

THE ANCIENT GREEK
HERO IN 24 HOURS:
SOURCEBOOK



GREGORY NAGY, GENERAL EDITOR

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Sourcebook of Ancient Greek Texts in English Translation

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Sourcebook of Ancient Greek Texts in English Translation

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Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 1

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Anger [*mēnis*], goddess, sing it, of Achilles, son of Peleus—₂
disastrous [*oulomenē*] anger that made countless pains [*algea*] for the
Achaeans,₃ and many steadfast lives [*psūkhai*] it drove down to Hādēs,₄
heroes' lives, but their bodies it made prizes for dogs [5] and for all birds,
and the Will of Zeus was reaching its fulfillment [*telos*]—₆ sing starting
from the point where the two—I now see it—first had a falling out,
engaging in strife [*eris*],₇ I mean, [Agamemnon] the son of Atreus, lord
of men, and radiant Achilles.₈ So, which one of the gods was it who
impelled the two to fight with each other in strife [*eris*]?₉ It was
[Apollo] the son of Leto and of Zeus. For he [= Apollo], infuriated at the
king [= Agamemnon], [10] caused an evil disease to arise throughout
the mass of warriors, and the people were getting destroyed, because the
son of Atreus had dishonored Khrysēs his priest. Now Khrysēs had come
to the ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, and had brought with
him a great ransom [*apoina*]: moreover he bore in his hand the scepter of
Apollo wreathed with a suppliant's wreath [15] and he besought the
Achaeans, but most of all the two sons of Atreus, who were their chiefs.

“Sons of Atreus,” he cried, “and all other Achaeans, may the gods who
dwell in Olympus grant you to destroy the city of Priam, and to reach
your homes in safety; [20] but free my daughter, and accept a ransom
[*apoina*] for her, in reverence to Apollo, son of Zeus.”

Then the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the
priest and taking the ransom that he offered; but not so Agamemnon,
son of Atreus [25] who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly

away. “Old man,” said he, “let me not find you tarrying about our ships, nor yet coming hereafter. Your scepter of the god and your wreath shall profit you nothing. I will not free her. She shall grow old [30] in my house at Argos far from her own home, busying herself with her loom and visiting my bed; so go, and do not provoke me or it shall be the worse for you.”

The old man feared him and obeyed. Not a word he spoke, but went by the shore of the sounding sea [35] and prayed apart to King Apollo, whom lovely fine-haired Leto had borne. “Hear me,” he cried, “O god of the silver bow, you who protects Khrysē and holy Killa and rules Tenedos with your might, hear me O Sminthian God of Plague Apollo. If I have ever decked your temple with garlands, [40] or burned your thigh-pieces in fat of bulls or goats, grant my prayer, and let your arrows avenge these my tears upon the Danaans.”

Thus did he pray, and Apollo heard his prayer. He came down furious from the summits of Olympus, [45] with his bow and his quiver upon his shoulder, ⁴⁶ and on his shoulders the arrows made a sound with the rage ⁴⁷ that trembled within him; his face was as dark as night. ⁴⁸ He sat himself down away from the ships, and he shot his arrow in the midst of them: ⁴⁹ there was a terrible [*deinos*] sound from the silver bow. [50] First he smote their mules and their hounds, but presently he aimed his shafts at the people themselves, and all day long the pyres of the dead were burning. For nine whole days he shot his arrows among the people, but upon the tenth day Achilles called them together in assembly— [55] moved to do so by Hera, the white-armed goddess, who saw the Achaeans in their death-throes and had compassion upon them. Then, when they were assembled, fleet Achilles rose and spoke among them.

“Son of Atreus,” said he, “I deem that we should now [60] turn roving home if we would escape destruction, for we are being cut down by war and pestilence at once. Let us ask some priest or prophet [*mantis*], or some reader of dreams (for dreams, too, are of Zeus) who can tell us why

Phoebus Apollo is so angry, and say [65] whether it is for some vow that we have broken, or hecatomb that we have not offered, and whether he will accept the savor of lambs and goats without blemish, so as to take away the plague from us.”

With these words he sat down, and Kalkhas son of Thestor, wisest of seers, [70] who knew things past present and to come, rose to speak. He it was who had guided the Achaeans with their fleet to Ilion, through the prophecies with which Phoebus Apollo had inspired him. With all sincerity and goodwill he addressed them thus:

“Achilles, beloved of Zeus, you bid me tell you about the [75] anger [*mēnis*] of King Apollo, the Arch-Destroyer, I will therefore do so; but consider first and swear that you will stand by me heartily in word and deed, for I know that I shall offend one who rules the Argives with might, to whom all the Achaeans are in subjection. [80] A plain man cannot stand against the anger of a king, who even if he swallows his displeasure now, will yet nurse revenge till he has taken it. Consider, therefore, whether or not you will protect me.”

And Achilles, the great runner, answered, [85] “Fear not, but speak as it is given to you by the gods. I swear by Apollo, Kalkhas, to whom you pray, and whose oracles you reveal to us, that not a Danaan at our ships shall lay his hand upon you, while I yet live to look upon the face of the earth— [90] no, not even if you name Agamemnon himself, ⁹¹ who now boasts to be by far the best of the Achaeans.”

At that the brave seer [*mantis*] spoke boldly. “The god,” he said, “is not angry about either a vow or a hecatomb, but for his priest’s sake, whom Agamemnon has dishonored, [95] in that he would neither free his daughter nor take a ransom [*apoina*] for her. ⁹⁶ For that reason the far-shooter gave—and will give—pains [*algea*] upon us, ⁹⁷ and he will not remove the disgraceful devastation [*loigos*] from the Danaans ⁹⁸ until Agamemnon has restored the girl without fee or ransom [*apoina*] to her

father, and has sent a holy hecatomb [100] to Khrysē. Thus we may perhaps appease him.”

With these words he sat down, and the warlord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, rose in anger. His heart was black with rage, and his eyes flashed fire [105] as he scowled at Kalkhas and said, “Seer [*mantis*] of evil, you never yet prophesied good things concerning me, but have always loved to foretell that which was evil. You have brought me neither comfort nor performance; and now you come prophesying among the Danaans, and saying [110] that Apollo has plagued us because I would not take a ransom [*apoina*] for this girl, the daughter of Khrysēs. I have set my heart on keeping her in my own house, for I prefer her to my own wife Clytemnestra, whom I courted when young, whose peer she is in [115] both form and feature, in intelligence and accomplishments. Still I will give her up if I must, for I want the people to live, not die; but you must find me a prize [*geras*] instead, or I alone among the Argives shall be without one. This is not well; [120] for you see, all of you, that my prize [*geras*] is to go elsewhere.”

And swift godlike Achilles answered, “Most noble son of Atreus, covetous beyond all humankind, how shall the magnanimous Achaeans find you another prize [*geras*]? We have no common store from which to take one. [125] Those we took from the cities have been divided up; we cannot disallow the awards that have been made already. Give this girl, therefore, to the god, and if ever Zeus grants that we destroy the city of Troy we will requite you three and fourfold.”

[130] Then the warlord Agamemnon said, “Achilles, valiant though you be, you shall not thus get the better of me in matters of the mind [*noos*]. You shall not overreach and you shall not persuade me. Are you to keep your own prize [*geras*], while I sit tamely under my loss and give up the girl at your bidding? [135] Let the Achaeans find me a prize [*geras*] in fair exchange to my liking, or I will come and take your own, or that of Ajax or of Odysseus; and to whomsoever I may come shall regret my

coming. [140] But of this we will take thought hereafter; for the present, let us draw a ship into the sea, and find a crew for her expressly; let us put a hecatomb on board, and let us send Khrysēis of the lovely cheeks also; further, let some chief man among us be in command, [145] either Ajax, or Idomeneus, or godlike Odysseus, or yourself, son of Peleus, mighty warrior that you are, that we may offer sacrifice and appease the anger of the Arch-Destroyer god.”

Achilles scowled at him and answered, “You are steeped in insolence and lust of gain. [150] With what heart can any of the Achaeans do your bidding, either on foray or in open fighting? I came to make war here not because the Trojans are responsible [*aitioi*] for any wrong committed against me. I have no quarrel with them. They have not raided my cattle nor my horses, [155] nor cut down my harvests on the rich plains of Phthia; for between me and them there is a great space, both mountain and sounding sea. We have followed you, shameless one, for your pleasure, not ours—to gain satisfaction [*tīmē*] from the Trojans for you—you with the looks of a dog—and for Menelaos. [160] You forget this, and threaten to rob me of the prize [*geras*] for which I have toiled, and which the sons of the Achaeans have given me. Never when the Achaeans destroy any rich city of the Trojans do I receive so good a prize [*geras*] as you do, [165] though it is my hands that do the better part of the fighting. When the sharing comes, your share is far the largest, and I must go back to my ships, take what I can get and be thankful, when my labor of fighting is done. Now, therefore, I shall go back to Phthia; it will be much better [170] for me to return home with my ships, for I will not stay here dishonored to gather gold and substance for you.”

And the warlord Agamemnon answered, “Leave if you will, I shall make you no entreaties to stay you. I have others here [175] who will do me honor, and above all Zeus, the lord of counsel. There is no king here so hateful to me as you are, ¹⁷⁷ strife [*eris*] is always dear to you, as well as wars and battles. So what if you are strong? Was it not a god that made

you so? Go home, then, with your ships and comrades [180] to lord it over the beloved Myrmidons. I care neither for you nor for your anger [*kotos*]; and thus will I do: since Phoebus Apollo is taking Khrysēis from me, I shall send her with my ship and my followers, but I shall come to your tent and [185] take your own beautiful prize Brisēis, that you may learn how much stronger I am than you are, ¹⁸⁶ so that any one else will draw back ¹⁸⁷ from saying that he is equal to [*isos*] me [=Agamemnon] and from making himself equal to [*homoios*] me face to face.” ¹⁸⁸ Thus he [= Agamemnon] spoke.

And the son of Peleus [= Achilles] felt grief [*akhos*], and the heart ¹⁸⁹ within his shaggy chest was divided [190] whether to draw the sharp sword at his thigh ¹⁹¹ and make the others get up and scatter while he kills the son of Atreus [= Agamemnon], ¹⁹² or whether to check his anger [*kholos*] and restrain his heart [*thūmos*]. While he was thus of two minds, and was drawing his mighty sword from its scabbard, Athena came down [195] from the sky (for white-armed Hera had sent her in the love she bore for them both), and seized the son of Peleus by his golden hair, visible to him alone, for of the others no man could see her. Achilles turned in amazement, and by the fire that flashed from her eyes at once knew that she was [200] Athena. “Why are you here,” said he, “daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus? To see the outrage [*hubris*] of Agamemnon, son of Atreus? Let me tell you—and it shall surely be— [205] he shall pay for this insolence with his life.”

And Athena said, “I come from the sky, if you will hear me, to bid you stop your anger [*menos*]. Hera has sent me, who cares for both of you alike. [210] Cease, then, this quarreling, and do not draw your sword; rail at him if you will, with words, and your railing will not be vain, for I tell you—and it shall surely be—that you shall hereafter receive gifts three times as splendid by reason of this present outrage [*hubris*]. Hold, therefore, and obey.”

[215] “Goddess,” answered swift Achilles, the great runner, “whatever anger [*kholos*] a man may have, he must do as you two command him. This will be best, for the gods ever hear the prayers of him who has obeyed them.”

He stayed his hand on the silver hilt of his sword, [220] and thrust it back into the scabbard as Athena bade him. Then she went back to Olympus among the other gods [*daimones*], and to the house of aegis-bearing Zeus.

But the son of Peleus again began railing at the son of Atreus, for he had not yet desisted from his anger [*kholos*]. [225] “Wine-bibber,” he cried, “you with the looks of a dog and the heart of a deer, you never dare to go out with the army of warriors in fight, nor yet with our chosen (best of the Achaeans) men in ambuscade. You shun this as you do death itself. You had rather go round and [230] rob his prizes from any man who contradicts you. You devour your people, for you are king over a feeble folk. ²³² This could be the last time, son of Atreus, that you will be hurling insults. ²³³ And here’s another thing. I’ll tell it to you, and I will swear on top of it a great oath: ²³⁴ I swear by this scepter [*skēptron*] that I’m holding here, this scepter that will never again have leaves and branches [235] growing out of it—and it never has—ever since it left that place in the mountains where it was cut down. ²³⁶ It will never flourish again, since the bronze implement has stripped it ²³⁷ of its leaves and its bark. Now the sons of the Achaeans carry it around, ²³⁸ holding it in their hands whenever they act as makers of judgments [*dikaspōloi*], judging what are and what are not divine laws [*themis* plural], ²³⁹ which they uphold, taking their authority from Zeus. This is going to be a big oath. [240] So here is what I say, and I say it most solemnly: the day will come when there will be a longing [*pothē*] for Achilles, and it will overcome the sons of the Achaeans, ²⁴¹ overcome them all. When that day comes, there is no way you will be able, no matter how much grief you feel [*akh-nusthai*], ²⁴² to keep them away from harm. And that is the

time when many will be killed at the hands of Hector the man-killer, ²⁴³ dying as they fall to the ground. And you will have in your insides a heart [*thūmos*] that will be all torn up for you, ²⁴⁴ feeling angry about the fact that you have not at all honored the best of the Achaeans.”

[245] Thus spoke [Achilles] the son of Peleus, and he threw the scepter [*skēptron*] to the ground, ²⁴⁶ that scepter adorned with golden studs driven into it. Then he sat down, while the son of Atreus was beginning fiercely from his place upon the other side. Then up rose smooth-tongued Nestor, the facile speaker of the Pylians, and the words fell from his lips sweeter than honey. [250] Two generations of men born and bred in sandy Pylos had passed away under his rule, and he was now reigning over the third. With all sincerity and goodwill, therefore, he addressed them thus:

“Truly,” he said, “a great grief [*penthos*] has befallen the Achaean land. [255] Surely Priam with his sons would rejoice, and the Trojans be glad at heart if they could hear this quarrel between you two, who are so excellent in fight and counsel. I am older than either of you; therefore be guided by me. [260] Moreover I have been the familiar friend of men even greater than you are, and they did not disregard my counsels. Never again can I behold such men as Perithoös and Dryas, shepherd of his people, or as Kaineus, Exadios, godlike Polyphemus, [265] and Theseus, son of Aegeus, peer of the immortals. These were the mightiest men ever born upon this earth: mightiest were they, and when they fought the fiercest tribes of mountain savages they utterly overthrew them. I came from distant Pylos, and went about among them, [270] for they would have me come, and I fought as it was in me to do. Not a man now living could withstand them, but they heard my words, and were persuaded by them. So be it also with yourselves, for this is the more excellent way. [275] Therefore, Agamemnon, though you be strong, take not this girl away, for the sons of the Achaeans have already given her to Achilles; ²⁷⁷ Don’t you, [Achilles] son of Peleus, be quarrelling with the king, ²⁷⁸ force against force, since it is never an equal [*homoīē*] honor

[*tīmē*], I mean, the rank inherited ²⁷⁹ by a king holding the scepter, to whom Zeus has given a luminous sign of sovereignty. [280] Even if you [= Achilles] are as mighty as you are, born of a goddess, ²⁸¹ nevertheless, he [= Agamemnon] is superior in status, since he rules over more subjects. Son of Atreus, check your anger [*menos*], I implore you; end this quarrel with Achilles, who in the day of battle is a tower of strength to the Achaeans.”

[285] And Agamemnon answered, “Sir, all that you have said is true, but this man wants to become our lord and master: he must be lord of all, king of all, and chief of all, and this shall hardly be. [290] Granted that the gods have made him a great warrior, have they also given him the right to speak with railing?”

Achilles interrupted him. “I should be a coward and a good-for-nothing,” he cried, “if I were to give in to you in all things. [295] Order other people about, not me, for I shall obey no longer. Furthermore I say—and lay my saying to your heart—I shall fight neither you nor any man about this girl, for those that take were those also that gave. [300] But of all else that is at my ship you shall carry away nothing by force. Try, that others may see; if you do, my spear shall be reddened with your blood.”

When they had quarreled thus angrily, [305] they rose, and broke up the assembly at the ships of the Achaeans. Achilles, the son of Peleus, went back to his tents and ships with Patroklos, the son of Menoitios and his company, while Agamemnon drew a vessel into the water and chose a crew of twenty oarsmen. [310] He escorted fair-cheeked Khrysēis on board and sent moreover a hecatomb for the god. And Odysseus went as chief.

³¹² Then they went on board and started sailing along the watery pathways. But the son of Atreus bade the people purify themselves; so they purified themselves and cast their impurities into the sea. [315]

Then they offered hecatombs of bulls and goats without blemish on the sea shore, and the smoke with the savor of their sacrifice rose curling up towards the sky. Thus did they busy themselves throughout the army of warriors.

But Agamemnon did not forget the threat that he had made Achilles, [320] and called his trusty heralds and attendants [*therapontes*] Talthybios and Eurybates. “Go,” said he, “to the tent of Achilles, son of Peleus; take fair-cheeked Brisēis by the hand and bring her here; if he will not give her I shall come [325] with others and take her—which will press him harder.”

He ordered this directly and dismissed them, ³²⁷ and the two went, unwilling, along the shore of the barren sea, till they came to the tents and ships of the Myrmidons. They found Achilles sitting by his tent and his ships, [330] and ill-pleased he was when he beheld them. They stood fearfully and reverently before him, and never a word did they speak, but he knew them and said, ³³⁴ “Hail, heralds, messengers of Zeus and of men! [335] draw near; my quarrel is not with you but with Agamemnon who has sent you for the girl Brisēis. Therefore, Patroklos, bring her and give her to them, but let them be witnesses by the blessed gods, by mortal men, [340] and by the fierceness of hard-hearted Agamemnon’s anger, that if ever there will be ³⁴¹ a need for me to ward off the disgraceful devastation [*loigos*], they shall seek and they shall not find. Agamemnon is mad with rage and ³⁴³ knows not a thing when it comes to noticing [*noeîn*] both backward and forward in time ³⁴⁴ that the Achaeans be safe as they fight at the ships.”

[345] Patroklos did as his dear comrade had bidden him. He brought Brisēis from the tent and gave her over to the heralds, who took her with them to the ships of the Achaeans—and the woman was loath to go. Then Achilles went all alone [350] by the side of the hoary sea [*pontos*], weeping and looking out upon the boundless waste of waters. He raised his hands in prayer to his immortal mother, “Mother,” he cried, “you

bore me doomed to live but for a little season; surely Zeus, who thunders from Olympus, might have given me honor [*tīmē*]. It is not so: he has not honored me. [355] Agamemnon, son of Atreus, has done me dishonor, and has robbed me of my prize [*geras*] by force.”

As he spoke he wept aloud, and his mother heard him where she was sitting in the depths of the sea hard by the Old One, her father. Soon she rose up like gray mist out of the waves, [360] sat down before him as he stood weeping, caressed him with her hand, and said, “My son, why are you weeping? What is it that gives you grief [*penthos*]? Keep it not from me in your mind [*noos*], but tell me, that we may know it together.”

Achilles drew a deep sigh and said, [365] “You know it; why tell you what you know well already? We went to Thebe, the strong city of Eëtion, destroyed it, and brought here the spoil. The sons of the Achaeans shared it duly among themselves, and chose lovely fair-cheeked Khrysēis as the prize of Agamemnon; [370] but Khrysēs, priest of Apollo, came to the ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, and brought with him a great ransom [*apoina*]: moreover he bore in his hand the scepter of Apollo, wreathed with a suppliant’s wreath, and beseeched all the Achaeans, [375] but most of all the two sons of Atreus who were their chiefs.

Then the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the priest and taking the ransom that he offered; but not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away. [380] So he went back in anger, and Apollo, who loved him dearly, heard his prayer. Then the god sent a deadly dart upon the Argives, and the people died thick and fast, for the arrows went everywhere among the wide army of the Achaeans. At last a seer [*mantis*] [385] in the fullness of his knowledge declared to us the oracles of Apollo the Arch-Destroyer, and I myself was first to say that we should appease him. ³⁸⁷ Then an anger took hold of the son of Atreus, and straightaway he stood up ³⁸⁸ and boastfully

promised [verb *apeileō*] a *mūthos*, which now has come to fulfillment [= verb *teleō*, from noun *telos* ‘fulfillment’]. The Achaeans are now taking the girl in a ship [390] to Khrysē, and sending gifts of sacrifice to the god; but the heralds have just taken from my tent the daughter of Brisēs, whom the Achaeans had awarded to myself.

Help your brave son, therefore, if you are able. Go to Olympus, and if you have ever [395] done him service in word or deed, implore the aid of Zeus. Often in my father’s house have I heard you glory in the fact that you alone of the immortals saved the son of Kronos from ruin, when the others, [400] with Hera, Poseidon, and Pallas Athena would have put him in bonds. It was you, goddess, who delivered him by calling to Olympus the hundred-handed monster whom gods call Briareus, but men Aigaion, for he has more force [*biē*] even than his father Ouranos; [405] when therefore he took his seat all-glorious beside the son of Kronos, the other gods were afraid, and did not bind him. Go, then, to him, remind him of all this, clasp his knees, and bid him give aid to the Trojans. Let the Achaeans be hemmed in at the sterns of their ships, and perish on the sea shore, [410] that they may reap what joy they may of their king, and that Agamemnon, wide-ruling son of Atreus, may regret his derangement [*atē*] in offering insult to the best of the fighting Achaeans.”

Thetis wept and answered, “My son, woe is me that I should have borne and nursed you. [415] Would indeed that you had lived your span free from all sorrow at your ships, for it is all too brief; alas, that you should be at once short of life and long of sorrow above your peers: woe, therefore, was the hour in which I bore you; [420] nevertheless I will go to the snowy heights of Olympus, and tell this tale to Zeus, if he will hear our prayer: meanwhile stay where you are with your ships, nurse your anger [*mēnis*] against the Achaeans, and hold aloof from fight. For Zeus went yesterday to Okeanos, to a feast among the Ethiopians, and the other gods went with him. [425] He will return to Olympus twelve

days hence; I will then go to his dwelling paved with bronze and will beseech him; nor do I doubt that I shall be able to persuade him.”

Then she left him, still furious at the loss of the slim-waisted girl [430] that had been taken by force [*biē*] from him. Meanwhile Odysseus reached Khrysē with the hecatomb. When they had come inside the harbor they furled the sails and laid them in the ship’s hold; they slackened the forestays, lowered the mast into its place, [435] and rowed the ship to the place where they would have her lie; there they cast out their mooring-stones and made fast the hawsers. They then got out upon the sea shore and landed the hecatomb for Apollo the Archer; Khrysēis also left the ship, [440] and Odysseus led her to the altar to deliver her into the hands of her father. “Khrysēs,” said he, “King Agamemnon has sent me to bring you back your child, and to offer sacrifice to Apollo on behalf of the Danaans, that we may propitiate the god, [445] who has now brought sorrow upon the Argives.”

So saying he gave the girl over to her father, who received her gladly, and they orderly arranged the holy hecatomb around the altar of the god. They washed their hands and took up the barley-meal to sprinkle over the victims, [450] while Khrysēs lifted up his hands and prayed aloud on their behalf. “Hear me,” he cried, “O god of the silver bow, that protects Khrysē and holy Killa, and rules Tenedos with your might. Even as you heard me before when I prayed, and you pressed hard upon the Achaeans, [455] so hear me yet again, and fulfil my desire. ⁴⁵⁶ Ward off now from the Danaans the disgraceful devastation [*loigos*]!”

Thus did he pray, and Apollo heard his prayer. When they had done praying and sprinkling the barley-meal, they drew back the heads of the victims and killed and flayed them. [460] They cut out the thigh-bones, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, set some pieces of raw meat on the top of them. ⁴⁶² And the old man burned them [= the thigh bones] over splinters of wood, and bright wine did he ⁴⁶³ pour over them, while the young men were getting ready for him the five-pronged forks that

they were holding in their hands. When the thigh-pieces were burned and they had tasted the innards, [465] they cut the rest up small, put the pieces upon the spits, roasted them till they were done, and drew them off: then, when they had finished their work [*ponos*] and the feast was ready, they ate it, and every man had his full share, so that all were satisfied. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, [470] attendants filled the mixing-bowl with wine and water and handed it round, after giving every man his drink-offering.

Thus all day long they worshipped the god with song, hymning him, ⁴⁷³ the young warriors of the Achaeans, singing a beautiful paean, and the god took pleasure in his heart [*phrenes*] at their voices; [475] but when the sun went down and it became dark, they laid themselves down to sleep by the stern cables of the ship, and when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared they again set sail for the army of the Achaeans. Apollo sent them a fair wind, [480] so they raised their mast and hoisted their white sails aloft. As the sail bellied with the wind the ship flew through the deep blue water, and the foam hissed against her bows as she went. ⁴⁸³ And the ship ran along the waves, on its pathway leading to its destination. When they reached the wide-stretching army of the Achaeans, [485] they drew the vessel ashore, high and dry upon the sands, set her strong props beneath her, and went their ways to their own tents and ships.

But Achilles, the son of Peleus in the line of Zeus, stayed at his ships and nursed his anger [*mēnis*]. [490] He went not to the honor-bringing assembly, and ventured not forth to fight, but gnawed at his own heart, pining for battle and the war-cry.

Now after twelve days the immortal gods came back in a body to Olympus, [495] and Zeus led the way. Thetis was not unmindful of the charge her son had laid upon her, so she rose from under the sea and went through the great sky with early morning to Olympus, where she found the mighty wide-seeing son of Kronos sitting all alone upon its

topmost ridges. [500] She sat herself down before him, and with her left hand seized his knees, while with her right she caught him under the chin, and besought him, saying,

“Father Zeus, Lord of Sky, if I ever did you service in word or deed among the immortals, hear my prayer, [505] and do honor to my son, whose life is to be cut short so early. But ⁵⁰⁶ Agamemnon, king of men, ⁵⁰⁷ has taken away his honor [*tīmē*]; for he got and keeps his prize [*geras*], having himself taken it away. Honor him then yourself, Olympian lord of counsel, and grant victory to the Trojans, till the Achaeans [510] give my son his due and load him with riches in compensation [*tīmē*].”

Zeus sat for a while silent, and without a word, but Thetis still kept firm hold of his knees, and besought him a second time. “Incline your head,” said she, “and promise me surely, [515] or else deny me—for you have nothing to fear—that I may learn how greatly you disdain me.”

Then Zeus was much troubled and answered, “I shall have trouble if you set me quarrelling with Hera, for she will provoke me with her taunting speeches; [520] even now she is always railing at me before the other gods and accusing me of giving aid to the Trojans. Go back now, lest she should find out. I will consider the matter, and will bring it about as you wish. [525] See, I incline my head that you believe me. This is the most solemn act that I can give to any god. I never retract my word, or deceive, or fail to do what I say, when I have nodded my head.”

⁵²⁸ So spoke [Zeus] the son of Kronos, and with his eyebrows of blue he made a reinforcing [= *epi-*] nod. ⁵²⁹ Ambrosial were the locks that cascaded from the lord’s [530] head immortal. And he caused great Olympus to quake.

When the pair had thus laid their plans, they parted—Zeus to his house, while the goddess left the splendor of Olympus, and plunged into the depths of the sea. The gods rose from their seats, before the coming of

their father. Not one of them dared [535] to remain sitting, but all stood up as he came among them. There, then, he took his seat. But Hera, when she saw him, knew that he and the Old One's daughter, silver-footed Thetis, had been hatching mischief, so she at once began to upbraid him. [540] "Trickster," she cried, "which of the gods have you been taking into your counsels now? You are always settling matters in secret behind my back, and have never yet told me, if you could help it, one word of your intentions."

[545] "Hera," replied the father of gods and men, "you must not expect to be informed of all my counsels. You are my wife, but you would find it hard to understand them. When it is proper for you to hear, there is no one, god or man, who will be told sooner, but when I mean to keep a matter to myself, [550] you must not pry nor ask questions."

"Dread son of Kronos," answered ox-vision Hera, "what are you talking about? I? Pry and ask questions? Never. I let you have your own way in everything. [555] Still, I have a strong misgiving that the Old Man of the Sea's daughter, silver-footed Thetis has been talking you over, for she was with you and had hold of your knees this self-same morning. I believe, therefore, that you have been promising her to give honor to Achilles, and to kill many people at the ships of the Achaeans."

[560] "Wife," said Zeus, master of cloud and storm, "I can do nothing but you suspect me and find it out. You will take nothing by it, for I shall only dislike you the more, and it will go harder with you. Granted that it is as you say; I mean to have it so; [565] sit down and hold your tongue as I bid you for if I once begin to lay my hands about you, though all the gods were on your side it would profit you nothing."

Then ox-vision Hera was frightened, so she curbed her stubborn will and sat down in silence. [570] But the sky-dwellers were disquieted throughout the house of Zeus, till the cunning artisan Hephaistos began to try and pacify his beloved mother Hera of the white arms. "It will be

intolerable,” said he, “if you two fall to wrangling [575] and setting the gods in an uproar about a pack of mortals. If such ill counsels are to prevail, we shall have no pleasure at our banquet. Let me then advise my mother—and she must herself know that it will be better—to make friends with my dear father Zeus, lest he again scold her and disturb our feast. [580] If the Olympian Thunderer wants to hurl us all from our seats, he can do so, for he is far the strongest, so give him fair words, and he will then soon be in a good humor with us.”

As he spoke, he took a double cup of nectar, [585] and placed it in his mother’s hand. “Cheer up, my dear mother,” said he, “and make the best of it. I love you dearly, and should be very sorry to see you get a thrashing; however grieved I might be, I could not help for there is no standing up against Zeus. [590] Once before when I was trying to help you, he caught me by the foot and flung me from the celestial threshold. All day long from morning till evening was I falling, till at sunset I came to ground in the island of Lemnos, and there I lay, with very little life left in me, till the Sintians came and tended me.”

[595] Ivory-armed Hera smiled at this, and as she smiled she took the cup from her son’s hands. Then Hephaistos drew sweet nectar from the mixing-bowl, and served it round among the gods, going from left to right; and the blessed gods laughed out a loud approval [600] as they saw him bustling about the celestial dwellings.

Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun they feasted, and all had their full share, so that everyone was satisfied. Apollo struck his lyre, and the Muses lifted up their sweet voices, calling out and making response to one another. [605] But when the sun’s glorious light had faded, they went home to bed, each in his own abode, which lame Hephaistos with his consummate skill had fashioned for them. So Zeus, the Olympian Lord of Thunder, hastened to the bed [610] in which he always slept; and when he had got on top of it he went to sleep, with Hera of the golden throne, by his side.

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Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 2

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now the other gods and the armed warriors on the plain slept soundly, but sweet sleep did not take hold of Zeus, for he was thinking how to do honor to Achilles, to destroy many people at the ships of the Achaeans. [5] In the end he thought it would be best to send a false dream to Atreus' son King Agamemnon; so he called one to him and said to it, "False Dream, go to the ships of the flowing-haired Achaeans, [10] into the tent of Agamemnon, and say to him word to word as I now bid you. Tell him to get the Achaeans instantly under arms, for he shall take Troy. There are no longer divided counsels among the gods; [15] Hera has brought them to her own mind, and woe to the Trojans!"

The dream went off when it had heard its message, and soon reached the ships of the Achaeans. It sought out Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and found him in his tent, wrapped in a profound slumber. [20] It hovered over his head in the likeness of Nestor, son of Neleus, whom Agamemnon honored above all his councilors, and said:

"You are sleeping, son of Atreus; [25] one who has the welfare of his assembly of warriors and so much other care upon his shoulders should limit his sleep. Hear me at once, for I come as a messenger from Zeus, who, though he is not near, yet takes thought for you and pities you. He bids you get the Achaeans instantly under arms, for you shall take [30] Troy. There are no longer divided counsels among the gods; Hera has brought them over to her own mind, and woe to the Trojans at the hands of Zeus! Remember this, and when you wake see that it does not escape you."

[35] The dream then left him ³⁶ thinking in his *thūmos* about things that were not to be: ³⁷ for he thought that he would capture Priam's city on that very day, ³⁸ the fool; he did not know what things Zeus was planning to do. ³⁹ For he [Zeus] was yet to inflict pains [*algea*] and groaning [40] on both Trojans and Danaans in battles of power [*kratos*]. Then presently he woke, with the divine message still ringing in his ears; so he sat upright, and put on his soft khiton so fair and new, and over this his heavy cloak. He bound his sandals on to his comely feet, [45] and slung his silver-studded sword about his shoulders; then he took the imperishable [*aphthiton*] staff of his father, and came forth to the ships of the bronze-armored Achaeans.

The goddess Dawn now wended her way to vast Olympus that she might herald day to Zeus and to the other immortals, [50] and Agamemnon sent the criers round to call the people in assembly; so they called them and the people gathered then. But first he summoned a meeting of the elders at the ship of Nestor king of Pylos, [55] and when they were assembled he laid a cunning counsel before them.

“My friends,” said he, “I have had a divine dream in the dead of night, and the dream's face and figure resembled none but Nestor's. It hovered over my head and said, [60] ‘You are sleeping, son of high-spirited Atreus, breaker of horses; one who has the welfare of his assembly of warriors and so much other care upon his shoulders should dock his sleep. Hear me at once, for I am a messenger from Zeus, who, though he be not near, yet takes thought for you and pities you. [65] He bids you get the Achaeans instantly under arms, for you shall take Troy. There are no longer divided counsels among the gods; Hera has brought them over to her own mind, and woe betides the Trojans [70] at the hands of Zeus. Remember this.’ The dream then vanished and I awoke. Let us now, therefore, arm the sons of the flowing-haired Achaeans. But it will be the right thing [*themis*] that I should first sound them, and to this end I will

tell them to flee with their ships; [75] but do you others go about among the army of warriors and prevent their doing so.”

He then sat down, and Nestor the prince of sandy Pylos with all sincerity and goodwill addressed them thus: “My friends,” said he, “princes and councilors of the Argives, [80] if any other man of the Achaeans had told us of this dream we should have declared it false, and would have had nothing to do with it. But he has seen ⁸² who boasts to be by far the best [*aristos*] of the Achaeans; we must therefore set about getting the people under arms.”

With this he led the way from the assembly, [85] and the other sceptered kings rose with him in obedience to the word of Agamemnon; but the people pressed forward to hear. They swarmed like bees that come forth from some hollow cave and flit in countless throng among the spring flowers, [90] bunched in knots and clusters; even so did the mighty multitude pour from ships and tents to the assembly, and range themselves upon the wide-watered shore, while among them ran Wildfire Rumor, messenger of Zeus, urging them ever to the fore. [95] Thus they gathered in a pell-mell of mad confusion, and the earth groaned under the tramp of men as the people sought their places. Nine heralds went crying about among them to stay their tumult and bid them listen to the kings, till at last they were got into their several places and ceased their clamor. [100] Then powerful King Agamemnon rose, holding his scepter. It was the work of Hephaistos, who gave it to Zeus the son of Kronos. Zeus gave it to the courier Hermes, slayer of Argos, guide and guardian. King Hermes gave it to Pelops, the mighty charioteer, and [105] Pelops to Atreus, shepherd of his people. Atreus, when he died, left it to Thyestes, rich in flocks, and Thyestes in his turn left it to be borne by Agamemnon, that he might be lord of all Argos and of the isles. Leaning, then, on his scepter, he addressed the Argives.

[110] “My friends,” he said, “heroes, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, Zeus, the son of Kronos, has tied me down with *atē*. Cruel, he gave me

his solemn promise that I should destroy the strong-walled city of Priam before returning, but he has played me false, and is now bidding me [115] go ingloriously back to Argos with the loss of much people. Such is the will of strong Zeus, who has laid many a proud city in the dust, as he will yet lay others, for his power is above all. It will be a sorry tale hereafter that an [120] Achaean army of warriors, at once so great and valiant, battled in vain against men fewer in number than themselves; but as yet the end is not in sight. Think that the Achaeans and Trojans have sworn to a solemn covenant, and that they have each been numbered— [125] the Trojans by the counting of their householders, and we by companies of ten; think further that each of our companies desired to have a Trojan householder to pour out their wine; we are so greatly more in number that full many a company would have to go without its cup-bearer. [130] But they have in the town allies from other places, and it is these that hinder me from being able to destroy the rich city of Ilion. Nine of Zeus' years are gone; [135] the timbers of our ships have rotted; their tackling is sound no longer. Our wives and little ones at home look anxiously for our coming, but the work that we came here to do has not been done. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say: [140] let us sail back to our own land, for we shall not take Troy of the wide ways."

With these words he moved the hearts of the multitude, so many of them as knew not the cunning counsel of Agamemnon. They surged to and fro like the waves [145] of the Icarian Sea [*pontos*], when the east and south winds break from celestial clouds to lash them; or as when the west wind sweeps over a field of wheat and the ears bow beneath the blast, even so were they swayed as they flew with loud cries [150] towards the ships, and the dust from under their feet rose skyward. They cheered each other on to draw the ships into the sea; they cleared the channels in front of them; they began taking away the stays from underneath them, and the sky rang with their glad cries, so eager were they to return.

[155] Then surely the Argives would have had a return [*nostos*] after a fashion that was not fated. But Hera said to Athena, “Alas, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, the one who cannot be worn down, shall the Argives flee home to their own land over the broad sea, [160] and leave Priam and the Trojans the glory of still keeping Helen, for whose sake so many of the bronze-armored Achaeans have died at Troy, far from their homes? Go about at once among the army of warriors, and speak fairly to them, man by man, [165] that they draw not their ships into the sea.”

Owl-vision goddess Athena was not slack to do her bidding. Down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus, and in a moment she was at the ships of the Achaeans. There she found Odysseus, peer of Zeus in counsel, [170] standing alone. He had not as yet laid a hand upon his ship, for he felt grief [*akhos*] and was sorry; so she went close up to him and said, “Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, [175] are you going to fling yourselves into your ships and be off home to your own land in this way? Will you leave Priam and the Trojans the glory of still keeping Helen, for whose sake so many of the Achaeans have died at Troy, far from their homes? Go about at once among the army of warriors, [180] and speak fairly to them, man by man, that they draw not their ships into the sea.”

Odysseus knew the voice as that of the goddess: he flung his cloak from him and set off to run. His attendant Eurybates, a man of Ithaca, who waited on him, took charge of the cloak, [185] whereon Odysseus went straight up to Agamemnon son of Atreus and received from him his ancestral, imperishable staff. With this he went about among the ships of the Achaeans.

Whenever he met a king or chieftain, he stood by him and spoke to him fairly. [190] “Sir,” said he, “this flight is cowardly and unworthy. Stand by your post, and bid your people also keep their places. You do not yet know the full mind [*noos*] of Agamemnon; he was sounding us, and before long will visit the Achaeans with his displeasure. We were not all

of us at the council to hear what he then said; [195] see to it lest he be angry and do us harm; for the honor [*tīmē*] of kings is great, and the hand of Zeus is with them.”

But when he came across some man from some locale [*dēmos*] who was making a noise, he struck him with his staff and rebuked him, saying, [200] “What kind of superhuman force [*daimōn*] has possessed you? Hold your peace, and listen to better men than yourself. You are a coward and no warrior; you are nobody either in fight or council; we cannot all be kings; it is not well that there should be many masters; one man must be supreme— [205] one king to whom the son of scheming Kronos has given the scepter and divine laws to rule over you all.”

Thus masterfully did he go about among the army of warriors, and the people hurried back to the council from their tents and ships with a sound as the thunder of surf when it comes crashing down upon the shore, [210] and all the sea [*pontos*] is in an uproar.

The rest now took their seats and kept to their own several places, but Thersites still went on wagging his unbridled tongue—a man of many words, and those unseemly [= without *kosmos*]; a monger of sedition, a railer against all who were in authority, rashly but not according to order [*kosmos*], [215] so that he might set the Achaeans in a laugh. He was the ugliest man of all those that came to Troy—bandy-legged, lame of one foot, with his two shoulders rounded and hunched over his chest. His head ran up to a point, but there was little hair on the top of it. [220] He was hateful to Achilles and Odysseus most of all, ²²¹ because he made a quarrel [*neikos*] against these two; now, however, with a shrill squeaky voice he began heaping his abuse on radiant Agamemnon. The Achaeans were angry and disgusted, but nevertheless he kept on brawling and bawling at the son of Atreus.

[225] “Agamemnon,” he cried, “what ails you now, and what more do you want? Your tents are filled with bronze and with fair women, for

whenever we take a town we give you the pick of them. Would you have yet more gold, [230] which some Trojan is to give you as a ransom for his son, when I or another Achaean has taken him prisoner? or is it some young girl to hide and lie with? It is not well that you, the ruler of the Achaeans, should bring them into such misery. [235] Weakling cowards, women rather than men, let us sail home, and leave this man here at Troy to stew in his own prizes of honor, and discover whether or not we were of any service to him. Achilles is a much better man than he is, and see how he has treated him— [240] robbing him of his prize and keeping it himself. Achilles takes it meekly and shows no fight; if he did, son of Atreus, you would never again insult him.”

Thus railed Thersites, but radiant Odysseus at once went up to him [245] and rebuked him sternly. “Check your glib tongue, Thersites,” said he, “and babble not a word further. Chide not princes when you have no one to back you. There is no viler creature that has come to Troy with the sons of Atreus. [250] Drop this chatter about kings, and neither revile them nor keep harping about homecoming [*nostos*]. We do not yet know how things are going to be, nor whether the Achaeans are to return with good success or evil. How dare you berate Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the people, [255] because the Danaans have awarded him so many prizes? I tell you, therefore—and it shall surely be—that if I again catch you talking such nonsense, I will either forfeit my own head [260] and be no longer called father of Telemachus, or I will take you, strip you stark naked to reveal your shame [*aidōs*], and whip you out of the assembly till you go blubbering back to the ships.”

[265] Then he beat him with his staff about the back and shoulders till he dropped and fell weeping. The golden scepter raised a bloody welt on his back, so he sat down frightened and in pain, looking foolish as he wiped the tears from his eyes. [270] The people were sorry for him, but they laughed heartily, and one man would turn to his neighbor saying, “Odysseus has done many a good thing before now in fight and council, but he never did the Argives a better turn [275] than when he stopped

this man's mouth from barking any further. He will give the kings no more of his insolence."

Thus said the people. Then Odysseus, ransacker of cities, rose, scepter in hand, and owl-vision Athena [280] in the likeness of a herald bade the people be still, that those who were far off might hear him and consider his council. He therefore with all sincerity and goodwill addressed them thus:

"King Agamemnon, son of Atreus, the Achaeans are for [285] making you a by-word among all humankind. They forget the promise they made you when they set out from horse-pasturing Argos, that you should not return till you had destroyed the town of strong-walled Troy, and, like children or widowed women, [290] they murmur and would set off homeward. True it is that they have had toil [*ponos*] enough to be disheartened. A man chafes at having to stay away from his wife even for a single month, when he is on shipboard, at the mercy of wind and sea, [295] but it is now nine long years that we have been kept here; I cannot, therefore, blame the Achaeans if they turn restive; still we shall be shamed if we go home empty-handed after so long a stay—²⁹⁹ Endure, my near and dear ones [*philoî*], and stay as long as it takes for us to find out [300] whether Kalkhas is prophesying something that is true or not.

³⁰¹ For I know this well in my heart, and you all ³⁰² are witnesses, those of you who have not been carried off by the demons of death. ³⁰³ It is as if it was yesterday or the day before, when the ships of the Achaeans at Aulis ³⁰⁴ were gathered, portending doom to Priam and the Trojans. [305] Standing around a spring, at a sacred altar, ³⁰⁶ we were sacrificing perfect [*telēssai*] hecatombs to the immortal ones ³⁰⁷ under a beautiful plane tree, in a place where sparkling water flowed. ³⁰⁸ Then there appeared [*phainesthai*] a great sign [*sēma*], a serpent [*drakōn*] with blood-red markings on its back. ³⁰⁹ Terrifying it was. The Olympian [= Zeus]

himself had sent it into the zone of light. [310] It darted out from underneath the altar, and it rushed toward the plane tree. ³¹¹ Over there were the nestlings of a sparrow, helpless young things. ³¹² In the highest branch amidst the leaves they were hiding in fear, ³¹³ eight of them. The ninth was the mother that had hatched the young ones. ³¹⁴ Then it devoured them, in a way that is pitiful [*eleeina*], while they were chirping. [315] And their mother was fluttering above, lamenting [*oduresthai*] for her dear little things. ³¹⁶ Then it threw its coils around her, catching her by the wing as she was wailing over [*amphiakhuia*] them. ³¹⁷ And when it devoured the young ones of the sparrow and the mother as well, ³¹⁸ the same god that had made it visible [*phainein*] now made it most visible [*arizēlos*]. ³¹⁹ For the son of crafty Kronos now made it into stone. [320] We just stood there, struck with awe [*thauma*] at what happened, ³²¹ how such frightful portents invaded the hecatombs of the gods. ³²² Then, right away, Kalkhas spoke, speaking the words of seers [*theopropēin*]: ³²³ “Why are you speechless, Achaeans with the elaborate hair? ³²⁴ Zeus, master of craft, made visible [*phainein*] this great portent [*teras*]. [325] It is late in coming, late in reaching its outcome [*telos*], and its fame [*kleos*] will never perish. ³²⁶ Just as this thing devoured the young ones of the sparrow and the mother as well, ³²⁷ eight in number, while the mother made it nine, the one that hatched the young ones, ³²⁸ so also we will wage war for that many years in number, ³²⁹ and then, on the tenth year, we will capture the city with its broad streets.” [330] Thus spoke that man. And now I see that all these things are reaching their outcome [*telos*]. ³³¹ So come now, all of you, hold your place, all you Achaeans with the fine shin-guards, ³³² stay here until we capture the great city of Priam.”

Then the Argives raised a shout, till the ships rang again with the uproar. [335] Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, then addressed them. “Shame on you,” he cried, “to stay talking here like children, when you should fight like men. Where are our covenants now, and where the

oaths that we have taken? [340] Shall our counsels be flung into the fire, with our drink-offerings and the right hands of fellowship wherein we have put our trust? We waste our time in words, and for all our talking here shall be no further forward. Stand, therefore, son of Atreus, by your own steadfast purpose; [345] lead the Argives on to battle, and leave this handful of men to rot, who scheme, and scheme in vain, to get back to Argos before they have learned whether Zeus be true or a liar. [350] For the mighty son of all-powerful Kronos surely promised that we should succeed, when we Argives set sail to bring death and destruction upon the Trojans. He showed us favorable signs [*sēmata*] by flashing his lightning on our right hands; therefore let none make haste to go [355] till he has first lain with the wife of some Trojan, and avenged the toil and sorrow that he has suffered for the sake of Helen. Nevertheless, if any man is in such haste to be at home again, let him lay his hand to his ship that he may meet his doom in the sight of all. [360] But, O king, consider and listen to my counsel, for the word that I say may not be neglected lightly. Divide [*krinein*] your men, Agamemnon, into their several tribes and clans, that clans and tribes may stand by and help one another. If you do this, and if the Achaeans obey you, [365] you will find out who, both chiefs and peoples, are brave, and who are cowards; for they will vie against the other. Thus you shall also learn whether it is through the counsel of the gods or the cowardice of men that you shall fail to take the town.”

And powerful Agamemnon answered, [370] “Nestor, you have again outdone the sons of the Achaeans in counsel. Would, by Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, that I had among them ten more such councilors, for the city of King Priam would then soon fall beneath our hands, and we should destroy it. [375] But Zeus of the aegis the son of Kronos afflicts me with bootless wranglings and strife. Achilles and I are quarrelling about this girl, in which matter I was the first to offend; if we can be of one mind again, [380] the Trojans will not stave off destruction for a day. Now, therefore, get your morning meal, that our armies of warriors join in fight. Whet well your spears; see well to the

ordering of your shields; give good feeds to your swift-footed horses, and look your chariots carefully over, [385] that we may do battle the livelong day. ³⁸⁶ There will not be a pause for rest [from battle] in between, not a bit, ³⁸⁷ unless the night comes and separates the ménos from the men. The bands that bear your shields shall be wet with the sweat upon your shoulders, your hands shall weary upon your spears, [390] your horses shall steam in front of your chariots, and if I see any man shirking the fight, or trying to keep out of it at the ships, there shall be no help for him, but he shall be a prey to dogs and vultures.”

Thus he spoke, and the Achaeans roared approval. As when the waves run high [395] before the blast of the south wind and break on some lofty headland, dashing against it and buffeting it without ceasing, as the storms from every quarter drive them, even so did the Achaeans rise and hurry in all directions to their ships. There they lighted their fires at their tents and got dinner, [400] offering sacrifice every man to one or other of the gods, and praying each one of them that he might live to come out of the fight. Agamemnon, king of men, sacrificed a fat five-year-old bull to the mighty son of Kronos, and invited the princes and elders of his assembly of warriors. [405] First he asked Nestor and King Idomeneus, then the two Ajaxes and the son of Tydeus, and sixthly Odysseus, peer of gods in counsel; but Menelaos came of his own accord, for he knew how busy his brother then was. [410] They stood round the bull with the barley-meal in their hands, and powerful Agamemnon prayed, saying, “Zeus, most glorious, supreme, that dwells in the sky, and rides upon the storm-cloud, grant that the sun may not go down, nor the night fall, till the palace of Priam is laid low, [415] and its gates are consumed with fire. Grant that my sword may pierce the khiton of Hector about his heart, and that full many of his comrades may bite the dust as they fall dying round him.”

Thus he prayed, but the son of Kronos would not fulfill his prayer. [420] He accepted the sacrifice, yet none the less increased their toil [*ponos*] continually. When they had done praying and sprinkling the barley-

meal upon the victim, they drew back its head, killed it, and then flayed it. They cut out the thigh-bones, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, and set pieces of raw meat on the top of them. [425] These they burned upon the split logs of firewood, but they spitted the innards, and held them in the flames to cook. When the thigh-pieces were burned, and they had tasted the innards, they cut the rest up small, put the pieces upon spits, roasted them till they were done, and drew them off; [430] then, when they had finished their work [*ponos*] and the feast was ready, they ate it, and every man had his full share, so that all were satisfied. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, began to speak. "King Agamemnon," said he, [435] "let us not stay talking here, nor be slack in the work that the gods have put into our hands. Let the heralds summon the bronze-armored people to gather at their several ships; we will then go about among the army of warriors, [440] that we may begin fighting at once."

Thus did he speak, and the lord of men Agamemnon heeded his words. He at once sent the criers round to call the people in assembly. So they called them, and the people gathered then. [445] The chiefs about the son of Atreus chose their men and marshaled [*krinein*] them, while owl-vision Athena went among them holding her priceless aegis that knows neither age nor death. From it there waved a hundred tassels of pure gold, all deftly woven, and each one of them worth a hundred oxen. [450] With this she darted furiously everywhere among the masses of the Achaeans, urging them forward, and putting courage into the heart of each, so that he might fight and do battle without ceasing. Thus war became sweeter in their eyes even than returning home in their ships. [455] As when some great forest fire is raging upon a mountain top and its light is seen afar, even so as they marched the gleam of their armor flashed up into the firmament of the sky.

They were like great flocks [460] of geese, or cranes, or swans on the plain about the waters of Cayster, that wing their way here and there, glorying in the pride of flight, and crying as they settle till the fen is

alive with their screaming. Even thus did their tribes pour from ships and tents [465] on to the plain of the Skamandros, and the ground rang as brass under the feet of men and horses. They stood as thick upon the flower-bespangled field as leaves that bloom in season [*hōrā*].

As countless swarms of flies [470] buzz around a herdsman's homestead in the time [*hōrā*] of spring when milk is splashing in the pails, even so did the Achaeans swarm on to the plain to charge the Trojans and destroy them.

The chiefs disposed their men this way and that before the fight began, drafting them out [475] as easily as goatherds draft their flocks when they have got mixed while feeding; and among them went powerful King Agamemnon, with a head and face like Zeus the lord of thunder, a waist like *Arēs*, and a chest like that of Poseidon. [480] As some great bull that lords it over the herds upon the plain, even so did Zeus make the son of Atreus stand peerless among the multitude of heroes.

⁴⁸⁴ And now, tell me, O Muses, you who live in your Olympian abodes, [485] since you are goddesses and you were there and you know everything, ⁴⁸⁶ but we [= the Narrator] only hear the *kleos* and we know nothing ⁴⁸⁷ —who were the chiefs and princes of the Danaans [= the Achaeans]? ⁴⁸⁸ But their number I could not tell nor name ⁴⁸⁹ (not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths [490] and a voice that was unbreaking, and if a heart of bronze were within me) ⁴⁹¹ if the Muses of Olympus, of Zeus the aegis-bearer ⁴⁹² the daughters, did not remind me, how many came to Troy. ⁴⁹³ But now I will say the leaders [*arkhoi*] of the ships, and all the ships.

Peneleos, Leitos, [495] Arkesilaos, Prothoenor, and Klonios were chiefs of the Boeotians. These were they that dwelt in Hyria and rocky Aulis, and who held Skhoinos, Skolos, and the highlands of Eteonos, with Thespeia, Graia, and the fair city of Mykalessos. They also held Harma,

Eilesion, and Erythrai; [500] and they had Eleon, Hyle, and Peteon; Ocalea and the strong fortress of Medeon; Copae, Eutresis, and Thisbe, the haunt of doves; Coronea, and the pastures of Haliartos; Plataea and Glisas; [505] the fortress of Thebes the less; holy Onkhestos with its famous grove of Poseidon; Arne, rich in vineyards; Midea, sacred Nisa, and Anthedon upon the sea. From these there came fifty ships, and in each [510] there were a hundred and twenty young men of the Boeotians.

Askalaphos and Ialmenos, sons of Arēs, led the people that dwelt in Aspledon and Orkhomenos the realm of Minyas. Astyokhe a noble maiden bore them in the house of Aktor son of Azeus; for she had gone with Arēs secretly into an upper chamber, [515] and he had lain with her. With these there came thirty ships.

The Phocians were led by Skhedios and Epistrophos, sons of mighty Iphitos, the son of great-hearted Naubolos. These were they that held Kyparissos, rocky Pytho [Delphi], [520] holy Krisa, Daulis, and Panopeus; they also that dwelt in Anemorea and Hyampolis, and about the waters of the river Kephissos, and Lilaea by the springs of the Kephissos; with their chieftains came forty ships, [525] and they marshaled the forces of the Phocians, which were stationed next to the Boeotians, on their left.

Ajax, the fleet son of Oïleus, commanded the Locrians. He was not so great, nor nearly so great, as Ajax the son of Telamon. He was a little man, and his breastplate was made of linen, [530] but in use of the spear he excelled all the Hellenes and the Achaeans. These dwelt in Kynos, Opous, Kalliaros, Bessa, Skarphe, fair Augeiai, Tarphe, and Thronion about the river Boagrius. With him there came forty ships [535] of the Locrians who dwell beyond sacred Euboea.

The fierce Abantes held Euboea with its cities, Khalkis, Eretria, Histiaia, rich in vines, Kerinthos upon the sea, and the rock-perched town of

Dion; with them were also the men of Karystos and Styra; [540] Elephenor of the lineage of Arēs was in command of these; he was son of Khalkodon, and chief over all the great-hearted Abantes. With him they came, fleet of foot and wearing their hair long behind, brave warriors, who would ever strive to tear open the armor of their foes with their long ashen spears. [545] Of these there came fifty ships.

⁵⁴⁶ And those who held Athens, well-founded city, ⁵⁴⁷ the district [*dēmos*] of stout-hearted Erekhtheus, whom once Athena ⁵⁴⁸ nourished, daughter of Zeus, but the grain-giving earth gave birth to him. ⁵⁴⁹ and she [Athena] established him in Athens, in her own rich temple, [550] And there he is supplicated, with sacrifices of bulls and rams, ⁵⁵¹ by the young men of Athens, each time the seasonal moment comes round. ⁵⁵² And their leader was Menestheus, son of Peteoos. ⁵⁵³ Never before had there been a mortal man who was equal to [*homoios*] him [= Menestheus] ⁵⁵⁴ in marshaling [*kosmeîn*] the horse-drawn chariot teams and the shield-bearing warriors. [555] Nestor could alone rival him, for he was older. With him there came fifty ships.

Ajax brought twelve ships from Salamis, and stationed them alongside those of the Athenians.

The men of Argos, again, and those who held the walls of Tiryns, [560] with Hermione, and Asine upon the gulf; Trozen, Eionai, and the vineyard lands of Epidauros; the Achaean youths, moreover, who came from Aegina and Mases; these were led by Diomedes of the loud battle-cry, and Sthenelos son of famed Kapaneus. [565] With them in command was Euryalos, a godlike man, son of king Mekisteus, son of Talaos; but Diomedes of the great war cry was chief over them all. With these there came eighty ships.

Those who held the strong city of Mycenae, [570] rich Corinth and Kleonai; Orneai, lovely Araithyrea, and Likyon, where Adrastus reigned of old; Hyperesia, high Gonoessa, and Pellene; Aigion [575] and all the

coast-land round about Helike; these sent a hundred ships under the command of powerful King Agamemnon, son of Atreus. His force was far both finest and most numerous, and in their midst was the king himself, all glorious in his armor of gleaming bronze—foremost among the heroes, [580] because he was the best [*aristos*], and he led the most numerous host.

And those that dwelt in Lacedaemon, lying low among the hills, Pharis, Sparta, with Messe, the haunt of doves; Bryseai, lovely Augeiai, Amyklai, and Helos upon the sea; [585] Laas, moreover, and Oitylos; these were led by Menelaos of the loud battle-cry, brother to Agamemnon, and of them there were sixty ships, drawn up apart from the others. Among them went Menelaos himself, strong in zeal, urging his men to fight; for he longed to [590] avenge the toil and sorrow that he had suffered for the sake of Helen.

The men of Pylos and lovely Arene, and Thryon where is the ford of the river Alpheus; strong-built Aepy, Kyparisseis, and Amphigenea; Pteleon, Helos, and Dorion, where the Muses [595] met Thamyras, and stilled his minstrelsy for ever. He was returning from Oikhalia, where Eurystos lived and reigned, and boasted that he would surpass even the Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, if they should sing against him; whereon they were angry, and maimed him. [600] They robbed him of his divine power of song, and thenceforth he could strike the lyre no more. These were commanded by Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, and with him there came ninety ships.

And those that held Arcadia, under the high mountain of Cyllene, near the tomb of Aipylos, where the people fight hand to hand; [605] the men of Pheneus also, and Orkhomeos rich in flocks; of Rhipai, Stratie, and bleak Enispe; of Tegea and fair Mantinea; of Stymphelos and Parrhasia; of these powerful King Agapenor, son of Ankaeos, was commander, [610] and they had sixty ships. Many Arcadians, good warriors, came in each one of them, but Agamemnon found them the

ships in which to cross the sea [*pontos*], for they were not a people that occupied their business upon the waters.

[615] The men, moreover, of Bouprasion and of radiant Elis, so much of it as is enclosed between Hyrmine, Myrsinos upon the sea shore, the rock Olene and Alesion. These had four leaders, and each of them had ten ships, with many Epeioi on board. [620] Their chiefs were Amphimakhos and Thalpios—the one, son of Kteatos, and the other, of Eurytos—both of the lineage of Aktor. The two others were Diores, son of Amarynkes, and godlike Polyxenos, son of King Agasthenes, son of Augeas.

[625] And those of Doulikhion with the sacred Echinean islands, who dwelt beyond the sea off Elis; these were led by Meges, peer of Arēs, and the son of valiant Phyleus, dear to Zeus, who quarreled with his father, and went to settle in Doulikhion. [630] With him there came forty ships.

Odysseus led the brave Kephallēnians, who held Ithaca, Neriton with its forests, Crocyleia, rugged Aigilips, Samos and Zakynthos, [635] with the mainland also that was over against the islands. These were led by Odysseus, peer of Zeus in counsel, and with him there came twelve ships.

Thoas, son of Andraimon, commanded the Aetolians, who dwelt in Pleuron, Olenos, Pylene, [640] Khalkis by the sea, and rocky Calydon, for the great high-hearted king Oineus had now no sons living, and was himself dead, as was also golden-haired Meleagros, who had been set over the Aetolians to be their king. And with Thoas there came forty ships.

[645] The famous spearman Idomeneus led the Cretans, who held Knossos, and the well-walled city of Gortys; Lyktos also, Miletus and silver-shining Lykastos that lies upon the chalk; the populous towns of

Phaistos and Rhytion, with the other peoples that dwelt in the hundred cities of Crete. [650] All these were led by Idomeneus, and by Meriones, peer of manslaughtering Arēs. And with these there came eighty ships.

Tlepolemos, son of Hēraklēs, a man both brave and large of stature, brought nine ships of lordly warriors from Rhodes. [655] These dwelt in Rhodes which is divided among the three cities of Lindos, Ialysos, and Kameiros, that lies upon the chalk. These were commanded by Tlepolemos, son of mighty Hēraklēs and born of Astyochea, whom he had carried off from Ephyra, on the river Selleis, [660] after destroying many cities of valiant warriors. When Tlepolemos grew up, he killed his father's uncle Likymnios, scion of Arēs, who had been a famous warrior in his time, but was then grown old. Then he built himself a fleet, gathered a great following, [665] and fled beyond the sea [*pontos*], for he was menaced by the other sons and grandsons of Hēraklēs. After a voyage during which he suffered great hardship, he came as a wanderer to Rhodes, where the people divided into three communities, according to their tribes, and were dearly loved by Zeus, the lord of gods and men; [670] wherefore the son of Kronos who is lord over all gods and all men, showered down great riches upon them.

And Nireus brought three ships from Syme —Nireus, who was the handsomest man that came up under Ilion of all the Danaans after the perfect son of Peleus— [675] but he was a man of no substance, and had but a small following.

And those that held Nisyros, Karpathos, and Kasos, with Kos, the city of Eurypylos, and the Calydnian islands, these were commanded by Pheidippos and Antiphos, two sons of King Thessalos the son of Hēraklēs. [680] And with them there came thirty ships.

Those again who held Pelasgian Argos, Alos, Alope, and Trachis; and those of Phthia and Hellas the land of fair women, who were called Myrmidons, Hellenes, and Achaeans; [685] these had fifty ships, over

which Achilles was in command. But they now took no part in the war, inasmuch as there was no one to marshal them; for swift-footed radiant Achilles stayed by his ships, furious about the loss of the girl of the lovely hair, Brisēis, whom he had taken from Lyrnessos at his own great peril, [690] when he had destroyed Lyrnessos and Thebe, and had overthrown Mynes, the furious spearman, and Epistrophos, sons of king Euenor, son of Selepus. For her sake Achilles was still in grief [*akhos*], but before long he was again to join them.

[695] And then there were those that held Phylake and Pyrasos, with its flowery meadows, ⁶⁹⁶ precinct of Demeter; and Iton, the mother of sheep; ⁶⁹⁷ Antron upon the sea, and Pteleon that lies upon the grass lands. ⁶⁹⁸ Of these men the Arēs-like Protesilaos had been leader ⁶⁹⁹ while he was still alive, but now he was held down by the black earth that covered him. [700] He had left a wife behind him in Phylake to tear both her cheeks in sorrow, ⁷⁰¹ and his house was only half completed [*hēmi-telēs*]. He was killed by a Dardanian warrior ⁷⁰² while he was leaping out from his ship [on Trojan soil], and he was the very first of the Achaeans to make the leap. ⁷⁰³ Still, his people were not without a leader, though they longed [*potheîn*] for their leader. ⁷⁰⁴ But now his people were organized [*kosmeîn*] by Podarkes, attendant [*ozos*] of Arēs. [705] He [= Podarkes] was son of Iphiklos, rich in sheep, who was the son of Phylakos, ⁷⁰⁶ and he [= Podarkes] was the blood brother of Protesilaos, the one with the great heart [*thūmos*]. ⁷⁰⁷ But he [= Podarkes] was younger, Protesilaos being both older and more Arēs-like, ⁷⁰⁸ yes, that hero [*hērōs*] Protesilaos, the Arēs-like. Still, his people were not ⁷⁰⁹ without a leader, though they longed [*potheîn*] for him [= Protesilaos], noble [*esthlos*] man that he was. [710] With him there came forty ships.

And those that held Pherai by the Boebean lake, with Boebe, Glaphyrai, and the strong-founded populous city of Iolkos, these with their eleven ships were led by Eumelos, dear son of Admetos, [715] whom Alcestis bore to him, loveliest of the daughters of Pelias. And those that held

Methone and Thaumakia, with Meliboia and rugged Olizon, these were led by the skilful archer Philoctetes, and they had seven ships, each with fifty oarsmen [720] all of them good archers; but Philoctetes was lying in great pain in the Island of Lemnos, where the sons of the Achaeans left him, for he had been bitten by a poisonous water snake. There he lay sick and in grief [*akhos*], [725] and full soon did the Argives come to miss him. But his people, though they felt his loss were not leaderless, for Medon, the bastard son of Oileus by Rhene, set them in array.

Those, again, of Tricca and the stony region of Ithome, [730] and they that held Oikhalia, the city of Oikhalian Eurytos, these were commanded by the two sons of Asklepios, skilled in the art of healing, Podaleirios and Makhaon. And with them there came thirty ships. The men, moreover, of Ormenios, and by the fountain of Hypereia, [735] with those that held Asterios, and the white crests of Titanos, these were led by Eurypylos, the shining son of Euaimon, and with them there came forty ships.

Those that held Argissa and Gyrtone, Orthe, Elone, and the white city of Oloösson, [740] of these brave Polypoites, stubborn in battle, was leader. He was son of Perithoös, who was son of Zeus himself, for Hippodameia bore him to Perithoös on the day when he took his revenge on the shaggy mountain savages and drove them from Mount Pelion to the Aithikes. [745] But Polypoites was not sole in command, for with him was Leonteus, of the lineage of Arēs, who was son of high-hearted Koronos, the son of Kaineus. And with these there came forty ships.

Gouneus brought two and twenty ships from Kyphos, and he was followed by the Enienes and the valiant Perrhaiboi, [750] who dwelt about wintry Dodona, and held the lands round the lovely river Titaresios, which sends its waters into the Peneus. They do not mingle with the silver eddies of the Peneus, but flow on the top of them like oil;

[755] for the Titaresios is a branch of dread Orkos and of the river Styx, the fearful oath-river.

Of the Magnetes, Prothoös son of Tenthredon was commander. They were they that dwelt about the river Peneus and Mount Pelion. Prothoös, fleet of foot, was their leader, and with him there came forty ships.

[760] So now, these were the leaders of the Danaans and their lords. ⁷⁶¹ Who, then, was by far the best [*aristos*] —tell me, Muse! —of men or horses, among those that followed after the sons of Atreus?

Of the horses, those of the son of Pheres were by far the finest. They were driven by Eumelos, and were as fleet as birds. [765] They were of the same age and color, and perfectly matched in height. Apollo, of the silver bow, had bred them in Perea—both of them mares, and terrifying as Arēs in battle. Of the men, Ajax, son of Telamon, ⁷⁶⁹ so long as Achilles was angry; for he was by far the best [*phertatos*], for Achilles the blameless son of Peleus excelled him greatly [770] and he had also better horses; but Achilles was now holding aloof at his ships by reason of his quarrel with Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, and his people passed their time upon the sea shore, throwing discs or aiming with spears at a mark, [775] and in archery. Their horses stood each by his own chariot, champing lotus and wild celery. The chariots were housed under cover, but their owners, for lack of leadership, wandered here and there about the army of warriors and went not forth to fight.

[780] Thus marched the army like a consuming fire, and the earth groaned beneath them when the lord of thunder is angry and lashes the land about Typhoeus among the Arimoi, where they say Typhoeus lies. Even so did the earth groan beneath them [785] as they sped over the plain.

And now Iris, fleet as the wind, was sent by Zeus of the aegis to tell the bad news among the Trojans. They were gathered in assembly, old and

young, at Priam's gates, [790] and Iris came close up to Priam, speaking with the voice of Priam's son Polites, who, being fleet of foot, was stationed as watchman for the Trojans on the tomb of old Aisyetes, to look out for any attack of the Achaeans. [795] In his likeness Iris the swift-running spoke, saying, "Old man, you talk idly, as in time of peace, while war is at hand. I have been in many a battle, but never yet saw such an army of warriors as is now advancing. They are crossing the plain to attack the city as [800] thick as leaves or as the sands of the sea. Hector, I charge you above all others, do as I say. There are many allies dispersed about the city of Priam from distant places and speaking divers tongues. [805] Therefore, let each chief give orders to his own people, setting them severally in array and leading them forth to battle."

Thus she spoke, but Hector knew that it was the goddess, and at once broke up the assembly. The men flew to arms; all the gates were opened, and the people thronged through them, [810] horse and foot, with the tramp as of a great multitude.

Now there is a high mound before the city, rising by itself upon the plain. Men call it Batieia, but the gods know that it is the tomb [*sēma*] of lithe dancing Myrrhine. [815] Here the Trojans and their allies divided their forces.

Priam's son, great Hector of the gleaming helmet, commanded the Trojans, and with him were arrayed by far the greater number and most valiant of those who were longing for the fray.

The Dardanians were led by brave [820] Aeneas, whom divine Aphrodite bore to Anchises, when she, goddess though she was, had lain with him upon the mountain slopes of Ida. He was not alone, for with him were the two sons of Antenor, Arkhilokhos and Akamas, both skilled in all the arts of war.

They that dwelt in Telea under the lowest spurs of Mount Ida, [825] men of substance, who drink the limpid waters of the Aisepos, and are of Trojan blood—these were led by Pandaros shining son of Lykaon, whom Apollo had taught to use the bow.

They that held Adrasteia and the locale [*dēmos*] of Apaisos, with Pityeia, and the high mountain of Tereia— [830] these were led by Adrastos and Amphios, whose breastplate was of linen. These were the sons of Merops of Perkote, who excelled in all kinds of divination. He told them not to take part in the war, but they gave him no heed, for fate lured them to destruction.

[835] They that dwelt about Perkote and Praktios, with Sestos, Abydos, and radiant Arisbe—these were led by Asios, son of Hyrtakos, a brave commander— Asios, the son of Hyrtakos, whom his powerful dark bay steeds, of the breed that comes from the river Selleis, had brought from Arisbe.

[840] Hippothoös led the tribes of Pelasgian spearmen, who dwelt in fertile Larissa—Hippothoös, and Pylaios of the lineage of Arēs, two sons of the Pelasgian Lethos, son of Teutamos. Akamas and the warrior Peiroös commanded the Thracians [845] and those that came from beyond the mighty stream of the Hellespont.

Euphemos, son of Troizenos, the son of Keos, was chief of the spear-carrying Kikones. Pyraikhmes led the Paeonian archers from distant Amydon, by the broad waters of the river Axios, [850] the fairest that flow upon the earth.

The Paphlagonians were commanded by stout-hearted Pylaimenes from Enetai, where the mules run wild in herds. These were they that held Kytoros and the country round Sesamos, with the cities by the river Parthenios, [855] Kromna, Aigialos, and lofty Erythinoi.

Odios and Epistrophos were chiefs over the Halizonoi from distant Alybe, where there are mines of silver. Khromis, and Ennomos the augur, led the Mysians, but his skill in augury availed not to save him from destruction, [860] for he fell by the hand of the fleet descendant of Aiakos in the river, where he slew others also of the Trojans.

Phorkys, again, and noble godlike Ascanius led the Phrygians from the far country of Ascania, and both were eager for the fray.

Mesthles and Antiphos commanded the Maeonians, [865] sons of Talaimenes, born to him of the Gygaean lake. These led the Maeonians, who dwelt under Mount Tmolos.

Nastes led the Carians, men of a strange speech. These held Miletus and the wooded mountain of Phthires, with the water of the river Maeander and the lofty crests of Mount Mykale. [870] These were commanded by Nastes and Amphimakhos, the brave sons of Nomion. He came into the fight with gold about him, like a girl; fool that he was, his gold was of no avail to save him, for he fell in the river by the hand of the fleet descendant of Aiakos, [875] and Achilles bore away his gold.

Sarpedon and Glaukos led the Lycians from their distant land, by the eddying waters of the Xanthos.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 3

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] When the companies were thus arrayed, each under its own chief, the Trojans advanced as a flight of wild fowl or cranes that scream overhead when rain and winter [5] drive them over the flowing waters of Okeanos to bring death and destruction on the Pygmies, and they wrangle in the air as they fly; but the Achaeans marched silently, in high heart, and minded to stand by one another.

[10] As when the south wind spreads a curtain of mist upon the mountain tops, bad for shepherds but better than night for thieves, and a man can see no further than he can throw a stone, even so rose the dust from under their feet as they made all speed over the plain.

[15] When they were close up with one another, Alexandros¹ the godlike came forward as champion on the Trojan side. On his shoulders he bore the skin of a panther, his bow, and his sword, and he brandished two spears shod with bronze as a challenge to the bravest of the Achaeans to meet him in single fight. [20] Menelaos the warlike saw him stride out thus before the ranks, and was glad as a hungry lion that lights on the carcass of some goat or horned stag, [25] and devours it there and then, though dogs and youths set upon him. In this way was Menelaos glad when his eyes caught sight of godlike Alexandros, thinking now that he should take his revenge, and so he sprang from his chariot, clad in his suit of armor.

[30] Alexandros the godlike quailed as he saw Menelaos come forward, and shrank in fear of his life under cover of his men. As one who starts back affrighted, trembling and pale, when he comes suddenly upon a

serpent in some mountain glade, [35] even so did godlike Alexandros plunge into the throng of haughty Trojan warriors, terror-stricken at the sight of the son of Atreus.

Then Hector upbraided him. “Paris,”² said he, “evil-hearted Paris, fair to see, but woman-crazed, and false of tongue, [40] would that you had never been born, or that you had died unwed. Better so, than live to be disgraced and looked at askance. Will not the flowing-haired Achaeans mock at us and say that we have sent one to champion us who is fair to look at [45] but has neither might [*biē*] in his heart nor any strength? Even so, did you not gather together oarsmen as your companions and set sail on the sea [*pontos*]? Did you not carry off a lovely woman from a far country, already wedded among a people of warriors— [50] to bring sorrow upon your father, your city, and your whole locale [*dēmos*], but joy to your enemies, and hang-dog shamefacedness to yourself? And now can you not dare face warlike Menelaos and learn what manner of man he is whose wife you have stolen? Where indeed would be your lyre and your love-tricks, [55] your comely locks and your fair favor, when you were lying in the dust before him? The Trojans are a weak-kneed people, or before this you would have had a shirt of stones for the wrongs you have done them.”

And Alexandros the godlike answered, “Hector, your rebuke is just. [60] You are hard as the axe which a shipwright wields at his work, and cleaves the timber to his liking. As the axe in his hand, so keen is the edge of your mind [*noos*]. Still, taunt me not with the gifts that golden Aphrodite has given me; [65] they are precious; let not a man disdain them, for the gods give them where they are minded, and none can have them for the asking. If you would have me do battle with Menelaos the warlike, bid the Trojans and Achaeans take their seats, [70] while he and I fight in their midst for Helen and all her wealth. Let him who shall be victorious and prove to be the better man take the woman and all she has, to bear them to his home, but let the rest swear to a solemn

covenant of peace whereby you Trojans shall stay here in Troy, while the others go home [75] to Argos and the land of the Achaeans.”

When Hector heard this he was glad, and went about among the Trojan ranks holding his spear by the middle to keep them back, and they all sat down at his bidding: [80] but the flowing-haired Achaeans still aimed at him with stones and arrows, till Agamemnon shouted to them saying, “Hold, Argives, shoot not, sons of the Achaeans; Hector desires to speak.”

[85] They ceased taking aim and were still, whereon Hector spoke. “Hear from my mouth,” said he, “Trojans and strong-greaved Achaeans, the saying of Alexandros, through whom this quarrel has come about. He bids the Trojans and Achaeans lay their armor upon the ground, [90] while he and warlike Menelaos fight in the midst of you for Helen and all her wealth. Let him who shall be victorious and prove to be the better man take the woman and all she has, to bear them to his own home, but let the rest swear to a solemn covenant of peace.”

[95] Thus he spoke, and they all held their peace, till Menelaos of the loud battle-cry addressed them. “And now,” he said, “hear me too, for it is I who am the most aggrieved. I deem that the parting of Achaeans and Trojans is at hand, as well it may be, seeing how much you have suffered [100] for my quarrel with Alexandros and the wrong he did me. Let him who shall die, die, and let the others fight no more. Bring, then, two lambs, a white ram and a black ewe, for Earth and Sun, and we will bring a third for Zeus. [105] Moreover, you shall bid Priam come, that he may swear to the covenant himself; for his sons are high-handed and ill to trust, and the oaths of Zeus must not be transgressed or taken in vain. Young men’s minds are light as air, but when an old man comes he looks before [110] and after, deeming that which shall be fairest upon both sides.”

The Trojans and Achaeans were glad when they heard this, for they thought that they should now have rest. They backed their chariots toward the ranks, got out of them, and put off their armor, laying it down upon the ground; [115] and the armies were near to one another with a little space between them. Hector sent two messengers to the city to bring the lambs and to bid Priam come, while powerful Agamemnon told Talthybios to fetch the other lamb from the ships, [120] and he did as Agamemnon had said.

Meanwhile Iris went to Helen of the white arms in the form of her sister-in-law, wife of the son of Antenor, for strong Helikaon, son of Antenor, had married Laodike, the fairest of Priam's daughters. [125] She [= Iris] found her [= Helen] in the palace. She was weaving a great web, ¹²⁶a purple [*porphureē*] fabric that folds in two [= *diplax*], and she was inworking [*en-passein*] many ordeals [*athloi*] ¹²⁷of Trojans, tamers of horses, and of Achaeans, wearers of bronze khitons, ¹²⁸—ordeals that they suffered at the hands of Arēs all because of her. Iris then came close up to her and said, [130] “Come here, child, and see the strange doings of the Trojans and bronze-armored Achaeans. Till now they have been warring upon the plain, mad with lust of battle, but now they have left off fighting, [135] and are leaning upon their shields, sitting still with their spears planted beside them. Alexandros and Menelaos the warlike are going to fight about yourself, and you are to the wife of him who is the victor.”

Thus spoke the goddess, and Helen's heart yearned [140] after her former husband, her city, and her parents. She threw a white mantle over her head, and hurried from her room, weeping as she went, not alone, but attended by two of her handmaids, Aithra, daughter of Pittheus, and ox-vision Klymene. [145] And straightway they were at the Scaean gates.

The two sages, Oukalegon and Antenor, elders of the people, were seated by the Scaean gates, with Priam, Panthoös, Thymoetes, Lampos, Klytios,

and Hiketaon, of the lineage of Arēs. [150] These were too old to fight, but they were fluent orators, and sat on the tower like cicadas that chirrup delicately from the boughs of some high tree in a wood. When they saw Helen coming towards the tower, [155] they said softly to one another, “There is no way to wish for retribution [*nemesis*] that Trojans and strong-greaved Achaeans should endure so much and so long, for the sake of a woman so marvelously and divinely lovely. Still, fair though she be, let them take her and go, [160] or she will breed sorrow for us and for our children after us.”

But Priam bade her draw near. “My child,” said he, “take your seat in front of me that you may see your former husband, your kinsmen and your friends. I lay no blame [*aitiā*] upon you, it is the gods, not you who are responsible [*aitioi*]. [165] It is they that have brought about this terrifying war with the Achaeans. Tell me, then, who is yonder huge hero so great and goodly? I have seen men taller by a head, but none so comely [170] and so royal. Surely he must be a king.”

“Sir,” answered Helen, shining among women, “father of my husband, dear and reverend in my eyes, would that I had chosen death rather than to have come here with your son, far from my bridal chamber, my friends, [175] my darling daughter, and all the companions of my girlhood. But it was not to be, and my lot is one of tears and sorrow. As for your question, the hero of whom you ask is Agamemnon, widely powerful son of Atreus, a good king and a brave warrior, [180] brother-in-law as surely as that he lives, to my abhorred and miserable self.”

The old man marveled at him and said, “Happy son of Atreus, child of good fortune. I see that the Achaeans are subject to you in great multitudes. [185] When I was in Phrygia I saw much horsemen, the people of Otreus and of godlike Mygdon, who were camping upon the banks of the river Sangarios; I was their ally, and with them when the Amazons, peers of men, came up against them, [190] but even they were not so many as the glancing-eyed Achaeans.”

The old man next looked upon Odysseus; “Tell me,” he said, “who is that other, shorter by a head than Agamemnon, but broader across the chest and shoulders? [195] His armor is laid upon the ground, and he stalks in front of the ranks as it were some great woolly ram ordering his ewes.”

And Helen answered, [200] “He is resourceful Odysseus, a man of great craft, son of Laertes. He was born in the rugged locale [*dēmos*] of Ithaca, and excels in all manner of stratagems and subtle cunning.”

Then Antenor said, “Madam, you have spoken truly. [205] Radiant Odysseus once came here as envoy about yourself, and warlike Menelaos with him. I received them in my own house, and therefore know both of them by sight and conversation. When they stood up in the presence of the assembled Trojans, [210] Menelaos was the broader shouldered, but when both were seated Odysseus had the more royal presence. After a time they delivered their message, and the speech of Menelaos ran smoothly on the tongue; he did not say much, for he was a man of few words, [215] but he spoke very clearly and to the point, though he was the younger man of the two; resourceful Odysseus, on the other hand, when he rose to speak, was at first silent and kept his eyes fixed upon the ground. There was no play nor graceful movement of his scepter; he kept it straight and stiff like a man unpracticed in oratory— [220] one might have taken him for a mere churl or simpleton; but when he raised his voice, and the words came driving from his deep chest like winter snow before the wind, then there was none to touch him, and no man thought further of what he looked like.”

[225] Priam then caught sight of Ajax and asked, “Who is that great and goodly warrior whose head and broad shoulders tower above the rest of the Argives?”

“That,” answered Helen, “is huge Ajax, bulwark of the Achaeans, [230] and on the other side of him, among the Cretans, stands Idomeneus,

looking like a god, and with the chiefs of the Cretans round him. Often did Menelaos receive him as a guest in our house when he came visiting us from Crete. I see, moreover, [235] many other glancing-eyed Achaeans whose names I could tell you, but there are two whom I can nowhere find, Castor [Kastor], breaker of horses, and Pollux [Polydeukes], the mighty boxer; they are children of my mother, and own brothers to myself. Either they have not left Lacedaemon, [240] or else, though they have brought their ships, they will not show themselves in battle for the shame and disgrace that I have brought upon them.”

She knew not that both these heroes were already lying under the earth in their own land of Lacedaemon.

[245] Meanwhile the heralds were bringing the holy oath-offerings through the city—two lambs and a goatskin of wine, the gift of earth; and Idaios brought the mixing bowl and the cups of gold. He went up to Priam and said, [250] “Son of Laomedon, the princes of the Trojans, breakers of horses, and bronze-armored Achaeans bid you come down on to the plain and swear to a solemn covenant. Alexandros and warlike Menelaos are to fight for Helen in single combat, [255] that she and all her wealth may go with him who is the victor. We are to swear to a solemn covenant of peace whereby we others shall dwell here in Troy, while the Achaeans return to Argos and the land of the Achaeans.”

The old man trembled as he heard, but bade his followers [260] yoke the horses, and they made all haste to do so. He mounted the chariot, gathered the reins in his hand, and Antenor took his seat beside him; they then drove through the Scaean gates on to the plain. When they reached the ranks of the Trojans and Achaeans [265] they left the chariot, and with measured pace advanced into the space between the armies of warriors.

Agamemnon, lord of men, and resourceful Odysseus both rose to meet them. The attendants brought on the oath-offerings and [270] mixed the wine in the mixing-bowls; they poured water over the hands of the chieftains, and the son of Atreus drew the dagger that hung by his sword, and cut wool from the lambs' heads; this the men-servants gave about among the Trojan and Achaean princes, [275] and the son of Atreus lifted up his hands in prayer. ²⁷⁶ "O Father Zeus, ruler of Ida, most renowned and greatest, ²⁷⁶ and O Helios (Sun), who oversees and hears all, Earth and Rivers, and you who in the realms below chastise the spirit of him that has broken his oath, [280] witness these rites and guard them, that they be not vain. If Alexandros kills Menelaos, let him keep Helen and all her wealth, while we sail home with our ships; but if fair-haired Menelaos kills Alexandros, [285] let the Trojans give back Helen and all that she has; let them moreover pay such penalty [*tīmē*] to the Achaeans as shall be agreed upon, in testimony among those that shall be born hereafter. And if Priam and his sons refuse such penalty [*tīmē*] when Alexandros has fallen, [290] then will I stay here and fight on till I have got satisfaction [*telos*]."

As he spoke he drew his knife across the throats of the victims, and laid them down gasping and dying upon the ground, for the knife had robbed them of their strength. [295] Then they poured wine from the mixing-bowl into the cups, and prayed to the everlasting gods, saying, Trojans and Achaeans among one another, "Zeus, most great and glorious, and you other everlasting gods, [300] grant that the brains of them who shall first sin against their oaths—of them and their children—may be shed upon the ground even as this wine, and let their wives become the slaves of strangers."

Thus they prayed, but not as yet would Zeus, son of Kronos, grant them their prayer. Then Priam, descendant of Dardanos, spoke, saying, "Hear me, Trojans and you strong-greaved Achaeans, [305] I will now go back to the wind-beaten city of Ilion: I dare not with my own eyes witness

this fight between my son and warlike Menelaos, for Zeus and the other immortals alone know which shall fall [*telos*].”

[310] Then he laid the two lambs on his chariot and took his seat. He gathered the reins in his hand, and Antenor sat beside him; the two then went back to Ilion. Hector, son of Priam, and radiant Odysseus [315] measured the ground, and cast lots from a helmet of bronze to see which should take aim first. Meanwhile the two armies of warriors lifted up their hands and prayed saying, [320] “Father Zeus, that rules from Ida, most glorious in power, grant that he who first brought about this war between us may die, and enter the house of Hādēs, while we others remain at peace and abide by our oaths.”

Great Hector of the shining helmet now turned his head aside while he shook the helmet, [325] and the lot of Paris flew out first. The others took their several stations, each by his horses and the place where his arms were lying, while radiant Alexandros, husband of lovely-haired Helen, put on his goodly armor. [330] First he covered his legs with greaves of good make and fitted with ankle-clasps of silver; after this he donned the cuirass of his brother Lykaon, and fitted it to his own body; he hung his silver-studded sword [335] of bronze about his shoulders, and then his mighty shield. On his comely head he set his helmet, well-wrought, with a crest of horse-hair that nodded menacingly above it, and he grasped a terrifying spear that suited his hands. In like fashion warlike Menelaos also put on his armor.

[340] When they had thus armed, each amid his own people, they strode fierce of aspect into the open space, and both Trojans, breakers of horses, and strong-greaved Achaeans were struck with awe as they beheld them. They stood near one another on the measured ground, [345] brandishing their spears, and each furious against the other. Alexandros aimed first, and struck the round shield of the son of Atreus, but the spear did not pierce it, for the shield turned its point. [350] Menelaos next took aim, praying to Father Zeus as he did so. “King Zeus,” he said,

“grant me revenge on radiant Alexandros who has wronged me; subdue him under my hand that in ages yet to come a man may shrink from doing ill deeds in the house of his host.”

[355] He poised his spear as he spoke, and hurled it at the shield of Alexandros. Through shield and cuirass it went, and tore the khiton by his flank, [360] but Alexandros swerved aside, and thus saved his life. Then the son of Atreus drew his sword, and drove at the projecting part of his helmet, but the sword fell shivered in three or four pieces from his hand, and he cried, looking towards Heaven, [365] “Father Zeus, of all gods you are the most spiteful; I was sure of my revenge, but the sword has broken in my hand, my spear has been hurled in vain, and I have not killed him.”

With this he flew at Alexandros, caught him by the horsehair plume of his helmet, [370] and began dragging him towards the Achaeans. The strap of the helmet that went under his chin was choking him, and Menelaos would have dragged him off to his own great glory had not Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite been quick to mark [375] and to break the strap of ox-hide, so that the empty helmet came away in his hand. This he flung to his comrades among the strong-greaved Achaeans, and was again springing upon Alexandros to run him through [380] with a spear, but Aphrodite snatched him up in a moment (as a god can do), hid him under a cloud of darkness, and conveyed him to his own bedchamber.

Then she went to call Helen, and found her on a high tower with the Trojan women crowding round her. [385] She took the form of an old woman who used to dress wool for her when she was still in Lacedaemon, and of whom she was very fond. Thus disguised she plucked her by perfumed robe and said, [390] “Come here; Alexandros says you are to go to the house; he is on his bed in his own room, radiant with beauty and dressed in gorgeous apparel. No one would

think he had just come from fighting, but rather that he was going to a dance [*khoros*], or had done dancing [*khoros*] and was sitting down.”

[395] With these words she moved the heart of Helen to anger. When she marked the beautiful neck of the goddess, her lovely bosom, and sparkling eyes, she marveled at her and said, “Goddess, why do you thus beguile me? [400] Are you going to send me afield still further to some man whom you have taken up in Phrygia or fair Maeonia? Menelaos has just vanquished great Alexandros, and is to take my hateful self back with him. You are come here to betray me. [405] Go sit with Alexandros yourself; henceforth be goddess no longer; never let your feet carry you back to Olympus; worry about him and look after him till he make you his wife, or, for the matter of that, his slave—but me? [410] I shall not go; I can garnish his bed no longer; I should be a by-word among all the women of Troy. Besides, I have grief [*akhos*] on my mind.”

Aphrodite the shining was very angry, and said, “Bold hussy, do not provoke me; if you do, I shall leave you to your fate [415] and hate you as much as I have loved you. I will stir up fierce hatred between Trojans and Achaeans, and you shall come to a bad end.”

Then Helen daughter of Zeus was frightened. She wrapped her mantle about her and went [420] in silence, following the superhuman force [*daimōn*] and unnoticed by the Trojan women.

When they came to the house of Alexandros the maid-servants set about their work, but Helen went into her own room, and the laughter-loving goddess [425] took a seat and set it for her facing Alexandros. Then Helen, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, sat down, and with eyes askance began to upbraid her husband.

“So you are come from the fight,” said she; “would that you had fallen rather by the hand of that brave man who was my husband. [430] You

used to brag that you were a better man with might [*biē*] and spear than warlike Menelaos. Go, then, and challenge him again—but I should advise you not to do so, [435] for if you are foolish enough to meet him in single combat, you will soon fall by his spear.”

And Paris answered, “Wife, do not vex me with your reproaches. This time, with the help of Athena, fair-haired Menelaos has vanquished me; [440] another time I may myself be victor, for I too have gods that will stand by me. Come, let us lie down together and make friends. Never yet was I so passionately enamored of you as at this moment—not even when I first carried you off from Lacedaemon and sailed away with you— [445] not even when I had converse with you upon the couch of love in the island of Kranae was I so enthralled by desire of you as now.” Then he led her towards the bed, and his wife went with him.

Thus they laid themselves on the bed together; but the son of Atreus strode among the throng, [450] looking everywhere for godlike Alexandros, and no man, neither of the Trojans nor of the allies, could find him. If they had seen him they were in no mind to hide him, for they all of them hated him as they did death itself. [455] Then Agamemnon, king of men, spoke, saying, “Hear me, Trojans, Dardanians, and allies. The victory has been with warlike Menelaos; therefore give back Helen of Argos with all her wealth, and pay such penalty [*tīmē*] [460] as shall be agreed upon, in testimony among them that shall be born hereafter.”

Thus spoke the son of Atreus, and the Achaeans shouted in approval.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. This is the first time that Alexandros is mentioned.

[[back](#)] 2. ‘Paris’ is the other name of Alexandros.

2017-08-02

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 4

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now the gods were sitting with Zeus in council upon the golden floor while the goddess Hebe went round pouring out nectar for them to drink, and as they pledged one another in their cups of gold they looked down upon the town of Troy. [5] The son of Kronos then began to tease Hera, talking at her so as to provoke her. “Menelaos,” said he, “has two good friends among the goddesses, Hera of Argos, and Athena of Alalkomene, but they only sit still [10] and look on, while laughing Aphrodite keeps ever by the side of Alexandros to defend him in any danger; indeed she has just rescued him when he was sure that it was all over with him—for the victory really did lie with warlike Menelaos. We must consider what we shall do about all this; [15] shall we set them fighting anew or make peace between them? If you will agree to this last Menelaos can take back Helen of Argos and the city of Priam may remain still inhabited.”

[20] Athena and Hera muttered their discontent as they sat side-by-side hatching mischief for the Trojans. Athena scowled at her father, for she was in a furious passion with him, and said nothing, but Hera could not contain herself. [25] “Dread son of Kronos,” said she, “what, pray, is the meaning of all this? Is my trouble [*ponos*], then, to go for nothing, and the sweat that I have sweated, to say nothing of my horses, while getting the people together against Priam and his children? Do as you will, but we other gods shall not all of us approve your counsel.”

[30] Zeus who gathers clouds was angry and answered, “My dear, what harm have Priam and his sons done you that you are so hotly bent on destroying the strong-founded city of Ilion? Will nothing do for you

but you must go within their walls and [35] eat Priam raw, with his sons and all the other Trojans to boot? Have it your own way then; for I would not have this matter become a bone of contention between us. I say further, and lay my saying to your heart, [40] if ever I want to destroy a city belonging to friends of yours, you must not try to stop me; you will have to let me do it, for I am giving in to you sorely against my will. Of all inhabited cities under the sun and stars of the sky, [45] there was none that I so much respected as sacred Ilion with Priam of the strong ash spear and his whole people. Equitable feasts were never wanting about my altar, nor the savor of burning fat, which is honor due to ourselves.”

[50] “My own three favorite cities,” answered the ox-vision goddess Hera, “are Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae. Destroy them whenever you may be displeased with them. I shall not defend them and I shall not care. [55] Even if I did, and tried to stay you, I should take nothing by it, for you are much stronger than I am, but I will not have my own work wasted. I too am a god and of the same lineage as yourself. I am devious-devising Kronos’ eldest daughter, [60] and am honorable not on this ground only, but also because I am your wife, and you are king over the gods. Let it be a case, then, of give-and-take between us, and the rest of the gods will follow our lead. Tell Athena [65] to go and take part in the fight at once, and let her contrive that the Trojans shall be the first to break their oaths and set upon the far-famed Achaeans.”

The father of gods and men heeded her words, and said to Athena, [70] “Go at once into the Trojan and Achaean armies, and contrive that the Trojans shall be the first to break their oaths and set upon the far-famed Achaeans.” This was what Athena was already eager to do, so down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus. She shot through the sky [75] as some radiant meteor which the son of scheming Kronos has sent as a sign to mariners or to some great army, and a fiery train of light follows in its wake. [80] The Trojans and strong-greaved Achaeans were struck with awe as they beheld, and one would turn to his neighbor,

saying, “Either we shall again have war and din of combat, or Zeus the lord of battle will now make peace between us.”

[85] Thus did they converse. Then Athena took the form of Laodokos, son of Antenor, and went through the ranks of the Trojans to find godlike Pandaros, the terrifying son of Lykaon, a man blameless and powerful. She found him [90] standing among the stalwart heroes who had followed him from the banks of the Aisopos, so she went close up to him and said, “Brave and high-spirited son of Lykaon, will you do as I tell you? If you dare send an arrow at Menelaos [95] you will win honor and gratitude [*kharis*] from all the Trojans, and especially from prince Alexandros—he would be the first to requite you very handsomely if he could see warlike Menelaos, son of Atreus mount his funeral pyre, slain by an arrow from your hand. [100] Take your home aim then, and pray to Lycian Apollo, the famous archer; vow that when you get home to your strong city of sacred Zelea you will offer a hecatomb of firstling lambs in his honor.”

His fool’s heart was persuaded, [105] and he took his bow from its case. This bow was made from the horns of a wild ibex that he had killed as it was bounding from a rock; he had stalked it, and it had fallen as the arrow struck it to the heart. Its horns were sixteen palms long, [110] and a worker in horn had made them into a bow, smoothing them well down, and giving them tips of gold. When Pandaros had strung his bow he laid it carefully on the ground, and his brave followers held their shields before him lest the Achaeans should set upon him [115] before he had shot warlike Menelaos. Then he opened the lid of his quiver and took out a winged arrow that had never yet been shot, fraught with the pangs of death. He laid the arrow on the string and prayed to Lycian Apollo, the famous archer, [120] vowing that when he got home to his strong city of sacred Zelea he would offer a hecatomb of firstling lambs in his honor. He laid the notch of the arrow on the ox-hide bowstring, and drew both notch and string to his breast till the arrowhead was near the bow; then when the bow was arched into a half-circle [125] he let

fly, and the bow twanged, and the string sang as the arrow flew gladly on over the heads of the throng.

But the blessed gods did not forget you, O Menelaos, and Zeus' daughter, driver of the spoil, was the first to stand before you and ward off the piercing arrow. [130] She turned it from his skin as a mother whisks a fly from off her child when it is sleeping sweetly; she guided it to the part where the golden buckles of the belt that passed over his double cuirass were fastened, so the arrow struck the belt that went tightly round him. [135] It went right through this and through the cuirass of cunning workmanship; it also pierced the belt beneath it, which he wore next his skin to keep out darts or arrows; it was this that served him in the best stead, nevertheless the arrow went through it and grazed the top of the skin, [140] so that blood began flowing from the wound.

As when some woman of Maeonia or Caria strains purple dye on to a piece of ivory that is to be the cheek-piece of a horse, and is to be laid up in a treasure house—many a charioteer wants to bear it, [145] but the king keeps it as an ornament [*kosmos*] of which both horse and driver may be proud—even so, O Menelaos, were your shapely thighs and your legs down to your fair ankles stained with blood.

When King Agamemnon, lord of men, saw the blood flowing from the wound he was afraid, [150] and so was brave Menelaos himself till he saw that the barbs of the arrow and the thread that bound the arrowhead to the shaft were still outside the wound. Then he took heart, but Agamemnon heaved a deep sigh as he held Menelaos' hand in his own, and his comrades made moan in concert. [155] "Dear brother," he cried, "I have been the death of you in pledging this covenant and letting you come forward as our champion. The Trojans have trampled on their oaths and have wounded you; nevertheless the oath, the blood of lambs, the drink-offerings and the right hands of fellowship in which have put our trust shall not be vain. [160] If he that rules Olympus fulfill it not

here and now, he will yet fulfill it hereafter, and they shall pay dearly with their lives and with their wives and children. The day will surely come when mighty Ilion shall be laid low, [165] with Priam of the strong ash spear and Priam's people, when the son of Kronos from his high throne shall overshadow them with his terrifying aegis in punishment of their present treachery. This shall surely be; but how, Menelaos, shall I have grief [*akhos*] for you, [170] if it be your lot now to die? I should return to Argos the thirsty as a by-word, for the Achaeans will at once go home. We shall leave Priam and the Trojans the glory of still keeping Helen of Argos, and the earth will rot your bones [175] as you lie here at Troy with your purpose not fulfilled. Then shall some braggart Trojan leap upon your tomb and say, 'Ever thus may Agamemnon wreak his vengeance; he brought his army in vain; [180] he is gone home to his own land with empty ships, and has left brave Menelaos behind him.' Thus will one of them say, and may the earth then swallow me."

But fair-haired Menelaos reassured him and said, "Take heart, and do not alarm the people; [185] the arrow has not struck me in a mortal part, for my outer belt of burnished metal first stayed it, and under this my cuirass and the belt of mail which the bronze-smiths made me."

And powerful Agamemnon answered, "I trust, dear Menelaos, that it may be even so, [190] but the surgeon shall examine your wound and lay herbs upon it to relieve your pain."

He then said to Talthybios, "Talthybios, tell Makhaon, son to the great physician, blameless Asklepios, [195] to come and see Menelaos immediately. Some Trojan or Lycian archer has wounded him with an arrow—to our grief [*penthos*], and to his own great glory [*kleos*]."

Talthybios did as he was told, and went about the army of warriors, [200] trying to find Makhaon. Presently he found him standing amid the brave warriors who had followed him from horse-pasturing Tricca;

then he went up to him and said, “Son of Asklepios, powerful King Agamemnon says [205] you are to come and see warlike Menelaos immediately. Some Trojan or Lycian archer has wounded him with an arrow—to our grief [*penthos*] and to his own great glory [*kleos*].”

Thus did he speak, and Makhaon was moved to go. They passed through the vast army of the Achaeans [210] and went on till they came to the place where fair-haired Menelaos had been wounded and was lying with the chieftains gathered in a circle round him. Makhaon passed into the middle of the ring and at once drew the arrow from the belt, bending its barbs back through the force with which he pulled it out. [215] He undid the burnished belt, and beneath this the cuirass and the belt of mail which the bronze-smiths had made; then, when he had seen the wound, he wiped away the blood and applied some soothing drugs which Cheiron had given to Asklepios out of the good will he bore him.

[220] While they were thus busy about Menelaos of the great war cry, the Trojans came forward against them, for they had put on their armor, and now renewed the fight.

You would not have then found radiant Agamemnon asleep nor cowardly and unwilling to fight, [225] but eager rather for the fray. He left his chariot rich with bronze and his panting steeds in charge of his attendant [*therapōn*] Eurymedon, son of Ptolemaios the son of Peiraios, and bade him hold them in readiness against the time [230] his limbs should weary of going about and giving orders to so many, for he went among the ranks on foot. When he saw men hastening to the front he stood by them and cheered them on. “Argives,” said he, “slacken not one whit in your onset; [235] father Zeus will be no helper of liars; the Trojans have been the first to break their oaths and to attack us; therefore they shall be devoured of vultures; we shall take their city and carry off their wives and children in our ships.”

[240] But he angrily rebuked those whom he saw shirking and disinclined to fight. “Argives,” he cried, “cowardly miserable creatures, have you no shame to stand here like frightened fawns who, when they can no longer scud over the plain, [245] huddle together, but show no fight? You are as dazed and spiritless as deer. Would you wait till the Trojans reach the sterns of our ships as they lie on the shore, to see whether the son of Kronos will hold his hand over you to protect you?”

[250] Thus did he go about giving his orders among the ranks. Passing through the crowd, he came presently on the Cretans, arming round Idomeneus, who was at their head, fierce as a wild boar, while Meriones was bringing up the battalions that were in the rear. [255] Agamemnon was glad when he saw him, and spoke to him fairly. “Idomeneus,” said he, “I treat you with greater distinction than I do any others of the Achaeans, whether in war or in other things, or at table. When the princes [260] are mixing my choicest wines in the mixing-bowls, they have each of them a fixed allowance, but your cup is kept always full like my own, that you may drink whenever you are minded. Go, therefore, into battle, and show yourself the man you have been always proud to be.”

[265] Idomeneus, lord of the Cretans, answered, “I will be a trusty comrade, as I promised you from the first I would be. Urge on the other flowing-haired Achaeans, that we may join battle at once, for the Trojans have trampled upon [270] their covenants. Death and destruction shall be theirs, seeing they have been the first to break their oaths and to attack us.”

The son of Atreus went on, glad at heart, till he came upon the two Ajaxes arming themselves amid a mass of foot-soldiers. [275] As when a goat-herd from some high post watches a storm drive over the deep sea [*pontos*] before the west wind—black as pitch is the offing and a mighty whirlwind draws towards him, so that he is afraid and drives his flock into a cave— [280] even thus did the ranks of stalwart youths move in a

dark mass to battle under the Ajaxes, horrid with shield and spear. Glad was King Agamemnon when he saw them. [285] “No need,” he cried, “to give orders to such leaders of the bronze-armored Argives as you are, for of your own selves you spur your men on to fight with might and main. Would, by father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo that all were so minded as you are, [290] for the city of Priam would then soon fall beneath our hands, and we should destroy it.”

With this he left them and went onward to Nestor, the facile speaker of the Pylians, who was marshalling his men and urging them on, [295] in company with Pelagon, Alastor, Khromios, Haimon, and Bias, shepherd of his people. He placed his horsemen with their chariots and horses in the front rank, while the foot-soldiers, brave men and many, whom he could trust, were in the rear. The cowards he drove into the middle, [300] that they might fight whether they would or no. He gave his orders to the horsemen first, bidding them hold their horses well in hand, so as to avoid confusion. “Let no man,” he said, “relying on his strength or skill in charioteering, get before the others and engage singly with the Trojans, [305] nor yet let him lag behind or you will weaken your attack; but let each when he meets an enemy’s chariot throw his spear from his own; this will be much the best; this is how the men of old took towns and strongholds; in this way was their thinking [*noos*].”

[310] Thus did the old man charge them, for he had been in many a fight, and King Agamemnon was glad. “I wish,” he said to him, that your limbs were as supple and your strength [*biē*] as sure as your judgment is; [315] but age, the common enemy of humankind, has laid his hand upon you; would that it had fallen upon some other, and that you were still young.”

And Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, answered, “Son of Atreus, I too would gladly be the man I was when I slew mighty Ereuthalion; [320] but the gods will not give us everything at one and the same time. I was then young, and now I am old; still I can go with my horsemen and give

them that counsel which old men have a right to give. The wielding of the spear I leave to those [325] who are younger and have more force [*biē*] than myself.”

Agamemnon went his way rejoicing, and presently found Menestheus, son of Peteos, driver of horses, tarrying in his place, and with him were the Athenians loud of tongue in battle. Near him also tarried resourceful Odysseus, [330] with his sturdy Kephallēnians round him; they had not yet heard the battle-cry, for the ranks of Trojans and Achaeans had only just begun to move, so they were standing still, waiting for some other columns of the Achaeans [335] to attack the Trojans and begin the fighting. When he saw this Agamemnon rebuked them and said, “Son of Peteos, and you other, steeped in cunning, heart of guile, [340] why stand you here cowering and waiting on others? You two should be of all men foremost when there is hard fighting to be done, for you are ever foremost to accept my invitation when we councilors of the Achaeans are holding feast. [345] You are glad enough then to take your fill of roast meats and to drink wine as long as you please, whereas now you would not care though you saw ten columns of Achaeans engage the enemy in front of you.”

Resourceful Odysseus glared at him and answered, [350] “Son of Atreus, what are you talking about? How can you say that we are slack? When the Achaeans are in full fight with the Trojans, breakers of horses, you shall see, if you care to do so, that the father of Telemachus will join battle with the foremost [355] of them. You are talking idly.”

When Agamemnon saw that Odysseus was angry, he smiled pleasantly at him and withdrew his words. “Odysseus,” said he, “noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, excellent in all good counsel, I have neither fault to find nor orders to give you, [360] for I know your heart is right, and that you and I are of a mind. Enough; I will make you amends for what I have said, and if any ill has now been spoken may the gods bring it to nothing.” He then left them and went on to others.

[365] Presently he saw the son of Tydeus, noble high-spirited Diomedes, standing by his chariot and horses, with Sthenelos the son of Kapaneus beside him; whereon he began to upbraid him. [370] “Son of Tydeus, the daring breaker of horses,” he said, “why stand you cowering here upon the brink of battle? Tydeus did not shrink thus, but was ever ahead of his men when leading them on against the foe—so, at least, say they that saw him in battle, for I never set eyes [375] upon him myself. They say that there was no man like him. He came once to Mycenae, not as an enemy but as a guest, in company with godlike Polyneikes [Polynices] to recruit his forces, for they were levying war against the strong city of Thebes, and prayed our people for a body of picked men to help them. [380] The men of Mycenae were willing to let them have one, but Zeus dissuaded them by showing them unfavorable omens [sēma pl.]. Tydeus, therefore, and Polyneikes [Polynices] went their way. When they had got as far as the deep-meadowed and rush-grown banks of the Aisopos, the Achaeans sent Tydeus as their envoy, [385] and he found the Kadmeians gathered in great numbers to a banquet in the house of mighty Eteokles. Stranger though he was, he knew no fear on finding himself single-handed among so many, but challenged them to contests of all kinds, and in each one of them was [390] at once victorious, so mightily did Athena help him. The Kadmeians who lash their horses were incensed at his success, and set a force of fifty youths with two chiefs—the godlike hero Maion, son of Haimon, [395] and Polyphontes, stubborn in battle, son of Autophonos—at their head, to lie in wait for him on his return journey; but Tydeus slew every man of them, save only Maeon, whom he let go in obedience to divine omens. Such was Tydeus of Aetolia. [400] His son can talk more glibly, but he cannot fight as his father did.”

Strong Diomedes made no answer, for he was shamed by the rebuke of Agamemnon; but the son of Kapaneus the glorious took up his words and said, ⁴⁰⁴ “Son of Atreus! Don’t warp your talk when you know how to speak clearly! [405] We boast to be much better than our fathers. ⁴⁰⁶ We even captured the foundations of seven-gated Thebes, ⁴⁰⁷ having

mustered a smaller army against a stronger fortress, ⁴⁰⁸ and having heeded the signs of the gods and the help of Zeus. ⁴⁰⁹ But they perished, by their own wantonness. [410] So do not bestow on our fathers an honor [*tīmē*] that is like ours.”

Darkly strong Diomedes looked sternly at him and said, “Hold your peace, my friend, as I bid you. It is not amiss that Agamemnon should urge the strong-greaved Achaeans forward, [415] for the glory will be his if we take the city, and his the shame [*penthos*] if we are vanquished. Therefore let us acquit ourselves with valor.”

As he spoke he sprang from his chariot, [420] and his armor rang so fiercely about his body that even a brave man might well have been scared to hear it.

As when the mighty sea [*pontos*] that thunders on the beach when the west wind has lashed it into fury—it has reared its head afar and now [425] comes crashing down on the shore; it bows its arching crest high over the jagged rocks and spews its salt foam in all directions—even so did the serried phalanxes of the Danaans march steadfastly to battle. The chiefs gave orders each to his own people, but the men said never a word; no man would think it, [430] for huge as the mass of warriors was, it seemed as though there was not a tongue among them, so silent were they in their obedience; and as they marched the armor about their bodies glistened in the sun. But the clamor of the Trojan ranks was as that of many thousand ewes that stand waiting to be milked in the yards of some rich master of flocks, [435] and bleat incessantly in answer to the bleating of their lambs; for they had not one speech nor language, but their tongues were diverse, and they came from many different places. These were inspired of Arēs, but the others by owl-vision Athena — [440] and with them came Panic, Rout, and Strife whose fury never tires, sister and friend of manslaughtering Arēs, who, from being at first but low in stature, grows till she raises her head to the sky, though her feet are still on earth. She it was that went about among them and flung

down discord [445] to the waxing of sorrow with even hand between them.

When they were got together in one place shield clashed with shield and spear with spear in the rage of battle. The bossed shields beat one upon another, and there was a tramp as of a great multitude— [450] death-cry and shout of triumph of slain and slayers, and the earth ran red with blood. As torrents swollen with rain course madly down their deep channels till the angry floods meet in some gorge, [455] and the shepherd on the hillside hears their roaring from afar—even such was the toil [*ponos*] and uproar of the armies as they joined in battle.

First Antilokhos slew an armed warrior of the Trojans, Ekhepolos, son of Thalysios, fighting in the foremost ranks. He struck at the projecting part of his helmet and drove the spear into his brow; [460] the point of bronze pierced the bone, and darkness veiled his eyes; headlong as a tower he fell amid the press of the fight, and as he dropped King Elephenor the powerful, son of Khalkodon and chief of the proud Abantes, [465] began dragging him out of reach of the darts that were falling around him, in haste to strip him of his armor. But his purpose was not for long; high-hearted Agenor saw him hauling the body away, and smote him in the side with his bronze-shod spear—for as he stooped his side was left unprotected by his shield— [470] and thus he perished. Then the fight between Trojans and Achaeans grew furious over his body, and they flew upon each other like wolves, man and man crushing one upon the other.

Right away Ajax, son of Telamon, slew the fair youth Simoeisios, son of Anthemion, whom his mother [475] bore by the banks of the Simoeis, as she was coming down from Mount Ida, where she had been with her parents to see their flocks. Therefore he was named Simoeisios, but he did not live to pay his parents for his rearing, for he was cut off untimely by the spear of mighty Ajax, [480] who struck him in the breast by the right nipple as he was coming on among the foremost fighters; the spear

went right through his shoulder, and he fell as a poplar that has grown straight and tall in a meadow by some mere, and its top is thick with branches. [485] Then the wheelwright lays his axe to its roots that he may fashion a piece for the wheel of some goodly chariot, and it lies seasoning by the waterside. In such a way did illustrious Ajax fell to earth Simoeisios, son of Anthemion. Then Antiphos of the gleaming breastplate, [490] son of Priam, hurled a spear at Ajax from amid the crowd and missed him, but he hit Leukos, the brave comrade of Odysseus, in the groin, as he was dragging the body of Simoeisios over to the other side; so he fell upon the body and loosed his hold upon it. Odysseus was furious when he saw Leukos slain, [495] and strode in full armor through the front ranks till he was quite close; then he glared round about him and took aim, and the Trojans fell back as he did so. His dart was not sped in vain, for it struck Demokoön, the bastard son of Priam, [500] who had come to him from Abydos, where he had charge of his father's fast-running mares. Odysseus, infuriated by the death of his comrade, hit him with his spear on one temple, and the bronze point came through on the other side of his forehead. Then darkness veiled his eyes, and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. [505] Glorious Hector, and they that were in front, then gave round while the Argives raised a shout and drew off the dead, pressing further forward as they did so. But Apollo looked down from Pergamon and called aloud to the Trojans, for he was displeased. "Trojans, breakers of horses," he cried, "rush on the foe, and do not let yourselves be thus beaten [510] by the Argives. Their skins are not stone nor iron that when you hit them you do them no harm. Moreover, Achilles, the son of lovely-haired Thetis, is not fighting, but is nursing his anger at the ships."

Thus spoke the mighty god, crying to them from the city, while Zeus' terrifying daughter, [515] the Triton-born, went about among the army of the Achaeans, and urged them forward whenever she beheld them slackening.

Then fate fell upon Diores, son of Amarynkeus, for he was struck by a jagged stone near the ankle of his right leg. He that hurled it was [520] Peiroös, son of Imbrasos, chief of the Thracians, who had come from Ainos; the bones and both the tendons were crushed by the pitiless stone. He fell to the ground on his back, and in his death throes stretched out his hands towards his comrades. [525] But Peiroös, who had wounded him, sprang on him and thrust a spear into his belly, so that his bowels came gushing out upon the ground, and darkness veiled his eyes. As he was leaving the body, Thoas of Aetolia struck him in the chest near the nipple, and the point fixed itself in his lungs. Thoas came close up to him, pulled [530] the spear out of his chest, and then drawing his sword, smote him in the middle of the belly so that he died; but he did not strip him of his armor, for his Thracian comrades, men who wear their hair in a tuft at the top of their heads, stood round the body and kept him off with their long spears for all his great stature and valor; [535] so he was driven back. Thus the two corpses lay stretched on earth near to one another, the one chief of the Thracians and the other of the bronze-armored Epeioi; and many another fell round them.

And now no man would have made light of the fighting [540] if he could have gone about among it unscathed and unwounded, with Athena leading him by the hand, and protecting him from the storm of spears and arrows. For many Trojans and Achaeans on that day lay stretched side-by-side face downwards upon the earth.

Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 5

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Then Pallas Athena put power [*menos*] and courage into Diomedes, son of Tydeus, that he might excel all the other Argives, and cover himself with glory [*kleos*]. She made a stream of fire flare from his shield and helmet [5] like the star that shines most radiantly in summer after its bath in the waters of Okeanos—even such a fire did she kindle upon his head and shoulders as she bade him speed into the thickest hurly-burly of the fight.

Now there was a certain rich and honorable man among the Trojans, [10] priest of Hephaistos, and his name was Dares. He had two sons, Phegeus and Idaios, both of them skilled in all the arts of war. These two came forward from the main body of Trojans, and set upon Diomedes, he being on foot, while they fought from their chariot. When they were close up to one another, [15] Phegeus took aim first, but his spear went over Diomedes' left shoulder without hitting him. Diomedes then threw, and his spear sped not in vain, for it hit Phegeus on the breast near the nipple, and he fell from [20] his chariot. Idaios did not dare to bestride his brother's body, but sprang from the chariot and took to flight, or he would have shared his brother's fate; whereon Hephaistos saved him by wrapping him in a cloud of darkness, that his old father might not be utterly overwhelmed with grief; [25] but the son of high-hearted Tydeus drove off with the horses, and bade his followers take them to the ships. The high-hearted Trojans were scared when they saw the two sons of Dares, one of them in fright and the other lying dead by his chariot. Owl-vision Athena, therefore, [30] took Arēs by the hand and said, “Arēs, Arēs, bane of men, bloodstained stormer of cities, may we not now leave the Trojans and Achaeans to fight it out, and see to

which of the two Zeus will grant the victory? Let us go away, and thus avoid his anger [*mēnis*].”

[35] So saying, she drew violent Arēs out of the battle, and set him down upon the steep banks of the Skamandros. Upon this the Danaans drove the Trojans back, and each one of their chieftains killed his man. First King Agamemnon flung mighty Odios, chief of the Halizonoi, from his chariot. [40] The spear of Agamemnon caught him on the broad of his back, just as he was turning in flight; it struck him between the shoulders and went right through his chest, and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground.

Then Idomeneus killed Phaistos, son of Boros the Maeonian, who had come from Tarne. Mighty spear-renowned Idomeneus [45] speared him on the right shoulder as he was mounting his chariot, and the darkness of death enshrouded him as he fell heavily from the car.

The attendants [*therapontes*] of Idomeneus spoiled him of his armor, while Menelaos, son of Atreus, killed [50] Skamandrios the son of Strophios, a mighty huntsman and keen lover of the chase. Artemis herself had taught him how to kill every kind of wild creature that is bred in mountain forests, but neither she nor his famed skill in archery could now save him, [55] for the spear of Menelaos the spear-famed struck him in the back as he was fleeing; it struck him between the shoulders and went right through his chest, so that he fell headlong and his armor rang rattling round him. Meriones then killed Phereklos the son of Tekton, who was the son of Harmon, [60] a man whose hand was skilled in all manner of cunning workmanship, for Pallas Athena had dearly loved him. He it was that made the ships for Alexandros, which were the beginning of all mischief, and brought evil alike both on the Trojans and on Alexandros himself; for he heeded not the decrees of the gods. [65] Meriones overtook him as he was fleeing, and struck him on the right buttock. The point of the spear went through the bone into the

bladder, and death came upon him as he cried aloud and fell forward on his knees.

Meges, moreover, slew Pedaios, son of Antenor, [70] who, though he was a bastard, had been brought up by lovely Theano as one of her own children, for the love she bore her husband. The son of Phyleus the spear-famed got close up to him and drove a spear into the nape of his neck: it went under his tongue all among his teeth, [75] so he bit the cold bronze, and fell dead in the dust.

And Eurypylos, son of Euaimon, killed radiant Hypsenor, the son of high-hearted Dolopion, who had been made priest of the river Skamandros, ⁷⁸ and he got honor [*tīmē*] from the district [*dēmos*], like a god. Eurypylos, the shining son of Euaimon, gave him chase [80] as he was fleeing before him, smote him with his sword upon the arm, and lopped his strong hand from off it. The bloody hand fell to the ground, and the shades of death, with fate that no man can withstand, came over his eyes.

[85] Thus furiously did the battle rage between them. As for the son of Tydeus, you could not say whether he was more among the Achaeans or the Trojans. He rushed across the plain like a winter torrent that has burst its barrier in full flood; no dykes, [90] no walls of fruitful vineyards can embank it when it is swollen with rain from the sky, but in a moment it comes tearing onward, and lays many a field waste that many a strong man hand has reclaimed—even so were the dense phalanxes of the Trojans driven in rout by the son of Tydeus, and many though they were, they dared not abide his onslaught.

[95] Now when the shining son of Lykaon saw him scouring the plain and driving the Trojans pell-mell before him, he aimed an arrow and hit the front part of his cuirass near the shoulder: the arrow went right through the metal [100] and pierced the flesh, so that the cuirass was covered with blood. Then the son of Lykaon shouted in triumph,

“High-hearted Horsemen Trojans, come on; the bravest of the Achaeans is wounded, and he will not hold out much longer if King [105] Apollo was indeed with me when I sped here from Lycia.”

Thus did he boast; but his arrow had not killed Diomedes, who withdrew and made for the chariot and horses of Sthenelos, the son of Kapaneus. “Dear son of Kapaneus,” said he, “come down from your chariot, [110] and draw the arrow out of my shoulder.”

Sthenelos sprang from his chariot, and drew the arrow from the wound, whereon the blood came spouting out through the hole that had been made in his khiton. Then Diomedes of the great war cry prayed, saying, [115] “Hear me, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, the one who cannot be worn down, if ever you loved my father well and stood by him in the thick of a fight, do the like now by me; grant me to come within a spear’s throw of that man and kill him. He has been too quick for me and has wounded me; and now he is boasting that [120] I shall not see the light of the sun much longer.”

Thus he prayed, and Pallas Athena heard him; she made his limbs supple and quickened his hands and his feet. Then she went up close to him and said, “Fear not, Diomedes, to do battle with the Trojans, [125] for I have set in your heart the spirit of your father, the charioteer Tydeus. Moreover, I have withdrawn the veil from your eyes, that you know gods and men apart. If, then, any other god comes here and offers you battle, [130] do not fight him; but should Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite come, strike her with your spear and wound her.”

When she had said this owl-vision Athena went away, and the son of Tydeus again took his place among the foremost fighters, [135] three times more fierce even than he had been before. He was like a lion that some mountain shepherd has wounded, but not killed, as he is springing over the wall of a sheep-yard to attack the sheep. The shepherd has roused the brute to fury but cannot defend his flock, [140] so he takes

shelter under cover of the buildings, while the sheep, panic-stricken on being deserted, are smothered in heaps one on top of the other, and the angry lion leaps out over the sheep-yard wall. Even thus did strong Diomedes go furiously about among the Trojans.

He killed Astynooos, and Hyperion, shepherd of his people, [145] the one with a thrust of his spear, which struck him above the nipple, the other with a sword cut on the collarbone, that severed his shoulder from his neck and back. He let both of them lie, and went in pursuit of Abas and Polyidos, sons of the old man who read [*krinein*] dreams, Eurydamas: [150] they never came back for him to read them any more dreams, for mighty Diomedes made an end of them. He then gave chase to Xanthos and Thoön, the two sons of Phainops, both of them very dear to him, for he was now worn out with age, and begat no more sons to inherit his possessions. [155] But Diomedes took both their lives and left their father sorrowing bitterly, for he nevermore saw them come home from battle alive, and his kinsmen divided his wealth among themselves.

Then he came upon two sons of Priam, [160] Ekhemmon and Khromios, as they were both in one chariot. He sprang upon them as a lion fastens on the neck of some cow or heifer when the herd is feeding in a coppice. For all their vain struggles he flung them both from their chariot and stripped the armor from their bodies. [165] Then he gave their horses to his comrades to take them back to the ships.

When Aeneas saw him thus making havoc among the ranks, he went through the fight amid the rain of spears to see if he could find Pandaros the godlike. When he had found the brave son of Lykaon he said, [170] “Pandaros, where is now your bow, your winged arrows, and your fame [*kleos*] as an archer, in respect of which no man here can rival you nor is there any in Lycia that can beat you? Lift then your hands to Zeus and send an arrow at this man who is going so masterfully about, [175] and has done such deadly work among the Trojans. He has killed many a brave man—unless indeed he is some god who is angry with the Trojans

about their sacrifices, and has set his hand against them in his anger [*mēnis*].”

And the son of Lykaon answered, [180] “Aeneas, I take him for none other than the valiant son of Tydeus. I know him by his shield, the visor of his helmet, and by his horses. It is possible that he may be a god, but if he is the man I say he is, [185] he is not making all this havoc without divine help, but has some god by his side who is shrouded in a cloud of darkness, and who turned my arrow aside when it had hit him. I have taken aim at him already and hit him on the right shoulder; my arrow went through the breastplate of his cuirass; [190] and I was sure I should send him hurrying to the world below, but it seems that I have not killed him. There must be a god who is angry with me. Moreover I have neither horse nor chariot. In my father’s stables there are eleven excellent chariots, fresh from the builder, quite new, with cloths [195] spread over them; and by each of them there stand a pair of horses, champing barley and rye; my old father Lykaon urged me again and again when I was at home and on the point of starting, to take chariots and horses with me [200] that I might lead the Trojans in battle, but I would not listen to him; it would have been much better if I had done so, but I was thinking about the horses, which had been used to eat their fill, and I was afraid that in such a great gathering of men they might be ill-fed, so I left them at home and came on foot to Ilion [205] armed only with my bow and arrows. These it seems, are of no use, for I have already hit two chieftains, the sons of Atreus and of Tydeus, and though I drew blood surely enough, I have only made them still more furious. I did ill to take my bow down from its peg [210] on the day I led my band of Trojans to lovely Ilion in Hector’s service [*kharis*], and if ever I get home again to set eyes on my native place, my wife, and the greatness of my house, may some one cut my head off then and there [215] if I do not break the bow and set it on a hot fire—such pranks as it plays me.”

Aeneas answered, “Say no more. Things will not mend till we two go against this man with chariot and horses [220] and bring him to a trial

of arms. Mount my chariot, and note how cleverly the horses of Tros can speed here and there over the plain in pursuit or flight. [225] If Zeus again grants glory to the son of Tydeus they will carry us safely back to the city. Take hold, then, of the whip and reins while I stand upon the car to fight, or else do you wait this man's onset while I look after the horses."

[230] "Aeneas," replied the shining son of Lykaon, "take the reins and drive; if we have to flee before the son of Tydeus the horses will go better for their own driver. If they miss the sound of your voice when they expect it they may be frightened, and refuse to take us out of the fight. [235] The son of high-hearted Tydeus will then kill both of us and take the horses. Therefore drive them yourself and I will be ready for him with my spear."

They then mounted the chariot and drove full-speed [240] towards the son of Tydeus. Sthenelos, shining son of Kapaneus, saw them coming and said to Diomedes, "Diomedes, son of Tydeus, man after my own heart, I see two heroes speeding towards you, [245] both of them men of might the one a skilful archer, Pandaros son of Lykaon, the other, Aeneas, whose father is Anchises the blameless, while his mother is Aphrodite. Mount the chariot and let us retreat. Do not, [250] I pray you, press so furiously forward, or you may get killed."

Darkly strong Diomedes looked angrily at him and answered: "Talk not of flight, for I shall not listen to you: I am of a lineage that knows neither flight nor fear, and my limbs are as yet unwearied. [255] I am in no mind to mount, but will go against them even as I am; Pallas Athena bids me be afraid of no man, and even though one of them escape, their steeds shall not take both back again. I say further, [260] and lay my saying to your heart—if Athena sees fit to grant me the glory of killing both, stay your horses here and make the reins fast to the rim of the chariot; then be sure you spring Aeneas' horses and drive them from the Trojan to the Achaean ranks. [265] They are of the stock that great

Zeus of the wide brows gave to Tros in payment for his son Ganymede, and are the finest that live and move under the sun. King Anchises stole the blood by putting his mares to them without Laomedon's knowledge, [270] and they bore him six foals. Four are still in his stables, but he gave the other two to Aeneas. We shall win great glory [*kleos*] if we can take them."

Thus did they converse, [275] but the other two had now driven close up to them, and the shining son of Lykaon spoke first. "Great and mighty son," said he, "of noble Tydeus, my arrow failed to lay you low, so I will now try with my spear."

[280] He poised his spear as he spoke and hurled it from him. It struck the shield of the son of Tydeus; the bronze point pierced it and passed on till it reached the breastplate. Then the shining son of Lykaon shouted out and said, "You are hit clean through the belly; [285] you will not stand out for long, and the glory of the fight is mine."

But strong Diomedes all undismayed made answer, "You have missed, not hit, and before you two see the end of this matter one or other of you shall glut tough-shielded Arēs with his blood."

[290] With this he hurled his spear, and Athena guided it on to Pandaros' nose near the eye. It went crashing in among his white teeth; the bronze point cut through the root of his tongue, coming out under his chin, and his glistening armor rang rattling round him [295] as he fell heavily to the ground. The horses started aside for fear, and he was robbed of life [*psūkhē*] and strength.

Aeneas sprang from his chariot armed with shield and spear, fearing lest the Achaeans should carry off the body. He bestrode it as a lion in the pride of strength, [300] with shield and spear before him and a cry of battle on his lips resolute to kill the first that should dare face him. But the son of Tydeus caught up a mighty stone, so huge and great that as

men now are it would take two to lift it; nevertheless he bore it aloft with ease unaided, [305] and with this he struck Aeneas on the groin where the hip turns in the joint that is called the “cup-bone.” The stone crushed this joint, and broke both the sinews, while its jagged edges tore away all the flesh. The hero fell on his knees, and propped himself with his hand resting on the ground [310] till the darkness of night fell upon his eyes. And now Aeneas, king of men, would have perished then and there, had not his mother, Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite, who had conceived him by Anchises when he was herding cattle, been quick to mark, and thrown her two white arms about the body of her dear son. [315] She protected him by covering him with a fold of her own fair garment, lest some Danaan should drive a spear into his breast and kill him.

Thus, then, did she bear her dear son out of the fight. But Sthenelos the son of Kapaneus was not unmindful of the orders [320] that Diomedes of the great war cry had given him. He made his own horses fast, away from the hurly-burly, by binding the reins to the rim of the chariot. Then he sprang upon Aeneas’ fluttering-maned horses and drove them from the Trojan to the Achaean ranks. [325] When he had so done he gave them over to his chosen comrade Deipylos, whom he valued above all others as the one who was most like-minded with himself, to take them on to the ships. He then remounted his own chariot, seized the reins, and drove with all speed in search of the son of Tydeus.

[330] Now the son of Tydeus was in pursuit of the Cyprian goddess, spear in hand, for he knew her to be feeble and not one of those goddesses that can lord it among men in battle like Athena or Enyo, the waster of cities, and when at last after a long chase he caught her up, [335] he flew at her and thrust his spear into the flesh of her delicate hand. The point tore through the ambrosial robe which the Graces had woven for her, and pierced the skin between her wrist and the palm of her hand, so that the immortal blood, [340] or *ikhōr*, that flows in the veins of the blessed gods, came pouring from the wound; for the gods do not eat bread nor drink wine, hence they have no blood such as ours,

and are immortal. Aphrodite wailed aloud, and let her son fall, but Phoebus Apollo caught him in his arms, [345] and hid him in a cloud of darkness, lest some fast-mounted Danaan should drive a spear into his breast and kill him; and Diomedes of the great war cry shouted out as he left her, "Daughter of Zeus, leave war and battle alone, can you not be contented with beguiling silly women? [350] If you meddle with fighting you will get what will make you shudder at the very name of war."

The goddess went dazed and discomfited away, and Iris, fleet as the wind, drew her from the throng, in pain and with her fair skin all besmirched. [355] She found fierce Arēs waiting on the left of the battle, with his spear and his two fleet steeds resting on a cloud; whereon she fell on her knees before her brother and implored him to let her have his horses. "Dear brother," she cried, "save me, and give me your horses [360] to take me to Olympus where the gods dwell. I am badly wounded by a mortal, the son of Tydeus, who would now fight even with father Zeus."

Thus she spoke, and Arēs gave her his gold-bedizened steeds. She mounted the chariot sick and sorry at heart, [365] while Iris sat beside her and took the reins in her hand. She lashed her horses on and they flew forward nothing loath, till in a trice they were at high Olympus, where the gods have their dwelling. There she stayed them, unloosed them from the chariot, and gave them their ambrosial forage; [370] but bright Aphrodite flung herself on to the lap of her mother Dione, who threw her arms about her and caressed her, saying, "Which of the celestial beings has been treating you in this way, as though you had been doing something wrong in the face of day?"

[375] And laughter-loving Aphrodite answered, "Proud Diomedes, the son of high-hearted Tydeus, wounded me because I was bearing my dear son Aeneas, whom I love best of all humankind, out of the fight.

The war is no longer one between Trojans and Achaeans, [380] for the Danaans have now taken to fighting with the immortals.”

“Bear it, my child,” replied Dione, shining among divinities, “and make the best of it. We dwellers in Olympus have to put up with much at the hands of men, and we lay much suffering on one another. [385] Arēs had to suffer when Otos and strong Ephialtes, children of Aloeus, bound him in cruel bonds, so that he lay thirteen months imprisoned in a vessel of bronze. Arēs would have then perished had not fair Eeriboia, surpassingly lovely stepmother to the sons of Aloeus, [390] told Hermes, who stole him away when he was already well-nigh worn out by the severity of his bondage. Hera, again, suffered when the mighty son of Amphitryon wounded her on the right breast with a three-barbed arrow, and nothing could assuage her pain. So, also, did huge Hādēs, [395] when this same man, the son of aegis-bearing Zeus, hit him with an arrow even at the gates of Hādēs, and hurt him badly. Then Hādēs went to the house of Zeus on great Olympus, angry and full of grief [*akhos*]; and the arrow [400] in his brawny shoulder caused him great anguish till Paieon healed him by spreading soothing herbs on the wound, for Hādēs was not of mortal mold. Daring, headstrong, evildoer who thought not of his sin in shooting the gods that dwell in Olympus. [405] And now owl-vision Athena has egged this son of Tydeus on against yourself, fool that he is for not reflecting that no man who fights with gods will live long or hear his children prattling about his knees when he returns from battle. [410] Let, then, the son of Tydeus, breaker of horses, see that he does not have to fight with one who is stronger than you are. Then shall his brave wife Aigialeia, high-spirited daughter of Adrastos, rouse her whole house from sleep, wailing for the loss of her wedded lord, [415] Diomedes, the bravest of the Achaeans.”

So saying, she wiped the *ikhōr* from the wrist of her daughter with both hands, whereon the pain left her, and her hand was healed. But Athena and Hera, who were looking on, began to taunt Zeus son of Kronos with their mocking talk, [420] and Athena was first to speak. “Father

Zeus,” said she, “do not be angry with me, but I think the Cyprian must have been persuading some one of the Achaean women to go with the Trojans of whom she is so very fond, and while caressing one or other of them [425] she must have torn her delicate hand with the gold pin of the woman’s brooch.”

The father of gods and men smiled, and called golden Aphrodite to his side. “My child,” said he, “it has not been given you to be a warrior. Attend, henceforth, to your own delightful matrimonial duties, [430] and leave all this fighting to sudden Arēs and to Athena.”

Thus did they converse. But Diomedes of the great war cry sprang upon Aeneas, though he knew him to be in the very arms of Apollo. Not one whit did he fear the mighty god, [435] so set was he on killing Aeneas and stripping him of his armor. Thrice did he spring forward with might and main to slay him, and three times did Apollo beat back his gleaming shield. When he was coming on for the fourth time, equal [*īsos*] to a superhuman force [*daimōn*], Apollo shouted to him with a terrifying voice and said, [440] “Take note, son of Tydeus, and draw back. Do not try, with regard to the gods, ⁴⁴¹ to think thoughts equal [*īsa*] to their thoughts, since our kind and your kind are not at all the same [*homoion*], ⁴⁴² I mean, the lineage of the immortal gods and the lineage of humans who walk the earth.”

The son of Tydeus then gave way for a little space, to avoid the anger [*mēnis*] of the god, while Apollo [445] took Aeneas out of the crowd and set him in sacred Pergamon, where his temple stood. There, within the mighty sanctuary, Leto and Artemis of the showering arrows healed him and made him glorious to behold, while Apollo of the silver bow fashioned a wraith [450] in the likeness of Aeneas, and armed as he was. Round this the Trojans and radiant Achaeans hacked at the bucklers about one another’s breasts, hewing each other’s round shields and light hide-covered targets. Then Phoebus Apollo said to violent Arēs, [445] “Arēs, Arēs, bane of men, bloodstained stormer of cities, can you not go

to this man, the son of Tydeus, who would now fight even with father Zeus, and draw him out of the battle? He first went up to the Cyprian and wounded her in the hand near her wrist, and afterwards sprang upon me too, equal [*īsos*] to a superhuman force [*daimōn*].”

[460] He then took his seat on the top of Pergamon, while manslaughtering Arēs went about among the ranks of the Trojans, cheering them on, in the likeness of fleet Akamas chief of the Thracians. “Sons of Priam, the king whom the gods love,” said he, [465] “how long will you let your people be thus slaughtered by the Achaeans? Would you wait till they are at the walls of Troy? Aeneas the son of great-hearted Anchises has fallen, he whom we held in as high honor as radiant Hector himself. Help me, then, to rescue our brave comrade from the stress of the fight.”

[470] With these words he put heart and spirit into them all. Then Sarpedon rebuked Hector very sternly. “Hector,” said he, “where is your prowess now? ⁴⁷³ Perhaps you think that you will protect the city [*polis*] all alone, without the fighting men and the allies, with your brothers and brothers-in-law. [475] I see not one of them here; they cower as hounds before a lion; it is we, your allies, who bear the brunt of the battle. I have come from afar, even from Lycia and the banks of the whirling river Xanthos, [480] where I have left my wife, my infant son, and much wealth to tempt whoever is needy; nevertheless, I head my Lycian warriors and stand my ground against any who would fight me though I have nothing here for the Achaeans to plunder, [485] while you look on, without even bidding your men stand firm in defense of their wives. See that you fall not into the hands of your foes as men caught in the meshes of a net, and they destroy your fair city right then and there. [490] Keep this before your mind night and day, and beseech the chiefs of your allies to hold on without flinching, and thus put away their reproaches from you.”

So spoke Sarpedon, and Hector smarted under his words. ⁴⁹⁴

Straightaway he [= Hector] leapt out of his chariot, armor and all, hitting the ground, [495] and went about among the army of warriors brandishing his two spears, exhorting the men to fight and raising the terrifying cry of battle. Then they rallied and again faced the Achaeans, but the Argives stood compact and firm, and were not driven back. As the breezes sport with the chaff upon some goodly threshing-floor, [500] when men are winnowing—while golden-haired Demeter blows with the wind to sort [*krinein*] the chaff from the grain, and the chaff-heaps grow whiter and whiter—even so did the Achaeans whiten in the dust which the horses' hooves raised to the firmament of the sky, [505] as their drivers turned them back to battle, and they bore down with might upon the foe. Fierce Arēs, to help the Trojans, covered them in a veil of darkness, and went about everywhere among them, inasmuch as Phoebus Apollo of the glowing sword had told him [510] that when he saw Pallas Athena leave the fray he was to put courage into the hearts of the Trojans—for it was she who was helping the Danaans. Then Apollo sent Aeneas forth from his rich sanctuary, and filled his heart with valor, whereon he took his place among his comrades, who were overjoyed [515] at seeing him alive, sound, and of a good courage; but they could not ask him how it had all happened, for they were too busy [*ponos*] with the turmoil raised by manslaughtering Arēs and by Strife, who raged insatiably in their midst.

The two Ajaxes, Odysseus, and Diomedes [520] cheered the Danaans on, fearless of the fury and onset of the Trojans. They stood as still as clouds which the son of Kronos has spread upon the mountain tops when there is no air and fierce Boreas sleeps with the other [525] boisterous winds whose shrill blasts scatter the clouds in all directions—even so did the Danaans stand firm and unflinching against the Trojans. The son of Atreus went about among them and exhorted them. “My friends,” said he, “acquit yourselves like brave men, [530] and shun dishonor in one another’s eyes amid the stress of battle. They that shun

dishonor more often live than get killed, but they that flee save neither life nor fame [*kleos*].”

As he spoke he hurled his spear and hit one of those who were in the front rank, the comrade of high-hearted Aeneas, [535] Deikoön, son of Pergasos, whom the Trojans held in no less honor than the sons of Priam, for he was ever quick to place himself among the foremost. The spear of powerful King Agamemnon struck his shield and went right through it, for the shield stayed it not. It drove through his belt into the lower part of his belly, [540] and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground.

Then Aeneas killed two champions of the Danaans, Krethon and Orsilokhos. Their father was a rich man who lived in the strong city of Phere and was descended from the river [545] Alpheus, whose broad stream flows through the land of the Pylians. The river begat Orsilokhos, who ruled over much people and was father to high-hearted Diokles, who in his turn begat twin sons, Krethon and Orsilokhos, well skilled in all the arts of war. [550] These, when they grew up, went to Ilion with the Argive fleet for the honor [*tīmē*] of Menelaos and Agamemnon, sons of Atreus, and there they both of them met their end [*telos*]. As two lions [555] whom their dam has reared in the depths of some mountain forest to plunder homesteads and carry off sheep and cattle till they get killed by the hand of man, so were these two vanquished by Aeneas, [560] and fell like high pine-trees to the ground.

Brave Menelaos pitied them in their fall, and made his way to the front, clad in gleaming bronze and brandishing his spear, for Arēs egged him on to do so with intent that he should be killed by Aeneas; [565] but Antilokhos the son of high-hearted Nestor saw him and sprang forward, fearing that the king might come to harm and thus bring all their labor [*ponos*] to nothing; when, therefore Aeneas and Menelaos were setting their hands and spears against one another eager to do battle, [570] Antilokhos placed himself by the side of Menelaos. Aeneas, bold though

he was, drew back on seeing the two heroes side-by-side in front of him, so they drew the bodies of Krethon and Orsilokhos to the ranks of the Achaeans and committed the two poor men into the hands of their comrades. [575] They then turned back and fought in the front ranks.

They killed high-hearted Pylaimenes peer of Arēs, leader of the Paphlagonian warriors. Menelaos the spear-famed son of Atreus struck him on the collar-bone as he was standing on his chariot, [580] while Antilokhos hit his charioteer and attendant [*therapōn*] Mydon, the brave son of Atymnios, who was turning his horses in flight. He hit him with a stone upon the elbow, and the reins, enriched with white ivory, fell from his hands into the dust. Antilokhos rushed towards him and struck him on the temples with his sword, [585] whereon he fell head-first from the chariot to the ground. There he stood for a while with his head and shoulders buried deep in the dust—for he had fallen on sandy soil till his horses kicked him and laid him flat on the ground, as Antilokhos lashed them and drove them off to the army of the Achaeans.

[590] But Hector marked them from across the ranks, and with a loud cry rushed towards them, followed by the strong battalions of the Trojans. Arēs and dread goddess Enyo led them on, she fraught with ruthless turmoil of battle, while Arēs wielded a monstrous spear, and went about, [595] now in front of Hector and now behind him.

Diomedes of the great war cry shook with passion as he saw them. As a man crossing a wide plain is dismayed to find himself on the brink of some great river rolling swiftly to the sea—he sees its boiling waters and starts back in fear— [600] even so did the son of Tydeus give ground. Then he said to his men, “My friends, how can we wonder that glorious Hector wields the spear so well? Some god is ever by his side to protect him, and now Arēs is with him in the likeness of mortal man. [605] Keep your faces therefore towards the Trojans, but give ground backwards, for we dare not fight with gods.”

As he spoke the Trojans drew close up, and Hector killed two men, both in one chariot, Menesthes and Ankhialos, heroes well versed in war. [610] Great Ajax, son of Telamon, pitied them in their fall; he came close up and hurled his spear, hitting Amphios the son of Selagos, a man of great wealth who lived in Paesus and owned much wheat-growing land, but his lot had led him to come to the aid of Priam and his sons. [615] Telemonian Ajax struck him in the belt; the spear pierced the lower part of his belly, and he fell heavily to the ground. Then shining Ajax ran towards him to strip him of his armor, but the Trojans rained spears upon him, many of which fell upon his shield. [620] He planted his heel upon the body and drew out his spear, but the darts pressed so heavily upon him that he could not strip the goodly armor from his shoulders. The Trojan chieftains, moreover, many and valiant, came about him with their spears, so that he dared not stay; [625] great, brave and valiant though he was, they drove him from them and he was beaten back.

Thus, then, did the battle rage between them. Presently the strong hand of fate impelled Tlepolemos, the son of Hēraklēs, a man both brave and of great stature, to fight godlike Sarpedon; [630] so the two, son and grandson of great Zeus, drew near to one another, and Tlepolemos spoke first. “Sarpedon,” said he, “councilor of the Lycians, why should you come skulking here, you who are a man of peace? [635] They lie who call you son of aegis-bearing Zeus, for you are little like those who were of old his children. Far other was Hēraklēs, my own brave and lion-hearted father, [640] who came here for the horses of Laomedon, and though he had six ships only, and few men to follow him, destroyed the city of Ilion and made a wilderness of her highways. You are a coward, and your people are falling from you. For all your strength, and all your coming from Lycia, [645] you will be no help to the Trojans but will pass the gates of Hādēs vanquished by my hand.”

And Sarpedon, chief of the Lycians, answered, “Tlepolemos, your father overthrew Ilion by reason of haughty Laomedon’s folly [650] in refusing

payment to one who had served him well. He would not give your father the horses which he had come so far to fetch. As for yourself, you shall meet death by my spear. You shall yield glory to myself, and your spirit [*psūkhē*] to Hādēs of the noble steeds.”

[655] Thus spoke Sarpedon, and Tlepolemos upraised his spear. They threw at the same moment, and Sarpedon struck his foe in the middle of his throat; the spear went right through, and the darkness of death fell upon his eyes. [660] Tlepolemos’ spear struck Sarpedon on the left thigh with such force that it tore through the flesh and grazed the bone, but his father as yet warded off destruction from him.

His comrades bore godlike Sarpedon out of the fight, in great pain by the weight of the spear [665] that was dragging from his wound. They were in such haste and stress [*ponos*] as they bore him that no one thought of drawing the spear from his thigh so as to let him walk uprightly. Meanwhile the strong-greaved Achaeans carried off the body of Tlepolemos, whereon radiant Odysseus [670] was moved to pity, and panted for the fray as he beheld them. He doubted whether to pursue the son of Zeus the loud-thundering, or to make slaughter of the Lycian rank and file; it was not decreed, however, [675] that he should slay the son of Zeus; Athena, therefore, turned him against the main body of the Lycians. He killed Koiranos, Alastor, Khromios, Alkandros, Halios, Noemon, and Prytanis, and would have slain yet more, [680] had not great Hector marked him, and sped to the front of the fight clad in his suit of mail, filling the Danaans with terror. Sarpedon was glad when he saw him coming, and besought him, saying, “Son of Priam, let me not be here to fall into the hands of the Danaans. [685] Help me, and since I may not return home to gladden the hearts of my wife and of my infant son, let me die within the walls of your city.”

Hector of the shining helmet made him no answer, [690] but rushed onward to fall at once upon the Achaeans and kill many among them. His radiant comrades then bore godlike Sarpedon away and laid him

beneath Zeus' spreading oak tree. Pelagon, his friend and comrade, [695] drew the spear out of his thigh, but Sarpedon lost control of his life-breath [*psūkhē*], and a mist came over his eyes. Presently he came to again, for the breath of the north wind as it played upon him gave him new life, and brought him out of the deep swoon into which he had fallen.

Meanwhile the Argives were neither driven towards their ships by Arēs and bronze-armored Hector, [700] nor yet did they attack them; when they knew that Arēs was with the Trojans they retreated, but kept their faces still turned towards the foe. Who, then, was first and who last to be slain by Arēs the brazen and Priam's son Hector? [705] They were valiant Teuthras, and Orestes, the renowned charioteer, Trēkhos, the Aetolian warrior, Oinomaos, Helenos, the son of Oinops, and Oresbios of the gleaming belt, who was possessed of great wealth, and dwelt by the Cephisian lake [710] with the other Boeotians who lived near him, owners of a fertile locale [*dēmos*].

Now when the goddess Hera saw the Argives thus falling, she said to Athena, "Alas, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, the one who cannot be worn down, [715] the promise we made Menelaos that he should not return till he had destroyed the strong-walled city of Ilion will be of none effect if we let Arēs rage thus furiously. Let us go into the fray at once."

Athena did not [720] gainsay her. Then Hera, the august goddess, daughter of great Kronos, began to harness her gold-bedizened steeds. Hebe with all speed fitted on the eight-spoked wheels of bronze that were on either side of the iron axle-tree. The spikes of the wheels were of gold, imperishable, [725] and over these there was a tire of bronze, wondrous to behold. The naves of the wheels were silver, turning round the axle upon either side. The car itself was made with plaited bands of gold and silver, and it had a double top-rail running all round it. From the body of the car there went a pole of silver, [730] on to the end of

which she bound the golden yoke, with the bands of gold that were to go under the necks of the horses. Then Hera put her steeds under the yoke, eager for battle and the war-cry.

⁷³³ As for Athena, daughter of Zeus who has the aegis, ⁷³⁴ she let her woven robe [*peplos*] slip off at the threshold of her father, [735] her pattern-woven [*poikilos*] peplos, the one that she herself made and worked on with her own hands. ⁷³⁶ And, putting on the khiton [*khitōn*] of Zeus the gatherer of clouds, And, slipping into the tunic [*khitōn*] of Zeus the gatherer of clouds, ⁷³⁷ with armor she armed herself to go to war, which brings tears. ⁷³⁸ Over her shoulders she threw the aegis, with fringes on it, ⁷³⁹—terrifying—garlanded all around by Fear personified. [740] On it [= the aegis] are Strife [*Eris*], Resistance [*Alkē*], and the chilling Shout [*Iōkē*, as shouted by victorious pursuers]. ⁷⁴¹ On it also is the head of the Gorgon, the terrible monster, ⁷⁴² a thing of terror and horror, the portent of Zeus who has the aegis. ⁷⁴³ On her head she put the helmet, with a horn on each side and with four bosses, ⁷⁴⁴ golden, adorned with pictures showing the warriors [*pruleis*] of a hundred cities. [745] Into the fiery chariot with her feet she stepped, and she took hold of the spear, ⁷⁴⁶ heavy, huge, massive. With it she subdues the battle-rows of men— ⁷⁴⁷ heroes against whom she is angry, she of the mighty father. Hera lashed the horses on, and the gates of the sky bellowed as they flew open of their own accord, gates over which the Seasons [*Hōrai*] preside, [750] in whose hands are Heaven and Olympus, either to open the dense cloud that hides them, or to close it. Through these the goddesses drove their obedient steeds, and found the son of Kronos sitting all alone on the topmost ridges of Olympus. [755] There Hera of the white arms stayed her horses, and spoke to Zeus the son of Kronos, lord of all. “Father Zeus,” said she, “are you not angry with Arēs for these high doings? How great and goodly an army of the Achaeans he has destroyed to my great grief [*akhos*], and without either right or reason [*kosmos*], [760] while the Cyprian and Apollo are enjoying it all at their ease and setting this unrighteous madman on to keep on doing things that are not right

[*themis*]. I hope, Father Zeus, that you will not be angry if I hit Arēs hard, and chase him out of the battle.”

And Zeus answered, [765] “Set Athena on to him, for she punishes him more often than any one else does.”

Hera of the white arms did as he had said. She lashed her horses, and they flew forward nothing loath midway betwixt earth and sky. [770] As far as a man can see when he looks out upon the sea [*pontos*] from some high beacon, so far can the loud-neighing horses of the gods spring at a single bound. When they reached Troy and the place where its two flowing streams Simoeis and Skamandros meet, [775] there Hera of the white arms stayed them and took them from the chariot. She hid them in a thick cloud, and Simoeis made ambrosia spring up for them to eat; ⁷⁷⁸ and they [= the goddesses Hera and Athena] went along, like [*homoiai*] tremulous doves, the way they went, ⁷⁷⁹ eager to protect the Argive men. [780] When they came to the part where the bravest and most in number were gathered about mighty Diomedes, breaker of horses, fighting like lions or wild boars of great strength and endurance, there Hera stood still and raised a shout [785] like that of high-hearted brazen-voiced Stentor, whose cry was as loud as that of fifty men together. “Argives,” she cried; “shame [*aidōs*] on cowardly creatures, brave in semblance only; as long as Achilles was fighting, his spear was so deadly [790] that the Trojans dared not show themselves outside the Dardanian gates, but now they come out far from the city and fight even at your ships.”

With these words she put heart and spirit into them all, while owl-vision Athena sprang to the side of the son of Tydeus, whom she found near his chariot and horses, [795] cooling the wound that Pandaros had given him. For the sweat caused by the hand that bore the weight of his shield irritated the hurt: his arm was weary with pain, and he was lifting up the strap to wipe away the blood. The goddess laid her hand on the yoke of his horses and said, [800] “The son of Tydeus is not such another as his

father. Tydeus was a little man, but he could fight, and rushed madly into the fray even when I told him not to do so. When he went all unattended as envoy to the city of Thebes among the Kadmeians, [805] I bade him feast in their houses and be at peace; but with that high spirit which was ever present with him, he challenged the youth of the Kadmeians, and at once beat them in all that he attempted, so mightily did I help him. I stand by you too to protect you, [810] and I bid you be instant in fighting the Trojans; but either you are tired out, or you are afraid and out of heart, and in that case I say that you are no true son of Tydeus, the son of high-spirited Oineus.”

Powerful Diomedes answered, [815] “I know you, goddess, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, and will hide nothing from you. I am not afraid nor out of heart, nor is there any slackness in me. I am only following your own instructions; you told me not to fight any of the blessed gods; [820] but if Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite came into battle I was to wound her with my spear. Therefore I am retreating, and bidding the other Argives gather in this place, for I know that Arēs is now lording it in the field.”

[825] “Diomedes, son of Tydeus,” replied owl-vision goddess Athena, “man after my own heart, fear neither Arēs nor any other of the immortals, for I will befriend you. No, drive straight at violent Arēs, [830] and smite him in close combat; fear not this raging madman, villain incarnate, first on one side and then on the other. But now he was holding talk with Hera and myself, saying he would help the Argives and attack the Trojans; nevertheless he is with the Trojans, and has forgotten the Argives.”

[835] With this she caught hold of Sthenelos and lifted him off the chariot on to the ground. In a second he was on the ground, whereupon the goddess mounted the car and placed herself by the side of radiant Diomedes. The oaken axle groaned aloud under the burden of the terrifying goddess and the hero; [840] Pallas Athena took the whip and reins, and drove straight at Arēs. He was in the act of stripping huge

Periphas, shining son of Okhesios and bravest of the Aetolians. Bloody Arēs was stripping him of his armor, and Athena [845] donned the helmet of Hādēs, that he might not see her; when, therefore, he saw Diomedes, breaker of horses, he made straight for him and let Periphas lie where he had fallen. [850] As soon as they were at close quarters he let fly with his bronze spear over the reins and yoke, thinking to take Diomedes' life, but owl-vision Athena caught the spear in her hand and made it fly harmlessly over the chariot. [855] Diomedes of the great war cry then threw, and Pallas Athena drove the spear into the pit of the stomach of brazen Arēs, where his under-belt went round him. There Diomedes wounded him, tearing his fair flesh and then drawing his spear out again. Arēs roared [860] as loudly as nine or ten thousand men in the thick of a fight, and the Achaeans and Trojans were struck with panic, so terrifying was the cry he raised.

As a dark cloud in the sky [865] when it comes on to blow after heat, even so did Diomedes, son of Tydeus, see Arēs the brazen ascend into the broad sky. With all speed he reached high Olympus, home of the gods, and in great pain sat down beside Zeus the son of Kronos, grieving in his spirit. [870] He showed Zeus the immortal blood that was flowing from his wound, and spoke piteously, saying, "Father Zeus, are you not angered by such doings? We gods are continually suffering in the most cruel manner at one another's hands while performing service [*kharis*] to mortals; [875] and we all owe you a grudge for having begotten that mad termagant of a daughter, who is always committing outrage of some kind. We other gods must all do as you bid us, but her you neither scold nor punish; [880] you encourage her because the pestilent creature is your daughter. See how she has been inciting proud Diomedes son of Tydeus to vent his rage on the immortal gods. First he went up to the Cyprian and wounded her in the hand near her wrist, and then he sprang upon me too, equal [*īsos*] to a superhuman force [*daimōn*]. [885] Had I not run for it I must either have lain there for long enough in torments among the ghastly corpses, or have been eaten alive with spears till I had no more strength left in me."

Zeus looked angrily at him and said, “Do not come whining here, you who face both ways. [890] I hate you worst of all the gods in Olympus, for you are ever fighting and making mischief. You have the intolerable and stubborn spirit of your mother Hera: it is all I can do to manage her, and it is her doing that you are now in this plight: [895] still, I cannot let you remain longer in such great pain; you are my own off-spring, and it was by me that your mother conceived you; if, however, you had been the son of any other god, you are so destructive that by this time you should have been lying lower than the Titans.”

He then bade Paieon heal him, [900] whereon Paieon spread pain-killing herbs upon his wound and cured him, for he was not of mortal mold. As the juice of the fig-tree curdles milk, and thickens it in a moment though it is liquid, even so instantly did Paieon cure fierce Arēs. [905] Then Hebe washed him, and clothed him in goodly raiment, and he took his seat by his father great Zeus all glorious to behold.

But Hera of Argos and Athena of Alalkomene, now that they had put a stop to the murderous doings of Arēs, went back again to the house of Zeus.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 6

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] The fight between Trojans and Achaeans was now left to rage as it would, and the tide of war surged here and there over the plain as they aimed their bronze-shod spears at one another between the streams of Simoeis and Xanthos.

[5] First, Ajax, son of Telamon, tower of strength to the Achaeans, broke a phalanx of the Trojans, and came to the assistance of his comrades by killing Akamas, son of Eussoros, the best man among the Thracians, being both brave and of great stature. The spear struck the projecting peak of his helmet: [10] its bronze point then went through his forehead into the brain, and darkness veiled his eyes.

Then Diomedes killed Axylos, son of Teuthranos, a rich man who lived in the strong-founded city of Arisbe, and was beloved by all men; for he had a house by the roadside, [15] and entertained every one who passed; howbeit not one of his guests stood before him to save his life, and Diomedes killed both him and his attendant [*therapōn*] Kalesios, who was then his charioteer—so the pair passed beneath the earth.

[20] Euryalos killed Dresos and Opheltios, and then went in pursuit of Aisepos and Pedasos, whom the naiad nymph Abarbarea had borne to noble Boukolion. Boukolion was eldest son to haughty Laomedon, but he was a bastard. [25] While tending his sheep he had converse with the nymph, and she conceived twin sons; these the son of Mekisteus now slew, and he stripped the armor from their shoulders. Polypoites then killed Astyalos, [30] Odysseus Pidytes of Perkote, and Teucer Aretaon. Ableros fell by the spear of Nestor's son Antilokhos, and Agamemnon,

king of men, killed Elatos who dwelt in Pedasos by the banks of the river Satnioeis. [35] Leitos killed Phylakos as he was fleeing, and Eurypylos slew Melanthos.

Then Menelaos of the loud war-cry took Adrastos alive, for his horses ran into a tamarisk bush, as they were flying wildly over the plain, [40] and broke the pole from the car; they went on towards the city along with the others in full flight, but Adrastos rolled out, and fell in the dust flat on his face by the wheel of his chariot; Menelaos came up to him spear in hand, [45] but Adrastos caught him by the knees begging for his life. “Take me alive,” he cried, “son of Atreus, and you shall have a full ransom for me: my father is rich and has much treasure of gold, bronze, and wrought iron laid by in his house. From this store he will give you a large ransom [50] should he hear of my being alive and at the ships of the Achaeans.”

Thus did he plead, and Menelaos was for yielding and giving him to a attendant [*therapōn*] to take to the ships of the Achaeans, but Agamemnon came running up to him and rebuked him. [55] “My good Menelaos,” said he, “this is no time for giving quarter. Has, then, your house fared so well at the hands of the Trojans? Let us not spare a single one of them—not even the child unborn and in its mother’s womb; let not a man of them be left alive, [60] but let all in Ilion perish, unheeded and forgotten.”

Thus did he speak, and his brother was persuaded by him, for his words were just. Menelaos, therefore, thrust Adrastos from him, whereon powerful King Agamemnon struck him in the flank, and he fell: then the son of Atreus [65] planted his foot upon his breast to draw his spear from the body.

Meanwhile Nestor shouted to the Argives, saying, “My friends, Danaan warriors, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, let no man lag that he may spoil the dead, and bring back much booty to the ships. [70] Let us kill

as many as we can; the bodies will lie upon the plain, and you can despoil them later at your leisure.”

With these words he put heart and spirit into them all. And now the Trojans would have been routed and driven back into Ilion, [75] had not Priam’s son Helenos, wisest of augurs, said to Hector and Aeneas, “Hector and Aeneas, you two are the mainstays [*ponos*] of the Trojans and Lycians, for you are foremost at all times, alike in fight and counsel; [80] hold your ground here, and go about among the army of warriors to rally them in front of the gates, or they will fling themselves into the arms of their wives, to the great joy of our foes. Then, when you have put heart into all our companies, we will stand firm here and fight the Danaans [85] however hard they press us, for there is nothing else to be done. Meanwhile do you, Hector, go to the city and tell our mother what is happening. Tell her to bid the matrons gather at the temple of owl-vision Athena in the acropolis; let her then take her key and open the doors of the sacred building. [90] The peplos that seems to her to have the most pleasurable beauty [*kharis*] and is the biggest ⁹¹ in the palace—the one that is by far the most near and dear [*philos*] to her— ⁹² she must take that one and lay it on the knees of Athena with the beautiful hair. Let her, moreover, promise to sacrifice twelve yearling heifers that have never yet felt the goad, in the temple of the goddess, if she will take pity [95] on the town, with the wives and little ones of the Trojans, and keep the son of Tydeus the wild spear-fighter from falling on the goodly city of Ilion; for he fights with fury and fills men’s spirits with panic. I hold him mightiest of them all; we did not fear even their great champion Achilles, [100] son of a goddess though he be, as we do this man: his rage is beyond all bounds, and there is none can vie with him in prowess.”

Hector did as his brother bade him. ¹⁰³ Straightaway he [= Hector] leapt out of his chariot, armor and all, hitting the ground, and went about everywhere among the army of warriors, brandishing his spears, [105] urging the men on to fight, and raising the dread cry of battle. Then

they rallied and again faced the Achaeans, who gave ground and ceased their murderous onset, for they thought that some one of the immortals had come down from the starry sky to help the Trojans, so strangely had they rallied. [110] And Hector shouted to the Trojans, “High-hearted Trojans and far-renowned allies, be men, my friends, and fight with might and main, while I go to Ilion and tell the old men of our council and our wives [115] to pray to the gods [*daimones*] and vow hecatombs in their honor.”

With this he went his way, and the black rim of hide that went round his shield beat against his neck and his ankles.

Then Glaukos, son of Hippolokhos, and the son of Tydeus [120] went into the open space between the armies to fight in single combat. When they were close up to one another Diomedes of the loud war-cry was the first to speak. “Who, my good sir,” said he, “who are you among men? I have never seen you in battle until now, [125] but you are daring beyond all others if you abide my onset. Woe to those fathers whose sons face my might. If, however, you are one of the immortals and have come down from the sky, I will not fight you; [130] for even valiant Lykourgos, son of Dryas, did not live long when he took to fighting with the gods. He it was that drove the nursing women who were in charge of frenzied Dionysus through the land of Nysa, and they flung their thyrsos on the ground as manslaughtering Lykourgos [135] beat them with his oxgoad. Dionysus himself plunged terror-stricken into the sea, and Thetis took him to her bosom to comfort him, for he was scared by the fury with which the man reviled him. Then the gods who live at ease were angry with Lykourgos and the son of Kronos struck him blind, nor did he live much longer [140] after he had become hateful to the immortals. Therefore I will not fight with the blessed gods; but if you are of them that eat the fruit of the ground, draw near and meet your doom.”

And the shining son of Hippolokhos answered, [145] Son of Tydeus, you with the great *thūmos*! Why do you ask about my lineage [*genēē*]?
¹⁴⁶ The *genēē* of men is like the *genēē* of leaves. ¹⁴⁷ Some leaves are shed on the earth by the wind, ¹⁴⁸ while others are grown by the greening forest—and the season [*hōrā*] of spring is at hand. ¹⁴⁹ So also the *genēē* of men: one grows, another wilts. [150] If, then, you would learn my descent, it is one that is well known to many. There is a city in the heart of Argos, pasture land of horses, called Ephyra, where Sisyphus lived, who was the craftiest of all humankind. He was the son of Aiolos, and had a son named Glaukos, [155] who was father to Bellerophon the blameless, whom the gods have endowed with the most surpassing comeliness and beauty. But Proitos devised his ruin, and being stronger than he, drove him from the locale [*dēmos*] of the Argives, over which Zeus had made him ruler. [160] For beautiful Antaia, wife of Proitos, lusted after him, and would have had him lie with her in secret; but Bellerophon was an honorable man and would not, so she told lies about him to Proitos. ‘Proitos,’ said she, ‘kill Bellerophon or die, [165] for he would have had converse with me against my will.’ The king was angered, but shrank from killing Bellerophon, so he sent him to Lycia bearing baneful signs [*sēma* pl.], written inside a folded tablet and containing much ill against the bearer. [170] He bade Bellerophon show these written signs to his father-in-law, to the end that he might thus perish; Bellerophon therefore went to Lycia, and the gods escorted him safely.

When he reached the river Xanthos, which is in Lycia, the king received him with all goodwill, feasted him nine days, and killed nine heifers in his honor, [175] but when rosy-fingered morning appeared upon the tenth day, he questioned him and desired to see the markings [*sēma* pl.] from his son-in-law Proitos. When he had received the baneful markings [*sēma* pl.] he first commanded Bellerophon to kill that savage monster, the Chimaera, [180] who was not a human being, but a goddess, for she had the head of a lion and the tail of a serpent, while her body was that of a goat, and she breathed forth flames of fire; but

Bellerophon slew her, for he was guided by divine signs. He next fought the far-famed Solymoi, [185] and this, he said, was the hardest of all his battles. Thirdly, he killed the Amazons, women who were the peers of men, and as he was returning thence the king devised yet another plan for his destruction; he selected [*krinein*] the bravest warriors in all Lycia, and placed them in ambushade, but not a man ever came back, [190] for blameless Bellerophon killed every one of them. Then the king knew that he must be the valiant offspring of a god, so he kept him in Lycia, gave him his daughter in marriage, and made him of equal honor [*tīmē*] in the kingdom with himself; and the Lycians gave him a piece of land, [195] the best in all the country, fair with vineyards and tilled fields, to have and to hold.

The king's daughter bore valiant Bellerophon three children, Isandros, Hippolokhos, and Laodameia. Zeus, the lord of counsel, lay with Laodameia, and she bore him noble Sarpedon; [200] but when Bellerophon came to be hated by all the gods, he wandered all desolate and dismayed upon the plain of Alea, gnawing at his own heart, and shunning the path of man. Arēs, insatiate of battle, killed his son Isandros while he was fighting the glorious Solymoi; [205] his daughter was killed by Artemis of the golden reins, for she was angered with her; but Hippolokhos was father to myself, and when he sent me to Troy he urged me again and again to fight ever among the foremost and outcompete my peers, so as not to shame the blood of my fathers [210] who were the noblest in Ephyra and in all Lycia. This, then, is the descent I claim."

Thus did he speak, and the heart of Diomedes of the great war cry was glad. He planted his spear in the ground, and spoke to him with friendly words. [215] "Then," he said, "you are an old friend of my father's house. Great Oineus once entertained Bellerophon the blameless for twenty days, and the two exchanged presents. Oineus gave a belt rich with purple, [220] and Bellerophon a double cup, which I left at home when I set out for Troy. I do not remember Tydeus, for he was taken from us

while I was yet a child, when the army of the Achaeans was cut to pieces before Thebes. Henceforth, however, I must be your host in middle Argos, [225] and you mine in Lycia, if I should ever go to that locale [*dēmos*]; let us avoid one another's spears even during a general engagement; there are many noble Trojans and allies whom I can kill, if I overtake them and the gods deliver them into my hand; so again with yourself, there are many Achaeans whose lives you may take if you can; [230] we two, then, will exchange armor, that all present may know of the old ties that subsist between us."

With these words they sprang from their chariots, grasped one another's hands, and plighted friendship. But Zeus, the son of Kronos, made Glaukos take leave of his wits, [235] for he exchanged golden armor for bronze, the worth of a hundred head of cattle for the worth of nine.

Now when Hector reached the Scaean gates and the oak tree, the wives and daughters of the Trojans came running towards him to ask after their sons, brothers, kinsmen, [240] and husbands: he told them to set about praying to the gods, and many were made sorrowful as they heard him.

Presently he reached the splendid palace of King Priam, adorned with colonnades of hewn stone. In it there were fifty bedchambers—all of hewn stone— [245] built near one another, where the sons of Priam slept, each with his wedded wife. Opposite these, on the other side the courtyard, there were twelve upper rooms also of hewn stone for Priam's daughters, built near one another, [250] where his sons-in-law slept with their wives. When Hector got there, his fond mother came up to him with Laodike, the fairest of her daughters. She took his hand within her own and said, "My son, why have you left the battle to come here? [255] Are the Achaeans, woe betide them, pressing you hard about the city that you have thought fit to come and uplift your hands to Zeus from the citadel? Wait till I can bring you wine that you may make offering to Zeus and to the other immortals, [260] and may then drink and be

refreshed. Wine gives a man fresh strength when he is wearied, as you now are with fighting on behalf of your kinsmen.”

And tall Hector of the shining helmet answered, “Honored mother, bring no wine, [265] lest you unman me and I forget my strength. I dare not make a drink-offering to Zeus with unwashed hands; one who is bespattered with blood and filth may not pray to the son of Kronos. Get the matrons together, [270] and go with offerings to the temple of Athena driver of the spoil; ²⁷¹ The peplos, whichever is for you the one that has the most pleasurable beauty [*kharis*] and is the biggest ²⁷² in the palace—the one that is by far the most near and dear [*philos*] to you yourself— ²⁷³ take that one and lay it on the knees of Athena with the beautiful hair. Promise, moreover, to sacrifice twelve yearling heifers [275] that have never yet felt the goad, in the temple of the goddess if she will take pity on the town, with the wives and little ones of the Trojans, and keep the son of Tydeus from off the goodly city of Ilion, for he fights with fury, and fills men’s spirits with panic. Go, then, to the temple of Athena, [280] while I seek Paris and exhort him, if he will hear my words. Would that the earth might open her jaws and swallow him, for Zeus bred him to be the bane of the Trojans, and of high-hearted Priam and Priam’s sons. Could I but see him go down into the house of Hādēs, [285] my heart would forget its heaviness.”

²⁸⁶ So he [= Hector] spoke, and she [= Hecuba], going into the palace, summoned her handmaidens, ²⁸⁷ calling out to them. And they went around the city to assemble the highborn women. ²⁸⁸ Meanwhile she descended into the fragrant storechamber. ²⁸⁹ There they were, the peploi, completely pattern-woven [*poikiloi*], the work of women, [290] from Sidon, whom Alexandros [= Paris] himself, the godlike, ²⁹¹ had brought home [to Troy] from the land of Sidon, sailing over the vast sea [*pontos*], ²⁹² on that journey when he brought also Helen, genuine daughter of the Father. ²⁹³ Hecuba lifted out one and brought it as gift to Athena, ²⁹⁴ the one that was the most beautiful in pattern-weavings [*poikilmata*] and

the biggest, [295] and it shone like a star. It lay beneath the others. ²⁹⁶ She went on her way, and the many highborn women hastened to follow her. ²⁹⁷ When these [women] had come to Athena's temple at the top of the citadel, ²⁹⁸ Theano of the fair cheeks opened the door for them, ²⁹⁹ daughter of Kissēs and wife of Antenor, breaker of horses, [300] she whom the Trojans had established to be priestess of the Athenian goddess. ³⁰¹ With a cry of ololu! all lifted up their hands to Athena, ³⁰² and Theano of the fair cheeks, taking up the peplos, laid it ³⁰³ along the knees of Athena the lovely-haired, and praying ³⁰⁴ she supplicated the daughter of powerful Zeus: [305] "O Lady Athena, our city's defender, shining among goddesses: ³⁰⁶ break the spear of Diomedes, and grant that the man be ³⁰⁷ hurled on his face in front of the Scaean Gates; so may we ³⁰⁸ instantly dedicate within your shrine twelve heifers, ³⁰⁹ yearlings, never broken, if only you will have pity [310] on the city of Troy, and the Trojan wives, and their innocent children." Thus she prayed, but Pallas Athena granted not her prayer.

While they were thus praying to the daughter of great Zeus, Hector went to the fair house of Alexandros, which he had had built for him [315] by the foremost builders in the land. They had built him his house, storehouse, and courtyard near those of Priam and Hector on the acropolis. Here Hector, beloved of Zeus, entered, with a spear eleven cubits long in his hand; the bronze point gleamed in front of him, [320] and was fastened to the shaft of the spear by a ring of gold. He found Alexandros within the house, busied about his armor, his shield and cuirass, and handling his curved bow; there, too, sat Argive Helen with her women, setting them their several tasks; [325] and as Hector saw him he rebuked him with words of scorn. "Sir," said he, "you do ill to nurse this rancor; the people perish fighting round this our town; you would yourself chide one [330] whom you saw shirking his part in the combat. Up then, or before long the city will be in a blaze."

And godlike Alexandros answered, “Hector, your rebuke is just; listen therefore, and believe me when I tell you that [335] I am not here so much through rancor or ill-will [*nemesis*] towards the Trojans, as from a desire to indulge my grief. My wife was even now gently urging me to battle, and I hold it better that I should go, for victory is ever fickle. [340] Wait, then, while I put on my armor, or go first and I will follow. I shall be sure to overtake you.”

Hector of the shining helmet made no answer, but Helen tried to soothe him. “Brother,” said she, “to my abhorred and sinful self, [345] would that a whirlwind had caught me up on the day my mother brought me forth, and had borne me to some mountain or to the waves of the roaring sea that should have swept me away before this mischief had come about. But, since the gods have devised these evils, would, at any rate, [350] that I had been wife to a better man—to one who could smart under dishonor [*nemesis*] and men’s evil speeches. This man was never yet to be depended upon, nor never will be, and he will surely reap what he has sown. Still, brother, come in and rest upon this seat, [355] for it is you who bear the brunt of that toil [*ponos*] that has been caused by my hateful self and by the derangement [*atē*] of Alexandros—whom Zeus has doomed ³⁵⁷ so that even in the future ³⁵⁸ we will be subjects of song for men yet to be.”

And tall Hector of the shining helmet answered, [360] “Bid me not be seated, Helen, for all the goodwill you bear me. I cannot stay. I am in haste to help the Trojans, who miss me greatly when I am not among them; but urge your husband, and of his own self also let him make haste to overtake me before I am out of the city. [365] I must go home to see my household, my wife and my little son, for I know not whether I shall ever again return to them, or whether the gods will cause me to fall by the hands of the Achaeans.”

Then Hector of the shining helmet left her, [370] and right away was at his own house. He did not find Andromache of the white arms, for she

was on the wall with her child and one of her maids, weeping bitterly. Seeing, then, that she was not within, [375] he stood on the threshold of the women's rooms and said, "Women, tell me, and tell me true, where did Andromache go when she left the house? Was it to my sisters, or to my brothers' wives? or is she at the temple of Athena [380] where the other women are propitiating the terrifying goddess?"

His good housekeeper answered, "Hector, since you bid me tell you things that are true [*alēthea*], she did not go to your sisters nor to your brothers' wives, nor yet to the temple of Athena, [385] where the other women are propitiating the terrifying goddess, but she is on the high wall of Ilion, for she had heard the Trojans were being hard pressed, and that the Achaeans were in great force: she went to the wall in frenzied haste, and the nurse went with her carrying the child."

[390] Hector hurried from the house when she had done speaking, and went down the streets by the same way that he had come. When he had gone through the city and had reached the Scaean gates through which he would go out on to the plain, his wife came running towards him, [395] Andromache, daughter of great Eëtion who ruled in Thebe under the wooded slopes of wooded Mount Plakos, and was king of the Cilicians. His daughter had married Hector of the bronze helmet, and now came to meet him with a nurse who carried [400] his little child in her bosom—a mere babe. Hector's darling son, and lovely as a star. ⁴⁰² Hector used to call him Skamandrios, but the others ⁴⁰³ called him Astyanax; for Hector alone protected Ilion. Hector smiled as he looked upon the boy, but he did not speak, [405] and Andromache stood by him weeping and taking his hand in her own. ⁴⁰⁷ "What's gotten into you [Hector]—some kind of superhuman force [*daimōn*]? Your own power [*menos*] is going to make you perish [*phthi-n-ein*]. You are not showing pity, ⁴⁰⁸ not thinking of your disconnected [*nēpiakhos*] son, and not thinking of me, deprived as I am of good fortune. I will soon become a widow, ⁴⁰⁹ your widow, since you will soon be killed by the

Achaeans. [410] They will all rush at you. It would be better for me, ⁴¹¹ if I should lose you, to lie dead and be covered over by the earth, since there will no longer ⁴¹² be anything left to comfort me when you have met your fate. ⁴¹³ I will have nothing but sorrows [*akhos* plural]. I have neither a father nor a queen mother now. ⁴¹⁴ My father was killed by radiant Achilles [415] when that one destroyed the beautifully flourishing city of the Cilicians, ⁴¹⁶ Thebe, with its lofty gates. So he [= Achilles] killed Eëtion, ⁴¹⁷ but he did not strip him of his armor—at least he had that much decency in his heart [*thūmos*]⁴¹⁸— and he honored him with the ritual of cremation, burning him together with his armor. ⁴¹⁹ Then he heaped up a tomb [*sēma*] for him, and elm trees were generated [*phuteuein*] around it [420] by forest nymphs who are daughters of Zeus, holder of the aegis. ⁴²¹ I had seven brothers in my father's house, ⁴²² but on the same day they all went down into the house of Hādēs. ⁴²³ For they were all killed by Achilles, swift of foot, the radiant one, ⁴²⁴ while they were guarding their ranging cattle and their bright-fleeced sheep. [425] My mother—her who had been queen of all the land under the wooded mountain Plakos— ⁴²⁶ he [= Achilles] brought here along with the captured treasures, ⁴²⁷ and freed her for the price of an untold amount of property, ⁴²⁸ but then, in the house of your father [= Priam], she was shot down by Artemis, shooter of arrows. ⁴²⁹ Oh, Hector, you who are to me a father, a queen mother, [430] a brother, and a husband in his prime— ⁴³¹ please, have pity on me; stay here at the fortifications; ⁴³² don't make your child an orphan, and your wife a widow. As for the army of warriors, place them near the fig-tree, where the city can be best scaled, and the wall is weakest. [435] Thrice have the bravest of them come there and assailed it, under the two Ajaxes, renowned Idomeneus, the sons of Atreus, and the brave son of Tydeus, either of their own bidding, or because some soothsayer had told them.”

[440] And tall Hector of the shining helmet answered, “Wife, I too have thought upon all this, but with what face should I look upon the

Trojans, men or women, if I shirked battle like a coward? I cannot do so: I know nothing save [445] to fight bravely in the forefront of the Trojan army of warriors and win fame [*kleos*] alike for my father and myself. ⁴⁴⁷ For I know well in my thinking, in my heart, that ⁴⁴⁸ there will come a day when, once it comes, the sacred city of Ilios [= Ilion = Troy] will be destroyed ⁴⁴⁹ —and Priam, too, and along with him [will be destroyed] the people of that man with the fine ash spear, that Priam. [450] But the pain I have on my mind is not as great for the Trojans and for what will happen to them in the future, ⁴⁵¹ or for Hecuba or for Priam the king, ⁴⁵² or for my brothers if, many in number and noble as they are, ⁴⁵³ they will fall in the dust at the hands of men who are their enemies ⁴⁵⁴ —no, [the pain I have on my mind is not as great for them] as it is for you when I think of a moment when some Achaean man, one of those men who wear khitons of bronze, [455] takes hold of you as you weep and leads you away as his prize, depriving you of your days of freedom from slavery. ⁴⁵⁶ And you would be going to Argos, where you would be weaving [*huphainein*] at the loom of some other woman [and no longer at your own loom at home] ⁴⁵⁷ —and you would be carrying water for her, drawing from the spring called Messēis or the one called Hypereia. ⁴⁵⁸ Again and again you will be forced to do things against your will, and the bondage holding you down will be harsh. ⁴⁵⁹ And someone some day will look at you as you pour out your tears and will say: [460] “Hector is the man whose wife this woman used to be. He used to be the best in battle ⁴⁶¹ —the best of all the Trojans, those horse-tamers, back in those days when they fought to defend Ilion [= Troy].” ⁴⁶² That is what someone some day will say. And just hearing it will give you a new sorrow ⁴⁶³ as the widow of this kind of man, the kind that is able to prevent those days of slavery. ⁴⁶⁴ But, once I am dead, may earth be scattered over me and cover me, [465] before I hear your cry as they carry you into bondage.”

He stretched his arms towards his child, but the boy cried and nestled in his nurse’s bosom, scared at the sight of his father’s armor, [470] and at

the horse-hair plume that nodded fiercely from his helmet. His father and mother laughed to see him, but glorious Hector took the helmet from his head and laid it all gleaming upon the ground. Then he took his darling child, kissed him, and dandled him in his arms, [475] praying over him the while to Zeus and to all the gods. “Zeus,” he cried, “grant that this my child may be even as myself, chief among the Trojans; let him be not less excellent in strength, and let him rule Ilion with his might. Then may one say of him as he comes from battle, ‘The son is far better than the father.’ [480] May he bring back the bloodstained spoils of him whom he has laid low, and let his mother’s heart be glad.”

With this he laid the child again in the arms of his wife, who took him to her own soft bosom, smiling through her tears. As her husband watched her his heart yearned towards her [485] and he caressed her fondly, saying, “My own wife, do not take these things too bitterly to heart. No one can hurry me down to Hādēs before my time, but if a man’s hour is come, be he brave or be he coward, there is no escape for him when he has once been born. [490] But you go back to the household and attend to your own work, ⁴⁹¹ that is, the loom and the shuttle, giving orders to the handmaidens [who work for you]. Go, then, within the house, and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants; for war is man’s matter, and mine above all others of them that have been born in Ilion.”

He took his plumed helmet from the ground, [495] and his wife went back again to her house; ⁴⁹⁶she was turning her head back again and again, shedding tears thick and fast. When she reached her home she found her maidens within, and bade them all join in her lament; [500] so they mourned Hector, slayer of men, in his own house though he was yet alive, for they thought that they should never see him return safe from battle, and from the furious hands of the Achaeans.

Paris did not remain long in his house. He donned his goodly armor overlaid with bronze, [505] and hastened through the city as fast as his

feet could take him. As a horse, stabled and fed, breaks loose and gallops gloriously over the plain to the place where he is wont to bathe in the fair-flowing river—he holds his head high, and his mane streams [510] upon his shoulders as he exults in his strength and flies like the wind to the haunts and feeding ground of the mares—even so went forth Paris the son of Priam from high Pergamon, gleaming like sunlight in his armor, and he laughed aloud as he sped swiftly on his way. [515] Right away he came upon his brother, radiant Hector, who was then turning away from the place where he had held converse with his wife, and he was himself the first to speak. “Sir,” said he, “I fear that I have kept you waiting when you are in haste, and have not come as quickly as you bade me.”

[520] “My good brother,” answered tall Hector of the shining helmet, “you fight bravely, and no man with any justice can make light of your doings in battle. But you are careless and willfully remiss. It grieves me to the heart to hear the ill that the Trojans speak about you, [525] for they went through much toil [*ponos*] on your account. Let us be going, and we will make things right hereafter, should Zeus grant that we offer to the eternal gods of the sky the cup of our deliverance in our own homes, when we have chased the strong-greaved Achaeans from Troy.”

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 7

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] With these words Hector, the glorious, passed through the gates, and his brother Alexandros with him, both eager for the fray. As when some god sends [5] a breeze to sailors who have long looked for one in vain, and have labored at their oars till they are faint with toil, even so welcome was the sight of these two heroes to the Trojans.

Then Alexandros killed Menesthios, the son of Arēithoös; he lived in Ame, and was son of Arēithoös [10] the Mace-man, and of ox-vision Phylomedousa. Hector threw a spear at Eioneus and struck him dead with a wound in the neck under the bronze rim of his helmet. Glaukos, moreover, son of Hippolokhos, chief of the Lycians, in hard hand-to-hand fight smote Iphinoos, [15] son of Dexios, on the shoulder, as he was springing on to his chariot behind his fleet mares; so he fell to earth from the car, and there was no life left in him.

When, therefore, owl-vision Athena saw these men making havoc of the Argives, she darted down to Ilion [20] from the summits of Olympus, and Apollo, who was looking on from Pergamon, went out to meet her; for he wanted the Trojans to be victorious. The pair met by the oak tree, and King Apollo son of Zeus was first to speak. “What would you have,” said he, “daughter of great Zeus, [25] that your proud spirit has sent you here from Olympus? Have you no pity upon the Trojans, and would you incline the scales of victory in favor of the Danaans? Let me persuade you—for it will be better thus—stay the combat for today, [30] but let them renew the fight hereafter till they compass the doom of Ilion, since you goddesses have made up your minds to destroy the city.”

And owl-vision goddess Athena answered, “So be it, Far-Darter; it was in this mind [35] that I came down from Olympus to the Trojans and Achaeans. Tell me, then, how do you propose to end this present fighting?”

Apollo, son of Zeus, replied, “Let us incite great Hector, breaker of horses, to challenge some one of the Danaans [40] in single combat; on this the Achaeans will be shamed into finding a man who will fight him.”

Owl-vision Athena assented, and Helenos, son of Priam, [45] divined the counsel of the gods; he therefore went up to Hector and said, “Hector, son of Priam, peer of gods in counsel, I am your brother, let me then persuade you. Bid the other Trojans and Achaeans all of them take their seats, [50] and challenge the best man among the Achaeans to meet you in single combat. I have heard the voice of the ever-living gods, and the hour of your doom is not yet come.”

Hector was glad when he heard this saying, [55] and went in among the Trojans, grasping his spear by the middle to hold them back, and they all sat down. Agamemnon also bade the strong-greaved Achaeans be seated. But Athena and the lord of the silver bow, Apollo, in the likeness of vultures, [60] perched on father Zeus’ high oak tree, proud of their men; and the ranks sat close ranged together, bristling with shield and helmet and spear. As when the rising west wind furs the face of the sea [*pontos*] and the waters grow dark beneath it, [65] so sat the companies of Trojans and Achaeans upon the plain. And Hector spoke thus:

“Hear me, Trojans and strong-greaved Achaeans, that I may speak even as I am minded; Zeus, son of Kronos, on his high throne has brought our oaths [70] and covenants to nothing, and foreshadows ill for both of us, till you either take the towers of Troy, or are yourselves vanquished at your ships. The princes of the Achaeans are here present in the midst of you; let him, then, that will fight me [75] stand forward as your

champion against radiant Hector. Thus I say, and may Zeus be witness between us. If your champion slay me, let him strip me of my armor and take it to your ships, but let him send my body home that the Trojans [80] and their wives may give me my dues of fire when I am dead. In like manner, if Apollo grant me glory and I slay your champion, I will strip him of his armor and take it to the city of Ilion, where I will hang it in the temple of far-striking Apollo. ⁸⁴ And I will give back his corpse, sending it back to their ships with the sturdy benches, [85] so that the Achaeans, they with their long hair, may ritually prepare [*tarkhuein*] him ⁸⁶ and that they may pile up for him a tomb [*sēma*] on the shore of the expansive Hellespont. ⁸⁷ And some day, someone from a future generation will say, ⁸⁸ as he is sailing on a many-benched ship over the wine-dark sea [*pontos*]: ⁸⁹ “This is the tomb [*sēma*] of a man who died a long time ago, [90] who was performing his *aristeiā* when illustrious Hektor killed him.” ⁹¹ That is what someone will say, and my fame [*kleos*] will never perish.”

Thus did he speak, but they all held their peace, ashamed to decline the challenge, yet fearing to accept it, till at last Menelaos rose and rebuked them, [95] for he was angry. “Alas,” he cried, “vain braggarts, women not men, double-dyed indeed will be the stain upon us if no man of the Danaans will now face Hector. May you be turned every man of you into earth and water as you sit spiritless [100] and inglorious in your places. I will myself go out against this man, but the upshot of the fight will be from on high in the hands of the immortal gods.”

With these words he put on his armor. ¹⁰⁴ At that point, Menelaos, the end of your life would have appeared, [105] in the clutches of Hector, since he was better by far, had not the princes of the Achaeans sprung upon you and checked you. Powerful King Agamemnon caught him by the right hand and said, “Menelaos, you are mad; [110] a truce to this folly. Be patient in spite of passion, do not think of fighting a man so much stronger than yourself as Hector, son of Priam, who is feared by

many another as well as you. Even Achilles, who is far more mighty than you are, shrank from meeting him in battle. [115] Sit down your own people, and the Achaeans will send some other champion to fight Hector; fearless and fond of battle though he be, I bet his knees will bend gladly under him if he comes out alive from the hurly-burly of this fight.”

[120] With these words of reasonable counsel he persuaded his brother, whereon his attendants [*therapontes*] gladly stripped the armor from off his shoulders. Then Nestor rose and spoke, “Truly,” said he, “the Achaean land is fallen upon grief [*penthos*]. [125] The old charioteer Peleus, counselor and orator among the Myrmidons, loved when I was in his house to question me concerning the birth and lineage of all the Argives. How would it not grieve him could he hear of them as now quailing before Hector? [130] Many a time would he lift his hands in prayer that his spirit might leave his body and go down within the house of Hādēs. Would, by father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, that I were still young and strong as when the Pylians and Arcadians were gathered in fight by the rapid river Celadon [135] under the walls of Pheia, and round about the waters of the river Iardanos. ¹³⁶ Their champion stood forth, Ereuthalion, a man godlike, ¹³⁷ wearing upon his shoulders the armor of King Arēithoös, ¹³⁸ Arēithoös the brilliant, named the Club Bearer ¹³⁹ by the men and fair-girdled women of that time, [140] because he fought not with bow and arrows, nor with a long spear, ¹⁴¹ but with a club coated with iron he smashed the army ranks. ¹⁴² Lykourgos killed him—with a stratagem, not with power [*kratos*] — ¹⁴³ in a narrow pass, where the iron club could not ward off ¹⁴⁴ his destruction, since Lykourgos anticipated him [145] by pinning him through the middle with his spear, and he fell down backwards to the ground. ¹⁴⁶ And he stripped off the armor that brazen Arēs had given him. ¹⁴⁷ And from then on he wore the armor himself whenever he went to the struggle [*mōlos*] of Arēs. ¹⁴⁸ But when Lykourgos was growing old in his halls, ¹⁴⁹ he gave it to Ereuthalion to wear, his near-and-dear [*philos*] attendant [*therapōn*].

[150] So, wearing his armor [of Arēithoös], he [Ereuthalion] was challenging all the best to fight him. ¹⁵¹ But they were all afraid and trembling: no one undertook to do it. ¹⁵² I was the only one, driven to fight by my heart [*thūmos*] which was ready to undertake much, ¹⁵³ with all its boldness, even though I was the youngest of them all. ¹⁵⁴ I fought him, and Athena gave me fame. [155] For I killed the biggest and the best man: ¹⁵⁶ he sprawled in his great bulk from here to here. ¹⁵⁷ If only I were that young! If only my *biē* had remained as it was! For the son of Priam would then soon find one who would face him. But you, foremost among the whole army of warriors though you be, [160] have none of you any stomach for fighting Hector.”

Thus did the old man rebuke them, and right away nine men started to their feet. Foremost of all stood the lord of men, King Agamemnon, and after him brave Diomedes, the son of Tydeus. Next were the two Ajaxes, men clothed in valor as with a garment, [165] and then Idomeneus, and Meriones his manslaughtering brother in arms. After these Eurypylos, glorious son of Euaimon, Thoas, the son of Andraimon, and Odysseus also rose. [170] Then Nestor charioteer of Gerenia again spoke, saying: “Cast lots among you to see who shall be chosen. If he come alive out of this fight he will have done good service alike to his own spirit and to the strong-greaved Achaeans.”

[175] Thus he spoke, and when each of them had marked his lot, and had thrown it into the helmet of Agamemnon son of Atreus, the people lifted their hands in prayer, and thus would one of them say as he looked into the vault of the sky, “Father Zeus, grant that the lot fall on Ajax, [180] or on Diomedes, the strong son of Tydeus, or upon the king of rich Mycenae himself.”

As they were speaking, Nestor charioteer of Gerenia shook the helmet, and from it there fell the very lot which they wanted—the lot of Ajax. The herald bore it about and showed it to all the chieftains of the Achaeans, going from left to right; [185] but they none of them owned

it. When, however, in due course he reached the man who had written upon it and had put it into the helmet, brave Ajax held out his hand, and the herald gave him the lot. When Ajax saw his mark [*sēma*] he knew it and was glad; [190] he threw it to the ground and said, “My friends, the lot is mine, and I rejoice, for I shall vanquish radiant Hector. I will put on my armor; meanwhile, pray to King Zeus [195] in silence among yourselves that the Trojans may not hear you—or aloud if you will, for we fear no man. None shall overcome me, neither by force nor cunning, for I was born and bred in Salamis, and can hold my own in all things.”

[200] With this they fell praying to King Zeus, the son of Kronos, and thus would one of them say as he looked toward the vault of the sky, “Father Zeus that rules from Ida, most glorious in power, grant victory to Ajax, and let him win great glory: but if you wish well to Hector also and would protect him, [205] grant to each of them equal fame and prowess.”

Thus they prayed, and Ajax armed himself in his suit of gleaming bronze. When he was in full array he sprang forward as monstrous as *Arēs* the war god when he takes part among men whom Zeus [210] has set fighting with one another—even so did huge Ajax, bulwark of the Achaeans, spring forward with a grim smile on his face as he brandished his long spear and strode onward. The Argives were elated as they beheld him, but the Trojans [215] trembled in every limb, and the heart even of Hector beat quickly, but he could not now retreat and withdraw into the ranks behind him, for he had been the challenger. Ajax came up bearing his shield in front of him like a wall— [220] a shield of bronze with seven folds of ox-hide—the work of *Tykhios*, who lived in Hyle and was by far the best worker in leather. He had made it with the hides of seven full-fed bulls, and over these he had set an eighth layer of bronze. Holding this shield before him, [225] Ajax, son of Telamon, came close up to Hector, and menaced him saying, “Hector, you shall now learn, man to man, what kind of champions the Danaans have among them even besides lion-hearted Achilles, cleaver of the ranks of men. He now

abides at the ships [230] in anger with Agamemnon, shepherd of his people, but there are many of us who are well able to face you; therefore begin the fight.”

And tall Hector of the glancing helmet answered, “Noble Ajax, son of Telamon and seed of Zeus, chief of the army of warriors, [235] treat me not as though I were some puny boy or woman that cannot fight. I have been long used to the blood and butcheries of battle. I am quick to turn my leather shield either to right or left, for this I deem the main thing in battle. [240] I can charge among the chariots and horsemen, and in hand to hand fighting can delight the heart of Arēs; howbeit I would not take such a man as you are off his guard—but I will smite you openly if I can.”

He poised his spear as he spoke, and hurled it from him. [245] It struck the sevenfold shield in its outermost layer—the eighth, which was of bronze—and went through six of the layers but in the seventh hide it stayed. Then Ajax threw in his turn, [250] and struck the round shield of the son of Priam. The terrible spear went through his gleaming shield, and pressed onward through his cuirass of cunning workmanship; it pierced the khiton against his side, but he swerved and thus saved his life. [255] They then each of them drew out the spear from his shield, and fell on one another like savage lions or wild boars of great strength and endurance: the son of Priam struck the middle of Ajax’s shield, but the bronze did not break, and the point of his dart was turned. [260] Ajax then sprang forward and pierced the shield of Hector; the spear went through it and staggered him as he was springing forward to attack; it gashed his neck and the blood came pouring from the wound, but even so Hector did not cease fighting; he drew back, and with his strong hand seized a stone [265] that was lying on the plain—great and rugged and black; with this he struck the shield of Ajax on the boss that was in its middle, so that the bronze rang again. But Ajax in turn caught up a far larger stone, swung it aloft, and hurled it with prodigious force. [270] This millstone of a rock broke Hector’s shield

inwards and threw him down on his back with the shield crushing him under it, but Apollo raised him at once. Then they would have hacked at one another in close combat with their swords, had not heralds, messengers of gods and men, [275] come forward, one from the Trojans and the other from the bronze-armored Achaeans—Talthybios and Idaios both of them honorable men; these parted them with their staves, and the good herald Idaios said, “My sons, fight no longer, [280] you are both of you valiant, and both are dear to Zeus who gathers clouds; we know this; but night is now falling, and the requests of night may not be well ignored.”

Ajax son of Telamon answered, “Idaios, bid Hector say so, [285] for it was he that challenged our princes. Let him speak first and I will accept his saying.”

Then tall Hector of the glancing helmet said, “Ajax, the gods have granted you stature and strength, and judgment; and in wielding the spear you excel all others of the Achaeans. [290] Let us for this day cease fighting; hereafter we will fight anew till some superhuman force [*daimōn*] decides between us, and give victory to one or to the other; night is now falling, and the requests of night may not be well ignored. Gladden, then, the hearts of the Achaeans at your ships, [295] and more especially those of your own followers and clansmen, while I, in the great city of King Priam, bring comfort to the Trojans and their women, who vie with one another in their prayers on my behalf. Let us, moreover, exchange presents [300] that it may be said among the Achaeans and Trojans, ‘They fought with might and main, but were reconciled and parted in friendship.’

Then he gave Ajax a silver-studded sword with its sheath and well-cut baldric, [305] and in return Ajax gave him a belt dyed with purple. Thus they parted, the one going to the army of the Achaeans, and the other to that of the Trojans, who rejoiced when they saw their hero come to them safe and unharmed from the strong hands of mighty Ajax. [310]

They led him, therefore, to the city as one that had been saved beyond their hopes. On the other side the strong-greaved Achaeans brought Ajax elated with victory to Agamemnon.

When they reached the quarters of the son of Atreus, Agamemnon sacrificed for them [315] a five-year-old bull in honor of Zeus the all-powerful son of Kronos. They flayed the carcass, made it ready, and divided it into joints; these they cut carefully up into smaller pieces, putting them on the spits, roasting them sufficiently, and then drawing them off. ³¹⁹ But when they finished with their efforts and prepared the feast [*dais*] [320] they feasted [= had the *dais*], and there was no *thūmos* lacking in a fair allotment [*dais*]. ^{321–322} And wide-ruling Agamemnon the hero, son of Atreus, gave as honorific portion [*geras*] to Ajax the whole back [of beef]. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, [325] old Nestor whose counsel was ever truest began to speak; with all sincerity and goodwill, therefore, he addressed them thus:

“Son of Atreus, and other chieftains, inasmuch as many of the flowing-haired Achaeans are now dead, whose blood Arēs has shed by the banks of the Skamandros, [330] and their spirits [*psūkhai*] have gone down to the house of Hādēs, it will be well when morning comes that we should cease fighting; we will then wheel our dead together with oxen and mules and burn them not far from the ships, that when we sail hence we may take the bones of our comrades home [335] to their children. Hard by the funeral pyre we will build a tomb that shall be raised from the plain for all in common; near this let us set about building a high wall, to shelter ourselves and our ships, and let it have well-made gates [340] that there may be a way through them for our chariots. Close outside we will dig a deep trench all round it to keep off both horse and foot, that the Trojan chieftains may not bear hard upon us.”

Thus he spoke, and the princes shouted in approval. [345] Meanwhile the Trojans held a council, angry and full of discord, on the acropolis by the gates of King Priam’s palace; and high-spirited Antenor spoke.

“Hear me,” he said, “Trojans, Dardanians, and allies, that I may speak even as I am minded. [350] Let us give up Argive Helen and her wealth to the sons of Atreus, for we are now fighting in violation of our solemn covenants, and shall not prosper till we have done as I say.”

He then sat down [355] and radiant Alexandros husband of lovely-haired Helen rose to speak. “Antenor,” said he, “your words are not to my liking; you can find a better saying than this if you will; if, however, you have spoken in good earnest, [360] then indeed have the gods robbed you of your reason. I will speak plainly, and hereby notify to the Trojans that I will not give up the woman; but the wealth that I brought home with her from Argos I will restore, and will add yet further of my own.”

[365] Then, when Paris had spoken and taken his seat, Priam of the lineage of Dardanos, peer of gods in council, rose and with all sincerity and goodwill addressed them thus: “Hear me, Trojans, Dardanians, and allies, that I may speak even as I am minded. [370] Get your suppers now as before throughout the city, but keep your watches and be wakeful. At daybreak let Idaios go to the ships, and tell Agamemnon and Menelaos sons of Atreus the saying of Alexandros through whom this quarrel has come about; [375] and let him also be instant with them that they now cease fighting till we burn our dead; hereafter we will fight anew, till some superhuman force [*daimōn*] decides between us and give victory to one or to the other.”

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. [380] They took supper in their companies and at daybreak Idaios went his way to the ships. He found the Danaans, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, in council at the stern of Agamemnon’s ship, and took his place in the midst of them. [385] “Son of Atreus,” he said, “and princes of the Achaean army of warriors, Priam and the other noble Trojans have sent me to tell you the saying of Alexandros through whom this quarrel has come about, if so be that you may find it acceptable. All the treasure he took with him

[390] in his ships to Troy—would that he had sooner perished—he will restore, and will add yet further of his own, but he will not give up the wedded wife of glorious Menelaos, though the Trojans would have him do so. Priam bade me inquire further [395] if you will cease fighting till we burn our dead; hereafter we will fight anew, till some superhuman force [*daimōn*] decide between us and give victory to one or to the other.”

They all held their peace, but presently Diomedes of the loud war cry spoke, saying, [400] “Let there be no taking, neither treasure, nor yet Helen, for even a child may see that the doom of the Trojans is at hand.” The sons of the Achaeans shouted approval at the words that Diomedes, breaker of horses, had spoken, [405] and then King Agamemnon said to Idaios, “Idaios, you have heard the answer the Achaeans make you—and I with them. But as concerning the dead, I give you leave to burn them, [410] for when men are once dead there should be no grudging them the rites of fire. Let Zeus, the high-thundering husband of Hera, be witness to this covenant.”

As he spoke he upheld his scepter in the sight of all the gods, and Idaios went back to the strong city of Ilion. The Trojans and Dardanians were gathered [415] in council waiting his return; when he came, he stood in their midst and delivered his message. As soon as they heard it they set about their twofold labor, some to gather the corpses, and others to bring in wood. The Argives on their part also hastened from their ships, [420] some to gather the corpses, and others to bring in wood.

The sun was beginning to beat upon the fields, fresh risen into the celestial vault from the slow still currents of deep Okeanos, when the two armies met. They could hardly recognize their dead, [425] but they washed the clotted gore from off them, shed tears over them, and lifted them upon their wagons. Priam had forbidden the Trojans to wail aloud, so they heaped their dead sadly and silently upon the pyre, and having burned them went back to the city of Ilion. [430] The strong-greaved

Achaeans in like manner heaped their dead sadly and silently on the pyre, and having burned them went back to their ships.

Now in the twilight when it was not yet dawn, chosen bands of the Achaeans were gathered round the pyre [435] and built one tomb that was raised in common for all, and hard by this they built a high wall to shelter themselves and their ships; they gave it strong gates that there might be a way through them for their chariots, [440] and close outside it they dug a trench deep and wide, and they planted it within with stakes.

Thus did the flowing-haired Achaeans toil, and the gods, seated by the side of Zeus the lord of lightning, marveled at their great work; [445] but Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, spoke, saying, "Father Zeus, what mortal in the whole world will again take the gods into his counsel [*noos*]? See you not how the Achaeans have built a wall about their ships and driven a trench [450] all round it, without offering hecatombs to the gods? The fame [*kleos*] of this wall will reach as far as dawn itself, and men will no longer think anything of the one which Phoebus Apollo and myself built with so much labor for Laomedon."

Zeus who gathers clouds was displeased and answered, [455] "What, O shaker of the earth, are you talking about? A god less powerful than yourself might be alarmed at what they are doing, but your fame [*kleos*] reaches as far as the light of dawn spreads. Surely when the flowing-haired Achaeans [460] have gone home with their ships, you can shatter their wall and fling it into the sea; you can cover the beach with sand again, and the great wall of the Achaeans will then be utterly effaced."

Thus did they converse, and by sunset [465] the work of the Achaeans was completed; they then slaughtered oxen at their tents and got their supper. Many ships had come with wine from Lemnos, sent by Euneus the son of Jason, born to him by Hypsipyle. The son of Jason freighted them with ten thousand measures of wine, [470] which he sent specially

to the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaos. From this supply the flowing-haired Achaeans bought their wine, some with bronze, some with iron, some with hides, some with whole heifers, [475] and some again with captives. They spread a goodly banquet and feasted the whole night through, as also did the Trojans and their allies in the city. But all the time Zeus boded them ill and roared with his portentous thunder. Pale fear got hold upon them, [480] and they spilled the wine from their cups on to the ground, nor did any dare drink till he had made offerings to the most mighty son of Kronos. Then they laid themselves down to rest and enjoyed the boon of sleep.

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Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 8

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now when Dawn, clad in her robe of saffron, had begun to suffuse light over the earth, Zeus called the gods in council on the topmost crest of serrated Olympus. Then he spoke and all the other gods gave ear. [5] “Hear me” said he, “gods and goddesses, that I may speak even as I am minded. Let none of you neither goddess nor god try to cross me, but obey me every one of you that I may bring this matter to an end. [10] If I see anyone acting apart and helping either Trojans or Danaans, he shall be beaten inordinately before he comes back again to Olympus; or I will hurl him down into dark Tartaros far into the deepest pit under [15] the earth, where the gates are iron and the floor bronze, as far beneath Hādēs as the sky is high above the earth, that you may learn how much the mightiest I am among you. Try me and find out for yourselves. ¹⁹ Hang a golden cord from the sky and hold on to it, [20] all you gods and goddesses. ²¹ But still you could not pull Zeus, the supreme counsellor [*mēstō*], from the sky to the ground, ²² even if you tried very hard. ²³ But when I feel like it and decide to pull, ²⁴ I could pull all the way, earth and all, sea and all. [25] Then I would tie the cord around a ridge of Olympus ²⁶ and then everything would be in mid-air. ²⁷ That is how much superior I am to gods and men.”

They were frightened and all of them of held their peace, for he had spoken masterfully; [30] but at last owl-vision Athena answered, "Father, son of Kronos, king of kings, we all know that your might is not to be gainsaid, but we are also sorry for the Danaan warriors, who are perishing and coming to a bad end. [35] We will, however, since you so bid us, refrain from actual fighting, but we will make serviceable

suggestions to the Argives that they may not all of them perish in your displeasure."

Zeus, the gatherer of clouds, smiled at her and answered, "Take heart, my child, Triton-born; I am not really in earnest, [40] and I wish to be kind to you."

With this he yoked his fleet horses, with hooves of bronze and manes of glittering gold. He girded himself also with gold about the body, seized his gold whip and took his seat in his chariot. Then [45] he lashed his horses and they flew forward without hesitation midway between earth and starry sky. After a while he reached Ida with its many fountains, mother of wild beasts, and Gargaros, where are his grove and fragrant altar. There the father of gods and men stayed his horses, [50] took them from the chariot, and hid them in a thick cloud; then he took his seat all glorious upon the topmost crests, looking down upon the city of Troy and the ships of the Achaeans.

The flowing-haired Achaeans took their morning meal hastily at the ships, and afterwards put on their armor. The Trojans [55] on the other hand likewise armed themselves throughout the city, fewer in numbers but nevertheless eager perforce to do battle for their wives and children. All the gates were flung wide open, and horse and foot rushed forth with the tramp as of a great multitude.

[60] When they were got together in one place, shield clashed with shield, and spear with spear, in the conflict of mail-clad men. Mighty was the din as the bossed shields pressed hard on one another—cry and shout of triumph [65] of slain and slayers, and the earth ran red with blood.

Now so long as the day waxed and it was still morning their weapons beat against one another, and the people fell, but when the sun had reached the mid-point of the sky, the father of all balanced his golden

scales, [70] and put two fates of death within them, one for the Trojans, breakers of horses, and the other for the bronze-armored Achaeans. He took the balance by the middle, and when he lifted it up the day of the Achaeans sank; the death-fraught scale of the Achaeans settled down upon the ground, while that of the Trojans rose toward the sky. [75] Then he thundered aloud from Ida, and sent the glare of his lightning upon the Achaeans; when they saw this, pale fear fell upon them and they were mightily afraid.

Idomeneus dared not stay nor yet Agamemnon, nor did the two Ajaxes, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, hold their ground. [80] Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, alone stood firm, bulwark of the Achaeans, not of his own will, but one of his horses was disabled. Radiant Alexandros, husband of lovely-haired Helen, had hit it with an arrow just on the top of its head where the mane begins to grow away from the skull, a very deadly place. [85] The horse bounded in his anguish as the arrow pierced his brain, and his struggles threw others into confusion. The old man instantly began cutting the traces with his sword, but Hector's fleet horses bore down upon him through the rout with their bold charioteer, [90] even Hector himself, and the old man would have perished there and then had not Diomedes been quick to mark, and with a loud cry called Odysseus to help him.

“Resourceful Odysseus,” he cried, “noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, where are you fleeing to, with your back turned like a coward? [95] See that you are not struck with a spear between the shoulders. Stay here and help me to defend Nestor from this man's furious onset.”

Long-suffering great Odysseus would not give ear, but sped onward to the ships of the Achaeans, and the son of Tydeus flinging himself alone into the thick of the fight [100] took his stand before the horses of the son of Neleus. “Sir,” said he, “these young warriors are pressing you hard, your force is spent, and age is heavy upon you, your attendant [*therapōn*] is naught, and your horses are slow to move. [105] Mount my

chariot and see what the horses of Tros can do—how cleverly they can scud here and there over the plain either in flight or in pursuit. I took them from the hero Aeneas. Let our attendants [*theraponte*] attend to your own steeds, but [110] let us drive straight at the Trojans, breakers of horses, that Hector may learn how furiously I too can wield my spear.”

Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, hearkened to his words. Then the two mighty attendants [*theraponte*], Sthenelos and kind-hearted Eurymedon, saw to Nestor’s horses, [115] while the two both mounted Diomedes’ chariot. Nestor took the reins in his hands and lashed the horses on; they were soon close up with Hector, and the son of Tydeus aimed a spear at him as he was charging full speed towards them. He missed him, but struck his charioteer and attendant [*therapōn*] [120] Eniopeus, son of noble Thebaïos, in the breast by the nipple while the reins were in his hands, so that he lost his life-breath [*psūkhē*] there and then, and the horses swerved as he fell headlong from the chariot. [125] Hector was greatly grieved at the loss of his charioteer, but let him lie for all his sorrow [*akhos*], while he went in quest of another driver; nor did his steeds have to go long without one, for he presently found brave Arkheptolemos, the bold son of Iphitos, and made him get up behind the horses, giving the reins into his hand.

[130] All had then been lost and no help for it, for they would have been penned up in Ilion like sheep, had not the father of gods and men been quick to mark, and hurled a fiery flaming thunderbolt which fell just in front of Diomedes’ horses [135] with a flare of burning brimstone. The horses were frightened and tried to back beneath the car, while the reins dropped from Nestor’s hands. Then he was afraid and said to Diomedes, “Son of Tydeus, turn your horses in flight; [140] see you not that the hand of Zeus, son of Kronos, is against you? Today he grants victory to Hector; tomorrow, if it so please him, he will again grant it to ourselves; no man, however brave, may thwart the purpose [*noos*] of Zeus, for he is far stronger than any.”

[145] Diomedes of the great war cry answered, “All that you have said is true; there is a grief [*akhos*] however which pierces me to the very heart, for Hector will talk among the Trojans and say, ‘The son of Tydeus fled before me to the ships.’ [150] This is the boast he will make, and may earth then swallow me.”

“Son of brave Tydeus,” replied Nestor, “what mean you? Though Hector say that you are a coward the Trojans and Dardanians will not believe him, [155] nor yet the wives of the mighty warriors whom you have laid low.”

So saying he turned the horses back through the thick of the battle, and with a cry that rent the air the Trojans and Hector rained their darts after them. [160] Tall Hector of the shining helmet shouted to him and said, “Son of Tydeus, the Danaans have done you honor before now as regards your place at table, the meals they give you, and the filling of your cup with wine. Henceforth they will despise you, for you are become no better than a woman. Be off, girl and coward that you are, you shall not scale our walls [165] through any hesitation on my part; neither shall you carry off our wives in your ships, for I shall give you with my own hand the fate [*daimōn*] of death.”

The son of Tydeus was in two minds whether or not to turn his horses round again and fight him. Thrice did he doubt, [170] and three times did Zeus thunder from the heights of Ida as a sign [*sēma*] to the Trojans that he would turn the battle in their favor. Hector then shouted to them and said, “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians, lovers of close fighting, be men, my friends, and fight with might and with main; [175] I see that Zeus is minded to grant victory and great glory to myself, while he will deal destruction upon the Danaans. Fools, for having thought of building this weak and worthless wall. It shall not stay my fury; my horses will spring lightly over their trench, [180] but when I get to the hollow ships ¹⁸¹ let there be some memory [*mnēmosunē*], in the future, of the burning fire, ¹⁸² how I will set the ships on fire and kill ¹⁸³ the Argives

[= Achaeans] right by their ships, confounded as they will be by the smoke.”

Then he cried to his horses, [185] “Xanthos and Podargos, and you Aithon and goodly Lampos, pay me for your keep now and for all the honey-sweet wheat with which Andromache, daughter of high-hearted Eëtion, has fed you, and for she has mixed wine and water for you to drink whenever you would, before doing so [190] even for me who am her own husband. Haste in pursuit, that we may take the shield of Nestor, the fame [*kleos*] of which ascends to the sky, for it is of solid gold, arm-rods and all, and that we may strip from the shoulders of Diomedes, breaker of horses, [195] the cuirass which Hephaistos made him. Could we take these two things, the Achaeans would set sail in their ships this self-same night.”

Thus did he boast, but Queen Hera made high Olympus quake as she shook with rage upon her throne. [200] Then said she to the mighty god of Poseidon, “What now, wide ruling lord of the earthquake? Can you find no compassion in your heart for the dying Danaans, who bring you many a welcome offering to Helike and to Aigai? Wish them well then. [205] If all of us who are with the Danaans were to drive the Trojans back and keep Zeus of the broad brows from helping them, he would have to sit there sulking alone on Ida.”

King Poseidon was greatly troubled and answered, “Hera, rash of tongue, what are you talking about? [210] We other gods must not set ourselves against Zeus son of Kronos, for he is far stronger than we are.”

Thus did they converse; but the whole space enclosed by the ditch, from the ships even to the wall, was filled with horses and warriors, who were [215] pent up there by Hector son of Priam, now that the hand of Zeus was with him. He would even have set fire to the ships and burned them, had not Queen Hera put it into the mind of Agamemnon, to bestir himself and to encourage the Achaeans. [220] To this end he went

round the ships and tents carrying a great purple cloak, and took his stand by the huge black hull of Odysseus' ship, which was middlemost of all; it was from this place that his voice would carry farthest, on the one hand towards the tents of Ajax son of Telamon, [225] and on the other towards those of Achilles—for these two heroes, well assured of their own strength, had valorously drawn up their ships at the two ends of the line. From this spot then, with a voice that could be heard afar, he shouted to the Danaans, saying, ²²⁸ “Shame, Argives! Though splendid in appearance, you are base objects of blame. ²²⁸ Where have the boasts gone, when we said that we are the best [*aristoi*]? [230] These boasts you uttered, saying empty words, at Lemnos, ²³¹ when you were eating the abundant meat of straight-horned oxen ²³² and drinking from great bowls filled to the brim with wine, ²³³ how any one of you could each stand up against a hundred or even two hundred Trojans ²³⁴ in battle. But now we cannot even match one of them, [235] Hector, who is about to set fire to our ships with burning fire. Father Zeus, did you ever bring such ruin [*atē*] to a great king and rob him so utterly of his greatness? Yet, when to my sorrow I was coming here, I never let my ship pass [240] your altars without offering the fat and thigh-bones of heifers upon every one of them, so eager was I to destroy the strong-walled city of Troy. Grant me then this prayer—allow us to escape at any rate with our lives, and let not the Achaeans be so utterly vanquished by the Trojans.”

[245] Thus did he pray, and father Zeus pitying his tears granted that his people should live, not die; right away he sent them an eagle, most unfailingly portentous of all birds, with a young fawn in its talons; the eagle dropped the fawn by the altar [250] on which the Achaeans sacrificed to Zeus, the lord of omens. When, therefore, the people saw that the bird had come from Zeus, they sprang more fiercely upon the Trojans and fought more boldly.

There was no man of all the many Danaans who could then boast that he had driven his horses over the trench and gone forth to fight sooner than the son of Tydeus; [255] long before any one else could do so he slew an armed warrior of the Trojans, Agelaos, the son of Phradmon. He had turned his horses in flight, but the spear struck him in the back midway between his shoulders and went right through his chest, [260] and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell forward from his chariot.

After him came Agamemnon and Menelaos, sons of Atreus, the two Ajaxes clothed in valor as with a garment, Idomeneus and his companion in arms Meriones, peer of manslaughtering Arēs, [265] and Eurypylos, the brave son of Euaimon. Ninth came Teucer with his bow, and took his place under cover of the shield of Ajax son of Telamon. When Ajax lifted his shield Teucer would peer round, and when he had hit any one in the throng, [270] the man would fall dead; then Teucer would hasten back to Ajax as a child to its mother, and again duck down under his shield.

Which of the Trojans did brave Teucer first kill? Orsilokhos, and then Ormenos and Ophelestes, [275] Daitor, Khromios, and godlike Lykophontes, Amopaon, son of Polyaimon, and Melanippos. These in turn did he lay low upon the earth, and King Agamemnon the lord of men was glad when he saw him making havoc of the Trojans with his mighty bow. [280] He went up to him and said, “Teucer, man after my own heart, son of Telamon, chief among the army of warriors, shoot on, and be at once the saving of the Danaans and the glory of your father Telamon, who brought you up and took care of you in his own house when you were a child, bastard though you were. [285] Cover him with glory though he is far off; I will promise and I will assuredly perform; if aegis-bearing Zeus and Athena grant me to destroy the city of Ilion, you shall have the next best prize [290] of honor after my own—a tripod, or two horses with their chariot, or a woman who shall go up into your bed.”

[292] And Teucer the blameless answered, “Most noble son of Atreus, you need not urge me; from the moment we began to drive them back to strong-founded citadel of Ilion, I have never ceased so far as in me lies to look out for men whom I can shoot and kill; I have shot eight barbed shafts, and all of them have been buried in the flesh of warlike youths, but I cannot hit this mad dog, with his wolfish rage [*lyssa*].”

[300] As he spoke he aimed another arrow straight at Hector, for he was bent on hitting him; nevertheless he missed him, and the arrow hit Priam’s brave son Gorgythion the blameless in the breast. [305] His mother, fair Kastianeira, lovely as a goddess, had been married from Aisyme, and now he bowed his head as a garden poppy in full bloom when it is weighed down by showers in spring—even thus heavy bowed his head beneath the weight of his helmet.

[310] Again he aimed at Hector, for he was longing to hit him, and again his arrow missed, for Apollo turned it aside; but he hit Hector’s brave charioteer Arkheptolemos in the breast, by the nipple, as he was driving furiously into the fight. The horses swerved aside as he fell headlong from the chariot, [315] and there was no life [*psūkhē*] left in him. Hector was greatly grieved at the loss of his charioteer, but for all his sorrow [*akhos*] he let him lie where he fell, and bade his brother Kebriones, who was hard by, take the reins. Kebriones did as he had said.

[320] Hector then with a loud cry sprang from his chariot to the ground, and seizing a great stone made straight for Teucer with intent kill him. Teucer had just taken an arrow from his quiver and had laid it upon the bow-string, but shining-helmed Hector struck him with the jagged stone as he was taking aim and drawing the string to his shoulder; he hit him just where the collar-bone divides the neck from the chest, [325] a very deadly place, and broke the sinew of his arm so that his wrist was less, and the bow dropped from his hand as he fell forward on his knees. Ajax [330] saw that his brother had fallen, and running towards him bestrode him and sheltered him with his shield. Meanwhile his two trusty attendants, Mekisteus, son of Ekhios, and

radiant Alastor, came up and bore him to the ships groaning in his great pain.

[335] Zeus now again put heart into the Trojans, and they drove the Achaeans to their deep trench with Hector in all his glory at their head. As a hound grips a wild boar or lion in [340] flank or buttock when he gives him chase, and watches warily for his wheeling, even so did Hector follow close upon the flowing-haired Achaeans, ever killing the hindmost as they rushed panic-stricken onwards. When they had fled through the set stakes and trench and many Achaeans had been laid low at the hands of the Trojans, [345] they halted at their ships, calling upon one another and praying every man instantly as they lifted up their hands to the gods; but Hector wheeled his horses this way and that, his eyes glaring like those of Gorgo or manslaughtering Arēs.

[350] Hera, the goddess of the white arms, when she saw them had pity upon them, and at once said to Athena, “Alas, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, shall you and I take no more thought for the dying Danaans, though it be the last time we ever do so? See how they perish [355] and come to a bad end before the onset of but a single man. Hector the son of Priam rages with intolerable fury, and has already done great mischief.”

Owl-vision Athena answered, “Would, indeed, this man might die in his own land, and fall by the hands of the Achaeans; [360] but my father Zeus is mad with spleen, ever foiling me, ever headstrong and unjust. He forgets how often I saved his son when he was worn out by the labors [āthloi] Eurystheus had laid on him. He would weep till his cry came up to the sky, [365] and then Zeus would send me down to help him; if I had had the sense to foresee all this, when Eurystheus sent him to the house of Hādēs, to fetch the infernal hound from Erebus, he would never have come back alive out of the deep waters of the river Styx. [370] And now Zeus hates me, while he lets Thetis have her way because she kissed his knees and took hold of his beard, when she was

begging him to do honor to Achilles, ransacker of cities. I shall know what to do next time he begins calling me his owl-vision darling. Get our horses ready, [375] while I go within the house of aegis-bearing Zeus and put on my armor; we shall then find out whether Priam's son Hector of the shining helmet will be glad to meet us in the highways of battle, or whether the Trojans will glut hounds and vultures [380] with the fat of their flesh as they be dead by the ships of the Achaeans."

Thus did she speak and white-armed Hera, exalted goddess and daughter of great Kronos, obeyed her words; she set about harnessing her gold-bedizened steeds, while Athena daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus [385] flung her richly vesture, made with her own hands, on to the threshold of her father, and donned the khiton of Zeus who gathers clouds, arming herself for battle. Then she stepped into her flaming chariot, and grasped the spear [390] so stout and sturdy and strong with which she quells the ranks of heroes who have displeased her. Hera lashed her horses, and the gates of the sky bellowed as they flew open of their own accord—gates over which the Seasons [*hōrai*] preside, in whose hands are the sky and Olympus, either [395] to open the dense cloud that hides them or to close it. Through these the goddesses drove their obedient steeds.

But father Zeus when he saw them from Ida was very angry, and sent golden-winged Iris with a message to them. "Go," said he, "fleet Iris, turn them back, and see that they do not come near me, [400] for if we come to fighting there will be mischief. This is what I say, and this is what I mean to do. I will lame their horses for them; I will hurl them from their chariot, and will break it in pieces. It will take them all ten years to heal [405] the wounds my lightning shall inflict upon them; my owl-vision daughter will then learn what quarrelling with her father means. I am less surprised and angry with Hera, for whatever I say she always contradicts me."

With this storm-footed Iris went her way, [410] fleet as the wind, from the heights of Ida to the lofty summits of Olympus. She met the goddesses at the outer gates of its many valleys and gave them her message. “What,” said she, “are you about? Are you mad? The son of Kronos forbids going. [415] This is what he says, and this is he means to do, he will lame your horses for you, he will hurl you from your chariot, and will break it in pieces. It will take you all ten years to heal the wounds his lightning will inflict upon you, that [420] you may learn, owl-vision goddess, what quarrelling with your father means. He is less hurt and angry with Hera, for whatever he says she always contradicts him but you, bold hussy, will you really dare to raise your huge spear in defiance of Zeus?”

[425] With this she left them, and Hera said to Athena, “Truly, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, I am not for fighting men’s battles further in defiance of Zeus. Let them live or die as luck [430] will have it, and let Zeus mete out his judgments upon the Trojans and Danaans according to his own pleasure.”

She turned her steeds; the Seasons [*Hōrai*] presently unyoked them, made them fast to their ambrosial mangers, [435] and leaned the chariot against the end wall of the courtyard. The two goddesses then sat down upon their golden thrones, amid the company of the other gods; but they were very angry.

Presently father Zeus drove his chariot to Olympus, and entered the assembly of gods. [440] The mighty lord of the earthquake unyoked his horses for him, set the car upon its stand, and threw a cloth over it. Zeus of the wide brows then sat down upon his golden throne and Olympus reeled beneath him. Athena and Hera sat alone, apart [445] from Zeus, and neither spoke nor asked him questions, but Zeus knew what they meant, and said, “Athena and Hera, why are you so angry? Are you fatigued with killing so many of your dear friends the Trojans? [450] Be this as it may, such is the might of my hands that all the gods in

Olympus cannot turn me; you were both of you trembling all over before ever you saw the fight and its terrible doings. I tell you therefore—and it would have surely been— [455] I should have struck you with lightning, and your chariots would never have brought you back again to Olympus.”

Athena and Hera groaned in spirit as they sat side-by-side and brooded mischief for the Trojans. Athena sat silent without a word, for she was in a [460] furious passion and bitterly incensed against her father; but Hera could not contain herself and said, “What, dread son of Kronos, are you talking about? We know how great your power is, nevertheless we have compassion upon the Danaan warriors [465] who are perishing and coming to a bad end. We will, however, since you so bid us, refrain from actual fighting, but we will make serviceable suggestions to the Argives, that they may not all of them perish in your displeasure.”

And Zeus who gathers clouds answered, [470] “Tomorrow morning, ox-vision Hera, if you choose to do so, you will see the son of Kronos destroying large numbers of the Argives, for fierce Hector shall not cease fighting till he has roused the swift-footed son of Peleus [475] when they are fighting in dire straits at their ships’ sterns about the body of fallen Patroklos. Like it or no, this is how it is decreed; for all I care, you may go to the lowest depths beneath earth and sea [*pontos*], where Iapetos and Kronos dwell [480] in lone Tartaros with neither ray of light nor breath of wind to cheer them. You may go on and on till you get there, and I shall not care one whit for your displeasure; you are the greatest vixen living.”

Hera of the white arms made him no answer. [485] The sun’s glorious orb now sank into Okeanos and drew down night over the grain-giving land. Sorry indeed were the Trojans when light failed them, but welcome and thrice prayed for did darkness fall upon the Achaeans.

Then glorious Hector led the Trojans [490] back from the ships, and held a council on the open space near the river, where there was a spot clear of corpses. They left their chariots and sat down on the ground to hear the speech he made them. He grasped a spear eleven cubits long, [495] the bronze point of which gleamed in front of it, while the ring round the spearhead was of gold. Spear in hand he spoke. "Hear me," said he, "Trojans, Dardanians, and allies. I thought but now that I should destroy the ships and all the Achaeans with them before I went back to Ilion, [500] but darkness came on too soon. It was this alone that saved them and their ships upon the seashore. Now, therefore, let us obey the behests of night, and prepare our suppers. Take your horses out of their chariots and give them their feeds of wheat; [505] then make speed to bring sheep and cattle from the city; bring wine also and wheat for your horses and gather much wood, that from dark till dawn we may burn watchfires whose flare may reach to the sky. [510] For the flowing-haired Achaeans may try to flee beyond the sea by night, and they must not embark unscathed and unmolested; many a man among them must take a dart with him to nurse at home, hit with spear or arrow as he is [515] leaping on board his ship, that others may fear to bring war and weeping upon the Trojans. Moreover let the heralds tell it about the city that the growing youths and gray-bearded men are to camp upon its divinely built walls. [520] Let the women each of them light a great fire in her house, and let watch be safely kept lest the town be entered by surprise while the army of warriors is outside. See to it, brave Trojans, as I have said, and let this suffice for the moment; [525] at daybreak I will instruct you further. I pray in hope to Zeus and to the gods that we may then drive those fate-spined hounds from our land, for 'tis the fates that have borne them and their ships here. This night, therefore, let us keep watch, but with [530] early morning let us put on our armor and rouse fierce war at the ships of the Achaeans; I shall then know whether brave Diomedes the son of Tydeus will drive me back from the ships to the wall, or whether I shall myself slay him and carry off his bloodstained spoils. [535] Tomorrow let him show his mettle [*aretē*], abide my spear if he dare. I bet that at break of day, he shall be among the first to fall and

many another of his comrades round him. ⁵³⁸ If only I were ⁵³⁹ immortal and unaging for all days to come, [540] and if only I were honored [=got *tīmē*] just as Athena and Apollo are honored [=get *tīmē*] ⁵⁴¹ —as surely as this day brings misfortune to the Argives.”

Thus spoke Hector and the Trojans shouted approval. They took their sweating steeds from under the yoke, and made them fast each by his own chariot. [545] They made haste to bring sheep and cattle from the city, they brought wine also and wheat from their houses and gathered much wood. They then offered unblemished hecatombs to the immortals, and the wind carried the [550] sweet savor of sacrifice to the gods—but the blessed gods did not partake of it, for they bitterly hated Ilion with Priam of the strong ash spear and Priam’s people. Thus high in hope they sat through the livelong night by the highways of war, and many a watchfire did they kindle. [555] As when the stars shine clear, and the moon is bright—there is not a breath of air, not a peak nor glade nor jutting headland but it stands out in the ineffable radiance that breaks forth from the sky; the stars can all of them be told and the heart of the shepherd is glad— [560] even thus shone the watchfires of the Trojans before Ilion midway between the ships and the river Xanthos. A thousand camp-fires gleamed upon the plain, and in the glow of each there sat fifty men, while the horses, champing [565] oats and wheat beside their chariots, waited till dawn should come.

Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 9

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thus did the Trojans watch. But Panic, comrade of bloodstained Rout, had taken fast hold of the Achaeans and their princes were all of them in despair. As when the two winds [5] that blow from Thrace—the north and the northwest—spring up of a sudden and rouse the fury of the sea [*pontos*]¹—in a moment the dark waves rear up their heads and scatter their sea-wrack in all directions—even thus troubled were the hearts of the Achaeans.

The son of Atreus in dismay [10] bade the heralds call the people to a council man by man, but not to cry the matter aloud; he made haste also himself to call them, and they sat sorry at heart in their assembly.

Agamemnon shed tears as it were a running stream or cataract [15] on the side of some sheer cliff; and thus, with many a heavy sigh he spoke to the Achaeans. “My friends,” said he, “princes and councilors! Of the Argives, Zeus, son of Kronos, has tied me down with derangement [*atē*] more than anyone else. The cruel god gave me his solemn promise [20] that I should destroy the city of Troy before returning, but he has played me false, and is now bidding me go ingloriously back to Argos with the loss of much people. Such is the will of Zeus, who has laid many a proud city in the dust [25] as he will yet lay others, for his power is above all. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say and sail back to our own country, for we shall not take Troy.”

Thus he spoke, and the sons of the Achaeans [30] for a long while sat sorrowful there, but they all held their peace, till at last Diomedes of the loud battle-cry made answer saying, “Son of Atreus, I will chide your folly, as is my right [*themis*] in council. Be not then aggrieved that I

should do so. In the first place you attacked me before all the Danaans and said that I was a coward and no warrior. The Argives young [35] and old know that you did so. But the son of scheming Kronos endowed you by halves only. He gave you honor as the chief ruler over us, but valor, which is the highest both right and might he did not give you. [40] Sir, think you that the sons of the Achaeans are indeed as unwarlike and cowardly as you say they are? If your own mind is set upon going home—go—the way is open to you; the many ships that followed you from Mycenae stand ranged upon the seashore; [45] but the rest of us stay here till we have destroyed Troy. I tell you: though these too should turn homeward with their ships, Sthenelos and myself will still fight on till we reach the goal of Ilion, for the gods were with us when we came.”

[50] The sons of the Achaeans shouted approval at the words of Diomedes, breaker of horses, and presently Nestor the charioteer rose to speak. “Son of Tydeus,” said he, “in war your prowess is beyond question, and in council you excel all who are of your own years; [55] no one of the Achaeans can make light of what you say nor gainsay it, but you have not yet come to the end [*telos*] of the whole matter. You are still young—you might be the youngest of my own children—still you have spoken wisely and have counseled the chief of the Achaeans not without discretion; [60] nevertheless I am older than you and I will tell you everything; therefore let no man, not even King Agamemnon, disregard my saying, for he that foment civil discord is a clanless, hearthless outlaw.

[65] Now, however, let us obey the behests of night and get our suppers, but let the sentinels every man of them camp by the trench that is without the wall. I am giving these instructions to the young men; when they have been attended to, do you, son of Atreus, give your orders, for you are the most royal among us all. [70] Prepare a feast for your councilors; it is right and reasonable that you should do so; there is abundance of wine in your tents, which the ships of the Achaeans bring from Thrace daily. You have everything at your disposal wherewith to

entertain guests, and you have many subjects. When many are got together, you can be guided by him whose [75] counsel is wisest—and sorely do we need shrewd and prudent counsel, for the foe has lit his watchfires hard by our ships. Who can be other than dismayed? This night will either be the ruin of our army of warriors, or save it.”

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. [80] The sentinels went out in their armor under command of Nestor’s son Thrasymedes, a chief of the army, and of the bold warriors Askalaphos and Ialmenos: there were also Meriones, Aphareus and Deipyros, and the son of Kreion, noble Lykomedes. [85] There were seven chiefs of the sentinels, and with each there went a hundred youths armed with long spears: they took their places midway between the trench and the wall, and when they had done so they lit their fires and got every man his supper.

The son of Atreus then bade many councilors of the Achaeans [90] to his quarters and prepared a great feast in their honor. They laid their hands on the good things that were before them, and as soon as they had enough to eat and drink, old Nestor, whose counsel was ever truest, was the first to lay his mind before them. [95] He, therefore, with all sincerity and goodwill addressed them thus.

“With yourself, most noble son of Atreus, king of men, Agamemnon, will I both begin my speech and end it, for you are king over many people. Zeus, moreover, has granted that you wield the scepter and uphold things that are right [*themis*], that you may take thought for your people under you; [100] therefore it behooves you above all others both to speak and to give ear, and to turn into action the counsel of another who is minded to speak wisely. All turns on you and on your commands, therefore I will say what I think will be best. No man will be of a truer mind [*noos*] than [105] that which has been mine from the hour when you angered Achilles by taking the girl Briseis from his tent against my judgment [*noos*]. I urged you not to do so, but you yielded to your own pride, [110] and dishonored a hero whom the gods themselves had

honored—for you still hold the prize that had been awarded to him. Now, however, let us think how we may appease him, both with presents and fair speeches that may conciliate him.”

[115] And the lord of men, Agamemnon, answered, “You have reproved my derangement [*atē* pl.] justly. I was wrong. I own it. One whom the gods befriend is in himself a host, and Zeus has shown that he befriends this man by destroying much people of the Achaeans. I was blinded with passion and yielded to my lesser mind; [120] therefore I will make amends, and will give him great gifts by way of atonement. I will tell them in the presence of you all. I will give him seven tripods that have never yet been on the fire, and ten talents of gold. I will give him twenty iron cauldrons and twelve strong horses that have won races and carried off prizes. [125] Rich, indeed, both in land and gold is he that has as many prizes as my horses have won me. ¹²⁸ And I will give seven women, skilled in flawless handiwork [*erga*], ¹²⁹ women from Lesbos. These women, when Lesbos with all its beautiful settlements was captured by him [= Achilles] all by himself, [130] were chosen by me as my own share [of the war prizes], and in beauty they were winners over all other rival groups of women. ¹³¹ These are the women I will give him. And there will be among them the woman whom I took away back then, ¹³² the daughter of Brisēs [= Brisēis]; and I swear a great oath that I never went up into her couch, nor have been with her after the manner [*themis*] of men and women.

[135] “All these things will I give him now down, and if hereafter the gods grant that I destroy the city of Priam, let him come when we Achaeans are dividing the spoil, and load his ship with gold and bronze to his liking; furthermore let him take twenty Trojan women, [140] the loveliest after Helen herself. Then, when we reach Achaean Argos, wealthiest of all lands, he shall be my son-in-law and I will show him like honor with my own dear son Orestes, who is being nurtured in all abundance. I have three daughters, [145] Khrysothemis, Laodike, and Iphianassa, let him take the one of his choice, freely and without gifts of

wooing, to the house of Peleus; I will add such dower to boot as no man ever yet gave his daughter, and will give him seven well established cities, [150] Kardamyle, Enope, and Hirē, where there is grass; holy Pherai and the rich meadows of Anthea; lovely Aeipeia also, and the vine-clad slopes of Pedasos, all near the sea, and on the borders of sandy Pylos. The men that dwell there are rich in cattle and sheep; [155] they will honor him with gifts as though he were a god, and be obedient to his comfortable ordinances [*themis* pl.]. All this will I do if he will now forgo his anger. Let him then yield: it is only Hādēs who is utterly ruthless and unyielding—and hence he is of all gods the one most hateful to humankind. [160] Moreover I am older and more royal than himself. Therefore, let him now obey me.”

Then Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, answered, “Most noble son of Atreus, king of men, Agamemnon. The gifts you offer are no small ones, [165] let us then send chosen messengers, who may go to the tent of Achilles son of Peleus without delay. ¹⁶⁷ But come, let those upon whom I am looking take on the task. ¹⁶⁷ First of all, let Phoenix, dear to Zeus, take the lead; ¹⁶⁷ and after him the great Ajax and brilliant Odysseus, [170] and of the heralds let Odios and Eurybates accompany them. Now bring water for our hands, and bid all keep silence while we pray to Zeus the son of Kronos, if so be that he may have mercy upon us.”

Thus did he speak, and his saying pleased them well. Men-servants poured water over [175] the hands of the guests, while attendants filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water, and handed it round after giving every man his drink-offering; then, when they had made their offerings, and had drunk each as much as he was minded, the envoys set out from the tent of Agamemnon son of Atreus; ¹⁷⁹ And the Gerenian horseman Nestor gave them many instructions, [180] making signs with his eyes at each, especially at Odysseus, ¹⁸¹ that they try to persuade the blameless son of Peleus.

¹⁸² And the two went along the shore of the much-roaring sea, and prayed earnestly to earth-encircling Poseidon that the high spirit of the descendant of Aiakos might incline favorably towards them. [185] The two of them reached the shelters and the ships of the Myrmidons, ¹⁸⁶ and they found Achilles diverting his heart [*phrēn*] as he was playing on a clear-sounding lyre [*phorminx*], ¹⁸⁷ a beautiful one, of exquisite workmanship, and its cross-bar was of silver. ¹⁸⁸ It was part of the spoils that he had taken when he destroyed the city of Eëtion, ¹⁸⁹ and he was now diverting his heart [*thūmos*] with it as he was singing [*aeidein*] the glories of men [*klea andrōn*]. [190] Patroklos was the only other person there. He [= Patroklos] sat in silence, facing him [= Achilles], ¹⁹¹ and waiting for the Aeacid [= Achilles] to leave off singing [*aeidein*]. ¹⁹² Meanwhile the two of them came in—radiant Odysseus leading the way — ¹⁹³ and stood before him. Achilles sprang up from his seat ¹⁹⁴ with the lyre [*phorminx*] still in his hand, [195] and Patroklos, when he saw the guests, rose also. ¹⁹⁶ Greeting the two of them, swift-footed Achilles said: ¹⁹⁷ “Hail to the two of you: you have come as friends [*philoi*]. I need you very much— ¹⁹⁸ you two who are the dearest [= most *philos*] to me among the Achaeans, even now when I am angry.”

With this he led them forward, [200] and bade them sit on seats covered with purple rugs; then he said to Patroklos who was close by him, “Son of Menoitios, set a larger bowl upon the table, mix less water with the wine, and give every man his cup, for these are very dear friends, who are now under my roof.”

[205] Patroklos did as his comrade bade him; he set the chopping-block in front of the fire, and on it he laid the loin of a sheep, the loin also of a goat, and the chine of a fat hog. Automedon held the meat while radiant Achilles chopped it; he then sliced the pieces and put them on spits while [210] the son of Menoitios made the fire burn high. When the flame had died down, he spread the embers, laid the spits on top of them, lifting them up and setting them upon the spit-racks; and he

sprinkled them with salt. [215] When the meat was roasted, he set it on platters, and handed bread round the table in fair baskets, while Achilles dealt them their portions. Then Achilles took his seat facing the godlike Odysseus against the opposite wall, and bade his comrade Patroklos [220] offer sacrifice to the gods; so he cast the offerings into the fire, and they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, ²²³ Ajax nodded to Phoenix; and brilliant Odysseus took note [*noeîn*], filled his cup with wine and pledged Achilles.

[225] “Hail, Achilles! You will not be without a fair *dais* ²²⁶ either in the tent of Agamemnon son of Atreus ²²⁷ or here and now. There is at hand much that would suit your *menos*, ²²⁸ for you to have as *dais*. But the concern is not about a pleasant *dais*. ²²⁹ Rather, we are facing a great pain [*pēma*], O cherished-by-Zeus [*diotrephēs*], [230] and we are in doubt. It can go either way, whether we can save or lose ²³¹ the ships with their fair benches. The Trojans and their allies have camped hard by our ships and by the wall; they have lit watchfires throughout their army of warriors and deem that nothing [235] can now prevent them from falling on our fleet. Zeus, moreover, has sent his signals [*sēma* pl.] on their right; Hector, in all his glory, rages like a madman; confident that Zeus, son of Kronos, is with him he fears neither god nor man, but a wolfish rage [*lyssa*] has entered him, [240] and he prays for the approach of day. He vows that he will hew the high sterns of our ships in pieces, set fire to their hulls, and make havoc of the Achaeans while they are dazed and smothered in smoke; I much fear that the gods [245] will make good his boasting, and it will prove our lot to perish at Troy far from our home in Argos. Up, then! And late though it be, save the sons of the Achaeans who faint before the fury of the Trojans. ²⁴⁹ You yourself will have an *akhos* in the future, [250] and there will be no way to find a remedy [*akos*] for the bad thing once it is done. Consider before it be too late, and save the Danaans from destruction.

My good friend, when your father Peleus sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon, did he not charge you saying, 'Son, Athena and Hera will make you strong [255] if they choose, but check your high temper, for the better part is in goodwill. Eschew vain quarrelling, and the Achaeans old and young will respect you more for doing so.' These were his words, but you have forgotten them. Even now, [260] Stop! Abandon your anger, which causes pain for your *thūmos*. Agamemnon will make you great amends if you will forgive him; listen, and I will tell you what he has said in his tent that he will give you. He will give you seven tripods that have never yet been on the fire, and ten talents of gold; twenty [265] iron cauldrons, and twelve strong horses that have won races and carried off prizes. Rich indeed both in land and gold is he who has as many prizes as these horses have won for Agamemnon. [270] And he [= Agamemnon] will give seven women, skilled in flawless handiwork [*erga*], ²⁷¹ women from Lesbos. These women, when Lesbos with all its beautiful settlements was captured by you [= Achilles] all by yourself, ²⁷² were chosen by him as his own share [of the war prizes], and in beauty they were winners, back then, over all other rival groups of women. ²⁷³ These are the women that he will give you. And there will be among them the woman whom he took away back then, ²⁷⁴ the daughter of Brisēs [= Brisēis]; and he will swear a great oath, [275] he has never gone up into her couch nor been with her after the manner [*themis*] of men and women. All these things will he give you now down, and if hereafter the gods grant that he destroy the city of Priam, you can come when we Achaeans are dividing the spoil, and load your ship with [280] gold and bronze to your liking. You can take twenty Trojan women, the loveliest after Helen herself. Then, when we reach Achaean Argos, wealthiest of all lands, you shall be his son-in-law, and he will show you like honor with his own dear son Orestes, [285] who is being nurtured in all abundance. Agamemnon has three daughters, Khrysothemis, Laodike, and Iphianassa; you may take the one of your choice, freely and without gifts of wooing, to the house of Peleus; he will add such dower [290] to boot as no man ever yet gave his daughter, and will give you

seven well-established cities, Kardamyle, Enope, and Hirē where there is grass; holy Pherai and the rich meadows of Anthea; lovely Aipeia also, and the vine-clad slopes of Pedasos, [295] all near the sea, and on the borders of sandy Pylos. The men that dwell there are rich in cattle and sheep; they will honor you with gifts as if you were a god, and be obedient to your comfortable ordinances [*themis* pl.]. All this will he do if you will now forgo your anger. [300] Moreover, though you hate both him and his gifts with all your heart, yet pity the rest of the Achaeans who are being hard pressed as the whole army of warriors; they will honor you as a god, and you will earn great glory at their hands. You might even kill Hector; he will come within your reach, [305] for he has a wolfish rage [*lyssa*] and declares that not a Danaan whom the ships have brought can hold his own against him.”

Swift-footed Achilles answered, ³⁰⁸ “Descended from Zeus, son of Laertes, you of many resources, Odysseus: ³⁰⁸ I see that I must say what I say back to you without mincing words, [310] just the way I think, and the way it will be that the outcome has been reached [*teleîn*]. ³¹¹ So do not try to cajole me, taking turns sitting down next to me. ³¹² Here is why. Hateful [*ekhthros*] is that man to me, as hateful as the gates of Hādēs, ³¹³ the man who hides one thing in his thinking and says another thing. ³¹⁴ As for me, I will say it the way it seems best to me. [315] I will be appeased neither by Agamemnon son of Atreus nor by any other of the Danaans, for I see that I have no thanks [*kharis*] for all my fighting. He that fights fares no better than he that does not; coward and hero are held in equal honor [*tīmē*], [320] and death deals like measure to him who works and him who is idle. I have taken nothing by all my hardships—with my life [*psūkhē*] ever in my hand; as a bird when she has found a morsel takes it to her nestlings, and herself fares hardly, [325] even so many a long night have I been wakeful, and many a bloody battle have I waged by day against those who were fighting for their women. With my ships I have taken twelve cities, and eleven round about Troy have I stormed with my men by land; [330] I took great

store of wealth from every one of them, but I gave all up to
 Agamemnon, son of Atreus. He stayed where he was by his ships, yet of
 what came to him he gave little, and kept much himself. Nevertheless he
 did distribute some prizes of honor among the chieftains and kings,
 [335] and these have them still; from me alone of the Achaeans did he
 take the woman in whom I delighted—let him keep her and sleep with
 her. Why, pray, must the Argives fight the Trojans? What made the son
 of Atreus gather the army of warriors and bring them? Was it not for the
 sake of Helen? [340] Are the only mortal men in the world who love
 their wives ³⁴¹ the sons of Atreus? I ask this question because any man
 who is noble and sensible ³⁴² loves [*phileîn*] and cherishes her who is his
 own, just as I, with regard to her [= Brisēis] ³⁴³ with my whole heart did
 I love [*phileîn*] her, though she was only the prize of my spear.
 Agamemnon has taken her from me; he has played me false; [345] I
 know him; let him tempt me no further, for he shall not move me. ³⁴⁶
 Let him, Odysseus, along with you ³⁴⁷ and the other kings devise a way
 to ward off the destructive fire from the ships. ³⁴⁸ He has indeed labored
 greatly in my absence, ³⁴⁹ and he has even built a wall and driven a ditch
 around it [350] —wide and big it is—and he has fastened stakes inside. ³⁵¹
 Even so he cannot hold back the strength of Hector the man-killer. So
 long as I fought the Achaeans Hector did not let the battle range far
 from the city walls; he would come to the Scaean gates and to the oak
 tree, but no further. [355] Once he stayed to meet me and hardly did he
 escape my onset: now, however, since I am in no mood to fight him, I
 will tomorrow offer sacrifice to Zeus and to all the gods; I will draw my
 ships into the water and then victual them duly; tomorrow morning, if
 you care to look, you will see [360] my ships on the Hellespont, and my
 men rowing out to sea with might and main. If Poseidon the shaker of
 the earth grants me a fair passage, in three days I shall be in generous
 Phthia. I have much there that I left behind me when I came here [365]
 to my sorrow, and I shall bring back still further store of gold, of red
 copper, of fair women, and of iron, my share of the spoils that we have
 taken; but one prize, he who gave has insolently taken away. Tell him all

as I now bid you, [370] and tell him in public that the Achaeans may hate him and beware of him should he think that he can yet dupe others for his effrontery never fails him.

As for me, hound that he is, he dares not look me in the face. I will take no counsel with him, and will undertake nothing in common with him. [375] He has wronged me and deceived me enough, he shall not cozen me further; let him go his own way, for Zeus of the counsels has robbed him of his reason. His presents are hateful [*ekhthra*] to me, and for him I care not a bit. He may offer me ten or even twenty times [380] what he has now done, or, more than that, all that he has in the world, both now and ever in the future. He may promise me the wealth of Orkhomenos or of Egyptian Thebes, which is the richest city in the whole world, for it has a hundred gates through each of which two hundred men may drive at once with their chariots and horses; [385] he may offer me gifts as many as the sands of the sea or the dust of the plain in multitude. But even so he shall not move me till I have been revenged in full for the bitter wrong he has done me. I will not marry his daughter; she may be fair as Aphrodite, [390] and skillful as owl-vision Athena, but I will have none of her: let another take her, who may be a good match for her and who rules a larger kingdom. If the gods spare me to return home, Peleus will find me a wife; [395] there are Achaean women in Hellas and Phthia, daughters of kings that have cities under them; of these I can take whom I will and marry her. Many a time was I minded when at home in Phthia to woo and wed a woman who would make me a suitable wife, [400] and to enjoy the riches of my old father Peleus. ⁴⁰¹ My life [*psūkhē*] is worth more to me than all the wealth ⁴⁰² that was once possessed, so they say, by that well-situated citadel of Ilion, ⁴⁰³ back when it was still at peace, before the coming of the Achaeans, ⁴⁰⁴ or than all the treasure that is stored inside when you enter the stone threshold of the one who shoots, [405] Phoebus Apollo, at rocky Pytho [= Delphi]. ⁴⁰⁶ Cattle and sheep can be rustled in a raid, ⁴⁰⁷ and one can acquire both tripods and horses with their golden manes if he wants them, ⁴⁰⁸ but a

man's life [*psūkhē*] can never come back—it cannot be rustled in a raid
409 and thus taken back—once it has passed through the barriers of his
teeth.

[410] My mother Thetis, goddess with silver steps, tells me that 411 I
carry the burden of two different fated ways [*kēres*] leading to the final
moment [*telos*] of death. 412 If I stay here and fight at the walls of the city
of the Trojans, then my safe homecoming [*nostos*] will be destroyed for
me, but I will have a glory [*kleos*] that is imperishable [*aphthiton*]. 414
Whereas if I go back home, returning to the dear land of my forefathers,
[415] then it is my glory [*kleos*], genuine [*esthlon*] as it is, that will be
destroyed for me, but my life force [*aiōn*] will then 416 last me a long
time, and the final moment [*telos*] of death will not be swift in catching
up with me. To the rest of you, then, I say, 'Go home, for you will not
take Ilion.' Zeus of the wide brows [420] has held his hand over her to
protect her, and her people have taken heart. 421 But you must go back to
the chieftains of the Achaeans 422 and give them this message—for that is
the privilege of the Elders— 423 that they should devise in their thoughts
another plan [*mētis*] that is better 424 and that will rescue their ships and
the host of the Achaeans [425] who are at the hollow ships. For this one
[this *mētis*], 426 which they now devised during the time of my anger,
does not suffice. As for Phoenix, let him sleep here that he may sail with
me in the morning if he so will. But I will not take him by force."

[430] They all held their peace, dismayed at the sternness with which he
had denied them, till presently the old charioteer Phoenix in his great
fear for the ships of the Achaeans, burst into tears and said, "Noble
Achilles, if you are now minded to have a return [*nostos*], [435] and in
the fierceness of your anger will do nothing to save the ships from
burning, how, my son, can I remain here without you? Your father
Peleus bade me go with you when he sent you as a mere lad from Phthia
to Agamemnon. [440] You knew nothing neither of war nor of the arts
whereby men make their mark in council, and he sent me with you to

train you in all excellence of speech and action. Therefore, my son, I will not [445] stay here without you—no, not even if the gods themselves grant me the gift of stripping my years from off me, and making me young as I was when I first left Hellas the land of fair women. I was then fleeing the anger of my father Amyntor, son of Ormenos, who was furious with me in the matter of his concubine, [450] of whom he was enamored to the wronging of his wife my mother. My mother, therefore, prayed me without ceasing to lie with the woman myself, that so she hates my father, and in the course of time I yielded. But my father soon came to know, and cursed me bitterly, calling the dread Furies [*Erinyes*] to witness. [455] He prayed that no son of mine might ever sit upon my knees—and the gods, Zeus of the world below and terrifying Persephone, fulfilled his curse. I took counsel to kill him, but some god stayed my rashness and bade me think [460] on men's evil tongues and how I should be branded as the murderer of my father: nevertheless I could not bear to stay in my father's house with him so bitter against me. My cousins and clansmen came about me, [465] and pressed me sorely to remain; many a sheep and many an ox did they slaughter, and many a fat hog did they set down to roast before the fire; many a jar, too, did they broach of my father's wine. [470] Nine whole nights did they set a guard over me taking turns to watch, and they kept a fire always burning, both in the cloister of the outer court and in the inner court at the doors of the room wherein I lay; but when the darkness of the tenth night came, [475] I broke through the closed doors of my room, and climbed the wall of the outer court after passing quickly and unperceived through the men on guard and the women servants. I then fled through Hellas till I came to fertile Phthia, mother of sheep, [480] and to King Peleus, who made me welcome and treated me as a father treats an only son who will be heir to all his wealth. He made me rich and set me over much people, establishing me on the borders of Phthia where I was chief ruler over the Dolopians.

[485] It was I, godlike Achilles, who had the making of you; I loved you with all my heart: for you would eat neither at home nor when you had

gone out elsewhere, till I had first set you upon my knees, cut up the dainty morsel that you were to eat, and held the wine-cup to your lips. [490] Many a time have you slobbered your wine in baby helplessness over my shirt; I had infinite trouble with you, but I knew that the gods had granted me no offspring of my own, and I made a son of you, Achilles, [495] that in my hour of need you might protect me. Now, therefore, I say battle with your pride and beat it; cherish not your anger for ever; the might [*aretē*] and majesty [*tīmē*] of the gods are more than ours, [500] but even the gods may be appeased; and if a man has sinned he prays the gods, and reconciles them to himself by his piteous cries and by incense, with drink-offerings and the savor of burnt sacrifice. For Appeals [*Litai*] are like daughters to great Zeus; lame, wrinkled, with eyes askance, they follow in the footsteps of the goddess Derangement [*Atē*]. [505] She, being fierce and fleet of foot, leaves them far behind him, and ever baneful to humankind outstrips them even to the ends of the world; but nevertheless the Appeals [*Litai*] come hobbling and healing after. If a man has pity upon these daughters of Zeus when they draw near him, they will bless him and hear him too when he is making his own appeals; [510] but if he deny them and will not listen to them, they go to Zeus the son of Kronos and make an appeal to him that this man may presently fall into derangement [*atē*]⁵¹³—for him to regret bitterly hereafter. So, Achilles, you too must grant that the Daughters of Zeus [= *Litai*] be given their⁵¹⁴ honor [*tīmē*], which makes flexible the thinking [*noos*] of others, good as they are. [515] Were not the son of Atreus offering you gifts and promising others later—if he were still furious and implacable—I am not he that would bid you throw off your anger [*mēnis*] and help the Achaeans, no matter how great their need; but he is giving much now, and more hereafter; [520] he has sent his chiefs to urge his suit, and has selected [*krinein*] those who of all the Argives are most acceptable to you; make not then their words and their coming to be of no effect. Your anger has been righteous so far.⁵²⁴ This is how [*houtōs*] we [= I, Phoenix] learned it, the glories [*klea*] of men [*andrōn*] of an earlier time [*prosthen*], [525] who were heroes [*hērōes*],

whenever one of them was overcome by tempestuous anger.⁵²⁶ They could be persuaded by way of gifts and could be swayed by words⁵²⁷ I totally recall [*me-mnē-mai*] how this was done—it happened a long time ago, it is not something new—⁵²⁸ recalling exactly how it was. I will tell it in your company—since you are all near and dear [*philoi*].

The Kouretes and the steadfast Aetolians were fighting [530] and killing one another round Calydon—the Aetolians defending the city and the Kouretes trying to destroy it. For Artemis of the golden throne was angry and did them hurt because Oineus had not offered [535] her his harvest first fruits. The other gods had all been feasted with hecatombs, but to the daughter of great Zeus alone he had made no sacrifice. He had forgotten her, or somehow or other it had escaped him, and this was a grievous sin. Then the archer goddess in her displeasure sent a prodigious creature against him—a savage wild boar with great white tusks [540] that did much harm to his orchard lands, uprooting apple-trees in full bloom and throwing them to the ground. But Meleagros son of Oineus got huntsmen and hounds from many cities [545] and killed it—for it was so monstrous that not a few were needed, and many a man did it stretch upon the funeral pyre. Then the goddess set the Kouretes and the Aetolians fighting furiously about the head and skin of the boar.

[550] So long as Meleagros, dear [*philos*] to Arēs, was fighting in the war,⁵⁵¹ things went badly for the Kouretes [of the city of Pleuron], and they could not⁵⁵² put up a resistance [against the Aetolians] outside the city walls [of Pleuron, the city of the Kouretes], even though they [= the Kouretes] had a multitude of fighters.⁵⁵³ But as soon as anger [*kholos*] entered Meleagros—the kind of anger that affects also others,⁵⁵⁴ making their thinking [*noos*] swell to the point of bursting inside their chest even if at other times they have sound thoughts [*phroneîn*], [555] [then things changed:] he [= Meleagros] was angry [*khōomenos*] in his heart at his dear mother Althaea,⁵⁵⁶ and he was lying around, next to his wife, whom he had courted and married in the proper way. She was the

beautiful Kleopatra, ⁵⁵⁷ whose mother was Marpessa, the one with the beautiful ankles, daughter of Euenos, ⁵⁵⁸ and whose father was Idēs, a man most powerful among those earthbound men ⁵⁵⁹ who lived in those times. It was he [= Idēs] who had grabbed his bow and had stood up against the lord [560] Phoebus Apollo, and he [= Idēs] had done it for the sake of his bride [*numphē*], the one with the beautiful ankles [= Marpessa]. ⁵⁶¹ She [= Kleopatra] had been given a special name by the father and by the queen mother back then [when she was growing up] in the palace. ⁵⁶² They called her Alcyone, making that a second name for her, because her ⁵⁶³ mother [= Marpessa] was feeling the same pain [*oitos*] felt by the halcyon bird, known for her many sorrows [*penthos*]. ⁵⁶⁴ She [= Marpessa] was crying because she had been seized and carried away by the one who has far-reaching power, Phoebus Apollo. [565] So, right next to her [= Kleopatra], he [= Meleagros] lay down, nursing his anger [*kholos*]⁵⁶⁵—an anger that brings pains [*algea*] to the heart [*thūmos*]. ⁵⁶⁶ He was angry [*kholoûsthai*] about the curses [*ārai*] that had been made by his own mother. She [= Meleagros's mother Althaea] had been praying to the gods, ⁵⁶⁷ making many curses [*ārâsthai*] in her sorrow [*akhos*] over the killing of her brother [by her son Meleagros]. ⁵⁶⁸ Many times did she beat the earth, nourisher of many, with her hands, ⁵⁶⁹ calling upon Hādēs and on terrifying Persephone. [570] She had gone down on her knees and was sitting there; her chest and her lap were wet with tears ⁵⁷¹ as she prayed that they [= the gods] should consign her son to death. And she was heard by a Fury [*Erinys*] that roams in the mist, ⁵⁷² a Fury heard her, from down below in Erebos—with a heart that cannot be assuaged.

⁵⁷³ And then it was that the din of battle rose up all around the gates [of the people of Calydon], and also the dull thump ⁵⁷⁴ of the battering against their walls. Now he [= Meleagros] was sought out by the elders [575] of the Aetolians [= the people of Calydon]; they were supplicating [*lissesthai*] him, and they came along with the best priests of the gods. ⁵⁷⁶

They were supplicating him [= Meleagros] to come out [from where he was lying down with his wife] and rescue them from harm, promising him a big gift. ⁵⁷⁷ They told him that, wherever the most fertile plain in the whole region of lovely Calydon may be, ⁵⁷⁸ at that place he could choose a most beautiful precinct [*temenos*] of land, ⁵⁷⁹ fifty acres, half of which would be a vineyard [580] while the other half would be a field open for plowing. ⁵⁸¹ He was also supplicated many times by the old charioteer Oineus, ⁵⁸² who was standing at the threshold of the chamber with the high ceiling ⁵⁸³ and beating at the locked double door, hoping to supplicate him by touching his knees. ⁵⁸⁴ Many times did his sisters and his mother the queen [585] supplicate [*lissesthai*] him. But all the more did he say “no!” Many times did his comrades [*hetairoi*] supplicate him, ⁵⁸⁶ those who were most cherished by him and were the most near and dear [*philoι*] of them all, ⁵⁸⁷ but, try as they might, they could not persuade the heart [*thūmos*] in his chest ⁵⁸⁸ —not until the moment when his chamber got a direct hit, and the walls of the high fortifications ⁵⁸⁹ were getting scaled by the Kouretes, who were starting to set fire to the great city [of Calydon]. [590] Then at long last Meleagros was addressed by his wife, who wears her waistband so beautifully around her waist. ⁵⁹¹ She was crying as she supplicated [*lissesthai*] him, telling everything in detail ⁵⁹² —all the sorrowful things [*kēdea*] that happen to those mortals whose city is captured. ⁵⁹³ They kill the men. Fire turns the city to ashes. ⁵⁹⁴ They take away the children and the wives, who wear their waistbands so beautifully around their waists. [595] His heart was stirred when he heard what bad things will happen. ⁵⁹⁶ He got up and went off. Then he covered his body with shining armor. ⁵⁹⁷ And this is how [*houtōs*] he rescued the Aetolians from the evil day [of destruction]. ⁵⁹⁸ He yielded to his heart [*thūmos*]. But they [= the Aetolians] no longer carried out the fulfillment [*teleîn*] of their offers of gifts ⁵⁹⁹ —those many pleasing [*khariēnta*] things that they had offered. But, in any case, he protected them from the evil event. [600] As for you [= Achilles], don’t go on thinking [*noeîn*] in your mind [*phrenes*] the way you are thinking

now. Don't let a superhuman force [*daimōn*] do something to you ⁶⁰¹ right here, turning you away, my near and dear one [*philos*]. It would be a worse prospect ⁶⁰² to try to rescue the ships [of the Achaeans] if they are set on fire. So, since the gifts are waiting for you, ⁶⁰³ get going! For if you do that, the Achaeans will honor [*tīnein*] you—same as a god. ⁶⁰⁴ But if you have no gifts when you do go into the war, that destroyer of men, [605] you will no longer have honor [*tīmē*] the same way, even if you have succeeded in blocking the [enemy's] forces of war."

And Achilles of the swift feet answered, "Phoenix, old friend and father, I have no need of such honor. I have honor [*tīmē*] from Zeus himself, which will abide with me at my ships while I have breath [610] in my body, and my limbs are strong. I say further—and lay my saying to your heart—vex me no more with this weeping and lamentation, all for the gratification [*kharis*] of the great son of Atreus. Love him so well, and you may lose the love I bear you. [615] You ought to help me rather in troubling those that trouble me; be king as much as I am, and share like honor [*tīmē*] with myself. ⁶¹⁷ These men will take the message; but you must stay here ⁶¹⁸ and lie down on the soft bed; at daybreak we will consider whether to remain or go."

[620] Then he nodded quietly to Patroklos as a sign that he was to prepare a bed for Phoenix, and that the others should make their return [*nostos*]. ⁶²² And then Ajax stood up among them, ⁶²³ the godlike son of Telamon, and he said: ⁶²⁴ "Odysseus, descended from the gods, noble son of Laertes, [625] let's just go, for I see that there is no fulfillment [*teleutē*] that will come from what we say [= the *mūthos*]. ⁶²⁶ No, on this expedition, there will be no action resulting from words. We must go and tell the news as soon as possible ⁶²⁷ to the Danaans, even though what we say [= the *mūthos*] will not be good for those ⁶²⁸ who are waiting to receive it. As for Achilles, ⁶²⁹ a savage feeling [*thūmos*] does he have embedded in his chest, which holds within it that great heart of his. [630] What a wretched man he is! He cares nothing for the love

[*philotēs*] of his comrades [*hetairoi*]. ⁶³¹ With that love we honored him more than all the others over there by the ships. ⁶³² He is pitiless. If a man's brother or son has been killed, ⁶³³ that man will accept a blood-price [*poinē*] as compensation for the one who was killed, ⁶³⁴ and the one who caused the death, having paid a vast sum, can remain in the locale [*dēmos*], [635] while the other one's heart and manly feeling [*thūmos*] are checked, ⁶³⁶ now that he has accepted the blood-price [*poinē*]. But for you, [Achilles,] a bad and relentless ⁶³⁷ feeling [*thūmos*] have the gods put into your chest, and this, all because of just one girl, ⁶³⁸ just one, whereas we now offer you the seven best we have, and much else into the bargain. Be then of a more gracious mind, [640] respect the hospitality of your own roof. We are with you as messengers from the army of the Danaans, and would be held nearest and dearest [*philtatoi*] to yourself of all the Achaeans."

"Ajax," replied swift-footed Achilles, "noble son of Telamon, seed of Zeus, [645] you have spoken much to my liking, but my blood boils when I think it all over, and remember how the son of Atreus treated me with contumely as though I were some vile tramp, and that too in the presence of the Argives. Go, then, and deliver your message; [650] say that I will have no concern with fighting till Hector the radiant, son of noble Priam, reaches the tents of the Myrmidons ⁶⁵³ killing the Argives, and until he darkens with fire [*katasmukhein*] our vessels. For all his lust of battle, I take it [655] he will be held in check when he is at my own tent and ship."

⁶⁵⁶ So he spoke, and they each took a double-handled cup ⁶⁵⁷ and made a libation; then they went back to the ships, and Odysseus led the way. But Patroklos told his men and the maid-servants to make ready a comfortable bed for Phoenix; [660] they therefore did so with sheepskins, a rug, and a sheet of fine linen. The old man then laid himself down and waited till divine Dawn came. But Achilles slept in an inner room, and beside him [665] the daughter of Phorbas lovely

Diomedes, whom he had carried off from Lesbos. Patroklos lay on the other side of the room, and with him fair-waisted Iphigeneia whom radiant Achilles had given him when he took Skyros the city of Enyeus.

When the envoys reached the tents of the son of Atreus, [670] the Achaeans rose, pledged them in cups of gold, and began to question them. King Agamemnon was the first to do so. "Tell me, honored Odysseus," said he, "will he save the ships from burning, [675] or did he refuse, and is he still furious?"

Long-suffering Odysseus answered, "Most noble son of Atreus, king of men, Agamemnon, Achilles will not be calmed, but is more fiercely angry than ever, and spurns both you and your gifts. [680] He bids you take counsel with the Argives to save the ships and army of warriors as you best may; as for himself, he said that at daybreak he should draw his oarswept ships into the water. He said further that he should advise every one to sail [685] home likewise, for that you will not reach the goal of Ilion. 'Wide-seeing Zeus,' he said, 'has laid his hand over the city to protect it, and the people have taken heart.' This is what he said, and the others who were with me can tell you the same story—Ajax and the two heralds, men, both of them, who may be trusted. [690] The old man Phoenix stayed where he was to sleep, for so Achilles would have it, that he might go home with him in the morning if he so would; but he will not take him by force."

The sons of the Achaeans all held their peace, sitting [695] for a long time silent and dejected, by reason of the sternness with which Achilles had refused them, till presently Diomedes of the great war cry said, "Most noble son of Atreus, lordly king of men, Agamemnon, you ought not to have sued the blameless son of Peleus nor offered him gifts. He is proud enough as it is, [700] and you have encouraged him in his pride and further. Let him stay or go as he will. He will fight later when he is in the humor, and the gods put it in his mind to do so. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say; [705] we have eaten and drunk our fill, let us then

take our rest, for in rest there is both strength and stay. But when fair rosy-fingered morn appears, O son of Atreus, right away bring out your army of warriors and your horsemen in front of the ships, urging them on, and yourself fighting among the foremost.”

[710] Thus he spoke, and the other chieftains approved, acclaiming the words of Diomedes, breaker of horses. They then made their drink-offerings and went every man to his own tent, where they laid down to rest and enjoyed the boon of sleep.

2020-12-15

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 10

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now the other princes of the Achaeans slept soundly the whole night through, but Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the people, was troubled, so that he could get no rest. [5] As when lovely-haired Hera's lord flashes his lightning in token of great rain or incessant hail or snow when the snow-flakes whiten the ground, or again as a sign that he will open the wide jaws of hungry war, even so did Agamemnon heave many a heavy sigh, [10] for his spirit trembled within him. When he looked upon the plain of Troy he marveled at the many watchfires burning in front of Ilion, and at the sound of pipes and reeds and of the hum of men, but when presently he turned towards the ships and armies of the Achaeans, [15] he tore his hair by handfuls before Zeus on high, and groaned aloud for the very restlessness of his spirit. In the end he thought it best to go at once to Nestor, son of Neleus, and see if between them they could find any way [20] of the Danaans from destruction. He therefore rose, slipped on his tunic, bound his fair sandals about his comely feet, flung the skin of a huge tawny lion over his shoulders—a skin that reached his feet—and took his spear in his hand.

[25] Neither could Menelaos sleep, for he, too, boded ill for the Argives who for his sake had sailed from far over the seas to fight the Trojans. He covered his broad back with the skin of a spotted panther, [30] put a helmet of bronze upon his head, and took his spear in his brawny hand. Then he went to rouse his brother, who was by far the most powerful of the Achaeans, ³³ and he got honor *tīmē* from the population [*dēmos*], like a god. He found him by the stern of his ship already putting his goodly array about his shoulders, [35] and right glad was he that his brother had come.

Menelaos spoke first. “Why,” said he, “my dear brother, are you thus arming? Are you going to send any of our comrades to exploit the Trojans? I greatly fear that no one will do you this service, [40] and spy upon the enemy alone in the dead of night. It will be a deed of great daring.”

And powerful Agamemnon answered, “Illustrious Menelaos, we both of us need shrewd counsel to save [45]the Argives and our ships, for Zeus has changed his mind, and inclines towards Hector’s sacrifices rather than ours. I never saw nor heard tell of any man as having wrought such ruin in one day as Hector, beloved of Zeus, has now wrought against the sons of the Achaeans— [50] and that too of his own unaided self, for he is son neither to god nor goddess. The Argives will regret it long and deeply. Run, therefore, with all speed by the line of the ships, and call Ajax and Idomeneus. Meanwhile I will go to Nestor the radiant, [55] and bid him rise and go about among the companies of our sentinels to give them their instructions; they will listen to him sooner than to any man, for his own son, and Meriones brother in arms to Idomeneus, are chiefs over them. It was to them more particularly that we gave this charge.”

[60] In turn Menelaos of the great war cry replied, “How do I take your meaning? Am I to stay with them and wait your coming, or shall I return here as soon as I have given your orders?” [65] “Wait,” answered King Agamemnon, “for there are so many paths about the camp that we might miss one another. Call every man on your way, and bid him be stirring; name him by his lineage and by his father’s name, give each all titular observance, and stand not too much upon your own dignity; [70] we must take our full share of toil, for at our birth Zeus laid this heavy burden upon us.”

With these instructions he sent his brother on his way, and went on to Nestor, shepherd of his people. He found him sleeping in his tent hard by his own black ship; [75] his goodly armor lay beside him—his shield,

his two spears and his glittering helmet; beside him also lay the gleaming belt with which the old man girded himself when he armed to lead his people into battle—for his age stayed him not. [80] He raised himself on his elbow and looked up at the son of Atreus, Agamemnon. “Who is it,” said he, “that goes thus about the army of warriors and the ships alone and in the dead of night, when men are sleeping? Are you looking for one of your mules or for some comrade? [85] Do not stand there and say nothing, but speak. What is your business?”

And lord of men Agamemnon answered, “Nestor, son of Neleus, honor to the Achaean name, it is I, Agamemnon, son of Atreus, on whom Zeus has laid labor [*ponos*] and sorrow so long as there is breath [90] in my body and my limbs carry me. I am thus abroad because sleep sits not upon my eyelids, but my heart is big with war and with the jeopardy of the Achaeans. I am in great fear for the Danaans. I am at sea, and without sure counsel; my heart beats as though it would leap [95] out of my body, and my shining limbs fail me. If then you can do anything—for you too cannot sleep—let us go the round of the watch, and see whether they are drowsy with toil and sleeping to the neglect of their duty. [100] The enemy is encamped hard and we know not but he may attack us by night.”

Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, replied, “Most noble son of Atreus, king of men, Agamemnon, Zeus of the counsels will not do all for Hector [105] that Hector thinks he will; he will have troubles yet in plenty if Achilles will lay aside his anger. I will go with you, and we will rouse others, either the son of Tydeus the spear-famed, or Odysseus, or fleet-footed Ajax and the valiant son of Phyleus. [110] Some one had also better go and call Ajax the great, the godlike one, and King Idomeneus, for their ships are not near at hand but the farthest of all. I cannot however refrain from blaming Menelaos, much as I love him and respect him— [115] and I will say so plainly, even at the risk of offending you—for sleeping and leaving all this trouble to yourself. He ought to be

going about imploring aid from all the princes of the Achaeans, for we are in extreme danger.”

And the lord of men Agamemnon answered, [120] “Aged sir, you may sometimes blame him justly, for he is often remiss and unwilling to exert himself—not indeed from sloth, nor yet lack of good sense [*noos*], but because he looks to me and expects me to take the lead. At this occasion, however, he was awake before I was, and came to me of his own accord. [125] I have already sent him to call the very men whom you have named. And now let us be going. We shall find them with the watch outside the gates, for it was there I said that we would meet them.”

“In that case,” answered Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, “the Argives will not blame him nor disobey his orders [130] when he urges them to fight or gives them instructions.”

With this he put on his khiton, and bound his sandals about his comely feet. He buckled on his purple coat, of two thicknesses, large, and of a rough shaggy texture, [135] grasped his terrifying bronze-shod spear, and wended his way along the line of the ships of the bronze-armored Achaeans. First he called loudly to Odysseus peer of gods in counsel and woke him, for he was soon roused by the sound of the battle-cry. [140] He came outside his tent and said, “Why do you go thus alone about the army of warriors, and along the line of the ships in the stillness of the night? What is it that you find so urgent?” And Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, answered, “Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, [145] take it not amiss, for the Achaeans are in much grief [*akhos*]. Come with me and let us wake some other, who may advise well with us whether we shall fight or flee.”

Then resourceful Odysseus went at once into his tent, put his shield about his shoulders and came out with them. [150] First they went to Diomedes, son of Tydeus, and found him outside his tent clad in his armor with his comrades sleeping round him and using their shields as

pillows; as for their spears, they stood upright on the spikes of their butts that were driven into the ground, and the burnished bronze flashed afar like the lightning of father Zeus. The hero [155] was sleeping upon the skin of an ox, with a piece of fine carpet under his head; high-spirited Nestor went up to him and stirred him with his heel to rouse him, upbraiding him and urging him to bestir himself. "Wake up," he exclaimed, "son of Tydeus. How can you sleep on in this way? [160] Can you not see that the Trojans are encamped on the brow of the plain hard by our ships, with but a little space between us and them?"

On these words Diomedes leaped up instantly and said, "Old man, your heart is of iron; you rest not one moment from your labors [*ponoi*]. [165] Are there no younger men among the Achaeans who could go about to rouse the princes? There is no tiring you."

And Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, made answer, "My son, all that you have said is true. [170] I have good sons, and also much people who might call the chieftains, but the Achaeans are in the gravest danger; life and death are balanced as it were on the edge of a razor. [175] Go then, for you are younger than I, and of your courtesy rouse swift Ajax and the fleet son of Phyleus."

Diomedes threw the skin of a great tawny lion about his shoulders—a skin that reached his feet—and grasped his spear. When he had roused the heroes, he brought them back with him; [180] they then went the round of those who were on guard, and found the chiefs not sleeping at their posts but wakeful and sitting with their arms about them. As sheep dogs that watch their flocks when they are yarded, and hear a wild beast [185] coming through the mountain forest towards them—right away there is a hue and cry of dogs and men, and slumber is broken—even so was sleep chased from the eyes of the Achaeans as they kept the watches of the wicked night, for they turned constantly towards the plain whenever they heard any stir among the Trojans. [190] The old man was glad and bade them be of good cheer. "Watch on, my children," said

he, “and let not sleep get hold upon you, lest our enemies triumph over us.”

With this he passed the trench, and with him [195] the other chiefs of the Achaeans who had been called to the council. Meriones and the glorious son of Nestor went also, for the princes bade them. When they were beyond the trench that was dug round the wall they held their meeting on the open ground where there was a space clear of corpses, [200] for it was here that when night fell Hector, the huge, had turned back from his onslaught on the Argives. They sat down, therefore, and held debate with one another.

Aged Nestor spoke first. “My friends,” said he, “is there any man bold enough [205] to venture among the Trojans, and cut off some straggler, or bring us news of what the enemy mean to do—whether they will stay here by the ships away from the city, or whether, [210] now that they have worsted the Achaeans, they will retire within their walls. If he could learn all this and come back safely here, his fame [*kleos*] would be sky-high in the mouths of all men, and he would be rewarded richly; for the chiefs from all our ships [215] would each of them give him a black ewe with her lamb—which is a present of surpassing value—and he would be asked as a guest to all feasts and clan-gatherings.”

They all held their peace, but Diomedes of the loud war-cry spoke saying, [220] “Nestor, my heart and bold spirit [*thūmos*] urge me to visit the army of the hateful Trojans over against us, but if another will go with me I shall do so in greater confidence and comfort. When two men are together, one of them [225] may see some opportunity [*kerdos*] which the other has not caught sight of; if a man is alone his thinking [*noos*] is slower, and his cunning intelligence [*mētis*] is slight.”

Then several offered to go with Diomedes. The two Ajaxes, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, Meriones, and the son of Nestor all wanted to go, [230] so did Menelaos the spear-famed; patient Odysseus also wished to

go among the army of the Trojans, for he was ever full of daring, and then Agamemnon, king of men, spoke thus: “Diomedes,” said he, “son of Tydeus, man after my own heart, [235] choose your comrade for yourself—take the best man of those that have offered, for many would now go with you. Do not through delicacy reject the better man, and take the worst out of respect [*aidōs*] for his lineage, because he is of more royal blood.”

[240] He said this because he feared for fair-haired Menelaos. Diomedes answered, “If you bid me take the man of my own choice, how in that case can I fail to think of god-like Odysseus, than whom there is no man more eager in heart and bold spirit [*thūmos*] to face [245] all kinds of ordeal [*ponos*]²⁴⁹—and Pallas Athena loves him well? If he were to go with me we should pass safely through fire itself, for he is quick to see and understand.”

Long-suffering radiant Odysseus replied, ²⁴⁹ “Son of Tydeus! Give me neither too much praise [verb from *ainos*] nor too much blame [verb from *neikos*]; [250] you are saying these things in the presence of Argives who know. Let us be going, for the night wanes and dawn is at hand. The stars have gone forward, two-thirds of the night are already spent, and the third is alone left us.”

They then put on their armor. [255] Brave Thrasymedes provided the son of Tydeus with a sword and a shield (for he had left his own at his ship) and on his head he set a helmet of bull’s hide without either peak or crest; it is called a skull-cap and is a common headgear. [260] Meriones found a bow and quiver for Odysseus, and on his head he set a leather helmet that was lined with a strong plaiting of leather thongs, while on the outside it was thickly studded with boar’s teeth, [265] well and skillfully set into it; next the head there was an inner lining of felt. This helmet had been stolen by Autolykos out of Eleon when he broke into the house of Amyntor, son of Ormenos. He gave it to Amphidamas of Cythera to take to Skandeia, and Amphidamas gave it as a guest-gift

to Molos, [270] who gave it to his son Meriones; and now it was set upon the head of Odysseus.

When the pair had armed, they set out, and left the other chieftains behind them. Pallas Athena [275] sent them a heron by the wayside upon their right hands; they could not see it for the darkness, but they heard its cry. Odysseus was glad when he heard it and prayed to Athena: “Hear me,” he cried, “daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, you who spy out all my ways and who are with me in all my hardships [*ponoi*]; [280] befriend me in this my hour, and grant that we may return to the ships covered with glory after having achieved some mighty exploit that shall bring sorrow to the Trojans.”

Then Diomedes of the loud war-cry also prayed: “Hear me too,” said he, “daughter of Zeus, the one who cannot be worn down; [285] be with me even as you were with my noble father Tydeus when he went to Thebes as envoy sent by the Achaeans. He left the bronze-armored Achaeans by the banks of the river Aisopos, and went to the city bearing a message of peace to the Kadmeians; on his return thence, [290] with your help, divine goddess, he did great deeds of daring, for you were his ready helper. Even so guide me and guard me now, and in return I will offer you in sacrifice a broad-browed heifer of a year old, unbroken, and never yet brought by man under the yoke. I will gild her horns and will offer her up to you in sacrifice.”

[295] Thus they prayed, and Pallas Athena heard their prayer. When they had done praying to the daughter of great Zeus, they went their way like two lions prowling by night amid the armor and bloodstained bodies of them that had fallen.

Neither again did Hector let the high-hearted Trojans [300] sleep; for he too called the princes and councilors of the Trojans that he might set his counsel before them. “Is there one,” said he, “who for a great reward will do me the service of which I will tell you? He shall be well paid if he

will. [305] I will give him a chariot and a couple of strong-necked horses, the fleetest that can be found at the ships of the Achaeans, if he will dare this thing; and he will win infinite honor to boot; he must go to the ships and find out whether they are still guarded as heretofore, [310] or whether now that we have beaten them the Achaeans design to flee, and through sheer exhaustion are neglecting to keep their watches.”

They all held their peace; but there was among the Trojans a certain man named Dolon, son of Eumedes, [315] the famous herald—a man rich in gold and bronze. He was ill-favored, but a good runner, and was an only son among five sisters. He it was that now addressed Hector and the Trojans with these words [*mūthos*]. “Hector, [320] “my heart and bold spirit [*thūmos*] urge me to go to the ships and exploit them. But first hold up your scepter and swear that you will give me the chariot, bright with bronze, and the horses that now carry the noble son of Peleus. I will make you a good scout, and will not fail you. [325] I will go through the army from one end to the other till I come to the ship of Agamemnon, where I take it the princes of the Achaeans are now consulting whether they shall fight or flee.”

When he had done speaking Hector held up his scepter, and swore him his oath saying, “May Zeus, the thundering husband of Hera, bear witness [330] that no other Trojan but yourself shall mount those steeds, and that you shall have your will with them for ever.”

The oath he swore was bootless, but it made Dolon more keen on going. He hung his bow over his shoulder, and as an overall he wore the skin of a gray wolf, while on his head he set [335] a cap of ferret skin. Then he took a pointed javelin, and left the camp for the ships, but he was not to return with any news for Hector. When he had left the horses and the troops behind him, he made all speed on his way, but illustrious Odysseus [340] perceived his coming and said to Diomedes, “Diomedes, here is some one from the camp; I am not sure whether he is a spy, or whether it is some thief who would plunder the bodies of the dead; let

him get a little past us, [345] we can then spring upon him and take him. If, however, he is too quick for us, go after him with your spear and hem him in towards the ships away from the Trojan camp, to prevent his getting back to the town.”

With this they turned out of their way and lay down among the corpses. [350] Dolon suspected nothing and soon passed them, but when he had got about as far as the distance by which a mule-plowed furrow exceeds one that has been plowed by oxen (for mules can plow fallow land quicker than oxen) they ran after him, and when he heard their footsteps he stood still, [355] for he was sure they were friends from the Trojan camp come by Hector’s orders to bid him return; when, however, they were only a spear’s cast, or less away from him, he saw that they were enemies and ran away as fast as his legs could take him. The others gave chase at once, [360] and as a couple of well-trained hounds press forward after a doe or hare that runs screaming in front of them, even so did the son of Tydeus and Odysseus, ransacker of cities, pursue Dolon and cut him off from his own people. [365] But when he had fled so far towards the ships that he would soon have fallen in with the outposts, Athena infused fresh strength into the son of Tydeus for fear some other of the bronze-armored Achaeans might have the glory of being first to hit him, and he might himself be only second; powerful Diomedes therefore sprang forward with his spear and said, [370] “Stand, or I shall throw my spear, and in that case I shall soon make an end of you.”

He threw as he spoke, but missed his aim on purpose. The dart flew over the man’s right shoulder, and then stuck in the ground. He stood stock still, trembling and in great fear; [375] his teeth chattered, and he turned pale with fear. The two came breathless up to him and seized his hands, whereon he began to weep and said, “Take me alive; I will ransom myself; we have great store of gold, bronze, and wrought iron, [380] and from this my father will satisfy you with a very large ransom, should he hear of my being alive at the ships of the Achaeans.”

“Fear not,” replied resourceful Odysseus, “let no thought of death be in your mind; but tell me, and tell me true, [385] why are you thus going about alone in the dead of night away from your camp and towards the ships, while other men are sleeping? Is it to plunder the bodies of the slain, or did Hector send you to spy out what was going on at the ships? Or did you come here of your own mere notion [*noos*]?”

[390] Dolon answered, his limbs trembling beneath him: “Hector, with his vain flattering promises, lured me into derangement [*atē*]. He said he would give me the horses of the proud son of Peleus and his bronze-bedizened chariot; he bade me go through the darkness of the fleeing night, [395] get close to the enemy, and find out whether the ships are still guarded as heretofore, or whether, now that we have beaten them, the Achaeans design to flee, and through sheer exhaustion are neglecting to keep their watches.”

[400] Resourceful Odysseus smiled at him and answered, “You had indeed set your heart upon a great reward, but the horses of the descendant of valiant Aiakos are hardly to be kept in hand or driven by any other mortal man than Achilles himself, whose mother was an immortal. [405] But tell me, and tell me true, where did you leave Hector, the people’s shepherd, when you started? Where lies his armor and his horses? How, too, are the watches and sleeping-ground of the Trojans ordered? What are their plans? Will they [410] stay here by the ships and away from the city, or now that they have worsted the Achaeans, will they retire within their walls?” And Dolon son of Eumedes answered, “I will tell you truly all. ⁴¹⁴ Hector, accompanied by all his advisors, [415] is planning plans [*boulas bouleuei*] at the tomb [*sēma*] of godlike Ilos, away from the general tumult; as for the guards about which you ask me, there is no watch selected [*krinein*] to keep guard over the army of warriors. The Trojans have their watchfires, for they are bound to have them; they, therefore, are awake and keep [420] each other to their duty as sentinels; but the allies who have come from

other places are asleep and leave it to the Trojans to keep guard, for their wives and children are not here.”

Illustrious Odysseus then said, “Now tell me; are they sleeping among the Trojan troops, [425] or do they lie apart? Explain this that I may understand it.”

“I will tell you truly all,” replied Dolon Eumedes’ son. “To the seaward lie the Carians, the Paeonian bowmen, the Leleges, the Kaukones, and the noble Pelasgoi. [430] The Lycians and proud Mysians, with the Phrygian horsemen and Maeonian charioteers, have their place on the side towards Thymbra; but why ask about all this? If you want to find your way into the army of the Trojans, there are the Thracians, who have lately come here and lie apart from the others [435] at the far end of the camp; and they have Rhesus, son of Eioneus, for their king. His horses were the finest and strongest that I have ever seen. ⁴³⁷ And they were whiter than snow, and they were like [*homoioi*] the winds, the way they ran. His chariot is bright with silver and gold, and he has brought his marvelous golden armor, of the rarest workmanship— [440] too splendid for any mortal man to carry, and meet only for the gods. Now, therefore, take me to the fast-running ships or bind me securely here, until you come back and have proved my words [445] whether they be false or true.”

Powerful Diomedes looked sternly at him and answered, “Think not, Dolon, for all the good information you have given us, that you shall escape now you are in our hands, for if we ransom you or let you go, [450] you will come some second time to the fast ships of the Achaeans either as a spy or as an open enemy, but if I kill you and make an end of you, you will give no more trouble.”

Then Dolon would have caught him by the beard [455] to beseech him further, but Diomedes struck him in the middle of his neck with his sword and cut through both sinews so that his head fell rolling in the

dust while he was yet speaking. They took the ferret-skin cap from his head, and also the wolf-skin, the bow, and his long spear. [460] Radiant Odysseus hung them up aloft in honor of Athena, the goddess of plunder, and prayed saying, "Accept these, goddess, for we give them to you in preference to all the gods in Olympus: therefore speed us still further towards the horses and sleeping-ground of the Thracians."

[465] With these words he took the spoils and set them upon a tamarisk tree, and they made a mark [*sēma*] of the place by pulling up reeds and gathering boughs of tamarisk that they might not miss it as they came back through the fleeing hours of darkness. The two then went onwards amid fallen armor and dark blood, [470] and came presently to the company of Thracian warriors, who were sleeping, tired out with their day's toil; their goodly armor was lying on the ground beside them all in order [*kosmos*] in three rows, and each man had his yoke of horses beside him. Rhesus was sleeping in the middle, and hard by him his fast horses [475] were made fast to the topmost rim of his chariot. Odysseus from some way off saw him and said, "This, Diomedes, is the man, and these are the horses about which Dolon whom we killed told us. Do your very utmost; [480] dally not about your armor, but loose the horses at once—or else kill the men yourself, while I see to the horses."

Then owl-vision Athena put courage into the heart of Diomedes, and he smote them right and left. They made a hideous groaning as they were being hacked about, and the earth was red with their blood. [485] As a lion springs furiously upon a flock of sheep or goats when he finds without their shepherd, so did the son of Tydeus set upon the Thracian warriors till he had killed twelve. As he killed them resourceful Odysseus came [490] and drew them aside by their feet one by one, that the horses might go forward freely without being frightened as they passed over the dead bodies, for they were not yet used to them. When the son of Tydeus came to the king, [495] he killed him too (which made thirteen), as he was breathing hard, for by the counsel of Athena an evil dream, the seed of Oineus, hovered that night over his head. Meanwhile

patient Odysseus untied the horses, made them fast one to another and drove them off, [500] striking them with his bow, for he had forgotten to take the whip from the chariot. Then he whistled as a sign to radiant Diomedes.

But Diomedes stayed where he was, thinking what other daring deed he might accomplish. He was doubting whether to take the chariot in which the king's armor was lying, [505] and draw it out by the pole, or to lift the armor out and carry it off; or whether again, he should not kill some more Thracians. While he was thus hesitating Athena came up to him and said, "Make your return [*nostos*], Diomedes, son of great-hearted Tydeus [510] to the ships or you may be driven there, should some other god rouse the Trojans."

Diomedes knew that it was the goddess, and at once sprang upon the horses. Odysseus beat them with his bow and they flew onward to the rapid ships of the Achaeans.

[515] But Apollo kept no blind lookout when he saw Athena with the son of Tydeus. He was angry with her, and coming to the army of the Trojans he roused Hippokoön, a counselor of the Thracians and a noble kinsman of Rhesus. He started up out of his sleep [520] and saw that the horses were no longer in their place, and that the men were gasping in their death-agony; on this he groaned aloud, and called upon his friend by name. Then the whole Trojan camp was in an uproar as the people kept hurrying together, and they marveled at the deeds [525] of the heroes who had now got away towards the black ships.

When they reached the place where they had killed Hector's scout, Odysseus the beloved of Zeus stayed his horses, and the son of Tydeus, leaping to the ground, placed the bloodstained spoils in the hands of Odysseus and remounted: [530] then he lashed the horses onwards, and they flew forward eagerly towards the ships as though of their own free will. Nestor was first to hear the tramp of their feet. "My friends," said

he, “princes and counselors of the Argives, shall I guess right or wrong? —but I must say what I think: [535] there is a sound in my ears as of the tramp of horses. I hope it may Diomedes and Odysseus driving in horses from the Trojans, but I much fear that the bravest of the Argives may have come to some harm at their hands.”

[540] He had hardly done speaking when the two men came in and dismounted, whereon the others shook hands right gladly with them and congratulated them. Nestor charioteer of Gerenia was first to question them. “Tell me,” said he, “renowned Odysseus, [545] how did you two come by these horses? Did you steal in among the Trojan forces, or did some god meet you and give them to you? They shine terribly, like sunbeams. I am well conversant with the Trojans, for old warrior though I am I never hold back by the ships, [550] but I never yet saw or heard of such horses as these are. Surely some god must have met you and given them to you, for you are both of you dear to Zeus, who gathers the clouds, and to Zeus’ owl-vision daughter Athena.”

And glorious Odysseus answered, [555] “Nestor son of Neleus, honor to the Achaean name, the gods, if they so will, can give us even better horses than these, for they are far mightier than we are. These horses, however, about which you ask me, are freshly come from Thrace. Brave Diomedes killed their king [560] with the twelve bravest of his companions. Hard by the ships we took a thirteenth man—a scout whom Hector and the haughty Trojans had sent as a spy upon our ships.”

He laughed as he spoke and drove the horses over the ditch, [565] while the other Achaeans followed him gladly. When they reached the strongly built quarters of the son of Tydeus, they tied the horses with thongs of leather to the manger, where the steeds of Diomedes stood eating their sweet wheat, [570] but Odysseus hung the bloodstained spoils of Dolon at the stern of his ship, that they might prepare a sacred offering to Athena. As for themselves, they went into the sea and washed the sweat

from their bodies, and from their necks and thighs. When the sea-water had taken all the sweat [575] from off them, and had refreshed them, they went into the polished baths and washed themselves. After they had so done and had anointed themselves with oil, they sat down to table, and drawing from a full mixing-bowl, made a drink-offering of sweet-hearted wine to Athena.

2018-12-12

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 11

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] And now as Dawn rose from her couch beside haughty Tithonos, harbinger of light alike to mortals and immortals, Zeus sent fierce Discord with the ensign of war in her hands to the fast ships of the Achaeans. [5] She took her stand by the huge black hull of Odysseus' ship which was middlemost of all, so that her voice might carry farthest on either side, on the one hand towards the tents of Ajax son of Telamon, and on the other towards those of Achilles—for these two heroes, well-assured of their own strength, had valorously drawn up their ships at the two ends of the line. [10] There she took her stand, and raised a cry both loud and shrill that filled the Achaeans with courage, giving them heart to fight resolutely and with all their might, so that they had rather stay there and do battle than go home in their ships.

[15] The son of Atreus shouted aloud and bade the Argives gird themselves for battle while he put on his armor. First he girded his goodly greaves about his legs, making them fast with ankle clasps of silver; and about his chest he set the breastplate [20] which Kinyras had once given him as a guest-gift. The story [*kleos*], which reached as far as Cyprus, was that the Achaeans were about to sail for Troy, and therefore he gave it to the king. It had ten circles of dark lapis, [25] twelve of gold, and ten of tin. There were serpents of lapis that reared themselves up towards the neck, three upon either side, like the rainbows which the son of Kronos has set in the sky as a sign to mortal men. About his shoulders he threw his sword, studded with bosses [30] of gold; and the scabbard was of silver with a chain of gold wherewith to hang it. He took moreover the richly-wrought shield that covered his body when he was in battle—fair to see, with ten circles of bronze running all round it.

On the body of the shield there were twenty bosses of white tin, [35] with another of dark lapis in the middle: this last was made to show a blank-eyed Gorgon's head, fierce and grim, with Rout and Panic on either side. The band for the arm to go through was of silver, on which there was a writhing snake of lapis with three heads [40] that sprang from a single neck, and went in and out among one another. On his head Agamemnon set a helmet, with a peak before and behind, and four plumes of horse-hair that nodded menacingly above it; then he grasped two terrifying bronze-shod spears, and the gleam of his armor shot from him as a flame into the firmament, [45] while Hera and Athena thundered in honor of the king of rich Mycenae.

Every man now left his horses in charge of his charioteer to hold them in proper order [*kosmos*] by the trench, while he went into battle on foot clad in full armor, [50] and a mighty uproar rose on high into the dawning. The chiefs were armed and at the trench before the horses got there, but these came up presently. The son of Kronos sent a portent of evil sound about their army of warriors, and the dew fell red with blood, for he was about [55] to send many a brave man hurrying down to Hādēs.

The Trojans, on the other side upon the rising slope of the plain, were gathered round great Hector, noble Polydamas, Aeneas—⁵⁸ who got honor [*tīmē*] from the locale [*dēmos*] of the Trojans, like a god— and the three sons of Antenor, Polybos, radiant Agenor, [60] and young Akamas, beauteous as a god. Hector's round shield showed in the front rank, and as some baneful star that shines for a moment through a rent in the clouds and is again hidden beneath them; even so was Hector now seen in the front ranks [65] and now again in the rear, and his bronze armor gleamed like the lightning of aegis-bearing Zeus. And now as a band of reapers mow swathes of wheat or barley upon a rich man's land, and the sheaves fall thick before them, [70] even so did the Trojans and Achaeans fall upon one another; they were in no mood for yielding but fought like wolves, and neither side got the better of the other. Discord, the Lady of

Sorrow, was glad as she beheld them, for she was the only god that went among them; [75] the others were not there, but stayed quietly each in his own home among the dells and valleys of Olympus. All of them blamed the son of Kronos, Zeus of the dark mists, for wanting to give victory to the Trojans, [80] but father Zeus heeded them not: he held aloof from all, and sat apart in his all-glorious majesty, looking down upon the city of the Trojans, the ships of the Achaeans, the gleam of bronze, and alike upon the slayers and on the slain.

Now so long as the day waxed and it was still morning, [85] their darts rained thick and fast, and the people perished, but as the hour drew near when a woodman working in some mountain forest will get his midday meal—for he has felled till his hands are weary; he is tired out, and must now have food— [90] then the Danaans with a cry that rang through all their ranks, broke the battalions of the enemy. Agamemnon led them on, and slew first Bienor, a leader of his people, and afterwards his comrade and charioteer Oïleus, who sprang from his chariot and was coming full towards him; [95] but Agamemnon struck him on the forehead with his spear; his bronze visor was of no avail against the weapon, which pierced both bronze and bone, so that his brains were battered in and he was killed in full fight.

Agamemnon stripped their khitons from off them [100] and left them with their breasts all bare to lie where they had fallen. He then went on to kill Isos and renowned Antiphos, two sons of Priam, the one a bastard, the other born in wedlock; they were in the same chariot—the bastard driving, while noble Antiphos fought beside him. Achilles had once [105] taken both of them prisoners in the glades of Ida, and had bound them with fresh withes as they were shepherding, but he had taken a ransom for them; now, however, wide-powerful Agamemnon, son of Atreus, smote Isos in the chest above the nipple with his spear, while he struck Antiphos hard by the ear and threw him from his chariot. [110] Right away he stripped their goodly armor from off them and recognized them, for he had already seen them at ships when Achilles of

the swift feet brought them in from Ida. As a lion fastens on the fawns of a hind and crushes them in his great jaws, [115] robbing them of their tender life while he is on his way back to his lair—the hind can do nothing for them even though she be close by, for she is in an agony of fear, and flies through the thick forest, sweating, and at her utmost speed before the mighty monster— [120] so, no man of the Trojans could help Isos and Antiphos, for they were themselves fleeing in panic before the Argives.

Then King Agamemnon took the two sons of high-spirited Antimakhos, Peisandros and brave Hippolokhos. [125] It was Antimakhos who had been foremost in preventing Helen's being restored to fair-haired Menelaos, for he was lavishly bribed by Alexandros; and now powerful Agamemnon took his two sons, both in the same chariot, trying to bring their horses to a stand—for they had lost hold of the reins and the horses were mad with fear. [130] The son of Atreus sprang upon them like a lion, and the pair besought him from their chariot. "Take us alive," they cried, "son of Atreus, and you shall receive a great ransom for us. Our father Antimakhos has great store of gold, bronze, and wrought iron, and from this he will satisfy you with a very large ransom [135] should he hear of our being alive at the ships of the Achaeans."

With such piteous words and tears did they beseech the king, but they heard no pitiful answer in return. "If," said Agamemnon, "you are sons of high-spirited Antimakhos, who once at a council of Trojans proposed [140] that Menelaos and godlike Odysseus, who had come to you as envoys, should be killed and not allowed to return, you shall now pay for the foul iniquity of your father."

As he spoke he felled Peisandros from his chariot to the earth, smiting him on the chest with his spear, so that he lay face uppermost upon the ground. [145] Hippolokhos fled, but him too did Agamemnon smite; he cut off his hands and his head—which he sent rolling in among the

crowd as though it were a ball. There he let them both lie, and wherever the ranks were thickest there he flew, while the other strong-greaved Achaeans followed. [150] Foot soldiers drove the foot soldiers of the foe in rout before them, and slew them; horsemen did the like by horsemen, and the thundering tramp of the horses raised a cloud of dust from off the plain. King Agamemnon followed after, ever slaying them and cheering on the Achaeans. [155] As when some mighty forest is all ablaze—the eddying gusts whirl fire in all directions till the thickets shrivel and are consumed before the blast of the flame—even so fell the heads of the fleeing Trojans before powerful Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and many a noble pair of steeds [160] drew an empty chariot along the highways of war, for lack of drivers who were lying on the plain, more useful now to vultures than to their wives.

Zeus drew Hector away from the darts and dust, with the carnage and din of battle; [165] but the son of Atreus sped onwards, calling out lustily to the Danaans. They flew on by the tomb [*sēma*] of old Ilos, son of Dardanos, in the middle of the plain, and past the place of the wild fig-tree making always for the city—the son of Atreus still shouting, and with invincible hands all dripping in gore; [170] but when they had reached the Scaean gates and the oak tree, there they halted and waited for the others to come up. Meanwhile the Trojans kept on fleeing over the middle of the plain like a herd of cows maddened with fright when a lion has attacked them in the dead of night—he springs on one of them, [175] seizes her neck in the grip of his strong teeth and then laps up her blood and gorges himself upon her entrails—even so did King Agamemnon son of Atreus pursue the foe, ever slaughtering the hindmost as they fled pell-mell before him. Many a man was flung headlong from his chariot [180] by the hand of the son of Atreus, for he wielded his spear with fury.

But when he was just about to reach the high wall and the city, the father of gods and men came down from the sky and took his seat, thunderbolt in hand, upon the crest of Ida, with its many springs. [185]

He then told Iris of the golden wings to carry a message for him. “Go,” said he, “fleet Iris, and speak thus to Hector—say that so long as he sees Agamemnon heading his men and making havoc of the Trojan ranks, he is to keep aloof and bid the others [190] bear the brunt of the battle, but when Agamemnon is wounded either by spear or arrow, and takes to his chariot, then will I grant him strength to slay till he reach the strong-benched ships and night falls at the going down of the sun.”

[195] Swift wind-footed Iris hearkened and obeyed. Down she went to strong Ilion from the crests of Ida, and found radiant Hector son of high-spirited Priam standing by his chariot and horses. Then she said, [200] “Hector son of Priam, peer of gods in counsel, father Zeus has sent me to bear you this message—so long as you see Agamemnon heading his men and making havoc of the Trojan ranks, you are to keep aloof and bid the others [205] bear the brunt of the battle, but when Agamemnon is wounded either by spear or arrow, and takes to his chariot, then will Zeus grant you strength to slay till you reach the ships, and till night falls at the going down of the sun.”

[210] When she had thus spoken swift-footed Iris left him, and ²¹¹ Hector leapt out of his chariot, armor and all, brandishing his spear as he went about everywhere among the army of warriors, cheering his men on to fight, and stirring the dread strife of battle. The Trojans then wheeled round, and again met the Achaeans, [215] while the Argives on their part strengthened their battalions. The battle was now in array and they stood face to face with one another, Agamemnon ever pressing forward in his eagerness to be ahead of all others.

²¹⁸ Tell me now you Muses dwelling on Olympus, ²¹⁹ who was the first to come up and face Agamemnon, [220] either among the Trojans or among their famous allies? ²²¹ It was Iphidamas son of Antenor, a man both good and great, ²²² who was raised in fertile Thrace the mother of sheep. ²²³ Kissēs in his own house raised him when he was little. ²²⁴ Kissēs was his mother’s father, father to Theano, the one with the fair cheeks.

[225] When he [= Iphidamas] reached the stage of adolescence, which brings luminous glory, ²²⁶ he [= Kissēs] wanted to keep him at home and to give him his own daughter in marriage, ²²⁷ but as soon as he [= Iphidamas] had married, he left the bride chamber and went off seeking the kleos of the Achaeans ²²⁸ along with twelve curved ships that followed him: these he had left at Perkote [230] and had come on by land to Ilion. He it was that now met Agamemnon, son of Atreus. When they were close up with one another, the son of Atreus missed his aim, and Iphidamas hit him on the belt below the cuirass [235] and then flung himself upon him, trusting to his strength of arm; the belt, however, was not pierced, nor nearly so, for the point of the spear struck against the silver and was turned aside as though it had been lead: King Agamemnon caught it [240] from his hand, and drew it towards him with the fury of a lion; he then drew his sword, and killed Iphidamas by striking him on the neck. So there the poor man lay, sleeping a sleep as it were of bronze, killed in the defense of his comrades, far from his wedded wife, of whom he had had no joy [*kharis*] though he had given much for her: he had given a hundred-head of cattle down, and had promised later on to give a thousand [245] sheep and goats mixed, from the countless flocks of which he was possessed. Agamemnon son of Atreus then despoiled him, and carried off his armor into the army of the Achaeans.

When noble Koön, Antenor's eldest son, saw this, he felt grief [*penthos*] [250] in his eyes at the sight of his fallen brother. Unseen by great Agamemnon he got beside him, spear in hand, and wounded him in the middle of his arm below the elbow, the point of the spear going right through the arm. Agamemnon was convulsed with pain, [255] but still not even for this did he leave off struggling and fighting, but grasped his spear that flew as fleet as the wind, and sprang upon Koön who was trying to drag off the body of his brother—his father's son—by the foot, and was crying for help to all the bravest of his comrades; but Agamemnon struck him [260] with a bronze-shod spear and killed him as he was dragging the dead body through the press of men under cover

of his shield: he then cut off his head, standing over the body of Iphidamas. Thus did the sons of Antenor meet their fate at the hands of the son of Atreus, and go down into the house of Hādēs.

As long as the blood still welled warm from his wound Agamemnon went about attacking the ranks of the enemy [265] with spear and sword and with great handfuls of stone, but when the blood had ceased to flow and the wound grew dry, the pain became great. As the sharp pangs [270] which the Eileithuiai, goddesses of childbirth, daughters of Hera and dispensers of cruel pain, send upon a woman when she is in labor—even so sharp were the pangs of the son of Atreus. He sprang on to his chariot, and bade his charioteer drive to the ships, for he was in great agony. [275] With a loud clear voice he shouted to the Danaans, “My friends, princes and counselors of the Argives, defend the ships yourselves, for Zeus has not allowed me to fight the whole day through against the Trojans.”

[280] With this the charioteer turned his horses towards the ships, and they flew forward, holding nothing back. Their chests were white with foam and their bellies with dust, as they drew the wounded king out of the battle.

When Hector saw Agamemnon quit the field, [285] he shouted to the Trojans and Lycians saying, “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanian warriors, be men, my friends, and acquit yourselves in battle bravely; their best man has left them, and Zeus has granted me a great triumph; charge [290] the foe with your chariots that you may win still greater glory.”

With these words he put heart and spirit into them all, and as a huntsman hounds his dogs on against a lion or wild boar, even so did Hector, [295] peer of Arēs, hound the proud Trojans on against the Achaeans. Full of hope he plunged in among the foremost, and fell on the fight like some fierce tempest that swoops down upon the sea, and lashes its deep waters [*pontos*] into fury.

What, then is the full tale of those whom Hector son of Priam killed [300] in the hour of triumph which Zeus then granted him? First Asaios, Autonoos, and Opites; Dolops, son of Klytios, Opheltios and Agelaos; Aisymnos, Oros and Hipponoos steadfast in battle; these chieftains of the Achaeans did Hector slay, and then [305] he fell upon the rank and file. As when the west wind hustles the clouds of the white south and beats them down with the fierceness of its fury—the waves of the sea roll high, and the spray is flung aloft in the rage of the wandering wind—even so thick were the heads of them that fell by the hand of Hector.

[310] All had then been lost and no help for it, and the Achaeans would have fled pell-mell to their ships, had not Odysseus cried out to Diomedes, “Son of Tydeus, what has happened to us that we thus forget our prowess? Come, my good man, stand by my side and help me, we shall be [315] shamed for ever if Hector takes the ships.”

And Diomedes answered, “Come what may, I will stand firm; but we shall have scant joy of it, ³¹⁸ since Zeus the cloud-gatherer ³¹⁹ wills to give the victory [*kratos*] to the Trojans instead of us.”

[320] With these words he struck Thymbraios from his chariot to the ground, smiting him in the left breast with his spear, while Odysseus killed godlike Molion who was his attendant [*therapōn*]. These they let lie, now that they had stopped their fighting; the two heroes then went on playing havoc with the foe, like two wild boars [325] that turn in fury and rend the hounds that hunt them. Thus did they turn upon the Trojans and slay them, and the Achaeans were thankful to have breathing time in their flight from Hector.

They then took two princes with their chariot, the two sons of Merops from the district [*dēmos*] of Perkote, who excelled all others [330] in the arts of divination. He had forbidden his sons to go to the war, but they would not obey him, for fate lured them to their fall. Diomedes of the

renowned spear, son of Tydeus deprived them of their life-breath [*psūkhē* pl.] and stripped them of their armor, [335] while Odysseus killed Hippodamos and Hypeirokeos.

And now the son of Kronos as he looked down from Ida ordained that neither side should have the advantage, and they kept on killing one another. The son of Tydeus speared Agastrophos, son of Paion, in the hip-joint with his spear. His chariot [340] was not at hand for him to flee with, so blindly confident had he been. His attendant [*therapōn*] was in charge of it at some distance and he was fighting on foot among the foremost until he lost his life. Hector soon marked the havoc Diomedes and Odysseus were making, and bore down upon them with a loud cry, followed by the Trojan ranks; [345] brave Diomedes was dismayed when he saw them, and said to Odysseus who was beside him, "Great Hector is bearing down upon us and we shall be undone; let us stand firm and wait his onset."

He poised his spear as he spoke and hurled it, [350] nor did he miss his mark. He had aimed at Hector's head near the top of his helmet, but bronze was turned by bronze, and Hector was untouched, for the spear was stayed by the visored helmet made with three plates of metal, which Phoebus Apollo had given him. Hector sprang back with a great bound under cover of the ranks; he fell on his knees and propped himself [355] with his brawny hand leaning on the ground, for darkness had fallen on his eyes. The son of Tydeus having thrown his spear dashed in among the foremost fighters, to the place where he had seen it strike the ground; meanwhile Hector recovered himself and springing back into his chariot [360] mingled with the crowd, by which means he saved his life. But Diomedes made at him with his spear and said, "Dog, you have again got away though death was close on your heels. Phoebus Apollo, to whom I think you pray before you go into battle, has again saved you, [365] nevertheless I will meet you and make an end of you hereafter, if there is any god who will stand by me too and be my helper. For the present I must pursue those I can lay hands on."

As he spoke he began stripping the spoils from the spear-famed son of Paion, but Alexandros husband of lovely-haired Helen [370] aimed an arrow at him, leaning against a pillar of the monument which men had raised to Ilos, son of Dardanos, a ruler in days of old. Diomedes had taken the cuirass from off the breast of strong Agastrophos, his heavy helmet also, and the shield from off his shoulders, [375] when Paris drew his bow and let fly an arrow that sped not from his hand in vain, but pierced the flat of Diomedes' right foot, going right through it and fixing itself in the ground. Then Paris with a hearty laugh sprang forward from his hiding-place, and taunted him saying, [380] "You are wounded—my arrow has not been shot in vain; would that it had hit you in the belly and killed you, for thus the Trojans, who fear you as goats fear a lion, would have had a truce from evil."

Diomedes all undaunted answered, [385] "Archer, you who without your bow are nothing, slanderer and seducer, if you were to be tried in single combat fighting in full armor, your bow and your arrows would serve you in little stead. Vain is your boast in that you have scratched the sole of my foot. I care no more than if a girl or some inept boy [390] had hit me. A worthless coward can inflict but a light wound; when I wound a man though I but graze his skin it is another matter, for my weapon will lay him low. His wife will tear her cheeks for grief and his children will be fatherless: there will he [395] rot, reddening the earth with his blood, and vultures, not women, will gather round him."

Thus he spoke, but Odysseus came up and stood over him. Under this cover he sat down to draw the arrow from his foot, and sharp was the pain he suffered as he did so. Then he sprang on to his chariot and bade the charioteer [400] drive him to the ships, for he was sick at heart.

Odysseus was now alone; not one of the Argives stood by him, for they were all panic-stricken. "Alas," said he to himself in his dismay, "what will become of me? It is ill [405] if I turn and flee before these odds, but it will be worse if I am left alone and taken prisoner, for the son of

Kronos has struck the rest of the Danaans with panic. But why talk to myself in this way? Well do I know that though cowards quit the field, a hero, [410] whether he wound or be wounded, must stand firm and hold his own.”

While he was thus in two minds, the ranks of the Trojans advanced and hemmed him in, and bitterly did they come to rue it. As hounds and lusty youths set upon a wild boar [415] that sallies from his lair whetting his white tusks—they attack him from every side and can hear the gnashing of his jaws, but for all his fierceness they still hold their ground—even so furiously did the Trojans [420] attack Odysseus. First he sprang spear in hand upon Deiopites and wounded him on the shoulder with a downward blow; then he killed Thoön and Ennomos. After these he struck Khersidamas in the loins under his shield as he had just sprung down from his chariot; [425] so he fell in the dust and clutched the earth in the hollow of his hand. These he let lie, and went on to wound Kharops, son of Hippiasos, own brother to noble Sokos. Sokos, hero that he was, made all speed to help him, and when he was close to Odysseus he said, [430] “Far-famed Odysseus, insatiable of craft and toil [*ponos*], this day you shall either boast of having killed both the sons of Hippiasos and stripped them of their armor, or you shall fall before my spear.”

With these words he struck the shield of Odysseus. [435] The spear went through the shield and passed on through his richly wrought cuirass, tearing the flesh from his side, but Pallas Athena did not allow it to pierce the entrails of the hero. Odysseus knew that his hour [*telos*] was not yet come, [440] but he gave ground and said to Sokos, “Wretch, you shall now surely die. You have stayed me from fighting further with the Trojans, but you shall now fall by my spear, [445] yielding glory to myself, and your spirit [*psūkhē*] to Hādēs of the noble steeds.”

Sokos had turned in flight, but as he did so, the spear struck him in the back midway between the shoulders, and went right through his chest. He fell heavily to the ground and Odysseus boasted over him saying,

[450] “O Sokos, son of high-spirited Hippiasos tamer of horses, the end [*telos*] has been too quick for you and you have not escaped it: poor wretch, not even in death shall your father and mother close your eyes, but the ravening vultures shall enshroud you with the flapping of their dark wings and devour you. [455] Whereas even though I fall the Achaeans will give me my due rites of burial.”

So saying he drew Sokos’ heavy spear out of his flesh and from his shield, and the blood welled forth when the spear was withdrawn so that he was much dismayed. When the great-hearted Trojans saw that Odysseus was bleeding [460] they raised a great shout and came on in a body towards him; he therefore gave ground, and called his comrades to come and help him. Thrice did he cry as loudly as man can cry, and three times did brave Menelaos hear him; he turned, therefore, to Ajax who was close beside him and said, [465] “Ajax, noble son of Telamon, chief of your people, the cry of patient Odysseus rings in my ears, as though the Trojans had cut him off and were defeating him while he is single-handed. Let us make our way through the throng; it will be well that we defend him; [470] I fear he may come to harm for all his valor if he be left without support, and the Danaans would miss him sorely.”

He led the way and mighty Ajax went with him. The Trojans had gathered round Odysseus like ravenous mountain jackals round [475] the carcass of some horned stag that has been hit with an arrow—the stag has fled at full speed so long as his blood was warm and his strength has lasted, but when the arrow has overcome him, the savage jackals devour him [480] in the shady glades of the forest. Then a superhuman force [*daimōn*] sends a fierce lion there, whereon the jackals flee in terror and the lion robs them of their prey—even so did Trojans many and brave gather round crafty Odysseus, but the hero stood at bay and kept them off with his spear. [485] Ajax then came up with his shield before him like a wall, and stood hard by, whereon the Trojans fled in all directions. Warlike Menelaos took Odysseus by the hand, and led him out of the press while his attendant [*therapōn*] brought up his chariot, but Ajax

rushed furiously on the Trojans and killed Doryklos, [490] a bastard son of Priam; then he wounded Pandokos, Lysandros, Pyrasos, and Pylartes; as some swollen torrent comes rushing in full flood from the mountains on to the plain, big with the rain of the sky—many a dry oak and many a pine does it engulf, [495] and much mud does it bring down and cast into the sea—even so did brave Ajax chase the foe furiously over the plain, slaying both men and horses.

Hector did not yet know what Ajax was doing, for he was fighting on the extreme left of the battle by the banks of the river Skamandros, where [500] the carnage was thickest and the war-cry loudest round Nestor and brave Idomeneus. Among these Hector was making great slaughter with his spear and furious driving, and was destroying the ranks that were opposed to him; still the Achaeans would have given no ground, [505] had not Alexandros, husband of lovely-haired Helen, stayed the prowess of Makhaon shepherd of his people, by wounding him in the right shoulder with a triple-barbed arrow. The Achaeans were in great fear that as the fight had turned against them the Trojans might take him prisoner, [510] and Idomeneus said to radiant Nestor, “Nestor, son of Neleus, honor to the Achaean name, mount your chariot at once; take Makhaon with you and drive your horses to the ships as fast as you can. A physician is worth more than several other men put together, for he can cut out arrows and spread healing herbs.”

[515] Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, did as Idomeneus had counseled; he at once mounted his chariot, and Makhaon, son of the famed physician Asklepios, went with him. He lashed his horses and they flew onward holding nothing [520] back towards the ships, as though of their own free will.

Then Kebriones seeing the Trojans in confusion said to Hector from his place beside him, “Hector, here are we two fighting on the extreme wing of the battle, while the other Trojans [525] are in pell-mell rout, they and their horses. Ajax, son of Telamon, is driving them before him;

I know him by the breadth of his shield: let us turn our chariot and horses there, where horse and foot are fighting most desperately, [530] and where the cry of battle is loudest.”

With this he lashed his goodly steeds, and when they felt the singing whip they drew the chariot full speed among the Achaeans and Trojans, over the bodies and shields of those that had fallen: the axle [535] was bespattered with blood, and the rail round the car was covered with splashes both from the horses’ hooves and from the tires of the wheels. Hector tore his way through and flung himself into the thick of the fight, and his presence threw the Danaans into confusion, for his spear was [540] not long idle; nevertheless though he went among the ranks with sword and spear, and throwing great stones, he avoided Ajax, son of Telamon, for Zeus would have been angry with him if he had fought a better man than himself.

Then father Zeus from his high throne struck fear into the heart of Ajax, so that he stood there dazed and threw his shield behind him— [545] looking fearfully at the throng of his foes as though he were some wild beast, and turning here and there but crouching slowly backwards. As peasants with their hounds chase a lion from their stockyard, and watch by night to prevent his carrying off the pick of their herd— [550] he makes his greedy spring, but in vain, for the darts from many a strong hand fall thick around him, with burning brands that scare him for all his fury, and when morning comes he slinks away, foiled and angry— [555] even so did Ajax, sorely against his will, retreat angrily before the Trojans, fearing for the ships of the Achaeans. Or as some lazy ass that has had many a cudgel broken about his back, when he into a field begins eating the wheat—boys [560] beat him but he is too many for them, and though they lay about with their sticks they cannot hurt him; still when he has had his fill they at last drive him from the field—even so did the Trojans and their allies pursue great Ajax, ever smiting the middle of his shield with their darts. [565] Now and again he would turn and show fight, keeping back the battalions of the Trojans, and

then he would again retreat; but he prevented any of them from making his way to the ships. Single-handed he stood midway between the Trojans [570] and Achaeans: the spears that sped from their hands stuck some of them in his mighty shield, while many, though thirsting for his blood, fell to the ground before they could reach him to the wounding of his fair flesh.

[575] Now when Eurypylos, the brave son of Euaimon, saw that Ajax was being overpowered by the rain of arrows, he went up to him and hurled his spear. He struck Apisaon, son of Phausios, in the liver below the midriff, and laid him low. Eurypylos sprang upon him, and stripped the armor from his shoulders; [580] but when godlike Alexandros saw him, he aimed an arrow at him which struck him in the right thigh; the arrow broke, but the point that was left in the wound dragged on the thigh; he drew back, therefore, under cover of his comrades to save his life, [585] shouting as he did so to the Danaans, "My friends, princes and counselors of the Argives, rally to the defense of Ajax who is being overpowered, and I doubt whether he will come out of the fight alive. [590] This way, then, to the rescue of great Ajax, son of Telamon!"

Even so did he cry when he was wounded; then the others came near, and gathered round him, holding their shields upwards from their shoulders so as to give him cover. Ajax then made towards them, [595] and turned round to stand at bay as soon as he had reached his men.

Thus then did they fight as it were a flaming fire. Meanwhile the mares of Neleus, all in a lather with sweat, were bearing Nestor out of the fight, and with him Makhaon, shepherd of his people. ⁵⁹⁹ He [Nestor] was seen and noted by swift-footed radiant Achilles, [600] who was standing on the spacious stern of his ship, ⁶⁰¹ watching the sheer pain [*ponos*] and tearful struggle of the fight. ⁶⁰² Then, all of a sudden, he called to his comrade [*hetairos*] Patroklos, ⁶⁰³ calling from the ship, and he [Patroklos] from inside the tent heard him [Achilles], ⁶⁰⁴ and he [Patroklos] came out, equal [*īsos*] to Arēs, and here, I see it, was the

beginning of his doom. [605] He [Patroklos], mighty son of Menoitios, was the first to speak, and he said [to Achilles]: ⁶⁰⁶ “Why, Achilles, do you call me? what need do you have for me?” And Achilles answered, “Noble son of Menoitios, man after my own heart, I take it that I shall now have the Achaeans praying at my knees, for they are in great straits; [610] go, Patroklos, and ask Nestor who is that he is bearing away wounded from the field; from his back I should say it was Makhaon, son of Asklepios, but I could not see his face for the horses went by me at full speed.”

[615] Patroklos did as his dear comrade had bidden him, and set off running by the ships and tents of the Achaeans.

When Nestor and Makhaon had reached the tents of the son of Neleus, they dismounted, and an attendant [*therapōn*], Eurymedon, took the horses [620] from the chariot. The pair then stood in the breeze by the seaside to dry the sweat from their shirts, and when they had so done they came inside and took their seats. Fair Hekamede, whom Nestor had had awarded to him from Tenedos when Achilles took it, mixed them a mixture; [625] she was daughter of high-spirited Arsinoos, and the Achaeans had given her to Nestor because he excelled all of them in counsel. First she set for them a fair and well-made table that had feet of lapis; on it there was a vessel of bronze and an onion to give relish to the drink, [630] with honey and cakes of barley-meal. There was also a cup of rare workmanship which the old man had brought with him from home, studded with bosses of gold; it had four handles, on each of which there were two golden doves feeding, and it had two feet to stand on. [635] Any one else would hardly have been able to lift it from the table when it was full, but Nestor could do so quite easily. In this the woman, as fair as a goddess, mixed them a mixture with Pramnian wine; she grated goat’s milk cheese into it with a bronze grater, threw in a handful of white barley-meal, [640] and having thus prepared the mixture she bade them drink it. When they had done so and had thus

quenched their thirst, they fell talking with one another, and at this moment godlike Patroklos appeared at the door.

When the old man saw him he sprang from his [645] seat, seized his hand, led him into the tent, and bade him take his place among them; but Patroklos stood where he was and said, “Noble sir, I may not stay, you cannot persuade me to come in; he that sent me is not one to be trifled with, and he bade me ask who the wounded man was whom you were bearing away from the field. I can now [650] see for myself that he is Makhaon, shepherd of his people. I must go back and tell Achilles. You, sir, know what a terrible man he is, and how ready to blame even where no blame should lie.”

And Nestor answered, [655] “Why should Achilles care to know how many of the Achaeans may be wounded? He reckons not the grief [*penthos*] that reigns in our army of warriors; our most valiant chieftains lie disabled, brave Diomedes, son of Tydeus, is wounded; [660] so are Odysseus and spear-famed Agamemnon; Eurypylos has been hit with an arrow in the thigh, and I have just been bringing this man from the field—he too wounded—with an arrow; nevertheless Achilles, so valiant though he be, cares not. [665] Will he wait till the ships, do what we may, are in a blaze, and we perish one upon the other? As for me, I have no strength nor stay in me any longer; would that I were still young and strong [670] as in the days when there was a fight between us and the men of Elis about some cattle-raiding. I then killed Itymoneus the valiant son of Hypeirokeos a dweller in Elis, as I was driving in the spoil; he was hit by a dart thrown by my hand while fighting in the front rank in defense of his cows, [675] so he fell and the country people around him were in great fear. We drove off a vast quantity of booty from the plain, fifty herds of cattle and as many flocks of sheep; fifty droves also of pigs, and as many wide-spreading flocks of goats. Of horses moreover we seized a hundred and fifty, all of them mares, [680] and many had foals running with them. All these did we drive by night to Pylos, the city of Neleus, taking them within the city; and the heart of Neleus was

glad in that I had taken so much, though it was the first time I had ever been in the field. At daybreak the heralds went round crying [685] that all in Elis to whom there was a debt owing should come; and the leading Pylians assembled to divide the spoils. There were many to whom the Epeioi owed chattels, for we men of Pylos were few and had been oppressed with wrong; in former years Hēraklēs had come, and had laid his hand heavy upon us, [690] so that all our best men had perished. Lordly Neleus had had twelve sons, but I alone was left; the others had all been killed. The bronze-armored Epeioi presuming upon all this had looked down upon us and had done us much evil. [695] My father chose [*krinein*] a herd of cattle and a great flock of sheep—three hundred in all—and he took their shepherds with him, for there was a great debt due to him in Elis, to wit four horses, winners of prizes. They and their chariots with them had gone to the games and were to run for a tripod, [700] but King Augeas took them, and sent back their driver grieving for the loss of his horses. Neleus was angered by what he had both said and done, and took great value in return, but he divided the rest, that no man might have less than his full share.

[705] Thus did we order all things, and offer sacrifices to the gods throughout the city; but three days afterwards the Epeioi came in a body, many in number, they and their chariots, in full array, and with them the two Moliones in their armor, though they were still lads and unused to fighting. [710] Now there is a certain town, Thryoessa, perched upon a rock on the river Alpheus, the border city Pylos; this they would destroy, and pitched their camp about it, but when they had crossed their whole plain, Athena darted down by night from Olympus and bade us [715] set ourselves in array; and she found willing warriors in Pylos, for the men meant fighting. Neleus would not let me arm, and hid my horses, for he said that as yet I could know nothing about war; nevertheless Athena so ordered the fight that, all on foot as I was, [720] I fought among our mounted forces and vied with the foremost of them. There is a river Minyeios that falls into the sea near Arene, and there they that were mounted (and I with them) waited till morning, when

the companies of foot soldiers came up with us in force. Thence in full panoply and equipment [725] we came towards noon to the sacred waters of the Alpheus, and there we offered victims to almighty Zeus, with a bull to Alpheus, another to Poseidon, and a herd-heifer to owl-vision Athena. After this we took supper in our companies, [730] and laid us down to rest each in his armor by the river.

The high-hearted Epeioi were beleaguering the city and were determined to take it, but before this might be there was a desperate fight in store for them. When the sun's rays began to fall upon the earth [735] we joined battle, praying to Zeus and to Athena, and when the fight had begun, I was the first to kill my man and take his horses—to wit the warrior Moullos. He was son-in-law to Augeas, having married his eldest daughter, golden-haired Agamede, [740] who knew the virtues of every herb which grows upon the face of the earth. I speared him as he was coming towards me, and when he fell headlong in the dust, I sprang upon his chariot and took my place in the front ranks. The high-hearted Epeioi fled in all directions when they saw the [745] chief of their horsemen (the best man they had) laid low, and I swept down on them like a whirlwind, taking fifty chariots—and in each of them two men bit the dust, slain by my spear. I should have even killed the two Moliones sons [750] of Aktor, except their real father, Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, had hidden them in a thick mist and borne them out of the fight. Then Zeus granted the Pylians a great victory, for we chased them far over the plain, killing the men and bringing in their armor, [755] till we had brought our horses to Bouprasion rich in wheat and to the Olenian rock, with the hill that is called Alision, at which point Athena turned the people back. There I slew the last man and left him; then the Achaeans drove their horses back from Bouprasion to Pylos [760] and gave thanks to Zeus among the gods, and among mortal men to Nestor.

Such was I among my peers, as surely as ever was, but Achilles is for keeping all his excellence [*aretē*] for himself; bitterly will he regret it

hereafter when the army of warriors is being cut to pieces. My good friend, did not Menoitios charge you thus, [765] on the day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon? Radiant Odysseus and I were in the house, inside, and heard all that he said to you; for we came to the fair house of Peleus while beating up recruits throughout all Achaea, and when we got [770] there we found Menoitios and yourself, and Achilles with you. The old charioteer Peleus was in the outer court, roasting the fat thigh-pieces of a heifer to Zeus the lord of thunder; and he held a gold chalice in his hand from which he poured drink-offerings of wine over the burning sacrifice. You two [775] were busy cutting up the heifer, and at that moment we stood at the gates, whereon Achilles sprang to his feet, led us by the hand into the house, placed us at table, and set before us such hospitable entertainment as is right [*themis*] for guests. When we had satisfied ourselves with meat and drink, [780] I said my say and urged both of you to join us. You were ready enough to do so, and the two old men charged you much and strongly. Old Peleus bade his son Achilles fight ever among the foremost and outcompete his peers, while Menoitios, the son of Aktor, spoke thus to you: [785] ‘My son,’ said he, ‘Achilles is of nobler birth than you are. ⁷⁸⁷ You are older; but he is much better in force [*bíē*]. Counsel him wisely, guide him in the right way, and he will follow you to his own profit.’ Thus did your father charge you, but you have forgotten; nevertheless, even [790] now, say all this to high-spirited Achilles if he will listen to you. Who knows but with the help of a superhuman force [*daimōn*] you may talk him over, for it is good to take a friend’s advice. If, however, he is fearful about some oracle, or if his mother has told him something from Zeus, [795] then let him send you, and let the rest of the Myrmidons follow with you, if perchance you may bring light and saving to the Danaans. And let him send you into battle clad in his own armor, that the Trojans may mistake you for him and leave off fighting; the sons of the Achaeans may thus have time to get their breath, [800] for they are hard pressed and there is little breathing time in battle. You, who are fresh, might easily drive a tired enemy back to his walls and away from the tents and ships.”

With these words he moved the heart of Patroklos, who set off running by the line of the ships to [805] Achilles, descendant of Aiakos. When he had got as far as the ships of Odysseus, where was their place of assembly and place for deciding what is right [*themis*], with their altars dedicated to the gods, Eurypylos, illustrious son of Euaimon, met him, wounded in the thigh with an arrow, and limping [810] out of the fight. Sweat rained from his head and shoulders, and black blood welled from his cruel wound, but his mind [*noos*] did not wander. The strong son of Menoitios when he saw him had compassion upon him and spoke piteously saying, [815] “O unhappy princes and counselors of the Danaans, are you then doomed to feed the hounds of Troy with your fat, far from your friends and your native land? Say, noble Eurypylos, will the Achaeans be able to hold great Hector in check, [820] or will they fall now before his spear?”

Wounded Eurypylos made answer, “Noble Patroklos, there is no hope left for the Achaeans but they will perish at their ships. All they that were princes among us [825] are lying struck down and wounded at the hands of the Trojans, who are waxing stronger and stronger. But save me and take me to your ship; cut out the arrow from my thigh; wash the black blood from off it with warm water, and lay upon it those gracious herbs [830] which, so they say, have been shown you by Achilles, who was himself shown them by Cheiron, most righteous of all the centaurs. For of the physicians Podaleirios and Makhaon, I hear that the one is lying wounded in his tent and is himself in need of healing, [835] while the other is fighting the Trojans upon the plain.”

“Hero Eurypylos,” replied the brave son of Menoitios, “how may these things be? What can I do? I am on my way to bear a message to noble Achilles from Nestor of Gerenia, bulwark of the Achaeans, [840] but even so I will not be unmindful your distress.”

With this he clasped him round the middle and led him into the tent, and an attendant [*therapōn*], when he saw him, spread bullock-skins on

the ground for him to lie on. He laid him at full length and cut out the sharp arrow from his thigh; he washed the black blood from the wound [845] with warm water; he then crushed a bitter herb, rubbing it between his hands, and spread it upon the wound; this was a virtuous herb which killed all pain; so the wound presently dried and the blood left off flowing.

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Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 12

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] So the warlike son of Menoitios was attending to the hurt of Eurypylos within the tent, but the Argives and Trojans still fought desperately, nor were the trench and the high wall above it, to keep the Trojans in check longer. [5] They had built it to protect their ships, and had dug the trench all round it that it might safeguard both the ships and the rich spoils which they had taken, but they had not offered hecatombs to the gods. It had been built without the consent of the immortals, and therefore it did not last. [10] So long as Hector lived and Achilles nursed his anger [*mēnis*], and so long as the city of Priam remained untaken, the great wall of the Achaeans stood firm; but when the bravest of the Trojans were no more, and many also of the Argives, though some were yet left alive [15] when, moreover, the city was destroyed in the tenth year, and the Argives had gone back with their ships to their own country—then Poseidon and Apollo took counsel to destroy the wall, and they turned on to it the streams of all the rivers from Mount Ida into the sea, [20] Rhesus, Heptaporos, Karesos, Rhodios, Grenikos, Aisopos, and goodly Skamandros, ²² and Simoeis, where many cowhide-shields and helmets ²³ fell in the dust—as also a generation of demigods [*hēmitheoi*]. Phoebus Apollo turned the mouths of all these rivers together [25] and made them flow for nine days against the wall, while Zeus rained the whole time that he might wash it sooner into the sea. Poseidon himself, trident in hand, surveyed the work and threw into the sea all the foundations of beams and stones which the Achaeans had laid with so much toil; [30] he made all level by the mighty stream of the Hellespont, and then when he had swept the

wall away he spread a great beach of sand over the place where it had been. This done he turned the rivers back into their old courses.

This was what Poseidon and Apollo were to [35] do in after time; but as yet battle and turmoil were still raging round the wall till its timbers rang under the blows that rained upon them. The Argives, cowed by the scourge of Zeus, were hemmed in at their ships in fear of Hector, the mighty minister of Rout, [40] who as heretofore fought with the force and fury of a whirlwind. As a lion or wild boar turns fiercely on the dogs and men that attack him, while these form solid wall and shower their javelins as they face him— [45] his courage is all undaunted, but his high spirit will be the death of him; many a time does he charge at his pursuers to scatter them, and they fall back as often as he does so— even so did Hector go about among the army of warriors exhorting his men, [50] and cheering them on to cross the trench.

But the horses dared not do so, and stood neighing upon its brink, for the width frightened them. They could neither jump it nor cross it, for it had overhanging banks all round [55] upon either side, above which there were the sharp stakes that the sons of the Achaeans had planted so close and strong as a defense against all who would assail it; a horse, therefore, could not get into it and draw his chariot after him, but those who were on foot kept trying their very utmost. [60] Then Polydamas went up to bold Hector and said, “Hector, and you other chiefs of the Trojans and allies, it is madness for us to try and drive our fast-footed horses across the trench; it will be very hard to cross, for it is full of sharp stakes, and beyond these there is the wall. [65] Our horses therefore cannot get down into it, and would be of no use if they did; moreover it is a narrow place and we should come to harm. If, indeed, great Zeus is minded to help the Trojans, and in his anger will utterly destroy the Achaeans, I would myself gladly see [70] them perish now and here far from Argos; but if they should rally and we are driven back from the ships pell-mell into the trench there will be not so much as a man get back to the city to tell the tale. [75] Now, therefore, let us all do as I say;

let our attendants [*therapontes*] hold our horses by the trench, but let us follow Hector in a body on foot, clad in full armor, and if the day of their doom is at hand the Achaeans will not be able to withstand us.”

[80] Thus spoke Polydamas and his saying pleased radiant Hector, ⁸¹ and straightaway he leapt out of his chariot, armor and all, hitting the ground, and all the other Trojans, when they saw him do so, also left their chariots. Each man then gave his horses over to his charioteer in charge [85] to hold them in good order [*kosmos*] for him at the trench. Then they formed themselves into companies, made themselves ready, and in five bodies followed their leaders. Those that went with Hector and Polydamas the blameless were the bravest and most in number, and the most determined [90] to break through the wall and fight at the ships. Kebriones was also joined with them as third in command, for Hector had left his chariot in charge of a less valiant warrior. The next company was led by Paris, Alkathöös, and Agenor; the third by Helenos and godlike Deiphobos, [95] two sons of Priam, and with them was the hero Asios—Asios the son of Hyrtakos, whose great black horses of the breed that comes from the river Selleis had brought him from Arisbe. Aeneas the valiant son of Anchises led the fourth; he and the two sons of Antenor, [100] Arkhelokhos and Akamas, men well versed in all the arts of war. Sarpedon was chief over the allies, and took with him Glaukos and warlike Asteropaios whom he thought most valiant after himself—for he was far the best man of them all. [105] These helped to array one another in their ox-hide shields, and then charged straight at the Danaans, for they felt sure that they would not hold out longer and that they should themselves now fall upon the ships.

The rest of the Trojans and their allies now followed the counsel of blameless Polydamas but [110] Asios son of Hyrtakos would not leave his horses and his attendant [*therapōn*] behind him; in his foolhardiness he took them on with him towards the ships, nor did he fail to come by his end in consequence. [115] Nevermore was he to return to wind-beaten Ilion, exulting in his chariot and his horses; before he could do so,

death of ill-omened name had overshadowed him and he had fallen by the spear of Idomeneus, the noble son of Deukalion. He had driven towards the left wing of the ships, by which way the Achaeans used to return with their chariots and horses from the plain. [120] In this direction he drove and found the gates with their doors opened wide, and the great bar down—for the gatemen kept them open so as to let those of their comrades enter who might be fleeing towards the ships. Here of set purpose did he direct his horses, and his men followed him [125] with a loud cry, for they felt sure that the Achaeans would not hold out longer, and that they should now fall upon the ships. Little did they know that at the gates they should find two of the bravest chieftains, proud sons of the spear-fighting Lapiths—the one, powerful Polypoites, mighty son of Perithoös, [130] and the other Leonteus, peer of manslaughtering Arēs. These stood before the gates like two high oak trees upon the mountains, that tower from their wide-spreading roots, and year after year battle with wind and rain—even so did [135] these two men await the onset of great Asios confidently and without flinching. The Trojans led by him and by Iamenos, Orestes, [140] Adamas, the son of Asios, Thoön and Oinomaos, raised a loud cry of battle and made straight for the wall, holding their shields of dry ox-hide above their heads; for a while the two defenders remained inside and cheered the strong-greaved Achaeans on to stand firm in the defense of their ships; when, however, they saw that the Trojans were attacking the wall, while the Danaans were crying out for help and being routed, [145] they rushed outside and fought in front of the gates like two wild boars upon the mountains that abide the attack of men and dogs, and charging on either side break down the wood all round them tearing it up by the roots, and one can hear the clattering of their tusks, [150] till some one hits them and makes an end of them—even so did the gleaming bronze rattle about their breasts, as the weapons fell upon them; for they fought with great fury, trusting to their own prowess and to those who were on the wall above them. These threw great stones at their assailants [155] in defense of themselves their tents and their ships. The stones fell thick as the flakes of snow that some fierce blast drives

from the dark clouds and showers down in sheets upon the earth—even so fell the weapons from the hands alike of Trojans and Achaeans. [160] Helmet and shield rang out as the great stones rained upon them, and Asios the son of Hyrtakos in his dismay cried aloud and smote his two thighs. “Father Zeus,” he cried, “Truly you too are altogether given [165] to lying. I made sure the Argive heroes could not withstand us, whereas like slim-waisted wasps, or bees that have their nests in the rocks by the wayside—they leave not the holes wherein they have built undefended, [170] but fight for their little ones against all who would take them—even so these men, though they be but two, will not be driven from the gates, but stand firm either to slay or be slain.”

He spoke, but moved not the mind of Zeus, whose counsel it then was to give glory to Hector. [175] Meanwhile the rest of the Trojans were fighting about the other gates; I, however, am no god to be able to tell about all these things, for the battle raged everywhere about the stone wall as it were a fiery furnace. The Argives, discomfited though they were, were forced to defend their ships, and all the gods who were defending [180] the Achaeans were vexed in spirit; but the Lapiths kept on fighting with might and main.

Then Polypoites, mighty son of Perithoös, hit Damasos with a spear upon his cheek—pierced helmet. The helmet did not protect him, for the point of the spear [185] went through it, and broke the bone, so that the brain inside was scattered about, and he died fighting. He then slew Pylon and Ormenos. Leonteus, of the lineage of Arēs, killed Hippomakhos, the son of Antimakhos, by striking him with his spear upon the belt. [190] He then drew his sword and sprang first upon Antiphates whom he killed in combat, and who fell face upwards on the earth. After him he killed Menon, Iamenos, and Orestes, and laid them low one after the other.

[195] While they were busy stripping the armor from these heroes, the youths who were led on by Polydamas and Hector (and these were the

greater part and the most valiant of those that were trying to break through the wall and fire the ships) were still standing by the trench, uncertain what they should do; [200] for they had seen a sign from the gods when they had essayed to cross it—a soaring eagle that flew skirting the left wing of their army of warriors, with a monstrous blood-red snake in its talons still alive and struggling to escape. The snake was still bent on revenge, wriggling and twisting itself backwards till it struck the bird that held it, [205] on the neck and breast; whereon the bird being in pain, let it fall, dropping it into the middle of the army of warriors, and then flew down the wind with a sharp cry. The Trojans were struck with terror when they saw the snake, portent of aegis-bearing Zeus, writhing in the midst of them, [210] and Polydamas went up to Hector and said, “Hector, at our councils of war you are ever given to rebuke me, even when I speak wisely, as though it were not well that one of the population [*dēmos*] should cross your will either in the field or in the council; you would have them support you always: [215] nevertheless I will say what I think will be best; let us not now go on to fight the Danaans at their ships, for I know what will happen if this soaring eagle which skirted the left wing of our army [220] with a monstrous blood-red snake in its talons (the snake being still alive) was really sent as an omen to the Trojans on their essaying to cross the trench. The eagle let go her hold; she did not succeed in taking it home to her little ones, and so will it be—with ourselves; even though by a mighty effort we break through the gates and wall of the Achaeans, and they give way before us, [225] still we shall not return in good order [*kosmos*] by the way we came, but shall leave many a man behind us whom the Achaeans will do to death in defense of their ships. ²²⁸ thus would a seer [*theopropos*] respond [*hupokrinesthai*] who was expert in these matters, and was trusted by the people.”

[230] Tall Hector of the shining helmet looked fiercely at him and said, “Polydamas, I like not of your reading. You can find a better saying than this if you will. If, however, you have spoken in good earnest, then indeed have the gods robbed you of your reason. [235] You would have

me pay no heed to the counsels of thunderous Zeus, nor to the promises he made me—and he bowed his head in confirmation; you bid me be ruled rather by the flight of wild-fowl. What care I whether they fly towards dawn or dark, [240] and whether they be on my right hand or on my left? Let us put our trust rather in the counsel of great Zeus, king of mortals and immortals. There is one omen, and one only—that a man should fight for his country. Why are you so fearful? [245] Though we be all of us slain at the ships of the Argives you are not likely to be killed yourself, for you are not steadfast nor courageous. If you will not fight, or would talk others over from doing so, [250] you shall fall right away before my spear.”

With these words he led the way, and the others followed after with a cry that rent the air. Then Zeus, the lord of thunder, sent the blast of a mighty wind from the mountains of Ida, that bore the dust down towards the ships; he thus lulled the thinking [*noos*] [255] of the Achaeans into security, and gave victory to Hector and to the Trojans, who, trusting to their own might and to the signs he had shown them, essayed to break through the great wall of the Achaeans. They tore down the breastworks from the walls, and overthrew the battlements; they heaved up the buttresses, which the Achaeans [260] had set in front of the wall in order to support it; when they had pulled these down they made sure of breaking through the wall, but the Danaans still showed no sign of giving ground; they still fenced the battlements with their shields of ox-hide, and hurled their missiles down upon the foe as soon as any came below the wall.

[265] The two Ajaxes went about everywhere on the walls cheering on the Achaeans, giving fair words to some while they spoke sharply to any one whom they saw to be remiss. ²⁶⁹ “My dear friends! You who are top-rank among the Argives, and you who are middle-rank, [270] and you who are of lower rank—I say this because it has never yet happened that all men are equal [*homoioi*] ²⁷¹ as men in war—now is the time when everybody has work to do. See that you none of you turn in flight

towards the ships, daunted by the shouting of the foe, but press forward and keep one another in heart, [275] if it may so be that Olympian Zeus the lord of lightning will grant that we repel our foes, and drive them back towards the city.”

Thus did the two go about shouting and cheering the Achaeans on. As the flakes that fall thick upon a winter’s day, when Zeus is minded [280] to snow and to display these his arrows to humankind—he lulls the wind to rest, and snows hour after hour till he has buried the tops of the high mountains, the headlands that jut into the sea, the grassy plains, and the tilled fields of men; the snow lies deep upon the forelands, and havens of the gray sea, [285] but the waves as they come rolling in stay it that it can come no further, though all else is wrapped as with a mantle so heavy are the skies with snow— even thus thickly did the stones fall on one side and on the other, some thrown at the Trojans, and some by the Trojans at the Achaeans; and the whole wall was in an uproar.

[290] Still the Trojans and brave Hector would not yet have broken down the gates and the great bar, had not Zeus turned his son Sarpedon against the Argives as a lion against a herd of horned cattle. Before him he held his shield [295] of hammered bronze, that the smith had beaten so fair and round, and had lined with ox-hides which he had made fast with rivets of gold all round the shield; this he held in front of him, and brandishing his two spears came on like some lion of the wilderness, who has been long [300] famished for want of meat and will dare break even into a well-fenced homestead to try and get at the sheep. He may find the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks with dogs and spears, but he is in no mind to be driven from the fold till he has had a try for it; [305] he will either spring on a sheep and carry it off, or be hit by a spear from strong hand—even so was godlike Sarpedon bent on attacking the wall and break down its battlements. Then he said to Glaukos, son of Hippolokhos, [310] “ Glaukos, why is it that you and I get the most honor [verb from *tīmē*] of all, ³¹¹ with a special place to sit, with choice meats, and with full wine-cups, ³¹² in Lycia, and everyone looks at us as

gods, ³¹³ and we are allotted a great sector of land [*temenos*] at the banks of the Xanthos, ³¹⁴ fine land, orchard and wheat-bearing ploughland? [315] And so it is our duty to take our stand in the front ranks of the Lycians, ³¹⁶ and to meet blazing battle head-on, ³¹⁷ so that one of the heavily armored Lycians may say of us: ³¹⁸ ‘Indeed it is not without *kleos* that our kings ³¹⁹ are lords of Lycia, who feed upon fat sheep [320] and drink choice sweet wine, since they have genuine strength ³²¹ and since they fight in the front ranks of the Lycians.’ My good friend, if, when we were once out of this fight, we could escape old age and death thenceforward and for ever, I should neither press forward myself [325] nor bid you do so, but death in ten thousand shapes hangs ever over our heads, and no man can elude him; therefore let us go forward and either win glory for ourselves, or yield it to another.”

Glaukos heeded his saying, [330] and the pair right away led on the army of Lycians. Menestheus son of Peteos was dismayed when he saw them, for it was against his part of the wall that they came—bringing destruction with them; he looked along the wall for some chieftain to support his comrades [335] and saw the two Ajaxes, men ever eager for the fray, and Teucer, who had just come from his tent, standing near them; but he could not make his voice heard by shouting to them, so great an uproar was there from crashing shields and helmets [340] and the battering of gates with a din which reached the skies. For all the gates had been closed, and the Trojans were hammering at them to try and break their way through them. Menestheus, therefore, sent Thoötes with a message to Ajax. “Run, good Thoötes,” he said, “and call Ajax, or better still bid both come, [345] for it will be all over with us here directly; the leaders of the Lycians are upon us, men who have ever fought desperately heretofore. But if they have too much labor [*ponos*] on their hands to let them come, at any rate let Ajax son of Telamon do so, [350] and let Teucer, the famous bowman, come with him.”

The messenger did as he was told, and set off running along the wall of the Achaeans. When he reached the Ajaxes he said to them, “Sirs,

princes of the Argives, [355] the son of noble Peteos bids you come to him for a while and help him. You had better both come if you can, or it will be all over with him directly; the leaders of the Lycians are upon him, men who [360] have ever fought desperately heretofore; if you have too much on your hands to let both come, at any rate let powerful Ajax son of Telamon do so, and let Teucer the famous bowman come with him.”

Great Ajax, son of Telamon, heeded the message, [365] and at once spoke to the son of Oïleus. “Ajax,” said he, “do you two, yourself and brave Lykomedes, stay here and keep the Danaans in heart to fight their hardest. I will go over yonder, and bear my part in the fray, but I will come back here at once as soon as I have given them the help they need.”

[370] With this, Ajax, son of Telamon, set off, and Teucer, his brother by the same father, went also, with Pandion to carry Teucer’s bow. They went along inside the wall, and when they came to the tower where high-hearted Menestheus was (and hard pressed indeed did they find him) [375] the brave chiefs and leaders of the Lycians were storming the battlements as it were a thick dark cloud, fighting in close quarters, and raising the battle-cry aloud.

First, Ajax son of Telamon killed brave Epikles, a comrade of Sarpedon, [380] hitting him with a jagged stone that lay by the battlements at the very top of the wall. As men now are, even one who is in the bloom of youth could hardly lift it with his two hands, but Ajax raised it high aloft and flung it down, smashing Epikles’ four-crested helmet [385] so that the bones of his head were crushed to pieces, and he fell from the high wall as though he were diving, with no more life left in him. Then Teucer wounded Glaukos the brave son of Hippolokhos as he was coming on to attack the wall. He saw his shoulder bare and aimed an arrow at it, which made Glaukos leave off fighting. [390] Then he sprang covertly down for fear some of the Achaeans might see that he

was wounded and taunt him. Sarpedon was stung with grief [*akhos*] when he saw Glaukos leave him, still he did not leave off fighting, but aimed his spear at Alkmaon the son of Thestor and hit him. [395] He drew his spear back again Alkmaon came down headlong after it with his bronzed armor rattling round him. Then Sarpedon seized the battlement in his strong hands, and tugged at it till it gave way, and a breach was made through which many might pass.

[400] Ajax and Teucer then both of them attacked him. Teucer hit him with an arrow on the band that bore the shield which covered his body, but Zeus saved his son from destruction that he might not fall by the ships' sterns. Meanwhile Ajax sprang on him and pierced his shield, but the spear [405] did not go clean through, though it hustled him back that he could come on no further. He therefore retired a little space from the battlement, yet without losing all his ground, for he still thought to cover himself with glory. Then he turned round and shouted to the brave Lycians saying, "Lycians, why do you thus fail me? [410] For all my prowess I cannot break through the wall and open a way to the ships single-handed. Come close on behind me, for the more there are of us the better."

The Lycians, shamed by his rebuke, pressed closer round him who was their counselor and their king. [415] The Argives on their part got their men in fighting order within the wall, and there was a deadly struggle between them. The Lycians could not break through the wall and force their way to the ships, nor could the Danaans drive the Lycians [420] from the wall now that they had once reached it. As two men, measuring-rods in hand, quarrel about their boundaries in a field that they own in common, and stickle for their rights though they be but in a mere strip, even so did the battlements now serve as a bone of contention, [425] and they beat one another's round shields for their possession. Many a man's body was wounded with the pitiless bronze, as he turned round and bared his back to the foe, and many were struck clean through their shields; [430] the wall and battlements were

everywhere deluged with the blood alike of Trojans and of Achaeans. But even so the Trojans could not rout the Achaeans, who still held on; and as some honest hard-working woman weighs wool in her balance and sees that the scales be true [*alēthēs*], [435] for she would gain some pitiful earnings for her little ones, even so was the fight balanced evenly between them till the time came when Zeus gave the greater glory to Hector son of Priam, who was first to spring towards the wall of the Achaeans. As he did so, he cried aloud to the Trojans, [440] “Up, Trojans, break the wall of the Argives, and fling fire upon their ships.”

Thus did he hound them on, and in one body they rushed straight at the wall as he had bidden them, and scaled the battlements with sharp spears in their hands. [445] Hector laid hold of a stone that lay just outside the gates and was thick at one end but pointed at the other; two of the best men in a local population [*dēmos*], the kind of men who exist now, could hardly raise it from the ground and put it on to a wagon, but Hector lifted it quite easily by himself, [450] for the son of scheming Kronos made it light for him. As a shepherd picks up a ram’s fleece with one hand and finds it no burden, so easily did Hector lift the great stone and drive it right at the doors that closed the gates so strong and so firmly set. [455] These doors were double and high, and were kept closed by two cross-bars to which there was but one key. When he had got close up to them, Hector strode towards them that his blow might gain in force and struck them in the middle, leaning his whole weight against them. He broke both hinges, and the stone fell [460] inside by reason of its great weight. The portals re-echoed with the sound, the bars held no longer, and the doors flew open, one one way, and the other the other, through the force of the blow. Then brave Hector leaped inside with a face as dark as that of fleeing night. The gleaming bronze flashed fiercely about his body and he had two spears [465] in his hand. None but a god could have withstood him as he flung himself into the gateway, and his eyes glared like fire. Then he turned round towards the Trojans and called on them to scale the wall, and they did as he bade them—some of them at once climbing over the wall, while others passed

[470] through the gates. The Danaans then fled panic-stricken towards their ships, and all was uproar and confusion.

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Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 13

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now when Zeus had thus brought Hector and the Trojans to the ships, he left them to their never-ending toil [*ponos*], and turned his keen eyes away, looking elsewhere towards the horse-breeders of Thrace, [5] the Mysians, fighters at close quarters, the noble Hippemolgoi, who live on milk, and the Abians, most just of humankind. He no longer turned so much as a glance towards Troy, for he did not think that any of the immortals would go and help either Trojans or Danaans.

[10] But King Poseidon had kept no blind look-out; he had been looking admiringly on the battle from his seat on the topmost crests of wooded Samothrace, whence he could see all Ida, with the city of Priam and the ships of the Achaeans. [15] He had come from under the sea and taken his place here, for he pitied the Achaeans who were being overcome by the Trojans; and he was furiously angry with Zeus.

Presently he came down from his post on the mountain top, and as he strode swiftly onwards the high hills and the forest quaked beneath the tread of his immortal feet. [20] Three strides he took, and with the fourth he reached his goal—²¹ Aigai, there is his famed palace built, in the depths of the water; ²² golden and gleaming it is, *aphthita* forever. ²³ Arriving there [= at Aigai], he [= Poseidon] harnessed to his chariot his two bronze-hooved horses ²⁴ —swift they were, with golden manes streaming from their heads— [25] . and he put on his golden armor, which enveloped his skin, and he seized his whip, ²⁶ golden it was, beautifully made, and he stepped on the platform of his chariot, ²⁷ and off he went over the waves, and the sea creatures were frolicking

underneath as we went along. ²⁸ They came out from all their hiding places down below, recognizing their lord and master. ²⁹ Gladly did the sea part as they [= the divine horses] were speeding ahead. [30] So lightly they moved that the wetness did not touch from below the bronze axle ³¹ as he [= Poseidon] was being conveyed toward the ships of the Achaeans by his prancing horses.

³² There is a wide cave in the depths of the deep water midway between Tenedos and rocky Imbros; here Poseidon lord of the earthquake stayed his horses, [35] unyoked them, and set before them their ambrosial forage. He hobbled their feet with hobbles of gold which none could either unloose or break, so that they might stay there in that place until their lord should return. This done he went his way to the army of the Achaeans.

Now the Trojans [40] followed Hector, son of Priam, in close array like a storm-cloud or flame of fire, fighting with might and main and raising the cry battle; for they thought that they should take the ships of the Achaeans and kill all their chief heroes then and there. Meanwhile earth-encircling Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, cheered on the Argives, for he had come up out of the sea [45] and had assumed the form and voice of Kalkhas.

First he spoke to the two Ajaxes, who were doing their best already, and said, “Ajaxes, you two can be the saving of the Achaeans if you will put out all your strength and not let yourselves be daunted. I am not afraid that the Trojans, [50] who have got over the wall in force, will be victorious in any other part, for the strong-greaved Achaeans can hold all of them in check, but I much fear that some evil will befall us here where Hector, with his wolfish rage [*lyssa*], ⁵⁴ who boasts to be the child of mighty Zeus, is leading them on like a pillar of flame. May [55] some god, then, put it into your hearts to make a firm stand here, and to incite others to do the like. In this case you will drive him from the ships even though he be inspired by Zeus himself.”

As he spoke the earth-encircling lord of the earthquake [60] struck both of them with his scepter and filled their hearts with daring. He made their legs light and active, as also their hands and their feet. Then, as the soaring falcon poises on the wing high above some sheer rock, and presently swoops down to chase some bird over the plain, [65] even so did Poseidon lord of the earthquake wing his flight into the air and leave them. Of the two, swift Ajax, son of Oïleus, was the first to know who it was that had been speaking with them, and said to Ajax, son of Telamon, "Ajax, this is one of the gods that dwell on Olympus, who in the likeness of the prophet is bidding us fight hard by our ships. [70] It was not Kalkhas the seer and diviner of omens; I knew him at once by his feet and knees as he turned away, for the gods are soon recognized. Moreover I feel the lust of battle burn more fiercely within me, [75] while my hands and my feet under me are more eager for the fray."

And Ajax, son of Telamon, answered, "I too feel my hands grasp my spear more firmly; my strength is greater, and my feet more nimble; I long, moreover, to meet [80] furious Hector son of Priam, even in single combat."

Thus did they converse, exulting in the hunger after battle with which the god had filled them. Meanwhile the earth-encircler roused the Achaeans, who were resting in the rear by the ships [85] overcome at once by hard fighting and by grief [*akhos*] at seeing that the Trojans had got over the wall in force. Tears began falling from their eyes as they beheld them, for they made sure that they should not escape destruction; but the lord of the earthquake [90] passed lightly about among them and urged their battalions to the front.

First he went up to Teucer and Leitos, the hero Peneleos, and Thoas and Deipyros; Meriones also and Antilokhos, valiant warriors; all did he exhort. [95] "Shame [*aidōs*] on you young Argives," he cried, "it was on your prowess I relied for the saving of our ships; if you fight not with might and main, this very day will see us overcome by the Trojans."

Truly my eyes behold a great [100] and terrifying portent which I had never thought to see—the Trojans at our ships—they, who were heretofore like panic-stricken hinds, the prey of jackals and wolves in a forest, with no strength but in flight for they cannot defend themselves. [105] Up to now the Trojans dared not for one moment face the attack of the Achaeans, but now they have come out far from their city and are fighting at our very ships through the cowardice of our leader and the disaffection of the people themselves, who in their discontent care not to fight in defense [110] of the ships but are being slaughtered near them. True, King Agamemnon, son of Atreus, is responsible [*aitios*] for our disaster by having insulted the swift-footed son of Peleus, still this is no reason why we should leave off fighting. [115] Let us be quick to heal, for the hearts of the brave heal quickly. You do ill to be thus remiss, you, who are the finest warriors in our whole army. I blame no man for keeping out of battle if he is a weakling, but I am indignant with such men as you are. [120] My good friends, matters will soon become even worse through this slackness; think, each one of you, of his own honor [*aidōs*] and deservedness [*nemesis*], for the hazard of the fight is extreme. Great Hector is now fighting at our ships; he has broken through the gates and the strong bolt that held them.”

[125] Thus did the earth-encircler address the Achaeans and urge them on. Then round the two Ajaxes there gathered strong bands of men, whom not even Arēs nor Athena, marshalers of armies, could disregard if they went among them, for they were the chosen [*krinein*] men of all those who were now awaiting the onset of Hector and the Trojans. They made a living fence, [130] spear to spear, shield to shield, buckler to buckler, helmet to helmet, and man to man. The horse-hair crests on their gleaming helmets touched one another as they nodded forward, so closely aligned were they; the spears they brandished in their strong hands were interlaced, [135] and their hearts were set on battle. The Trojans advanced in a dense body, with Hector at their head pressing right on as a rock that comes thundering down the side of some mountain from whose brow the winter torrents have torn it; the

foundations of the dull thing have been loosened by floods of rain, [140] and as it bounds headlong on its way it sets the whole forest in an uproar; it swerves neither to right nor left till it reaches level ground, but then for all its fury it can go no further—even so easily did Hector for a while seem as though he would career through the tents and ships of the Achaeans till he had reached the sea [145] in his murderous course; but the closely serried battalions stayed him when he reached them, for the sons of the Achaeans thrust at him with swords and spears pointed at both ends, and drove him from them so that he staggered and gave ground; then he shouted to the Trojans, [150] “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians, fighters in close combat, stand firm: the Achaeans have set themselves as a wall against me, but they will not check me for long; they will give ground before me if the mightiest of the gods, the thundering spouse of Hera, has indeed inspired my onset.”

[155] With these words he put heart and spirit into them all. Deiphobos, son of Priam, went about among them intent on deeds of daring with his round shield before him, under cover of which he strode quickly forward. Meriones took aim at him with a spear, [160] nor did he fail to hit the broad orb of ox-hide; but he was far from piercing it for the spear broke in two pieces long before he could do so; moreover Deiphobos had seen it coming and had held his shield well away from him. The high-spirited Meriones [165] drew back under cover of his comrades, angry alike at having failed to vanquish Deiphobos, and having broken his spear. He turned therefore towards the ships and tents to fetch a spear that he had left behind in his tent.

The others continued fighting, and the cry of battle rose up into the sky. [170] Teucer, son of Telamon, was the first to kill his man, to wit, the warrior Imbrios, son of Mentor, rich in horses. Until the Achaeans came he had lived in Pedaion, and had married Medesikaste a bastard daughter of Priam; but on the arrival of the Danaan fleet he had gone back [175] to Ilion, and was a great man among the Trojans, dwelling near Priam himself, who gave him like honor with his own sons. The son of

Telamon now struck him under the ear with a spear which he then drew back again, and Imbrios fell headlong as an ash-tree when it is felled on the crest of some high mountain beacon, [180] and its delicate green foliage comes toppling down to the ground. Thus did he fall with his bronze-wrought armor ringing harshly round him, and Teucer sprang forward with intent to strip him of his armor; but as he was doing so, Hector took aim at him with a spear. Teucer saw the spear coming and swerved aside, [185] whereon it hit great-hearted Amphimakhos, son of Kteatos, son of Aktor, in the chest as he was coming into battle, and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. Hector sprang forward to take Amphimakhos' helmet from off his temples, and in a moment Ajax [190] threw a spear at him, but did not wound him, for he was encased all over in his terrifying armor; nevertheless the spear struck the boss of his shield with such force as to drive him back from the two corpses, which the Achaeans then drew off. [195] Stikhios and radiant Menestheus, chiefs of the Athenians, bore away Amphimakhos to the army of the Achaeans, while the two brave and impetuous Ajaxes did the like by Imbrios. As two lions snatch a goat from the hounds that have it in their fangs, [200] and bear it through thick brushwood high above the ground in their jaws, thus did the Ajaxes bear aloft the body of Imbrios, and strip it of its armor. Then the son of Oïleus severed the head from the neck in revenge for the death of Amphimakhos, and sent it whirling over the crowd as though it had been a ball, [205] till it fell in the dust at Hector's feet.

Poseidon was exceedingly angry that his grandson Amphimakhos should have fallen; he therefore went to the tents and ships of the Achaeans to urge the Danaans still further, and to devise evil for the Trojans. [210] Idomeneus the spear-famed met him, as he was taking leave of a comrade, who had just come to him from the fight, wounded in the knee. His fellow-warriors bore him off the field, and Idomeneus having given orders to the physicians went on to his tent, [215] for he was still thirsting for battle. Poseidon spoke in the likeness and with the voice of Thoas, son of Andraimon, who ruled the Aetolians of all Pleuron and

high Calydon, ²¹⁸ and he got honor [*tīmē*] in the locale [*dēmos*], like a god. “Idomeneus,” said he, “lawgiver to the Cretans, what has now become of the threats [220] with which the sons of the Achaeans used to threaten the Trojans?”

And Idomeneus, chief among the Cretans, answered, “Thoas, no one, so far as I know, is responsible [*aitios*], for we can all fight. None are held back neither by fear [225] nor slackness, but it seems to be the will of almighty Zeus that the Achaeans should perish ingloriously here far from Argos: you, Thoas, have been always staunch, and you keep others in heart if you see any fail in duty; [230] be not then remiss now, but exhort all to do their utmost.”

To this Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, made answer, “Idomeneus, may he never return from Troy, but remain here for dogs to batten upon, who is this day willfully slack in fighting. [235] Get your armor and go, we must make all haste together if we may be of any use, though we are only two. Even cowards get a share of excellence [*aretē*] from companionship, and we two can hold our own with the bravest.”

[240] Then the god went back into the thick of the struggle [*ponos*], and Idomeneus when he had reached his tent donned his armor, grasped his two spears, and went forth. As the lightning which the son of Kronos brandishes from bright Olympus when he would show a sign [*sēma*] to mortals, and its gleam flashes far and wide— [245] even so did his armor gleam about him as he ran. Meriones, his sturdy attendant [*therapōn*], met him while he was still near his tent (for he was going to fetch his spear) and Idomeneus said

“Meriones, fleet son of Molos, best of [250] comrades, why have you left the field? Are you wounded, and is the point of the weapon hurting you? Or have you been sent to fetch me? I want no fetching; I had far rather fight than stay in my tent.”

“Idomeneus,” answered Meriones, [255] “I come for a spear, if I can find one in my tent; I have broken the one I had, in throwing it at the shield of Deiphobos.”

And Idomeneus chief of the bronze-armored Cretans answered, [260] “You will find one spear, or twenty if you so please, standing up against the end wall of my tent. I have taken them from Trojans whom I have killed, for I am not one to keep my enemy at arm’s length; therefore I have spears, bossed shields, [265] helmets, and burnished chest-armor.”

Then Meriones said, “I too in my tent and at my ship have spoils taken from the Trojans, but they are not at hand. I have been at all times valorous [270], and wherever there has been hard fighting have held my own among the foremost. There may be those among the Achaeans who do not know how I fight, but you know it well enough yourself.”

Idomeneus answered, [275] “I know you for a man of excellence [*aretē*]: you need not tell me. If the best men at the ships were being chosen to go on an ambush—and there is nothing like this for showing what a man is made of; it comes out then who is cowardly and who is of excellence [*aretē*]; the coward will change color at every touch and turn; [280] he is full of fears, and keeps shifting his weight first on one knee and then on the other; his heart beats fast as he thinks of death, and one can hear the chattering of his teeth; whereas the brave man will not change color nor be [285] frightened on finding himself in ambush, but is all the time longing to go into action—if the best men were being chosen for such a service, no one could make light of your courage nor feats of arms. If you were struck by a dart or smitten in close combat, it would not be from behind, in your neck nor back, [290] but the weapon would hit you in the chest or belly as you were pressing forward to a place in the front ranks. But let us no longer stay here talking like children, lest we be ill spoken of; go, fetch your spear from the tent at once.”

[295] Then Meriones, peer of manslaughtering Arēs, went to the tent and got himself a spear of bronze. He then followed after Idomeneus, big with great deeds of valor. As when baneful Arēs rushes forth to battle, and his son Panic, so strong [300] and dauntless, goes with him, to strike terror even into the heart of a hero—the pair have gone from Thrace to arm themselves among the Ephyroi or the brave Phlegyai, but they will not listen to both the contending armies of warriors, and will give victory to one side or to the other—even so did Meriones and Idomeneus, chiefs of men, [305] go out to battle clad in their bronze armor. Meriones was first to speak. “Son of Deukalion,” said he, “where would you have us begin fighting? On the right wing of the army of warriors, in the center, or on the left wing, [310] where I take it the flowing-haired Achaeans will be weakest?”

Idomeneus answered, “There are others to defend the center—the two Ajaxes and Teucer, who is the finest archer of all the Achaeans, and is good also in a hand-to-hand fight. [315] These will give Hector son of Priam enough to do; fight as he may, he will find it hard to vanquish their indomitable fury, and fire the ships, unless the son of Kronos [320] fling a firebrand upon them with his own hand. Great Ajax, son of Telamon, will yield to no man who is in mortal mould and eats the grain of Demeter, if bronze and great stones can overthrow him. He would not yield even to Achilles [325] in hand-to-hand fight, and in fleetness of foot there is none to beat him. ³²⁶ You [= Mērionēs] must keep the two of us [= Mērionēs and Idomeneus] to the left—just like this!—of the battleground, that we may know right away whether we are to give glory to some other, or he to us.”

Meriones, peer of fleet Arēs, then led the way till they came to the part of the army of warriors which Idomeneus had named.

[330] Now when the Trojans saw Idomeneus coming on like a flame of fire, him and his attendant [*therapōn*] clad in their richly wrought armor, they shouted and made towards him all in a body, and a furious hand-

to-hand fight raged under the ships' sterns. Fierce as the shrill winds that whistle [335] upon a day when dust lies deep on the roads, and the gusts raise it into a thick cloud—even such was the fury of the combat, and might and main did they hack at each other with spear and sword throughout the army of warriors. The field bristled with the long [340] and deadly spears which they bore. Dazzling was the sheen of their gleaming helmets, their fresh-burnished breastplates, and glittering shields as they joined battle with one another. Iron indeed must be his courage who could take pleasure in the sight of such a turmoil [*ponos*], and look on it without being dismayed.

[345] Thus did the two mighty sons of Kronos devise evil for mortal heroes. Zeus was minded to give victory to the Trojans and to Hector, so as to do honor to fleet Achilles, nevertheless he did not mean to utterly overthrow the Achaean army of warriors before Ilion, [350] and only wanted to glorify Thetis and her valiant son. Poseidon on the other hand went about among the Argives to incite them, having come up from the gray sea in secret, for he was grieved at seeing them vanquished by the Trojans, and was furiously angry with Zeus. Both were of the same lineage and country, [355] but Zeus was elder born and knew more, therefore Poseidon feared to defend the Argives openly, but in the likeness of man, he kept on encouraging them throughout their army of warriors. Thus, then, did these two devise a knot of war and battle, that none [360] could unloose or break, and set both sides tugging at it, to the failing of men's knees beneath them.

And now Idomeneus, though his hair was already flecked with gray, called loud on the Danaans and spread panic among the Trojans as he leaped in among them. He slew Othryoneus from Kabesos, a sojourner, who had but lately come to take part in the glory [*kleos*]. [365] He sought Cassandra the fairest of Priam's daughters in marriage, but offered no gifts of wooing, for he promised a great thing, to wit, that he would drive the sons of the Achaeans against their will from Troy; old King Priam had given his consent and promised her to him, whereon he

fought on the strength of the promises thus made to him. [370]
Idomeneus aimed a spear, and hit him as he came striding on. His cuirass of bronze did not protect him, and the spear stuck in his belly, so that he fell heavily to the ground. Then Idomeneus boasted over him saying, “Othryoneus, there is no one in the world whom I shall admire more than I do you, [375] if you indeed perform what you have promised Priam, son of Dardanos, in return for his daughter. We too will make you an offer; we will give you the loveliest daughter of the son of Atreus, and will bring her from Argos for you to marry, if you [380] will destroy the goodly city of Ilion in company with ourselves; so come along with me, that we may make a covenant at the ships about the marriage, and we will not be hard upon you about gifts of wooing.”

With this the hero Idomeneus began dragging him by the foot through the thick of the fight, but Asios came up to protect the body, [385] on foot, in front of his horses which his attendant [*therapōn*] drove so close behind him that he could feel their breath upon his shoulder. He was longing to strike down Idomeneus, but before he could do so Idomeneus smote him with his spear in the throat under the chin, and the bronze point went clean through it. He fell as an oak, or poplar, [390] or pine which shipwrights have felled for ship’s timber upon the mountains with whetted axes—even thus did he lie full length in front of his chariot and horses, grinding his teeth and clutching at the bloodstained dust. His charioteer was struck with panic [395] and did not dare turn his horses round and escape: thereupon stubborn Antilokhos hit him in the middle of his body with a spear; his cuirass of bronze did not protect him, and the spear stuck in his belly. He fell gasping from his chariot [400] and Antilokhos, great-hearted Nestor’s son, drove his horses from the Trojans to the strong-greaved Achaeans.

Deiphobos then came close up to Idomeneus to avenge Asios, and took aim at him with a spear, but Idomeneus was on the look-out and avoided it, [405] for he was covered by the round shield he always bore—a shield of ox-hide and bronze with two arm-rods on the inside. He crouched

under cover of this, and the spear flew over him, but the shield rang out as the spear grazed it, [410] and the weapon sped not in vain from the strong hand of Deiphobos, for it struck Hypsenor, son of Hippasos, shepherd of his people, in the liver under the midriff, and his limbs failed beneath him. Deiphobos boasted over him and cried with a loud voice saying, “Truly Asios has not fallen unavenged; [415] he will be glad even while passing into the house of Hādēs, strong warden of the gate, that I have sent some one to escort him.”

Thus did he boast, and the Argives felt grief [*akhos*] at his saying. Noble Antilokhos was more angry than anyone, but grief did not make him forget his friend and comrade. [420] He ran up to him, bestrode him, and covered him with his shield; then two of his staunch comrades, Mekisteus, son of Ekhios, and radiant Alastor stooped down, and bore him away groaning heavily to the ships. ⁴²⁴ Idomeneus did not fail in his great *menos*, and he was roused all the time [425] either to enshroud some Trojan in the darkness of death, or himself to fall while warding off the evil day from the Achaeans. Then fell Alkathoös, son of noble Aisyetes: he was son-in-law to Anchises, having married his eldest daughter Hippodameia [430] who was the darling of her father and mother, and excelled all her generation in beauty, accomplishments, and understanding, wherefore the bravest man in all Troy had taken her to wife—him did Poseidon lay low by the hand of Idomeneus, [435] blinding his bright eyes and binding his strong limbs in fetters so that he could neither go back nor to one side, but stood stock still like pillar or lofty tree when Idomeneus struck him with a spear in the middle of his chest. The coat of mail [440] that had up to now protected his body was now broken, and rang harshly as the spear tore through it. He fell heavily to the ground, and the spear stuck in his heart, which still beat, and made the butt-end of the spear quiver till dread Arēs put an end to his life. [445] Idomeneus boasted over him and cried with a loud voice saying, “Deiphobos, since you are in a mood to boast, shall we cry quits now that we have killed three men to your one? No, sir, stand in fight with me yourself, that you may learn what manner of Zeus-begotten

man am I that have come here. [450] Zeus first begot Minos, chief ruler in Crete, and Minos in his turn begot a son, noble Deukalion; Deukalion begot me to be a ruler over many men in Crete, and my ships have now brought me here, to be the bane of yourself, your father, and the Trojans.”

[455] Thus did he speak, and Deiphobos was in two minds, whether to go back and fetch some other Trojan to help him, or to take up the challenge single-handed. In the end, he thought it best to go and fetch Aeneas. ⁴⁵⁹ And he found him standing hindmost in the battle, [460] for he had anger [*mēnis*] always against brilliant Priam, ⁴⁶¹ because he [Priam] did not honor him [Aeneas], worthy that he was among heroes. Deiphobos went up to him and said, “Aeneas, prince among the Trojans, if you know any ties of kinship, help me now to defend the body of your sister’s husband; [465] come with me to the rescue of Alkathōös, who being husband to your sister brought you up when you were a child in his house, and now Idomeneus has slain him.”

With these words he moved the heart of Aeneas, and he went in pursuit of Idomeneus, big with great deeds of valor; [470] but Idomeneus was not to be thus daunted as though he were a mere child; he held his ground as a wild boar at bay upon the mountains, who abides the coming of a great crowd of men in some lonely place—the bristles stand upright on his back, his eyes flash fire, and he whets his tusks [475] in his eagerness to defend himself against hounds and men—even so did spear-famed Idomeneus hold his ground and budge not at the coming of Aeneas. He cried aloud to his comrades looking towards Askalaphos, Aphareus, Deipyros, Meriones, and Antilokhos, all of them brave warriors— [480] “This way, my friends,” he cried, “and leave me not single-handed—I go in great fear by fleet Aeneas, who is coming against me, and is a terrifying dispenser of death battle. Moreover he is in the flower of youth when a man’s strength is greatest; [485] if I was of the same age as he is and in my present mind, either he or I should soon bear away the prize of victory.”

Then, all of them as one man stood near him, shield on shoulder. Aeneas on the other side called to his comrades, [490] looking towards Deiphobos, Paris, and radiant Agenor, who were leaders of the Trojans along with himself, and the people followed them as sheep follow the ram when they go down to drink after they have been feeding, and the heart of the shepherd is glad—even so was the heart of Aeneas gladdened [495] when he saw his people follow him.

Then they fought furiously in close combat about the body of Alkathoös, wielding their long spears; and the bronze armor about their bodies rang fearfully as they took aim at one another in the press of the fight, while the two heroes [500] Aeneas and Idomeneus, peers of Arēs, outdid every one in their desire to hack at each other with sword and spear. Aeneas took aim first, but Idomeneus was on the lookout and avoided the spear, [505] so that it sped from Aeneas' strong hand in vain, and fell quivering in the ground. Idomeneus meanwhile smote Oinomaos in the middle of his belly, and broke the plate of his chest-armor, whereon his bowels came gushing out and he clutched the earth in the palms of his hands as he fell sprawling in the dust. Idomeneus drew his spear out of the body, [510] but could not strip him of the rest of his armor for the rain of darts that were showered upon him: moreover his strength was now beginning to fail him so that he could no longer charge, and could neither spring forward to recover his own weapon nor swerve aside to avoid one that was aimed at him; therefore, though he still defended himself in hand-to-hand fight, [515] his heavy feet could not bear him swiftly out of the battle. Deiphobos aimed a spear at him as he was retreating slowly from the field, for his bitterness against him was as fierce as ever, but again he missed him, and hit Askalaphos, the son of Arēs; the spear went [520] through his shoulder, and he clutched the earth in the palms of his hands as he fell sprawling in the dust.

Grim Arēs of terrifying voice did not yet know that his son had fallen, for ⁵²³he was on a peak of Olympus, amidst golden clouds. ⁵²⁴He was sitting there, all wrapped up in the plans [*boulai*] of Zeus, where the

other [525] gods were also sitting, forbidden to take part in the battle. Meanwhile men fought furiously about the body. Deiphobos tore the helmet from off his head, but Meriones sprang upon him, and struck him on the arm with a spear so that the visored [530] helmet fell from his hand and came ringing down upon the ground. Then Meriones sprang upon him like a vulture, drew the spear from his shoulder, and fell back under cover of his men. Then Polites, own brother of Deiphobos passed his arms around his waist, [535] and bore him away from the battle till he got to his horses that were standing in the rear of the fight with the chariot and their driver. These took him towards the city groaning and in great pain, with the blood flowing from his arm.

[540] The others still fought on, and the battle-cry rose to the sky without ceasing. Aeneas sprang on Aphareus, son of Kaletor, and struck him with a spear in his throat which was turned towards him; his head fell on one side, his helmet and shield came down along with him, and death, life's foe, was shed around him. [545] Antilokhos spied his chance, flew forward towards Thoön, and wounded him as he was turning round. He laid open the vein that runs all the way up the back to the neck; he cut this vein clean away throughout its whole course, and Thoön fell in the dust face upwards, stretching out his hands imploringly towards his comrades. [550] Antilokhos sprang upon him and stripped the armor from his shoulders, glaring round him fearfully as he did so. The Trojans came about him on every side and struck his broad and gleaming shield, but could not wound his body, for Poseidon [555] stood guard over the son of Nestor, though the darts fell thickly round him. He was never clear of the foe, but was always in the thick of the fight; his spear was never idle; he poised and aimed it in every direction, so eager was he to hit some one from a distance or to fight him hand to hand.

[560] As he was thus aiming among the crowd, he was seen by Adamas son of Asios, who rushed towards him and struck him with a spear in the middle of his shield, but Poseidon made its point without effect, for he

grudged him the life of Antilokhos. One half, therefore, of the spear stuck fast like a charred stake [565] in Antilokhos' shield, while the other lay on the ground. Adamas then sought shelter under cover of his men, but Meriones followed after and hit him with a spear midway between the private parts and the navel, where a wound is particularly painful to wretched mortals. [570] There did Meriones transfix him, and he writhed convulsively about the spear as some bull whom mountain herdsmen have bound with ropes of willow and are taking away perforce. Even so did he move convulsively for a while, but not for very long, till fighting Meriones came up and drew the spear [575] out of his body, and his eyes were veiled in darkness.

Helenos then struck Deipyros with a great Thracian sword, hitting him on the temple in close combat and tearing the helmet from his head; the helmet fell to the ground, and one of those who were fighting on the Achaean side took charge of it as it rolled at his feet, [580] but the eyes of Deipyros were closed in the darkness of death.

Then Menelaos of the great war-cry felt grief [*akhos*], and made menacingly towards Helenos, brandishing his spear; but Helenos drew his bow, and the two attacked one another at one and the same moment, the one with his spear, [585] and the other with his bow and arrow. The son of Priam hit the plate of Menelaos' chest-armor, but the arrow glanced from off it. As black beans or pulse come pattering down on to a threshing-floor from the broad winnowing-shovel, [590] blown by shrill winds and shaken by the shovel—even so did the arrow glance off and recoil from the shield of glorious Menelaos, who in his turn wounded the hand with which Helenos carried his bow; the spear [595] went right through his hand and stuck in the bow itself, so that to his life he retreated under cover of his men, with his hand dragging by his side—for the spear weighed it down till great-hearted Agenor drew it out and bound the hand carefully up [600] in a woolen sling which his attendant [*therapōn*] had with him.

Peisandros then made straight at Menelaos the glorious—his evil destiny luring him on to his doom [*telos*], for he was to fall in fight with you, O Menelaos. When the two were hard by one another [605] the spear of the son of Atreus turned aside and he missed his aim; Peisandros then struck the shield of brave Menelaos but could not pierce it, for the shield stayed the spear and broke the shaft; nevertheless he was glad and made sure of victory; [610] right away, however, the son of Atreus drew his sword and sprang upon him. Peisandros then seized the bronze battle-axe, with its long and polished handle of olive wood that hung by his side under his shield, and the two made at one another. Peisandros struck the peak of Menelaos' crested helmet [615] just under the crest itself, and Menelaos hit Peisandros as he was coming towards him, on the forehead, just at the rise of his nose; the bones cracked and his two gore-dripping eyes fell by his feet in the dust. He fell backwards to the ground, and Menelaos set his heel upon him, stripped him of his armor, and boasted over him saying, [620] "Even thus shall you Trojans leave the ships of the Achaeans, proud and insatiate of battle though you be: nor shall you lack any of the disgrace and shame which you have heaped upon myself. Cowardly she-wolves that you are, you in your hearts ⁶²⁴ did not fear the harsh anger [*mēnis*] of Zeus, the roar of whose thunder is enormous. [625] As the god-of-hosting-guests [*xenios*], he will at some point destroy your lofty city; you stole my wedded wife and wickedly carried off much treasure when you were her guest, and now you would fling fire upon our ships, and kill our heroes. [630] A day will come when, rage as you may, you shall be stayed. O father Zeus, you, whom they say are above all both gods and men in wisdom, and from whom all things that befall us do proceed, how can you thus favor the Trojans—men so proud and overweening, that they are never [635] tired of fighting? All things pall after a while—sleep, love, sweet song, and stately dance—still these are things of which a man would surely have his fill rather than of battle, whereas it is of battle that the Trojans are insatiate."

[640] So saying blameless Menelaos stripped the bloodstained armor from the body of Peisandros, and handed it over to his men; then he

again ranged himself among those who were in the front of the fight.

Harpalion son of King Pylaimenes then sprang upon him; he had come to fight at Troy along with his father, [645] but he did not go home again. He struck the middle of Menelaos' shield with his spear but could not pierce it, and to save his life drew back under cover of his men, looking round him on every side lest he should be wounded. [650] But Meriones aimed a bronze-tipped arrow at him as he was leaving the field, and hit him on the right buttock; the arrow pierced the bone through and through, and penetrated the bladder, so he sat down where he was and breathed his last in the arms of his comrades, stretched like a worm [655] upon the ground and watering the earth with the blood that flowed from his wound. The brave Paphlagonians tended him with all due care; they raised him into his chariot, and bore him sadly off to the city of Troy; his father went also with him weeping bitterly, but there was no ransom that could bring his dead son to life again.

[660] Paris was deeply grieved by the death of Harpalion, who was his host when he went among the Paphlagonians; he aimed an arrow, therefore, in order to avenge him. Now there was a certain man named Eukhenor, son of Polyidos the prophet [*mantis*], a brave man and wealthy, whose home was in Corinth. [665] This Eukhenor had set sail for Troy well knowing that it would be the death of him, for his good old father Polyidos had often told him that he must either stay at home and die of a terrible disease, or go with the Achaeans and perish at the hands of the Trojans; he chose, therefore, to avoid incurring the heavy fine the Achaeans [670] would have laid upon him, and at the same time to escape the pain and suffering of disease. Paris now smote him on the jaw under his ear, whereon the life went out of him and he was enshrouded in the darkness of death.

Thus then did they fight as it were a flaming fire. But Hector beloved of Zeus had not yet heard, and did not know [675] that the Argives were making havoc of his men on the left wing of the battle, where the

Achaean before long would have triumphed over them, so vigorously did Poseidon cheer them on and help them. He therefore held on at the point where he had first forced his way through the gates [680] and the wall, after breaking through the serried ranks of Danaan warriors. It was here that the ships of Ajax and Protesilaos were drawn up by the seashore; here the wall was at its lowest, and the fight both of man and horse raged most fiercely. [685] The Boeotians and the Ionians with their long khitons, the Locrians, the men of Phthia, and the famous force of the Epeioi could hardly stay flame-like Hector as he rushed on towards the ships, nor could they drive him from them, for he was as a wall of fire. The chosen men of the Athenians were in the van, [690] led by Menestheus, son of Peteos, with whom were also Pheidias, Stikhios, and stalwart Bias: Meges, son of Phyleus, Amphion, and Drakios commanded the Epeioi, while Medon and staunch Podarkes led the men of Phthia. Of these, Medon was bastard son to Oïleus the godlike [695] and brother of Ajax, but he lived in Phylake away from his own country, for he had killed the brother of his stepmother Eriopis, the wife of Oïleus; the other, Podarkes, was the son of Iphiklos, son of Phylakos. These two stood in the van of the great-hearted Phthians, [700] and defended the ships along with the Boeotians.

Swift Ajax son of Oïleus never for a moment left the side of Ajax son of Telamon, but as two swart oxen both strain their utmost at the plow which they are drawing in a fallow field, [705] and the sweat steams upwards from about the roots of their horns—nothing but the yoke divides them as they break up the ground till they reach the end of the field—even so did the two Ajaxes stand shoulder to shoulder by one another. Many and brave comrades followed the son of Telamon, [710] to relieve him of his shield when he was overcome with sweat and toil, but the Locrians did not follow so close after the great-hearted son of Oïleus, for they could not hold their own in a hand-to-hand fight. They had no bronze helmets with plumes of horse-hair, [715] neither had they shields nor ashen spears, but they had come to Troy armed with bows, and with slings of twisted wool from which they showered

their missiles to break the ranks of the Trojans. The others, therefore, with their heavy armor bore the brunt of the fight [720] with the Trojans and with Hector the brazen-helmed, while the Locrians shot from behind, under their cover; and thus the Trojans began to lose heart, for the arrows threw them into confusion.

The Trojans would now have been driven in sorry plight from the ships and tents back to windy Ilion, [725] had not Polydamas presently said to bold Hector, ⁷²⁶ “Hector, there is no way you can be helped to heed persuasive words. ⁷²⁷ Just because the god granted that you excel in deeds of war ⁷²⁸ you wish also to excel in planning [*boulē*] by knowing more than others. ⁷²⁹ But there is no way you can get everything all to yourself. [730] The god grants that one man excel in deeds of war ⁷³¹ and another in dancing and another in playing the lyre and singing. ⁷³² And for yet another man, far-seeing Zeus places a wise understanding [*noos*] in his breast, ⁷³³ a genuine one; and many men benefit from such a man, ⁷³⁴ and he saves many of them, and he himself has the greatest powers of recognition [verb *anagignōskō*] [735] But I will tell you what seems best to me. The fight has hemmed you in as with a circle of fire, and even now that the great-hearted Trojans are within the wall some of them stand aloof in full armor, while others are fighting scattered and outnumbered near the ships. [740] Draw back, therefore, and call your chieftains round you, that we may advise together whether to fall now upon the ships in the hope that the gods may grant us victory, or to beat a retreat while we can yet safely do so. I greatly fear [745] that the Achaeans will pay us their debt of yesterday in full, for there is one abiding at their ships who is never weary of battle, and who will not hold aloof much longer.”

Thus spoke Polydamas, and his words pleased Hector well. ⁷⁴⁹ Straightaway he [= Hector] leapt out of his chariot, armor and all, hitting the ground, [750] and said, “Polydamas, gather the chieftains

here; I will go yonder into the fight, but will return at once when I have given them their orders.”

He then sped onward, towering like a snowy mountain, [755] and with a loud cry flew through the ranks of the Trojans and their allies. When they heard his voice they all hastened to gather round Polydamas, the excellent son of Panthoös, but Hector kept on among the foremost, looking everywhere to find Deiphobos and prince Helenos, Adamas, son of Asios, [760] and Asios, son of Hyrtakos; living, indeed, and unscathed he could no longer find them, for the two last were lying by the sterns of the Achaean ships, losing their life-breath [*psūkhē*] at the hands of the Argives, while the others had been also stricken and wounded by them; [765] but upon the left wing of the dread battle he found Alexandros, husband of lovely-haired Helen, cheering his men and urging them on to fight. He went up to him and upbraided him. “Paris,” said he, “evil-hearted Paris, fair to see but woman-mad and false of tongue, [770] where are Deiphobos and King Helenos? Where are Adamas son of Asios, and Asios son of Hyrtakos? Where too is Othryoneus? Ilion is undone and will now surely fall!”

Alexandros the godlike answered, [775] “Hector, why find fault when there is no one to find fault with? I should hold aloof from battle on any day rather than this, for my mother bore me with nothing of the coward about me. From the moment when you set our men fighting about the ships we have been staying here and doing battle with the Danaans. [780] Our comrades about whom you ask me are dead; Deiphobos and King Helenos alone have left the field, wounded both of them in the hand, but the son of Kronos saved them alive. Now, therefore, lead on where you would have us go, [785] and we will follow with right goodwill; you shall not find us fail you in so far as our strength holds out, but no man can do more than in him lies, no matter how willing he may be.”

With these words he satisfied his brother, and the two went towards the part of the battle where the fight was thickest, [790] about Kebriones, brave Polydamas, Phalkes, Orthaios, godlike Polyphetes, Palmys, Ascanius, and Morys, son of Hippotion, who had come from fertile Ascania on the preceding day to relieve other troops. Then Zeus urged them on to fight. [795] And they came, like a gust of the racking winds, ⁷⁹⁶ which under the thunderstroke of Father Zeus drives downward ⁷⁹⁷ and with gigantic clamor hits the sea, and the many ⁷⁹⁸ boiling waves along the length of the roaring sea ⁷⁹⁹ bend and whiten to foam in ranks, one upon the other— [800] even so did rank behind rank of Trojans arrayed in gleaming armor follow their leaders onward. The way was led by Hector, son of Priam, peer of manslaughtering Arēs, with his round shield before him—his shield of ox-hides covered with plates of bronze— [805] and his gleaming helmet upon his temples. He kept stepping forward under cover of his shield in every direction, making trial of the ranks to see if they would give way to him, but he could not daunt the courage of the Achaeans. Ajax was the first to stride out and challenge him. [810] “Sir,” he cried, “draw near; why do you think thus vainly to dismay the Argives? We Achaeans are excellent warriors, but the scourge of Zeus has fallen heavily upon us. Your heart is set on destroying our ships, but we too have bands that can keep you at bay, [815] and your own fair town shall be sooner taken and destroyed by ourselves. The time is near when you shall pray Zeus and all the gods in your flight, that your steeds may be swifter than hawks [820] as they raise the dust on the plain and bear you back to your city.”

As he was thus speaking a bird flew by upon his right hand, and the army of the Achaeans shouted, for they took heart at the omen. But Hector answered, “Ajax, braggart and false of tongue, [825] if only I were the child of aegis-bearing Zeus ⁸²⁶ for all days to come, and the Lady Hera were my mother, ⁸²⁷ and if only I got *tīmē* just as Athena and Apollo get *tīmē* ⁸²⁸ —as surely as this day brings misfortune to the Argives. And you shall fall among them if you dare [830] abide my

spear; it shall rend your fair body and bid you glut our hounds and birds of prey with your fat and your flesh, as you fall by the ships of the Achaeans.”

With these words he led the way and the others followed after with a cry that rent the air, while the army of warriors shouted behind them. [835] The Argives on their part raised a shout likewise, nor did they forget their prowess, but stood firm against the onslaught of the bravest Trojan chieftains, and the cry from both the armies rose up to the sky and to the brightness of Zeus’ presence.

2020-12-15

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 14

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Nestor was sitting over his wine, but the cry of battle did not escape him, and he said to the son of Asklepios, “What, noble Makhaon, is the meaning of all this? The shouts of men fighting by our ships grow stronger and stronger; [5] stay here, therefore, and sit over your wine, while fair Hekamede heats you a bath and washes the clotted blood from off you. I will go at once to the look-out station and see what it is all about.”

As he spoke he took up the shield of his son Thrasymedes [10] that was lying in his tent, all gleaming with bronze, for Thrasymedes had taken his father’s shield; he grasped his redoubtable bronze-shod spear, and as soon as he was outside saw the disastrous rout of the Achaeans who, now that their wall was overthrown, [15] were fleeing pell-mell before the Trojans. As when there is a heavy swell upon the sea, but the waves are dumb—they keep their eyes on the watch for the quarter whence the fierce winds may spring upon them, but they stay where they are and set neither this way nor that, till some particular wind sweeps down from heaven to determine them— [20] even so did the old man ponder whether to make for the crowd of Danaans, or go in search of Agamemnon. In the end he deemed it best to go to the son of Atreus; but meanwhile the armies were fighting and killing one another, [25] and the hard bronze rattled on their bodies, as they thrust at one another with their swords and spears.

The wounded kings, the son of Tydeus, Odysseus, and Agamemnon, son of Atreus, fell on Nestor as they were coming up from their ships— [30] for theirs were drawn up some way from where the fighting was

going on, being on the shore itself inasmuch as they had been beached first, while the wall had been built behind the hindermost. The stretch of the shore, wide though it was, did not afford room for all the ships, and the army was cramped for space, [35] therefore they had placed the ships in rows one behind the other, and had filled the whole opening of the bay between the two points that formed it. The kings, leaning on their spears, were coming out to survey the fight, being in great anxiety, [40] and when old Nestor met them they were filled with dismay. Then King Agamemnon said to him, “Nestor, son of Neleus, honor to the Achaean name, why have you left the battle to come hither? I fear that what dread Hector said will come true, [45] when he vaunted among the Trojans saying that he would not return to Ilion till he had fired our ships and killed us; this is what he said, and now it is all coming true. Alas! others of the Achaeans, [50] like Achilles, are in anger with me that they refuse to fight by the sterns of our ships.”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerene, answered, “It is indeed as you say; it is all coming true at this moment, and even Zeus who thunders from on high cannot prevent it. [55] Fallen is the wall on which we relied as an impregnable bulwark both for us and our fleet. The Trojans are fighting stubbornly and without ceasing at the ships; look where you may you cannot see from what quarter the rout of the Achaeans is coming; [60] they are being killed in a confused mass and the battle-cry ascends to heaven; let us think, if counsel can be of any use, what we had better do; but I do not advise our going into battle ourselves, for a man cannot fight when he is wounded.”

And King Agamemnon answered, [65] “Nestor, if the Trojans are indeed fighting at the rear of our ships, and neither the wall nor the trench has served us—over which the Danaans toiled so hard, and which they deemed would be an impregnable bulwark both for us and our fleet—I see it must be the will of Zeus [70] that the Achaeans should perish ingloriously here, far from Argos. I knew when Zeus was willing to defend us, and I know now that he is raising the Trojans to like honor

with the gods, while us, on the other hand, he has bound hand and foot. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say; [75] let us bring down the ships that are on the beach and draw them into the water; let us make them fast to their mooring-stones a little way out, against the fall of night—if even by night the Trojans will desist from fighting; we may then draw down the rest of the fleet. [80] There is no sense of *nemesis* in fleeing ruin even by night. It is better for a man that he should flee and be saved than be caught and killed.”

Odysseus looked fiercely at him and said, “Son of Atreus, what are you talking about? Wretch, you should have commanded some other and baser army, [85] and not been ruler over us to whom Zeus has allotted a life of hard fighting from youth to old age, till we every one of us perish. Is it thus that you would quit the city of Troy, to win which we have suffered so much hardship? [90] Hold your peace, lest some other of the Achaeans hear you say what no man who knows how to give good counsel, no king over so great an army as that of the Argives should ever have let fall from his lips. [95] I despise your judgment utterly for what you have been saying. Would you, then, have us draw down our ships into the water while the battle is raging, and thus play further into the hands of the conquering Trojans? It would be ruin; [100] the Achaeans will not go on fighting when they see the ships being drawn into the water, but will cease attacking and keep turning their eyes towards them; your counsel, therefore, Sir leader, would be our destruction.”

Agamemnon answered, “Odysseus, your rebuke has stung me to the heart. [105] I am not, however, ordering the Achaeans to draw their ships into the sea whether they will or no. Some one, it may be, old or young, can offer us better counsel which I shall rejoice to hear.”

Then said Diomedes, [110] “Such an one is at hand; he is not far to seek, if you will listen to me and not resent my speaking though I am younger than any of you. I am by lineage son to a noble sire, Tydeus, who lies buried at Thebes. [115] For Portheus had three noble sons, two of

whom, Agrios and Melas, abode in Pleuron and rocky Calydon. The third was the horseman Oeneus, my father's father, and he was the most valorous of them all. Oeneus remained in his own country, but my father (as Zeus and the other gods ordained it) [120] migrated to Argos. He married into the family of Adrastos, and his house was one of great abundance, for he had large estates of fertile grain-growing land, with much orchard ground as well, and he had many sheep; moreover he excelled all the Argives in the use of the spear. [125] You must yourselves have heard whether these things are true or no; therefore when I say well despise not my words as though I were a coward or of ignoble birth. I say, then, let us go to the fight as we needs must, wounded though we be. When there, we may keep out of the battle [130] and beyond the range of the spears lest we get fresh wounds in addition to what we have already, but we can spur on others, who have been indulging their spleen and holding aloof from battle hitherto."

Thus did he speak; whereon they did even as he had said and set out, King Agamemnon leading the way.

[135] Meanwhile Poseidon had kept no blind look-out, and came up to them in the semblance of an old man. He took Agamemnon's right hand in his own and said, "Son of Atreus, I take it Achilles is glad now [140] that he sees the Achaeans routed and slain, for he is utterly without remorse—may he come to a bad end and heaven confound him. As for yourself, the blessed gods are not yet so bitterly angry with you but that the princes and counselors of the Trojans [145] shall again raise the dust upon the plain, and you shall see them fleeing from the ships and tents towards their city."

With this he raised a mighty cry of battle, and sped forward to the plain. The voice that came from his deep chest was as that of nine or ten thousand men when they are shouting in the thick of a fight, [150] and it put fresh courage into the hearts of the Achaeans to wage war and do battle without ceasing. Hera of the golden throne looked down as she

stood upon a peak of Olympus and her heart was gladdened at the sight of him [155] who was at once her brother and her brother-in-law, hurrying hither and thither amid the fighting. Then she turned her eyes to Zeus as he sat on the topmost crests of many-fountained Ida, and loathed him. She set herself to think how she might trick his thinking, [160] and in the end she deemed that it would be best for her to go to Ida and array herself in rich attire, in the hope that Zeus might become enamored of her, and wish to embrace her. While he was thus engaged a sweet and careless sleep might be made [165] to steal over his eyes and senses.

She went, therefore, to the room which her son Hephaistos had made her, and the doors of which he had cunningly fastened by means of a secret key so that no other god could open them. Here she entered and closed the doors behind her. [170] She cleansed all the dirt from her fair body with ambrosia, then she anointed herself with olive oil, ambrosial, very soft, and scented specially for herself—if it were so much as shaken in the bronze-floored house of Zeus, the scent pervaded the universe of heaven and earth. [175] With this she anointed her delicate skin, and then she plaited the fair ambrosial locks that flowed in a stream of golden tresses from her immortal head. She put on the wondrous robe which Athena had worked for her with consummate art, and had set on it many embellishments; [180] she fastened it about her bosom with golden clasps, and she girded herself with a girdle that had a hundred tassels: then she fastened her earrings, three brilliant pendants with much charm radiating from them, through the pierced lobes of her ears, [185] and threw a lovely new veil over her head. She bound her sandals on to her feet, and when she had finished making herself up in perfect order, she left her room and called Aphrodite to come aside and speak to her. [190] “My dear child, said she, will you do what I am going to ask of you, or will refuse me because you are angry at my being on the Danaan side, while you are on the Trojan?”

Zeus' daughter Aphrodite answered, "Hera, august queen of goddesses, daughter of mighty Kronos, [195] say what you want, and I will do it for at once, if I can, and if it can be done at all." Then Hera told her a lying tale and said, "I want you to endow me with some of those fascinating charms, the spells of which bring all things mortal and immortal to your feet. [200] I am going to the world's end to visit ²⁰¹ Ōkeanos, the genesis [*genesis*] of gods, and mother Tethys: they received me in their house, took care of me, and brought me up, having taken me over from Rhaea when Zeus imprisoned great Kronos in the depths that are under earth and sea. [205] I must go and see them that I may make peace between them; they have been quarreling, and are so angry that they have not slept with one another this long while; if I can bring them round and restore them to one another's embraces, [210] they will be grateful to me and love me for ever afterwards."

Thereon laughter-loving Aphrodite said, "I cannot and must not refuse you, for you sleep in the arms of Zeus who is our king."

As she spoke she loosed from her bosom the finely woven girdle [215] into which all her charms had been wrought—love, desire, and that sweet flattery which steals the judgment even of the most prudent. She gave the girdle to Hera and said, "Take this girdle wherein all my charms reside [220] and lay it in your bosom. If you will wear it I promise you that your errand, be it what it may, will not be bootless."

When she heard this Hera smiled, and still smiling she laid the girdle in her bosom. Aphrodite now went back into the house of Zeus, [225] while Hera darted down from the summits of Olympus. She passed over Pieria and fair Emathia, and went on and on till she came to the snowy ranges of the Thracian horsemen, over whose topmost crests she sped without ever setting foot to ground. When she came to Athos she went on over the waves of the sea till she reached Lemnos, [230] the city of noble Thoas. There she met Sleep, own brother to Death, and caught him by the hand, saying, "Sleep, you who lord it alike over mortals and

immortals, if you ever did me a service in times past, do one for me now, [235] and I shall show gratitude to you ever after. Close Zeus' keen eyes for me in slumber while I hold him clasped in my embrace, and I will give you a beautiful golden seat, that can never fall to pieces; my clubfooted son Hephaistos [240] shall make it for you, and he shall give it a footstool for you to rest your fair feet upon when you are at table."

Then Sleep answered, "Hera, great queen of goddesses, daughter of mighty Kronos, I would lull any other of the gods to sleep without compunction, not even excepting the waters of Okeanos [245] from whom all of them proceed, but I dare not go near Zeus, nor send him to sleep unless he bids me. I have had one lesson already through doing what you asked me, [250] on the day when Zeus' mighty son Hēraklēs set sail from Ilion after having sacked the city of the Trojans. At your bidding I suffused my sweet self over the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus, and laid him to rest; meanwhile you hatched a plot against Hēraklēs, and set the blasts of the angry winds beating upon the sea, till you took him [255] to the goodly city of Cos away from all his friends. Zeus was furious when he awoke, and began hurling the gods about all over the house; he was looking more particularly for myself, and would have flung me down through space into the sea where I should never have been heard of any more, had not Night who cows both men and gods protected me. [260] I fled to her and Zeus left off looking for me in spite of his being so angry, for he did not dare do anything to displease Night. And now you are again asking me to do something on which I cannot venture."

And Hera said, "Sleep, why do you take such notions as those into your head? [265] Do you think Zeus will be as anxious to help the Trojans, as he was about his own son? Come, I will marry you to one of the youngest of the Graces, and she shall be your own—Pasithea, whom you have always wanted to marry."

[270] Sleep was pleased when he heard this, and answered, “Then swear it to me by the dread waters of the river Styx; lay one hand on the bounteous earth, and the other on the sheen of the sea, so that all the gods who dwell down below with Kronos may be our witnesses, [275] and see that you really do give me one of the youngest of the Graces [*kharites*]*—*Pasithea, whom I have always wanted to marry.”

Hera did as he had said. She swore, and invoked all the gods of the nether world, who are called Titans, to witness. [280] When she had completed her oath, the two enshrouded themselves in a thick mist and sped lightly forward, leaving Lemnos and Imbros behind them. Presently they reached many-fountained Ida, mother of wild beasts, and Lectum where they left the sea to go on by land, [285] and the tops of the trees of the forest sighed under the going of their feet. Here Sleep halted, and ere Zeus caught sight of him he climbed a lofty pine-tree—the tallest that reared its head towards heaven on all Ida. He hid himself behind the branches and sat there [290] in the semblance of the sweet-singing bird that haunts the mountains and is called Khalkis by the gods, but men call it Kymindis. Hera then went to Gargaros, the topmost peak of Ida, and Zeus, driver of the clouds, set eyes upon her. As soon as he did so he became inflamed with the same passionate desire for her that he had felt [295] when they had first enjoyed each other’s embraces, and slept with one another without their dear parents knowing anything about it. He went up to her and said, “What do you want that you have come hither from Olympus—and that too with neither chariot nor horses to convey you?”

[300] Then Hera told him a lying tale and said, “I am going to the world’s end, to visit ³⁰² Ōkeanos, the genesis [*genesis*] of gods, and mother Tethys; they received me into their house, took care of me, and brought me up. I must go and see them that I may make peace between them: [305] they have been quarreling, and are so angry that they have not slept with one another this long time. The horses that will take me over land and sea are stationed on the lowermost spurs of many-

fountained Ida, and I have come here from Olympus on purpose to consult you. [310] I was afraid you might be angry with me later on, if I went to the house of Okeanos without letting you know.”

And Zeus said, “Hera, you can choose some other time for paying your visit to Okeanos—for the present let us devote ourselves to love and to the enjoyment of one another. [315] Never yet have I been so overpowered by passion neither for goddess nor mortal woman as I am at this moment for yourself—not even when I was in love with the wife of Ixion who bore me Peirithoos, peer of gods in counsel, nor yet with Danae, the daintily-ankled daughter of Acrisius, [320] who bore me the famed hero Perseus. Then there was the daughter of Phoenix, who bore me Minos and Rhadamanthus: there was Semele, and Alkmene in Thebes by whom I begot my lion-hearted son Hēraklēs, [325] while Semele became mother to Bacchus, the comforter of humankind. There was queen Demeter again, and lovely Leto, and yourself—but with none of these was I ever so much enamored as I now am with you.”

Hera again answered him with a lying tale. [330] “Most dread son of Kronos,” she exclaimed, “what are you talking about? Would you have us enjoy one another here on the top of Mount Ida, where everything can be seen? What if one of the ever-living gods should see us sleeping together, and tell the others? [335] It would be such a scandal that when I had risen from your embraces I could never show myself inside your house again; but if you are so minded, there is a room which your son Hephaistos has made me, and he has given it good strong doors; [340] if you would so have it, let us go thither and lie down.”

And Zeus answered, “Hera, you need not be afraid that either god or man will see you, for I will enshroud both of us in such a dense golden cloud, that the very sun [345] for all his bright piercing beams shall not see through it.”

With this the son of Kronos caught his wife in his embrace; whereon the earth sprouted them a cushion of young grass, with dew-bespangled lotus, crocus, and hyacinth, so soft and thick that it raised them well above the ground. [350] Here they laid themselves down and overhead they were covered by a fair cloud of gold, from which there fell glittering dew-drops. Thus, then, did the sire of all things repose peacefully on the crest of Ida, overcome at once by sleep and love, and he held his spouse in his arms. Meanwhile Sleep made off to the ships of the Achaeans, [355] to tell earth-encircling Poseidon, lord of the earthquake. When he had found him he said, "Now, Poseidon, you can help the Danaans with a will, and give them victory though it be only for a short time while Zeus is still sleeping. I have sent him into a sweet slumber, [360] and Hera has beguiled him into going to bed with her."

Sleep now departed and went his ways to and fro among humankind, leaving Poseidon more eager than ever to help the Danaans. He darted forward among the first ranks and shouted saying, "Argives, shall we let Hector, [365] son of Priam, have the triumph of taking our ships and covering himself with glory? This is what he says that he shall now do, seeing that Achilles is still in dudgeon at his ship; we shall get on very well without him if we keep each other in heart and stand by one another. [370] Now, therefore, let us all do as I say. Let us each take the best and largest shield we can lay hold of, put on our helmets, and sally forth with our longest spears in our hands; I will lead you on, [375] and Hector son of Priam, rage as he may, will not dare to hold out against us. If any good staunch warrior has only a small shield, let him hand it over to a worse man, and take a larger one for himself."

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. [380] The son of Tydeus, Odysseus, and Agamemnon, wounded though they were, set the others in array, and went about everywhere effecting the exchanges of armor; the most valiant took the best armor, and gave the worse to the worse man. When they had donned their bronze armor they marched on with Poseidon at their head. [385] In his strong hand he grasped his

terrible sword, keen of edge and flashing like lightning; it is not the right thing to do, to come across it in the day of battle; all men quake for fear and keep away from it.

Hector on the other side set the Trojans in array. Thereon Poseidon and Hector waged fierce war [390] on one another—Hector on the Trojan and Poseidon on the Argive side. Mighty was the uproar as the two forces met; the sea came rolling in towards the ships and tents of the Achaeans, but waves do not thunder on the shore more loudly [395] when driven before the blast of Boreas, nor do the flames of a forest fire roar more fiercely when it is well alight upon the mountains, nor does the wind bellow with ruder music as it tears on through the tops of oaks when it is blowing its hardest, [400] than the terrible shout which the Trojans and Achaeans raised as they sprang upon one another.

Hector first aimed his spear at Ajax, who was turned full towards him, nor did he miss his aim. The spear struck him where two bands passed over his chest— [405] the band of his shield and that of his silver-studded sword—and these protected his body. Hector was angry that his spear should have been hurled in vain, and withdrew under cover of his men. As he was thus retreating, Ajax son of Telamon struck him with a stone, [410] of which there were many lying about under the men's feet as they fought—brought there to give support to the ships' sides as they lay on the shore. Ajax caught up one of them and struck Hector above the rim of his shield close to his neck; the blow made him spin round like a top and reel in all directions. As an oak falls headlong when uprooted by the lightning flash of father Zeus, [415] and there is a terrible smell of brimstone—no man can help being dismayed if he is standing near it, for a thunderbolt is a very awful thing—even so did Hector fall to earth and bite the dust. His spear fell from his hand, but his shield and helmet were made fast about his body, [420] and his bronze armor rang about him.

The sons of the Achaeans came running with a loud cry towards him, hoping to drag him away, and they showered their darts on the Trojans, but none of them could wound him before he was surrounded [425] and covered by the princes Polydamas, Aeneas, Agenor, Sarpedon, leader of the Lycians, and noble Glaukos: of the others, too, there was not one who was unmindful of him, and they held their round shields over him to cover him. His comrades then lifted him off the ground and bore him away from the battle to the place [430] where his horses stood waiting for him at the rear of the fight with their driver and the chariot; these then took him towards the city groaning and in great pain. When they reached the ford of the air stream of Xanthos, begotten of Immortal Zeus, [435] they took him from off his chariot and laid him down on the ground; they poured water over him, and as they did so he breathed again and opened his eyes. Then kneeling on his knees he vomited blood, but soon fell back on to the ground, and his eyes were again closed in darkness for he was still stunned by the blow.

[440] When the Argives saw Hector leaving the field, they took heart and set upon the Trojans yet more furiously. Ajax, fleet son of Oïleus, began by springing on Satnios, son of Enops, and wounding him with his spear: a fair naiad nymph had borne him to Enops [445] as he was herding cattle by the banks of the river Satnioeis. The son of Oïleus came up to him and struck him in the flank so that he fell, and a fierce fight between Trojans and Danaans raged round his body. Polydamas son of Panthoos drew near to avenge him, [450] and wounded Prothoenor son of Areilykos on the right shoulder; the terrible spear went right through his shoulder, and he clutched the earth as he fell in the dust. Polydamas vaunted loudly over him saying, "Again I take it that the spear has not sped in vain from the strong hand of the son of Panthoos; [455] an Argive has caught it in his body, and it will serve him for a staff as he goes down into the house of Hādēs."

The Argives were stung by grief on account of this boasting. Ajax, son of Telamon, was more angry than any, [460] for the man had fallen close

by him; so he aimed at Polydamas as he was retreating, but Polydamas saved himself by swerving aside and the spear struck Arkhelokhos son of Antenor, for heaven counseled his destruction; [465] it struck him where the head springs from the neck at the top joint of the spine, and severed both the tendons at the back of the head. His head, mouth, and nostrils reached the ground long before his legs and knees could do so, and Ajax shouted to Polydamas saying, [470] “Think, Polydamas, and tell me truly whether this man is not as well worth killing as Prothoenor was: he seems rich, and of rich family, a brother, it may be, or son of the horseman Antenor, for he is very like him.”

[475] But he knew well who it was, and the Trojans were greatly vexed with grief. Akamas then bestrode his brother’s body and wounded Promakhos the Boeotian with his spear, for he was trying to drag his brother’s body away. Akamas vaunted loudly over him saying, “Argive archers, braggarts that you are, [480] toil and suffering shall not be for us only, but some of you too shall fall here as well as ourselves. See how Promakhos now sleeps, vanquished by my spear; payment for my brother’s blood has not long delayed; a man, therefore, may well be thankful [485] if he leaves a kinsman in his house behind him to avenge his fall.”

His taunts gave grief to the Argives, and Peneleos was more enraged than any of them. He sprang towards Akamas, but Akamas did not stand his ground, and he killed Ilioneus, [490] son of the rich flock-master Phorbas, whom Hermes had favored and endowed with greater wealth than any other of the Trojans. Ilioneus was his only son, and Peneleos now wounded him in the eye under his eyebrows, tearing the eye-ball from its socket: the spear went right through the eye [495] into the nape of the neck, and he fell, stretching out both hands before him. Peneleos then drew his sword and smote him on the neck, so that both head and helmet came tumbling down to the ground with the spear still sticking in the eye; he then held up the head, as though it had been a poppy-head, [500] and showed it to the Trojans, vaunting over them as he did

so. “Trojans,” he cried, “bid the father and mother of noble Ilioneus make moan for him in their house, for the wife also of Promakhos, son of Alegenor, will never be gladdened by the coming of her dear husband — [505] when we Argives return with our ships from Troy.”

As he spoke fear fell upon them, and every man looked round about to see whither he might flee for safety.

Tell me now, O Muses that dwell on Olympus, who was the first of the Argives to bear away blood-stained spoils [510] after Poseidon lord of the earthquake had turned the fortune of war. Ajax, son of Telamon, was first to wound Hyrtios, son of Gyrtios, leader of the staunch Mysians. Antilokhos killed Phalces and Mermerus, while Meriones slew Morys and Hippotion, [515] Teucer also killed Prothoon and Periphetes. The son of Atreus then wounded Hyperenor, shepherd of his people, in the flank, and the bronze point made his entrails gush out as it tore in among them; on this his life-breath came hurrying out of him at the place where he had been wounded, and his eyes were closed in darkness. [520] Ajax son of Oïleus killed more than any other, for there was no man so fleet as he to pursue fleeing foes when Zeus had spread panic among them.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 15

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] But when their flight had taken them past the trench and the set stakes, and many had fallen by the hands of the Danaans, the Trojans made a halt on reaching their chariots, routed and pale with fear. Zeus now woke on the crests of Ida, [5] where he was lying with golden-throned Hera by his side, and starting to his feet he saw the Trojans and Achaeans, the one thrown into confusion, and the others driving them pell-mell before them with King Poseidon in their midst. He saw Hector lying on the ground with his comrades gathered round him, [10] gasping for breath, wandering in mind and vomiting blood, for it was not the feeblest of the Achaeans who struck him.

The sire of gods and men had pity on him, and looked fiercely on Hera. “I see, Hera,” said he, “you mischief-making trickster, that your cunning [15] has stayed Hector from fighting and has caused the rout of his army. I am in half a mind to thrash you, in which case you will be the first to reap the fruits of your scurvy knavery. Do you not remember how once upon a time I had you hanged? I fastened two anvils on to your feet, and bound your hands in a chain of gold [20] which none might break, and you hung in mid-air among the clouds. All the gods in Olympus were in a fury, but they could not reach you to set you free; when I caught any one of them I gripped him and hurled him from the heavenly threshold till he came fainting down to earth; yet even this did not relieve my mind from the incessant anxiety [25] which I felt about noble Hēraklēs whom you and Boreas had spitefully conveyed beyond the seas to Cos, after suborning the tempests; but I rescued him, and notwithstanding all his mighty labors I brought him back again [30] to horse-pasturing Argos. I would remind you of this that you may learn to

leave off being so deceitful, and discover how much you are likely to gain by the embraces out of which you have come here to trick me.”

Ox-vision Hera trembled as he spoke, [35] and said, “May the heavens above and earth below be my witnesses, with the waters of the river Styx—and this is the most solemn oath that a blessed god can take—I tell you, I swear also by your own almighty head and by our bridal bed [40]—things over which I could never possibly perjure myself—that Poseidon is not punishing Hector and the Trojans and helping the Achaeans through any doing of mine; it is all of his own mere notion because he was sorry to see the Achaeans hard pressed at their ships: [45] if I were advising him, I should tell him to do as you tell him.”

The sire of gods and men smiled and answered, “If you, ox-vision Hera, [50] were always to support me when we sit in council of the gods, Poseidon, like it or no, would soon come round to your and my way of thinking. If, then, you are speaking the truth and mean what you say, go among the rank and file of the gods, and tell [55] Iris and Apollo, lord of the bow, that I want them—Iris, that she may go to the bronze-armored Achaean army and tell Poseidon to leave off fighting and go home, and Apollo, that he may send Hector again into battle [60] and give him fresh strength; he will thus forget his present sufferings, and drive the Achaeans back in confusion till they fall among the ships of Achilles son of Peleus. Achilles will then send his comrade Patroklos into battle, [65] and glorious Hector will kill him in front of Ilion after he has slain many warriors, and among them my own noble son Sarpedon. Achilles will kill Hector to avenge Patroklos, and from that time I will bring it about that the Achaeans shall persistently drive the Trojans back [70] till they fulfill the counsels of Athena and take Ilion. But I will not stay my anger, nor permit any god to help the Danaans till I have accomplished the desire of the son of Peleus, [75] according to the promise I made by bowing my head on the day when Thetis touched my knees and besought me to give Achilles, ransacker of cities, honor.”

Hera of the white arms heeded his words and went from the heights of Ida to great Olympus. [80] Swift as the thought of one whose fancy carries him over vast continents, and he says to himself, “Now I will be here, or there,” and he would have all manner of things—even so swiftly did Hera wing her way till she came to high Olympus and went in among the gods [85] who were gathered in the house of Zeus. When they saw her they all of them came up to her, and held out their cups to her by way of greeting. She let the others be, but took the cup offered her by lovely Themis who was first to come running up to her. “Hera,” said she, [90] “why are you here? And you seem troubled—has your husband the son of Kronos been frightening you?”

And Hera of the white arms answered, “Divine Themis, do not ask me about it. You know what a proud and cruel disposition my husband has. [95] Lead the gods to table, where you and all the immortals can hear the wicked designs which he has avowed. Many a one, mortal and immortal, will be angered by them, however peaceably he may be feasting now.”

[100] Then Hera sat down, and the gods were troubled throughout the house of Zeus. Laughter sat on her lips but her brow was furrowed with care, and she spoke up in a rage. “Fools that we are,” she cried, “to be thus madly angry with Zeus; [105] we keep on wanting to go up to him and stay him by force or by persuasion, but he sits aloof and cares for nobody, for he knows that he is much stronger than any other of the immortals. Make the best, therefore, of whatever ills he may choose to send each one of you; [110] Arēs, I take it, has had a taste of them already, for his son Askalaphos has fallen in battle—the man whom of all others he loved most dearly and whose father he owns himself to be.”

When he heard this Arēs smote his two sturdy thighs with the flat of his hands, and said in anger, [115] “Do not blame me, you gods that dwell in the heavens, if I go to the ships of the Achaeans and avenge the death

of my son, even though it end in my being struck by Zeus' lightning and lying in blood and dust among the corpses."

As he spoke he gave orders to yoke his horses Panic and Rout, [120] while he put on his armor. Then, Zeus would have been roused to still more fierce and implacable anger [*mēnis*] against the other immortals, had not Athena, alarmed for the safety of the gods, sprung from her seat and hurried outside. [125] She tore the helmet from his head and the shield from his shoulders, and she took the bronze spear from his strong hand and set it on one side; then she said to violent Arēs, "Mad one, you are undone; you have ears that hear not, or you have lost all sense of respect [*aidōs*] and understanding [*noos*]; [130] have you not heard what Hera of the white arms has said on coming straight from the presence of Olympian Zeus? Do you wish to go through all kinds of suffering before you are brought back sick and sorry to Olympus, after having caused infinite mischief to all us others? [135] Zeus would instantly leave the Trojans and Achaeans to themselves; he would come to Olympus to punish us, and would grip us up one after another, guilty [*aitios*] or not guilty. Therefore lay aside your anger for the death of your son; better men than he [140] have either been killed already or will fall hereafter, and one cannot protect every one's whole family."

With these words she took Arēs back to his seat. Meanwhile Hera called Apollo outside, with Iris the messenger of the gods. [145] "Zeus," she said to them, "desires you to go to him at once on Mount Ida; when you have seen him you are to do as he may then tell you."

Then Hera left them and resumed her seat inside, [150] while Iris and Apollo made all haste on their way. When they reached Ida with its many springs, mother of wild beasts, they found wide-seeing Zeus seated on topmost Gargaros with a fragrant cloud encircling his head as with a diadem. They stood before his presence, [155] and he was pleased with them for having been so quick in obeying the orders his wife had given them.

He spoke to Iris first. “Go,” said he, “fleet Iris, tell King Poseidon what I now tell you—and tell him true. [160] Tell him leave off fighting, and either join the company of the gods, or go down into the sea. If he takes no heed and disobeys me, let him consider well whether he is strong enough to hold his own against me [165] if I attack him. I am older and much stronger than he is; yet he is not afraid to set himself up as on a level with myself, of whom all the other gods stand in awe.”

Iris, fleet as the wind, obeyed him, [170] and as the cold hail or snowflakes that fly from out the clouds before the blast of Boreas, even so did she wing her way till she came close up to the great shaker of the earth. Then she said, “I have come, O dark-haired king that holds the world in his embrace, [175] to bring you a message from Zeus. He tells you leave off fighting, and either join the company of the gods or go down into the sea; if, however, you take no heed and disobey him, he says he will come down here and fight you. [180] He would have you keep out of his reach, for he is older and much stronger than you are, and yet you are not afraid to set yourself up as on a level with himself, of whom all the other gods stand in awe.”

Poseidon was very angry and said, [185] “Great heavens—strong as Zeus may be, he has said more than he can do if he has threatened violence against me, who am of like honor with himself. We were three brothers whom Rhea bore to Kronos – Zeus, myself, and Hādēs who rules the world below. Heaven and earth were divided into three parts, and each of us was to have an equal share. [190] When we cast lots, it fell to me to have my dwelling in the sea for evermore; Hādēs took the darkness of the realms under the earth, while air and sky and clouds were the portion that fell to Zeus; but earth and great Olympus are the common property of all. Therefore I will not walk as Zeus would have me. For all his strength, let him keep to his own third share [195] and be contented without threatening to lay hands upon me as though I were nobody. Let him keep his bragging talk for his own sons and daughters, who must perforce obey him.”

[200] Iris fleet as the wind then answered, “Am I really, Poseidon, to take this daring and unyielding message to Zeus, or will you reconsider your answer? Sensible people are open to argument, and you know that the Furies [Erinyes] always range themselves on the side of the older person.”

[205] Poseidon, the shaker of the earth, answered, “Goddess Iris, your words have been spoken in season. It is well when a messenger shows so much discretion. Nevertheless it cuts me to the very heart with grief [akhos] that any one should rebuke so angrily another [210] who is his own peer, and of like empire with himself. Now, however, I will give way in spite of my displeasure; furthermore let me tell you, and I mean what I say—if contrary to the desire of myself, Athena driver of the spoil, Hera, Hermes, and King Hephaistos, [215] Zeus spares steep Ilion, and will not let the Achaeans have the great triumph of ransacking it, let him understand that he will incur our implacable resentment.”

Poseidon now left the field to go down under the sea [pontos], and sorely did the Achaeans miss him. [220] Then Zeus said to Apollo, “Go, dear Phoebus, to brazen-helmeted Hector, for Poseidon who holds the earth in his embrace has now gone down under the sea to avoid the severity of my displeasure. Had he not done so those gods [225] who are below with Kronos would have come to hear of the fight between us. It is better for both of us that he should have curbed his anger and kept out of my reach, for I should have had much trouble with him. Take, then, your tasseled aegis, [230] and shake it furiously, so as to set the Achaean heroes in a panic; take, moreover, brave Hector, O Far-Darter, into your own care, and rouse him to deeds of daring, till the Achaeans are sent fleeing back to their ships and to the *Hellespont*. From that point I will think it well over, [235] how the Achaeans may have a respite from their troubles [ponoi].”

Apollo obeyed his father’s saying, and left the crests of Ida, flying like a falcon, bane of doves and swiftest of all birds. He found radiant Hector

no longer lying upon the ground, but sitting up, [240] for he had just come to himself again. He knew those who were about him, and the sweat and hard breathing had left him from the moment when the thinking [*noos*] of aegis-bearing Zeus had revived him. Apollo stood beside him and said, “Hector, son of Priam, why are you so faint, [245] and why are you here away from the others? Has any mishap befallen you?”

Hector in a weak voice answered, “And which, kind sir, of the gods are you, who now ask me thus? Do you not know that Ajax struck me on the chest with a stone [250] as I was killing his comrades at the ships of the Achaeans, and compelled me to leave off fighting? I made sure that this very day I should breathe my last and go down into the house of Hādēs.”

Then King Apollo said to him, “Take heart; the son of Kronos has sent you a mighty helper [255] from Ida to stand by you and defend you, even me, Phoebus Apollo of the golden sword, who have been guardian hitherto not only of yourself but of your city. Now, therefore, order your horsemen to drive their chariots to the ships in great multitudes. [260] I will go before your horses to smooth the way for them, and will turn the Achaeans in flight.”

As he spoke he infused great strength into the shepherd of his people. And as a horse, stabled and full-fed, breaks loose and gallops gloriously over the plain [265] to the place where he is wont to take his bath in the river—he tosses his head, and his mane streams over his shoulders as in all the pride of his strength he flies full speed to the pastures where the mares are feeding—even so Hector, when he heard what the god said, urged his horsemen on, [270] and sped forward as fast as his limbs could take him. As country peasants set their hounds on to a horned stag or wild goat—he has taken shelter under rock or thicket, and they cannot find him, [275] but, lo, a bearded lion whom their shouts have roused stands in their path, and they are in no further humor for the chase—

even so the Achaeans were still charging on in a body, using their swords and spears pointed at both ends, but when they saw Hector going about among his men [280] they were afraid, and their hearts fell down into their feet.

Then spoke Thoas son of Andraimon, leader of the Aetolians, a man who could throw a good throw, and who was staunch also in close fight, while few could surpass him in debate when opinions were divided. [285] He then with all sincerity and goodwill addressed them thus: “What, in the gods’ name, do I now see? Is it not Hector come to life again? Every one made sure he had been killed by Ajax son of Telamon, [290] but it seems that one of the gods has again rescued him. He has killed many of us Danaans already, and I take it will yet do so, for the hand of Zeus must be with him or he would never dare show himself so masterful in the forefront of the battle. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say; [295] let us order the main body of our forces to fall back upon the ships, but let those of us who profess to be the flower of the army stand firm, and see whether we cannot hold Hector back at the point of our spears as soon as he comes near us; I conceive that he will then think better of it before he tries to charge into the press of the Danaans.”

[300] Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. Those who were about Ajax and King Idomeneus, the followers moreover of Teucer, Meriones, and Meges peer of Arēs called all their best men about them and sustained the fight against Hector and the Trojans, [305] but the main body fell back upon the ships of the Achaeans.

The Trojans pressed forward in a dense body, with Hector striding on at their head. Before him went Phoebus Apollo shrouded in cloud about his shoulders. He bore aloft the terrible aegis with its shaggy fringe, [310] which Hephaistos the smith had given Zeus to strike terror into the hearts of men. With this in his hand he led on the Trojans.

The Argives held together and stood their ground. The cry of battle rose high from either side, and the arrows flew from the bowstrings. Many a spear sped from strong hands [315] and fastened in the bodies of many a valiant warrior, while others fell to earth midway, before they could taste of man's fair flesh and glut themselves with blood. So long as Phoebus Apollo held his aegis quietly and without shaking it, the weapons on either side took effect and the people fell, [320] but when he shook it straight in the face of the Danaans and raised his mighty battle-cry their hearts fainted within them and they forgot their former prowess. As when two wild beasts spring in the dead of night on a herd of cattle or a large flock of sheep [325] when the herdsman is not there—even so were the Danaans struck helpless, for Apollo filled them with panic and gave victory to Hector and the Trojans.

The fight then became more scattered and they killed one another where they best could. Hector killed Stikhios and Arkesilaos, [330] the one, leader of the bronze-armored Boeotians, and the other, friend and comrade of great-hearted Menestheus. Aeneas killed Medon and Iasos. The first was bastard son to godlike Oïleus, and brother to Ajax, but he lived in Phylake [335] away from his own country, for he had killed a man, a kinsman of his stepmother Eriopis whom Oïleus had married. Iasos had become a leader of the Athenians, and was son of Spheilos the son of Boukolos. Polydamas killed Mekisteus, and Polites Ekhios, [340] in the front of the battle, while radiant Agenor slew Klonios. Paris struck Deiokhos from behind in the lower part of the shoulder, as he was fleeing among the foremost, and the point of the spear went clean through him.

While they were despoiling these heroes of their armor, the Achaeans were fleeing in confusion to the trench and the set stakes, [345] and were forced back within their wall. Hector then cried out to the Trojans, “Forward to the ships, and let the spoils be. If I see any man keeping back on the other side the wall away from the ships I will have him

killed: [350] his kinsmen and kinswomen shall not give him his dues of fire, but dogs shall tear him in pieces in front of our city.”

As he spoke he laid his whip about his horses’ shoulders and called to the Trojans throughout their ranks; the Trojans shouted with a cry that rent the air, and kept their horses neck and neck with his own. [355]

Phoebus Apollo went before, and kicked down the banks of the deep trench into its middle so as to make a great broad bridge, as broad as the throw of a spear when a man is trying his strength. The Trojan battalions poured over the bridge, [360] and Apollo with his redoubtable aegis led the way. He kicked down the wall of the Achaeans as easily as a child who playing on the sea-shore has built a house of sand and then kicks it down again and destroys it— [365] even so did you, O Apollo, shed toil and trouble upon the Argives, filling them with panic and confusion.

Thus then were the Achaeans hemmed in at their ships, calling out to one another and raising their hands with loud cries every man to the heavens. [370] Nestor of Gerenia, tower of strength to the Achaeans, lifted up his hands to the starry firmament of the heavens, and prayed more fervently than any of them. “Father Zeus,” said he, “if ever any one in wheat-growing Argos burned you fat thigh-bones of sheep or heifer and prayed that he might return safely home, whereon you bowed your head to him in assent, [375] bear it in mind now, and suffer not the Trojans to triumph thus over the Achaeans.”

All counseling Zeus thundered loudly in answer to the prayer of the aged son of Neleus. When they heard Zeus thunder [380] they flung themselves yet more fiercely on the Achaeans. As a wave breaking over the bulwarks of a ship when the sea runs high before a gale—for it is the force of the wind that makes the waves so great—even so did the Trojans spring over the wall with a shout, [385] and drive their chariots onwards. The two sides fought with their double-pointed spears in hand-to-hand encounter—the Trojans from their chariots, and the Achaeans climbing

up into their ships and wielding the long pikes that were lying on the decks ready for use in a sea-fight, jointed and shod with bronze.

[390] Now Patroklos, so long as the Achaeans and Trojans were fighting about the wall, but were not yet within it and at the ships, remained sitting in the tent of good Eurypylos, entertaining him with his conversation and spreading herbs over his wound to ease his pain. [395] When, however, he saw the Trojans swarming through the breach in the wall, while the Achaeans were clamoring and struck with panic, he cried aloud, and smote his two thighs with the flat of his hands. “Eurypylos,” said he in his dismay, “I know you want me badly, but I cannot stay with you any longer, [400] for there is hard fighting going on; an attendant [*therapōn*] shall take care of you now, for I must make all speed to Achilles, and induce him to fight if I can; who knows but with the help of a superhuman force [*daimōn*] I may persuade him. A man does well to listen to the advice of a friend.”

[405] When he had thus spoken he went his way. The Achaeans stood firm and resisted the attack of the Trojans, yet though these were fewer in number, they could not drive them back from the ships, neither could the Trojans break the Achaean ranks and make their way in among the tents and ships. [410] As a carpenter’s line gives a true edge to a piece of ship’s timber, in the hand of some skilled workman whom Athena has instructed in all kinds of useful arts—even so level was the issue of the fight between the two sides, as they fought some round one and some round another.

[415] Hector made straight for glorious Ajax, and they put up fierce struggle [*ponos*] over the same ship. Hector could not force Ajax back and fire the ship, nor yet could Ajax drive Hector from the spot to which a superhuman force [*daimōn*] had brought him.

Then shining Ajax struck Kaletor [420] son of Klytios in the chest with a spear as he was bringing fire towards the ship. He fell heavily to the

ground and the torch dropped from his hand. When Hector saw his cousin fallen in front of the ship he shouted to the Trojans and Lycians saying, [425] “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians good in close fight, bate not a jot, but rescue the son of Klytios lest the Achaeans strip him of his armor now that he has fallen in the struggle [*agōn*].”

He then aimed a spear at Ajax, [430] and missed him, but he hit Lykophron an attendant [*therapōn*] of Ajax, who came from Cythera, but was living with Ajax inasmuch as he had killed a man among the Cythereans. Hector’s spear struck him on the head below the ear, [435] and he fell headlong from the ship’s prow on to the ground with no life left in him. Ajax shook with rage and said to his brother, “Teucer, my good man, our trusty comrade the son of Mastor has fallen, he came to live with us from Cythera and whom we honored as much as our own beloved parents. [440] Hector has just killed him; fetch your deadly arrows at once and the bow which Phoebus Apollo gave you.”

Teucer heard him and hastened towards him with his bow and quiver in his hands. Right then and there he showered his arrows on the Trojans, [445] and hit Kleitos, the glorious son of Peisenor, comrade of Polydamas the noble son of Panthoös, with the reins in his hands as he was attending to his horses; he was in the middle of the very thickest part of the fight, doing good service to Hector and the Trojans, [450] but evil had now come upon him, and not one of those who were fain to do so could avert it, for the arrow struck him on the back of the neck. He fell from his chariot and his horses shook the empty car as they swerved aside. King Polydamas saw what had happened, and was the first to come up to the horses; [455] he gave them in charge to Astynooos, son of Protiaon, and ordered him to look on, and to keep the horses near at hand. He then went back and took his place in the front ranks.

Teucer then aimed another arrow at bronze-helmeted Hector, and there would have been no more fighting at the ships [460] if he had hit him and killed him then and there: but Teucer did not escape the notice

[*noos*] of Zeus, who kept watch over Hector and deprived him of his triumph, by breaking his bowstring for him just as he was drawing it and about to take his aim; on this the arrow went astray [465] and the bow fell from his hands. Teucer shook with anger and said to his brother, “Alas, see how a superhuman force [*daimōn*] thwarts us in all we do; he has broken my bowstring and snatched the bow from my hand, though I strung it this selfsame morning [470] that it might serve me for many an arrow.”

Ajax, son of Telamon, answered, “My good man, let your bow and your arrows be, for Zeus has made them useless in order to spite the Danaans. Take your spear, lay your shield upon your shoulder, [475] and both fight the Trojans yourself and urge others to do so. They may be successful for the moment but if we fight as we ought they will find it a hard matter to take the ships.”

Teucer then took his bow and put it by in his tent. He hung a shield four hides thick about his shoulders, [480] and on his comely head he set his helmet well wrought with a crest of horse-hair that nodded menacingly above it; he grasped his redoubtable bronze-shod spear, and right then and there he was by the side of Ajax.

When Hector saw that Teucer’s bow was of no more use to him, [485] he shouted out to the Trojans and Lycians, “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians good in close fight, be men, my friends, and show your mettle here at the ships, for I see the weapon of one of their chieftains made useless by the hand of Zeus. [490] It is easy to see when Zeus is helping people and means to help them still further, or again when he is bringing them down and will do nothing for them; he is now on our side, and is going against the Argives. Therefore swarm round the ships and fight. [495] If any of you is struck by spear or sword and loses his life, let him die; he dies with honor who dies fighting for his country; and he will leave his wife and children safe behind him, with his house

and allotment un plundered if only the Achaeans can be driven back to their own land, they and their ships.”

[500] With these words he put life [*menos*] and spirit [*thūmos*] into them all. Ajax on the other side exhorted his comrades saying, “Shame [*aidōs*] on you Argives, we are now utterly undone, unless we can save ourselves by driving the enemy from our ships. Do you think, if Hector takes them, [505] that you will be able to get home by land? Can you not hear him cheering on his whole army to fire our fleet, and telling them to remember that they are not at a dance [*khoros*] but in battle? Our only thought [*noos*] and plan [*mētis*] [510] is to fight them with might and main; we had better chance it, life or death, once for all, than fight long and without issue hemmed in at our ships by worse men than ourselves.”

With these words he put life [*menos*] and spirit [*thūmos*] into them all. [515] Hector then killed Skhedios son of Perimedes, leader of the Phocians, and Ajax killed Laodamas leader of foot soldiers and shining son to Antenor. Polydamas killed Otos of Cyllene a comrade of the son of Phyleus and chief of the proud Epeioi. [520] When Meges saw this he sprang upon him, but Polydamas crouched down, and he missed him, for Apollo would not suffer the son of Panthoös to fall in battle; but the spear hit Kroismos in the middle of his chest, whereon he fell heavily to the ground, and Meges stripped him of his armor. [525] At that moment the valiant warrior Dolops, son of Lamos, sprang upon him; Lamos was son of Laomedon and noted for his valor, while his son Dolops was versed in all the ways of war. He then struck the middle of the son of Phyleus’ [= Meges’] shield with his spear, setting on him at close quarters, but his good corselet [530] made with plates of metal saved him; Phyleus had brought it from Ephyra and the river Selleis, where his host, King Euphetes, had given it him to wear in battle and protect him. It now served to save the life of his son. [535] Then Meges struck the topmost crest of Dolops’ bronze helmet with his spear and tore away its plume of horse-hair, so that all newly dyed with scarlet as it was it tumbled down into the dust. While he was still fighting and confident of

victory, [540] warlike Menelaos came up to help Meges, and got by the side of Dolops unperceived; he then speared him in the shoulder, from behind, and the point, driven so furiously, went through into his chest, whereon he fell headlong. The two then made towards him to strip him of his armor, [545] but Hector called on all his brothers for help, and he especially upbraided brave Melanippos, son of Hiketaon, who once upon a time used to pasture his herds of cattle in Perkote before the war broke out; [550] but when the ships of the Danaans came, he went back to *Ilion*, where he was eminent among the Trojans, and lived near Priam who treated him as one of his own sons. Hector now rebuked him and said, “Why, Melanippos, are we thus remiss? Do you take no note of the death of your kinsman, [555] and do you not see how they are trying to take Dolops’ armor? Follow me; there must be no fighting the Argives from a distance now, but we must do so in close combat till either we kill them or they take the high wall of *Ilion* and slay her people.”

He led on as he spoke, and the hero Melanippos followed after. [560] Meanwhile huge Ajax son of Telamon was cheering on the Argives. “My friends,” he cried, “be men, and fear the loss of respect [*aidōs*]; quit yourselves in battle so as to win respect from one another. Men who respect each other’s good opinion are less likely to be killed than those who do not, but in flight there is neither gain nor glory [*kleos*].”

[565] Thus did he exhort men who were already bent upon driving back the Trojans. They laid his words to heart and hedged the ships as with a wall of bronze, while Zeus urged on the Trojans. Menelaos of the loud battle-cry urged Antilokhos on. “Antilokhos,” said he, “you are young [570] and there is none of the Achaeans more fleet of foot or more valiant than you are. See if you cannot spring upon some Trojan and kill him.”

He hurried away when he had thus spurred Antilokhos, who at once darted out from the front ranks and aimed a spear, after looking carefully round him. [575] The Trojans fell back as he threw, and the dart did not

speed from his hand without effect, for it struck Melanippos the proud son of Hiketaon in the breast by the nipple as he was coming forward, and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. Antilokhos sprang upon him [580] as a dog springs on a fawn which a hunter has hit as it was breaking away from its covert, and killed it. Even so, O Melanippos, did stalwart Antilokhos spring upon you to strip you of your armor; but noble Hector marked him, and came running up to him through the thick of the battle. [585] Antilokhos, brave warrior though he was, would not stay to face him, but fled like some savage creature which knows it has done wrong, and flies, when it has killed a dog or a man who is herding his cattle, before a body of men can be gathered to attack it. Even so did the son of Nestor flee, and the Trojans and radiant Hector [590] with a cry that rent the air showered their weapons after him; nor did he turn round and stay his flight till he had reached his comrades.

The Trojans, fierce as lions, were still rushing on towards the ships in fulfillment of the behests of Zeus who kept spurring them on to new deeds of daring, [595] while he deadened the courage of the Argives and defeated them by encouraging the Trojans. For he meant giving glory to Hector, son of Priam, and letting him throw fire upon the ships, till he had fulfilled the unrighteous prayer that Thetis had made him; Zeus, therefore, bided his time [600] till he should see the glare of a blazing ship. From that hour he was about so to order that the Trojans should be driven back from the ships and to grant glory to the Achaeans. With this purpose he inspired Hector, son of Priam, who was eager enough already, to assail the ships. [605] His fury was as that of spear-shaking Arēs, or as when a fire is raging in the glades of some dense forest upon the mountains; he foamed at the mouth, his eyes glared under his terrible eye-brows, and his helmet quivered on his temples by reason of the fury with which he fought. [610] Zeus from the heavens was with him, and though he was but one against many, granted him victory and glory; for he was doomed to an early death, and already Pallas Athena was hurrying on the hour of his destruction at the hands of the son of Peleus.

[615] Now, however, he kept trying to break the ranks of the enemy wherever he could see them thickest, and in the goodliest armor; but do what he might he could not break through them, for they stood as a tower foursquare, or as some high cliff rising from the gray sea that braves the anger of the gale, [620] and of the waves that thunder up against it. He fell upon them like flames of fire from every quarter. As when a wave, raised mountain high by wind and storm, breaks over a ship and covers it deep in foam, [625] the fierce winds roar against the mast, the hearts of the sailors fail them for fear, and they are saved but by a very little from destruction—even so were the hearts of the Achaeans fainting within them. [630] Or as a savage lion attacking a herd of cows while they are feeding by thousands in the low-lying meadows by some wide-watered shore—the herdsman is at his wit's end how to protect his herd and keeps going about now in the van and now in the rear of his cattle, [635] while the lion springs into the thick of them and fastens on a cow so that they all tremble for fear—even so were the Achaeans utterly panic-stricken by Hector and father Zeus. Nevertheless Hector only killed Periphetes of Mycenae; he was son of Kopreus [640] who was wont to take the orders of King Eurystheus to mighty Hēraklēs, but the son was far better in excellence [*aretē*] than the father in every way; he was fleet of foot, a valiant warrior, and in understanding [*noos*] ranked among the foremost men of *Mycenae*. He it was who then afforded Hector a triumph, [645] for as he was turning back he stumbled against the rim of his shield which reached his feet, and served to keep the javelins off him. He tripped against this and fell face upward, his helmet ringing loudly about his head as he did so. Hector saw him fall and ran up to him; [650] he then thrust a spear into his chest, and killed him close to his own comrades. These, for all their sorrow, could not help him for they were themselves terribly afraid of Hector.

They had now reached the ships and the prows of those that had been drawn up first were on every side of them, but the Trojans came pouring after them. [655] The Argives were driven back from the first row of ships, but they made a stand by their tents without being broken

up and scattered; shame [*aidōs*] and fear restrained them. They kept shouting incessantly to one another, and Nestor of Gerenia, tower of strength to the Achaeans, [660] was loudest in imploring every man by his parents, and beseeching him to stand firm.

“Be men, my friends,” he cried, “and give respect [*aidōs*] to one another’s good opinion. Think, all of you, on your children, your wives, your property, and your parents whether these be alive or dead. [665] On their behalf though they are not here, I implore you to stand firm, and not to turn in flight.”

With these words he put heart and spirit into them all. Athena lifted the thick veil of darkness from their eyes, and much light fell upon them, [670] alike on the side of the ships and on that where the fight was raging. They could see Hector of the great war cry and all his men, both those in the rear who were taking no part in the battle, and those who were fighting by the ships.

Great-hearted Ajax could not bring himself to retreat [675] along with the rest, but strode from deck to deck with a great sea-pike in his hands twelve cubits long and jointed with rings. As a man skilled in feats of charioteering [680] couples four horses together and comes tearing full speed along the public way from the country into some large town—many both men and women marvel as they see him for he keeps all the time changing his horse, springing from one to another without ever missing his feet while the horses are at a gallop— [685] even so did Ajax go striding from one ship’s deck to another, and his voice went up into the heavens. He kept on shouting his orders to the Danaans and exhorting them to defend their ships and tents; neither did Hector remain within the main body of the Trojan warriors, [690] but as a dun eagle swoops down upon a flock of wild-fowl feeding near a river—geese, it may be, or cranes, or long-necked swans—even so did Hector make straight for a dark-prowed ship, rushing right towards it; [695] for

Zeus with his mighty hand impelled him forward, and roused his people to follow him.

And now the battle again raged furiously at the ships. You would have thought the men were coming on fresh and unwearied, so fiercely did they fight; and this was the mind [*noos*] in which they were— [700] the Achaeans did not believe they should escape destruction but thought themselves doomed, while there was not a Trojan but his heart beat high with the hope of firing the ships and putting the Achaean heroes to the sword.

Thus were the two sides minded. Then Hector seized the stern of the good ship [705] that had brought Protesilaos to Troy, but never bore him back to his native land. Round this ship there raged a close hand-to-hand fight between Danaans and Trojans. They did not fight at a distance with bows and javelins, [710] but with one mind hacked at one another in close combat with their mighty swords and spears pointed at both ends; they fought moreover with keen battle-axes and with hatchets. Many a good stout blade hilted and scabbarded with iron, fell from hand or shoulder as they fought, [715] and the earth ran red with blood. Hector, when he had seized the ship, would not loose his hold but held on to its curved stern and shouted to the Trojans, “Bring fire, and raise the battle-cry all of you with a single voice. Now has Zeus granted us a day that will pay us for all the rest; [720] this day we shall take the ships which came here against the gods’ will, and which have caused us such infinite suffering through the cowardice of our councilors, who when I would have done battle at the ships held me back and forbade the army to follow me; if Zeus did then indeed warp our judgments, [725] himself now commands me and cheers me on.”

As he spoke thus the Trojans sprang yet more fiercely on the Achaeans, and Ajax no longer held his ground, for he was overcome by the darts that were flung at him, and made sure that he was doomed. Therefore he left the raised deck at the stern, and stepped back on to the seven-foot

bench of the oarsmen. [730] Here he stood on the look-out, and with his spear held back the Trojans whom he saw bringing fire to the ships. All the time he kept on shouting at the top of his voice and exhorting the Danaans. “My friends,” he cried, “Danaan heroes, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, be men my friends, and fight with might and with main. [735] Can we hope to find helpers hereafter, or a wall to shield us more surely than the one we have? There is no strong city within reach, whence we may draw fresh population [*dēmos*] to turn the scales in our favor. We are on the plain of the armed Trojans with the sea [*pontos*] behind us, [740] and far from our own country. Our salvation, therefore, is in the might of our hands and in hard fighting.”

As he spoke he wielded his spear with still greater fury, and when any Trojan made towards the ships with fire to win favor [*kharis*] with Hector, [745] he would be on the look-out for him, and drive at him with his long spear. Twelve men did he thus kill in hand-to-hand fight before the ships.

Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 16

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thus did they fight about the ship of Protesilaos. Then Patroklos drew near to Achilles with tears welling from his eyes, as from some spring whose crystal stream falls over the ledges of a high precipice. [5] When swift-footed radiant Achilles saw him thus weeping he was sorry for him and said, “Why, Patroklos, do you stand there weeping like some unaware [*nēpiē*] little girl that comes running to her mother, and begs to be taken up and carried—she catches hold of her mother’s dress to stay her though she is in a hurry, [10] and looks tearfully up until her mother carries her—even such tears, Patroklos, are you now shedding. Have you anything to say to the Myrmidons or to myself, or have you had news from Phthia which you alone know? They tell me Menoitios, son of Aktor, is still alive, [15] as also Peleus son of Aiakos, among the Myrmidons—men whose loss we two should bitterly deplore; or are you grieving about the Argives and the way in which they are being killed at the ships, through their own high-handed doings? Do not hide in your mind [*noos*] anything from me but tell me that both of us may know about it.”

[20] Then, O charioteer Patroklos, with a deep sigh you answered, “Achilles, son of Peleus, foremost champion of the Achaeans, ²² do not be angry, for such a grief [*akhos*] has beset [= brought *biē* upon] the Achaeans. All those who have been their champions so far are lying at the ships, wounded by sword or spear. [25] Brave Diomedes son of Tydeus has been hit with a spear, while famed Odysseus and Agamemnon have received sword-wounds; Eurypylos again has been struck with an arrow in the thigh; skilled apothecaries are attending to these heroes, and healing them of their wounds; are you still, O Achilles,

so inexorable? [30] May it never be my lot to nurse such a passion as you have done, to the damage of your own good name. Who in future story will speak well of you ³² if you do not ward off the disgraceful devastation [*loigos*] from the Argives? You know no pity; charioteer Peleus was not your father nor Thetis your mother, but the gray sea bore you and the sheer cliffs begot you, [35] so cruel and remorseless are you in your thinking [*noos*]. If however you are kept back through knowledge of some oracle, or if your mother Thetis has told you something from the mouth of Zeus, at least send me and the Myrmidons with me, if I may bring deliverance to the Danaans. [40] Let me moreover wear your armor; the Trojans may thus mistake me for you and quit the field, so that the hard-pressed sons of the Achaeans may have breathing time—which while they are fighting may hardly be. We who are fresh might soon drive tired men [45] back from our ships and tents to their own city.”

He knew not what he was asking, nor that he was suing for his own destruction. Achilles was deeply moved and answered, “What, noble Patroklos, are you saying? [50] I know no prophesyings which I am heeding, nor has my mother told me anything from the mouth of Zeus, ⁵² but I have this terrible sorrow [*akhos*] that has come over my heart and spirit [*thūmos*], ⁵³ seeing as I do that the man [= Agamemnon] is trying to deprive a man who is equal to [*homoios*] him ⁵⁴ and to take away the prize of this man [= Achilles], just because he [= Agamemnon] is ahead in power. [55] the terrible *akhos* that I have, since I suffered pains [*algea*] in my *thūmos* is more than I can endure. The girl whom the sons of the Achaeans chose for me, whom I won as the fruit of my spear on having ransacked a city—her has King Agamemnon taken from me as though I were some common vagrant. [60] Still, let bygones be bygones: no man may keep his anger for ever; I said I would not relent till battle and the cry of war had reached my own ships; nevertheless, now gird my armor about your shoulders, [65] and lead the Myrmidons to battle, for the dark cloud of Trojans has burst furiously over our fleet; the Argives are

driven back on to the beach, cooped within a narrow space, and the whole people of Troy has taken heart to sally out against them, [70] because they see not the visor of my helmet gleaming near them. Had they seen this, there would not have been a creek nor grip that had not been filled with their dead as they fled back again. And so it would have been, if only King Agamemnon had dealt fairly by me. As it is the Trojans have beset our army. [75] Diomedes son of Tydeus no longer wields his spear to defend the Danaans, neither have I heard the voice of the son of Atreus coming from his hated [*ekhthre*] head, whereas that of manslaughtering Hector rings in my ears as he gives orders to the Trojans, who triumph over the Achaeans and fill the whole plain with their cry of battle. [80] Even so, Patroklos, ward off the devastation [*loigos*] from the ships ⁸¹ and attack with power [*kratos*], lest they [the Trojans] burn ⁸² the ships with blazing fire and take away a safe homecoming [*nostos*]. Bring to fulfillment [*telos*] what I now order you to do, so that you may win me great honor [*tīme*] [85] from all the Danaans, and that they may restore the girl to me again and give me rich gifts into the bargain. When you have driven the Trojans from the ships, come back again. Though Hera's thundering husband should put triumph within your reach, do not fight the Trojans further in my absence, [90] or you will rob me of glory that should be mine. And do not for lust of battle go on killing the Trojans nor lead the Achaeans on to Ilion, lest one of the ever-living gods from Olympus attack you—for Phoebus Apollo loves them well: [95] return when you have freed the ships from peril, and let others wage war upon the plain. ⁹⁷ Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo! If only ⁹⁸ not one of all the Trojans could escape destruction, ⁹⁹ nor a single one of the Argives, while you and I emerge from the slaughter, [100] so that we two alone may break Troy's sacred coronal."

Thus did they converse. But Ajax could no longer hold his ground for the shower of darts that rained upon him; the will [*noos*] of Zeus and the javelins of the Trojans were too much for him; the helmet that gleamed

about his temples rang [105] with the continuous clatter of the missiles that kept pouring on to it and on to the cheek-pieces that protected his face. Moreover his left shoulder was tired with having held his shield so long, yet for all this, let fly at him as they would, they could not make him give ground. He could hardly draw his breath, the sweat rained from every pore of his body, [110] he had not a moment's respite, and on all sides he was beset by danger upon danger.

And now, tell me, O Muses that hold your mansions on Olympus, how fire was thrown upon the ships of the Achaeans. Hector came close up and let drive with his great sword at the ashen spear of Ajax. [115] He cut it clean in two just behind where the point was fastened on to the shaft of the spear. Ajax, therefore, had now nothing but a headless spear, while the bronze point flew some way off and came ringing down on to the ground. Ajax knew the hand of the gods in this, [120] and was dismayed at seeing that Zeus had now left him utterly defenseless and was willing victory for the Trojans. Therefore he drew back, and the Trojans flung fire upon the ship which was at once wrapped in flame.

The fire was now flaring about the ship's stern, whereon Achilles smote his two thighs [125] and said to Patroklos, "Up, noble charioteer, for I see the glare of hostile fire at our fleet; up, lest they destroy our ships, and there be no way by which we may retreat. Gird on your armor at once while I call our people together."

[130] As he spoke Patroklos put on his armor. First he greaved his legs with greaves of good make, and fitted with ankle-clasps of silver; after this he donned the cuirass of the swift-footed descendant of Aiakos, richly inlaid and studded. [135] He hung his silver-studded sword of bronze about his shoulders, and then his mighty shield. On his comely head he set his helmet, well wrought, with a crest of horse-hair that nodded menacingly above it. He grasped two redoubtable spears that suited his hands, [140] but he did not take the spear of noble Achilles, so stout and strong, for none other of the Achaeans could wield it, though

Achilles could do so easily—¹⁴³ the Pelian ash-spear, which Cheiron had given to his *philos* father,¹⁴⁴ from the heights of Mount Pelion, to be death for heroes. He bade [145] Automedon yoke his horses with all speed, for he was the man whom he held in honor next after Achilles, and on whose support in battle he could rely most firmly. Automedon therefore yoked the fleet horses Xanthos and Balios, [150] steeds that could fly like the wind: these were they whom the harpy Podarge bore to the west wind, as she was grazing in a meadow by the waters of the river Okeanos. In the side traces he set the noble horse Pedasos, whom Achilles breaker of battles had brought away with him when he ransacked the city of Eëtion, and who, mortal steed though he was, could take his place along with those that were immortal.

[155] Meanwhile Achilles went about everywhere among the tents, and bade his Myrmidons put on their armor. Even as fierce ravening wolves that are feasting upon a horned stag which they have killed upon the mountains, and their jaws are red with blood— [160] they go in a pack to lap water from the clear spring with their long thin tongues; and they reek of blood and slaughter; they know not what fear is, for it is hunger drives them—even so did the leaders and counselors of the Myrmidons [165] gather round the good attendant [*therapōn*] of the fleet descendant of Aiaikos, and among them stood Achilles himself cheering on both men and horses.

Fifty ships had noble Achilles brought to Troy, [170] and in each there was a crew of fifty oarsmen. Over these he set five leaders whom he could trust, while he was himself commander over them all. Menesthios of the gleaming corselet, son to the river Sperkheios that streams from the heavens, was leader of the first company. [175] Fair Polydora daughter of Peleus bore him to ever-flowing Sperkheios—a woman mated with a god – but he was called son of Boros, son of Perieres, with whom his mother was living as his wedded wife, and who gave great wealth to gain her. The second company was led by noble Eudoros, [180] son to an unwedded woman. Polymele, daughter of Phylas,

graceful in dancing [*khōros*], bore him; the mighty slayer of Argos was enamored of her as he saw her among the singing women at a dance [*khōros*] held in honor of Artemis the rushing huntress of the golden arrows; he therefore—Hermes, giver of all good—went with her into an upper chamber, [185] and lay with her in secret, whereon she bore him a noble son Eudoros, singularly fleet of foot and in fight valiant. When Eileithuia goddess of the pains of child-birth brought him to the light of day, and he saw the face of the sun, mighty Ekhekles son of Aktor took the mother to wife, [190] and gave great wealth to gain her, but her father Phylas brought the child up, and took care of him, doting as fondly upon him as though he were his own son. The third company was led by warlike Peisandros son of Maimalos, the finest spearman among all the Myrmidons [195] next to Achilles' own comrade Patroklos. The old charioteer Phoenix was leader of the fourth company, and Alkimedon, noble son of Laerkeus, of the fifth.

When Achilles had chosen [*krinein*] his men and had stationed them all with their leaders, he charged them strictly saying, [200] “Myrmidons, remember your threats against the Trojans while you were at the ships in the time of my anger, and you were all complaining of me. ‘Cruel son of Peleus,’ you would say, ‘your mother must have suckled you on gall, so ruthless are you. You keep us here at the ships against our will; [205] if you are so relentless it were better we went home over the sea.’ Often have you gathered and thus chided with me. The hour is now come for those high feats of arms that you have so long been pining for, therefore keep high hearts each one of you to do battle with the Trojans.”

[210] With these words he put heart and spirit into them all, and they serried their companies yet more closely when they heard the words of their king. As the stones which a builder sets in the wall of some high house which is to give shelter from the winds—even so closely were the helmets and bossed shields set against one another. [215] Shield pressed on shield, helmet on helmet, and man on man; so close were they that

the horse-hair plumes on the gleaming ridges of their helmets touched each other as they bent their heads.

In front of them all two men put on their armor—Patroklos and Automedon—two men, with but one mind [220] to lead the Myrmidons. Then Achilles went inside his tent and opened the lid of the strong chest which silver-footed Thetis had given him to take on board ship, and which she had filled with khitons, cloaks to keep out the cold, and good thick rugs. [225] In this chest he had a cup of rare workmanship, from which no man but himself might drink, nor would he make offering from it to any other god save only to father Zeus. He took the cup from the chest and cleansed it with sulfur; this done he rinsed it with clean water, [230] and after he had washed his hands he drew wine. Then he stood in the middle of the court and prayed, looking towards the heavens, and making his drink-offering of wine; nor was he unseen of Zeus whose joy is in thunder. ²³³ “King Zeus,” he [= Achilles] cried out, “lord of Dodona, god of the Pelasgoi, who dwells afar, ²³⁴ you who hold stormy Dodona in your sway, where the Selloi, [235] your seers, dwell around you with their feet unwashed and their beds made upon the ground— ²³⁶ just as you heard what I was saying when I prayed to you before, ²³⁷ and did me honor by sending disaster on the Achaean people, ²³⁸ so also now grant me the fulfillment of yet a further prayer, and it is this: ²³⁹ I shall stay here at my assembly [*agōn*] of ships, [240] but I shall send my comrade [*hetairos*] into battle at the head of many Myrmidons, ²⁴¹ sending him to fight. Send forth, O all-seeing Zeus, a radiance [*kudos*] to go before him; ²⁴² make bold the heart inside his chest so that Hector ²⁴³ may find out whether he [Patroklos] knows how to fight alone, ²⁴⁴ [Patroklos,] my attendant [*therapōn*], or whether his hands can only then be so invincible [245] with their fury when I myself enter the war struggle of Arēs. ²⁴⁶ Afterwards when he [= Patroklos] has chased away from the ships the attack and the cry of battle, ²⁴⁷ grant that he may return unharmed to the swift ships, ²⁴⁸ with his armor and his comrades [*hetairoi*], fighters in close combat.”

²⁴⁹ Thus did he [Achilles] pray, and Zeus, the Planner, heard his prayer.
[250] Part of it he did indeed grant him—but the other part he refused.
²⁵¹ He granted that Patroklos should thrust back war and battle from the
ships, ²⁵² yes, he granted that. But he refused to let him come safely [*ex-*
apo-ne-e-sthai] out of the fight.

When he had made his drink-offering and had thus prayed, Achilles
went inside his tent and put back the cup into his chest.

[255] Then he again came out, for he still loved to look upon the fierce
fight that raged between the Trojans and Achaeans.

Meanwhile the armed band that was about great-hearted Patroklos
marched on till they sprang high in hope upon the Trojans. They came
swarming out like wasps [260] whose nests are by the roadside, and
whom silly children love to tease, whereon anyone who happens to be
passing may get stung—or again, if a wayfarer going along the road
vexes them by accident, every wasp will come flying out [265] in a fury
to defend his little ones—even with such rage and courage did the
Myrmidons swarm from their ships, and their cry of battle rose
heavenwards. Patroklos called out to his men at the top of his voice,
“Myrmidons, followers of Achilles son of Peleus, [270] be men my
friends, fight with might and with main, that we may win glory for the
son of Peleus, who is far the foremost man at the ships of the Argives—
he, and his close fighting attendants [*therapontes*]. The son of Atreus
wide-ruling King Agamemnon will thus recognize his derangement
[*atē*] in showing no respect to the bravest of the Achaeans.”

[275] With these words he put heart and spirit into them all, and they
fell in a body upon the Trojans. The ships rang again with the cry
which the Achaeans raised, and when the Trojans saw the brave son of
Menoitios and his attendant [*therapōn*] all gleaming in their armor, [280]
they were daunted and their battalions were thrown into confusion, for

they thought the fleet son of Peleus ²⁸² had cast aside his state of *mēnis* and had chosen being *philos* instead. Every one, therefore, looked round about to see where he might flee for safety.

Patroklos first aimed a spear into the middle of the press [285] where men were packed most closely, by the stern of the ship of great-hearted Protesilaos. He hit Pyraikhmes who had led his Paeonian horsemen from the Amydon and the broad waters of the river Axios; the spear struck him on the right shoulder, and with a groan he fell backwards in the dust; [290] on this his men were thrown into confusion, for by killing their leader, who was the finest warrior among them, Patroklos struck panic into them all. ²⁹³ He drove them [the Trojans] from the ships, and he quenched the blazing fire —leaving the half-burnt ship to lie where it was. [295] The Trojans were now driven back with a shout that rent the skies, while the Danaans poured after them from their ships, shouting also without ceasing. As when Zeus, gatherer of the thunder-cloud, spreads a dense canopy on the top of some lofty mountain, and all the peaks, the jutting headlands, and forest glades show out [300] in the great light that flashes from the bursting heavens, ³⁰¹ thus the Danaans, having averted from the ships the burning fire, took breath for a little while; but the fury of the fight was not yet over, for the Trojans were not driven back in utter rout, [305] but still gave battle, and were ousted from their ground only by sheer fighting.

The fight then became more scattered, and the chieftains killed one another when and how they could. The valiant son of Menoitios first drove his spear into the thigh of Areilykos just as he was turning round; [310] the point went clean through, and broke the bone so that he fell forward. Meanwhile warlike Menelaos struck Thoas in the chest, where it was exposed near the rim of his shield, and he fell dead. The son of Phyleus saw Amphiklos about to attack him, and before he could do so took aim at the upper part of his thigh, [315] where the muscles are thicker than in any other part; the spear tore through all the sinews of the leg, and his eyes were closed in darkness. Of the sons of Nestor one,

Antilokhos, speared Atymnios, driving the point of the spear through his throat, and down he fell. Maris then sprang on Antilokhos [320] in hand-to-hand fight to avenge his brother, and bestrode the body spear in hand; but valiant Thrasymedes was too quick for him, and in a moment had struck him in the shoulder before he could deal his blow; his aim was true, and the spear severed all the muscles at the root of his arm, and tore them right down to the bone, [325] so he fell heavily to the ground and his eyes were closed in darkness. Thus did these two noble comrades of Sarpedon go down to Erebos slain by the two sons of Nestor; they were the warrior sons of Amisodoros, who had reared the invincible Chimaera, to the bane of many. [330] Ajax, son of Oïleus, sprang on Kleoboulos and took him alive as he was entangled in the crush; but he killed him then and there by a sword-blow on the neck. The sword reeked with his blood, while dark death and the strong hand of fate gripped him and closed his eyes.

[335] Peneleos and Lykon now met in close fight, for they had missed each other with their spears. They had both thrown without effect, so now they drew their swords. Lykon struck the plumed crest of Peneleos' helmet but his sword broke at the hilt, while Peneleos smote Lykon on the neck under the ear. [340] The blade sank so deep that the head was held on by nothing but the skin, and there was no more life left in him. Meriones gave chase to Akamas on foot and caught him up just as he was about to mount his chariot; he drove a spear through his right shoulder so that he fell headlong from the car, and his eyes were closed in darkness. [345] Idomeneus speared Erymas in the mouth; the bronze point of the spear went clean through it beneath the brain, crashing in among the white bones and smashing them up. His teeth were all of them knocked out and the blood came gushing in a stream from both his eyes; it also came gurgling up from his mouth and nostrils, [350] and the darkness of death enfolded him round about.

Thus did these chieftains of the Danaans each of them kill his man. As ravening wolves seize on kids or lambs, fastening on them when they are

alone on the hillsides and have strayed from the main flock through the carelessness of the shepherd—and when the wolves see this [355] they pounce upon them at once because they cannot defend themselves—even so did the Danaans now fall on the Trojans, who fled with ill-omened cries in their panic and had no more fight left in them.

Meanwhile great Ajax kept on trying to drive a spear into bronze-helmeted Hector, but Hector was so skillful [360] that he held his broad shoulders well under cover of his ox-hide shield, ever on the look-out for the whizzing of the arrows and the heavy thud of the spears. He well knew that the fortunes of the day had changed, but still stood his ground and tried to protect his comrades.

³⁶⁴ Just as when, down from Mount Olympus, a cloud [*nephos*] comes upon the sky [*ouranos*], [365] following an earlier moment of bright [*diē*] air [*aithēr*], and when Zeus stretches [over the sky] a violent rainstorm [*lailaps*], ³⁶⁶ so also was there a clamorous routing of them [= the Trojans], driven away from the ships [of the Achaeans]. Hector's fleet horses bore him and his armor out of the fight, and he left the Trojan army penned in by the deep trench against their will. [370] Many a yoke of horses snapped the pole of their chariots in the trench and left their master's car behind them. Patroklos gave chase, calling impetuously on the Danaans and full of fury against the Trojans, who, being now no longer in a body, filled all the ways with their cries of panic and rout; the air was darkened [375] with the clouds of dust they raised, and the horses strained every nerve in their flight from the tents and ships towards the city.

Patroklos kept on heading his horses wherever he saw most men fleeing in confusion, cheering on his men the while. Chariots were being smashed in all directions, and many a man came tumbling down from his own car to fall beneath the wheels of that of Patroklos, [380] whose immortal steeds, given by the gods to Peleus, sprang over the trench at a bound as they sped onward. He was intent on trying to get near Hector,

for he had set his heart on spearing him, but Hector's horses were now hurrying him away. ³⁸⁴ Just as when, under the mass of a violent rainstorm, the dark earth in its entirety is weighed down [385] on that day in autumn when water is poured down most furiously ³⁸⁶ by Zeus, at a time when he feels anger [*kotos*] toward men and takes out his anger on them, ³⁸⁷ on the kinds of men who do violence [to justice] in the public assembly as they make crooked judgments about what is right and wrong [*themistes*], ³⁸⁸ thus driving out justice [*dikē*], since they do not care at all about the watchful eye of the gods, ³⁸⁹ and their rivers are now all filled to overflowing, [390] and many of their terraced fields are being torn away by torrential rains ³⁹¹ and swept down toward the seething sea with a mighty groan, ³⁹² flowing straight down from the steep heights above, and now all the labor of farming is going to waste, ³⁹³ —so also did the horses of the Trojans let out a groan.

Patroklos now cut off the battalions that were nearest to him [395] and drove them back to the ships. They were doing their best to reach the city, but he would not let them, and bore down on them between the river and the ships and wall. Many a fallen comrade did he then avenge. First he hit Pronoos with a spear [400] on the chest where it was exposed near the rim of his shield, and he fell heavily to the ground. Next he sprang on Thestor son of Enops, who was sitting all huddled up in his chariot, for he had lost his head and the reins had been torn out of his hands. Patroklos went up to him and drove a spear into his right jaw; [405] he thus hooked him by the teeth and the spear pulled him over the rim of his car, as one who sits at the end of some jutting rock and draws a strong fish out of the sea [*pontos*] with a hook and a line—even so with his spear did he pull Thestor all gaping from his chariot; [410] he then threw him down on his face and he died while falling. Then, as Eurylaos was on to attack him, he struck him full on the head with a stone, and his brains were all battered inside his helmet, whereon he fell headlong to the ground and the pangs of death took hold upon him. [415] Then he laid low, one after the other, Erymas, Amphoteros, Epaltes,

Tlepolemos, Ekhios son of Damastor, Pyris, Ipheus, Euippos and Polymelos son of Argeas.

Now when Sarpedon saw his comrades, [420] men who wore unbelted tunics, being overcome by Patroklos son of Menoitios, he rebuked the godlike Lycians saying. “Shame [*aidōs*] on you, where are you fleeing to? Show your mettle; I will myself meet this man in fight and learn who it is that is so masterful; he has done us much hurt, [425] and has stretched many a brave man upon the ground.”

He sprang from his chariot as he spoke, and Patroklos, when he saw this, leaped on to the ground also. The two then rushed at one another with loud cries like eagle-beaked crooked-taloned vultures that scream and tear at one another [430] in some high mountain fastness.

The son of scheming Kronos looked down upon them in pity and said to Hera who was his wife and sister, “Alas, that it should be the lot of Sarpedon whom I love so dearly to perish by the hand of Patroklos. [435] I am in two minds whether to catch him up out of the fight and set him down safe and sound in the fertile district [*dēmos*] of Lycia, or to let him now fall by the hand of the son of Menoitios.”

And ox-vision Hera answered, [440] “Most dread son of Kronos, what is this that you are saying? Would you snatch a mortal man, whose doom has long been fated, out of the jaws of death? Do as you will, but we shall not all of us be of your mind. I say further, and lay my saying to your heart, [445] that if you send Sarpedon safely to his own home, some other of the gods will be also wanting to escort his son out of battle, for there are many sons of gods fighting round the city of Troy, and you will make everyone jealous. [450] If, however, you are fond of him and pity him, let him indeed fall by the hand of Patroklos, but as soon as the life [*psūkhē*] is gone out of him, send Death and sweet Sleep to bear him off the field [455] and take him to the expansive district [*dēmos*] of Lycia, ⁴⁵⁶ and there his relatives and comrades will ritually

prepare [*tarkhuein*] him, ⁴⁵⁷ with a tomb and a stele—for that is the privilege of the dead.”

The sire of gods and men assented, but ⁴⁵⁹ he poured down [*kata-kheîn*] bloody drops [*psiades*] to the earth [460] in honor [*tīmē*] of his son whom Patroklos was about to kill on the fertile plain of Troy far from his home.

When they were now come close to one another Patroklos struck glorious Thrasydemos, the brave attendant [*therapōn*] of Sarpedon, [465] in the lower part of the belly, and killed him. Sarpedon then aimed a spear at Patroklos and missed him, but he struck the horse Pedasos in the right shoulder, and it screamed aloud as it lay, groaning in the dust until the life went out of it. [470] The other two horses began to plunge; the pole of the chariot cracked and they got entangled in the reins through the fall of the horse that was yoked along with them; but spear-famed Automedon knew what to do; without the loss of a moment he drew the keen blade that hung by his sturdy thigh and cut the third horse adrift; [475] whereon the other two righted themselves, and pulling hard at the reins again went together into battle.

Sarpedon now took a second aim at Patroklos, and again missed him, the point of the spear passed over his left shoulder without hitting him. Patroklos then aimed in his turn, [480] and the spear sped not from his hand in vain, for he hit Sarpedon just where the midriff surrounds the ever-beating heart. He fell like some oak or silver poplar or tall pine to which woodmen have laid their axes upon the mountains to make timber for ship-building— [485] even so did he lie stretched at full length in front of his chariot and horses, moaning and clutching at the blood-stained dust. As when a lion springs with a bound upon a herd of cattle and fastens on a great black bull which dies bellowing in its clutches— [490] even so did the leader of the shield-armored Lycian warriors struggle in death as he fell by the hand of Patroklos. He called on his trusty comrade and said, “Glaukos, my brother, hero among

heroes, put forth all your strength, fight with might and main, now if ever quit yourself like a valiant warrior. [495] First go about among the Lycian leaders and tell them fight for Sarpedon; then yourself also do battle to save my armor from being taken. My name will haunt you henceforth and for ever if the Achaeans rob me of my armor [500] now that I have fallen near the assembly [*agōn*] of their ships. Do your very utmost and call all my people together.”

The outcome [*telos*] of death closed his eyes as he spoke. Patroklos planted his heel on his breast and drew the spear from his body, whereon his diaphragm came out along with it, [505] and he drew out both spear-point and Sarpedon’s life-breath [*psūkhē*] at the same time. Hard by the Myrmidons held his snorting steeds, who were wild with panic at finding themselves deserted by their lords.

Glaukos was overcome with grief [*akhos*] when he heard what Sarpedon said, for he could not help him. [510] He had to support his arm with his other hand, being in great pain through the wound which Teucer’s arrow had given him when Teucer was defending the wall as he, Glaukos, was assailing it. Therefore he prayed to far-darting Apollo saying, “Hear me O king from your seat, may be in the fertile district [*dēmos*] of Lycia, [515] or may be in Troy, for in all places you can hear the prayer of one who is in distress, as I now am. I have a grievous wound; my hand is aching with pain, there is no staunching the blood, and my whole arm drags by reason of my hurt, [520] so that I cannot grasp my sword nor go among my foes and fight them, though our prince, Zeus’ son Sarpedon, is slain. Zeus defended not his son, do you, therefore, O king, heal me of my wound, ease my pain and grant me strength both to cheer on [525] the Lycians and to fight along with them round the body of him who has fallen.”

Thus did he pray, and Apollo heard his prayer. He eased his pain, staunched the black blood from the wound, and gave him new strength. [530] Glaukos perceived this, and was thankful that the mighty god had

answered his prayer; right then and there, he went among the Lycian leaders, and bade them come to fight about the body of Sarpedon. From these he strode on among the Trojans [535] to Polydamas son of Panthoös and radiant Agenor; he then went in search of Aeneas and Hector of the brazen helmet, and when he had found them he said, “Hector, you have utterly forgotten your allies, who languish here for your sake far from friends and home [540] while you do nothing to support them. Sarpedon leader of the Lycian warriors has fallen—he who was at once the right and might of Lycia; brazen Arēs has laid him low by the spear of Patroklos. Stand by him, my friends, and suffer not the Myrmidons to strip him of his armor, [545] nor to treat his body with contumely in revenge for all the Danaans whom we have speared at the ships.”

As he spoke the Trojans were plunged in extreme and ungovernable grief [*penthos*]; for Sarpedon, alien though he was, had been one of the main stays of their city, [550] both as having many people with him, and himself the foremost among them all. Led by Hector, who was infuriated by the fall of Sarpedon, they made instantly for the Danaans with all their might, while the undaunted spirit of Patroklos son of Menoitios cheered on the Achaeans. [555] First he spoke to the two Ajaxes, men who needed no words telling them what to do. “Ajaxes,” said he, “may it now please you to show yourselves the men you have always been, or even better—Sarpedon is fallen—he who was first to overleap the wall of the Achaeans; let us take the body and outrage it; [560] let us strip the armor from his shoulders, and kill his comrades if they try to rescue his body.”

He spoke to men who of themselves were full eager; both sides, therefore, the Trojans and Lycians on the one hand, and the Myrmidons and Achaeans on the other, strengthened their battalions, [565] and fought desperately about the body of Sarpedon, shouting fiercely the while. Mighty was the din of their armor as they came together, and

Zeus shed a thick darkness over the fight, to increase the ordeal [*ponos*] of the battle over the body of his son.

At first the Trojans made some headway against the Achaeans, [570] for one of the best men among the Myrmidons was killed, radiant Epeigeus, son of noble Agakles who had once upon a time been king in the good city of Boudeion; but presently, having killed a valiant kinsman of his own, he took refuge with Peleus and silver-footed Thetis, [575] who sent him to Ilion the land of noble steeds to fight the Trojans under Achilles. Hector now struck him on the head with a stone just as he had caught hold of the body, and his brains inside his helmet were all battered in, so that he fell face foremost upon the body of Sarpedon, [580] and there died. Patroklos was enraged with grief [*akhos*] over by the death of his comrade, and sped through the front ranks as swiftly as a hawk that swoops down on a flock of daws or starlings. Even so swiftly, [585] O noble charioteer Patroklos, did you make straight for the Lycians and Trojans to avenge your comrade. Right then and there he struck Sthenelaos the son of Ithaimenes on the neck with a stone, and broke the tendons that join it to the head and spine. Then glorious Hector and the front rank of his men gave ground. As far as a man can throw a javelin in competition [*āthlos*] for some prize, or even in battle— [590] so far did the Trojans now retreat before the Achaeans. Glaukos, leader of the shield-armored Lycians, was the first to rally them, [595] by killing Bathykles, son of Khalkon, who lived in Hellas and was supreme in wealth [*olbos*] among the Myrmidons. Glaukos turned round suddenly, just as Bathykles who was pursuing him was about to lay hold of him, and drove his spear right into the middle of his chest, whereon he fell heavily to the ground, and the fall of so good a man filled the Achaeans with grief [*akhos*], [600] while the Trojans were exultant, and came up in a body round the corpse. Nevertheless the Achaeans, mindful of their prowess, bore straight down upon them.

Meriones then killed a helmeted warrior of the Trojans, Laogonos son of Onetor, [605] who was priest of Zeus of Mount Ida, ⁶⁰⁵ and he got

honor [*tīmē*] from the locale [*dēmos*], like a god. Meriones struck him under the jaw and ear, so that life went out of him and the darkness of death laid hold upon him. Aeneas then aimed a spear at Meriones, hoping to hit him under the shield as he was advancing, [610] but Meriones saw it coming and stooped forward to avoid it, whereon the spear flew past him and the point stuck in the ground, while the butt-end went on quivering till Arēs robbed it of its force. The spear, therefore, sped from Aeneas’ hand in vain and fell quivering to the ground. [615] Aeneas was angry and said, “Meriones, you are a good dancer, but if I had hit you my spear would soon have made an end of you.”

And Meriones the spear-famed answered, [620] “Aeneas, for all your bravery, you will not be able to make an end of every one who comes against you. You are only a mortal like myself, and if I were to hit you in the middle of your shield with my spear, however strong and self-confident you may be, I should soon vanquish you, [625] and you would yield your life-breath [*psūkhē*] to Hādēs of the noble steeds.” Then the son of Menoitios rebuked him and said, “Meriones, hero though you be, you should not speak thus; taunting speeches, my good friend, will not make the Trojans draw away from the dead body; some of them must go under ground first; the outcome [*telos*] of battle is in the force of hands, [630] while the outcome of deliberation is words; fight, therefore, and say nothing.”

He led the way as he spoke and the hero went forward with him. ⁶³³ Like the noise that arises from woodcutters ⁶³⁴ in the folds of the mountain, and the hearing is from afar [= and the sound comes from afar], [635] even such a din now rose from earth-clash of bronze armor and of good ox-hide shields, as men smote each other with their swords and spears pointed at both ends. A man had need of good eyesight now to know Sarpedon, [640] so covered was he from head to foot with spears and blood and dust. Men swarmed about the body, as flies that buzz round the full milk-pails in the season [*hōrā*] of spring when they are

brimming with milk—even so did they gather round godlike Sarpedon; nor did Zeus turn his keen eyes away for one moment from the fight, [645] but kept looking at it all the time, for he was settling how best to kill Patroklos, and considering whether glorious Hector should be allowed to end him now in the fight round the body of Sarpedon, [650] and strip him of his armor, or whether he should let him give yet further trouble [*ponos*] to the Trojans. In the end, he thought it best that ⁶⁵³ until the good *therapōn* of Achilles, son of Peleus should drive bronze-helmeted Hector and the Trojans back towards the city and take the lives of many. [655] First, therefore, he made Hector turn fainthearted, whereon he mounted his chariot and fled, telling the other Trojans to flee also, for he saw that the scales of Zeus had turned against him. Neither would the brave Lycians stand firm; [660] they were dismayed when they saw their king lying struck to the heart amid a heap of corpses—for when the son of Kronos made the fight wax hot many had fallen above him. The Achaeans, therefore stripped the gleaming armor from his shoulders and the brave son of Menoitios gave it to his men to take to the ships. [665] Then Zeus lord of the storm-cloud said to Apollo, “Dear Phoebus, go, I pray you, and take Sarpedon out of range of the weapons; cleanse the black blood from off him, and then bear him a long way off where you may wash him in the river, anoint him with ambrosia, [670] and clothe him in immortal raiment; this done, commit him to the arms of the two fleet messengers, Death, and Sleep, who will carry him straightway to the fertile district [*dēmos*] of Lycia, ⁶⁷⁴ and there his relatives and comrades will ritually prepare [*tarkhuein*] him, [675] with a tomb and a stele—for that is the privilege of the dead.”

Thus he spoke. Apollo obeyed his father’s saying, and came down from the heights of Ida into the thick of the fight; right away he took radiant Sarpedon out of range of the weapons, and then bore him a long way off, where he washed him in the river, [680] anointed him with ambrosia and clothed him in immortal raiment; this done, he committed him to the arms of the two fleet messengers, Death and Sleep, who presently set him down in the fertile district [*dēmos*] of Lycia.

Meanwhile Patroklos, with many a shout to his horses and to Automedon, [685] pursued the Trojans and Lycians in the pride and foolishness of his heart. Had he but obeyed the bidding of the son of Peleus, he would have escaped death and have been unscathed; but the thinking [*noos*] of Zeus passes man's understanding; [690] he will put even a brave man to flight and snatch victory from his grasp, or again he will set him on to fight, as he now did when he put a high spirit into the heart of Patroklos.

Who then first, and who last, was slain by you, O Patroklos, when the gods had now called you to meet your doom? First Adrastos, Autonoos, Ekheklos, [695] Perimos, the son of Megas, Epistor and Melanippos; after these he killed Elastos, Moulios, and Pylartes. These he slew, but the rest saved themselves by flight.

⁶⁹⁸ The sons of the Achaeans could now have taken Troy ⁶⁹⁹ by the hands of Patroklos, for he was raging in all directions with his spear, [700] if Phoebus Apollo had not made his stand at the well-built wall, ⁷⁰¹ standing there and thinking destructive thoughts against him [= Patroklos], since he [= Apollo] was supporting the Trojans. ⁷⁰² Three times did he [= Patroklos] reach the base of the high wall, ⁷⁰³ that is what Patroklos did, and three times was he beaten back by Apollo, ⁷⁰⁴ who struck with his own immortal hands the luminous shield [of Patroklos]. [705] But when he [= Patroklos] rushed ahead yet a fourth time, equal [*īsos*] to a superhuman force [*daimōn*], ⁷⁰⁶ he [= Apollo] shouted to him with a terrifying voice and spoke winged words: ⁷⁰⁷ “Draw back, Patroklos, you who are descended from the gods in the sky. It is not your destiny [*aisa*] ⁷⁰⁸ to destroy with your spear the city of the proud Trojans, ⁷⁰⁹ nor will it be the destiny of Achilles, who is a far better man than you are.” [710] That is what he [= Apollo] said. On hearing this, Patroklos drew quite a way back, ⁷¹¹ thus avoiding the anger [*mēnis*] of Apollo who shoots from afar.

Meanwhile Hector was waiting with his horses inside the Scaean gates, in doubt whether to drive out again and go on fighting, or to call the army inside the gates. [715] As he was thus doubting Phoebus Apollo drew near him in the likeness of a young and lusty warrior Asios, who was uncle of Hector, breaker of horses, being brother to Hecuba, and son of Dymas who lived in Phrygia by the waters of the river Sangarios; [720] in his likeness Zeus' son Apollo now spoke to Hector saying, "Hector, why have you left off fighting? It is ill done of you. If I were as much better a man than you, as I am worse, you should soon rue your slackness. Drive straight towards Patroklos, if so be that Apollo may grant you a triumph over him, [725] and you may kill him."

With this the god went back into the struggle [*ponos*], and Hector bade Kebriones drive again into the fight. Apollo passed in among them, [730] and struck panic into the Argives, while he gave triumph to Hector and the Trojans. Hector let the other Danaans alone and killed no man, but drove straight at Patroklos. ⁷³³ Then Patroklos, from one side, leapt from his chariot, hitting the ground, with a spear in his left hand, [735] and in his right a jagged stone as large as his hand could hold. He stood still and threw it, nor did it go far without hitting some one; the cast was not in vain, for the stone struck Kebriones, Hector's charioteer, a bastard son of glorious Priam, as he held the reins in his hands. The stone hit him on the forehead and drove his brows into his head for the bone was smashed, [740] and his eyes fell to the ground at his feet. He dropped dead from his chariot as though he were diving, and there was no more life left in him. Over him did you then vaunt, O charioteer Patroklos, saying, [745] "Bless my heart, how active he is, and how well he dives. If we had been at sea [*pontos*] this man would have dived from the ship's side and brought up as many oysters as the whole crew could stomach, even in rough water, for he has dived beautifully off his chariot on to the ground. [750] It seems, then, that there are divers also among the Trojans."

As he spoke he flung himself on Kebriones with the spring, as it were, of a lion that while attacking a stockyard is himself struck in the chest, and his courage is his own destruction—even so furiously, O Patroklos, did you then spring upon Kebriones. [755] Then Hector, from the other side, leapt from his chariot, hitting the ground. The pair then fought over the body of Kebriones. As two lions fight fiercely on some high mountain over the body of a stag that they have killed, even so did these two mighty warriors, [760] Patroklos son of Menoitios and brave Hector, hack and hew at one another over the corpse of Kebriones. Hector would not let him go when he had once got him by the head, while Patroklos kept fast hold of his feet, and a fierce fight raged between the other Danaans and Trojans. [765] As the east and south wind buffet one another when they beat upon some dense forest on the mountains—there is beech and ash and spreading cornel; the tops of the trees roar as they beat on one another, and one can hear the boughs cracking and breaking— [770] even so did the Trojans and Achaeans spring upon one another and lay about each other, and neither side would give way. Many a pointed spear fell to ground and many a winged arrow sped from its bow-string about the body of Kebriones; many a great stone, moreover, beat on many a shield as they fought around his body, [775] but there he lay in the whirling clouds of dust, all huge and hugely, heedless of his driving now.

So long as the sun was still high in mid-heaven the weapons of either side were alike deadly, and the people fell; but when he went down towards the time when men loose their oxen, [780] the Achaeans proved to be beyond all forecast stronger, so that they drew Kebriones out of range of the darts and tumult of the Trojans, and stripped the armor from his shoulders. ⁷⁸³ Then Patroklos rushed ahead toward the Trojans, with the worst intentions. ⁷⁸⁴ Three times he rushed at them, and he was equal [*atalantos*] to swift Arēs. [785] He [= Patroklos] was making a terrifying shout, and he killed three times nine men. ⁷⁸⁶ But when he [= Patroklos] rushed ahead for yet a fourth time, equal [*īsos*] to a superhuman force [*daimōn*], ⁷⁸⁷ then, O Patroklos, the end of your life

made its appearance to you. ⁷⁸⁸ Facing you now was Phoebus [Apollo], ready to fight you in grim battle. ⁷⁸⁹ He [= Apollo] was terrifying. But he [= Patroklos] did not notice him as he [= Apollo] was coming at him in the heat of battle. [790] For he [= Apollo] was covered in a great cloud of mist as he made contact with him. ⁷⁹¹ He [= Apollo] stood behind him and he struck him on his back and his broad shoulders ⁷⁹² with the downturned flat of his hand, making his eyes spin. ⁷⁹³ His helmet was knocked off his head by Phoebus Apollo, ⁷⁹⁴ and it rolled rattling off under the horses' hooves. [795] That is what happened to this helmet, and its horse-tail plumes were all begrimed ⁷⁹⁶ with blood and dust. Before this time, it was not sanctioned ⁷⁹⁷ that this horse-hair helmet should ever get begrimed in the dust, ⁷⁹⁸ while it was protecting the head and comely forehead of that godlike man, ⁷⁹⁹ protecting the head of Achilles. But now Zeus gave it to Hector [800] for him to wear on his head. And his [= Hector's] destruction was near. ⁸⁰¹ Broken completely in his [= Patroklos'] hands was that spear of his that casts a long shadow, ⁸⁰² a huge and heavy and massive piece of weaponry, and from his shoulders ⁸⁰³ his shield, strap and all, fell to the ground, with its beautiful edgework. ⁸⁰⁴ Taken away from him was his breastplate, removed by lord Apollo, son of Zeus.

[805] And his [= Patroklos'] mind was seized by derangement [*atē*]; his limbs failed him, ⁸⁰⁶ and he just stood there in a daze. Whereupon Euphorbos, son of Panthoös, a Dardanian, the best spearman of his time, as also the finest charioteer and fleetest runner, came behind him and struck him in the back with a spear, midway between the shoulders. [810] This man as soon as ever he had come up with his chariot had dismounted twenty men, so proficient was he in all the arts of war—he it was, O charioteer Patroklos, that first drove a weapon into you, but he did not quite overpower you. Euphorbos then ran back into the crowd, after drawing his ashen spear out of the wound; [815] he would not stand firm and wait for Patroklos, unarmed though he now was, to attack him; but Patroklos unnerved, alike by the blow the god had given

him and by the spear-wound, drew back under cover of his men in fear for his life. Hector on this, seeing him to be wounded and giving ground, [820] forced his way through the ranks, and when close up with him struck him in the lower part of the belly with a spear, driving the bronze point right through it, so that he fell heavily to the ground to the great dismay of the Achaeans. As when a lion has fought some fierce wild-boar and worsted him—the two fight furiously upon the mountains over some little fountain at which they would both drink, [825] and the lion has beaten the boar till he can hardly breathe—even so did Hector son of Priam take the life of the brave son of Menoitios who had killed so many, striking him from close at hand, and vaunting over him the while. [830] “Patroklos,” said he, “you thought that you should ransack our city, rob our Trojan women of their freedom, and carry them off in your ships to your own country. Fool; Hector and his fleet horses were ever straining their utmost to defend them. [835] I am foremost of all the Trojan warriors to stave the day of bondage from off them; as for you, vultures shall devour you here. Poor wretch, Achilles with all his bravery availed you nothing; and yet I think—when you left him he charged you strictly, saying, ‘Come not back to the ships, charioteer Patroklos, [840] till you have rent the bloodstained khiton of manslaughtering Hector about his body.’ Thus I think—did he charge you, and your fool’s heart answered him ‘yes’ within you.”

Then, as the life ebbed out of you, you answered, O charioteer Patroklos: “Hector, vaunt as you will, for Zeus the son of Kronos and Apollo have granted you victory; [845] it is they who have vanquished me so easily, and they who have stripped the armor from my shoulders; had twenty such men as you attacked me, all of them would have fallen before my spear. Fate and the son of Leto have overpowered me, and among mortal men Euphorbos; [850] you are yourself third only in the killing of me. I say further, and lay my saying to your heart, you too shall live but for a little season; death and the day of your doom are close upon you, and they will lay you low by the hand of Achilles descendant of Aiakos.”

[855] When he had thus spoken his eyes were closed in the fulfillment [*telos*] of death, his life-breath [*psūkhē*] left his body and flitted down to the house of Hādēs, mourning its sad fate and bidding farewell to the youth and vigor of its manhood. Dead though he was, glorious Hector still spoke to him saying, “Patroklos, why should you thus foretell my doom? [860] Who knows but Achilles, son of lovely-haired Thetis, may be smitten by my spear and die before me?”

As he spoke he drew the bronze spear from the wound, planting his foot upon the body, which he thrust off and let lie on its back. He then went spear in hand after Automedon, [865] attendant [*therapōn*] of the fleet descendant of Aiakos, for he longed to lay him low, but the immortal steeds which the gods had given as a rich gift to Peleus bore Automedon swiftly from the field. [867]

Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 17

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

Brave Menelaos son of Atreus now came to know that Patroklos had fallen, and made his way through the front ranks clad in full armor to bestride him. [5] As a cow stands lowing over her first calf, even so did yellow-haired Menelaos bestride Patroklos. He held his round shield and his spear in front of him, resolute to kill any who should dare face him. [10] But the son of Panthoös had also noted the body, and came up to Menelaos saying, “Menelaos, son of Atreus, draw back, leave the body, and let the bloodstained spoils be. [15] I was first of the Trojans and their brave allies to drive my spear into Patroklos, let me, therefore, have my full glory [*kleos*] among the Trojans, or I will take aim and kill you.”

To this Menelaos answered in great anger “By father Zeus, boasting is an ill thing. [20] The leopard is not more bold, nor the lion nor savage wild-boar, which is fiercest and most dauntless of all creatures, than are the proud sons of Panthoös. Yet Hyperenor, breaker of horses, [25] did not see out the days of his youth when he made light of me and withstood me, deeming me the meanest warrior among the Danaans. His own feet never bore him back to gladden his wife and parents. [30] Even so shall I make an end of you too, if you withstand me; get you back into the crowd and do not face me, or it shall be worse for you. Even a fool may be wise after the event.”

Euphorbos would not listen, and said, “Now indeed, Menelaos, shall you pay for the death of my brother over whom you vaunted, [35] and whose wife you widowed in her bridal chamber, while you brought grief [*penthos*] unspeakable on his parents. I shall comfort these poor people if I bring your head and armor [40] and place them in the hands of

Panthoös and noble Phrontis. The time is come when this matter shall be fought out in a struggle [*ponos*] and settled, for me or against me.”

As he spoke he struck Menelaos full on the shield, but the spear did not go through, for the shield turned its point. [45] Menelaos then took aim, praying to father Zeus as he did so; Euphorbos was drawing back, and Menelaos struck him about the roots of his throat, leaning his whole weight on the spear, so as to drive it home. The point went clean through his neck, [50] and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. ⁵¹ With blood bedewed was his hair, looking like myrtle-blossoms [*kharites*]¹, ⁵² with the curls and all so deftly bound in bands of silver and gold. As one who has grown a fine young olive tree in a clear space where there is abundance of water— [55] the plant is full of promise, and though the winds beat upon it from every quarter it puts forth its white blossoms till the blasts of some fierce wind sweep down upon it and level it with the ground—even so did Menelaos strip the fair youth Euphorbos of his armor after he had slain him. [60] Or as some fierce lion upon the mountains in the pride of his strength fastens on the finest heifer in a herd as it is feeding—first he breaks her neck with his strong jaws, and then gorges on her blood and entrails; [65] dogs and shepherds raise a hue and cry against him, but they stand aloof and will not come close to him, for they are pale with fear—even so no one had the courage to face valiant Menelaos. [70] The son of Atreus would have then carried off the armor of the son of Panthoös with ease, had not Phoebus Apollo been angry, and in the guise of Mentès chief of the Kikones incited Hector to attack him. [75] “Hector,” said he, “you are now going after the horses of the noble descendant of Aiaikos, but you will not take them; they cannot be kept in hand and driven by mortal man, save only by Achilles, who is son to an immortal mother. [80] Meanwhile Menelaos, warlike son of Atreus, has bestridden the body of Patroklos and killed the noblest of the Trojans, Euphorbos, son of Panthoös, so that he can fight no more.”

The god then went back into the toil [*ponos*] and turmoil, but the spirit of Hector was darkened with a cloud of grief [*akhos*]; he looked along the ranks [85] and saw Euphorbos lying on the ground with the blood still flowing from his wound, and Menelaos stripping him of his armor. Then he made his way to the front ⁸⁸ looking like the flame of Hesperiaistos, ⁸⁹ unquenchable, clad in his gleaming armor, and crying with a loud voice. When the son of Atreus heard him, [90] angered, he said to his great-hearted *thūmos*, “Alas! what shall I do? I may not let the Trojans take the armor of Patroklos who has fallen fighting on my behalf, lest some Danaan who sees me should cry shame upon me. Still if for the sake of my honor [*tīmē*] I fight Hector and the Trojans single-handed, [95] they will prove too many for me, for Hector is bringing them up in force. Why, however, should I thus hesitate? ⁹⁸ When a man is willing, face-to-face with a daimōn, to fight another man ⁹⁹ whom the god honors, then it becomes a sure thing that a big pain [*pēma*] will roll down [*kulindesthai*] upon him. [100] Let no Danaan think ill of me if I give place to Hector, for the hand of the gods gives him honor [*tīmē*]. Yet, if I could find Ajax, the two of us would fight Hector and any superhuman force [*daimōn*] too, if we might only save the body of Patroklos for Achilles son of Peleus. [105] This, of many evils, would be the least.”

While he was thus in two minds, the Trojans came up to him with Hector at their head; he therefore drew back and left the body, turning about like some bearded lion [110] who is being chased by dogs and men from a stockyard with spears and hue and cry, whereon he is daunted and slinks sulkily off—even so did Menelaos, fair-haired son of Atreus, turn and leave the body of Patroklos. When among the body of his men, [115] he looked around for mighty Ajax, son of Telamon, and presently saw him on the extreme left of the fight, cheering on his men and exhorting them to keep on fighting, for Phoebus Apollo had spread a great panic among them. He ran up to him and said, [120] “Ajax, my

good friend, come with me at once to dead Patroklos, if so be that we may take the body to Achilles—as for his armor, Hector already has it.”

These words stirred the heart of Ajax, and he made his way among the front ranks, Menelaos going with him. [125] Hector of the shining helmet had stripped Patroklos of his armor, and was dragging him away to cut off his head and take the body to fling before the dogs of Troy. But Ajax came up with his shield like a wall before him, on which Hector withdrew under shelter of his men, [130] and sprang on to his chariot, giving the armor over to the Trojans to take to the city, as a great glory [*kleos*] for himself; Ajax, therefore, covered the body of Patroklos with his broad shield and bestrode him; as a lion stands over his whelps if hunters have come upon him in a forest when he is with his little ones— [135] in the pride and fierceness of his strength he draws his knit brows down till they cover his eyes—even so did Ajax bestride the body of Patroklos, and by his side stood warlike Menelaos, son of Atreus, nursing great sorrow [*penthos*] in his heart.

[140] Then Glaukos, son of Hippolokhos, looked fiercely at Hector and rebuked him sternly. “Hector,” said he, “you make a brave show, but in fight you are sadly wanting. A runaway like yourself has no claim to so great a glory [*kleos*]. Think how you may now save your town and citadel [145] by the hands of your own people born in Ilion; for you will get no Lycians to fight for you, seeing what thanks they have had for their incessant hardships. Are you likely, sir, to do anything to help a man of less note, [150] after leaving Sarpedon, who was at once your guest and comrade in arms, to be the spoil and prey of the Danaans? So long as he lived he did good favor [*kharis*] both to your city and to yourself; yet you had no stomach to save his body from the dogs. If the Lycians will listen to me, [155] they will go home and leave Troy to its fate. If the Trojans had any of that daring fearless spirit which lays hold of men who are engaging in the struggle [*ponos*] for their land and harassing those who would attack it, we should soon bear off Patroklos into Ilion. [160] Could we get this dead man away and bring him into

the city of Priam, the Argives would readily give up the armor of Sarpedon, and we should get his body to boot. For he who was ¹⁶⁴ killed was the attendant *therapōn* of such a man who is by far the best [*aristos*] at the ships of the Achaeans— [165] he and his close-fighting followers [*therapontes*]. Nevertheless you dared not make a stand against Ajax, nor face him, eye to eye, with battle all round you, for he is a braver man than you are.”

Hector scowled at him and answered, [170] “Glaukos, you should know better. I have held you so far as a man of more understanding than any in all Lycia, but now I despise you for saying that I am afraid of Ajax. [175] I fear neither battle nor the din of chariots, but the thinking [*noos*] of Zeus is stronger than ours; Zeus at one time makes even a strong man draw back and snatches victory from his grasp, while at another he will set him on to fight. Come here then, my friend, stand by me [180] and see indeed whether I shall play the coward the whole day through as you say, or whether I shall not stay some even of the boldest Danaans from fighting round the body of Patroklos.”

As he spoke he called loudly on the Trojans saying, “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians, fighters in close combat, [185] be men, my friends, and fight might and main, while I put on the goodly armor of blameless Achilles, which I took when I killed Patroklos.”

With this Hector of the shining helmet left the fight, [190] and ran full speed after his men who were taking the armor of Achilles to Troy, but had not yet got far. Standing for a while apart from the woeful fight, he changed his armor. His own he sent to the strong city of Ilion and to the Trojans, while ¹⁹⁴ he put on the immortalizing armor [95] of Achilles son of Peleus, which the skydwelling gods ¹⁹⁶ gave to his father [= Peleus] near and dear. And he had given it to his son [= Achilles] ¹⁹⁷ when he grew old. But the son himself never reached old age wearing the armor of his father.

¹⁹⁸ He [= Hector] was seen from afar by Zeus, gatherer of clouds. ¹⁹⁹ There he [= Hector] was, all fitted out in the armor of the godlike son of Peleus. [200] Then he [= Zeus] moved his head and spoke to himself [= to his own *thūmos*] ²⁰¹ “Ah, you [= Hector] are a pitiful wretch. Your own death is not on your mind [*thūmos*]— ²⁰² a death that is coming near.² There you are, putting on the immortalizing armor ²⁰³ of a man who is champion, one who makes all others tremble. ²⁰⁴ It was his comrade you killed, gentle he was and strong, [205] and his armor, in a way that went against the order [*kosmos*] of things, from his head and shoulders ²⁰⁶ you took. All the same, I will for now put in your hands great power [*kratos*]. ²⁰⁷ As a compensation [*poinē*] for this, you will never return home from the battle. ²⁰⁸ Never will you bring home, for Andromache to receive, the famed [*kluta*] armor of Peleus’ son.”

²⁰⁹ So spoke the son of Kronos, and with his eyebrows of azure he made a reinforcing [= *epi-*] nod. [210] He [= Zeus] fitted the armor to Hector’s skin, and he [= Hector] was entered by Arēs ²¹¹ the terrifying, the Enyalios. And his [= Hector’s] limbs were all filled inside ²¹² with force and strength. Seeking to join up with his famed allies ²¹³ he went off, making a great war cry. He was quite the picture for them all. ²¹⁴ He was shining in the armor of the man with the great heart [*thūmos*], the son of Peleus. [215] He went about among them and cheered them on— Mesthles, Glaukos, Medon, Thersilokhos, Asteropaios, Deisenor and Hippothoös, Phorkys, Chromios, and Ennomos the augur. All these did he exhort saying, [220] “Hear me, allies from other cities who are here in your thousands, it was not in order to have a crowd about me that I called you here each from his several city, but that with heart and spirit you might defend the wives and little ones of the Trojans from the fierce Achaeans. [225] For this do I oppress my people with your food and the presents that make you rich. Therefore turn, and charge at the foe, to stand or fall as is the game of war; whoever shall bring Patroklos, dead though he be, [230] into the hands of the Trojans, breakers of horses,

and shall make Ajax give way before him, I will give him one half of the spoils while I keep the other. He will thus share like glory [*kleos*] with myself.”

When he had thus spoken they charged full weight upon the Danaans with their spears held out before them, and the hopes of each ran high [235] that he should force Ajax son of Telamon to yield up the body—fools that they were, for he was about to take the lives of many. Then Ajax said to Menelaos, “My good friend Menelaos, you and I shall hardly come out of this fight alive. I am less concerned for the body of Patroklos, [240] who will shortly become meat for the dogs and vultures of Troy, than for the safety of my own head and yours. Hector has wrapped us round in a storm of battle from every quarter, and our destruction seems now certain. [245] Call then upon the princes of the Danaans if there is any who can hear us.”

Menelaos of the great war cry did as he said, and shouted to the Danaans for help at the top of his voice. “My friends,” he cried, “princes and counselors of the Argives, all you who with Agamemnon and Menelaos drink at the public cost, [250] and give orders each to his own people as Zeus grants him power and honor [*tīmē*], the fight is so thick about me that I cannot distinguish you severally; come on, therefore, every man unbidden, [255] and think it shame that Patroklos should become meat and morsel for Trojan hounds.”

Fleet Ajax, son of Oïleus, heard him and was first to force his way through the fight and run to help him. Next came Idomeneus and Meriones, his attendant, peer of manslaughtering Arēs. [260] As for the others that came into the fight after these, who of his own self could name them?

The Trojans with Hector at their head charged in a body. As a great wave that comes thundering in at the mouth of some heaven-born river, [265] and the rocks that jut into the sea ring with the roar of the

breakers that beat and buffet them—even with such a roar did the Trojans come on; but the Achaeans in singleness of heart stood firm about the son of Menoitios, and fenced him with their bronze shields. Zeus, moreover, hid the brightness of their helmets in a thick cloud, [270] for he had borne no grudge against the son of Menoitios while he was still alive and attendant [*therapōn*] to the descendant of Aiakos; therefore he was loath to let him fall a prey to the dogs of his foes the Trojans, and urged his comrades on to defend him.

At first the Trojans drove the glancing-eyed Achaeans back, [275] and they withdrew from the dead man daunted. The Trojans did not succeed in killing any one, nevertheless they drew the body away. But the Achaeans did not lose it long, for Ajax, foremost of all the Danaans after the blameless son of Peleus alike in stature and prowess, [280] quickly rallied them and made towards the front like a wild boar upon the mountains when he stands at bay in the forest glades and routs the hounds and lusty youths that have attacked him— [285] even so did glorious Ajax son of Telamon passing easily in among the phalanxes of the Trojans, disperse those who had bestridden Patroklos and were most bent on winning glory by dragging him off to their city. At this moment Hippothoös, brave son of the Pelasgian Lethos, in his zeal for Hector and the Trojans, was dragging the body off by the foot through the press of the fight, [290] having bound a strap round the sinews near the ankle; but a mischief soon befell him from which none of those could save him who would have gladly done so, for the son of Telamon sprang forward and smote him on his bronze-cheeked helmet. [295] The plumed headpiece broke about the point of the weapon, struck at once by the spear and by the strong hand of Ajax, so that the bloody brain came oozing out through the crest-socket. His strength then failed him and he let great-hearted Patroklos' foot drop from his hand, [300] as he fell full length dead upon the body; thus he died far from the fertile land of Larissa, and never repaid his parents the cost of bringing him up, for his life was cut short early by the spear of mighty Ajax. Hector then took aim at Ajax with a spear, [305] but he saw it coming and just managed

to avoid it; the spear passed on and struck Skhedios son of noble Iphitos, leader of the Phocians, who dwelt in famed Panopeus and reigned over many people; it struck him under the middle of the collar-bone [310] the bronze point went right through him, coming out at the bottom of his shoulder-blade, and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. Ajax in his turn struck noble Phorkys, high-spirited son of Phainops, in the middle of the belly as he was bestriding Hippothoös, and broke the plate of his cuirass; [315] whereon the spear tore out his entrails and he clutched the ground in his palm as he fell to earth. Hector and those who were in the front rank then gave ground, while the Argives raised a loud cry of triumph, and drew off the bodies of Phorkys and Hippothoös which they stripped presently of their armor.

The Trojans would now have been worsted by the brave Achaeans and driven back to Ilion [320] through their own cowardice, while the Argives, so great was their courage and endurance, would have achieved a triumph even against the will of Zeus, if Apollo had not roused Aeneas, in the likeness of Periphas, son of Epytos, an attendant who had grown old in the service [325] of Aeneas' aged father, and was at all times devoted to him. In his likeness, then, Apollo said, "Aeneas, can you not manage, even though the gods be against us, to save high Ilion? I have known men, whose numbers, courage, and self-reliance have saved their population [*dēmos*] in spite of Zeus, [330] whereas in this case he would much rather give victory to us than to the Danaans, if you would only fight instead of being so terribly afraid."

Aeneas knew far-striking Apollo when he looked straight at him, and shouted to Hector saying, [335] "Hector and all other Trojans and allies, shame [*aidōs*] on us if we are beaten by the warlike Achaeans and driven back to Ilion through our own cowardice. A god has just come up to me and told me that Zeus the supreme disposer will be with us. [340] Therefore let us make for the Danaans, that it may go hard with them before they bear away dead Patroklos to the ships.

As he spoke he sprang out far in front of the others, who then rallied and again faced the Achaeans. Aeneas speared Leiokritos, son of Arisbas, [345] a valiant follower of Lykomedes, and Lykomedes was moved with pity as he saw him fall; he therefore went close up, and speared Apisaon, son of Hippasos, shepherd of his people, in the liver under the midriff, so that he died; [350] he had come from fertile Paeonia and was the best man of them all after Asteropaios. Warlike Asteropaios flew forward to avenge him and attack the Danaans, but this might no longer be, [355] Inasmuch as those about Patroklos were well covered by their shields, and held their spears in front of them, for Ajax had given them strict orders that no man was either to give ground, or to stand out before the others, but all were to hold well together about the body and fight hand to hand. [360] Thus did huge Ajax bid them, and the earth ran red with blood as the corpses fell thick on one another alike on the side of the Trojans and allies, and on that of the Danaans; for these last, too, fought no bloodless fight though many fewer of them perished, [365] through the care they took to defend and stand by one another.

Thus did they fight as it were a flaming fire; it seemed as though it had gone hard even with the sun and moon, for they were hidden over all that part where the bravest heroes were fighting about the dead son of Menoitios, [370] whereas the other Danaans and strong-greaved Achaeans fought at their ease in full daylight with radiant sunshine all round them, and there was not a cloud to be seen neither on plain nor mountain. [375] These last moreover would rest for a while and leave off fighting, for they were some distance apart and beyond the range of one another's weapons, whereas those who were in the thick of the fray suffered both from battle and darkness. All the best of them were being worn out by the great weight of their armor, but the two valiant heroes, Thrasymedes and Antilokhos, had not yet heard of the death of Patroklos the blameless, [380] and believed him to be still alive and leading the van against the Trojans; they were keeping themselves in reserve against the death or rout of their own comrades, for so Nestor had ordered when he sent them from the ships into battle.

[385] Thus through the livelong day did they wage fierce war, and the sweat of their toil rained ever on their legs under them, and on their hands and eyes, as they fought over the attendant [*therapōn*] of the fleet son of Peleus. It was as when a man gives a great ox-hide [390] all drenched in fat to his men, and bids them stretch it; whereon they stand round it in a ring and tug till the moisture leaves it, and the fat soaks in for the many that pull at it, and it is well stretched—even so did the two sides tug the dead body hither and thither within the compass of but a little space— [395] the Trojans steadfastly set on dragging it into Ilion, while the Achaeans were no less so on taking it to their ships; and fierce was the fight between them. Not Arēs himself the lord of armies, nor yet Athena, even in their fullest fury could make light of such a battle.

[400] Such fearful turmoil [*ponos*] of men and horses did Zeus on that day ordain round the body of Patroklos. Meanwhile Achilles did not know that he had fallen, for the fight was under the wall of Troy a long way off the ships. [405] He had no idea, therefore, that Patroklos was dead, and thought that he would return alive as soon as he had gone close up to the gates. He knew that he was not to ransack the city neither with nor without himself, for his mother had often told him this when he had sat alone with her, and she had informed him of the counsels of great Zeus. [410] Now, however, she had not told him how great a disaster had befallen him in the death of the one who was far dearest to him of all his comrades.

The others still kept on charging one another round the body with their pointed spears and killing each other. Then would one say, [415] “My friends, we can never again show our faces at the ships—better, and greatly better, that earth should open and swallow us here in this place, than that we should let the Trojans have the triumph of bearing off Patroklos to their city.”

[420] The high-hearted Trojans also on their part spoke to one another saying, “Friends, though we fall to a man beside this body, let none

shrink from fighting.” With such words did they exhort each other. They fought and fought, [425] and an iron clank rose through the void air to the brazen vault of the heavens. The horses of the descendant of Aiakos stood out of the fight and wept when they heard that their driver had been laid low by the hand of manslaughtering Hector. Automedon, valiant son of Dioreas, [430] lashed them again and again; many a time did he speak kindly to them, and many a time did he upbraid them, but they would neither go back to the ships by the waters of the broad Hellespont, nor yet into battle among the Achaeans; they stood with their chariot stock still, [435] as a pillar set over the tomb of some dead man or woman, and bowed their heads to the ground. Hot tears fell from their eyes as they mourned the loss of their charioteer, [440] and their noble manes drooped all wet from under the yokestraps on either side the yoke.

The son of Kronos saw them and took pity upon their sorrow. He wagged his head, and muttered to himself, saying, “Poor things, why did we give you to King Peleus who is a mortal, while you are yourselves ageless and immortal? [445] Was it that you might share the sorrows that befall humankind? for of all creatures that live and move upon the earth there is none so pitiable as he is—still, Hector, son of Priam, shall drive neither you nor your chariot. I will not have it. [450] It is enough that he should have the armor over which he vaunts so vainly. Furthermore I will give you strength of heart and limb to bear Automedon safely to the ships from battle, for I shall let the Trojans triumph still further, and go on killing till they reach the ships; [455] whereon night shall fall and darkness overshadow the land.”

⁴⁵⁶ So saying he [Zeus] breathed good power [*menos*] into the horses so that they shook the dust from out of their manes, and bore their chariot swiftly into the fight that raged between Trojans and Achaeans. [460] Behind them fought Automedon full of sorrow for his comrade, as a vulture amid a flock of geese. In and out, and here and there, full speed he dashed amid the throng of the Trojans, but for all the fury of his

pursuit he killed no man, [465] for he could not wield his spear and keep his horses in hand when alone in the chariot; at last, however, a comrade, Alkimedon, son of Laerkes son of Haimon caught sight of him and came up behind his chariot. “Automedon,” said he, “what god has put this folly into your heart [470] and robbed you of your right mind, that you fight the Trojans in the front rank single-handed? He who was your comrade is slain, and Hector plumes himself on being armed in the armor of the descendant of Aiakos.”

Automedon, son of Diores, answered, [475] “Alkimedon, there is no one else who can control and guide the immortal steeds so well as you can, save only Patroklos—while he was alive—peer of gods in counsel. ⁴⁷⁹ But you [= Alkimedon], take this whip and these splendid reins, [480] take them, while I [= Automedon] step off [*apobainein*] from the chariot, so that I may fight.”

Alkimedon sprang on to the chariot, and caught up the whip and reins, while Automedon leaped from off the car. When glorious Hector saw him he said to Aeneas who was near him, [485] “Aeneas, counselor of the mail-clad Trojans, I see the steeds of the fleet descendant of Aiakos come into battle with weak hands to drive them. I am sure, if you think well, that we might take them; [490] they will not dare face us if we both attack them.”

The valiant son of Anchises was of the same mind, and the pair went right on, with their shoulders covered under shields of tough dry ox-hide, overlaid with much bronze. Chromios and godlike Aretos went also with them, [495] and their hearts beat high with hope that they might kill the men and capture the horses—fools that they were, for they were not to return unscathed from their meeting with Automedon, who prayed to father Zeus and was right away filled with courage and strength abounding. [500] He turned to his trusty comrade Alkimedon and said, “Alkimedon, keep your horses so close up that I may feel their breath upon my back; I doubt that we shall not stay Hector son of Priam

till he has killed us [505] and mounted behind the horses; he will then either spread panic among the ranks of the Achaeans, or himself be killed among the foremost.”

Then he cried out to the two Ajaxes and Menelaos, “Ajaxes leaders of the Argives, and Menelaos, give the dead body over to them that are best able to defend it, [510] and come to the rescue of us living; for Hector and Aeneas who are the two best men among the Trojans, are pressing us hard in the full tide of war. Nevertheless the issue lies on the lap of the gods, I will therefore hurl my spear and leave the rest to Zeus.”

[515] He poised and hurled as he spoke, whereon the spear struck the round shield of Aretos, and went right through it for the shield stayed it not, so that it was driven through his belt into the lower part of his belly. [520] As when some sturdy youth, axe in hand, deals his blow behind the horns of an ox and severs the tendons at the back of its neck so that it springs forward and then drops, even so did Aretos give one bound and then fall on his back the spear quivering in his body till it made an end of him. [525] Hector then aimed a spear at Automedon but he saw it coming and stooped forward to avoid it, so that it flew past him and the point stuck in the ground, while the butt-end went on quivering till Arēs robbed it of its force. [530] They would then have fought hand to hand with swords had not the two Ajaxes forced their way through the crowd when they heard their comrade calling, and parted them for all their fury—for Hector, Aeneas, and godlike Chromios were afraid and drew back, [535] leaving Aretos to lie there struck to the heart. Automedon, peer of fleet Arēs, then stripped him of his armor and vaunted over him saying, “I have done little to assuage my sorrow [akhos] for the son of Menoitios, for the man I have killed is not so good as he was.”

[540] As he spoke he took the blood-stained spoils and laid them upon his chariot; then he mounted the car with his hands and feet all steeped in gore as a lion that has been gorging upon a bull.

And now the fierce groanful fight again raged about Patroklos, for Athena came down from the heavens [545] and roused its fury by the command of far-seeing Zeus, who had changed his mind [*noos*] and sent her to encourage the Danaans. As when Zeus bends his bright bow in the heavens in token to humankind either of war or of the chill storms that stay men from their labor and plague the flocks—even so, [550] wrapped in such radiant raiment, did Athena go in among the army and speak man by man to each. First she took the form and voice of Phoenix [555] and spoke to strong Menelaos son of Atreus, who was standing near her. “Menelaos,” said she, “it will be shame and dishonor to you, if dogs tear the noble comrade of Achilles under the walls of Troy. [560] Therefore be staunch, and urge your men to be so also.”

Menelaos of the great war cry answered, “Phoenix, my good old friend, may Athena grant me strength and keep the darts from off me, for so shall I stand by Patroklos and defend him; his death has gone to my heart, [565] but Hector is as a raging fire and deals his blows without ceasing, for Zeus is now granting him a time of triumph.”

Owl-vision Athena was pleased at his having named herself before any of the other gods. Therefore she put strength into his knees and shoulders, [570] and made him as bold as a fly, which, though driven off will yet come again and bite if it can, so dearly does it love man’s blood—even so bold as this did she make him as he stood over Patroklos and threw his spear. [575] Now there was among the Trojans a man named Podes, son of Eëtion, who was both rich and valiant. Hector held him in the highest honor in the district [*dēmos*], for he was his comrade and boon companion; the spear of Menelaos struck this man in the belt just as he had turned in flight, and went right through him. [580] Whereon he fell heavily forward, and fair-haired Menelaos, son of Atreus, drew off his body from the Trojans into the ranks of his own people.

Apollo then went up to Hector and spurred him on to fight, in the likeness of Phainops son of Asios who lived in Abydos and was the most

avored of all Hector's guests. [585] In his likeness far-striking Apollo said, "Hector, who of the Achaeans will fear you henceforward now that you have quailed before Menelaos who has ever been rated poorly as a warrior? Yet he has now got a corpse away from the Trojans single-handed, [590] and has slain your own true comrade, a man brave among the foremost, Podes, son of Eëtion."

A dark cloud of grief [*akhos*] fell upon Hector as he heard, and he made his way to the front clad in full armor. Then the son of Kronos seized his bright tasseled aegis, and veiled Ida in cloud: [595] he sent forth his lightnings and his thunders, and as he shook his aegis he gave victory to the Trojans and routed the Achaeans.

The panic was begun by Peneleos the Boeotian, for while keeping his face turned ever towards the foe he had been hit with a spear on the upper part of the shoulder; a spear thrown by Polydamas had grazed the top of the bone, [600] for Polydamas had come up to him and struck him from close at hand. Then Hector in close combat struck Leitos, son of noble Alektryon, in the hand by the wrist, and disabled him from fighting further. He looked about him in dismay, knowing that never again should he wield spear in battle with the Trojans. [605] While Hector was in pursuit of Leitos, Idomeneus struck him on the breastplate over his chest near the nipple; but the spear broke in the shaft, and the Trojans cheered aloud. ⁶⁰⁸ He [= Hector] threw his spear at Idomeneus son of Deukalion. ⁶⁰⁹ He [= Idomeneus] was standing in his chariot. He [= Hector] just barely missed his target. [610] Instead, he struck the follower [*opāōn*] and charioteer [*hēniokhos*] of Mērionēs, ⁶¹¹ Koiranos was the man's name, who had followed [*hepesthai*] him [= Mērionēs], coming from the city of Lyktos. ⁶¹² For he [= Mērionēs], from the start, had come [to the battleground] on foot when he had come away from the ships with their curved prows and sterns. ⁶¹³ That is how he [= Mērionēs] had come. And he [= Mērionēs] would have handed over to the Trojans a mighty victory [if he had been the one

who got killed, and] ⁶¹⁴ if Koiranos had not been the one who drove with speed the swift horses. [615] He [= Koiranos] had come as a light of salvation for him [= Mērionēs], preventing this day from becoming the pitiless day [of death] for him [= Mērionēs], ⁶¹⁶ while he himself [= Koiranos] lost his own life at the hands of Hector, slayer of men. ⁶¹⁷ Yes, he [= Hector] struck him [= Koiranos], hitting him right under the jaw and ears. His teeth were pried loose, ⁶¹⁸ pushed in by the tip of the spear, which split his tongue right down the middle. ⁶¹⁹ He fell from the chariot, dropping the reins to the ground. [620] But Mērionēs picked them up in his hands, ⁶²¹ having leaned over, from the ground, and he spoke these words to Idomeneus: ⁶²² “Give the horses a lash of the whip right now and keep whipping them until you get all the way back to the swift ships. ⁶²³ Even you must know by now that victory no longer belongs to the Achaeans.” ⁶²⁴ That is what he [= Mērionēs] said, and Idomeneus gave the horses with the beautiful manes a lash of the whip [625] as they sped toward the hollow ships, since by now his spirit was invaded by fear.

Great-hearted Ajax and Menelaos noted how Zeus had turned the scale in favor of the Trojans, and huge Ajax was first to speak. “Alas,” said he, [630] “even a fool may see that father Zeus is helping the Trojans. All their weapons strike home; no matter whether it be a brave man or a coward that hurls them, Zeus speeds all alike, whereas ours fall each one of them without effect. [635] What, then, will be best both as regards rescuing the body, and our return to the joy of our friends who will be grieving as they look in this direction; for they will make sure that nothing can now check the terrible hands of manslaughtering Hector, and that he will fling himself upon our ships. [640] I wish that some one would go and tell the son of Peleus at once, for I do not think he can have yet heard the sad news that the dearest of his friends has fallen. But I can see not a man among the Achaeans to send, for they and their chariots are alike hidden in darkness. [645] O father Zeus, lift this cloud

from over the sons of the Achaeans; make the heavens serene, and let us see; if you will that we perish, let us fall at any rate by daylight.”

Father Zeus heard him and had compassion upon his tears. Right away he chased away the cloud of darkness, [650] so that the sun shone out and all the fighting was revealed. Ajax then said to Menelaos of the great war cry, “Look, illustrious Menelaos, and if Antilokhos, son of great-hearted Nestor, be still living, send him at once to tell the high-spirited Achilles [655] that by far the dearest to him of all his comrades has fallen.”

Menelaos heeded his words and went his way as a lion from a stockyard—the lion is tired of attacking the men and hounds, [660] who keep watch the whole night through and will not let him feast on the fat of their herd. In his lust of meat he makes straight at them but in vain, for darts from strong hands assail him, and burning brands which daunt him for all his hunger, so in the morning he slinks sulkily away— [665] even so did Menelaos of the great war cry sorely against his will leave Patroklos, in great fear lest the Achaeans should be driven back in rout and let him fall into the hands of the foe. He charged Meriones and the two Ajaxes, strictly saying, [670] “Ajaxes and Meriones, leaders of the Argives, now indeed remember how good Patroklos was; he was ever courteous while alive, bear it in mind now that he is dead.”

With this fair-haired Menelaos left them, looking round him as keenly as an eagle, [675] whose sight they say is keener than that of any other bird—however high he may be in the heavens, not a hare that runs can escape him by crouching under bush or thicket, for he will swoop down upon it and make an end of it— [680] even so, O illustrious Menelaos, did your keen eyes range round the mighty army of your followers to see if you could find the son of Nestor still alive. Presently Menelaos saw him on the extreme left of the battle cheering on his men and exhorting them to fight boldly. Menelaos the fair-haired went up to him and said, [685] “Antilokhos, come here that you may learn ⁶⁸⁶ of the ghastly news,

which should never have happened. ⁶⁸⁷ Once you see it with your own eyes ⁶⁸⁸ you will know that the god is letting roll down from above a pain [*pēma*] upon the Danaans [= Achaeans], ⁶⁸⁹ and victory now belongs to the Trojans. He has just been killed, the best of the Achaeans, [690] I mean, Patroklos, and the Danaans [= Achaeans] will have a great longing [*pothē*]. Run instantly to the ships and tell Achilles, that he may come to rescue the body and bear it to the ships. As for the armor, Hector already has it.”

[695] Antilokhos was struck with horror. For a long time he was speechless; his eyes filled with tears and he could find no utterance, but he did as Menelaos had said, and set off running as soon as he had given his armor to a comrade, blameless Laodokos, who was wheeling his horses round, close beside him.

[700] Thus, then, did he run weeping from the field, to carry the bad news to Achilles son of Peleus. Nor were you, O illustrious Menelaos, minded to help his harassed comrades, when Antilokhos had left the Pylans—and greatly did they miss him— [705] but he sent them noble Thrasymedes, and himself went back to Patroklos. He came running up to the two Ajaxes and said, “I have sent Antilokhos to the ships to tell swift-footed Achilles, but rage against radiant Hector as he may, he cannot come, for he cannot fight without armor. What then will be our best plan both as regards rescuing the dead, and our own escape from death amid the battle-cries of the Trojans?”

[715] Huge Ajax answered, “Renowned Menelaos, you have said well: do you, then, and Meriones stoop down, raise the body, and bear it out of the fray [*ponos*], while we two behind you keep off glorious Hector and the Trojans, [720] one in heart as in name, and long used to fighting side by side with one another.”

Then Menelaos and Meriones took the dead man in their arms and lifted him high aloft with a great effort. The Trojan army raised a hue and cry

behind them when they saw the Achaeans bearing the body away, [725] and flew after them like hounds attacking a wounded boar in the hunt of a band of young huntsmen. For a while the hounds fly at him as though they would tear him in pieces, but now and again he turns on them in a fury, scaring and scattering them in all directions— [730] even so did the Trojans for a while charge in a body, striking with sword and with spears pointed at both the ends, but when the two Ajaxes faced them and stood at bay, they would turn pale and no man dared press on to fight further about the dead.

[735] In this way—did the two heroes strain every nerve to bear the body to the ships out of the fight. The battle raged round them like fierce flames that when once kindled spread like wildfire over a city, and the houses fall in the glare of its burning— [740] even such was the roar and tramp of men and horses that pursued them as they bore Patroklos from the field. Or as mules that put forth all their strength to draw some beam or great piece of ship's timber down a rough mountain-track, [745] and they pant and sweat as they, go even so did Menelaos and Meriones pant and sweat as they bore the body of Patroklos. Behind them the two Ajaxes held stoutly out. As some wooded mountain-spur that stretches across a plain will turn water [750] and check the flow even of a great river, nor is there any stream strong enough to break through it—even so did the two Ajaxes face the Trojans and stern the tide of their fighting though they kept pouring on towards them and foremost among them all was Aeneas son of Anchises with valiant Hector. [755] As a flock of daws or starlings fall to screaming and chattering when they see a falcon, foe to small birds, come soaring near them, even so did the Achaean youth raise a mix of cries as they fled before Aeneas and Hector, unmindful of their former prowess. [760] In the rout of the Danaans much goodly armor fell round about the trench, and of fighting there was no end.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The word *kharites* (plural of *kharis*) also refers to the Graces; the meaning ‘myrtle-blossoms’ is reported by ancient dictionaries stemming from scholars who worked at the Library of Alexandria.

[[back](#)] 2. In the scholia A (Aristonicus) for *Iliad* 17.202, we learn that the variant reading ὅς δὴ τοι σχεδὸν εἴσιν ‘that is coming near’ was preferred by Aristarchus: <ὅς δὴ τοι σχεδόν ἐστι:> ... αἱ δὲ Ἀριστάρχου ὅς δὴ τοι σχεδὸν εἴσιν. In scholia Aim (Didymus), we read: Ἀρίσταρχος εἴσιν.

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Homeric *Iliad* Rhapsody 18

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

Thus then did they fight as it were a flaming fire. Meanwhile the fleet runner Antilokhos, who had been sent as messenger, reached Achilles, and found him sitting by his tall ships and boding that which was indeed too surely true. [5] “Alas,” ₅ angered, he said to his great-hearted *thūmos*, “why are the flowing-haired Achaeans again scouring the plain and flocking towards the ships? May the gods be not now bringing that sorrow upon me of which my mother Thetis spoke, [10] saying that while I was yet alive the bravest of the Myrmidons should fall before the Trojans, and see the light of the sun no longer. I fear the brave son of Menoitios has fallen through his own daring, and yet I bade him return to the ships as soon as he had driven back those that were bringing fire against them, and not join battle with Hector.”

[15] As he was thus pondering, the son of stately Nestor came up to him and told his sad tale, weeping bitterly the while. “Alas,” he cried, “son of noble Peleus, I bring you bad tidings, would indeed that they were untrue. [20] Patroklos has fallen, and a fight is raging about his naked body—for Hector of the shining helmet holds his armor.”

A dark cloud of grief [*akhos*] fell upon Achilles as he listened. He filled both hands with dust from off the ground, and poured it over his head, disfiguring his comely face, [25] and letting the refuse settle over his khiton so fair and new. He flung himself down all huge and hugely at full length, and tore his hair with his hands. The bondswomen whom Achilles and Patroklos had taken captive wailed aloud for grief, [30] beating their breasts, and with their limbs failing them for sorrow. Antilokhos bent over him the while, weeping and holding both his

hands as he lay groaning for he feared that he might plunge a knife into his own throat. Then valiant Achilles gave a loud cry [35] and his mother heard him as she was sitting in the depths of the sea by the old man her father, whereon she wailed, and all the goddesses daughters of Nereus that dwelt at the bottom of the sea, came gathering round her. There were Glauke, Thalia and Kymodoke, [40] Nesaia, Speo, Thoe, and dark-eyed Halie, Kymothoe, Aktaia and Limnorea, Melite, Iaira, Amphithoe and Agaue, Doto and Proto, Pherousa and Dynamene, Dexamene, Amphinome and Kallianeira, [45] Doris, Panope, and the famous sea-nymph Galatea, Nemertes, Apseudes and Kallianassa. There were also Klymene, Ianeira and Ianassa, Maira, Oreithuia and lovely-haired Amatheia of the lovely locks, with other Nereids who dwell in the depths of the sea. [50] The crystal cave was filled with their multitude and they all beat their breasts while Thetis led them in their lament.

“Listen,” she cried, “sisters, daughters of Nereus, that you may hear the burden of my sorrows. ⁵⁴ Ah me, the pitiful one! Ah me, the mother, so sad it is, of the very best. [55] I gave birth to a faultless and strong son, ⁵⁶ the very best of heroes. And he shot up [*anedramen*] equal [*īsos*] to a seedling [*ernos*]. ⁵⁷ I nurtured him like a shoot in the choicest spot of the orchard, ⁵⁸ only to send him off on curved ships to Troy, to fight Trojan men. ⁵⁹ And I will never be welcoming him [60] back home as returning warrior, back to the House of Peleus. ⁶¹ And as long as he lives and sees the light of the sun, ⁶² he will have sorrow [*akh-nutai*], and though I go to him I cannot help him. Nevertheless I will go, that I may see my dear son and learn what sorrow [*penthos*] has befallen him though he is still holding aloof from battle.”

[65] She left the cave as she spoke, while the others followed weeping after, and the waves opened a path before them. When they reached the fertile plain of Troy, they came up out of the sea in a long line on to the sands, at the place where the ships of the Myrmidons were drawn up in close order round the tents of fleet Achilles. [70] His mother went up to

him as he lay groaning; she laid her hand upon his head and spoke piteously, saying, “My son, why are you thus weeping? What sorrow [*penthos*] has now befallen you? Tell me; hide it not from me. [75] Surely Zeus has granted you the prayer you made him, when you lifted up your hands and besought him that the Achaeans might all of them be pent up at their ships, and rue it bitterly that you were no longer with them.”

Fleet Achilles groaned and answered, “Mother, Olympian Zeus has indeed granted me the fulfillment of my prayer, but what good is it to me, seeing that my dear comrade Patroklos has fallen— [50] But what pleasure is there for me in these things? For my *phílos* companion [*hetairos*] has perished, ⁵¹ Patroklos, to whom I gave more *tīmē* than to all the other *hetairoi*. I have lost him; yes, and Hector when he had killed him stripped the wondrous armor, so glorious to behold, which the gods gave to Peleus [85] when they laid you in the couch of a mortal man. Would that you were still dwelling among the immortal sea-nymphs, and that Peleus had taken to himself some mortal bride. For now you shall have grief [*penthos*] infinite by reason of the death of that son [90] whom you can never welcome home—I tell you, I will not live nor go about among humankind unless Hector fall by my spear, and thus pay me for having slain Patroklos, son of Menoitios.”

Thetis wept and answered, [95] “Then, my son, is your end near at hand—for your own death awaits you full soon after that of Hector.”

Then said Achilles in his great grief, ⁹⁸ “Right away may I die next, since it turns out that I did not help my comrade [*hetairos*] ⁹⁹ by protecting him when he was about to be killed. And there he was, far away from his fatherland, ¹⁰⁰ and he died. He missed having me as his protector from harm. ¹⁰¹ And now, since I will not have a homecoming [*neesthai*] to my dear fatherland, ¹⁰² and I did not become the Light [of salvation] for Patroklos or for my other *hetairoi* ¹⁰³ those others, many of them, who were also dispatched by radiant Hector ¹⁰⁴ —and here I am by the ships,

just sitting here, a heavy load for Earth to bear— [105] I, who in fight have no peer among the Achaeans, though in council there are better than I. Therefore, perish strife both from among gods and men, and anger, wherein even a righteous man will harden his heart—which rises up in the spirit of a man like smoke, [110] and the taste thereof is sweeter than drops of honey. Even so has Agamemnon angered me. And yet—so be it, for it is over; I will force my spirit into subjection as I needs must; I will go; I will pursue Hector [115] who has slain him whom I loved so dearly, and will then abide my doom when it may please Zeus and the other gods to send it. Even Hēraklēs, the best beloved of Zeus—even he could not escape the hand of death, but fate and Hera’s fierce anger laid him low, [120] as I too shall lie when I am dead if a like doom awaits me. ¹²¹ but now let me win worthy [*kleos*], and will bid Trojan and Dardanian women wring tears from their tender cheeks with both their hands in the grievousness of their great sorrow; thus shall they know that he who has held aloof so long will hold aloof no longer. [125] Hold me not back, therefore, in the love you bear me, for you shall not move me.”

Then silver-footed Thetis answered, “My son, what you have said is true. It is well to save your comrades from destruction, [130] but your armor is in the hands of the Trojans; Hector bears it in triumph upon his own shoulders. Full well I know that his vaunt shall not be lasting, for his end is close at hand; go not, however, into the press of battle [135] till you see me return here; tomorrow at break of day I shall be here, and will bring you goodly armor from King Hephaistos.”

Then she left her brave son, and as she turned away she said to the sea-nymphs her sisters, [140] “Dive into the bosom of the sea and go to the house of the old sea-god my father. Tell him everything; as for me, I will go to the cunning workman Hephaistos on high Olympus, and ask him to provide my son with a suit of splendid armor.”

[145] When she had so said, they dived right then and there beneath the waves, while silver-footed Thetis went her way that she might bring the armor for her son.

Thus, then, did her feet bear the goddess to Olympus, and meanwhile the strong-greaved Achaeans were fleeing with loud cries before manslaughtering Hector [150] till they reached the ships and the Hellespont, ¹⁵¹ nor could they, well-greaved Achaeans though they were, ¹⁵² save from the missiles the corpse, the *therapōn* of Achilles, for Hector son of Priam with his army and horsemen had again caught up to him like the flame of a fiery furnace; [155] three times did brave Hector seize him by the feet, striving with might and main to draw him away and calling loudly on the Trojans, and three times did the two Ajaxes, clothed in valor as with a garment, beat him from off the body; [160] but all undaunted he would now charge into the thick of the fight, and now again he would stand still and cry aloud, but he would give no ground. As upland shepherds that cannot chase some famished lion from a carcass, even so could not the two Ajaxes scare Hector son of Priam from the body of Patroklos.

[165] And now he would even have dragged it off and have won imperishable glory, had not Iris fleet as the wind, winged her way as messenger from Olympus to the son of Peleus and bidden him arm. She came secretly without the knowledge of Zeus and of the other gods, for Hera sent her, and when she had got close to him she said, [170] “Up, son of Peleus, mightiest of all humankind; rescue Patroklos about whom this fearful fight is now raging by the ships. Men are killing one another, the Danaans in defense of the dead body, while the Trojans are trying to haul it away, [175] and take it to windy Ilion: Hector is the most furious of them all; he is for cutting the head from the body and fixing it on the stakes of the wall. Up, then, and bide here no longer; shrink from the thought that Patroklos may become meat for the dogs of Troy. [180] Shame on you, should his body suffer any kind of outrage.”

And fleet Achilles said, “Iris, which of the gods was it that sent you to me?”

Wind-footed Iris answered, “It was Hera the royal spouse of Zeus, [185] but the son of Kronos does not know of my coming, nor yet does any other of the immortals who dwell on the snowy summits of Olympus.”

Then fleet Achilles answered her saying, “How can I go up into the battle? They have my armor. My mother forbade me to arm [190] till I should see her come, for she promised to bring me goodly armor from Hephaistos; I know no man whose arms I can put on, save only the shield of Ajax son of Telamon, and he surely must be fighting in the front rank [195] and wielding his spear about the body of dead Patroklos.”

Wind-footed Iris said, ‘We know that your armor has been taken, but go as you are; go to the deep trench and show yourself before the Trojans, that they may fear you [200] and cease fighting. Thus will the fainting sons of the Achaeans gain some brief breathing-time, which in battle may hardly be.’ Swift-footed Iris left him when she had so spoken.

But Achilles dear to Zeus arose, and Athena flung her tasseled aegis round his strong shoulders; [205] she crowned his head with a halo of golden cloud from which she kindled a glow of gleaming fire. As the smoke that goes up into the heavens from some city that is being beleaguered on an island far out at sea—all day long do men sally from the city and fight their hardest, [210] and at the going down of the sun the line of beacon-fires blazes forth, flaring high for those that dwell near them to behold, if so be that they may come with their ships and help them—even so did the light flare from the head of Achilles, [215] as he stood by the trench, going beyond the wall—but he did not join the Achaeans for he heeded the charge which his mother laid upon him.

There did he stand and shout aloud. Athena also raised her voice from afar, and spread terror unspeakable among the Trojans. [220] Ringing as the note of a trumpet that sounds alarm when the foe is at the gates of a city, even so brazen was the voice of the descendant of Aiakos, and when the Trojans heard its clarion tones they were dismayed; the horses turned back with their chariots for they boded mischief, [225] and their drivers were awe-struck by the steady flame which the owl-vision goddess had kindled above the head of the great son of Peleus.

Thrice did radiant Achilles raise his loud cry as he stood by the trench, and three times were the Trojans and their brave allies thrown into confusion; [230] whereon twelve of their noblest champions fell beneath the wheels of their chariots and perished by their own spears. The Achaeans to their great joy then drew Patroklos out of reach of the weapons, and laid him on a litter: his comrades stood mourning round him, [235] and among them fleet Achilles who wept bitterly as he saw his true comrade lying dead upon his bier. He had sent him out with horses and chariots into battle, but his return he was not to welcome.

[240] Then ox-vision Hera sent the busy sun, loath though he was, into the waters of Okeanos; so he set, and the radiant Achaeans had rest from the tug and turmoil of war.

Now the Trojans when they had come out of the fight, [245] unyoked their horses and gathered in assembly before preparing their supper. They kept their feet, nor would any dare to sit down, for fear had fallen upon them all because Achilles had shown himself after having held aloof so long from battle. Careful Polydamas son of Panthoös was first to speak, a man of judgment, [250] who alone among them could look both before and after. He was comrade to Hector, and they had been born upon the same night; with all sincerity and goodwill, therefore, he addressed them thus—

“Look to it well, my friends; I would urge you [255]to go back now to your city and not wait here by the ships till morning, for we are far from our walls. So long as this man has anger [*mēnis*] against great Agamemnon, the Achaeans were easier to deal with, [260] and I would have gladly camped by the ships in the hope of taking them; but now I go in great fear of the fleet son of Peleus; he is so daring that he will never bide here on the plain whereon the Trojans and Achaeans fight with equal valor, but he will try to storm our city and carry off our women. [265] Do then as I say, and let us retreat. For this is what will happen. The darkness of night will for a time stay the swift-footed son of Peleus, but if he find us here in the morning when he sallies forth in full armor, we shall have knowledge of him in good earnest. [270] Glad indeed will he be who can escape and get back to Ilion, and many a Trojan will become meat for dogs and vultures may I never live to hear it. If we do as I say, little though we may like it, we shall have strength in counsel during the night, [275] and the great gates with the doors that close them will protect the city. At dawn we can arm and take our stand on the walls; he will then rue it if he sallies from the ships to fight us. [280] He will go back when he has given his horses their fill of being driven in every which direction under our walls, and will be in no mind to try and force his way into the city. Neither will he ever ransack it, dogs shall devour him before he do so.”

Hector of the shining helmet looked fiercely at him and answered, [285] “Polydamas, your words are not to my liking in that you bid us go back and be pent within the city. Have you not had enough of being cooped up behind walls? In the old-days the city of Priam was famous the whole world over for its wealth of gold and bronze, [290] but our treasures are wasted out of our houses, and much goods have been sold away to Phrygia and fair Maonia, for the hand of Zeus has been laid heavily upon us. Now, therefore, that the son of scheming Kronos has granted me to win glory here and to hem the Achaeans in at their ships, prate no more in this foolish way among the population [*dēmos*]. [295] You will have no man with you; it shall not be; do all of you as I now

say;—take your suppers in your companies throughout the army, and keep your watches and be wakeful every man of you. [300] If any Trojan is uneasy about his possessions, let him gather them and give them out among the people. Better let these, rather than the Achaeans, have them. At daybreak we will arm and fight about the ships; [305] granted that radiant Achilles has again come forward to defend them, let it be as he will, but it shall go hard with him. I shall not shun him, but will fight him, to fall or conquer. The god of war deals out like measure to all, and the slayer may yet be slain.”

[310] Thus spoke Hector; and the Trojans, fools that they were, shouted in approval, for Pallas Athena had robbed them of their understanding. They gave ear to Hector with his evil counsel, but the wise words of Polydamas no man would heed. They took their supper throughout the army, [315] and meanwhile through the whole night the Achaeans mourned Patroklos, and the son of Peleus led them in their lament. He laid his manslaughtering hands upon the breast of his comrade, groaning again and again as a bearded lion when a man who was chasing deer has robbed him of his young in some dense forest; [320] when the lion comes back he is furious, and searches dingle and dell to track the hunter if he can find him, for he is mad with rage—even so with many a sigh did Achilles speak among the Myrmidons saying, “Alas! vain were the words [325] with which I cheered the hero Menoitios in his own house; I said that I would bring his brave son back again to Opoeis after he had ransacked Ilion and taken his share of the spoils—but Zeus does not give all men their heart’s desire. [330] The same soil shall be reddened here at Troy by the blood of us both, for I too shall never be welcomed home by the old charioteer Peleus, nor by my mother Thetis, but even in this place shall the earth cover me. Nevertheless, O Patroklos, now that I am left behind you, I will not bury you, till I have brought here [335] the head and armor of mighty Hector who has slain you. Twelve noble sons of Trojans will I behead before your bier to avenge you; till I have done so you shall lie as you are by the ships, [340] and fair women of Troy and Dardanos, whom we have

taken with spear and strength of arm when we ransacked men's goodly cities, shall weep over you both night and day."

Then radiant Achilles told his men to set a large tripod upon the fire [345] that they might wash the clotted gore from off Patroklos. Then they set a tripod full of bath water on to a clear fire: they threw sticks on to it to make it blaze, and the water became hot as the flame played about the belly of the tripod. When the water in the cauldron was boiling [350] they washed the body, anointed it with oil, and closed its wounds with ointment that had been kept nine years. Then they laid it on a bier and covered it with a linen cloth from head to foot, and over this they laid a fair white robe. Thus all night long did [355] the Myrmidons gather round Achilles to mourn Patroklos.

³⁵⁶ And Zeus summoned Hera his sister, his wife: "So, Lady ox-vision Hera, you have gained your end, and have roused fleet Achilles. One would think that the Achaeans were of your own flesh and blood."

[360] And Hera answered, "Dread son of Kronos, why should you say this thing? May not a man ³⁶³ who is mortal and who does not know so many devices [*mēdea*] [as I do], do what he can for another person? And shall not I— [365] foremost of all goddesses both by descent and as wife to you who reign in the heavens—devise evil for the Trojans if I am angry with them?"

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile Thetis came to the house of Hephaistos, [370] imperishable [*aphthitos*], star-bespangled, fairest of the abodes in the heavens, a house of bronze wrought by the lame god's own hands. She found him busy with his bellows, sweating and hard at work, for he was making twenty tripods that were to stand by the wall of his house, [375] and he set wheels of gold under them all that they might go of their own selves to the assemblies [*agōn*] of the gods, and come back again—marvels indeed to see. They were finished all but the ears of cunning workmanship which yet remained to be fixed to them:

these he was now fixing, and he was hammering at the rivets. [380] While he was thus at work silver-footed Thetis came to the house. Kharis, of graceful head-dress, wife to the far-famed lame god, came towards her as soon as she saw her, and took her hand in her own, saying, [385] "Why have you come to our house, Thetis of the light robes, honored and ever welcome—for you do not visit us often? Come inside and let me set refreshment before you."

The goddess led the way as she spoke, and bade Thetis sit on a richly decorated seat inlaid with silver; [390] there was a footstool also under her feet. Then she called Hephaistos and said, "Hephaistos, come here, Thetis wants you"; and the far-famed lame god answered, "Then it is indeed an august and honored goddess who has come here; [395] she it was that took care of me when I was suffering from the heavy fall which I had through my cruel mother's anger—for she would have got rid of me because I was lame. It would have gone hardly with me had not Eurynome, daughter of the ever-encircling waters of Okeanos, and Thetis, taken me to their bosom. [400] Nine years did I stay with them, and many beautiful works in bronze, brooches, spiral armlets, cups, and chains, did I make for them in their cave, with the roaring waters of Okeanos foaming as they rushed ever past it; and no one knew, neither of gods nor men, [405] save only Thetis and Eurynome who took care of me. If, then, lovely-haired Thetis has come to my house I must make her due requital for having saved me; entertain her, therefore, with all hospitality, while I put by my bellows and all my tools."

[410] Then the mighty monster hobbled off from his anvil, his thin legs plying lustily under him. He set the bellows away from the fire, and gathered his tools into a silver chest. Then he took a sponge and washed his face and hands, [415] his shaggy chest and brawny neck; he donned his khiton, grasped his strong staff, and limped towards the door. There were golden handmaids also who worked for him, and were like real young women, with sense and reason [*noos*], voice also and strength, [420] and all the learning of the immortals; these busied themselves as

the king bade them, while he drew near to Thetis, seated her upon a goodly seat, and took her hand in his own, saying, “Why have you come to our house, [425] Thetis honored and ever welcome—for you do not visit us often? Say what you want, and I will do it for you at once if I can, and if it can be done at all.”

Thetis wept and answered, “Hephaistos, is there another goddess in Olympus [430] whom the son of Kronos has been pleased to try with so much affliction as he has me? Me alone of the marine goddesses did he make subject to a mortal husband, Peleus son of Aiakos, and sorely against my will did I submit to the embraces of one who was but mortal, [435] and who now stays at home worn out with age. Neither is this all. Heaven granted me a son, ⁴³⁷ the very best of heroes. And he shot up [*anedramen*] equal [*īsos*] to a seedling [*ernos*]. ⁴³⁸ I nurtured him like a shoot in the choicest spot of the orchard, ⁴³⁹ only to send him off on curved ships to Troy, to fight Trojan men. [440] And I will never be welcoming him ⁴⁴¹ back home as returning warrior, back to the House of Peleus. ⁴⁴² And as long as he lives and sees the light of the sun, ⁴⁴³ he will have sorrow [*akh-nutai*], and though I go to him I cannot help him. The maiden whom the sons of the Achaeans had awarded him, [445] powerful King Agamemnon has made him give her up, and he wastes with sorrow [*akhos*] for her sake. Then the Trojans hemmed the Achaeans in at their ships’ sterns and would not let them come forth; the elders, therefore, of the Argives besought Achilles and offered him great treasure, [450] whereon he refused to bring deliverance to them himself, but put his own armor on Patroklos and sent him into the fight with many people after him. All day long they fought by the Scaean gates and would have taken the city there and then, [455] had not Apollo granted glory to Hector and slain the valiant son of Menoitios after he had done the Trojans much evil. Therefore I am suppliant at your knees if haply you may be pleased to provide my son, whose end is near at hand, with helmet and shield, with goodly greaves fitted with ankle-clasps, [460] and with a breastplate, for he lost his own when his true

comrade fell at the hands of the Trojans, and he now lies stretched on earth in the bitterness of his spirit.”

And Hephaistos answered, “Take heart, and be no more disquieted about this matter; [465] would that I could hide him from death’s sight when his hour is come, so surely as I can find him armor that shall amaze the eyes of all who behold it.”

When he had so said he left her and went to his bellows, turning them towards the fire and bidding them do their office. [470] Twenty bellows blew upon the melting-pots, and they blew blasts of every kind, some fierce to help him when he had need of them, and others less strong as Hephaistos willed it in the course of his work. He threw tough copper into the fire, and tin, [475] with silver and gold; he set his great anvil on its block, and with one hand grasped his mighty hammer while he took the tongs in the other.

⁴⁷⁸ First of all he was making the Shield, huge and massive, ⁴⁷⁹ fashioning it from inside out in every direction, and around it he was putting a rim that is radiant, [480] having three folds [*triplex*] and radiant. And he [made] a silver sling that was hanging from it. He made the shield in five thicknesses. ⁴⁸² And he was making many variegated things with his knowledgeable thinking. ⁴⁸² In it he fashioned the earth, in it the sky, in it the sea, ⁴⁸² and the sun that does not wear out, and the moon in her fullness, [485] and in it he [fashioned] all the celestial signs —the Pleiades, the Hyades, huge Orion, and the Bear, which men also call the Wagon and which turns round ever in one place, facing Orion; ⁴⁸⁹ she alone has no share in the baths of Okeanos.

[490] On it he [= the divine smith Hephaistos] wrought two cities of mortal men. ⁴⁹¹ And there were weddings in one, and feasts. ⁴⁹² They were leading the brides along the city from their maiden chambers ⁴⁹³ under the flaring of torches, and the loud bride song was arising. ⁴⁹⁴ The young men were dancing in circles, and among them [495] the pipes

and the lyres kept up their clamor as in the meantime the women, ⁴⁹⁶ standing each at the door of the courtyard, admired them.

⁴⁹⁷ Meanwhile the people were gathered in assembly, and there a quarrel [*neikos*] ⁴⁹⁸ had arisen, and two men were quarreling [*neikeîn*] about the blood-price [*poinë*] ⁴⁹⁹ for a man who had died. One of the two claimed that he had the right to pay off the damages in full, [500] declaring this publicly to the population of the district [*dēmos*], and the other of the two was refusing to accept anything. ⁵⁰¹ Both of them were seeking a limit [*peirar*], in the presence of an arbitrator [*histōr*], ⁵⁰² and the people took sides, each man shouting for the side he was on; ⁵⁰³ but the heralds kept them back, and the elders ⁵⁰⁴ sat on benches of polished stone in a sacred [*hieros*] circle, [505] taking hold of scepters [*skēptrā*] that the heralds, who lift their voices, put into their hands. ⁵⁰⁶ Holding these [scepters] they rose and each in his turn gave judgment [*dikazein*], ⁵⁰⁷ and in their midst there were placed on the ground two measures of gold, ⁵⁰⁸ to be given to that one among them who spoke a judgment [*dikē*] in the most straight way [*ithuntata*].

About the other city there lay encamped two armies in gleaming armor, [510] and they were divided whether to ransack it, or to spare it and accept the half of what it contained. But the men of the city would not yet consent, and armed themselves for a surprise; their wives and little children kept guard upon the walls, [515] and with them were the men who were past fighting through age; ⁵¹⁶ And they [= warriors represented on the Shield] were on their way. Leading them were Arēs and Pallas Athena. ⁵¹⁷ They were both golden. And they were wearing golden clothing. ⁵¹⁸ Beautiful and immense they were in their armor, gods that they are, ⁵¹⁹ most visible [*arizēlō*], side by side. But the warriors were smaller in size. [520] When they reached the place where they would lay their ambush, it was on a riverbed to which live stock of all kinds would come from far and near to water; here, then, they lay concealed, clad in full armor. Some way off them there were two scouts

who were on the look-out for the coming of sheep or cattle, [525] which presently came, followed by two shepherds who were playing on their pipes, and had not so much as a thought of danger. When those who were in ambush saw this, they cut off the flocks and herds and killed the shepherds. [530] Meanwhile the besiegers, when they heard much noise among the cattle as they sat in council, sprang to their horses, and made with all speed towards them; when they reached them they set battle in array by the banks of the river, and the armies aimed their bronze-shod spears at one another. With them were Strife and Riot, [535] and fell Fate who was dragging three men after her, one with a fresh wound, and the other unwounded, while the third was dead, and she was dragging him along by his heel: and her robe was bedrabbled in men's blood. [540] They went in and out with one another and fought as though they were living people haling away one another's dead.

He wrought also a fair fallow field, large and thrice ploughed already. Many men were working at the plough within it, turning their oxen to and fro, furrow after furrow. Each time that they turned on reaching the headland [545] a man would come up to them and give them a cup of wine, and they would go back to their furrows looking forward to the time when they should again reach the headland. The part that they had ploughed was dark behind them, so that the field, though it was of gold, still looked as if it were being ploughed—very curious to behold.

[550] He wrought also a field of harvest grain, and the reapers were reaping with sharp sickles in their hands. Swathe after swathe fell to the ground in a straight line behind them, and the binders bound them in bands of twisted straw. There were three binders, [555] and behind them there were boys who gathered the cut grain in armfuls and kept on bringing them to be bound: among them all the owner of the land stood by in silence and was glad. The servants were getting a meal ready under an oak, for they had sacrificed a great ox, and were busy cutting him up, [560] while the women were making a porridge of much white barley for the laborers' dinner.

He wrought also a vineyard, golden and fair to see, and the vines were loaded with grapes. The bunches overhead were black, but the vines were trained on poles of silver. He ran a ditch of dark metal all round it, [565] and fenced it with a fence of tin; there was only one path to it, and by this the vintagers went when they would gather the vintage. Youths and maidens all blithe and full of glee, carried the luscious fruit in plaited baskets; and with them [570] there went a boy who made sweet music with his lyre, and sang the Linus-song with his clear boyish voice.

He wrought also a herd of horned cattle. He made the cows of gold and tin, and they lowed [575] as they came full speed out of the yards to go and feed among the waving reeds that grow by the banks of the river. Along with the cattle there went four shepherds, all of them in gold, and their nine fleet dogs went with them. [580] Two terrible lions had fastened on a bellowing bull that was with the foremost cows, and bellow as he might they hauled him, while the dogs and men gave chase: the lions tore through the bull's thick hide and were gorging on his blood and bowels, but the herdsmen were afraid to do anything, and only hounded on their dogs; [585] the dogs dared not fasten on the lions but stood by barking and keeping out of harm's way.

⁵⁸⁷ Next, the one with the two great arms [= Hephaistos], whose fame is supreme, made [an image of] a space for pasturing ⁵⁸⁸ in a beautiful mountainous place. It was a vast space, full of sheep with shining fleeces. ⁵⁸⁹ It [= this space for pasturing] had herdsmen's stations [*stathmoi*], shelters [*klisiai*] with covering on top, and enclosures [*sēkoi*].

[590] The renowned one [= the god Hephaistos], the one with the two strong arms, pattern-wove [*poikillein*] in it [= the Shield of Achilles] a *khoros*. ⁵⁹¹ It [= the *khoros*] was just like the one that, once upon a time in far-ruling Knossos, ⁵⁹² Daedalus made for Ariadne, the one with the beautiful tresses [*plokamoi*]. ⁵⁹³ There were young men there, and girls who are courted with gifts of cattle, ⁵⁹⁴ and they all were dancing with

each other, holding hands at the wrist. [595] The girls were wearing delicate dresses, while the boys were clothed in tunics [*khitōn* plural] ⁵⁹⁶ well-woven, gleaming exquisitely, with a touch of olive oil. ⁵⁹⁷ The girls had beautiful garlands [*stephanai*], while the boys had knives ⁵⁹⁸ made of gold, hanging from knife-belts made of silver. ⁵⁹⁹ Half the time they moved fast in a circle, with expert steps, [600] showing the greatest ease, as when a wheel, solidly built, is given a spin by the hands ⁶⁰¹ of a seated potter, who is testing it whether it will run well. ⁶⁰² The other half of the time they moved fast in straight lines, alongside each other. ⁶⁰³ A huge crowd stood around the place of the song-and-dance [*khoros*] that rouses desire, ⁶⁰⁴ and they were feeling delight [*terpesthai*]; in their midst sang-and-danced [*melpesthai*] a divine singer [*aoidos*], [605] playing on the special lyre [*phorminx*]; two special dancers [*kubistētēre*] among them ⁶⁰⁶ were swirling as he led [*exarkhein*] the singing and dancing [*molpē*] in their midst.

⁶⁰⁷ And he was putting in it the mighty power of the river Okeanos ⁶⁰⁸ along the last rim of the Shield compactly made.

⁶⁰⁹ And when he had fashioned the huge and massive Shield, he made a breastplate also that shone brighter than fire. [610] He made helmet, close fitting to the brow, and richly worked, with a golden plume overhanging it; and he made greaves also of beaten tin.

Lastly, when the famed lame god had made all the armor, he took it and set it before the mother of Achilles; whereon she darted like a falcon from the snowy summits of Olympus and bore away the gleaming armor from the house of Hephaistos.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 19

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now when Dawn in robe of saffron was hastening from the streams of Okeanos, to bring light to mortals and immortals, Thetis reached the ships with the armor that the god had given her. She found her son fallen about the body of Patroklos [5] and weeping bitterly. Many also of his followers were weeping round him, but when the goddess came among them she clasped his hand in her own, saying, “My son, grieve as we may we must let this man lie, for it is by the will of the gods that he has fallen; [10] now, therefore, accept from Hephaistos this rich and goodly armor, which no man has ever yet borne upon his shoulders.”

As she spoke she set the armor before Achilles, and it rang out bravely as she did so. The Myrmidons were struck with awe, [15] and none dared look full at it, for they were afraid; but Achilles was roused to still greater fury, and his eyes gleamed with a fierce light, for he was glad when he handled the splendid present which the god had made him. Then, as soon as he had satisfied himself with looking at it, [20] he said to his mother, “Mother, the god has given me armor, meet handiwork for an immortal and such as no living could have fashioned; I will now arm, [25] but I much fear that flies will settle upon the son of Menoitios and breed worms about his wounds, so that his body, now he is dead, will be disfigured and the flesh will rot.”

Silver-footed Thetis answered, “My son, be not disquieted about this matter. [30] I will find means to protect him from the swarms of noisome flies that prey on the bodies of men who have been killed in battle. He may lie for a whole year, and his flesh shall still be as sound as ever, or even sounder. Call, therefore, the Achaean heroes in assembly;

[35] unsay your anger [*mēnis*] against Agamemnon; arm at once, and fight with might and main.”

As she spoke she put strength and courage into his heart, and she then dropped ambrosia and red nectar into the wounds of Patroklos, that his body might suffer no change.

[40] Then radiant Achilles went out upon the seashore, and with a loud cry called on the Achaean heroes. Then even those who as yet had stayed always at the assembly of [*agōn*] of ships, those who were steersmen [*kubernētēs*] and held the steering-oars of the ships, and even the stewards who were about the ships and served out rations, [45] all came to the place of assembly because Achilles had shown himself after having held aloof so long from fighting. Two attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs, radiant Odysseus and the son of Tydeus, came limping, for their wounds still pained them; [50] nevertheless they came, and took their seats in the front row of the assembly. Last of all came Agamemnon, king of men, he too wounded, for Koön son of Antenor had struck him with a spear in battle.

When the Achaeans were got together [55] Achilles of the swift feet rose and said, “Son of Atreus, surely it would have been better alike for both you and me, when we two were in such high anger about Brisēis, surely it would have been better, had Artemis’ arrow slain her at the ships [60] on the day when I took her after having ransacked Lyrnessos. For so, many an Achaean the less would have bitten dust before the foe in the days of my anger. It has been well for Hector and the Trojans, but the Achaeans will long indeed remember our quarrel. [65] Now, however, let it be, for it is over. If we have been angry, necessity has schooled our anger. I put it from me: I dare not nurse it for ever; therefore, bid the flowing-haired Achaeans arm right away [70] that I may go out against the Trojans, and learn whether they will be in a mind to sleep by the ships or no. Glad, I think, will he be to rest his knees who may flee my spear when I wield it.”

⁷⁴ Thus he spoke. And the fair-greaved Achaeans were happy [75] that the great-hearted son of Peleus unsaid his anger [*mēnis*]. ⁷⁶ Then Agamemnon, the king of men, spoke up at their meeting, ⁷⁷ right there from the place where he was sitting, not even standing up in the middle of the assembly. ⁷⁸ “Near and dear ones,” said he, “Danaan [= Achaean] heroes, attendants [*therapontes*] of Arēs! ⁷⁹ It is a good thing to listen when a man stands up to speak, and it is not seemly [80] to speak in relay after him. It would be hard for someone to do that, even if he is a practiced speaker. ⁸¹ For how could any man in an assembly either hear anything when there is an uproar ⁸² or say anything? Even a public speaker who speaks clearly will be disconcerted by it. ⁸³ What I will do is to make a declaration addressed to [Achilles] the son of Peleus. As for the rest of you ⁸⁴ Argives [= Achaeans], you should understand and know well, each one of you, the words [*mūthos*] that I say for the record. [85] By now the Achaeans have been saying these words [*mūthos*] to me many times, ⁸⁶ and they have been blaming me. But I am not responsible [*aitios*]. ⁸⁷ No, those who are really responsible are Zeus and Fate [*Moirā*] and the Fury [*Erinys*] who roams in the mist. ⁸⁸ They are the ones who, at the public assembly, had put savage derangement [*atē*] into my thinking [*phrenes*] ⁸⁹ on that day when I myself deprived Achilles of his honorific portion [*geras*]. [90] But what could I do? The god is the one who brings everything to its fulfillment [*teleutân*]. ⁹¹ That goddess Atē, senior daughter of Zeus—she makes everyone veer off-course [*aâsthai*], ⁹² that disastrous one [*oulomenē*], the one who has delicate steps. She never makes contact with the ground of the threshold, ⁹³ never even going near it, but instead she hovers over the heads of men, bringing harm to mortals. ⁹⁴ In her harmfulness, she has incapacitated others as well [besides me], and I have in mind one person in particular.

[95] Yes, once upon a time even Zeus veered off-course [*aâsthai*], who is said to be the best ⁹⁶ among men and gods. Even he ⁹⁷ was deceived; Hērā did it, with her devious ways of thinking, female that she is. ⁹⁸ It

happened on the day when the mighty Hēraklēs⁹⁹ was about to be born of Alkmene in Thebes, the city garlanded by good walls. [100] He [= Zeus], making a formal declaration [*eukhesthai*], spoke up at a meeting of all the gods and said: ¹⁰¹ ‘Hear me, all gods and all goddesses, ¹⁰² and let me say to you what the heart [*thūmos*] in my chest tells me to say. ¹⁰³ Today the goddess who presides over the pains of childbirth, Eileithuia, will help bring forth a man into the light, ¹⁰⁴ revealing him, and he will be king over all the people who live around him. [105] He comes from an ancestral line of men who are descended from blood that comes from me.’ ¹⁰⁶ Thinking devious thoughts, the goddess Hērā addressed him [= Zeus]: ¹⁰⁷ ‘You will be mistaken, and you will not be able to make a fulfillment [*telos*] of the words [*mūthos*] that you have spoken for the record. ¹⁰⁸ But come, Olympian god, swear for me a binding oath: ¹⁰⁹ swear that he will really be king over all the people who live around him, [110] I mean, the one who on this day shall fall to the ground between the legs of a woman ¹¹¹ who is descended from men who come from your line of ancestry, from blood that comes from you.’ ¹¹² So she spoke.

And Zeus did not at all notice [*noein*] her devious thinking, ¹¹³ but he swore a great oath. And right then and there, he veered off-course [*aâsthai*] in a big way. ¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, Hērā sped off, leaving the ridges of Olympus behind, [115] and swiftly she reached Achaean Argos. She knew that she would find there ¹¹⁶ the strong wife of Sthenelos son of Perseus. ¹¹⁷ She was pregnant with a dear son, and she was in her sixth month. ¹¹⁸ And she brought him forth into the light, even though he was still premature in his months. ¹¹⁹ Meanwhile she put a pause on the time of delivery for Alkmene, holding back the divine powers of labor, the Eileithuiai. [120] And then she herself went to tell the news to Zeus the son of Kronos, saying: ¹²¹ ‘Zeus the father, you with the gleaming thunderbolt, I will put a word into your thoughts: ¹²² there has just been born a man, a noble one, who will be king over the Argives. ¹²³ He is

Eurystheus son of Sthenelos son of Perseus. ¹²⁴ He is from your line of ancestry, and it is not unseemly for him to be king over the Argives.’

[125] So she spoke, and he was struck in his mind [*phrēn*] with a sharp sorrow [*akhos*]. ¹²⁶ And right away he grabbed the goddess Atē by the head—that head covered with luxuriant curls— ¹²⁷ since he was angry in his thinking [*phrenes*], and he swore a binding oath ¹²⁸ that never will she come to Olympus and to the starry sky ¹²⁹ never again will she come back, that goddess Atē, who makes everyone veer off-course [*aâsthai*].

[130] And so saying he threw her down from the starry sky, ¹³¹ having whirled her around in his hand. And then she [= Atē] came to the fields where mortals live and work. ¹³² He [= Zeus] always mourned the fact that she ever existed, every time he saw how his own dear son ¹³³ was having one of his degrading Labors [*āthloi*] to work on. ¹³⁴ So also I [= Agamemnon], while the great Hector, the one with the gleaming helmet, [135] was destroying the Argives [= Achaeans] at the sterns of the beached ships, ¹³⁶ was not able to keep out of my mind the veering [*atē*] I experienced once I veered off-course [*aâsthai*]. ¹³⁷ But since I did veer off-course [*aâsthai*] and since Zeus took away from me my thinking, ¹³⁸ I now want to make amends, and to give untold amounts of compensation. Go, therefore, into battle, you and your people with you. [140] I will give you all that radiant Odysseus offered you yesterday in your tents: or if it so please you, wait, though you would fain fight at once, and my attendants [*therapontes*] shall bring the gifts from my ship, that you may see whether what I give you is enough.”

[145] And Achilles answered, “Son of Atreus, king of men Agamemnon, you can give such gifts as you think proper, or you can withhold them: it is in your own hands. Let us now set battle in array; it is not well to tarry talking about trifles, [150] for there is a deed which is as yet to do. Achilles shall again be seen fighting among the foremost, and laying low the ranks of the Trojans: bear this in mind each one of you when he is fighting.”

Then resourceful Odysseus said, [155] “Achilles, godlike and brave, send not the Achaeans thus against Ilion to fight the Trojans fasting, for the battle will be no brief one, when it is once begun, and the gods have filled both sides with fury; [160] bid them first take food both bread and wine by the ships, for in this there is strength and stay. No man can do battle the livelong day to the going down of the sun if he is without food; however much he may want to fight [165] his strength will fail him before he knows it; hunger and thirst will find him out, and his limbs will grow weary under him. But a man can fight all day if he is full fed with meat and wine; his heart beats high, and his strength will stay [170] till he has routed all his foes; therefore, send the people away and bid them prepare their meal; King Agamemnon will bring out the gifts in presence of the assembly, that all may see them and you may be satisfied. [175] Moreover let him swear an oath before the Argives that he has never gone up into the couch of Brisēis, nor has lain down with her, even though it is right [*themis*] for humans, both men and women, to do this; and do you, too, show yourself of a gracious mind; ¹⁷⁹ But let him [Agamemnon] make amends to you with a rich feast [*dais*] in the tents, [180] so that you may have no lack in *dikē*. As for you, son of Atreus, treat people more righteously in future; it is no disgrace even to a king that he should make amends if he was wrong in the first instance.”

And King Agamemnon answered, [185] “Son of Laertes, your words please me well, for throughout you have spoken wisely. I will swear as you would have me do; I do so of my own free will, neither shall I take the name of a superhuman force [*daimōn*] in vain. Let, then, Achilles wait, though he would fain fight at once, [190] and do you others wait also, till the gifts come from my tent and we ratify the oath with sacrifice. Thus, then, do I charge you: choose [*krinein*] some noble young Achaeans to go with you, and bring from my tents the gifts [195] that I promised yesterday to Achilles, and bring the women also; furthermore let Talthybios find me a boar from those that are with the army, and make it ready for sacrifice to Zeus and to the sun.”

Then said Achilles, “Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men Agamemnon, [200] see to these matters at some other season, when there is breathing time and when I am calmer. Would you have men eat while the bodies of those whom Hector son of Priam slew are still lying mangled upon the plain? [205] Let the sons of the Achaeans, say I, fight fasting and without food, till we have avenged them; afterwards at the going down of the sun let them eat their fill. As for me, [210] Patroklos is lying dead in my tent, all hacked and hewn, with his feet to the door, and his comrades are mourning round him. Therefore I can take thought of nothing save only slaughter and blood and the rattle in the throat of the dying.”

[215] Odysseus answered, “Achilles, son of Peleus, mightiest of all the Achaeans, in battle you are better than I, and that more than a little, but in counsel I am much before you, for I am older and of greater knowledge. [220] Therefore be patient under my words. Fighting is a thing of which men soon surfeit, and when Zeus, who is war’s steward, weighs the upshot, it may well prove that the straw which our sickles have reaped is far heavier than the grain. [225] It may not be that the Achaeans should mourn the dead with their bellies; day by day men fall thick and threefold continually; when should we have respite from our sorrow [*ponos*]? Let us mourn our dead for a day and bury them out of sight and mind, [230] but let those of us who are left eat and drink that we may arm and fight our foes more fiercely. In that hour let no man hold back, waiting for a second summons; [235] such summons shall bode ill for him who is found lagging behind at our ships; let us rather sally as one man and loose the fury of war upon the Trojans.”

When he had thus spoken he took with him the sons of glorious Nestor, with Meges son of Phyleus, Thoas, Meriones, Lykomedes [240] son of Kreontes, and Melanippos, and went to the tent of Agamemnon son of Atreus. The word was not sooner said than the deed was done: they brought out the seven tripods which Agamemnon had promised, with the twenty metal cauldrons and the twelve horses; [245] And they led

forth right away the women, skilled in flawless handiwork, ²⁴⁶ seven of them, and the eighth was Brisēis of the fair cheeks. Odysseus weighed out the ten talents of gold and then led the way back, while the young Achaeans brought the rest of the gifts, and laid them in the middle of the assembly.

Agamemnon [250] then rose, and Talthybios whose voice was like that of a god came to him with the boar. The son of Atreus drew the knife which he wore by the scabbard of his mighty sword, and began by cutting off some bristles from the boar, lifting up his hands [255] in prayer as he did so. The other Achaeans sat where they were all silent and orderly to hear the king, and Agamemnon looked into the vault of the heavens and prayed saying, “I call Zeus the first and mightiest of all gods to witness, I call also Earth and Sun and the Furies [*Erinyes*] who dwell below [260] and take vengeance on him who shall swear falsely, that I have laid no hand upon the girl Brisēis, neither to take her to my bed nor otherwise, but that she has remained in my tents inviolate. If I swear falsely may the gods visit me [265] with all the penalties which they mete out to those who perjure themselves.”

He cut the boar’s throat as he spoke, whereon Talthybios whirled it round his head, and flung it into the wide sea to feed the fishes. Then Achilles also rose and said to the battle-fond Argives, [270] “Father Zeus, truly you give derangement [*atē*] to men and damage them. The son of Atreus had not else stirred me to so fierce an anger, nor so stubbornly taken Brisēis from me against my will. Surely Zeus must have counseled the destruction of many an Argive. [275] Go, now, and take your food that we may begin fighting.”

Then he broke up the assembly, and every man went back to his own ship. The Myrmidons attended to the presents and took them away to the ship of godlike Achilles. [280] They placed them in his tents, while the attendants [*therapontes*] drove the horses in among the others.

²⁸² Then Brisēis, looking like golden Aphrodite, ²⁸³ saw Patroklos all cut apart by the sharp bronze, and, when she saw him, ²⁸⁴ she poured herself all over him in tears and wailed with a voice most clear, and with her hands she tore at [285] her breasts and her tender neck and her beautiful face. ²⁸⁶ And then she spoke, weeping, this woman who looked like the goddesses: ²⁸⁷ “O Patroklos, you have been most gracious to me in my terrible state and most gratifying to my heart. ²⁸⁸ You were alive when I last saw you on my way out from the shelter ²⁸⁹ —and now I come back to find you dead, you, the protector of your people [290] —that is what I come back to find. Oh, how I have one misfortune after the next to welcome me. ²⁹¹ The man to whom I was given away by my father and by my mother the queen ²⁹² —I saw that man lying there in front of the city, all cut apart by the sharp bronze, ²⁹³ and lying near him were my three brothers— all of us were born of one mother— ²⁹⁴ they are all a cause for my sorrow, since they have all met up with their time of destruction. [295] No, you [= Patroklos] did not let me—back when my husband was killed by swift-footed Achilles, ²⁹⁶ killed by him, and when the city of my godlike Mynes [= my husband] was destroyed by him ²⁹⁷ —you did not let me weep, back then, but you told me that godlike Achilles ²⁹⁸ would have me as a properly courted wife, that you would make that happen, and that you would take me on board the ships, ²⁹⁹ taking me all the way to Phthia, and that you would arrange for a wedding feast among the Myrmidons. [300] So now I cannot stop crying for you, now that you are dead, you who were always so sweet and gentle.”

³⁰¹ So she [= Brisēis] spoke, weeping, and the women kept on mourning in response. ³⁰² They mourned for Patroklos, that was their pretext, but they were all mourning, each and every one of them, for what they really cared for in their sorrow. The elders of the Achaeans gathered round Achilles and prayed him to take food, but he groaned and would not do so. [305] “I pray you,” said he, “if any comrade will hear me, bid

me neither eat nor drink, for I am in great heaviness, and will stay fasting even to the going down of the sun.”

Then he sent the other princes away, [310] save only the two sons of Atreus and radiant Odysseus, Nestor, Idomeneus, and the old charioteer Phoenix, who stayed behind and tried to comfort him in the bitterness of his sorrow [*akhos*]: ³¹² nor was he gladdened in his *thūmos* ³¹³ until he entered the jaws of bloody war, and he fetched sigh on sigh, thinking ever of Patroklos. Then he said,

[315] “Hapless and dearest comrade, you it was who would get a good dinner ready for me at once and without delay when the Achaeans were hastening to fight the Trojans. ³¹⁹ But now there you are, lying there, all cut up, while my heart [320] is wanting, though I have drink and food [in my shelter], ³²¹ because of my longing [*pothē*] for you. There is nothing I could possibly suffer that would be worse than this, ³²² not even if I were to hear news that my father died ³²³ —who is now in Phthia weeping gently ³²⁴ about losing the kind of son that he has, and here I am, this son that I am, in a foreign country [*dēmos*], [325] and I am waging war here for the sake of that dreadful Helen ³²⁶ —or if I heard news that my dear son died, the one who is being brought up in Skyros — ³²⁷ if in fact godlike Neoptolemos is still living. Till now I was sure that I alone was to fall here at Troy away from Argos, [330] while you were to return to Phthia, bring back my son with you in your own ship, and show him all my property, my bondsmen, and the greatness of my house—for Peleus must surely be either [335] dead, or what little life remains to him is oppressed alike with the infirmities of age and ever present fear lest he should hear the sad tidings of my death.”

He wept as he spoke, and the elders sighed in concert as each thought on what he had left at home behind him. [340] The son of Kronos looked down with pity upon them, and said presently to Athena, “My child, you have quite deserted your hero; is he then gone so clean out of your

recollection? There [345] he sits by the ships all desolate for the loss of his dear comrade, and though the others are gone to their dinner he will neither eat nor drink. Go then and drop nectar and ambrosia into his breast, that he may know no hunger.”

With these words he urged Athena, who was already of the same mind. [350] She darted down from the heavens into the air like some falcon sailing on his broad wings and screaming. Meanwhile the Achaeans were arming throughout the army, and when Athena had dropped nectar and ambrosia into Achilles so that no cruel hunger should cause his limbs to fail him, [355] she went back to the house of her mighty father. Thick as the chill snow-flakes shed from the hand of Zeus and borne on the keen blasts of the north wind, even so thick did the gleaming helmets, [360] the bossed shields, the strongly plated breastplates, and the ashen spears stream from the ships. The sheen pierced the sky, the whole land was radiant with their flashing armor, and the sound of the tramp of their treading rose from under their feet. In the midst of them all radiant Achilles put on his armor; [365] he gnashed his teeth, his eyes gleamed like fire, for his grief [*akhos*] was greater than he could bear. Thus, then, full of fury against the Trojans, did he don the gift of the god, the armor that Hephaistos had made him. ³⁶⁸ He [= Achilles] put it [= his armor] on, the gifts of the god, which Hephaistos had made for him with much labor.

³⁶⁹ First he put around his legs the shin guards, [370] beautiful ones, with silver fastenings at the ankles. ³⁷¹ Next he put around his chest the breastplate, ³⁷² and around his shoulders he slung the sword with the nails of silver, ³⁷³ a sword made of bronze. Next, the Shield [*sakos*], great and mighty, ³⁷⁴ he took on, and from it there was a gleam [*selas*] from afar, as from the moon, [375] or as when, from the sea [*pontos*], a gleam [*selas*] to sailors appears [*phainesthai*] ³⁷⁶ from a blazing fire, the kind that blazes high in the mountains ³⁷⁷ at a solitary [*oiopolos*] station [*stathmos*], as the sailors are carried unwilling by gusts of wind ³⁷⁸ over the fish-

swarming sea [*pontos*], far away from their loved ones [*philoi*]³⁷⁹—so also did the gleam [*selas*] emanating from the Shield [*sakos*] of Achilles reach all the way up to the aether. [380] He lifted the redoubtable helmet, and set it upon his head, from whence it shone like a star, and the golden plumes which Hephaistos had set thick about the ridge of the helmet, waved all around it. Then radiant Achilles made trial of himself in his armor [385] to see whether it fitted him, so that his limbs could play freely under it, and it seemed to buoy him up as though it had been wings.

He also drew his father's spear out of the spear-stand, a spear so great and heavy and strong that none of the Achaeans save only Achilles had strength to wield it; [390] the Pelian ash-spear, which Cheiron had given to his *philos* father,³⁹¹ from the heights of Mount Pelion, to be death for heroes. Automedon and Alkimos busied themselves with the harnessing of his horses; they made the bands fast about them, and put the bit in their mouths, drawing the reins back [395] towards the chariot. Automedon, whip in hand, sprang up behind the horses, and after him Achilles mounted in full armor, resplendent as the sun-god Hyperion. Then with a loud voice he chided with his father's horses saying, [400] "Xanthos and Balios, famed offspring of Podarge—this time when we have done fighting be sure and bring your driver safely back to the army of the Achaeans, and do not leave him dead on the plain as you did Patroklos."

Then fleet Xanthos answered under the yoke— [405] for white-armed Hera had endowed him with human speech—and he bowed his head till his mane touched the ground as it hung down from under the yoke-band. "Dread Achilles," said he, "we will indeed save you now, but the day of your death is near, and we will not be responsible [*aitioi*], [410] for it will be the gods and stern fate that will destroy you. Neither was it through any sloth or slackness on our part that the Trojans stripped Patroklos of his armor; it was the mighty god whom lovely-haired Leto bore that slew him as he fought among the foremost, and granted a

triumph to Hector. [415] We two can fly as swiftly as Zephyros who they say is fleetest of all winds; nevertheless it is your doom to fall by the hand of a man and of a god.”

When he had thus spoken, the Furies [*Erinyes*] blocked his speaking any further, and fleet Achilles answered him in great sadness, saying, [420] “Why, O Xanthos, do you thus foretell my death? You need not do so, for I well know that I am to fall here, far from my dear father and mother; none the more, however, shall I stay my hand till I have given the Trojans their fill of fighting.”

So saying, with a loud cry he drove his horses to the front.

2019-12-12

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 20

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thus, then, did the Achaeans arm by their ships round you, O son of Peleus, who were hungering for battle; while the Trojans over against them armed upon the rise of the plain.

Meanwhile Zeus from the top of Olympus with its many valleys, bade Themis gather the gods in council, [5] whereon she went about and called them to the house of Zeus. There was not a river absent except Okeanos, nor a single one of the nymphs that haunt fair groves, or springs of rivers and meadows of green grass. [10] When they reached the house of cloud-compelling Zeus, they took their seats in the arcades of polished marble which Hephaistos with his consummate skill had made for father Zeus.

In such a way, therefore, did they gather in the house of Zeus. Poseidon also, lord of the earthquake, obeyed the call of the goddess, and came up out of the sea to join them. [15] There, sitting in the midst of them, he asked what Zeus' purpose might be. "Why," said he, "wielder of the lightning, have you called the gods in council? Are you considering some matter that concerns the Trojans and Achaeans—for the blaze of battle is on the point of being kindled between them?"

And Zeus answered, [20] "You know my purpose, shaker of earth, and wherefore I have called you here. I take thought for them even in their destruction. For my own part I shall stay here seated on Mount Olympus and look on in peace, but do you others go about among Trojans and Achaeans, and help either side as you may be severally disposed in your thinking [*noos*]. [25] If Achilles fights the Trojans without hindrance

they will make no stand against him; they have ever trembled at the sight of him, and now that he is roused to such fury about his comrade, [30] he will override fate itself and storm their city.”

Thus spoke Zeus and gave the word for war, whereon the gods took their several sides and went into battle. Hera, Pallas Athena, earth-encircling Poseidon, Hermes bringer of good luck and excellent in all cunning— [35] all these joined the army that came from the assembly [*agōn*] of ships; with them also came Hephaistos in all his glory, limping, but yet with his thin legs plying lustily under him. Arēs of gleaming helmet joined the Trojans, and with him Apollo of locks unshorn, and the archer goddess Artemis, [40] Leto, Xanthos, and laughter-loving Aphrodite.

So long as the gods held themselves aloof from mortal warriors the Achaeans were triumphant, for Achilles who had long refused to fight was now with them. There was not a Trojan but his limbs failed him for fear [45] as he beheld the fleet son of Peleus all glorious in his armor, and looking like Arēs himself. When, however, the Olympians came to take their part among men, right then and there arose strong Strife, rouser of armies, and Athena raised her loud voice, now standing by the deep trench that ran outside the wall, [50] and now shouting with all her might upon the shore of the sounding sea. Arēs also bellowed out upon the other side, dark as some black thunder-cloud, and called on the Trojans at the top of his voice, now from the acropolis, and now speeding up the side of the river Simoeis till he came to the hill Kallikolone.

Thus did the gods spur on both armies [55] to fight, and rouse fierce contention also among themselves. The sire of gods and men thundered from the heavens above, while from beneath Poseidon shook the vast earth, and bade the high hills tremble. The spurs and crests of many-fountained Ida quaked, [60] as also the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaeans. Hādēs, king of the realms below, was struck with fear;

he sprang panic-stricken from his throne and cried aloud in terror lest Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, should crack the ground over his head, and lay bare his moldy mansions to the sight of mortals and immortals— [65] mansions so ghastly grim that even the gods shudder to think of them. Such was the uproar as the gods came together in battle. Apollo with his arrows took his stand to face King Poseidon, while owl-vision Athena took hers against the god of war; [70] the archer-goddess Artemis with her golden arrows, sister of far-darting Apollo, stood to face Hera; generous Hermes the lusty bringer of good luck faced Leto, while the mighty eddying river whom men call Skamandros, but gods Xanthos, matched himself against Hephaistos.

[75] The gods, then, were thus ranged against one another. But the heart of Achilles was set on meeting Hector, son of Priam, for it was with his blood that he longed above all things else to glut the stubborn lord of battle. Meanwhile Apollo set Aeneas on to attack [80] the son of Peleus, and put courage into his heart, speaking with the voice of Lykaon, son of Priam. In his likeness therefore, he said to Aeneas, “Aeneas, counselor of the Trojans, where are now the brave words with which you vaunted over your wine before the Trojan princes, [85] saying that you would fight Achilles, son of Peleus, in single combat?”

And Aeneas answered, “Why do you thus bid me fight the proud son of Peleus, when I am in no mind to do so? [90] Were I to face him now, it would not be for the first time. His spear has already put me to flight from Ida, when he attacked our cattle and ransacked Lyrnessos and Pedasos; Zeus indeed saved me in that he granted me strength to flee, else I had fallen by the hands of Achilles and Athena, [95] who went before him to protect him and urged him to fall upon the Leleges and Trojans. No man may fight Achilles, for one of the gods is always with him as his guardian, and even were it not so, his weapon flies ever straight, and fails not [100] to pierce the flesh of him who is against him; if the gods would let me fight him to the finish [*telos*] on even

terms, he should not soon overcome me, though he boasts that he is made of bronze.”

Then said King Apollo, son to Zeus, “Nay, hero, pray [105] to the ever-living gods, for men say that you were born of Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite, whereas Achilles is son to a goddess of inferior rank. Aphrodite is child to Zeus, while Thetis is but daughter to the old man of the sea. Bring, therefore, your spear to bear upon him, and let him not scare you with his taunts and menaces.”

[110] As he spoke he put courage into the heart of the shepherd of his people, and he strode in full armor among the ranks of the foremost fighters. Nor did the son of Anchises escape the notice of white-armed Hera, as he went forth into the throng to meet Achilles. She called the gods about her, and said, [115] “Look to it, you two, Poseidon and Athena, and consider how this shall be; Phoebus Apollo has been sending Aeneas clad in full armor to fight Achilles. [120] Shall we turn him back at once, or shall one of us stand by Achilles and endow him with strength so that his heart fail not, and he may learn that the chiefs of the immortals are on his side, while the others who have all along been defending the Trojans are but vain helpers? [125] Let us all come down from Olympus and join in the fight, that this day he may take no hurt at the hands of the Trojans. Hereafter let him suffer whatever fate may have spun out for him when he was begotten and his mother bore him. If Achilles be not thus assured by the voice of a god, [130] he may come to fear presently when one of us meets him in battle, for the gods are terrible if they are seen face to face.”

Poseidon lord of the earthquake answered her saying, “Hera, restrain your fury, which has made you veer in your thinking [*noos*]; it is not well; I am not in favor of forcing the other gods to fight us, [135] for the advantage is too greatly on our own side; let us take our places on some hill out of the beaten track, and let mortals fight it out among themselves. If Arēs or Phoebus Apollo begin fighting, or keep Achilles in

check so that he cannot fight, [140] we too, will at once raise the cry of battle, and in that case they will soon leave the field and go back vanquished to Olympus among the other gods.”

With these words the dark-haired god led the way [145] to the high earth-mound of godlike Hēraklēs, built round solid masonry, and made by the Trojans and Pallas Athena for him to flee to when the sea-monster was chasing him from the shore onto the plain. Here Poseidon and those that were with him took their seats, [150] wrapped in a thick cloud of darkness; but the other gods seated themselves on the brow of Kallikolone round you, O Phoebus, and Arēs, the waster of cities.

Thus did the gods sit apart and form their plans, but neither side was willing to begin battle with the other, [155] and Zeus from his seat on high was in command over them all. Meanwhile the whole plain was alive with men and horses, and blazing with the gleam of armor. The earth rang again under the tramp of their feet as they rushed towards each other, and two champions, by far the foremost of them all, met between the armies to fight— [160] to wit, Aeneas, son of Anchises, and noble Achilles.

Aeneas was first to stride forward in attack, his doughty helmet tossing defiance as he came on. He held his strong shield before his breast, and brandished his bronze spear. The son of Peleus from the other side sprang forth to meet him, like some fierce lion [165] that the whole population [*dēmos*] has met to hunt and kill—at first he bodes no ill, but when some daring youth has struck him with a spear, he crouches openmouthed, his jaws foam, he roars with fury, [170] he lashes his tail from side to side about his ribs and loins, ¹⁷¹ and it is impelling itself to fight glaring as he springs straight before him with force [*menos*], to find out whether he is to slay, or be slain among the foremost of his foes— ¹⁷⁴ so also the *menos* and overweening *thūmos* of Achilles impelled him onwards [175] to spring upon great-hearted Aeneas.

When they were now close up with one another Achilles was first to speak. ¹⁷⁸ “Aeneas! Why are you standing so far up front in the battle? ¹⁷⁹ Does your *thūmos* urge you to fight against me [180] because you hope to be king of the horse-taming Trojans, ¹⁸¹ which is the *tīmē* of Priam? But even if you kill me, ¹⁸² Priam will not place the honorific portion [*geras*] in your hand on that account. ¹⁸³ He has children, and he is sound and not unstable. Or have the Trojans been allotting you a demesne of passing richness, [185] fair with orchard lawns and wheat lands, if you should slay me? This you shall hardly do. I have discomfited you once already. Have you forgotten how when you were alone I chased you from your herds helter-skelter down the slopes of Ida? [190] You did not turn round to look behind you; you took refuge in Lyrnessos, but I attacked the city, and with the help of Athena and father Zeus I ransacked it and carried its women into captivity, though Zeus and the other gods rescued you. You think they will protect you now, but they will not do so; [195] therefore I say go back into the army, and do not face me, or you will rue it. Even a fool may be wise after the event.”

Then Aeneas answered, [200] “Son of Peleus! Do not hope to intimidate me with words [*epos* plural] as if I were some child. ²⁰¹ For I myself know clearly how to tell ²⁰² reproaches [*kertomiai*] and unseemly things. ²⁰³ We know each other’s lineage, we know each other’s parentage, ²⁰⁴ hearing the famed words [*epos* plural] of mortal men. [205] But by sight you have never yet seen my parents, nor I yours. Men say that you are son to noble Peleus, and that your mother is Thetis, fair-haired daughter of the sea. I have noble Anchises for my father, and Aphrodite for my mother; [210] the parents of one or other of us shall this day mourn a son, for it will be more than silly talk that shall part us when the fight is over. Learn, then, my lineage if you will—and it is known to many.

[215] In the beginning Dardanos was the son of Zeus, and founded Dardania, for Ilion was not yet established on the plain for men to dwell in, and her people still abode on the spurs of many-fountained Ida.

Dardanos had a son, king Erikhthonios, [220] who was wealthiest of all men living; he had three thousand mares that fed by the water-meadows, they and their foals with them. Boreas was enamored of them as they were feeding, and covered them in the semblance of a dark-maned stallion. [225] Twelve female foals did they conceive and bear him, and these, as they sped over the fertile plain, would go bounding on over the ripe ears of wheat and not break them; or again when they would disport themselves on the broad back of Ocean they could gallop on the crest of a breaker. [230] Erikhthonios begat Tros, king of the Trojans, and Tros had three noble sons, Ilos, Assarakos, and godlike Ganymede who was comeliest of mortal men; wherefore the gods carried him off to be Zeus' cupbearer, [235] on account of his beauty, so that he might be among the Immortals. Ilos begat Laomedon, and Laomedon begat Tithonos, Priam, Lampos, Klytios, and Hiketaon of the stock of Arēs. But Assarakos was father to Kapys, and Kapys to Anchises, [240] who was my father, while Hector the radiant is son to Priam.

Such do I declare my blood and lineage, but as for excellence [*aretē*], Zeus gives it or takes it as he will, for he is lord of all. And now let there be no more of this prating [245] in mid-battle as though we were children. ²⁴⁶ It is possible for the two of us to tell each other very many reproaches [*oneidos* plural], ²⁴⁷ and not even a hundred-benched ship could bear their burden. ²⁴⁸ But the tongue of men is twisted, bearing many stories ²⁴⁹ of all kinds. And there is a manifold range of words [*epos* plural] from place to place. [250] The sort of *epos* you say is just the thing that you will hear told about yourself. ²⁵¹ But why must there be strife [*eris*] and quarrels [*neikos* plural] for the two of us ²⁵² to make *neikos* against each other, like women ²⁵³ who are angry in a *thūmos*-devouring *eris* ²⁵⁴ and who make *neikos* against each other in the middle of the assembly, [255] saying many true things and many false. Anger urges them on. ²⁵⁶ But I am eager for battle and you will not deflect me from my strength with *epos* [plural] —therefore let us make trial of one another with our spears.”

As he spoke he drove his spear at the great and terrible shield of Achilles, which rang out as the point struck it. [260] The son of Peleus held the shield before him with his strong hand, and he was afraid, for he thought that great-hearted Aeneas' spear would go through it quite easily, [265] not reflecting that the god's glorious gifts were little likely to yield before the blows of mortal men; and indeed war-wise Aeneas' spear did not pierce the shield, for the layer of gold, gift of the god, stayed the point. It went through two layers, [270] but the god had made the shield in five, two of bronze, the two innermost ones of tin, and one of gold; it was in this that the spear was stayed.

Achilles in his turn threw, and struck the round shield of Aeneas [275] at the very edge, where the bronze was thinnest; the spear of Pelian ash went clean through, and the shield rang under the blow; Aeneas was afraid, and crouched backwards, holding the shield away from him; the spear, however, flew over his back, and stuck quivering in the ground, [280] after having gone through both circles of the sheltering shield. Aeneas though he had avoided the spear, stood still, blinded with fear and grief [*akhos*] because the weapon had gone so near him; then Achilles sprang furiously upon him, [285] with a cry as of death and with his keen blade drawn, and Aeneas seized a great stone, so huge that two men, as men now are, would be unable to lift it, but Aeneas wielded it quite easily.

Aeneas would then have struck Achilles as he was springing towards him, either on the helmet, or on the shield that covered him, [290] and Achilles would have closed with him and dispatched him with his sword, had not Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, been quick to mark, and said right then and there to the immortals, "Alas, I feel grief [*akhos*] for great Aeneas, who will now go down to the house of Hādēs, [295] vanquished by the son of Peleus. Fool that he was to give ear to the counsel of Apollo. Apollo will never save him from destruction. Why should this man suffer grief [*akhos*] when he is guiltless, to no purpose, and in another's quarrel? Has he not at all times offered acceptable sacrifice to

the gods that dwell in the heavens? [300] Let us then snatch him from death's jaws, lest the son of Kronos be angry should Achilles slay him. It is fated, moreover, that he should escape, and that the race of Dardanos, whom Zeus loved above all the sons born to him of mortal women, [305] shall not perish utterly without seed or sign. ³⁰⁶ For the son of Kronos has already abominated the line of Priam. ³⁰⁷ And presently the might [*biē*] of Aeneas will be king of the Trojans ³⁰⁸ and his children's children, who are to be born hereafter."

Then answered ox-vision Hera, [310] "Earth-shaker, look to this matter yourself, and consider concerning Aeneas, whether you will save him, or suffer him, brave though he be, to fall by the hand of Achilles son of Peleus. For of a truth we two, I and Pallas Athena, [315] have sworn full many a time before all the immortals, that never would we shield Trojans from destruction, not even when all Troy is burning in the flames that the Achaeans shall kindle."

When earth-encircling Poseidon heard this he went into the battle amid the clash of spears, [320] and came to the place where Achilles and Aeneas were. Right then and there he shed a darkness before the eyes of the son of Peleus, drew the bronze-headed ashen spear from the shield of Aeneas, and laid it at the feet of Achilles. [325] Then he lifted Aeneas on high from off the earth and hurried him away. Over the heads of many a band of warriors both horse and foot did he soar as the god's hand sped him, till he came to the very fringe of the battle where the Kaukones were arming themselves for fight. Poseidon, shaker of the earth, then came near to him [330] and said, "Aeneas, what god has egged you on to this folly in fighting the son of Peleus, who is both a mightier man of valor and more beloved of heaven than you are? Give way before him whenever you meet him, lest you go down to the house of Hādēs even though fate would have it otherwise. When Achilles is dead you may then fight among the foremost undaunted, for none other of the Achaeans shall slay you."

[340] The god left him when he had given him these instructions, and at once removed the darkness from before the eyes of Achilles, who opened them wide indeed and said in great anger, “Alas! what marvel am I now beholding? [345] Here is my spear upon the ground, but I see not him whom I meant to kill when I hurled it. Of a truth Aeneas also must be under heaven’s protection, although I had thought his boasting was idle. Let him go hang; he will be in no mood to fight me further, [350] seeing how narrowly he has missed being killed. I will now give my orders to the Danaans and attack some other of the Trojans.”

He sprang forward along the line and cheered his men on as he did so. “Let not the Trojans,” he cried, “keep you at arm’s length, Achaeans, [355] but go for them and fight them man for man. However valiant I may be, I cannot give chase to so many and fight all of them. Even Arēs, who is an immortal, or Athena, would shrink from flinging himself into the jaws of such a fight and laying about him; nevertheless, [360] so far as in me lies I will show no slackness of hand or foot nor want of endurance, not even for a moment; I will utterly break their ranks, and woe to the Trojan who shall venture within reach of my spear.”

Thus did he exhort them. Meanwhile glorious Hector called upon the Trojans [365] and declared that he would fight Achilles. “Be not afraid, proud Trojans,” said he, “to face the son of Peleus; I could fight gods myself if the battle were one of words only, but they would be more than a match for me, if we had to use our spears. Even so the deed of Achilles will fall somewhat short of the outcome [*telos*] [370] of his word; he will do in part, and the other part he will clip short. I will go up against him though his hands be as fire—though his hands be fire and his strength iron.”

Thus urged the Trojans lifted up their spears against the Achaeans, and raised the cry of battle as they flung themselves into the midst of their ranks. [375] But Phoebus Apollo came up to Hector and said, “Hector, on no account must you challenge Achilles to single combat; keep a

lookout for him while you are under cover of the others and away from the thick of the fight, otherwise he will either hit you with a spear or cut you down at close quarters.”

Thus he spoke, and Hector drew back within the crowd, [380] for he was afraid when he heard what the god had said to him. Achilles then sprang upon the Trojans with a terrible cry, clothed in valor as with a garment. First he killed Iphition great son of Otrynteus, a leader of many people whom a naiad nymph had borne to Otrynteus waster of cities, [385] in the district [*dēmos*] of Hyde under the snowy heights of Mount Tmolos. Great Achilles struck him full on the head as he was coming on towards him, and split it clean in two; whereon he fell heavily to the ground and Achilles vaunted over him saying, “You be low, son of Otrynteus, mighty hero; [390] your death is here, but your lineage is on the Gygaean lake where your father’s estate lies, by Hyllos, rich in fish, and the eddying waters of Hermos.”

Thus did he vaunt, but darkness closed the eyes of the other. The chariots of the Achaeans cut him up as their wheels passed over him in the front of the battle, [395] and after him Achilles killed Demoleon, a valiant man of war and son to Antenor. He struck him on the temple through his bronze-cheeked helmet. The helmet did not stay the spear, but it went right on, crushing the bone [400] so that the brain inside was shed in all directions, and his lust of fighting was ended. Then he struck Hippodamas in the midriff as he was springing down from his chariot in front of him, and trying to escape. He breathed his last, bellowing like a bull bellows when young men are dragging him to offer him in sacrifice to the King of Helike, [405] and the heart of the earth-shaker is glad; even so did he bellow as he lay dying. Achilles then went in pursuit of godlike Polydoros, son of Priam, whom his father had always forbidden to fight because he was the youngest of his sons, [410] the one he loved best, and the fastest runner. He, in his folly and showing off the excellence [*aretē*] of his speed, was rushing about among front ranks until he lost his life, for swift-footed radiant Achilles struck

him in the middle of the back as he was darting past him: [415] he struck him just at the golden fastenings of his belt and where the two pieces of the double breastplate overlapped. The point of the spear pierced him through and came out by the navel, whereon he fell groaning on to his knees and a cloud of darkness overshadowed him as he sank holding his entrails in his hands.

When Hector saw his brother Polydoros with his entrails in his hands [420] and sinking down upon the ground, a mist came over his eyes, and he could not bear to keep longer at a distance; he therefore poised his spear and darted towards Achilles like a flame of fire. When Achilles saw him he bounded forward and vaunted saying, [425] “This is he that has wounded my heart most deeply and has slain my beloved comrade. Not for long shall we two quail before one another on the highways of war.”

He looked fiercely on radiant Hector and said, “Draw near, that you may meet your doom the sooner.” [430] Hector feared him not and answered, “Son of Peleus, think not that your words can scare me as though I were a child; I too if I will can brag and talk unseemly; I know that you are a mighty warrior, mightier by far than I, [435] nevertheless the issue lies in the lap of heaven whether I, worse man though I be, may not slay you with my spear, for this too has been found keen before now.”

He hurled his spear as he spoke, but Athena breathed upon it, [440] and though she breathed but very lightly she turned it back from going towards renowned Achilles, so that it returned to glorious Hector and lay at his feet in front of him. Achilles then sprang furiously on him with a loud cry, bent on killing him, but Apollo caught him up easily as a god can, and hid him in a thick darkness. [445] Thrice did swift-footed radiant Achilles spring towards him spear in hand, and three times did he waste his blow upon the air. When he rushed forward for the fourth time as though he were a superhuman force [*daimōn*] he shouted aloud saying, “Hound, this time too you have escaped death— [450] but of a

truth it came exceedingly near you. Phoebus Apollo, to whom it seems you pray before you go into battle, has again saved you; but if I too have any friend among the gods I will surely make an end of you when I come across you at some other time. Now, however, I will pursue and overtake other Trojans.”

[455] Then he struck Dryops with his spear, about the middle of his neck, and he fell headlong at his feet. There he let him lie and stayed Demoukhos son of Philetor, a man both brave and of great stature, by hitting him on the knee with a spear; then he smote him with his sword and killed him. [460] After this he sprang on Laogonos and Dardanos, sons of Bias, and threw them from their chariot, the one with a blow from a thrown spear, while the other he cut down in hand-to-hand fight. There was also Tros the son of Alastor—he came up to Achilles and clasped his knees [465] in the hope that he would spare him and not kill him but let him go, because they were both of the same age. Fool, he might have known that he should not prevail with him, for the man was in no mood for pity or forbearance but was in grim earnest. Therefore when Tros laid hold of his knees and sought a hearing for his prayers, Achilles drove his sword into his liver, [470] and the liver came rolling out, while his bosom was all covered with the black blood that welled from the wound. Thus did death close his eyes as he lay lifeless.

Achilles then went up to Moullos and struck him on the ear with a spear, and the bronze spear-head came right out at the other ear. He also struck Ekheklos son of Agenor on the head with his sword, [475] which became warm with the blood, while death and stern fate closed the eyes of Ekheklos. Next in order the bronze point of his spear wounded Deukalion in the fore-arm where the sinews of the elbow are united, whereon he waited Achilles’ onset [480] with his arm hanging down and death staring him in the face. Achilles cut his head off with a blow from his sword and flung it helmet and all away from him, and the marrow came oozing out of his backbone as he lay. He then went in pursuit of Rhigmos, [485] noble son of Peires, who had come from

fertile Thrace, and struck him through the middle with a spear which fixed itself in his belly, so that he fell headlong from his chariot. He also speared Areithoös, attendant [*therapōn*] to Rhigmos, in the back as he was turning his horses in flight, and thrust him from his chariot, while the horses were struck with panic.

[490] As a fire raging in some mountain glen after long drought—and the dense forest is in a blaze, while the wind carries great tongues of fire in every direction—even so furiously did Achilles rage, wielding his spear as though he were a superhuman force [*daimōn*], and giving chase to those whom he would slay, till the dark earth ran with blood. [495] Or as one who yokes broad-browed oxen that they may tread barley in a threshing-floor—and it is soon bruised small under the feet of the lowing cattle—even so did the horses of great-hearted Achilles trample on the shields and bodies of the slain. [500] The axle underneath and the railing that ran round the car were bespattered with clots of blood thrown up by the horses' hooves, and from the tires of the wheels; but the son of Peleus pressed on to win still further glory, and his hands were bedrabbled with gore.

Homeric *Iliad* **Rhapsody 21**

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now when they came to the ford of the full-flowing river Xanthos, begotten of immortal Zeus, Achilles cut their forces in two: one half he chased over the plain towards the city by the same way that the Achaeans had taken when fleeing panic-stricken [5] on the preceding day with glorious Hector in full triumph; this way did they flee pell-mell, and Hera sent down a thick mist in front of them to stay them. The other half were hemmed in by the deep silver-eddy stream, [10] and fell into it with a great uproar. The waters resounded, and the banks rang again, as they swam hither and thither with loud cries amid the whirling eddies. As locusts flying to a river before the blast of a grass fire—the flame comes on and on till at last it overtakes them and they huddle into the water— [15] even so was the eddy stream of Xanthos filled with the uproar of men and horses, all struggling in confusion before Achilles.

Right then and there the heaven-descended hero left his spear upon the bank, leaning it against a tamarisk bush, and plunged into the river like a superhuman force [*daimōn*], armed with his sword only. Fell was his purpose as he hewed the Trojans down on every side. [20] Their dying groans rose hideous as the sword smote them, and the river ran red with blood. As when fish flee scared before a huge dolphin, and fill every nook and corner of some fair haven—for he is sure to eat all he can catch— [25] even so did the Trojans cower under the banks of the mighty river, and when Achilles' arms grew weary with killing them, he drew twelve youths alive out of the water, to sacrifice in revenge for Patroklos, son of Menoitios. He drew them out like dazed fawns, [30] bound their hands behind them with the belts of their own khitons, and gave them

over to his men to take back to the ships. Then he sprang into the river, thirsting for still further blood.

[35] There he found Lykaon, son of Priam, seed of Dardanos, as he was escaping out of the water; he it was whom he had once taken prisoner when he was in his father's vineyard, having set upon him by night, as he was cutting young shoots from a wild fig-tree to make the wicker sides of a chariot. [40] Achilles then caught him to his sorrow unawares, and sent him by sea to Lemnos, where the son of Jason bought him. But a guest-friend, Eëtion of Imbros, freed him with a great sum, and sent him to Arisbe, whence he had escaped and returned to his father's house. [45] He had spent eleven days diverting his heart [*thūmos*] with his friends after he had come from Lemnos, but on the twelfth heaven again delivered him into the hands of Achilles, who was to send him to the house of Hādēs sorely against his will. He was unarmed when swift-footed Achilles caught sight of him, and had neither helmet nor shield; [50] nor yet had he any spear, for he had thrown all his armor from him on to the bank, and was sweating with his struggles to get out of the river, so that his strength was now failing him.

Then Achilles said to himself in his surprise, "What marvel do I see here? If this man can come back alive after having been sold over into Lemnos, [55] I shall have the Trojans also whom I have slain rising from the world below. Could not even the waters of the gray sea [*pontos*] imprison him, as they do many another whether he will or no? [60] This time let him taste my spear, that I may know for certain whether mother earth who can keep even a strong man down, will be able to hold him, or whether thence too he will return."

Thus did he pause and ponder. But Lykaon came up to him dazed [65] and trying hard to embrace his knees, for he would fain live, not die. Radiant Achilles thrust at him with his spear, meaning to kill him, but Lykaon ran crouching up to him and caught his knees, whereby the spear passed over his back, [70] and stuck in the ground, hungering

though it was for blood. With one hand he caught Achilles' knees as he besought him, and with the other he clutched the spear and would not let it go. Then he said, "Achilles, have mercy upon me and spare me, [75] for I am your suppliant. It was in your tents that I first broke bread on the day when you took me prisoner in the vineyard; after which you sold me away to Lemnos far from my father and my friends, and I brought you the price of a hundred oxen. [80] I have paid three times as much to gain my freedom; it is but twelve days that I have come to Ilion after much suffering, and now cruel fate has again thrown me into your hands. Surely father Zeus must hate me, that he has given me over to you a second time. [85] Short of life indeed did my mother Laothoe bear me, daughter of aged Altes—of Altes who reigns over the warlike Leleges and holds steep Pedasos on the river Satnioeis. Priam married his daughter along with many other women and two sons were born of her, [90] both of whom you will have slain. Your spear slew noble Polydoros as he was fighting in the front ranks, and now evil will here befall me, for I fear that I shall not escape you since a superhuman force [*daimōn*] has delivered me over to you. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart, [95] spare me, for I am not of the same womb as Hector who slew your gentle but strong comrade."

With such words did the princely son of Priam beseech Achilles; but Achilles answered him sternly. "Idiot," said he, "talk not to me of ransom. [100] Until Patroklos fell I preferred to give the Trojans quarter, and sold beyond the sea many of those whom I had taken alive; but now not a man shall live of those whom heaven delivers into my hands before the city of Ilion—and of all Trojans [105] it shall fare hardest with the sons of Priam. Therefore, my friend, you too shall die. Why should you whine in this way? Patroklos fell, and he was a better man than you are. I too—see you not how I am great and goodly? I am son to a noble father, and have a goddess for my mother, [110] but the hands of doom and death overshadow me all as surely. The day will come, either at dawn or dark, or at the noontide, when one shall take my life also in battle, either with his spear, or with an arrow sped from his bow."

[115] Thus did he speak, and Lykaon's heart sank within him. He loosed his hold of the spear, and held out both hands before him; but Achilles drew his keen blade, and struck him by the collar-bone on his neck; he plunged his two-edged sword into him to the very hilt, whereon he lay at full length on the ground, with the dark blood welling from him till the earth was soaked. [120] Then Achilles caught him by the foot and flung him into the river to go down stream, vaunting over him the while, and saying, "Lie there among the fishes, who will lick the blood from your wound and gloat over it; your mother shall not lay you on any bier to mourn you, [125] but the eddies of Skamandros shall bear you into the broad bosom of the sea. There shall the fishes feed on the fat of Lykaon as they dart under the dark ripple of the waters—so perish all of you till we reach the citadel of strong Ilion—you in flight, and I following after to destroy you. [130] The river with its broad silver stream shall serve you in no stead, for all the bulls you offered him and all the horses that you flung living into his waters. None the less miserably shall you perish till there is not a man of you but has paid in full for the death of Patroklos and the havoc you wrought among the Achaeans [135] whom you killed at the swift ships in my absence."

So spoke Achilles, but the river grew more and more angry, and pondered within himself how he should keep radiant Achilles out of the struggle [*ponos*] and save the Trojans from disaster. Meanwhile the son of Peleus, spear in hand, [140] sprang upon Asteropaios son of Pelegon to kill him. He was son to the broad river Axios and Periboia eldest daughter of Akessamenos; for the river had lain with her. Asteropaios stood up out of the water to face him [145] with a spear in either hand, and Xanthos filled him with courage, being angry for the death of the youths whom Achilles was slaying ruthlessly within his waters. When they were close up with one another swift-footed radiant Achilles was first to speak. [150] "Who and whence are you," said he, "who dare to face me? Woe to the parents whose son stands up against me." And the son of Pelegon answered, "Great son of Peleus, why should you ask my lineage. I am from the fertile land of far Paeonia, [155] leader of the

Paeonians, and it is now eleven days that I am at Ilion. I am of the blood of the river Axios—of Axios that is the fairest of all rivers that run. He begot the famed warrior Pelegon, [160] whose son men call me. Let us now fight, Achilles.”

Thus did he defy him, and Achilles raised his spear of Pelian ash. Asteropaios failed with both his spears, for he could use both hands alike; with the one spear he struck Achilles’ shield, [165] but did not pierce it, for the layer of gold, gift of the god, stayed the point; with the other spear he grazed the elbow of Achilles’ right arm drawing dark blood, but the spear itself went by him and fixed itself in the ground, foiled of its bloody banquet. Then Achilles, [170] fain to kill him, hurled his spear at Asteropaios, but failed to hit him and struck the steep bank of the river, driving the spear half its length into the earth. The son of Peleus then drew his sword and sprang furiously upon him. Asteropaios vainly tried to draw Achilles’ spear out of the bank by main force; three times did he tug at it, [175] trying with all his might to draw it out, and three times he had to leave off trying; the fourth time he tried to bend and break it, but before he could do so glorious Achilles smote him with his sword and killed him. He struck him in the belly near the navel, [180] so that all his bowels came gushing out on to the ground, and the darkness of death came over him as he lay gasping. Then Achilles set his foot on his chest and spoiled him of his armor, vaunting over him and saying, “Lie there – begotten of a river though you be, [185] it is hard for you to strive with the offspring of Kronos’ son. You declare yourself sprung from the blood of a broad river, but I am of the seed of mighty Zeus. My father is Peleus, son of Aiakos ruler over the many Myrmidons, and Aiakos was the son of Zeus. [190] Therefore as Zeus is mightier than any river that flows into the sea, so are his children stronger than those of any river whatsoever. Moreover you have a great river hard by if he can be of any use to you, but there is no fighting against Zeus the son of Kronos, with whom not even King Akheloos can compare, [195] nor the mighty stream of deep-flowing Okeanos, from whom all rivers and seas with all springs and deep wells proceed; even Okeanos fears the

lightnings of great Zeus, and his thunder that comes crashing out of heaven.”

[200] With this he drew his bronze spear out of the bank, and now that he had killed Asteropaios, he let him lie where he was on the sand, with the dark water flowing over him and the eels and fishes busy nibbling and gnawing the fat that was about his kidneys. [205] Then he went in chase of the Paeonians, who were fleeing along the bank of the river in panic when they saw their leader slain by the hands of the son of Peleus. Therein he slew Thersilokhos, Mydon, Astypylos, [210] Mnesos, Thrasios, Oineus, and Ophelestes, and he would have slain yet others, had not the river in anger taken human form, and spoken to him from out the deep waters saying, “Achilles, if you excel all in strength, [215] so do you also in wickedness, for the gods are ever with you to protect you: if, then, the son of Kronos has granted it to you to destroy all the Trojans, at any rate drive them out of my stream, and do your grim work on land. My fair waters are now filled with corpses, nor can I find any channel by which I may pour myself into the sea [220] for I am choked with dead, and yet you go on mercilessly slaying. I am in despair, therefore, O leader of your army, trouble me no further.”

Achilles answered, “So be it, Skamandros, Zeus-descended; but I will never cease dealing out death among the Trojans, [225] till I have pent them up in their city, and made trial of Hector face to face, that I may learn whether he is to vanquish me, or I him.”

As he spoke he set upon the Trojans with a fury like that of a superhuman force [*daimōn*]. But the river said to Apollo, “Surely, son of Zeus, lord of the silver bow, [230] you are not obeying the commands of Zeus who charged you strictly that you should stand by the Trojans and defend them, till twilight fades, and darkness is over an the earth.”

Meanwhile Achilles sprang from the bank into mid-stream, [235] whereon the river raised a high wave and attacked him. He swelled his

stream into a torrent, and swept away the many dead whom Achilles had slain and left within his waters. These he cast out on to the land, bellowing like a bull the while, but the living he saved alive, hiding them in his mighty eddies. [240] The great and terrible wave gathered about Achilles, falling upon him and beating on his shield, so that he could not keep his feet; he caught hold of a great elm-tree, but it came up by the roots, [245] and tore away the bank, damming the stream with its thick branches and bridging it all across; whereby Achilles struggled out of the stream, and fled full speed over the plain, for he was afraid.

But the mighty god ceased not in his pursuit, and sprang upon him with a dark-crested wave, [250] to keep him out of the struggle [*ponos*] and save the Trojans from destruction. The son of Peleus darted away a spear's throw from him; swift as the swoop of a black hunter-eagle which is the strongest and fleetest of all birds, even so did he spring forward, [255] and the armor rang loudly about his breast. He fled on in front, but the river with a loud roar came tearing after. As one who would water his garden leads a stream from some fountain over his plants, and all his ground—spade in hand he clears away the dams to free the channels, [260] and the little stones run rolling round and round with the water as it goes merrily down the bank faster than the man can follow—even so did the river keep catching up with radiant Achilles albeit he was a fleet runner, for the gods are stronger than men. [265] As often as he would strive to stand his ground, and see whether or no all the gods in heaven were in league against him, so often would the mighty wave come beating down upon his shoulders, and he would have to keep fleeing on and on in great dismay; [270] for the angry flood was tiring him out as it flowed past him and ate the ground from under his feet.

Then the son of Peleus lifted up his voice to heaven saying, “Father Zeus, is there none of the gods who will take pity upon me, and save me from the river? I do not care what may happen to me afterwards. [275] I hold responsible [*aitios*] none of the other dwellers on Olympus so severely as

I do my dear mother, who has beguiled and tricked me. She told me I was to fall under the walls of Troy by the flying arrows of Apollo; would that Hector, the best man among the Trojans, might there slay me; [280] then should I fall a hero by the hand of a hero; whereas now it seems that I shall come to a most pitiable end, trapped in this river as though I were some swineherd's boy, who gets carried down a torrent while trying to cross it during a storm."

As soon as he had spoken thus, Poseidon and Athena [285] came up to him in the likeness of two men, and took him by the hand to reassure him. Poseidon spoke first. "Son of Peleus," said he, "be not so exceeding fearful; we are two gods, [290] come with Zeus' sanction to assist you, I, and Pallas Athena. It is not your fate to perish in this river; he will abate presently as you will see; moreover we strongly advise you, if you will be guided by us, not to stay your hand from fighting [295] till you have pent the Trojan army within the famed walls of Ilion—as many of them as may escape. Then kill Hector and go back to the ships, for we will grant you a triumph over him."

When they had so said they went back to the other immortals, but Achilles strove onward over the plain, encouraged by the charge the gods had laid upon him. [300] All was now covered with the flood of waters, and much goodly armor of the youths that had been slain was rifting about, as also many corpses, but he forced his way against the stream, speeding right onwards, nor could the broad waters stay him, for Athena had endowed him with great strength. [305] Nevertheless Skamandros did not slacken in his pursuit, but was still more furious with the son of Peleus. He lifted his waters into a high crest and cried aloud to Simoeis saying, "Dear brother, let the two of us unite to stop this man, or he will ransack the mighty city of King Priam, [310] and the Trojans will not hold out against him. Help me at once; fill your streams with water from their sources, rouse all your torrents to a fury; raise your wave on high, and let snags and stones come thundering down you that we may make an end of this savage creature. [315] He is

in a rage, equal to the rage of the gods. Nothing shall serve him longer, not strength nor comeliness, nor his fine armor, which indeed shall soon be lying low in the deep waters covered over with mud. [320] I will wrap him in sand, and pour tons of shingle round him, so that the Achaeans shall not know how to gather his bones for the silt in which I shall have hidden him, and when they celebrate his funeral they need build no tomb [*sēma*].”

Then he raised his tumultuous flood high against Achilles, [325] seething as it was with foam and blood and the bodies of the dead. The dark waters of the river stood upright and would have overwhelmed the son of Peleus, but Hera, trembling lest Achilles should be swept away in the mighty torrent, lifted her voice on high [330] and called out to Hephaistos her son. “Crooked-foot,” she cried, “my child, be up and doing, for I deem it is with you that Xanthos is fain to fight; help us at once, kindle a fierce fire; I will then bring up the west and the white south wind in a mighty gale from the sea, [335] that shall bear the flames against the heads and armor of the Trojans and consume them, while you go along the banks of Xanthos burning his trees and wrapping him round with fire. Let him not turn you back neither by fair words nor foul, [340] and slacken not till I shout and tell you. Then you may stay your flames.”

Then Hephaistos kindled a fierce fire, which broke out first upon the plain and burned the many dead whom Achilles had killed and whose bodies were lying about in great numbers; [345] by this means the plain was dried and the flood stayed. As the north wind, blowing on an orchard that has been sodden with autumn rain, soon dries it, and the heart of the owner is glad—even so the whole plain was dried and the dead bodies were consumed. [350] Then he turned tongues of fire on to the river. He burned the elms the willows and the tamarisks, the lotus also, with the rushes and marshy herbage that grew abundantly by the banks of the river. The eels and fishes that go darting about everywhere in the water, these, too, [355] were sorely harassed by the flames that

cunning Hephaistos had kindled, and the river himself was scalded, so that he spoke saying, “Hephaistos, there is no god can hold his own against you. I cannot fight you when you flare out your flames in this way; strive with me no longer. Let radiant Achilles drive the Trojans out of the city immediately. [360] What have I to do with quarreling and helping people?”

He was boiling as he spoke, and all his waters were seething. As a cauldron upon a large fire boils when it is melting the lard of some fatted hog, and the lard keeps bubbling up all over when the dry faggots blaze under it— [365] even so were the goodly waters of Xanthos heated with the fire till they were boiling. He could flow no longer but stayed his stream, so afflicted was he by the blasts of fire which cunning Hephaistos had raised. Then he prayed to Hera and besought her saying, “Hera, why should your son vex my stream [370] with such especial fury? I am not so much responsible [*aitios*] as all the others are who have been helping the Trojans. I will leave off, since you so desire it, and let your son leave off also. Furthermore I swear never again will I do anything to save the Trojans from destruction, [375] not even when all Troy is burning in the flames which the Achaeans will kindle.”

As soon as goddess of the white arms, Hera heard this she said to her son Hephaistos, “Son Hephaistos, hold now your flames; [380] we ought not to use such violence against a god for the sake of mortals.”

When she had thus spoken Hephaistos quenched his flames, and the river went back once more into his own fair bed.

Xanthos was now beaten, so these two left off fighting, for Hera stayed them though she was still angry; but a furious quarrel broke out among the other gods, for they were of divided counsels. [385] They fell on one another with a mighty uproar—earth groaned, and the spacious firmament rang out as with a blare of trumpets. Zeus heard as he was sitting on Olympus, [390] and laughed for joy when he saw the gods

coming to blows among themselves. They were not long about beginning, and Arēs piercer of shields opened the battle. Sword in hand he sprang at once upon Athena and reviled her. “Why, vixen,” said he, “have you again set the gods by the ears [395] in the pride and haughtiness of your heart? Have you forgotten how you set Diomedes son of Tydeus on to wound me, and yourself took a spear in the sight of all and drove it into me to the hurt of my fair body? You shall now suffer for what you then did to me.”

[400] As he spoke he struck her on the terrible tasseled aegis—so terrible that not even can Zeus’ lightning pierce it. Here did manslaughtering Arēs strike her with his great spear. She drew back and with her strong hand seized a stone that was lying on the plain—great and rugged and black— [405] which men of old had set for the boundary of a field. With this she struck Arēs on the neck, and brought him down. Nine roods did he cover in his fall, and his hair was all soiled in the dust, while his armor rang rattling round him. But Athena laughed and vaunted over him saying, [410] “Idiot, have you not learned how far stronger I am than you, but you must still match yourself against me? Thus do your mother’s curses now roost upon you, for she is angry and would do you mischief because you have deserted the Achaeans and are helping the Trojans.”

[415] She then turned her two piercing eyes elsewhere, whereon Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite took Arēs by the hand and led him away groaning all the time, for it was only with great difficulty that he had come to himself again. When Queen Hera saw her, she said to Athena, [420] “Look, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, unwearying, that vixen Aphrodite is again taking Arēs through the crowd out of the battle; go after her at once.”

Thus she spoke. Athena sped after Aphrodite with a will, and made at her, striking her on the bosom with her strong hand [425] so that she fell fainting to the ground, and there they both lay stretched at full length.

Then Athena vaunted over her saying, “May all who help the Trojans against the Argives [430] prove just as redoubtable and stalwart as Aphrodite did when she came across me while she was helping Arēs. Had this been so, we should long since have ended the war by ransacking the strong city of Ilion.”

Goddess of the white arms, Hera smiled as she listened. [435] Meanwhile King Poseidon turned to Apollo saying, “Phoebus, why should we keep each other at arm’s length? it is not well, now that the others have begun fighting; it will be disgraceful to us if we return to Zeus’ bronze-floored mansion on Olympus without having fought each other; [440] therefore come on, you are the younger of the two, and I ought not to attack you, for I am older and have had more experience. Idiot, you have no sense, and forget how we two alone of all the gods fared hardly round about Ilion when we came from Zeus’ house and worked for Laomedon a whole year [445] at a stated wage and he gave us his orders. I built the Trojans the wall about their city, so wide and fair that it might be impregnable, while you, Phoebus, herded cattle for him in the dales of many-valleyed Ida. [450] When, however, the glad seasons [*hōrai*] brought round the time-limit [*telos*] for payment, mighty headstrong Laomedon robbed us of all our hire and sent us off with nothing but abuse. He threatened to bind us hand and foot and sell us over into some distant island. [455] He tried, moreover, to cut off the ears of both of us, so we went away in a rage, furious about the payment he had promised us, and yet withheld; in spite of all this, you are now showing favor [*kharis*] to his people, [460] and will not join us in compassing the utter ruin of the proud Trojans with their wives and children.”

And King Apollo answered, “Lord of the earthquake, you would not think me moderate [*sōphrōn*] ⁴⁶³ if I should fight you on account of mortals, ⁴⁶⁴ the wretches, who are like leaves. At given times, [465] they come to their fullness, bursting forth in radiance, eating the crops of the Earth, ⁴⁶⁶ while at other times they wilt [*phthi-nuthousin*], victims of fate.

Let us stay this fighting at once and let them settle it among themselves.”

He turned away as he spoke, for he would lay no hand on the brother of his own father. [470] But his sister the huntress Artemis, patroness of wild beasts, was very angry with him and said, “So you would flee, Far-Darter, and hand victory over to Poseidon with a cheap vaunt to boot. Baby, why keep your bow thus idle? [475] Never let me again hear you bragging in my father’s house, as you have often done in the presence of the immortals, that you would stand up and fight with Poseidon.”

Apollo made her no answer, but Zeus’ august queen was angry [480] and upbraided her bitterly. “Bold vixen,” she cried, “how dare you cross me thus? For all your bow you will find it hard to hold your own against me. Zeus made you as a lion among women, and lets you kill them whenever you choose. [485] You will find it better to chase wild beasts and deer upon the mountains than to fight those who are stronger than you are. If you would try war, do so, and find out by pitting yourself against me, how far stronger I am than you are.”

She caught both Artemis’ wrists with her left hand as she spoke, [490] and with her right she took the bow from her shoulders, and laughed as she beat her with it about the ears while Artemis wriggled and writhed under her blows. Her swift arrows were shed upon the ground, and she fled weeping from under Hera’s hand as a dove that flies before a falcon [495] to the cleft of some hollow rock, when it is her good fortune to escape. Even so did she flee weeping away, leaving her bow and arrows behind her.

Then the slayer of Argos, guide and guardian, said to Leto, “Leto, I shall not fight you; it is ill to come to blows with any of Zeus’ wives. [500] Therefore boast as you will among the immortals that you worsted me in fair fight.”

Leto then gathered up Artemis' bow and arrows that had fallen about amid the whirling dust, and when she had got them she made all haste after her daughter. [505] Artemis had now reached Zeus' bronze-floored mansion on Olympus, and sat herself down with many tears on the knees of her father, while her ambrosial raiment was quivering all about her. The son of Kronos drew her towards him, and laughing pleasantly the while began to question her saying, "Which of the heavenly beings, my dear child, [510] has been treating you in this cruel manner, as though you had been misconducting yourself in the face of everybody?" and the fair-crowned goddess of the chase answered, "It was your wife Hera of the white arms, father, who has been beating me; it is always her doing when there is any quarreling among the immortals."

Thus did they converse, [515] and meanwhile Phoebus Apollo entered the strong city of Ilion, for he was uneasy lest the wall should not hold out and the Danaans should take the city then and there, before its hour had come; but the rest of the ever-living gods went back, some angry and some triumphant to Olympus, where they took their seats [520] beside Zeus lord of the storm cloud, while Achilles still kept on dealing out death alike on the Trojans and on their horses. As when the smoke from some burning city ascends to heaven when the anger [*mēnis*] of the gods has kindled it—there is then toil [*ponos*] for all, and sorrow for not a few— [525] even so did Achilles bring toil [*ponos*] and sorrow on the Trojans.

Old King Priam stood on a high tower of the wall looking down on huge Achilles as the Trojans fled panic-stricken before him, and there was none to help them. Presently he came down from off the tower and with many a groan [530] went along the wall to give orders to the brave warders of the gate. "Keep the gates," said he, "wide open till the people come fleeing into the city, for Achilles is hard by and is driving them in rout before him. I see we are in great peril. As soon as our people are inside and in safety, [535] close the strong gates for I fear lest that terrible man should come bounding inside along with the others."

As he spoke they drew back the bolts and opened the gates, and when these were opened there was a haven of refuge for the Trojans. Apollo then came full speed out of the city to meet them [540] and protect them. Right for the city and the high wall, parched with thirst and grimy with dust, still they hurried on, with Achilles wielding his spear furiously behind them. For he was as one possessed, and was thirsting after glory.

Then had the sons of the Achaeans taken the lofty gates of Troy [545] if Apollo had not spurred on Agenor, valiant and noble son to blameless and powerful Antenor. He put courage into his heart, and stood by his side to guard him, leaning against a beech tree and shrouded in thick darkness. [550] When Agenor saw Achilles he stood still and his heart was clouded with care. “Alas,” said he to himself in his dismay, “if I flee before mighty Achilles, and go where all the others are being driven in rout, [555] he will none the less catch me and kill me for a coward. How would it be were I to let Achilles drive the others before him, and then flee from the wall to the plain that is behind Ilion till I reach the spurs of Ida and can hide in the underwood that is there? I could then wash the sweat from off me in the river [560] and in the evening return to Ilion. But why commune with myself in this way? Like enough he would see me as I am hurrying from the city over the plain, and would speed after me till he had caught me— [565] I should stand no chance against him, for he is mightiest of all humankind. What, then, if I go out and meet him in front of the city? His flesh too, I take it, can be pierced by pointed bronze. Life [*psūkhē*] is the same in one and all, and men say that he is but mortal [570] despite the triumph that Zeus, son of Kronos, grants him.”

So saying he stood on his guard and awaited Achilles, for he was now fain to fight him. As a leopardess that bounds from out a thick covert to attack a hunter— [575] she knows no fear and is not dismayed by the baying of the hounds; even though the man be too quick for her and wound her either with thrust or spear, still, though the spear has pierced

her she will not give in till she has either caught him in her grip or been killed outright— [580] even so did noble Agenor son of radiant Antenor refuse to flee till he had made trial of Achilles, and took aim at him with his spear, holding his round shield before him and crying with a loud voice. “Of a truth,” said he, “noble Achilles, you deem that you shall this day ransack the city of the proud Trojans. [585] Fool, there will be trouble enough yet before it, for there is many a brave man of us still inside who will stand in front of our dear parents with our wives and children, to defend Ilion. Here therefore, huge and mighty warrior though you be, here shall you die.”

[590] As he spoke his strong hand hurled his javelin from him, and the spear struck Achilles on the leg beneath the knee; the greave of newly wrought tin rang loudly, but the spear recoiled from the body of him whom it had struck, and did not pierce it, for the god’s gift stayed it. [595] Achilles in his turn attacked godlike Agenor, but Apollo would not grant him glory, for he snatched Agenor away and hid him in a thick mist, sending him out of the battle to go away serene [*hēsukhos*]. Then he craftily drew the son of Peleus away from going after the army, [600] for he put on the semblance of Agenor and stood in front of Achilles, who ran towards him to give him chase and pursued him over the wheat lands of the plain, turning him towards the deep waters of the river Skamandros. Apollo ran but a little way before him [605] and beguiled Achilles by making him think all the time that he was on the point of overtaking him. Meanwhile the rabble of routed Trojans was thankful to crowd within the city till their numbers thronged it; [610] no longer did they dare wait for one another outside the city walls, to learn who had escaped and who were fallen in fight, but all whose feet and knees could still carry them poured pell-mell into the town.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 22

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

Thus the Trojans in the city, scared like fawns, wiped the sweat from off them and drank to quench their thirst, leaning against the goodly battlements, while the Achaeans with their shields laid upon their shoulders drew close up to the walls. [5] But stern fate bade Hector stay where he was before Ilion and the Scaean gates. Then Phoebus Apollo spoke to the son of Peleus saying, “Why, son of Peleus, do you, who are only a man, give chase to me who am immortal? [10] Have you not yet found out that it is a god whom you pursue so furiously? You did not inflict struggles [*ponos*] on the Trojans whom you had routed, and now they are within their walls, while you have been decoyed here away from them. Me you cannot kill, for death can take no hold upon me.”

Achilles of the swift feet was greatly angered and said, [15] “You have thwarted me, Far-Darter, most malicious of all gods, and have drawn me away from the wall, where many another man would have bitten the dust before he got within Ilion; you have robbed me of great glory and have saved the Trojans at no risk to yourself, for you have nothing to fear, [20] but I would indeed have my revenge if it were in my power to do so.”

Then, with fell intent he made towards the city, and as the winning horse in a chariot race strains every nerve when he is flying over the plain, even so fast and furiously did the limbs of Achilles bear him onwards. [25] Old King Priam was first to note him as he scoured the plain, all radiant as the star which men call Orion’s Hound, and whose beams blaze forth in time of harvest more radiantly than those of any other that shines by night; brightest of them all though he be, [30] he

yet sends an ill sign [*sēma*] for mortals, for he brings fire and fever in his train—even so did Achilles’ armor gleam on his breast as he sped onwards. Priam raised a cry and beat his head with his hands as he lifted them up [35] and shouted out to his dear son, imploring him to return; but Hector still stayed before the gates, for his heart was set upon doing battle with Achilles. The old man reached out his arms towards him and bade him for pity’s sake come within the walls. “Hector,” he cried, “my son, stay not to face this man alone and unsupported, [40] or you will meet death at the hands of the son of Peleus, for he is mightier than you. Monster that he is; would indeed that the gods loved him no better than I do, for so, dogs and vultures would soon devour him as he lay stretched on earth, and a load of grief [*akhos*] would be lifted from my heart, for many a brave son has he taken away from me, [45] either by killing them or selling them away in the islands that are beyond the sea: even now I miss two sons from among the Trojans who have thronged within the city, Lykaon and Polydoros, whom Laothoe peeress among women bore me. Should they be still alive and in the hands of the Achaeans, [50] we will ransom them with gold and bronze, of which we have store, for the old man Altes endowed his daughter richly; but if they are already dead and in the house of Hādēs, sorrow will it be to us two who were their parents; albeit the grief of others will be more short-lived [55] unless you too perish at the hands of Achilles. Come, then, my son, within the city, to be the guardian of Trojan men and Trojan women, or you will both lose your own life and afford a mighty triumph to the son of Peleus. Have pity also on your unhappy father [60] while life yet remains to him—on me, whom the son of Kronos will destroy by a terrible doom on the threshold of old age, after I have seen my sons slain and my daughters hauled away as captives, my bridal chambers pillaged, little children dashed to earth amid the rage of battle, [65] and my sons’ wives dragged away by the cruel hands of the Achaeans; in the end fierce hounds will tear me in pieces at my own gates after some one has beaten the life out of my body with sword or spear—hounds that I myself reared and fed at my own table to guard my gates, [70] but who will yet lap my blood and then lie all distraught at my doors. When a

young man falls by the sword in battle, he may lie where he is and there is nothing unseemly; let what will be seen, all is honorable in death, but when an old man is slain there is nothing in this world more pitiable than that dogs should defile [75] his gray hair and beard and all that men hide for shame [*aidōs*].”

The old man tore his gray hair as he spoke, but he moved not the heart of Hector. His mother hard by wept and moaned aloud [80] as she bared her bosom and pointed to the breast which had suckled him. “Hector,” she cried, weeping bitterly the while, “Hector, my son, spurn not this breast, but have pity upon me too: if I have ever given you comfort from my own bosom, think on it now, dear son, and come within the wall to protect us from this man; [85] stand not without to meet him. Should the wretch kill you, neither I nor your richly dowered wife shall ever weep, dear offshoot of myself, over the bed on which you lie, for dogs will devour you at the ships of the Achaeans.”

[90] Thus did the two with many tears implore their son, but they moved not the heart of Hector, and he stood his ground awaiting huge Achilles as he drew nearer towards him. As serpent in its den upon the mountains, full fed with deadly poisons, [95] waits for the approach of man—he is filled with fury and his eyes glare terribly as he goes writhing round his den—even so Hector leaned his shield against a tower that jutted out from the wall and stood where he was, undaunted.

“Alas,” said he to himself in the heaviness of his heart, “if I go within the gates, [100] Polydamas will be the first to heap reproach upon me, for it was he that urged me to lead the Trojans back to the city on that awful night when Achilles again came forth against us. I would not listen, but it would have been indeed better if I had done so. Now that my folly has destroyed the army, [105] I dare not look Trojan men and Trojan women in the face, lest a worse man should say, ‘Hector has ruined us by his self-confidence.’ Surely it would be better for me to return after having fought Achilles and slain him, [110] or to die gloriously here

before the city. What, again, if I were to lay down my shield and helmet, lean my spear against the wall and go straight up to noble Achilles? What if I were to promise to give up Helen, who was the fountainhead of all this war, [115] and all the treasure that Alexandros brought with him in his ships to Troy, yes, and to let the Achaeans divide the half of everything that the city contains among themselves? I might make the Trojans, by the mouths of their princes, [120] take a solemn oath that they would hide nothing, but would divide into two shares all that is within the city—¹²² But why do I have these things to talk about with my spirit [*thūmos*]? Were I to go up to him he would show me no kind of mercy; he would kill me then and there as easily [125] as though I were a woman, when I had off my armor.¹²⁶ It is by now impossible to converse with him, starting from the oak or from the rock as young men and maidens prattle with one another. Better fight him at once, [130] and learn to which of us Zeus will grant victory.”

Thus did he stand and ponder, but Achilles came up to him as it were Arēs himself, plumed lord of battle. From his right shoulder he brandished his terrible spear of Pelian ash, [135] and the bronze gleamed around him like flashing fire or the rays of the rising sun. Fear fell upon Hector as he beheld him, and he dared not stay longer where he was but fled in dismay from before the gates, while Achilles darted after him at his utmost speed. As a mountain falcon, swiftest of all birds, [140] swoops down upon some cowering dove—the dove flies before him but the falcon with a shrill scream follows close after, resolved to have her—even so did Achilles make straight for Hector with all his might, while Hector fled under the Trojan wall as fast as his limbs could take him.

[145] On they flew along the wagon-road that ran hard by under the wall, past the lookout station, and past the weather-beaten wild fig-tree, till they came to two fair springs which feed the river Skamandros. [150] One of these two springs is warm, and steam rises from it as smoke from a burning fire, but the other even in summer is as cold as hail or snow, or the ice that forms on water. Here, hard by the springs, are the goodly

washing-troughs of stone, [155] where in the time of peace before the coming of the Achaeans the wives and fair daughters of the Trojans used to wash their clothes. Past these did they flee, the one in front and the other giving chase behind him: good was the man that fled, but better far was he that followed after, and swiftly indeed did they run, for the prize was no mere beast for sacrifice or bullock's hide, [160] as it might be for a common foot-race, but they ran for the life [*psūkhē*] of Hector. As horses in a chariot race speed round the turning-posts when they are running for some great prize [*āthlon*]*—*a tripod or woman*—*at the games in honor of some dead hero, [165] so did these two run full speed three times round the city of Priam. All the gods watched them, and the sire of gods and men was the first to speak.

“Alas,” said he, “my eyes behold a man who is dear to me being pursued round the walls of Troy; my heart is full of pity for Hector, [170] who has burned the thigh-bones of many a heifer in my honor, at one while on the of many-valleyed Ida, and again on the citadel of Troy; and now I see radiant Achilles in full pursuit of him round the city of Priam. What say you? Consider among yourselves [175] and decide whether we shall now save him or let him fall, valiant though he be, before Achilles, son of Peleus.”

Then owl-vision goddess Athena said, “Father, wielder of the lightning, lord of cloud and storm, what mean you? Would you pluck this mortal [180] whose doom has long been decreed out of the jaws of death? Do as you will, but we others shall not be of a mind with you.”

And Zeus answered, “My child, Triton-born, take heart. I did not speak in full earnest, and I will let you have your way. [185] Do as your thinking [*noos*] tells you, without letting up, without hindrance.”

Thus did he urge Athena who was already eager, and down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus.

Achilles was still in full pursuit of Hector, [190] as a hound chasing a fawn which he has started from its covert on the mountains, and hunts through glade and thicket. The fawn may try to elude him by crouching under cover of a bush, but he will scent her out and follow her up until he gets her—even so there was no escape for Hector from the swift-footed son of Peleus. [195] Whenever he made a set to get near the Dardanian gates and under the walls, that his people might help him by showering down weapons from above, Achilles would gain on him and head him back towards the plain, keeping himself always on the city side. As a man in a dream who fails to lay hands upon another whom he is pursuing [200] —the one cannot escape nor the other overtake—even so neither could Achilles come up with Hector, nor Hector break away from Achilles; nevertheless he might even yet have escaped death had not the time come when Apollo, who thus far had sustained his strength and nerved his running, was now no longer to stay by him. [205] Radiant Achilles made signs to the Achaean army, and shook his head to show that no man was to aim a dart at Hector, lest another might win the glory of having hit him and he might himself come in second. Then, at last, as they were nearing the fountains for the fourth time, the father of all balanced his golden scales and placed a doom in each of them, [210] one for Achilles and the other for Hector, breaker of horses. As he held the scales by the middle, ²¹² Hector's day of doom came, ²¹³ and he went off to Hādēs. Apollo left him. Then owl-vision Athena went close up to the son of Peleus and said, [215] “Noble Achilles, favored of heaven, I think in my mind [*noos*] we two shall surely take back to the ships a triumph for the Achaeans by slaying Hector, for all his lust of battle. [220] Do what Apollo may as he lies groveling before his father, aegis-bearing Zeus, Hector cannot escape us longer. Stay here and take breath, while I go up to him and persuade him to make a stand and fight you.”

Thus spoke Athena. Achilles obeyed her gladly, [225] and stood still, leaning on his bronze-pointed ashen spear, while Athena left him and went after radiant Hector in the form and with the voice of Deiphobos.

She came close up to him and said, ²²⁹ “Dear brother, indeed swift Achilles uses *biē* against you, [230] as he chases you with swift feet around the city of Priam. Let us await his onset and stand on our defense.”

And Hector answered, “Deiphobos, you have always been dearest to me of all my brothers, children of Hecuba and Priam, [235] but henceforth I shall rate you yet more highly, inasmuch as you have ventured outside the wall for my sake when all the others remain inside.” Then owl-vision goddess Athena said, “Dear brother, my father and mother went down on their knees and implored me, [240] as did all my comrades, to remain inside, so great a fear has fallen upon them all; but I was in an agony of grief when I beheld you; now, therefore, let us two make a stand and fight, and let there be no keeping our spears in reserve, [245] that we may learn whether Achilles shall kill us and bear off our spoils to the ships, or whether he shall fall before you.”

Thus did Athena inveigle him by her cunning, and when the two were now close to one another great helmet-glittering Hector was first to speak. [250] “I will no longer flee you, son of Peleus,” said he, “as I have been doing hitherto. Three times have I fled round the mighty city of Priam, without daring to withstand you, but now, let me either slay or be slain, for I am in the mind to face you. Let us, then, give pledges to one another by our gods, [255] who are the fittest witnesses and guardians of all covenants; let it be agreed between us that if Zeus grants me the longer stay and I take your life [*psūkhē*], I am not to treat your dead body in any unseemly fashion, but when I have stripped you of your armor, I am to give up your body to the Achaeans. And do you likewise.”

[260] Swift-footed Achilles glared at him and answered, “Fool, prate not to me about covenants. There can be no covenants between men and lions, wolves and lambs can never be of one mind, but hate each other out and out all through. [265] Therefore there can be no understanding

between you and me, nor may there be any covenants between us, till one or other shall fall and glut grim Arēs with his life's blood. Be mindful of all your excellence [*aretē*]; you have need now to prove yourself indeed a bold warrior and fighter. [270] You have no more chance, and Pallas Athena will right then and there vanquish you by my spear: you shall now pay me in full for the grief you have caused me on account of my comrades whom you have killed in battle."

He poised his spear as he spoke and hurled it. Glorious Hector saw it coming and avoided it; [275] he watched it and crouched down so that it flew over his head and stuck in the ground beyond; Athena then snatched it up and gave it back to Achilles without Hector's seeing her; Hector then said to the blameless son of Peleus, "You have missed your aim, Achilles, peer of the gods, [280] and Zeus has not yet revealed to you the hour of my doom, though you made sure that he had done so. You were a false-tongued liar when you deemed that I should forget my valor and quail before you. You shall not drive spear into the back of a runaway—drive it, should heaven so grant you power, drive it into me as I make straight towards you; [285] and now for your own part avoid my spear if you can—would that you might receive the whole of it into your body; if you were once dead the Trojans would find the war an easier matter, for it is you who have harmed them most."

He poised his spear as he spoke and hurled it. [290] His aim was true for he hit the middle of Achilles' shield, but the spear rebounded from it, and did not pierce it. Hector was angry when he saw that the weapon had sped from his hand in vain, and stood there in dismay for he had no second spear. With a loud cry he called Deiphobos and asked him for one, [295] but there was no man; then he saw the truth and said to himself, "Alas! the gods have lured me on to my destruction. I thought that the hero Deiphobos was by my side, but he is within the wall, and Athena has inveigled me; [300] death is now indeed exceedingly near at hand and there is no way out of it—for so Zeus and his son Apollo the far-darter have willed it, though heretofore they have been ever ready to

protect me. My doom has come upon me; let me not then die ingloriously and without a struggle, [305] but let me first do some great thing that shall be told among men hereafter.”

As he spoke he drew the keen blade that hung so great and strong by his side, and gathering himself together he sprang on Achilles like a soaring eagle which swoops down from the clouds [310] on to some lamb or timid hare—even so did Hector brandish his sword and spring upon Achilles. Achilles mad with rage darted towards him, with his wondrous shield before his breast, and his gleaming helmet, made with four layers of metal, nodding fiercely forward. [315] The thick tresses of gold with which Hephaistos had crested the helmet floated round it, and as the evening star that shines brighter than all others through the stillness of night, even such was the gleam of the spear which Achilles poised in his right hand, [320] fraught with the death of noble Hector. He eyed his fair flesh over and over to see where he could best wound it, but all was protected by the goodly armor of which Hector had spoiled Patroklos after he had slain him, save only the throat where the collar-bones divide the neck from the shoulders, [325] and this is the quickest place for the life-breath [*psūkhē*] to escape: here then did radiant Achilles strike him as he was coming on towards him, and the point of his spear went right through the fleshy part of the neck, but it did not sever his windpipe so that he could still speak. [330] Hector fell headlong, and radiant Achilles vaunted over him saying, “Hector, you thought that you would come off unscathed when you were despoiling Patroklos, and you did not think of me, who was not with him. Fool that you were: for I, his comrade, mightier far than he, was still left behind him at the ships, [335] and now I have laid you low. The Achaeans shall give him all due funeral rites, while dogs and vultures shall work their will upon yourself.”

Then Hector of the shining helmet said, as the life-breath [*psūkhē*] ebbed out of him, “I pray you by your life and knees, and by your parents, let not dogs devour me at the ships of the Achaeans, [340] but accept the rich treasure of gold and bronze which my father and mother will offer

you, and send my body home, that the Trojans and their wives may give me my dues of fire when I am dead.”

Swift-footed Achilles glared at him and answered, [345] “Dog, talk not to me neither of knees nor parents; ³⁴⁶ I wish that somehow my *menos* and *thūmos* impelled me ³⁴⁷ to slice you up and eat your meat raw, for the things you did, as nothing shall save you from the dogs—it shall not be, [350] though they bring ten or twenty-fold ransom and weigh it out for me on the spot, with promise of yet more hereafter. Though Priam, son of Dardanos, should bid them offer me your weight in gold, even so your mother shall never lay you out and make lament over the son she bore, but dogs and vultures shall eat you utterly up.”

[355] Hector with his dying breath then said, “I know you what you are, and was sure that I should not move you, for your heart is hard as iron; look to it that I bring not heaven’s anger upon you on the day when Paris and Phoebus Apollo, valiant though you be, [360] shall slay you at the Scaean gates.”

When he had thus said the shrouds of death’s final outcome [*telos*] enfolded him, whereon his life-breath [*psūkhē*] went out of him and flew down to the house of Hādēs, lamenting its sad fate that it should enjoy youth and strength no longer. But radiant Achilles said, speaking to the dead body, [365] “Die; for my part I will accept my fate whenever Zeus and the other gods see fit to send it.”

As he spoke he drew his spear from the body and set it on one side; then he stripped the blood-stained armor from Hector’s shoulders while the other Achaeans came running up [370] to view his wondrous strength and beauty; and no one came near him without giving him a fresh wound. Then would one turn to his neighbor and say, “It is easier to handle Hector now than when he was flinging fire on to our ships” [375] and as he spoke he would thrust his spear into him anew.

When swift-footed radiant Achilles had done despoiling Hector of his armor, he stood among the Argives and said, “My friends, princes and counselors of the Argives, now that heaven has granted us to overcome this man, [380] who has done us more hurt than all the others together, consider whether we should not attack the city in force, and discover in what mind [*noos*] the Trojans may be. We should thus learn whether they will desert their city now that Hector has fallen, or will still hold out even though he is no longer living. [385] But why argue with myself in this way, while Patroklos is still lying at the ships unburied, and unmourned—he whom I can never forget so long as I am alive and my strength fails not? Though men forget their dead when once they are within the house of Hādēs, [390] yet not even there will I forget the comrade whom I have lost. ³⁹¹ Come, young warriors of the Achaeans, let us sing a beautiful paean ³⁹² and return to the hollow ships, and bring him along. ³⁹³ We won a big *kudos*; we killed brilliant Hector, to whom the Trojans prayed throughout their city as though he were a god.”

[395] Then he treated the body of glorious Hector with contumely: he pierced the sinews at the back of both his feet from heel to ankle and passed thongs of ox-hide through the slits he had made: thus he made the body fast to his chariot, letting the head trail upon the ground. Then when he had put the goodly armor on the chariot and had himself mounted, [400] he lashed his horses on and they flew forward nothing loath. The dust rose from Hector as he was being dragged along, his dark hair flew all abroad, and his head once so comely was laid low on earth, for Zeus had now delivered him into the hands of his foes to do him outrage in his own land.

[405] Thus was the head of Hector being dishonored in the dust. His mother tore her hair, and flung her veil from her with a loud cry as she looked upon her son. His father made piteous moan, and throughout the city the people fell to weeping and wailing. [410] It was as though the whole of frowning Ilion was being smirched with fire. Hardly could the people hold Priam back in his hot haste to rush without the gates of the

city. He groveled in the mire and besought them, [415] calling each one of them by his name. “Let be, my friends,” he cried, “and for all your sorrow, suffer me to go single-handed to the ships of the Achaeans. Let me beseech this cruel and terrible man, if maybe he will respect the feeling of his fellow-men, and have compassion on my old age. [420] His own father is even such another as myself—Peleus, who bred him and reared him—to be the bane of us Trojans, and of myself more than of all others. Many a son of mine has he slain in the flower of his youth, and yet, grieve for these as I may, [425] I do so for one—Hector—more than for them all, and the bitterness of my sorrow [*akhos*] will bring me down to the house of Hādēs. Would that he had died in my arms, for so both his ill-starred mother who bore him, and myself, should have had the comfort of weeping and mourning over him.”

Thus did he speak with many tears, and all the people of the city joined in his lament. [430] Hecuba then raised the cry of wailing among the Trojans. “Alas, my son,” she cried, “what have I left to live for now that you are no more? Night and day did I glory in you throughout the city, for you were a tower of strength to all in Troy, [435] and both men and women alike hailed you as a god. So long as you lived you were their pride, but now death and destruction have fallen upon you.”

⁴³⁷ So she [= Hecuba] spoke, lamenting, but the wife [= Andromache] had not yet heard, ⁴³⁸ Hector’s wife: for no true messenger had come to her ⁴³⁹ and told her the news, how her husband was standing his ground outside the gates. [440] She [= Andromache] was weaving [*huphainein*] a web in the inner room of the lofty palace, ⁴⁴¹ a purple [*porphureē*] fabric that folds in two [= *diplax*], and she was inworking [*en-passein*] patterns of flowers [*throna*] that were varied [*poikila*]. ⁴⁴² And she called out to the attending women, the ones with the beautiful tresses [*plokamoi*], in the palace ⁴⁴³ to set a big tripod on the fire, so that there would be ⁴⁴⁴ a warm bath for Hector when he had his return [*nostos*] from battle. [445] Unwary [*nēpiē*] as she was, she did not know [*noeîn*] that, far from the

bath, ⁴⁴⁶ the hands of Achilles had brought him [= Hector] down. It was the work of Athena, the one with the look of the owl. ⁴⁴⁷ She [= Andromache] heard the wailing and the cries of oimoi coming from the high walls [*purgos*]. ⁴⁴⁸ Her limbs shook, and she dropped on the ground her shuttle. ⁴⁴⁹ And then she stood among the women slaves attending her, the ones with the beautiful tresses, and she spoke to them: [450] “Come, I want two of you to accompany me. I want to see what has happened ⁴⁵¹ I just heard the voice of my venerable mother-in-law, and what I feel inside is that ⁴⁵² my heart is throbbing hard in my chest right up to my mouth, and my knees down below ⁴⁵³ are frozen stiff. I now see that something bad is nearing the sons of Priam. ⁴⁵⁴ If only the spoken word had been too far away for me to hear. But I so terribly [455] fear for my bold Hector at the hands of radiant Achilles. ⁴⁵⁶ I fear that he has got him cut off from the rest, putting him on the run toward the open plain, ⁴⁵⁷ and that he has put a stop to a manliness that has gone too far, the cause of so much sorrow. ⁴⁵⁸ It was a thing that had a hold over him, since he could never just stand back and blend in with the multitude of his fellow warriors. ⁴⁵⁹ Instead, he would keep on running ahead of the rest of them, not yielding to anyone as he pushed ahead with his vital force [*menos*].”

[460] She [= Andromache] rushed out of the palace, same as a maenad [*mainas*], ⁴⁶¹ with heart throbbing. And her attending women went with her. ⁴⁶² But when she reached the tower and the crowd of warriors, ⁴⁶³ she stood on the wall, looking around, and then she noticed him. ⁴⁶⁴ There he was, being dragged right in front of the city. The swift chariot team of horses was [465] dragging him, far from her caring thoughts, back toward the hollow ships of the Achaeans. ⁴⁶⁶ Over her eyes a dark night spread its cover, ⁴⁶⁷ and she fell backward, gasping out her life’s breath [*psūkhē*]. ⁴⁶⁸ She threw far from her head the splendid adornments that bound her hair ⁴⁶⁹ —her frontlet [*ampux*], her snood [*kekruphalos*], her plaited headband [*anadesmē*], [470] and, to top it all, the headdress

[*krēdemnon*] that had been given to her by golden Aphrodite ⁴⁷¹ on that day when Hector, the one with the waving plume on his helmet, took her by the hand and led her ⁴⁷² out from the palace of Eëtion, and he gave countless courtship presents. ⁴⁷³ Crowding around her stood her husband's sisters and his brothers' wives, ⁴⁷⁴ and they were holding her up. She was barely breathing, to the point of dying. [475] But when she recovered her breathing and her life's breath gathered in her heart, ⁴⁷⁶ she started to sing a lament in the midst of the Trojan women.

⁴⁷⁷ "Hector, I too am wretched. For we were born sharing a single fate, ⁴⁷⁸ the two of us—you in Troy, in the palace of Priam, ⁴⁷⁹ and I in Thebe, the city at the foot of the wooded mountain of Plakos [480] in the palace of Eëtion, who raised me when I was little ⁴⁸¹ —an ill-fated father and a daughter with an equally terrible fate. If only he had never fathered me. ⁴⁸² But now you [= Hektor] are headed for the palace of Hādēs inside the deep recesses of earth, ⁴⁸³ that is where you are headed, while I am left behind by you, left behind in a state of hateful mourning [*penthos*], ⁴⁸⁴ a widow in the palace. And then there is the child, not yet bonded to you, so young he is, [485] whose parents we are, you and I with our wretched fate. Neither will you be for him, ⁴⁸⁶ no you will not, Hektor, of any help, since you died, nor will he be of any help for you, ⁴⁸⁷ even if he escapes the attack of the Achaeans, with all its sorrows, ⁴⁸⁸ still, for the rest of his life, because of you, there will be harsh labor for him, ⁴⁸⁹ and sorrows. For others will take his landholdings away from him. The time of bereavement [490] leaves the child with no agemates as friends. ⁴⁹¹ He bows his head to every man, and his cheeks are covered with tears. ⁴⁹² The boy makes his rounds among his father's former companions, ⁴⁹³ and he tugs at one man by the mantle and another man by the tunic, ⁴⁹⁴ and they pity him. One man gives him a small drink from a cup, [495] enough to moisten the boy's lips but not enough to moisten his palate. ⁴⁹⁶ But another boy whose parents are living hits him and chases him from the banquet, ⁴⁹⁷ beating him with his fists and

abusing him with words: ⁴⁹⁸ “Get out, you! Your father is not dining with us!” ⁴⁹⁹ And the boy goes off in tears to his widowed mother, [500] the boy Astyanax, who in days gone by, on the knees of his father, ⁵⁰¹ would eat only the marrow or the meat of sheep that were the fattest. ⁵⁰² And when sleep would come upon him after he was finished with playing, ⁵⁰³ he would go to sleep in a bed, in the arms of his nurse, ⁵⁰⁴ in a soft bed, with a heart that is filled in luxury. [505] But now he [= our child] will suffer many things, deprived of his father, ⁵⁰⁶ our child Astyanax, as the Trojans call him by name. ⁵⁰⁷ That is what he is called because you all by yourself guarded the gates and long walls. ⁵⁰⁸ But now, you are where the curved ships [of the Achaeans] are, far from your parents, ⁵⁰⁹ and you will be devoured by writhing maggots after the dogs have their fill of you. [510] There you lie, naked, while your clothes are lying around in the palace. ⁵¹¹ Fine clothes they are, marked by pleasurable beauty [*kharis*], the work of women’s hands. ⁵¹² But I will incinerate all these clothes over the burning fire. ⁵¹³ You will have no need for them, since you will not be lying in state, clothed in them. ⁵¹⁴ But there is to be fame [*kleos*] [for you] from the men and women of Troy.”

[515] So she [= Andromache] spoke, weeping, and the women mourned in response.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 23

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thus did they make their moan throughout the city, while the Achaeans when they reached the Hellespont went back every man to his own ship. But Achilles would not let the Myrmidons go, [5] and spoke to his brave comrades saying, “Myrmidons, famed horsemen and my own trusted friends, not yet, I say, let us unyoke, but with horse and chariot draw near to the body and mourn Patroklos, in due honor to the dead. [10] When we have had full comfort of lamentation we will unyoke our horses and take supper all of us here.”

¹² Then they all all wailed together, and Achilles led them. Thrice did they drive their chariots all sorrowing round the body, and Thetis stirred within them a still deeper yearning. [15] The sands of the seashore and the men’s armor were wet with their weeping, so great a minister of fear was he whom they had lost. ¹⁷ The son of Peleus [=Achilles] led them [= the Myrmidons] in a pulsating song of lamentation [*goos*]: he laid his bloodstained hands on the breast of his friend. “Fare well,” he cried, “Patroklos, even in the house of Hādēs. [20] I will now do all that I once upon a time promised you; I will drag Hector here and let dogs devour him raw; twelve noble sons of Trojans will I also slay before your pyre to avenge you.”

As he spoke he treated the body of glorious Hector with contumely, [25] laying it at full length in the dust beside the bier of Patroklos. The others then put off every man his armor, took the horses from their chariots, and seated themselves in great multitude by the ship of the swift-footed descendant of Aiakos, who then feasted them with an abundant funeral banquet. [30] Many a goodly ox, with many a sheep and bleating goat

did they butcher and cut up; many a tusked boar moreover, fat and well-fed, did they singe and set to roast in the flames of Hephaistos; and rivulets of blood flowed all round the place where the body was lying.

[35] Then the princes of the Achaeans took the swift-footed son of Peleus to Agamemnon, but hardly could they persuade him to come with them, so angry was he for the death of his comrade. As soon as they reached Agamemnon's tent they told the serving-men [40] to set a large tripod over the fire in case they might persuade the son of Peleus to wash the clotted gore from this body, but he denied them sternly, and swore it with a solemn oath, saying, "Nay, by King Zeus, first and mightiest of all gods, it is not right [*themis*] that water should touch my body, [45] till I have laid Patroklos on the flames, have built him a tomb [*sēma*], and shaved my head—⁴⁶ for never again ⁴⁷ will sorrow [*akhos*] like this enter my heart while I am among the living. Now, therefore, let us do all that this sad festival demands, but at break of day, King Agamemnon, [50] bid your men bring wood, and provide all else that the dead may duly take into the realm of darkness; the fire shall thus burn him out of our sight the sooner, and the people shall turn again to their own labors."

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. [55] They made haste to prepare the meal, they ate, and every man had his full share so that all were satisfied. ⁵⁸ The others went to their rest each to his own tent, ⁵⁹ but only the son of Peleus, by the shore of the resounding sea, [60] only he amidst all his many Myrmidons lay grieving with deep groans ⁶¹ in an open place on the beach where the waves came surging in, one after another. ⁶² Here sleep took hold of him, releasing him from the cares in his heart. ⁶³ It was a sweet sleep that poured all over him, since his shining limbs had been worn down ⁶⁴ with chasing Hector round windy Ilion. [65] Then came to him the spirit [*psūkhē*] of unhappy Patroklos, ⁶⁶ resembling in every way the man himself in size and good looks ⁶⁷ and voice. It [= the *psūkhē*] even wore the same clothes

he used to wear over his skin. ⁶⁸ It [= the *psūkhē*] stood over his head and addressed to him these words:

⁶⁹ “You sleep, Achilles. As for me, you have forgotten all about me; [70] you used to be not at all uncaring about me when I was alive, but now that I am dead you care for me no further. ⁷¹ Bury me with all speed that I may pass through the gates of Hādēs. ⁷² Keeping me away from there are the spirits [*psūkhai*], who are images [*eidōla*] of men who have ended their struggles; ⁷³ they [= the spirits] are not yet permitting me to join them beyond the river. ⁷⁴ So that is how it is, and that is how I am, directionless, at the entrance to the wide gates of the house of Hādēs. [75] Give me now your hand while I weep, and I do weep because never again ⁷⁶ will I return from the house of Hādēs once you all do what you have to do, which is, to let me have the ritual of fire. ⁷⁷ And never again will you [= Achilles] and I be alive together as we sit around only in each other’s company, separating ourselves from our dear comrades [*hetairoi*], while we keep on sharing, just the two of us, ⁷⁸ our thoughts with each other. My fate [*kēr*] has its hold on me, ⁷⁹ that hateful thing. Now it has opened its gaping jaws and swallowed me. It really always had its hold on me, ever since I was born. [80] But you, Achilles, you who look just like the gods [*theoeikelos*], you too have a fate [*moira*] that has its hold on you. ⁸¹ You too are fated to die beneath the walls of the noble Trojans.

⁸² I will tell you one more thing, and I call on you to comply. ⁸³ Do not let my bones be laid to rest apart from your bones, Achilles, ⁸⁴ but together with them—the same way we were brought up together in your own home, [85] back when I, still a boy, was brought from Opous by [my father] Menoitios. ⁸⁶ He brought me to your place because of a disastrous [*lugrē*] homicide. ⁸⁷ It happened on the day when I killed the son of Amphidamas. ⁸⁸ It was involuntary. I was feeling disconnected [*nēpios*]. I got angry during a game of dice. ⁸⁹ But then [your father] the charioteer Peleus received me in his home, [90] and he raised me in a

ritually correct way, naming me to be your attendant [*therapōn*]. ⁹¹ So now let the same container enclose our bones for both of us. ⁹² I mean, the two-handled golden vase given to you by that lady, your mother.”

And swift-footed Achilles answered, “Why, true heart, [95] are you come here to lay these charges upon me? I will of my own self do all as you have bidden me. Draw closer to me, let us once more throw our arms around one another, and find sad comfort in the sharing of our sorrows.”

He opened his arms towards him as he spoke [100] and would have clasped him in them, but there was nothing, and the spirit [*psūkhē*] vanished as a vapor, gibbering and whining into the earth. Achilles sprang to his feet, smote his two hands, and made lamentation saying, “Of a truth even in the house of Hādēs there are spirits [*psūkhai*] and phantoms that have no life in them; [105] all night long the sad spirit [*psūkhē*] of Patroklos has hovered overhead making a piteous moan, telling me what I am to do for him, and looking wondrously like himself.”

Thus did he speak and his words set them all weeping and mourning about the poor dumb dead, [110] till rosy-fingered morn appeared. Then King Agamemnon sent men and mules from all parts of the camp, to bring wood, and Meriones, attendant [*therapōn*] to Idomeneus, was in charge over them. They went out [115] with woodmen’s axes and strong ropes in their hands, and before them went the mules. Up hill and down dale did they go, by straight ways and crooked, and when they reached the heights of many-fountained Ida, they laid their axes to the roots of many a tall branching oak [120] that came thundering down as they felled it. They split the trees and bound them behind the mules, which then wended their way as they best could through the thick brushwood on to the plain. All who had been cutting wood bore logs, for so Meriones attendant [*therapōn*] to Idomeneus had bidden them. [125] They [= the Achaeans] placed them [the logs] in a row on the

promontory [*aktē*] where Achilles ¹²⁶ had marked out the place of a great tomb [*ērion*] for Patroklos and for his own self.

When they had thrown down their great logs of wood over the whole ground, they stayed all of them where they were, [130] but Achilles ordered his brave Myrmidons to gird on their armor, and to yoke each man his horses; they therefore rose, girded on their armor and mounted each his chariot—they and their charioteers with them. The chariots went before, and they that were on foot followed as a cloud in their tens of thousands after. In the midst of them his comrades bore Patroklos [135] and covered him with the locks of their hair which they cut off and threw upon his body. Last came radiant Achilles with his head bowed for sorrow, so noble a comrade was he taking to the house of Hādēs.

When they came to the place of which Achilles had told them they laid the body down and built up the wood. [140] Radiant swift-footed Achilles then turned his thoughts to another matter. He went a space away from the pyre, and cut off the yellow lock which he had let grow for the river Sperkheios. He looked all sorrowfully out upon the dark sea [*pontos*], and said, “Sperkheios, in vain did my father Peleus vow to you [145] that when I returned home to my loved native land I should cut off this lock and offer you a holy hecatomb; fifty she-goats was I to sacrifice to you there at your springs, where is your grove and your altar fragrant with burnt-offerings. Thus did my father vow, but you have not fulfilled the thinking [*noos*] of his prayer; [150] now, therefore, that I shall see my home no more, I give this lock as a keepsake to the hero Patroklos.”

As he spoke he placed the lock in the hands of his dear comrade, and all who stood by were filled with yearning and lamentation. The sun would have gone down upon their mourning [155] had not Achilles presently said to Agamemnon, “Son of Atreus, for it is to you that the people will give ear, there is a time to mourn and a time to cease from mourning;

bid the people now leave the pyre and set about getting their dinners: we, to whom the dead is dearest, [160] will see to what is wanted here, and let the other princes also stay by me.”

When King Agamemnon heard this he dismissed the people to their ships, but those who were about the dead heaped up wood and built a pyre a hundred feet this way and that; [165] then they laid the dead all sorrowfully upon the top of it. They flayed and dressed many fat sheep and oxen before the pyre, and great-hearted Achilles took fat from all of them and wrapped the body therein from head to foot, heaping the flayed carcasses all round it. [170] Against the bier he leaned two-handled jars of honey and unguents; four proud horses did he then cast upon the pyre, groaning the while he did so. The dead hero had had house-dogs; two of them did Achilles slay and threw upon the pyre; [175] he also put twelve brave sons of noble Trojans to the sword and laid them with the rest, for he was full of bitterness and fury. Then he committed all to the resistless and devouring might of the fire; he groaned aloud and called on his dead comrade by name. “Fare well,” he cried, “Patroklos, even in the house of Hādēs; [180] I am now doing all that I have promised you. Twelve brave sons of noble Trojans shall the flames consume along with yourself, but dogs, not fire, shall devour the flesh of Hector son of Priam.”

Thus did he vaunt, but the dogs came not about the body of Hector, [185] for Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite kept them off him night and day, and anointed him with ambrosial oil of roses that his flesh might not be torn when Achilles was dragging him about. Phoebus Apollo moreover sent a dark cloud from heaven to earth, [190] which gave shade to the whole place where Hector lay, that the heat of the sun might not parch his body.

Now the pyre about dead Patroklos would not kindle. Swift-footed radiant Achilles therefore had thoughts of another matter; he went apart and prayed to the two winds [195] Boreas and Zephyros vowing them

goodly offerings. He made them many drink-offerings from the golden cup and besought them to come and help him that the wood might make haste to kindle and the dead bodies be consumed. Fleet Iris heard him praying and started off to fetch the winds. [200] They were holding high feast in the house of boisterous Zephyros when Iris came running up to the stone threshold of the house and stood there, but as soon as they set eyes on her they all came towards her and each of them called her to him, but Iris would not sit down. "I cannot stay," she said, [205] "I must go back to the streams of Okeanos and the land of the Ethiopians who are offering hecatombs to the immortals, and I would have my share; but Achilles prays that Boreas and shrill Zephyros will come to him, and he vows them goodly offerings; [210] he would have you blow upon the pyre of Patroklos for whom all the Achaeans are lamenting."

With this she left them, and the two winds rose with a cry that rent the air and swept the clouds before them. They blew on and on until they came to the sea [*pontos*], [215] and the waves rose high beneath them, but when they reached Troy they fell upon the pyre till the mighty flames roared under the blast that they blew. All night long did they blow hard and beat upon the fire, and all night long did swift-footed Achilles grasp his double cup, [220] drawing wine from a mixing-bowl of gold, and calling upon the spirit [*psūkhē*] of unhappy dead Patroklos as he poured it upon the ground until the earth was drenched. As a father mourns when he is burning the bones of his bridegroom son whose death has wrung the hearts of his parents, [225] even so did Achilles mourn while burning the body of his comrade, pacing round the bier with piteous groaning and lamentation.

At length as the Morning Star was beginning to herald the light which saffron-mantled Dawn was soon to suffuse over the sea, the flames fell and the fire began to die. [230] The winds then went home beyond the Thracian sea [*pontos*], which roared and boiled as they swept over it. The son of Peleus now turned away from the pyre and lay down,

overcome with toil, till he fell into a sweet slumber. Presently they who were about the son of Atreus drew near in a body, and roused him with the noise and tramp of their coming. [235] He sat upright and said, “Son of Atreus, and all other princes of the Achaeans, first pour red wine everywhere upon the fire and quench it; let us then gather the bones of Patroklos, son of Menoitios, [240] singling them out with care; they are easily found, for they lie in the middle of the pyre, while all else, both men and horses, has been thrown in a heap and burned at the outer edge. We will lay the bones in a golden urn, in two layers of fat, against the time when I shall myself go down into the house of Hādēs. [245] I [= Achilles] command that you [= the Achaeans] make a tomb [*tumbos*], not very big, ²⁴⁶ just big enough for now. Later, this same tomb you Achaeans ²⁴⁷ must make very wide and very high—those of you who, after me, ²⁴⁸ will be left behind, you with your ships that have many benches.”

Thus he spoke and they obeyed the word of the swift-footed son of Peleus. [250] First they poured red wine upon the thick layer of ashes and quenched the fire. With many tears they singled out the whitened bones of their gentle comrade and laid them within a golden urn in two layers of fat: they then covered the urn with a linen cloth and took it inside the tent. [255] They marked off the circle where the tomb [*sēma*] should be, made a foundation for it about the pyre, and right away heaped up the earth. When they had thus raised a mound as a tomb [*sēma*], they were going away, but Achilles stayed the people and made them sit in assembly [*agōn*]. He brought prizes from the ships—cauldrons, tripods, [260] horses and mules, noble oxen, women with fair waistbands, and swart iron.

The first prize he offered was for the chariot races—a woman skilled in all useful arts, and a three-legged cauldron that had ears for handles, and would hold twenty-two measures. This was for the man who came in first. [265] For the second there was a six-year old mare, unbroken, and in foal to a he-ass; the third was to have a goodly cauldron that had

never yet been on the fire; it was still bright as when it left the maker, and would hold four measures. The fourth prize was two talents of gold, [270] and the fifth a two-handled urn as yet unsoiled by smoke. Then he stood up and spoke among the Argives saying,

“Son of Atreus, and all other strong-greaved Achaeans, these are the prizes that lie waiting the winners in the contest [*agōn*] of the chariot races. At any other time [275] I should carry off the first prize and take it to my own tent; you know how much my steeds are better in excellence [*aretē*] than all others—for they are immortal; Poseidon gave them to my father Peleus, who in his turn gave them to myself; but I shall hold aloof, I and my steeds [280] that have lost the glory [*kleos*] of their brave and kind driver, who many a time has washed them in clear water and anointed their manes with oil. See how they stand weeping here, with their manes trailing on the ground in the extremity of their sorrow. [285] But you others set yourselves in order throughout the army, whosoever has confidence in his horses and in the strength of his chariot.”

Thus spoke the son of Peleus and the drivers of chariots bestirred themselves. First among them all stood up Eumelos, king of men, son of Admetos, a man excellent in charioteering. [290] Next to him rose mighty Diomedes, son of Tydeus; he yoked the Trojan horses which he had taken from Aeneas, when Apollo bore him out of the fight. Next to him, yellow-haired Menelaos son of Atreus rose and yoked his fleet horses, Agamemnon’s mare, Aithe, [295] and his own horse, Podargos. The mare had been given to Agamemnon by Ekhepolos son of Anchises, that he might not have to follow him to Ilion, but might stay at home and take his ease; for Zeus had endowed him with great wealth and he lived in spacious Sicyon. [300] This mare, all eager for the race, did Menelaos put under the yoke.

Fourth in order Antilokhos, son to noble Nestor, son of high-hearted Neleus, made ready his horses. These were bred in Pylos, and his father

came up to him [305] to give him good advice of which, however, he stood in but little need. “Antilokhos,” said Nestor, “you are young, but Zeus and Poseidon have loved you well, and have made you an excellent charioteer. I need not therefore say much by way of instruction. You are skillful at wheeling your horses round the post, [310] but the horses themselves are very slow, and it is this that will, I fear, mar your chances. The other drivers know less than you do, but their horses are fleeter; ³¹³ Come, my *philos*, put in your *thūmos* every sort of skill [*mētis*], ³¹⁴ so that prizes may not elude you. [315] It is with *mētis* rather than force [*biē*] that a woodcutter is better. ³¹⁶ It is with *mētis* that a helmsman [*kubernētēs*] over the wine-dark sea [*pontos*] ³¹⁷ steers his swift ship buffeted by winds. ³¹⁸ It is with *mētis* that charioteer is better than charioteer. [320] If a man go wide in rounding this way and that, whereas a man of craft [*kerdos*] may have worse horses, but he will keep them well in hand when he sees the turning-post [*terma*]; he knows the precise moment [325] at which to pull the rein, and keeps his eye well on the man in front of him. ³²⁶ I [= Nestor] will tell you [= Antilokhos] a sign [*sēma*], a very clear one, which will not get lost in your thinking. ³²⁷ Standing over there is a stump of deadwood, a good reach above ground level. ³²⁸ It had been either an oak or a pine. And it hasn’t rotted away from the rains. ³²⁹ There are two white rocks propped against either side of it. [330] There it is, standing at a point where two roadways meet, and it has a smooth track on both sides of it for driving a chariot. ³³¹ It is either the tomb [*sēma*] of some mortal who died a long time ago ³³² or was a turning point [*nussa*] in the times of earlier men. ³³³ Now swift-footed radiant Achilles has set it up as a turning point [*terma* plural]. ³³⁴ Get as close to it as you can when you drive your chariot horses toward it, [335] and keep leaning toward one side as you stand on the platform of your well-built chariot, ³³⁶ leaning to the left as you drive your horses. Your right-side horse ³³⁷ you must goad, calling out to it, and give that horse some slack as you hold its reins, ³³⁸ while you make your left-side horse get as close as possible [to the turning point], ³³⁹ so that the hub

will seem to be almost grazing the post [340]—the hub of your well-made chariot wheel. But be careful not to touch the stone [of the turning point], ³⁴¹ or else you will get your horses hurt badly and break your chariot in pieces. ³⁴² That would make other people happy, but for you it would be a shame, ³⁴³ yes it would. So, near and dear [*philos*] as you are to me, you must be sound in your thinking and be careful, for if you can be first to round the post [345] there is no chance of anyone giving you the go-by later, not even though he had Arion, the horse of Adrastos, a horse which is of divine race, or the horses of Laomedon, which are the noblest in this land.”

When Nestor had made an end of counseling his son [350] he sat down in his place, and fifth in order Meriones got ready his horses. They then all mounted their chariots and cast lots. Achilles shook the helmet, and the lot of Antilokhos, son of Nestor, fell out first; next came that of strong King Eumelos, [355] and after his, those of Menelaos the spear-famed son of Atreus and of Meriones. The last place fell to the lot of Diomedes, son of Tydeus, who was the best man of them all. They took their places in line; Achilles showed them the turning-post round which they were to turn, some way off upon the plain; here he stationed his father’s follower [360] Phoenix as umpire, to note the running, and report truly.

At the same instant they all of them lashed their horses, struck them with the reins, and shouted at them with all their might. They flew full speed over the plain [365] away from the ships, the dust rose from under them as it were a cloud or whirlwind, and their manes were all flying in the wind. At one moment the chariots seemed to touch the ground, and then again they bounded into the air; [370] the drivers stood erect, and their hearts beat fast and furious in their lust of victory. Each kept calling on his horses, and the horses scoured the plain amid the clouds of dust that they raised.

It was when they were doing the last part of the course on their way back towards the sea that their pace was strained to the utmost [375] and it was seen what each could do in striving [*aretē*] toward the prize. The horses of the descendant of Pheres now took the lead, and close behind them came the Trojan stallions of Diomedes. They seemed as if about to mount Eumelos' chariot, [380] and he could feel their warm breath on his back and on his broad shoulders, for their heads were close to him as they flew over the course. Diomedes would have now passed him, or there would have been a dead heat, but Phoebus Apollo to spite him made him drop his whip. [385] Tears of anger fell from his eyes as he saw the mares going on faster than ever, while his own horses lost ground through his having no whip. Athena saw the trick which Apollo had played the son of Tydeus, [390] so she brought him his whip and put spirit into his horses; moreover she went after the son of Admetos in a rage and broke his yoke for him; the mares went one to one side the course, and the other to the other, and the pole was broken against the ground. [395] Eumelos was thrown from his chariot close to the wheel; his elbows, mouth, and nostrils were all torn, and his forehead was bruised above his eyebrows; his eyes filled with tears and he could find no utterance. But the son of Tydeus turned his horses aside and shot far ahead, [400] for Athena put fresh strength into them and covered Diomedes himself with glory.

Fair-haired Menelaos, son of Atreus, came next behind him, but battle-stubborn Antilokhos called to his father's horses. "On with you both," he cried, "and do your very utmost. I do not bid you try to beat [405] the steeds of the son of Tydeus, for Athena has put running into them, and has covered Diomedes with glory; but you must overtake the horses of the son of Atreus and not be left behind, or Aethe who is so fleet will taunt you. Why, my good men, are you lagging? [410] I tell you, and it shall surely be—Nestor will keep neither of you, but will put both of you to the sword, if we win any the worse a prize [*āthlon*] through your carelessness, fly after them at your utmost speed; [415] I will hit on a

plan for passing them in a narrow part of the way, and it shall not fail me.”

They feared the rebuke of their master, and for a short space went quicker. Presently Antilokhos saw a narrow place where the road had sunk. [420] The ground was broken, for the winter’s rain had gathered and had worn the road so that the whole place was deepened. Menelaos was making towards it so as to get there first, for fear of a foul, but Antilokhos turned his horses out of the way, and followed him a little on one side. [425] The son of Atreus was afraid and shouted out, “Antilokhos, you are driving recklessly; rein in your horses; the road is too narrow here, it will be wider soon, and you can pass me then; if you foul my chariot you may bring both of us to a mischief.”

But Antilokhos plied his whip, [430] and drove faster, as though he had not heard him. They went side by side for about as far as a young man can hurl a disc from his shoulder when he is trying his strength, and then Menelaos’ mares drew behind, for he left off driving [435] for fear the horses should foul one another and upset the chariots; thus, while pressing on in quest of victory, they might both come headlong to the ground. Menelaos then upbraided Antilokhos and said, “There is no greater trickster living than you are; go, and bad luck go with you; [440] the Achaeans say not well that you have understanding, and come what may you shall not bear away the prize [*āthlon*] without sworn protest on my part.”

Then he called on his horses and said to them, “Keep your pace, and slacken not; [445] the limbs of the other horses will weary sooner than yours, for they are neither of them young.”

The horses feared the rebuke of their master, and went faster, so that they were soon nearly up with the others.

Meanwhile the Achaeans from their seats were watching how the horses went, as they scoured the plain amid clouds of their own dust. [450] Idomeneus leader of the Cretans was first to make out the running, for he was not in the thick of the crowd, but stood on the most commanding part of the ground. The driver was a long way off from the assembly [*agōn*], but Idomeneus could hear him shouting, and could see the foremost horse quite plainly— [455] a chestnut with a round white mark [*sēma*], like the moon, on its forehead. He stood up and said among the Argives, “My friends, princes and counselors of the Argives, can you see the running as well as I can? There seems to be another pair in front now, [460] and another driver; those that led off at the start must have been disabled out on the plain. I saw them at first making their way round the turning-post, but now, though I search the plain of Troy, I cannot find them. [465] Perhaps the reins fell from the driver’s hand so that he lost command of his horses at the turning-post, and could not turn it. I suppose he must have been thrown out there, and broken his chariot, while his mares have left the course and gone off wildly in a panic. Come up and see for yourselves, [470] I cannot make out for certain, but the driver seems an Aetolian by descent, ruler over the Argives, brave Diomedes the son of Tydeus, breaker of horses.”

Swift Ajax, the son of Oïleus, took him up rudely and said, “Idomeneus, why should you be in such a hurry to tell us all about it, [475] when the mares are still so far out upon the plain? You are none of the youngest, nor your eyes none of the sharpest, but you are always laying down the law. You have no right to do so, for there are better men here than you are. [480] Eumelos’ horses are in front now, as they always have been, and he is on the chariot holding the reins.”

The leader of the Cretans was angry, and answered, “Ajax, you are an excellent railer, but you have no judgment [*noos*], and are wanting in much else as well, for you have a vile temper. [485] I will wager you a tripod or cauldron, and Agamemnon son of Atreus shall decide whose horses are first. You will then know to your cost.”

Swift Ajax son of Oïleus was for making him an angry answer, [490] and there would have been yet further brawling between them, had not Achilles risen in his place and said, “Cease your railing Ajax and Idomeneus—it is not seemly; you would be scandalized if you saw anyone else do the like: [495] sit down in the assembly [*agōn*] and keep your eyes on the horses; they are speeding towards the winning-post and will be here directly. You will then both of you know whose horses are first, and whose come after.”

[500] As he was speaking, the son of Tydeus came driving in, plying his whip lustily from his shoulder, and his horses stepping high as they flew over the course. The sand and grit rained thick on the driver, and the chariot inlaid with gold and tin ran close behind his fleet horses. [505] There was little trace of wheel-marks in the fine dust, and the horses came flying in at their utmost speed. Diomedes stayed them in the middle of the assembly [*agōn*], and the sweat from their manes and chests fell in streams on to the ground. ⁵⁰⁹ He [Diomedes] jumped from the splendid chariot to the ground [510] and leaned his whip against the yoke. Nor was he idle, ⁵¹¹ that powerful Sthenelos. He quickly took hold of the prize [*aethlon*] ⁵¹² and he gave [*dōke*] over to the superb companions, for taking away [*agein*], the woman, ⁵¹³ and the tripod with a handle [he gave it over to them] for carrying away [*pherein*]. Then he [Sthenelos] unharnessed the horses.

Next after him came in Antilokhos of the race of Neleus, [515] who had passed Menelaos by craft [*kerdos*] and not by the fleetness of his horses; but even so Menelaos came in as close behind him as the wheel is to the horse that draws both the chariot and its master. [520] The end hairs of a horse’s tail touch the tire of the wheel, and there is never much space between wheel and horse when the chariot is going; Menelaos was no further than this behind Antilokhos, the blameless, though at first he had been a full disc’s throw behind him. He had soon caught him up again, for Agamemnon’s mare, Aethe [525] of the fair mane, kept pulling

stronger and stronger, so that if the course had been longer he would have passed him, and there would not even have been a dead heat. Idomeneus' brave attendant [*therapōn*] Meriones was about a spear's cast behind glorious Menelaos. [530] His horses were slowest of all in the contest [*agōn*], and he was the worst driver. Last of them all came the son of Admetos, dragging his chariot and driving his horses on in front. When radiant swift-footed Achilles saw him he was sorry, [535] and stood up among the Argives saying, "The best man is coming in last. Let us give him a prize for it is reasonable. He shall have the second, but the first must go to the son of Tydeus."

Thus did he speak [540] and the others all of them applauded his saying, and were for doing as he had said, but great-hearted Nestor's son Antilokhos stood up and claimed his rights from the son of Peleus. "Achilles," said he, "I shall take it much amiss if you do this thing; you would rob me of my prize [*āthlon*], [545] because you think Eumelos' chariot and horses were thrown out, and himself too, good man that he is. He should have prayed duly to the immortals; he would not have come in last if he had done so. If you are sorry for him and so choose, you have much gold in your tents, with bronze, [550] sheep, cattle, and horses. Take something from this store if you would have the Achaeans speak well of you, and give him a better prize [*āthlon*] even than that which you have now offered; but I will not give up the mare, and he that will fight me for her, let him come on."

[555] Swift-footed Achilles smiled as he heard this, and was pleased with Antilokhos, who was one of his dearest comrades. So he said, "Antilokhos, if you would have me find Eumelos another prize, [560] I will give him the bronze breastplate with a rim of tin running all round it which I took from Asteropaios. It will be worth much money to him."

He bade his comrade Automedon bring the breastplate from his tent, and he did so. Achilles [565] then gave it over to Eumelos, who received it gladly.

But Menelaos got up in a rage, furiously angry with Antilokhos. An attendant placed his staff in his hands and bade the Argives keep silence: the hero then addressed them. [570] “Antilokhos,” said he, “what is this from you who have been so far blameless? You have shamed my excellence [*aretē*] and blocked my horses by flinging your own in front of them, though yours are much worse than mine are; therefore, O princes and counselors of the Argives, judge between us and show no favor, [575] lest one of the bronze-armored Achaeans say, ‘Menelaos has got the mare through lying and corruption; his horses were far inferior to Antilokhos’, but he is superior in excellence [*aretē*] and force [*biē*].’ No, I will determine the matter myself, and no man will blame me, for I shall do what is just. [580] Come here, Antilokhos, and stand, as our custom [*themis*] is, whip in hand before your chariot and horses; lay your hand on your steeds, [585] and swear by earth-encircling Poseidon that you did not purposely and guilefully get in the way of my horses.”

And Antilokhos answered, “Forgive me; I am much younger, King Menelaos, than you are; you stand higher than I do and are the better man of the two; you know how easily young men are betrayed into indiscretion; [590] their minds [*noos*] are more hasty, but their cunning intelligence [*mētis*] is slight; make due allowances therefore, and bear with me; I will of my own accord give up the mare that I have won, and if you claim any further chattel from my own possessions, I would rather yield it to you, at once, [595] than fall from your good graces henceforth, and do wrong in the eyes of superhuman forces [*daimones*].”

The son of Nestor the great-hearted then took the mare and gave her over to Menelaos, whose anger was thus appeased; as when dew falls upon a field of ripening wheat, and the lands are bristling with the harvest— [600] even so, O Menelaos, was your heart made glad within you. He turned to Antilokhos and said, “Now, Antilokhos, angry though I have been, I can give way to you of my own free will; you have never been headstrong nor ill-disposed hitherto, but this time your youth has got the better of your judgment [*noos*]; [605] be careful how you outwit

your betters in the future; no one else could have brought me round so easily, but your good father, your brother, and yourself have all of you had infinite trouble on my behalf; I therefore yield to your entreaty, [610] and will give up the mare to you, mine though it indeed be; the people will thus see that I am neither harsh nor vindictive.”

With this he gave the mare over to Antilokhos’ comrade Noemon, and then took the cauldron. Meriones, who had come in fourth, [615] carried off the two talents of gold, and the fifth prize [*āthlon*], the two-handled urn, being unawarded, Achilles gave it to Nestor, going up to him in the assembly [*agōn*] of Argives and saying, “Take this, my good old friend, as an heirloom and memorial of the funeral of Patroklos— [620] for you shall see him no more among the Argives. I give you this prize [*āthlon*] though you cannot win one; you can now neither wrestle nor fight, and cannot enter for the javelin-match nor foot-races, for the hand of age has been laid heavily upon you.”

[625] So saying he gave the urn over to Nestor, who received it gladly and answered, “My son, all that you have said is true; there is no strength now in my legs and feet, nor can I hit out with my hands from either shoulder. [630] Would that I were still young and strong as when the Epeioi were burying great King Amarynkeus in Bouprasion, and his sons offered prizes in his honor. There was then none that could vie with me neither of the Epeioi nor the Pylians themselves nor the great-hearted Aetolians. In boxing I overcame Klytomedes son of Enops, [635] and in wrestling, Ankaio of Pleuron who had come forward against me. Iphiklos was a good runner, but I beat him, and threw farther with my spear than either Phyleus or Polydoros. In chariot-racing alone did the two sons of Aktor surpass me by crowding their horses in front of me, for they were angry at the way victory had gone, [640] and at the greater part of the prizes remaining in the place in which they had been offered. They were twins, and the one kept on holding the reins, and holding the reins, while the other plied the whip. Such was I then, but now I must leave these matters to younger men; [645] I must bow before

the weight of years, but in those days I was eminent among heroes. And now, sir, go on with the funeral contests [*āthloi*] in honor of your comrade: gladly do I accept this urn, and my heart rejoices that you do not forget me but are ever mindful of my gentleness towards you, and of the respect [*tīmē*] due to me from the Achaeans. [650] For all which may the grace [*kharis*] of heaven be granted you in great abundance.”

Then the son of Peleus, when he had listened to all the praise [*ainos*] of Nestor, went about among the concourse of the Achaeans, and presently offered prizes for skill in the painful art of boxing. He brought out a strong mule, and made it fast in the middle of the crowd [*agōn*— [655] a she-mule never yet broken, but six years old—when it is hardest of all to break them: this was for the victor, and for the vanquished he offered a double cup. Then he stood up and said among the Argives, “Son of Atreus, and all other strong-greaved Achaeans, I invite our two champion boxers [660] to lay about them lustily and compete for these prizes. He to whom Apollo grants the greater endurance, and whom the Achaeans acknowledge as victor, shall take the mule back with him to his own tent, while he that is vanquished shall have the double cup.”

[665] As he spoke there stood up a champion both brave and of great stature, a skillful boxer, Epeios, son of Panopeus. He laid his hand on the mule and said, “Let the man who is to have the cup come here, for none but myself will take the mule. I am the best boxer of all here present, and none can beat me. [670] Is it not enough that I should fall short of you in actual fighting? Still, no man can be good at everything. I tell you plainly, and it shall come true; if any man will box with me I will bruise his body and break his bones; therefore let his friends stay here in a body [675] and be at hand to take him away when I have done with him.”

They all held their peace, and no man rose save godlike Euryalos, son of Mekisteus, who was son of Talaos. Mekisteus went once to Thebes after the fall of Oedipus, [680] to attend his funeral, and he beat all the people of Kadmos. The spear-famed son of Tydeus was Euryalos’ second,

cheering him on and hoping heartily that he would win. First he put a waistband round him and then he gave him some well-cut thongs of ox-hide; [685] the two men being now girt went into the middle of the ring of competition [*agōn*], and immediately fell to; heavily indeed did they punish one another and lay about them with their brawny fists. One could hear the horrid crashing of their jaws, and they sweated from every pore of their skin. Presently Epeios came on and gave Euryalos a blow on the jaw [690] as he was looking round; Euryalos could not keep his legs; they gave way under him in a moment and he sprang up with a bound, as a fish leaps into the air near some shore that is all bestrewn with sea-wrack, when Boreas furs the top of the waves, and then falls back into deep water. But great-hearted [695] Epeios caught hold of him and raised him up; his comrades also came round him and led him from the ring of competition [*agōn*], unsteady in his gait, his head hanging on one side, and spitting great clots of gore. They set him down in a swoon and then went to fetch the double cup.

[700] The son of Peleus now brought out the prizes for the third contest and showed them to the Argives. These were for the painful art of wrestling. For the winner there was a great tripod ready for setting upon the fire, and the Achaeans valued it among themselves at twelve oxen. For the loser he brought out [705] a woman skilled in all manner of arts, and they valued her at four oxen. He rose and said among the Argives, “Stand forward, you who will essay this contest [*āthlos*].”

Right then and there stood up great Ajax, the son of Telamon, and crafty Odysseus, full of craft [*kerdos*] rose also. [710] The two girded themselves and went into the middle of the ring of competition [*agōn*]. They gripped each other in their strong hands like the rafters which some master-builder frames for the roof of a high house to keep the wind out. [715] Their backbones cracked as they tugged at one another with their mighty arms—and sweat rained from them in torrents. Many a bloody weal sprang up on their sides and shoulders, but they kept on striving with might and main for victory and to win the tripod.

Odysseus could not throw Ajax, [720] nor Ajax him; Odysseus was too strong for him; but when the strong-greaved Achaeans began to tire of watching them, Ajax said to Odysseus, “Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, you shall either lift me, or I you, and let Zeus settle it between us.”

[725] He lifted him from the ground as he spoke, but Odysseus did not forget his cunning. He hit Ajax in the hollow at back of his knee, so that he could not keep his feet, but fell on his back with Odysseus lying upon his chest, and all who saw it marveled. Then radiant much-enduring Odysseus in turn lifted Ajax [730] and stirred him a little from the ground but could not lift him right off it, his knee sank under him, and the two fell side by side on the ground and were all begrimed with dust. They now sprang towards one another and were for wrestling yet a third time, but Achilles rose and stayed them. [735] “Put not each other further,” said he, “to such cruel suffering; the victory is with both alike, take each of you an equal prize, and let the other Achaeans now compete.”

Thus did he speak and they did even as he had said, and put on their khitons again after wiping the dust from off their bodies.

[740] The son of Peleus then offered prizes for speed in running—a mixing-bowl beautifully wrought, of pure silver. It would hold six measures, and far exceeded all others in the whole world for beauty; it was the work of cunning artificers in Sidon, [745] and had been brought into port by Phoenicians from beyond the sea [*pontos*], who had made a present of it to Thoas. Eueneus son of Jason had given it to Patroklos in ransom of Priam’s son Lykaon, and Achilles now offered it as a prize [*āthlon*] in honor of his comrade to him who should be the swiftest runner. [750] For the second prize he offered a large ox, well fattened, while for the last there was to be half a talent of gold. He then rose and said among the Argives, “Stand forward, you who will essay this contest [*āthlos*].”

Right then and there stood up swift Ajax son of Oïleus, [755] with cunning Odysseus, and Nestor's son Antilokhos, the fastest runner among all the youth of his time. They stood side by side and Achilles showed them the goal. The course was set out for them from the starting-post, and the son of Oïleus took the lead at once, [760] with radiant Odysseus as close behind him as the shuttle is to a woman's bosom when she throws the woof across the warp and holds it close up to her; even so close behind him was great Odysseus—treading in his footprints before the dust could settle there, [765] and Ajax could feel his breath on the back of his head as he ran swiftly on. The Achaeans all shouted approval as they saw him straining his utmost, and cheered him as he shot past them; but when they were now nearing the end of the course Odysseus prayed inwardly to owl-vision Athena. [770] "Hear me," he cried, "and help my feet, O goddess." Thus did he pray, and Pallas Athena heard his prayer; she made his hands and his feet feel light, and when the runners were at the point of pouncing upon the prize [*āthlon*], Ajax, through Athena's spite slipped [775] upon some manure that was lying around from the cattle which swift-footed Achilles had slaughtered in honor of Patroklos, and his mouth and nostrils were all filled with cow dung. Odysseus therefore carried off the mixing-bowl, for he got before glorious Ajax and came in first. [780] But Ajax took the ox and stood with his hand on one of its horns, spitting the dung out of his mouth. Then he said to the Argives, "Alas, the goddess has spoiled my running; she watches over Odysseus and stands by him as though she were his own mother." Thus did he speak and they all of them laughed heartily.

[785] Antilokhos carried off the last prize [*āthlon*] and smiled as he said to the bystanders, "You all see, my friends, that now too the gods have shown their respect for seniority. [790] Ajax is somewhat older than I am, and as for Odysseus, he belongs to an earlier generation, but he is hale in spite of his years, and no man of the Achaeans can run against him save only Achilles."

He said this to pay a compliment to the swift-footed son of Peleus, and Achilles answered, [795] “Antilokhos, you shall not have given me praise [*ainos*] to no purpose; I shall give you an additional half talent of gold.” He then gave the half talent to Antilokhos, who received it gladly.

Then the son of Peleus brought out to the assembly [*agōn*] the spear, helmet, and shield [800] that had been borne by Sarpedon, and were taken from him by Patroklos. He stood up and said among the Argives, “We bid two champions put on their armor, take their keen blades, and make trial of one another in the presence of the multitude; [805] whichever of them can first wound the flesh of the other, cut through his armor, and draw blood, to him will I give this goodly Thracian sword inlaid with silver, which I took from Asteropaios, but the armor let both hold in partnership, [810] and I will give each of them a hearty meal in my own tent.”

Right then and there stood up great Ajax the son of Telamon, as also mighty Diomedes, son of Tydeus. When they had put on their armor each on his own side of the ring, they both went into the middle eager to engage, [815] and with fire flashing from their eyes. The Achaeans marveled as they beheld them, and when the two were now close up with one another, three times did they spring forward and three times try to strike each other in close combat. Ajax pierced Diomedes’ round shield, but did not draw blood, for the cuirass beneath the shield protected him; [820] then the son of Tydeus from over his huge shield kept aiming continually at Ajax’s neck with the point of his spear, and the Achaeans alarmed for his safety bade them leave off fighting and divide the prize between them. Achilles then gave the great sword to the son of Tydeus, [825] with its scabbard, and the leathern belt with which to hang it.

Achilles next offered the massive iron quoit which mighty Eëtion had once upon a time been used to hurl, until swift-footed radiant Achilles had slain him and carried it off in his ships along with other spoils. [830]

He stood up and said among the Argives, “Stand forward, you who would essay this contest [*āthlos*]. He who wins it will have a store of iron that will last him five years as they go rolling round, and if his fair fields lie far from a town his shepherd or ploughman [835] will not have to make a journey to buy iron, for he will have a stock of it on his own premises.”

Then stood up the two mighty men Polypoites and Leonteus, with Ajax, son of Telamon, and noble Epeios. They stood up one after the other and Epeios took the quoit, [840] whirled it, and flung it from him, which set all the Achaeans laughing. After him threw Leonteus of the race of Arēs. Noble Ajax, son of Telamon, threw third, and sent the quoit beyond any mark [*sēma*] that had been made yet, but when mighty Polypoites took the quoit he hurled it as though it had been a stockman’s stick which he sends flying about among his cattle when he is driving them, [845] so far did his throw out-distance those of the others in the contest [*agōn*]. All who saw it roared approval, and his comrades carried the prize [*āthlon*] for him and set it on board his ship.

[850] Achilles next offered a prize of iron for archery—ten double-edged axes and ten with single eddies: he set up a ship’s mast, some way off upon the sands, and with a fine string tied a pigeon to it by the foot; this was what they were to aim at. [855] “Whoever,” he said, “can hit the pigeon shall have all the axes and take them away with him; he who hits the string without hitting the bird will have taken a worse aim and shall have the single-edged axes.”

Then stood up King Teucer, [860] and Meriones the stalwart attendant [*therapōn*] of Idomeneus rose also, They cast lots in a bronze helmet and the lot of Teucer fell first. He let fly with his arrow right then and there, but he did not promise hecatombs of firstling lambs to King Apollo, [865] and missed his bird, for Apollo foiled his aim; but he hit the string with which the bird was tied, near its foot; the arrow cut the string clean through so that it hung down towards the ground, while the bird flew

up into the sky, and the Achaeans shouted approval. [870] Meriones, who had his arrow ready while Teucer was aiming, snatched the bow out of his hand, and at once promised that he would sacrifice a hecatomb of firstling lambs to Apollo lord of the bow; then espying the pigeon high up under the clouds, [875] he hit her in the middle of the wing as she was circling upwards; the arrow went clean through the wing and fixed itself in the ground at Meriones' feet, but the bird perched on the ship's mast hanging her head and with all her feathers drooping; [880] the life went out of her, and she fell heavily from the mast. Meriones, therefore, took all ten double-edged axes, while Teucer bore off the single-edged ones to his ships.

Then the son of Peleus brought in to the contest [*agōn*] [885] a spear and a cauldron that had never been on the fire; it was worth an ox, and was chased with a pattern of flowers; and those that throw the javelin stood up—to wit the son of Atreus, wide-powerful king of men Agamemnon, and Meriones, stalwart attendant of Idomeneus. But swift-footed radiant Achilles spoke saying, [890] “Son of Atreus, we know how far you excel all others both in power and in throwing the javelin; take the cauldron as prize [*āthlon*] back with you to your ships, but if it so please you, let us give the spear to Meriones; this at least is what I should myself wish.”

[895] King Agamemnon assented. So he gave the bronze spear to Meriones, and handed the goodly cauldron as prize [*āthlon*] to Talthybios his attendant.

Homeric *Iliad*

Rhapsody 24

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] The assembly [*agōn*] now broke up and the people went their ways each to his own ship. There they made ready their supper, and then turned their thoughts to the blessed boon of sleep; but Achilles still wept for thinking of his dear comrade, and sleep, [5] before whom all things bow, could take no hold upon him. This way and that did he turn as he yearned after the might and manfulness of Patroklos; he thought of all they had done together, and all they had gone through both on the field of battle and on the waves of the weary sea. As he dwelt on these things he wept bitterly [10] and lay now on his side, now on his back, and now face downwards, till at last he rose and went out as one distraught to wander upon the seashore. Then, when he saw dawn breaking over beach and sea, he yoked his horses to his chariot, [15] and bound the body of Hector behind it that he might drag it about. Thrice did he drag it round the tomb [*sēma*] of the son of Menoitios, and then went back into his tent, leaving the body on the ground full length and with its face downwards. But Apollo would not suffer it to be disfigured, for he pitied the man, dead though he now was; [20] therefore he shielded him with his golden aegis continually, that he might take no hurt while Achilles was dragging him.

Thus shamefully did Achilles in his fury dishonor great Hector; but the blessed gods looked down in pity from heaven, and urged clear-sighted Hermes, slayer of Argos, to steal the body. [25] All were of this mind save only Hera, Poseidon, and Zeus' owl-vision daughter, who persisted in the hate which they had ever borne towards Ilion with Priam and his people; for they forgave not the wrong [*atē*] done them by Alexandros ²⁹

who blamed [made *neikos* against] the goddesses [Hera and Athena], when they came to his courtyard, [30] but he praised her [Aphrodite] who gave him the baneful pleasure of sex.

When the morning of the twelfth day had now come, Phoebus Apollo spoke among the immortals saying, “You gods ought to be ashamed of yourselves; you are cruel and hard-hearted. Did not Hector burn you thigh-bones of heifers and of unblemished goats? [35] And now dare you not rescue even his dead body, for his wife to look upon, with his mother and child, his father Priam, and his people, who would right then and there commit him to the flames, and give him his due funeral rites? So, then, you would all be on the side of mad Achilles? [40] His thinking [*phrenes*] is not right and his sense of *noos* ⁴¹ is not flexible within his breast, but like a lion he knows savage ways. ⁴² —a lion that yields to its strength [*biē*] and overweening *thūmos*, ⁴³ and goes after the sheep of men, in order to get a feast [*dais*]. Even so has Achilles flung aside all pity, [45] and all that decency [*aidōs*] which at once so greatly hurts yet greatly benefits anyone who abides by it. ⁴⁶ For a man could easily lose someone else who is more *phílos*, ⁴⁷ either a brother from the same womb or even a son; yet when he has mourned him and wept over him he will let him bide, for it takes much sorrow to kill a man; [50] whereas Achilles, now that he has slain noble Hector, drags him behind his chariot round the tomb [*sēma*] of his comrade. It were better of him, and for him, that he should not do so, for brave though he be we gods may take it ill that he should vent his fury upon dead clay.”

[55] Hera of the white arms spoke up in a rage. “This were well,” she cried, “O lord of the silver bow, if you would give like honor [*tīmē*] to Hector and to Achilles; but Hector was mortal and suckled at a woman’s breast, whereas Achilles is the offspring of a goddess [60] whom I myself reared and brought up. I married her to Peleus, who is above measure dear to the immortals; ⁶² and all you gods attended the wedding. And

you too were feasting among them ⁶³ and you had your lyre with you—false, and fond of low company, that you have ever been.”

Then said Zeus, who gathers the clouds, [65] “Hera, be not so bitter. Their honor [*tīmē*] shall not be equal, but of all that dwell in Ilion, Hector was dearest to the gods, as also to myself, for his offerings never failed me. Never was my altar stinted of its dues, [70] nor of the drink-offerings and savor of sacrifice which we claim of right. I shall therefore permit the body of mighty Hector to be stolen; and yet this may hardly be without Achilles coming to know it, for his mother keeps night and day beside him. Let some one of you, therefore, send Thetis to me, [75] and I will impart my counsel to her, namely that Achilles is to accept a ransom from Priam, and give up the body.”

Then Iris, fleet as the wind, went forth to carry his message. [80] Down she plunged into the dark sea [*pontos*] midway between Samos and rocky Imbros; the waters hissed as they closed over her, and she sank into the bottom as the lead at the end of an ox-horn, that is sped to carry death to fishes. She found Thetis sitting in a great cave with the other sea-goddesses gathered round her; [85] there she sat in the midst of them weeping for her noble son who was to fall far from his own land, on the fertile plains of Troy. Iris went up to her and said, ⁸⁸ “Bestir yourself, Thetis! Zeus, skilled in imperishable [*aphthita*] counsels, is calling you” ⁸⁹ And Thetis, the silver-footed goddess, answered, [90] “Why has that great god summoned me? ⁹¹ I am shy to have intercourse with the immortals and I am in great grief [*akhos*]. Still, I will go, and the word that he may speak shall not be spoken in vain.”

The goddess took her dark veil, than which there can be no robe more somber, [95] and went forth with fleet Iris leading the way before her. The waves of the sea opened them a path, and when they reached the shore they flew up into the heavens, where they found the all-seeing son of Kronos of the wide brows with the blessed gods that live for ever assembled near him. Athena gave up her seat to her, [100] and she sat

down by the side of father Zeus. Hera then placed a fair golden cup in her hand, and spoke to her in words of comfort, whereon Thetis drank and gave her back the cup; and the sire of gods and men was the first to speak.

“So, goddess Thetis,” said he, [105] “for all your sorrow, and the grief [*penthos*] that I well know reigns ever in your heart, you have come here to Olympus, and I will tell you why I have sent for you. This nine days past the immortals have been quarreling about Achilles, waster of cities, and the body of Hector. The gods would have clear-sighted Hermes, slayer of Argos, steal the body, but in furtherance of our decency [*aidōs*] and sense of being near-and-dear [*philotēs*] henceforward, [110] I will concede such honor to your son as I will now tell you. Go, then, to the army and lay these commands upon him; say that the gods are angry with him, and that I am myself more angry than them all, [115] in that he keeps Hector at the ships and will not give him up. He may thus fear me and let the body go. At the same time I will send Iris to great Priam to bid him go to the ships of the Achaeans, and ransom his son, taking with him such gifts for Achilles as may give him satisfaction.

[120] Silver-footed Thetis did as the god had told her, and right away she darted down from the topmost summits of Olympus. She went to her son’s tents where she found him grieving bitterly, while his trusty comrades round him were busy preparing their morning meal, [125] for which they had killed a great woolly sheep. His mother sat down beside him and caressed him with her hand saying, “My son, how long will you keep on thus grieving and making moan? You are gnawing at your own heart, [130] and think neither of food nor of woman’s embraces; and yet these too were well, for you have no long time to live, and death with the strong hand of fate are already close beside you. Now, therefore, heed what I say, for I come as a messenger from Zeus; he says that the gods are angry with you, [135] and himself more angry than them all, in that you keep Hector at the ships and will not give him up. Therefore let him go, and accept a ransom for his body.”

And Achilles of the swift feet answered, “So be it. [140] If Olympian Zeus of his own motion thus commands me, let him that brings the ransom bear the body away.”

Thus did mother and son talk together at the ships in long discourse with one another. Meanwhile the son of Kronos sent Iris to the strong city of Ilion. “Go,” said he, “fleet Iris, from the mansions of Olympus, [145] and tell King Priam in Ilion that he is to go to the ships of the Achaeans and free the body of his dear son. He is to take such gifts with him as shall give satisfaction to Achilles, and he is to go alone, with no other Trojan, save only some honored servant [150] who may drive his mules and wagon, and bring back the body of him whom noble Achilles has slain. Let him have no thought nor fear of death in his heart, for we will send the slayer of Argos to escort him, [155] and bring him within the tent of Achilles. Achilles will not kill him nor let another do so, for he will take heed to his ways and err not, and he will entreat a suppliant with all honorable courtesy.”

Then Iris, fleet as the wind, sped forth to deliver her message. [160] She went to Priam’s house, and found weeping and lamentation therein. His sons were seated round their father in the outer courtyard, and their raiment was wet with tears: the old man sat in the midst of them with his mantle wrapped close about his body, and his head and neck all covered with the filth [165] which he had clutched as he lay groveling in the mire. His daughters and his sons’ wives went wailing about the house, as they thought of the many and brave men who lost their life-breath [*psūkhē*], slain by the Argives. The messenger of Zeus stood by Priam [170] and spoke softly to him, but fear fell upon him as she did so. “Take heart,” she said, “Priam, offspring of Dardanos, take heart and fear not. I bring no evil tidings, but am minded well towards you. I come as a messenger from Zeus, who though he be not near, takes thought for you and pities you. [175] The lord of Olympus bids you go and ransom noble Hector, and take with you such gifts as shall give satisfaction to Achilles. You are to go alone, with no Trojan, save only some honored

servant who may drive your mules and wagon, and bring back to the city [180] the body of him whom noble Achilles has slain. You are to have no thought nor fear of death, for Zeus will send the slayer of Argos to escort you. When he has brought you within Achilles' tent, [185] Achilles will not kill you nor let another do so, for he will take heed to his ways and err not, and he will treat a suppliant with all honorable courtesy."

Iris went her way when she had thus spoken, and Priam told his sons to get a mule-wagon ready, [190] and to make the body of the wagon fast upon the top of its bed. Then he went down into his fragrant store-room, high-vaulted, and made of cedar-wood, where his many treasures were kept, and he called Hecuba his wife. "Wife," said he, "a messenger has come to me from Olympus, [195] and has told me to go to the ships of the Achaeans to ransom my dear son, taking with me such gifts as shall give satisfaction to Achilles. What think you of this matter? for my own part greatly does the power [*menos*] of my heart [*thūmos*] bid me to go there through the broad camp of the Achaeans to their ships."

[200] His wife cried aloud as she heard him, and said, "Alas, what has become of that judgment for which you have been ever famous both among strangers and your own people? How can you venture alone to the ships of the Achaeans, and look into the face of him who has slain so many of your [205] brave sons? You must have iron courage, for if the cruel savage sees you and lays hold on you, he will know neither respect nor pity. Let us then weep Hector from afar here in our own house, [210] for when I gave him birth the threads of overruling fate were spun for him that dogs should eat his flesh far from his parents, in the house of that terrible man on whose liver I would fain fasten and devour it. Thus would I avenge my son, who showed no cowardice when Achilles slew him, and thought neither of Right nor of avoiding battle [215] as he stood in defense of Trojan men and Trojan women."

Then Priam the godlike said, “I would go, do not therefore stay me nor be as a bird of ill omen in my house, for you will not move me. [220] Had it been some mortal man who had sent me some seer [*mantis*] or priest who divines from sacrifice—I should have deemed him false and have given him no heed; but now I have heard the goddess and seen her face to face, therefore I will go and her saying shall not be in vain. [225] If it be my fate to die at the ships of the bronze-armored Achaeans even so would I have it; let Achilles slay me, if I may but first have taken my son in my arms and mourned him to my heart’s comforting.”

So saying he lifted the lids of his chests, and took out twelve goodly vestments. He took also twelve cloaks of single fold, twelve rugs, [230] twelve fair mantles, and an equal number of khitons. He weighed out ten talents of gold, and brought moreover two burnished tripods, four cauldrons, and a very beautiful cup which the Thracians had given him when he had gone to them on an embassy; it was very precious, [235] but he grudged not even this, so eager was he to ransom the body of his son. Then he chased all the Trojans from the court and rebuked them with words of anger. “Out,” he cried, “shame and disgrace to me that you are. Have you no grief in your own homes that you are come to plague me here? [240] Is it a small thing, think you, that the son of Kronos has sent this sorrow upon me, to lose the bravest of my sons? I tell you, you shall prove it in person, for now that he is gone the Achaeans will have easier work in killing you. As for me, let me go down within the house of Hādēs, [245] before my eyes behold the ransacking and wasting of the city.”

He drove the men away with his staff, and they went forth as the old man sped them. Then he called to his sons, upbraiding Helenos, Paris, noble Agathon, [250] Pammon, Antiphonos, Polites of the loud battle-cry, Deiphobos, Hippothoös, and proud Dios. These nine did the old man call near him. “Come to me at once,” he cried, “worthless sons who do me shame; would that you had all been killed at the ships rather than Hector. [255] Miserable man that I am, I have had the bravest sons in all

Troy—noble godlike Mestor, Troilus, the dauntless charioteer, and ²⁵⁸
Hector, who was a god among men; and he seemed ²⁵⁹ to be the child
not of a mortal but of a god —yet there is not one of them left. [260]
Arēs has slain them and those of whom I am ashamed are alone left me.
Liars, and light of foot, heroes of the dance, robbers of lambs and kids
from your own people, why do you not get a wagon ready for me at
once, and put all these things upon it that I may set out on my way?”

[265] Thus did he speak, and they feared the rebuke of their father. They
brought out a strong mule-wagon, newly made, and set the body of the
wagon fast on its bed. They took the mule-yoke from the peg on which
it hung, a yoke of boxwood with a knob on the top of it and rings for
the reins to go through. [270] Then they brought a yoke-band eleven
cubits long, to bind the yoke to the pole; they bound it on at the far end
of the pole, and put the ring over the upright pin making it fast with
three turns of the band on either side the knob, and bending the thong
of the yoke beneath it. [275] This done, they brought from the store-
chamber the rich ransom that was to purchase the body of Hector, and
they set it all orderly on the wagon; then they yoked the strong harness-
mules which the Mysians had on a time given as a goodly present to
Priam; but for Priam himself they yoked horses [280] which the old
king had bred, and kept for own use.

Thus heedfully did Priam and his servant see to the yoking of their cars
at the palace. Then Hecuba came to them all sorrowful, [285] with a
golden goblet of wine in her right hand, that they might make a drink-
offering before they set out. She stood in front of the horses and said,
“Take this, make a drink-offering to father Zeus, and since you are
minded to go to the ships in spite of me, pray that you may come safely
back from the hands of your enemies. [290] Pray to the son of Kronos,
lord of the whirlwind, who sits on Ida and looks down over all Troy,
pray him to send his swift messenger on your right hand, the bird of
omen which is strongest and most dear to him of all birds, that you may
see it with your own eyes [295] and trust it as you go forth to the ships

of the fast-mounted Danaans. If all-seeing Zeus will not send you this messenger, however set upon it you may be, I would not have you go to the ships of the Argives.”

And Priam the godlike answered, [300] “Wife, I will do as you desire me; it is well to lift hands in prayer to Zeus, if so be he may have mercy upon me.” With this the old man bade the serving-woman pour pure water over his hands, and the woman came, bearing the water in a bowl. [305] He washed his hands and took the cup from his wife; then he made the drink-offering and prayed, standing in the middle of the courtyard and turning his eyes to heaven. “Father Zeus,” he said, “you who rule from Ida, most glorious and most great, grant that I may be received kindly and compassionately in the tents of Achilles; and send your swift messenger upon my right hand, [310] the bird of omen which is strongest and most dear to you of all birds, that I may see it with my own eyes and trust it as I go forth to the ships of the fast-mounted Danaans.”

So did he pray, and Zeus, the lord of counsel, heard his prayer. [315] Right then and there he sent an eagle, the most unerring portent of all birds that fly, the dusky hunter that men also call the Black Eagle. His wings were spread abroad on either side as wide as the well-made and well-bolted door of a rich man’s chamber. [320] He came to them flying over the city upon their right hands, and when they saw him they were glad and their hearts took comfort within them. The old man made haste to mount his chariot, and drove out through the inner gateway and under the echoing gatehouse of the outer court. Before him went the mules drawing the four-wheeled wagon, [325] and driven by high-spirited Idaios; behind these were the horses, which the old man lashed with his whip and drove swiftly through the city, while his friends followed after, wailing and lamenting for him as though he were on his road to death. As soon as they had come down from the city and had reached the plain, [330] his sons and sons-in-law who had followed him went back to Ilion.

But Priam and Idaïos as they showed out upon the plain did not escape the ken of all-seeing Zeus of the wide brows, who looked down upon the old man and pitied him; then he spoke to his beloved son Hermes and said, “Hermes, [335] for it is you who are the most disposed to escort men on their way, and to hear those whom you will hear, go, and so conduct Priam to the ships of the Achaeans that no other of the Danaans shall see him nor take note of him until he reach the son of Peleus.” Thus he spoke and strong Hermes, guide and guardian, slayer of Argos, did as he was told. [340] Right then and there he bound on his glittering golden sandals with which he could fly like the wind over land and sea; he took the wand with which he seals men’s eyes in sleep, or wakes them just as he pleases, [345] and flew holding it in his hand till he came to Troy and to the Hellespont. To look at, he was like a young man of noble birth in the hey-day of his youth and beauty with the down just coming upon his face.

Now when Priam and Idaïos had driven past the great tomb [*sēma*] of Ilion, [350] they stayed their mules and horses that they might drink in the river, for the shades of night were falling, when, therefore, Idaïos saw Hermes standing near them he said to Priam, “Take heed, descendant of Dardanos; here is matter which demands consideration [*noos*]. [355] I see a man who I think will presently fall upon us; let us flee with our horses, or at least embrace his knees and implore him to take compassion upon us?”

When he heard this the old man’s mind [*noos*] failed him, and he was in great fear; [360] he stayed where he was as one dazed, and the hair stood on end over his whole body; but the bringer of good luck came up to him and took him by the hand, saying, “Where, father, are you thus driving your mules and horses in the dead of night when other men are asleep? Are you not afraid of the fierce Achaeans [365] who are hard by you, so cruel and relentless? Should some one of them see you bearing so much treasure through the darkness of the fleeing night, what would not your state of mind [*noos*] then be? You are no longer young, and he

who is with you is too old to protect you from those who would attack you. [370] For myself, I will do you no harm, and I will defend you from anyone else, for you remind me of my own father.”

And old Priam the godlike answered, “It is indeed as you say, my dear son; nevertheless some god has held his hand over me, in that he has sent such a wayfarer as yourself to meet me so opportunely; [375] you are so comely in mien and figure, and your judgment [*noos*] is so excellent that you must come of blessed parents.”

Then said the slayer of Argos, guide and guardian, “Sir, all that you have said is right; [380] but tell me and tell me true, are you taking this rich treasure to send it to a foreign people where it may be safe, or are you all leaving strong Ilion in dismay now that your son has fallen [385] who was the bravest man among you and was never lacking in battle with the Achaeans?”

And Priam the godlike said, “Who are you, my friend, and who are your parents, that you speak so truly about the fate of my unhappy son?”

The slayer of Argos, guide and guardian, answered him, [390] “Sir, you would prove me, that you question me about glorious Hector. Many a time have I set eyes upon him in battle when he was driving the Argives to their ships and putting them to the sword. We stood still and marveled, [395] for Achilles in his anger with the son of Atreus suffered us not to fight. I am his attendant [*therapōn*], and came with him in the same ship. I am a Myrmidon, and my father’s name is Polyktor: he is a rich man and about as old as you are; he has six sons besides myself, and I am the seventh. [400] We cast lots, and it fell upon me to sail here with Achilles. I am now come from the ships on to the plain, for with daybreak the glancing-eyed Achaeans will set battle in array about the city. They chafe at doing nothing, and are so eager that their princes cannot hold them back.”

[405] Then answered Priam the godlike, “If you are indeed the attendant [*therapōn*] of Achilles, son of Peleus, tell me now the whole truth. Is my son still at the ships, or has Achilles hewn him limb from limb, and given him to his hounds?”

[410] “Sir,” replied the slayer of Argos, guide and guardian, “neither hounds nor vultures have yet devoured him; he is still just lying at the tents by the ship of Achilles, and though it is now twelve days that he has lain there, his flesh is not wasted nor have the worms eaten him [415] although they feed on warriors. At daybreak Achilles drags him cruelly round the tomb [*sēma*] of his dear comrade, but it does him no hurt. You should come yourself and see how he lies fresh as dew, with the blood all washed away, and his wounds every one of them closed [420] though many pierced him with their spears. Such care have the blessed gods taken of your brave son, for he was dear to them beyond all measure.”

The old man was comforted as he heard him and said, [425] “My son, see what a good thing it is to have made due offerings to the immortals; for as sure as that he was born my son never forgot the gods that hold Olympus, and now they requite it to him even in death. Accept therefore at my hands this goodly chalice; [430] guard me and with heaven’s help guide me till I come to the tent of the son of Peleus.”

Then answered the slayer of Argos, guide and guardian, “Sir, you are tempting me and playing upon my youth, but you shall not move me, for you are offering me presents [435] without the knowledge of Achilles whom I fear and hold it great guiltless to defraud, lest some evil presently befall me; but as your guide I would go with you even to Argos itself, and would guard you so carefully whether by sea or land, that no one should attack you through making light of him who was with you.”

[440] The bringer of good luck then sprang on to the chariot, and seizing the whip and reins he breathed fresh spirit into the mules and horses. When they reached the trench and the wall that was before the ships, those who were on guard had just been getting their suppers, [445] and the slayer of Argos threw them all into a deep sleep. Then he drew back the bolts to open the gates, and took Priam inside with the treasure he had upon his wagon. Ere long they came to the lofty dwelling of the son of Peleus [450] for which the Myrmidons had cut pine and which they had built for their king; when they had built it they thatched it with coarse tussock-grass which they had mown out on the plain, and all round it they made a large courtyard, which was fenced with stakes set close together. The gate was barred with a single bolt of pine which it took three men to force into its place, [455] and three to draw back so as to open the gate, but Achilles could draw it by himself. Hermes opened the gate for the old man, and brought in the treasure that he was taking with him for the son of Peleus. Then he sprang from the chariot on to the ground and said, [460] "Sir, it is I, immortal Hermes, that am come with you, for my father sent me to escort you. I will now leave you, and will not enter into the presence of Achilles, for it might anger him that a god should befriend mortal men thus openly. [465] Go you within, and embrace the knees of the son of Peleus: beseech him by his father, his lovely mother, and his son; thus you may move him." With these words Hermes went back to high Olympus.

Priam sprang from his chariot to the ground, [470] leaving Idaios where he was, in charge of the mules and horses. The old man went straight into the house where Achilles, loved of the gods, was sitting. There he found him with his men seated at a distance from him: only two, the hero Automedon, and Alkimos of the race of Arēs, were busy in attendance about his person, for he had but just done eating and drinking, [475] and the table was still there. Tall King Priam entered without their seeing him, and going right up to Achilles he clasped his

knees and kissed the dread manslaughtering hands that had slain so many of his sons.

[480] As when some cruel derangement [*atē*] has befallen a man that he should have killed some one in his own country, and must flee to a great man's protection in a land [*dēmos*] of strangers, and all marvel who see him, even so did Achilles marvel as he beheld godlike Priam. The others looked one to another and marveled also, [485] but Priam besought Achilles saying, ⁴⁸⁶ "Remember your father, O Achilles, you who look just like the gods. ⁴⁸⁷ He [= Peleus, the father of Achilles] is just like me, on the destructive threshold of old age. ⁴⁸⁸ It may be that those who dwell near him ⁴⁸⁹ are wearing him down, and there is no one to keep damage and devastation away from him. [490] Yet when he hears of you being still alive, ⁴⁹¹ he takes pleasure in his heart [*thūmos*], and every day he is full of hope ⁴⁹² that he will see his dear [*philos*] son come home to him from Troy; ⁴⁹³ but I am the most luckless of all men, since I fathered the best sons ⁴⁹⁴ in the city of Troy, which has power far and wide, and I can now say that there is not one of them left. [495] I had fifty sons when the sons of the Achaeans came here; ⁴⁹⁶ nineteen of them were from a single womb, ⁴⁹⁷ and the others were born to me by the women of my halls. ⁴⁹⁸ Many of them have been hamstrung by swift Arēs, ⁴⁹⁹ but he who was the only one left, who was the guardian of the city and ourselves, [500] he has been killed by you just now, while he was protecting his fatherland. ⁵⁰¹ I mean Hector. And it is because of him that I now come to the ships of the Achaeans ⁵⁰² intending to ransom his body from you. And I bring with me great ransom beyond telling. ⁵⁰³ Show respect [*aideîsthai*], O Achilles, to the gods; and have pity on me. ⁵⁰⁴ Remember your own father. But I am far more pitiable, [505] for I have steeled myself as no one yet among earthbound mortals has ever steeled himself before me. ⁵⁰⁶ I have raised to my lips the hand of the one who killed my son."

⁵⁰⁷ Thus he [= Priam] spoke, and he stirred up in him [= Achilles] a longing to cry in lament [*goos*] for his own father. ⁵⁰⁸ He touched the old man's hand and moved him gently away. ⁵⁰⁹ And they both remembered. One of them remembered Hector the man-killer [510] and cried for him, shedding tears thick and fast as he lay near the feet of Achilles. ⁵¹¹ As for Achilles, he was crying for his own father at one moment, and then, at the very next moment, ⁵¹² he would be crying for Patroklos. And the sounds of lament rose up all over the dwelling. But when Achilles was now sated with grief and had unburdened the bitterness of his sorrow, [515] he left his seat and raised the old man by the hand, in pity for his white hair and beard; then he said, "Unhappy man, you have indeed been greatly daring; how could you venture to come alone to the ships of the Achaeans, [520] and enter the presence of him who has slain so many of your brave sons? You must have iron courage: sit now upon this seat, and for all our grief we will hide our sorrows in our hearts, for weeping will not avail us. The immortals know no care, [525] yet the lot they spin for man is full of sorrow; on the floor of Zeus' palace there stand two urns, the one filled with evil gifts, and the other with good ones. He for whom Zeus the lord of thunder mixes the gifts he sends, [530] will meet now with good and now with evil fortune; but he to whom Zeus sends none but evil gifts will be pointed at by the finger of scorn, the hand of famine will pursue him to the ends of the world, and he will go up and down the face of the earth, respected neither by gods nor men. Even so did it befall Peleus; [535] the gods endowed him with all good things from his birth upwards, for he reigned over the Myrmidons excelling all men in prosperity [*olbos*] and wealth, and mortal though he was they gave him a goddess for his bride. But even on him too did heaven send misfortune, for there is no race of royal children born to him in his house, [540] save one son who is doomed to die all untimely [*pan-a-(h)ō-rios* = 'the most unseasonal of them all']; nor may I take care of him now that he is growing old, for I must stay here at Troy to be the bane of you and your children. And you too, O Priam, I have heard that you were formerly happy [*olbios*]. They say that in wealth and

plenitude of offspring you surpassed all that is in Lesbos, the realm of Makar to the northward, [545] Phrygia that is more inland, and those that dwell upon the great Hellespont; but from the day when the dwellers in heaven sent this evil upon you, war and slaughter have been about your city continually. Bear up against it, and let there be some intervals in your sorrow. Mourn as you may for your brave son, [550] you will take nothing by it. You cannot raise him from the dead, before you do so yet another sorrow shall befall you.”

And Priam the godlike answered, “O king, bid me not be seated, while Hector is still lying uncared for in your tents, but accept the great ransom which I have brought you, [555] and give him to me at once that I may look upon him. May you prosper with the ransom and reach your own land in safety, seeing that you have suffered me to live and to look upon the light of the sun.”

Swift-footed Achilles looked at him sternly and said, [560] “Vex me, sir, no longer; I am of myself minded to give up the body of Hector. My mother, daughter of the old man of the sea, came to me from Zeus to bid me deliver it to you. Moreover I know well, O Priam, and you cannot hide it, that some god has brought you to the ships of the Achaeans, for else, [565] no man however strong and in his prime would dare to come to our army; he could neither pass our guard unseen, nor draw the bolt of my gates thus easily; therefore, provoke me no further, lest I err against the word of Zeus, and suffer you not, [570] suppliant though you are, within my tents.”

The old man feared him and obeyed. Then the son of Peleus sprang like a lion through the door of his house, not alone, but with him went his two attendants [*therapontes*] Automedon and Alkimos [575] who were closer to him than any others of his comrades now that Patroklos was no more. These unyoked the horses and mules, and bade Priam’s herald and attendant be seated within the house. They lifted the ransom for Hector’s body from the wagon. [580] but they left two mantles and a goodly

khiton, that Achilles might wrap the body in them when he gave it to be taken home. Then he called to his servants and ordered them to wash the body and anoint it, but he first took it to a place where Priam should not see it, [585] lest if he did so, he should break out in the bitterness of his grief, and enrage Achilles, who might then kill him and err against the word of Zeus. When the servants had washed the body and anointed it, and had wrapped it in a fair khiton and mantle, [590] Achilles himself lifted it on to a bier, and he and his men then laid it on the wagon. He cried aloud as he did so and called on the name of his dear comrade, “Be not angry with me, Patroklos,” he said, “if you hear even in the house of Hādēs that I have given great Hector to his father for a ransom. It has been no unworthy one, [595] and I will share it equitably with you.”

Great Achilles then went back into the tent and took his place on the richly inlaid seat from which he had risen, by the wall that was at right angles to the one against which Priam was sitting. “Sir,” he said, [600] “your son is now laid upon his bier and is ransomed according to desire; you shall look upon him when you take him away at daybreak. ⁶⁰¹ But now the two of us must think of eating. ⁶⁰² Even Niobe, the one with the beautiful hair, thought of eating grain, ⁶⁰³ the one who had twelve children, and all of them were killed in the palace, ⁶⁰⁴ six daughters and six sons in the bloom of youth. [605] Apollo killed the sons, shooting from his silver bow. ⁶⁰⁶ He was angry at Niobe—and the daughters were killed by Artemis, shooter of arrows— ⁶⁰⁷ angry because she [= Niobe] tried to make herself equal to Leto, the one with the beautiful cheeks. ⁶⁰⁸ She [= Niobe] said that she [= Leto] gave birth to two, while she herself produced many. ⁶⁰⁹ So the two of them [= Apollo and Artemis], only two though they were, destroyed the many. [610] They [= the children of Niobe] lay there in their gore for nine days, and there was no one ⁶¹¹ to bury them. The people had been turned into stone by the son of Kronos. ⁶¹² Then on the tenth day they [= the children of Niobe] were given a burial by the sky-dwelling gods themselves. ⁶¹³ And she [= Niobe] thought of eating, since she was exhausted by her shedding of tears, ⁶¹⁴

and now, somewhere amidst the rocks, on the desolate heights, [615] in Sipylos, where they say the goddesses have places to sleep ⁶¹⁶ —the goddess nymphs, the ones who dance on the banks of the Akhelōios—⁶¹⁷ there does she [= Niobe], though she has been turned into stone, digest her sorrows inflicted by the gods. ⁶¹⁸ So too now the two of us must think, radiant old man, ⁶¹⁹ of eating grain. And then, after that, for your dear child you may weep again, [620] after you have brought him to Troy. And there will be many tears shed for him.”

With this fleet Achilles sprang from his seat and killed a sheep of silvery whiteness, which his followers skinned and made ready all in due order [*kosmos*]. They cut the meat carefully up into smaller pieces, spitted them, and drew them off again when they were well roasted. [625] Automedon brought bread in fair baskets and served it round the table, ⁶²⁶ and Achilles distributed the meat, and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, Priam, descendant of Dardanos, [630] marveled at the strength and beauty of Achilles for he was as a god to see, and Achilles marveled at Priam as he listened to him and looked upon his noble presence. When they had gazed their fill Priam the godlike spoke first. “And now, O king,” he said, [635] “take me to my couch that we may lie down and enjoy the blessed boon of sleep. Never once have my eyes been closed from the day your hands took the life of my son; I have groveled without ceasing [640] in the mire of my stable-yard, making moan and brooding over my countless sorrows. Now, moreover, I have eaten bread and drunk wine; hitherto I have tasted nothing.”

As he spoke Achilles told his men and the women-servants to set beds in the room that was in the gatehouse, [645] and make them with good red rugs, and spread coverlets on the top of them with woolen cloaks for Priam and Idaios to wear. So the maids went out carrying a torch and got the two beds ready in all haste. Then Achilles of the swift feet said laughingly to Priam, [650] “Dear sir, you shall lie outside, lest some counselor of those who, as is right [*themis*], keep coming to advise with

me should see you here in the darkness of the fleeing night, and tell it to Agamemnon, shepherd of the people. [655] This might cause delay in the delivery of the body. And now tell me and tell me true, for how many days would you celebrate the funeral rites of noble Hector? Tell me, that I may hold aloof from war and restrain the army.”

And Priam the godlike answered, [660] “Since, then, you suffer me to bury my noble son with all due rites, do thus, Achilles, and I shall be grateful. You know how we are pent up within our city; it is far for us to fetch wood from the mountain, and the people live in fear. Nine days, therefore, will we mourn Hector in my house; [665] on the tenth day we will bury him and there shall be a public feast in his honor; on the eleventh we will build a mound over his ashes, and on the twelfth, if there be need, we will fight.”

And swift-footed radiant Achilles answered, “All, King Priam, shall be as you have said. [670] I will stay our fighting for as long a time as you have named.”

As he spoke he laid his hand on the old man’s right wrist, in token that he should have no fear; thus then did Priam and his attendant sleep there in the forecourt, full of thought, [675] while Achilles lay in an inner room of the house, with fair Brisēis by his side.

And now both gods and mortals were fast asleep through the livelong night, but upon Hermes alone, the bringer of good luck, [680] sleep could take no hold for he was thinking all the time how to get King Priam away from the ships without his being seen by the strong force of sentinels. He hovered therefore over Priam’s head and said, “Sir, now that Achilles has spared your life, you seem to have no fear about sleeping in the thick of your foes. [685] You have paid a great ransom, and have received the body of your son; were you still alive and a prisoner the sons whom you have left at home would have to give three times as much to

free you; and so it would be if Agamemnon and the other Achaeans were to know of your being here.”

[690] When he heard this the old man was afraid and roused his servant. Hermes then yoked their horses and mules, and drove them quickly through the army so that no man perceived them. When they came to the ford of eddying Xanthos, begotten of immortal Zeus, Hermes went back to high Olympus, [695] and dawn in robe of saffron began to break over all the land. Priam and Idaios then drove on toward the city lamenting and making moan, and the mules drew the body of Hector. No one neither man nor woman saw them, till Cassandra, fair as golden Aphrodite [700] standing on Pergamon, caught sight of her dear father in his chariot, and his servant that was the city’s herald with him. Then she saw him that was lying upon the bier, drawn by the mules, and with a loud cry she went about the city saying, “Come here Trojans, men and women, and look on Hector; [705] if ever you rejoiced to see him coming from battle when he was alive, look now on him that was the glory of our city and all our people.”

At this there was not man nor woman left in the city, so great a sorrow [*penthos*] had possessed them. Hard by the gates they met Priam as he was bringing in the body. [710] Hector’s wife and his mother were the first to mourn him: they flew towards the wagon and laid their hands upon his head, while the crowd stood weeping round them. They would have stayed before the gates, weeping and lamenting the livelong day to the going down of the sun, [715] had not Priam spoken to them from the chariot and said, “Make way for the mules to pass you. Afterwards when I have taken the body home you shall have your fill of weeping.”

Then the people stood asunder, and made a way for the wagon. [720] When they had borne the body within the house they laid it upon a bed ⁷²⁰ and they seated next to him [Hektor’s corpse] singers [*aoidoi*] ⁷²¹ who were to lead in the lamentations [*thrēnoi*]. They sang a wailing song, ⁷²²

singing *thrēnoi*. And the women wailed in response, ⁷²³ and white-armed Andromache led them in the lamentation [*goos*] as she clasped the head of mighty manslaughtering Hector in her embrace. [725] “Husband,” she cried, “you have died young, and leave me in your house a widow; he of whom we are the ill-starred parents is still a mere child, and I fear he may not reach manhood. Ere he can do so our city will be razed and overthrown, for you who watched over it are no more— ⁷²⁹ you who guarded it [730] and you protected the cherished wives and helpless children. Our women will be carried away captives to the ships, and I among them; while you, my child, who will be with me will be put to some unseemly tasks, working for a cruel master. [735] Or, may be, some Achaean will hurl you (O miserable death) from our walls, to avenge some brother, son, or father whom Hector slew; many of them have indeed bitten the dust at his hands, for your father’s hand in battle was no light one. [740] Therefore do the people mourn him. You have left, O Hector, sorrow unutterable to your parents, and my own grief [*penthos*] is greatest of all, for you did not stretch forth your arms and embrace me as you lay dying, nor say to me any words that might have lived with me [745] in my tears night and day for evermore.”

Bitterly did she weep the while, and the women joined in her lament. Hecuba in her turn took up the strains of woe. “Hector,” she cried, “dearest to me of all my children. So long as you were alive the gods loved you well, [750] and even in death they have not been utterly unmindful of you; for when swift-footed Achilles took any other of my sons, he would sell him beyond the seas, to Samos, Imbros, or rugged Lemnos; and when he had taken away with his sword your life-breath [*psūkhē*] as well, [755] many a time did he drag you round the tomb [*sēma*] of his comrade—though this could not give him life—yet here you lie all fresh as dew, and comely as one whom Apollo has slain with his painless shafts.”

[760] Thus did she too speak through her tears with bitter moan, and then Helen for a third time took up the strain of lamentation. “Hector,”

said she, “dearest of all my brothers-in-law—for I am wife to Alexandros who brought me here to Troy—would that I had died before he did so— [765] twenty years are come and gone since I left my home and came from over the sea, but I have never heard one word of insult or unkindness from you. When another would chide with me, as it might be one of your brothers or sisters or of your brothers’ wives, [770] or my mother-in-law—for Priam was as kind to me as though he were my own father—you would rebuke and check them with words of gentleness and goodwill. Therefore my tears flow both for you and for my unhappy self, for there is no one else in Troy [775] who is kind to me, but all shrink and shudder as they go by me.”

She wept as she spoke and the vast local populace [*dēmos*] that was gathered round her joined in her lament. Then King Priam spoke to them saying, “Bring wood, O Trojans, to the city, and fear no cunning ambush of the Argives, [780] for Achilles when he dismissed me from the ships gave me his word that they should not attack us until the morning of the twelfth day.”

Right then and there they yoked their oxen and mules and gathered together before the city. Nine days long did they bring in great heaps of wood, [785] and on the morning of the tenth day with many tears they took brave Hector forth, laid his dead body upon the summit of the pile, and set it on fire. Then when the child of morning rosy-fingered dawn appeared on the eleventh day, the people again assembled, round the pyre of illustrious Hector. [790] When they were got together, they first quenched the fire with wine wherever it was burning, and then his brothers and comrades with many a bitter tear gathered his white bones, [795] and laid them in a golden urn—⁷⁹⁶ covering his body with purple robes— which they placed in a grave [*sēma*] and covered over with large stones set close together. Then they built a tomb [*sēma*] hurriedly over it keeping guard on every side [800] lest the strong-greaved Achaeans should attack them before they had finished. When they had heaped up

the barrow they went back again into the city, and being well assembled they held high feast in the house of Priam, their king.

Thus, then, did they celebrate the funeral of Hector, tamer of horses.

2019-12-12

Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 1

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] That man, tell me O Muse the song of that man, that versatile [*polutropos*] man, who in very many ways ² veered from his path and wandered off far and wide, after he had destroyed the sacred citadel of Troy. ³ Many different cities of many different people did he see, getting to know different ways of thinking [*noos*]. ⁴ Many were the pains [*algea*] he suffered in his heart [*thūmos*] while crossing the sea [5] struggling to merit [*arnusthai*] the saving of his own life [*psūkhē*] and his own homecoming [*nostos*] as well as the homecoming of his comrades [*hetairoi*]. ⁶ But do what he might he could not save his comrades [*hetairoi*], even though he very much wanted to. ⁷ For they perished through their own deeds of sheer recklessness, ⁸ disconnected [*nēpioi*] as they were, because of what they did to the cattle of the sun-god Helios. ⁹ They ate them. So the god [Helios] deprived them of their day of homecoming [*nostimon*]. [10] Starting from any single point of departure, O goddess, daughter of Zeus, tell me, as you have told those who came before me.

¹¹ So now all those who escaped precipitous death ¹² were safely home, having survived the war and the sea voyage. ¹³ But he [= Odysseus], apart from the others, though he was longing for his homecoming [*nostos*] and for his wife, ¹⁴ was detained by the queenly nymph [*numphē*] Kalypsō, who has her own luminous place among all the goddesses [15] who had got him into a large cave and wanted to marry him. But as years went by, there came a time when the gods settled that he should go back to Ithaca; even then, however, when he was among his own people,

his trials [*āthloi*] were not yet over; nevertheless all the gods had now begun to pity him [20] except Poseidon, who still persecuted godlike Odysseus without ceasing and would not let him get home.

Now Poseidon had gone off to ²³ the Ethiopians, who are divided in two, the most remote of men: ²⁴ some where Hyperion [*Helios*] sets, others where he rises. He had gone there [25] to accept a hecatomb of sheep and oxen, and was enjoying himself at his festival; but the other gods met in the house of Olympian Zeus, and the father of gods and men spoke first. At that moment he was thinking of stately Aegisthus, [30] who had been killed by Agamemnon's far-famed son Orestes; so he said to the other gods:

³² “Oh my, how mortals hold us gods responsible [= *aitioi*]! ³³ For they say that their misfortunes come from us. But they get their sufferings, ³⁴ beyond what is fated, by way of their own acts of recklessness [*atasthaliai*]. [35] Look at Aegisthus; he must needs make love to Agamemnon's wife unrighteously and then kill Agamemnon, though he knew it would be the death of him; for I sent Hermes, the mighty watcher, to warn him not to do either of these things, [40] inasmuch as Orestes would be sure to take his revenge when he grew up and wanted to return home. Hermes told him this in all good will but he would not listen, and now he has paid for everything in full.”

Then owl-vision Athena said, [45] “Father, son of Kronos, King of kings, it served Aegisthus right, and so it would any one else who does as he did; but Aegisthus is neither here nor there; it is for high-spirited Odysseus that my heart bleeds, when I think of [50] his sufferings in that lonely sea-girt island, far away, poor man, from all his friends. It is an island covered with forest, in the very middle of the sea, and a goddess lives there, daughter of the magician Atlas, who looks after the bottom of the ocean, and carries the great columns that keep the sky and earth asunder. [55] This daughter of Atlas has got hold of poor unhappy Odysseus, and keeps trying by every kind of blandishment to make him

forget his home, so that he is tired of life, and thinks of nothing but how he may once more see the smoke of his own chimneys. You, sir, [60] take no heed of this, and yet when Odysseus was at Troy did he not propitiate you with many a burnt sacrifice? Why then should you keep on being so angry with him?”

And Zeus said, “My child, what are you talking about? [65] How can I forget godlike Odysseus than whom there is no more capable man on earth [in regard to *noos*], nor more liberal in his offerings to the immortal gods that live in the sky? Bear in mind, however, that earth-encircler Poseidon is still furious with Odysseus for having blinded an eye of Polyphemus, king of the Cyclopes. [70] Polyphemus is son to Poseidon, shaker of the earth, by the nymph Thoösa, daughter to the sea-king Phorkys; therefore though he will not [75] kill Odysseus outright, he torments him by preventing him from his homecoming [*nostos*]. Still, let us lay our heads together and see how we can help him to return; Poseidon will then be pacified, for if we are all of a mind he can hardly stand out against us.”

[80] And owl-vision Athena said, “Father, son of Kronos, King of kings, if, then, the gods now mean that Odysseus should get home, we should first send Hermes, the guide, the slayer of Argos [85] to the Ogygian island to tell lovely-haired Kalypsō that we have made up our minds and that he is to have his homecoming [*nostos*].⁸⁸ As for me, I will go travel to Ithaca, going to his [= Odysseus’] son⁸⁹ in order to give him [= Telemachus] more encouragement and to put power [*menos*] into his heart [*phrenes*]. [90] He is to summon the long-haired Achaeans for a meeting in assembly,⁹¹ and he is to speak out to all the suitors [of his mother Penelope], who persist in⁹² slaughtering again and again any number of his sheep and oxen.⁹³ And I will conduct him to Sparta and to sandy Pylos,⁹⁴ and thus he will learn the return [*nostos*] of his dear [*philos*] father, if by chance he [= Telemachus] hears it, [95] and thus may genuine glory [*kleos*] possess him throughout humankind.”

So saying she bound on her glittering golden sandals, imperishable, with which she can fly like the wind over land or sea; she grasped the terrifying bronze-shod spear, [100] so stout and sturdy and strong, wherewith she quells the ranks of heroes who have displeased her, and down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus, and then, right away, she was in the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca, at the gateway of Odysseus' house, [105] disguised as a visitor, Mentès, chief of the Taphians, and she held a bronze spear in her hand. There she found the lordly suitors seated on hides of the oxen which they had killed and eaten, and diverting their hearts [*thūmos*] with board games in front of the house. Men-servants and pages were bustling about to wait upon them, [110] some mixing wine with water in the mixing-bowls, some cleaning down the tables with wet sponges and laying them out again, and some cutting up great quantities of meat.

Godlike Telemachus saw her long before any one else did. He was sitting moodily among the suitors [115] thinking about his brave father, and how he would send them fleeing out of the house, if he were to come to his own again and be honored as in days gone by. Thus brooding as he sat among them, he caught sight of Athena and went straight to the gate, for he was vexed [120] that a stranger should be kept waiting for admittance. He took her right hand in his own, and bade her give him her spear. "Welcome," said he, "to our house, and when you have partaken of food you shall tell us what you have come for."

[125] He led the way as he spoke, and Athena followed him. When they were within he took her spear and set it in the spear-stand against a strong bearing-post along with the many other spears of his unhappy father, patient-hearted Odysseus [130] and he conducted her to a richly decorated seat under which he threw a cloth of damask. There was a footstool also for her feet, and he set another seat near her for himself, away from the suitors, that she might not be annoyed while eating by their noise and insolence, [135] and that he might ask her more freely about his father.

A maid servant then brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread, [140] and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side, and a man-servant brought them wine and poured it out for them.

Then the suitors came in and [145] took their places on the benches and seats. Right away men servants poured water over their hands, maids went round with the bread-baskets, pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water, and they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them. [150] As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink they wanted music and dancing, which are the crowning embellishments of a banquet, so a servant brought a lyre to Phemios, whom they compelled perforce to sing to them. [155] As soon as he touched his lyre and began to sing Telemachus spoke low to Athena of the owl's vision, with his head close to hers that no man might hear.

"I hope, sir," said he, "that you will not be offended with what I am going to say. Singing comes cheap to those who do not pay for it, [160] and all this is done at the cost of one whose bones lie rotting in some wilderness or grinding to powder in the surf. If these men were to see my father come back to Ithaca they would pray for longer legs [165] rather than a longer purse, for wealth would not serve them; but he, alas, has fallen on an ill fate, and even when people do sometimes say that he is coming, we no longer heed them; we shall never see him again. And now, sir, tell me and tell me true, [170] who you are and where you come from. Tell me of your town and parents, what manner of ship you came in, how your crew brought you to Ithaca, and of what nation they declared themselves to be—for you cannot have come by land. Tell me also truly, for I want to know, [175] are you a stranger to this house, or have you been here in my father's time? In the old days we had many visitors for my father went about much himself."

And owl-vision Athena answered, “I will tell you truly and particularly all about it. [180] I am Mentès, son of high-spirited Ankhialos, and I am King of the oar-loving Taphians. I have come here with my ship and crew, on a voyage to men of a foreign tongue being bound for Temesa with a cargo of iron, and I shall bring back copper. [185] As for my ship, it lies over yonder off the open country away from the town, in the harbor Rheithron under the wooded mountain Neriton. Our fathers were friends before us, as the old hero Laertes will tell you, if you will go and ask him. They say, however, that he never comes to town [190] now, and lives by himself in the country, faring hardly, with an old woman to look after him and get his dinner for him, when he comes in tired from pottering about his vineyard. They told me your father was at home again, and that was why I came, [195] but it seems the gods are still keeping him back, for he is not dead yet not on the mainland. It is more likely he is on some sea-girt island in mid ocean, or a prisoner among savages who are detaining him against his will. [200] I am no prophet [*mantis*], and know very little about omens, but I speak as it is borne in upon me from the sky, and assure you that he will not be away much longer; for he is a man of such resource that even though he were in chains of iron he would find some means [205] of getting home again. But tell me, and tell me true, can Odysseus really have such a fine looking young man for a son? You are indeed wonderfully like him about the head and eyes, for we were close friends [210] before he set sail for Troy where the flower of all the Argives went also. Since that time we have never either of us seen the other.”

[215] “My mother,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “tells me I am son to Odysseus, but it is a wise child that knows his own father. Would that I were son to one who had grown old upon his own estates, for, since you ask me, there is no more ill-starred man under the sky than he [220] who they tell me is my father.”

And owl-vision Athena said, “There is no fear of your lineage dying out yet, while Penelope has such a fine son as you are. But tell me, and tell

me true, [225] what is the meaning of all this feasting, and who are these people? What is it all about? Have you some banquet, or is there a wedding in the family—for no one seems to be bringing any provisions of his own? And the guests—how atrociously they are behaving; what riot they make over the whole house; it is enough to disgust any respectable person who comes near them.”

[230] “Sir,” said the spirited Telemachus, “as regards your question, so long as my father was here it was well with us and with the house, but the gods in their displeasure have willed it otherwise, [235] and have hidden him away more closely than mortal man was ever yet hidden. I could have borne it better even though he were dead, if he had fallen with his men in the district [*dēmos*] of Troy, or had died with friends around him when the days of his fighting were done; for then the Achaeans would have built a mound over his ashes, [240] and I should myself have been heir to his renown [*kleos*]; ²⁴¹ But now the whirlwinds [*harpuiai*] have abducted him, without *kleos*. He is gone without leaving so much as a trace behind him, and I inherit nothing but dismay. Nor does the matter end simply with grief for the loss of my father; the gods have laid sorrows upon me of yet another kind; [245] for the chiefs from all our islands, Doulikhion, Samē, and the woodland island of Zakynthos, as also all the principal men of Ithaca itself, are eating up my house under the pretext of paying their court to my mother, who will neither point blank say that she will not marry, nor yet [250] bring matters to an end; so they are making havoc of my estate, and before long will do so also with myself.”

“Is that so?” exclaimed Athena, “Then you do indeed want absent Odysseus home again. [255] Give him his helmet, shield, and a couple lances, and if he is the man he was when I first knew him in our house, drinking and making merry, he would soon lay his hands about these rascally suitors, were he to stand once more upon his own threshold. He was then coming from Ephyra, [260] where he had been to beg poison for his arrows from Ilos, son of Mermeros. Ilos feared the ever-living

gods and would not give him any, but my father let him have some, for he was very fond of him. [265] If Odysseus is the man he then was these suitors will have a swift doom and a sorry wedding.

But there! It rests with the gods to determine whether he is to return, and take his revenge in his own house or no; I would, however, urge you to set about trying [270] to get rid of these suitors at once. Take my advice, call the Achaean heroes in assembly tomorrow—lay your case before them, and call the gods to bear you witness. Bid the suitors take themselves off, each to his own place, [275] and if your mother's mind is set on marrying again, let her go back to her father, who will find her a husband and provide her with all the marriage gifts that so dear a daughter may expect. As for yourself, let me prevail upon you [280] to take the best ship you can get, with a crew of twenty men, and go in quest of your father who has so long been missing. Some one may tell you something, or (and people often hear things in this way) some message [*kleos*] sent from the gods may direct you. First you go to Pylos and ask radiant Nestor; [285] and then from there to Sparta and to golden-haired Menelaos, the one who was the last of the Achaeans, wearers of bronze tunics, to come back home; if you hear that your father is alive and about to achieve his homecoming [*nostos*], you can put up with the waste these suitors will make for yet another twelve months. If on the other hand you hear of his death, [290] come home at once, celebrate his funeral rites with all due pomp, build a grave marker [*sēma*] to his memory, and make your mother marry again. Then, having done all this, think it well over in your mind how, by fair means or foul, [295] you may kill these suitors in your own house. You are too old to plead infancy any longer; have you not heard how people are singing Orestes' praises [*kleos*] for having killed [300] his father's murderer treacherous Aegisthus? You are a fine, smart looking young man; show your mettle, then, and make yourself a name in story. Now, however, I must go back to my ship and to my crew, who will be impatient if I keep them waiting longer; [305] think the matter over for yourself, and remember what I have said to you."

“Sir,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “it has been very kind of you to talk to me in this way, as though I were your own son, and I will do all you tell me; I know you want to be getting on with your voyage, but stay a little longer [310] till you have taken a bath and refreshed yourself. I will then give you a present, and you shall go on your way rejoicing; I will give you one of great beauty and value—a keepsake such as only dear friends give to one another.”

Owl-vision Athena answered, [315] “Do not try to keep me, for I would be on my way at once. As for any present you may be disposed to make me, keep it till I come again, and I will take it home with me. You shall give me a very good one, and I will give you one of no less value in return.”

With these words ³¹⁹ owl-vision Athena went away [320] and like a bird she flew up, but into his heart [*thūmos*] ³²¹ she [= Athena] had placed power [*menos*] and daring, and she had mentally connected [*hupo-mnē*] him with his father ³²² even more than before. He felt the change, wondered at it, and knew that the stranger had been a god, so he went straight to where the suitors were sitting.

[325] The famed singer was singing for them [= the suitors], and they in silence ³²⁶ sat and listened. He [= Phemios the singer] was singing the homecoming [*nostos*] of the Achaeans, ³²⁷ a disastrous [*lugros*] homecoming from Troy, and Pallas Athena was the one who brought it all to fulfillment [*epi-tellesthai*]. ³²⁸ From her room upstairs, this divinely inspired song of his was understood in her mind by ³²⁹ the daughter of Ikarios, the exceptionally intelligent Penelope, [330] and she came down the lofty staircase of her palace. ³³¹ She came not alone, but attended by two of her handmaidens. ³³² When she reached the suitors, this most radiant of women, ³³³ she stood by one of the posts that supported the roof of the halls, ³³⁴ holding in front of her cheeks a luxuriant veil, [335]

and a trusted handmaiden stood on either side of her. ³³⁶ Then, shedding tears, she addressed the godlike singer:

³³⁷ “Phemios, you know many another thing that charms mortals, ³³⁸ all about the deeds of men and gods, to which singers give glory [*kleeîn*]. ³³⁹ Sing for them [= the suitors] some one of those songs of glory, and let them in silence [340] drink their wine. But you stop this sad song, ³⁴¹ this disastrous [*lugrē*] song, which again and again affects my very own [*philon*] heart in my breast, ³⁴² wearing it down, since an unforgettable grief [*penthos alaston*] comes over me, more than ever. ³⁴³ I feel this way because that is the kind of person I long for, recalling his memory again and again, ³⁴⁴ the memory of a man whose glory [*kleos*] extends far and wide throughout Hellas and midmost Argos.”

[345] “Mother,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “let the bard sing what he has a mind [*noos*] to; bards are not responsible [*aitios*] for the ills they sing of; it is Zeus, not they, who is responsible [*aitios*], and who sends weal or woe upon humankind according to his own good pleasure. [350] There should be no feeling of sanction [*nemesis*] against this one for singing the ill-fated return of the Danaans, ³⁵¹ for men would most rather give glory [*kleos*] to that song ³⁵² which is the newest to make the rounds among listeners. Make up your mind to it and bear it; Odysseus is not the only man who never came [355] back from Troy, but many another went down as well as he. Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants; for speech is man’s matter, and mine above all others—for it is I who am master here.”

[360] She went wondering back into the house, and laid her son’s saying in her heart. Then, going upstairs with her handmaids into her room, she mourned her dear husband till owl-vision Athena shed sweet sleep over her eyes. [365] But the suitors were clamorous throughout the covered halls, and prayed each one that he might be her bedmate.

Then the spirited Telemachus spoke, “You suitors of my mother,” he cried, “you with your overweening insolence [*hubris*], let us feast at our pleasure now, and let there be no [370] brawling, for it is a rare thing to hear a man with such a divine voice as Phemios has; but in the morning meet me in full assembly that I may give you formal notice to depart, and feast at one another’s houses, [375] turn and turn about, at your own cost. If on the other hand you choose to persist in sponging upon one man, may the gods help me, but Zeus shall reckon with you in full, [380] and when you fall in my father’s house there shall be no man to avenge you.”

The suitors bit their lips as they heard him, and marveled at the boldness of his speech. Then, Antinoos, son of Eupheithes, said, “The gods seem to have given you lessons [385] in bluster and tall talking; may Zeus never grant you to be chief in Ithaca as your father was before you.”

The spirited Telemachus answered, “Antinoos, do not chide with me, but, [390] god willing, I will be chief too if I can. Is this the worst fate you can think of for me? It is no bad thing to be a chief, for it brings both riches and honor. Still, now that Odysseus is dead there are many great men in Ithaca [395] both old and young, and some other may take the lead among them; nevertheless I will be chief in my own house, and will rule those whom great Odysseus has won for me.”

Then Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, answered, [400] “It rests with the gods to decide who shall be chief among us, but you shall be master in your own house and over your own possessions; no one while there is a man in Ithaca shall do you violence [*biē*] nor rob you. [405] And now, my good man, I want to know about this stranger. What country does he come from? Of what family is he, and where is his estate? Has he brought you news about the return of your father, or was he on business of his own? [410] He seemed a well-to-do man, but he hurried off so suddenly that he was gone in a moment before we could get to know him.”

“The homecoming [*nostos*] of my father is dead and gone,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “and even if some rumor reaches me I put no more faith in it now. [415] My mother does indeed sometimes send for a soothsayer and question him, but I give his prophesying no heed. As for the stranger, he was Mentès, son of Ankhialos, chief of the oar-loving Taphians, an old friend of my father’s.” [420] But in his heart he knew that it had been the goddess.

The suitors then returned to their singing and dancing until the evening; but when night fell upon their pleasuring they went home to bed each in his own abode. [425] Telemachus’ room was high up in a tower that looked on to the outer court; there, then, he went, brooding and full of thought. A good old woman, Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, the son of Peisenor, went before him with a couple of blazing torches. [430] Laertes had bought her with his own wealth when she was quite young; he gave the worth of twenty oxen for her, and showed as much respect to her in his household as he did to his own wedded wife, but he did not take her to his bed for he feared his wife’s resentment. She it was who now lighted Telemachus to his room, and she loved him [435] better than any of the other women in the house did, for she had nursed him when he was a baby. He opened the door of his bed room and sat down upon the bed; as he took off his *khiton* he gave it to the good old woman, who folded it tidily up, [440] and hung it for him over a peg by his bed side, after which she went out, pulled the door to by a silver catch, and drew the bolt home by means of the strap. But Telemachus as he lay covered with a woolen fleece kept thinking all night through of his intended voyage and of the counsel that Athena had given him.

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Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 2

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Now when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, dear Telemachus rose and dressed himself. He bound his sandals on to his comely feet, girded his sword about his shoulder, [5] and left his room looking like an immortal god. He at once sent the criers round to call the people in assembly, so they called them and the people gathered there; then, when they were got together, [10] he went to the place of assembly spear in hand—not alone, for his two hounds went with him. Athena endowed him with a presence of such divine gracefulness [*kharis*] that all marveled at him as he went by, and when he took his place in his father's seat even the oldest councilors made way for him.

[15] Aigyptios, a man bent double with age, and of infinite experience, was the first to speak. His son Antiphos the spearman had gone with Odysseus to Ilion, land of noble steeds, but the savage Cyclops had killed him [20] when they were all shut up in the cave, and had cooked his last dinner for him. He had three sons left, of whom two still worked on their father's land, while the third, Eurynomos, was one of the suitors; nevertheless their father could not get over the loss of Antiphos, and was still weeping for him when he began his speech.

[25] “Men of Ithaca,” he said, “hear my words. From the day great Odysseus left us there has been no meeting of our councilors until now; who then can it be, whether old or young, that finds it so necessary to convene us? [30] Has he got wind of some enemy force approaching, and does he wish to warn us, or would he speak upon some other matter of public moment? I am sure he is an excellent person, and I hope Zeus will grant him his heart's desire.”

[35] Telemachus took this speech as of good omen and rose at once, for he was bursting with what he had to say. He stood in the middle of the assembly and the good herald Peisenor, a man of deep discretion, brought him his staff. Then, turning to Aigyptios, [40] “Sir,” said he, “it is I, as you will shortly learn, who have convened you, for it is I who am the most aggrieved. I have not got wind of any enemy force approaching about which I would warn you, nor is there any matter of public moment on which I would speak. [45] My grievance is purely personal, and turns on two great misfortunes which have fallen upon my house. The first of these is the loss of my excellent father, who was chief among all you here present, and was like a father to every one of you; the second is much more serious, and before long will be the utter ruin of my estate. [50] The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Ikarios, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, [55] but day by day they keep hanging about my father’s house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness; we have now no Odysseus to ward off harm from our doors, [60] and I cannot hold my own against them. I shall never all my days be as good a man as he was, still I would indeed defend myself if I had power to do so, for I cannot stand such treatment any longer; my house is being disgraced and ruined. Have respect, therefore, to your own consciences [65] and to public opinion. Fear, too, the wrath [*mēnis*] of the gods, lest they should be displeased and turn upon you. I pray you by Zeus the Olympian and Themis, who is the beginning and the end of councils, [70] [do not] hold back, my friends, and leave me single-handed—unless it be that my brave father Odysseus did some wrong to the strong-greaved Achaeans which you would now avenge on me, by aiding and abetting these suitors. Moreover, if I am to be eaten out of house and home at all, [75] I had rather you did the eating yourselves, for I could then take action against you to some purpose, and serve you with notices from house to house till I got paid in full, whereas now I have no remedy.”

[80] With this Telemachus dashed his staff to the ground and burst into tears. Every one was very sorry for him, but they all sat still and no one ventured to make him an angry answer, save only Antinoos, who spoke thus:

[85] “Telemachus, insolent braggart that you are, how dare you try to throw the blame upon us suitors? We are not the ones who are responsible [*aitioi*] but your mother is, for she knows many kinds of craftiness [*kerdos*]. This three years past, and close on four, [90] she has been driving us out of our minds, by encouraging each one of us, and sending him messages that say one thing but her mind [*noos*] means other things. And then there was that other trick she played us. She set up a great loom in her room, and began to weave [95] an enormous fine web. ‘Sweet hearts,’ said she, ‘Great Odysseus is indeed dead, still do not press me to marry again immediately, wait—for I would not have skill in weaving perish unrecorded—till I have completed a shroud for the hero Laertes, to be in readiness against the time when [100] death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the district [*dēmos*] will talk if he is laid out without a shroud.’

This was what she said, and we assented; whereon we could see her working on her great web all day long, [105] but at night she would undo it again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years and we never found her out, but as time [*hōrā*] wore on and she was now in her fourth year, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her work, [110] so she had to finish it whether she would or no. The suitors, therefore, make you this answer, that both you and the Achaeans may understand—‘Send your mother away, and bid her marry the man of her own and of her father’s choice’; [115] for I do not know what will happen if she goes on plaguing us much longer with the airs she gives herself on the score of the accomplishments Athena has taught her, and because she knows so many kinds of *kerdos*. We never yet heard of such a woman; we know all about [120] Tyro, Alkmene, Mycenae, wearer of garlands, and the

famous women of old. ¹²¹ Of all these women, not one knew thoughts equal to [*homoia*] the thoughts ¹²² knew, but they were nothing to your mother, any one of them. It was not fair of her to treat us in that way, and as long as she continues in the mind [*noos*] with which the gods have now endowed her, so long shall we go on eating up your estate; [125] and I do not see why she should change, for she gets all the honor and glory [*kleos*], and it is you who pay for it, not she. Understand, then, that we will not go back to our lands, neither here nor elsewhere, till she has made her choice and married some one or other of us.”

The spirited Telemachus answered, [130] “Antinoos, how can I drive the mother who bore me from my father’s house? My father is abroad and we do not know whether he is alive or dead. It will be hard on me if I have to pay Ikarios the large sum which I must give him if I insist on sending his daughter back to him. Not only will he deal rigorously with me, but some superhuman force [*daimōn*] will also [135] punish me; for my mother when she leaves the house will call on the Furies [*Erinyes*] to avenge her; besides, it would not be a creditable thing to do [= “it will result in *nemesis* for me among men”], and I will have nothing to say to it. If you choose to take offence at this, leave the house and feast elsewhere [140] at one another’s houses at your own cost turn and turn about. If, on the other hand, you elect to persist in sponging upon one man, may the gods help me, but Zeus shall reckon with you in full, [145] and when you fall in my father’s house there shall be no man to avenge you.”

As he spoke Zeus sent two eagles from the top of the mountain, and they flew on and on with the wind, sailing side-by-side in their own lordly flight. [150] When they were right over the middle of the assembly they wheeled and circled about, beating the air with their wings and glaring death into the eyes of them that were below; then, fighting fiercely and tearing at one another, they flew off towards the right over the town. [155] The people wondered as they saw them, and asked each other what all this might be; whereon the aged warrior

Halitherses, who was the best prophet and reader of omens among them, [160] spoke to them plainly and in all honesty, saying:

“Hear me, men of Ithaca, and I speak more particularly to the suitors, for I see mischief brewing for them. Odysseus is not going to be away much longer; indeed [165] he is close at hand to deal out death and destruction, not on them alone, but on many another of us who live in Ithaca. Let us then be wise in time, and put a stop to this wickedness before he comes. Let the suitors do so of their own accord; it will be better for them, [170] for I am not prophesying without due knowledge; everything has happened to resourceful Odysseus as I foretold when the Argives set out for Troy, and he with them. I said that after going through much hardship and losing all his men [175] he should come home again in the twentieth year and that no one would know him; and now all this is coming true.”

Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, then said, “Go home, old man, and prophesy to your own children, or it may be worse for them. I can read these omens myself [180] much better than you can; birds are always flying about in the sunshine somewhere or other, but they seldom mean anything. Odysseus has died in a far country, and it is a pity you are not dead along with him, instead of prating here about omens [185] and adding fuel to the anger of Telemachus which is fierce enough as it is. I suppose you think he will give you something for your family, but I tell you—and it shall surely be—when an old man like you, who should know better, talks a young one over till he becomes troublesome, [190] in the first place his young friend will only fare so much the worse—he will take nothing by it, for the suitors will prevent this—and in the next, we will lay a heavier fine, sir, upon yourself than you will at all like paying, for it will bear hardly upon you. As for Telemachus, I warn him in the presence of you all [195] to send his mother back to her father, who will find her a husband and provide her with all the marriage gifts so dear a daughter may expect. Till then we shall go on harassing him with our suit; for we fear no man, [200] and care neither for him, with

all his fine speeches, nor for any fortune-telling of yours. You may preach as much as you please, but we shall only hate you the more. We shall go back and continue to eat up Telemachus' estate without paying him, till such time as his mother leaves off tormenting us [205] by keeping us day after day on the tiptoe of expectation, each vying with the other in his suit for a prize of such rare perfection [*aretē*]. Besides we cannot go after the other women whom we should marry in due course, but for the way in which she treats us."

Then the spirited Telemachus said, "Eurymakhos, and you other haughty suitors, [210] I shall say no more, and entreat you no further, for the gods and the people of Ithaca now know my story. Give me, then, a ship and a crew of twenty men to take me here and there, and I will go to Sparta and to Pylos [215] to inquire about the *nostos* of my father who has so long been missing. Some one may tell me something, or (and people often hear *kleos* in this way) some message sent from the gods may direct me. If I can hear of him as alive and achieving his homecoming [*nostos*] I will put up with the waste you suitors will make for yet another [220] twelve months. If on the other hand I hear of his death, I will return at once, celebrate his funeral rites with all due pomp, build a grave marker [*sēma*] to his memory, and make my mother marry again."

With these words he sat down, [225] and Mentor who had been a friend of stately Odysseus, and had been left in charge of everything with full authority over the servants, rose to speak. He, then, plainly and in all honesty addressed them thus:

"Hear me, men of Ithaca, [230] I hope that you may never have a kind and well-disposed ruler any more, nor one who will govern you equitably; I hope that all your chiefs henceforward may be cruel and unjust, for there is not one of you but has forgotten godlike Odysseus, who ruled you as though he were your father. [235] I am not half so angry with the suitors, for if they choose to do violence in the

naughtiness of their minds [*noos*], and wager their heads that Odysseus will not return, they can take the high hand and eat up his estate, but as for you others I am shocked at the way [240] in which you the rest of the population [*dēmos*] all sit still without even trying to stop such scandalous goings on—which you could do if you chose, for you are many and they are few.”

Leiokritos, son of Euenor, answered him saying, “Mentor, what folly is all this, that you should set the people to stay us? It is a hard thing [245] for one man to fight with many about his victuals. Even though Odysseus himself were to set upon us while we are feasting in his house, and do his best to oust us, his wife, who wants him back so very badly, would have small cause for rejoicing, [250] and his blood would be upon his own head if he fought against such great odds. There is no sense in what you have been saying. Now, therefore, do you people go about your business, and let his father’s old friends, Mentor and Halitherses, speed this boy on his journey, if he goes at all— [255] which I do not think he will, for he is more likely to stay where he is till some one comes and tells him something.”

Then he broke up the assembly, and every man went back to his own abode, while the suitors returned to the house of godlike Odysseus.

[260] Then Telemachus went all alone by the sea side, washed his hands in the gray waves, and prayed to Athena. “Hear me,” he cried, “you god who visited me yesterday, and bade me sail the seas in search of the *nostos* of my father [265] who has so long been missing. I would obey you, but the Achaeans, and more particularly the wicked suitors, are hindering me that I cannot do so.”

As he thus prayed, Athena came close up to him in the likeness and with the voice of Mentor. [270] “Telemachus, you will not be weak or resourceless in the future ²⁷¹ if truly the goodly power [*menos*] of your father has been instilled in you, for Odysseus never broke his word nor

left his work half done. If, then, you take after him, your voyage will not be fruitless, but unless you have the blood of Odysseus and of Penelope in your veins [275] I see no likelihood of your succeeding. Sons are seldom as good men as their fathers; they are generally worse, not better; still, as you are not going to be either fool or coward henceforward, and are not entirely without some share of your father's wise discernment, [280] I look with hope upon your undertaking. But mind you never have thoughts [*noos*] like those of any of those foolish suitors, for they are neither sensible nor just [*dikaioi*], and give no thought to death and to the doom that will shortly fall on one and all of them, so that they shall perish on the same day. [285] As for your voyage, it shall not be long delayed; your father was such an old friend of mine that I will find you a ship, and will come with you myself. Now, however, return home, and go about among the suitors; begin getting provisions ready for your voyage; see everything well stowed, [290] the wine in jars, and the barley meal, which is the staff of life, in leather bags, while I go round the district [*dēmos*] and round up volunteers at once. There are many ships in Ithaca both old and new; I will run my eye over them for you and will choose the best; [295] we will get her ready and will put out to sea without delay."

Thus spoke Athena, daughter of Zeus, and Telemachus lost no time in doing as the goddess told him. He went moodily and found the suitors [300] flaying goats and singeing pigs in the outer court. Antinoos came up to him at once and laughed as he took his hand in his own, saying, "Telemachus, my fine fire-eater, bear no more ill blood neither in word [305] nor deed, but eat and drink with us as you used to do. The Achaeans will find you in everything—a ship and a picked crew to boot—so that you can set sail for sacred Pylos at once and get news of your noble father."

"Antinoos," answered the spirited Telemachus, [310] "I cannot eat in peace, nor take pleasure of any kind with such men as you are. Was it not enough that you should waste so much good property of mine

while I was yet a boy? Now that I am older and [315] know more about it, I am also stronger, and whether here among this people [*dēmos*], or by going to Pylos, I will do you all the harm I can. I shall go, and my going will not be in vain though, thanks to you suitors, I have neither ship nor crew of my own, and must be passenger not captain.”

[320] As he spoke he snatched his hand from that of Antinoos. Meanwhile the others went on getting dinner ready about the buildings, jeering at him tauntingly as they did so.

[325] “Telemachus,” said one youngster, “means to be the death of us; I suppose he thinks he can bring friends to help him from Pylos, or again from Sparta, where he seems bent on going. Or will he go to Ephyra as well, for poison [330] to put in our wine and kill us?”

Another said, “Perhaps if Telemachus goes on board ship, he will be like his father and perish far from his friends. In this case we should have plenty to do, [335] for we could then divide up his property amongst us: as for the house we can let his mother and the man who marries her have that.”

This was how they talked. But Telemachus went down into the lofty and spacious store-room where his father’s treasure of gold and bronze lay heaped up upon the floor, and where the linen and spare clothes were kept in open chests. Here, too, there was a store of fragrant olive oil, [340] while casks of old, well-ripened wine, unblended and fit for a god to drink, were ranged against the wall in case Odysseus should come home again after all. The room was closed with well-made doors [345] opening in the middle; moreover the faithful old house-keeper Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, the son of Peisenor, was in charge of everything both night and day. Telemachus called her to the store-room and said: “Nurse, draw me off some [350] of the best wine you have, after what you are keeping for my father’s own drinking, in case, poor man, he should escape death, and find his way home again after all. Let

me have twelve jars, and see that they all have lids; also fill me some well-sewn leather bags with barley meal [355] —about twenty measures in all. Get these things put together at once, and say nothing about it. I will take everything away this evening as soon as my mother has gone upstairs for the night. I am going to Sparta and to Pylos, and [360] I am going to find out about the *nostos* of my father, if I should hear.”

When dear Eurykleia heard this she began to cry, and spoke fondly to him, saying, “My dear child, what ever can have put such notion as that into your head? Where in the world do you want to go to— [365] you, who are the one hope of the house? Your poor illustrious father is dead and gone in some foreign locale [*dēmos*] nobody knows where, and as soon as your back is turned these wicked ones here will be scheming to get you put out of the way, and will share all your possessions among themselves; stay where you are among your own people, [370] and do not go wandering and worrying your life out on the barren ocean.”

“Fear not, nurse,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “my scheme is not without the sanction of the gods; but swear that you will say nothing about all this to my mother, till I have been away some ten or twelve days, [375] unless she hears of my having gone, and asks you; for I do not want her to spoil her beauty by crying.”

The old woman swore most solemnly that she would not, and when she had completed her oath, she began drawing off the wine into jars, [380] and getting the barley meal into the bags, while Telemachus went back to the suitors.

Then owl-vision Athena turned her thoughts to another matter. She took his shape, and went round the town to each one of the crew, telling them [385] to meet at the ship by sundown. She went also to Noemon, glorious son of Phronios, and asked him to let her have a ship—which he was very ready to do. When the sun had set and darkness was over all the land, she got the ship into the water, put [390] all the tackle on

board her that ships generally carry, and stationed her at the end of the harbor. Presently the crew came up, and the owl-vision goddess spoke encouragingly to each of them.

Furthermore she went to the house of godlike Odysseus, [395] and threw the suitors into a deep slumber. She caused their drink to fuddle them, and made them drop their cups from their hands, so that instead of sitting over their wine, they went back into the town to sleep, with their eyes heavy and full of drowsiness. [400] Then she took the form and voice of Mentor, and called Telemachus to come outside.

“Telemachus,” said she, “the strong-greaved men are on board and at their oars, waiting for you to give your orders, so make haste and let us be off.” [405] Then she led the way, while Telemachus followed in her steps. When they got to the ship they found the crew waiting by the water side, and the hallowed prince, Telemachus said, [410] “Now my men, help me to get the stores on board; they are all put together in the hall, and my mother does not know anything about it, nor any of the maid servants except one.”

With these words he led the way and the others followed after. [415] When they had brought the things as he told them, dear son of Odysseus, Telemachus went on board, Athena going before him and taking her seat in the stern of the vessel, while Telemachus sat beside her. Then the men loosed the hawsers and took their places on the benches. [420] Owl-vision Athena sent them a fair wind from the West, that whistled over the deep blue waves whereon Telemachus told them to catch hold of the ropes and hoist sail, and they did as he told them. They set the mast in its socket in the cross plank, raised it, [425] and made it fast with the forestays; then they hoisted their white sails aloft with ropes of twisted ox-hide. As the sail bellied out with the wind, the ship flew through the deep blue water, and the foam hissed against her bows as she sped onward. [430] Then they made all fast throughout the ship, filled the mixing-bowls to the brim, and made drink offerings to

the immortal gods that are from everlasting, but more particularly to the owl-vision daughter of Zeus.

Thus, then, the ship sped on her way through the watches of the night from dark till dawn.

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2019-07-31

Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 3

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] But as the sun was rising from the fair sea into the firmament of the sky to shed light on mortals and immortals, they reached Pylos, the strong-founded city of Neleus. [5] Now the people of Pylos were gathered on the sea shore to offer sacrifice of black bulls to dark-haired Poseidon, lord of the Earthquake. There were nine guilds with five hundred men in each, and there were nine bulls to each guild. As they were eating the innards and burning the thigh bones [on the embers] in the name of Poseidon, [10] Telemachus and his crew arrived, furled their sails, brought their ship to anchor, and went ashore.

Owl-vision Athena led the way and Telemachus followed her. Presently she said, “Telemachus, you must not at all feel shame [*aidōs*] or be nervous; [15] you have taken this voyage to try and find out where your father is buried and how he came by his end; so go straight up to Nestor, breaker of horses, that we may see what he has got to tell us. Beg of him to speak the truth, [20] and he will tell no lies, for he is an excellent person.”

“But how, Mentor,” replied the spirited Telemachus, “dare I go up to Nestor, and how am I to address him? I have never yet been used to holding long conversations with people, and feel shame [*aidōs*] about questioning one who is so much older than myself.”

[25] “Some things, Telemachus,” answered owl-vision Athena, “will be suggested to you by your own instinct, and some superhuman force [*daimōn*] will prompt you further; for I am assured that the gods have been with you from the time of your birth until now.”

She then went quickly on, [30] and Telemachus followed in her steps till they reached the place where the guilds of the Pylian people were assembled. There they found Nestor sitting with his sons, while his company round him were busy getting dinner ready, and putting pieces of meat on to the spits while other pieces were cooking. When they saw the strangers they crowded round them, [35] took them by the hand and bade them take their places. Nestor's son Peisistratos at once offered his hand to each of them, and seated them on some soft sheepskins that were lying on the sands near his father and his brother Thrasymedes. [40] Then he gave them their portions of the innards and poured wine for them into a golden cup, handing it to Athena first, and saluting her at the same time.

“Offer a prayer, sir,” said he, “to lord Poseidon, for it is his feast that you are joining; [45] when you have duly prayed and made your drink-offering, pass the cup to your friend that he may do so also. I doubt not that he too lifts his hands in prayer, for man cannot live without gods in the world. Still, he is younger than you are, and is much of an age with myself, [50] so I will give you the precedence.”

As he spoke he handed her the cup. Athena thought that he was just [*dikaïos*] and right to have given it to herself first; she accordingly began praying heartily to Poseidon. [55] “O god,” she cried, “you who encircle the earth, grant the prayers of your servants that call upon you. More especially we pray you send down your grace on Nestor and on his sons; thereafter also make the rest of the Pylian people some handsome return for the goodly hecatomb they are offering you. [60] Lastly, grant Telemachus and myself a happy issue, in respect of the matter that has brought us in our swift black ship to Pylos.”

When she had thus made an end of praying, she handed the cup to dear Telemachus and he prayed likewise. [65] By and by, when the outer meats were roasted and had been taken off the spits, ⁶⁶ apportioning portions [*moirai*], they feasted a very glorious feast [*dais*]. As soon as they

had had enough to eat and drink, Nestor, charioteer of Gerenia, began to speak.

“Now,” said he, “that our guests have done their dinner, [70] it will be best to ask them who they are. Who, then, sir strangers, are you, and from what port have you sailed? Are you traders? Or do you sail the seas as rovers with your hand against every man, and every man’s hand against you?”

[75] The spirited Telemachus answered boldly, for Athena had given him courage to ask about his father and get himself a good name [*kleos*]. “Nestor,” said he, “son of Neleus, honor to the Achaean name, [80] you ask whence we come, and I will tell you. We come from Ithaca under Neriton, and the matter about which I would speak is of private not public import. ⁸³ I am going after the widespread *kleos* of my father, if I should hear, radiant patient-hearted Odysseus, who is said [85] to have ransacked the town of Troy in company with yourself. We know what fate befell each one of the other heroes who fought at Troy, but as regards Odysseus the gods have hidden from us the knowledge even that he is dead at all, for no one can certify us in what place he perished, [90] nor say whether he fell in battle on the mainland, or was lost at sea amid the waves of Amphitrite. Therefore I am suppliant at your knees, if haply you may be pleased to tell me of his melancholy end, whether you saw it with your own eyes, or heard it from some [95] other traveler, for he was a man born to trouble. Do not soften things out of any pity for me, but tell me in all plainness exactly what you saw. If my brave father Odysseus ever did you loyal service, either by word or deed, [100] when you Achaeans were harassed among the [*dēmos*] Trojans, bear it in mind now as in my favor and tell me truly all.”

“My friend,” answered Nestor, “you recall a time of much sorrow to my mind, for the brave Achaeans [105] suffered much both at sea, while privateering under Achilles, and when fighting before the great city of king Priam. Our best men all of them fell there—Ajax, Achilles, [110]

Patroklos, peer of gods in counsel, and my own dear son, Antilokhos, a man singularly fleet of foot and in fight valiant. But we suffered much more than this; what mortal tongue indeed could tell the whole story? [115] Though you were to stay here and question me for five years, or even six, I could not tell you all that the Achaeans suffered, and you would turn homeward weary of my tale before it ended. Nine long years did we try every kind of stratagem, but the hand of the gods [120] was against us. [120] Back then, there was nobody who would set himself up as equal to [*homoios*] him [= Odysseus] in craft [*mētis*], ¹²¹ no, nobody would be willing to do so, since radiant Odysseus was so much better, your father—if indeed you are his son. I can hardly believe my eyes—and you talk just like him too—no one would [125] say that people of such different ages could speak so much alike. He and I never had any kind of difference from first to last neither in camp nor council, but in singleness of heart and purpose [*noos*] we advised the Argives how all might be ordered for the best.

[130] But after we [= the Achaeans] had destroyed the lofty city of Priam ¹³¹ and we went into our ships, the god dispersed us. ¹³² And then it was that Zeus devised in his thinking a plan to make a disastrous [*lugros*] homecoming [*nostos*] ¹³³ for the Argives [= Achaeans]; for they had not at all been either mindful [= having *noos*] or just [*dikaioi*], ¹³⁴ not all of them, and so many of them met up with a bad destiny [135] because of the disastrous [*oloē*] anger [*mēnis*] of the daughter of the mighty father—of the goddess with the looks of an owl, who brought about a quarrel [*eris*] between the two sons of Atreus.

The sons of Atreus called a meeting which was not as it should be [= without *kosmos*], for it was sunset and the Achaeans were heavy with wine. [140] When they explained why they had called the people together, it seemed that Menelaos was for sailing homeward [*nostos*] at once, and this displeased Agamemnon, who thought that we should wait till we had offered hecatombs [145] to appease the anger of Athena. Fool

that he was, he might have known that he would not prevail with her, for when the gods have made up their minds [*noos*] they do not change them lightly. So the two stood bandying hard words, whereon the strong-greaved Achaeans sprang to their feet [150] with a cry that rent the air, and were of two minds as to what they should do.

That night we rested and nursed our anger, for Zeus was hatching mischief against us. But in the morning some of us drew our ships into the water and put our goods with our women on board, [155] while the rest, about half in number, stayed behind with Agamemnon. We—the other half—embarked and sailed; and the ships went well, for the gods had smoothed the sea. When we reached Tenedos we offered sacrifices to the gods, [160] for we were longing for our homecoming [*nostos*]; cruel Zeus, however, did not yet mean that we should do so, and raised a second quarrel in the course of which some among us turned their ships back again, and sailed away under Odysseus to make their peace with Agamemnon; [165] but I, and all the ships that were with me pressed forward, for I saw that mischief was brewing. The son of Tydeus went on also with me, and his crews with him. ¹⁶⁸ He came late, golden-haired Menelaos did, after the two of us [= Nestor and Diomedes]. ¹⁶⁹ It was at Lesbos that he [= Menelaos] caught up with us, as we were planning the long part of our sea voyage— [170] for we did not know whether to go outside Chios by the island of Psyra, keeping this to our left, or inside Chios, over against the stormy headland of Mimas. So we asked a superhuman force [*daimōn*] for a sign, and were shown one to the effect that we should be soonest out of danger if we headed our ships across the open sea [175] to Euboea. This we therefore did, and a fair wind sprang up which gave us a quick passage during the night to Geraistos, where we offered many sacrifices to Poseidon for having helped us so far on our way. [180] Four days later Diomedes, breaker of horses, and his men stationed their ships in Argos, but I held on for Pylos, and the wind never fell light from the day when the gods first made it fair for me.

Therefore, my dear young friend, I returned without hearing anything [185] about the others. I know neither who got home safely nor who were lost but, as in duty bound, I will give you without reserve the reports that have reached me since I have been here in my own house. They say the Myrmidons returned home safely under great-hearted Achilles' glorious son, Neoptolemos; [190] so also did the valiant son of Poias, Philoctetes. Idomeneus, again, lost no men at sea, and all his followers who escaped death in the field got safe home with him to Crete. No matter how far out of the world you live, you will have heard of Agamemnon and the bad end he came to at the hands of Aegisthus [195] and a fearful reckoning did treacherous Aegisthus presently pay. See what a good thing it is for a man to leave a son behind him to do as Orestes did, who killed false Aegisthus the murderer of his noble father. You too, then—for you are a tall, smart-looking young man— [200] show your mettle and make yourself a name in story.”

“Nestor, son of Neleus,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “honor to the Achaean name, the Achaeans will bear the *kleos* of Orestes in song [205] even to future generations, for he has avenged his father nobly. Would that the gods might grant me to do like vengeance on the insolence of the wicked suitors, who are ill-treating me and plotting my ruin; but the gods have no such happiness [*olbos*] in store for me and for my father, so we must bear it as best we may.”

[210] “My friend,” said Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, “now that you remind me, I remember to have heard that your mother has many suitors, who are ill-disposed towards you and are making havoc of your estate. Do you submit to this tamely, or are the people of the *dēmos*, [215] following the voice of a god, against you? Who knows but that Odysseus may come back after all, and pay these scoundrels in full, either single-handed or with a force of Achaeans behind him? If owl-vision Athena were to take as great a liking to you as she did to glorious Odysseus [220] when we were fighting in the Trojan *dēmos* (for I never yet saw the gods so openly fond of anyone as Athena then was of your

father), if she would take as good care of you as she did of him, these wooers would soon some of them forget their wooing.”

[225] The spirited Telemachus answered, “I can expect nothing of the kind; it would be far too much to hope for. I dare not let myself think of it. Even though the gods themselves willed it no such good fortune could befall me.”

Then owl-vision goddess Athena said, [230] “Telemachus, what are you talking about? Heaven has a long arm if it is minded to save a man; and if it were me, I should not care how much I suffered before getting home, provided I could be safe when I was once there. I would rather this, than get home quickly, and then be killed in my own house as Agamemnon [235] was by the treachery of Aegisthus and his wife. Still, death is certain, and when a man’s hour is come, not even the gods can save him, no matter how fond they are of him.”

[240] “Mentor,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “do not let us talk about it any more. There is no chance of my father’s ever having a homecoming [*nostos*]; the gods have long since counseled his destruction. There is something else, however, about which I should like to ask Nestor, for he knows much more than anyone else does. [245] They say he has reigned for three generations so that it is like talking to an immortal. Tell me, therefore, Nestor, and tell me true [*alēthēs*]; how did widely ruling Agamemnon come to die in that way? What was Menelaos doing? And how came false Aegisthus [250] to kill so far better a man than himself? Was Menelaos away from Achaean Argos, voyaging elsewhere among humankind, that Aegisthus took heart and killed Agamemnon?”

“I will tell you truly [*alēthēs*],” answered Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, [255] “and indeed you have yourself divined how it all happened. If fair-haired Menelaos when he got back from Troy had found Aegisthus still alive in his house, there would have been no grave

marker heaped up for him, not even when he was dead, but he would have been thrown outside the city to dogs [260] and vultures, and not a woman would have mourned him, for he had done a deed of great wickedness; but we were over there, enduring ordeals [*āthloi*] at Troy, and Aegisthus who was taking his ease quietly in the heart of Argos, cajoled Agamemnon's wife, beautiful Clytemnestra, with incessant flattery.

[265] At first she would have nothing to do with his wicked scheme, for she was of a good natural disposition; moreover there was a singer with her, to whom Agamemnon had given strict orders on setting out for Troy, that he was to keep guard over his wife; but when the gods had counseled her destruction, [270] Aegisthus led this bard off to a desert island and left him there for crows and seagulls to batten upon—after which she went willingly enough to the house of Aegisthus. Then he offered many burnt sacrifices to the gods, and decorated many temples with tapestries and gilding, [275] for he had succeeded far beyond his expectations.

Meanwhile Menelaos and I were on our way home from Troy, on good terms with one another. When we got to Sounion, which is the point of Athens, Apollo with his painless [280] shafts killed Phrontis son of Onētor, the steersman [*kubernētēs*] of Menelaos' ship (and never a man knew better how to handle a vessel in rough weather), so that he died then and there with the steering-oar in his hand, and Menelaos, though very anxious to press forward, [285] had to wait in order to bury his comrade and give him his due funeral rites. Presently, when he too could put to sea again, and had sailed on as far as the Malean headland, Zeus of the wide brows counseled evil against him and made it blow hard [290] till the waves ran mountains high. Here he divided his fleet and took the one half towards Crete where the Cydonians dwell round about the waters of the river Iardanos. There is a high headland hereabouts stretching out into the sea from a place called Gortyn, [295] and all along this part of the coast as far as Phaistos the sea runs high when

there is a south wind blowing, but past Phaistos the coast is more protected, for a small headland can make a great shelter. Here this part of the fleet was driven on to the rocks and wrecked; but the crews just managed to save themselves. [300] As for the other five ships, they were taken by winds and seas to Egypt, where Menelaos gathered much gold and substance among people of an alien speech. Meanwhile Aegisthus here at home plotted his evil deed. For seven years after he had killed Agamemnon he ruled in golden Mycenae, [305] and the people were obedient under him, but in the eighth year Orestes came back from Athens to be his bane, and killed the murderer of his father. Then he celebrated the funeral rites [310] of his mother and of false unwarlike Aegisthus by a banquet to the people of Argos, and on that very day Menelaos of the great cry came home, with as much treasure as his ships could carry.

Take my advice then, and do not go traveling about for long so far from home, nor leave your property with such dangerous people in your house; [315] they will eat up everything you have among them, and you will have been on a fool's errand. Still, I should advise you by all means to go and visit Menelaos, who has lately come off a voyage among such distant peoples as no man could ever hope to get back from, [320] when the winds had once carried him so far out of his reckoning; even birds cannot fly the distance in a twelvemonth, so vast and terrifying are the seas that they must cross. Go to him, therefore, by sea, and take your own men with you; or if you would rather travel by land you can have a chariot, [325] you can have horses, and here are my sons who can escort you to Lacedaemon where fair-haired Menelaos lives. Beg of him to speak the truth, and he will tell you no lies, for he is an excellent person."

As he spoke the sun set and it came on dark, [330] whereon owl-vision goddess Athena said, "Sir, all that you have said is well; now, however, order the tongues of the victims to be cut, and mix wine that we may make drink-offerings to Poseidon, and the other immortals, and then go

to bed, for it is time [*hōra*]. [335] People should go away early and not keep late hours at a religious festival.”

Thus spoke the daughter of Zeus, and they obeyed her saying. Men servants poured water over the hands of the guests, while pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water, [340] and handed it round after giving every man his drink-offering; then they threw the tongues of the victims into the fire, and stood up to make their drink-offerings. When they had made their offerings and had drunk each as much as he was minded, Athena and godlike Telemachus were for going on board their ship, [345] but Nestor caught them up at once and stayed them.

“Heaven and the immortal gods,” he exclaimed, “forbid that you should leave my house to go on board of a ship. Do you think I am so poor and short of clothes, or that I have so few cloaks as to be unable to find comfortable beds [350] both for myself and for my guests? Let me tell you I have store both of rugs and cloaks, and shall not permit the son of my old friend Odysseus to camp down on the deck of a ship—not while I live—nor yet will my sons after me, [355] but they will keep open house as I have done.”

Then the owl-vision goddess Athena answered, “Sir, you have spoken well, and it will be much better that Telemachus should do as you have said; he, therefore, shall return with you and sleep [360] at your house, but I must go back to give orders to my crew, and keep them in good heart. I am the only older person among them; the rest are all young men of Telemachus’ own age, who have taken this voyage out of friendship; [365] so I must return to the ship and sleep there. Moreover tomorrow I must go to the great-hearted Kaukones where I have a large sum of wealth long owed to me. As for Telemachus, now that he is your guest, send him to Lacedaemon in a chariot, and let one of your sons go with him. Be pleased also to provide him with [370] your best and fleetest horses.”

When she had thus spoken, she flew away in the form of an eagle, and all marveled as they beheld it. Nestor was astonished, and took Telemachus by the hand. [375] “My friend,” said he, “I see that you are going to be a great hero some day, since the gods wait upon you thus while you are still so young. This can have been none other of those who dwell in the sky than Zeus’ terrifying daughter, the most-honored Triton-born, who showed such favor towards your brave father among the Argives.” [380] “Holy queen,” he continued, “send down noble glory [*kleos*] upon myself, my good wife, and my children. In return, I will offer you in sacrifice a broad-browed heifer of a year old, unbroken, and never yet brought by man under the yoke. I will gild her horns, and will offer her up to you in sacrifice.”

[385] Thus did he pray, and Athena heard his prayer. He then led the way to his own house, followed by his sons and sons-in-law. When they had got there and had taken their places on the benches and seats, [390] he mixed them a bowl of sweet wine that was eleven years old when the housekeeper took the lid off the jar that held it. As he mixed the wine, he prayed much and made drink-offerings to Athena, daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus. [395] Then, when they had made their drink-offerings and had drunk each as much as he was minded, the others went home to bed each in his own abode; but Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, put Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, to sleep in the room that was over the gateway [400] along with Peisistratos, who was the only unmarried son now left him. As for himself, he slept in an inner room of the house, with the queen his wife by his side.

Now when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, [405] Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, left his couch and took his seat on the benches of white and polished marble that stood in front of his house. Here aforetime sat Neleus, peer of gods in counsel, [410] but he was now dead, and had gone to the house of Hādēs; so Nestor of Gerenia sat in his seat, scepter in hand, as guardian of the public weal. His sons as they left their rooms gathered round him, Ekhephron, Stratios, Perseus,

Aretos, and Thrasymedes; [415] the sixth son was the hero Peisistratos, and when godlike Telemachus joined them they made him sit with them. Nestor then addressed them.

“My sons,” said he, “make haste to do as I shall bid you. I wish first and foremost to propitiate the great goddess Athena, [420] who manifested herself visibly to me during yesterday’s festivities. Go, then, one or other of you to the plain, tell the stockman to look me out a heifer, and come on here with it at once. [425] Another must go to great-hearted Telemachus’ ship, and invite all the crew, leaving two men only in charge of the vessel. Some one else will run and fetch Laerkeus the goldsmith to gild the horns of the heifer. The rest, stay all of you where you are; tell the maids in the house to prepare an excellent dinner, and to fetch seats, and logs of wood for a burnt offering. Tell them also to bring me some clear spring water.”

[430] Then they hurried off on their several errands. The heifer was brought in from the plain, and great-hearted Telemachus’ crew came from the ship; the goldsmith brought the anvil, hammer, and tongs, [435] with which he worked his gold, and Athena herself came to the sacrifice. Nestor, the old charioteer, gave out the gold, and the smith gilded the horns of the heifer that the goddess might have pleasure in their beauty. Then Stratios and noble Ekhephron brought her in by [440] the horns; Aretos fetched water from the house in a ewer that had a flower pattern on it, and in his other hand he held a basket of barley meal; sturdy Thrasymedes stood by with a sharp axe, ready to strike the heifer, while Perseus held a bucket. [445] Then Nestor began with washing his hands and sprinkling the barley meal, and he offered many a prayer to Athena as he threw a lock from the heifer’s head upon the fire.

When they had done praying and sprinkling the barley meal Thrasymedes, the high-hearted son of Nestor dealt his blow, and brought the heifer down with a stroke that cut through the tendons

[450] at the base of her neck, whereon the daughters and daughters-in-law of Nestor, and his venerable wife Eurydice (she was eldest daughter to Klymenos) shouted ‘ololu’ in delight. Then they lifted the heifer’s head from off the ground, and Peisistratos, leader of men, cut her throat. [455] When she had done bleeding and was quite dead, they cut her up. They cut out the thigh-bones, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, set some pieces of raw meat on the top of them. ⁴⁵⁹ And the old man burned them [= the thigh bones] over splinters of wood, and bright wine did he [460] pour over them, while the young men were getting ready for him the five-pronged forks that they were holding in their hands. When the thighs were burned and they had tasted the innards, they cut the rest of the meat up small, put the pieces on the spits and toasted them over the fire.

Meanwhile lovely Polykaste, [465] Nestor’s youngest daughter, washed Telemachus. When she had washed him and anointed him with oil, she brought him a fair mantle and khiton. ⁴⁶⁸ He emerged from the bathtub [*asaminthos*], looking like [*homoios*] the immortals in size, and took his seat by the side of Nestor. [470] When the outer meats were done they drew them off the spits and sat down to dinner where they were waited upon by some worthy henchmen, who kept pouring them out their wine in cups of gold. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Nestor, the charioteer of Gerenia, said, [475] “Sons, put Telemachus’ horses to the chariot that he may start at once.”

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said, and yoked the fleet horses to the chariot. The housekeeper packed them up a provision of bread, wine, [480] and sweetmeats fit for the sons of princes. Then Telemachus got into the chariot, while Peisistratos, leader of men, the son of Nestor, gathered up the reins and took his seat beside him. He lashed the horses on and they flew forward nothing loath [485] into the open country, leaving the high citadel of Pylos behind them. All that day did they travel, swaying the yoke upon their necks till the sun went down and darkness was over all the land. Then they reached Pherai

where Diokles lived, who was son to Ortilokhos and grandson to Alpheus. [490] Here they passed the night and Diokles entertained them hospitably. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn; appeared, they again yoked their horses and drove out through the gateway under the echoing gatehouse. Peisistratos lashed the horses on and they flew forward, holding back nothing; [495] presently they came to the wheat lands of the open country, and in the course of time completed their journey, so well did their steeds take them. Now when the sun had set and darkness was over the land...

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Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 4

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] They reached the low-lying city of Lacedaemon, where they drove straight to the halls of glorious Menelaos. They found him in his own house, feasting with his many clansmen in honor of the wedding of his son, and also of his daughter, whom [5] he was marrying to the son of that valiant warrior Achilles. He had given his consent and promised her to him while he was still at Troy, and now the gods were bringing the marriage about; so he was sending her with chariots and horses to the city of the Myrmidons over whom Achilles' son [10] was reigning. For his only son he had found a bride from Sparta, daughter of Alektor. This son, Megapenthes, was born to him of a bondwoman, for the gods granted Helen no more children after she had borne Hermione, who was fair as golden Aphrodite herself.

[15] So they feasted throughout the big palace with its high ceilings, ¹⁶ both the neighbors and the kinsmen of glorious Menelaos, ¹⁷ and they were feeling delight [*terpesthai*]; in their midst sang-and-danced [*melpesthai*] a divine singer [*aoidos*], ¹⁸ playing on the special lyre [*phorminx*]; two special dancers [*kubistētēre*] among them ¹⁹ were swirling as he led [*exarkhein*] the singing-and-dancing [*molpē*] in their midst.

[20] The hero Telemachus and the shining son of Nestor stayed their horses at the gate, whereon powerful Eteoneus, servant to glorious Menelaos came out, and as soon as he saw them ran hurrying back into the house to tell his Master. [25] He went close up to him and said, "Menelaos, dear to Zeus, there are some strangers come here, two men,

who look like sons of Zeus. What are we to do? Shall we take their horses out, or tell them to find friends elsewhere as they best can?”

[30] Fair-haired Menelaos was very angry and said, “Eteoneus, son of Boethoös, you never used to be a fool, but now you talk like a simpleton. Take their horses out, of course, and show the strangers in that they may have supper; you and I have stayed often enough at other people’s houses before we got back here, where the gods [35] grant that we may rest in peace henceforward.”

So Eteoneus bustled back and bade other servants come with him. They took their sweating steeds from under the yoke, [40] made them fast to the mangers, and gave them a feed of oats and barley mixed. Then they leaned the chariot against the end wall of the courtyard. ⁴³ They [=Telemachus and Peisistratos] were escorted inside the heavenly [*theion*] palace. Seeing what they were seeing, ⁴⁴ they were filled with awe [*thauma*] as they proceeded through the palace of the king, that man whose origins are celestial. [45] There was a gleam [*aiglē*] there, which was like the gleam of the sun or the moon, ⁴⁶ spreading throughout that palace famed for its high ceilings, that home of radiant Menelaos. ⁴⁷ But then, after they had feasted their eyes on what they saw, they went into the bath room and washed themselves.

When the servants had washed them and anointed them with oil, [50] they brought them woolen cloaks and khitons, and the two took their seats by the side of Menelaos, son of Atreus. A maidservant brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands; and she drew a clean table beside them. [55] An upper servant brought them bread, and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, while the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side.

Fair-haired Menelaos then greeted them saying, [60] “Eat up, and welcome; when you have finished supper I shall ask who you are, for the

lineage of such men as you cannot have been lost. You must be descended from a line of scepter-bearing kings, for poor people do not have such sons as you are.”

[65] Then he handed them a piece of fat roast loin, which had been set near him as being a prime part, and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them; as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, Telemachus said to the son of Nestor, with [70] his head so close that no one might hear, ⁷¹ “I want you to notice something, son of Nestor, you who are so dear to my heart: ⁷² notice the flash [*steropē*] of bronze [*khalkos*] as its light pervades the echoing hall ⁷³ and also the flash of gold and of electrum and of silver and of ivory. ⁷⁴ I’m guessing that Zeus, who lives on Olympus, has such a hall inside his palace, [75] and he would have as many indescribable things as are here. A sense of holy awe takes hold of me as I look at these things.”

Menelaos of the fair hair overheard him and said, “No one, my sons, can hold his own with Zeus, for his house and everything about him is immortal; but among mortal men— [80] well, there may be another who has as much wealth as I have, or there may not; but at all events I have traveled much and have undergone much hardship, for it was nearly eight years before I could get home with my fleet. I went to Cyprus, Phoenicia and the Egyptians; I went also to the Ethiopians, the Sidonians, and the Erembians, [85] and to Libya where the lambs have horns as soon as they are born, and the sheep bear lambs three times a year. Every one in that country, whether master or man, has plenty of cheese, meat, and good milk, for the ewes yield all the year round. [90] But while I was traveling and getting great riches among these people, my brother was secretly and shockingly murdered through the perfidy of his wicked wife, so that I have no pleasure in being lord of all this wealth. Whoever your parents may be they must have told you about all this, [95] and of my heavy loss in the ruin of a stately dwelling fully and magnificently furnished. Would that I had only a third of what I now have so that I had stayed at home, and all those were living who perished

on the plain of Troy, far from horse-pasturing Argos. [100] I often grieve, as I sit here in my house, for one and all of them. At times I cry aloud for sorrow, but presently I leave off again, for crying is cold comfort and one soon tires of it. Yet grieve for these as I may, I do so [105] for one man more than for them all. I cannot even think of him without loathing both food and sleep, so miserable does he make me, ¹⁰⁶ since none of the Achaeans struggled so much ¹⁰⁷ as Odysseus struggled and achieved. For him there would be ¹⁰⁸ cares in the future, whereas I would have an unforgettable grief [*akhos alaston*] always, for he has been gone a long time, and we know not [110] whether he is alive or dead. His old father, his long-suffering wife Penelope, and his son Telemachus, whom he left behind him an infant in arms, are plunged in grief on his account.”

Thus spoke Menelaos, and the heart of Telemachus yearned as he turned his thoughts to his father. Tears fell from his eyes as he heard him thus [115] mentioned, so that he held his cloak before his face with both hands. When Menelaos saw this he doubted whether to let him choose his own time for speaking, or to ask him at once and find what it was all about.

[120] While he was thus in two minds Helen came down from her high-vaulted and perfumed room, looking as lovely as Artemis of the golden distaff herself. Adraste brought her a seat, Alkippe a soft woolen rug, [125] while Phylo fetched her the silver work-box which Alkandra, wife of Polybos, had given her. Polybos lived in Egyptian Thebes, which is the richest city in the whole world; he gave Menelaos two baths, both of pure silver, two tripods, and ten talents of gold; besides all this, [130] his wife gave Helen some beautiful presents, to wit, a golden distaff, and a silver work-box that ran on wheels, with a gold band round the top of it. Phylo now placed this by her side, full of fine spun yarn, [135] and a distaff charged with violet colored wool was laid upon the top of it. Then Helen took her seat, put her feet upon the footstool, and began to question her husband.

“Do we know, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus,” said she, “the names of these strangers who have come to visit us? [140] Shall I guess right or wrong? But I cannot help saying what I think. Never yet have I seen either man or woman so like somebody else (indeed when I look at him I hardly know what to think) as this young man is like Telemachus, whom great-hearted Odysseus left as a baby behind him, [145] when you Achaeans went to Troy with battle in your hearts, on account of my most shameless self.”

“My dear wife,” replied fair-haired Menelaos, “I see the likeness just as you do. His hands and feet are just like Odysseus’; [150] so is his hair, with the shape of his head and the expression of his eyes. Moreover, when I was talking about Odysseus, and saying how much he had suffered on my account, tears fell from his eyes, and he hid his face in his mantle.”

[155] Then Peisistratos, son of Nestor, said, “Menelaos, son of Atreus, you are right in thinking that this young man is Telemachus, but he is very modest [*sōphrōn*], and is ashamed in his *thūmos* to come here and begin opening up discourse [160] with one whose conversation is so divinely interesting as your own. My father, Nestor the charioteer of Gerenia, sent me to escort him here, for he wanted to know whether you could give him any counsel or suggestion. A son has always trouble at home when his father [165] has gone away leaving him without supporters; and this is how Telemachus is now placed, for his father is absent, and there is no one among his own *dēmos* to stand by him.”

“Bless my heart,” replied fair-haired Menelaos; “then I am receiving a visit from the son of a very dear friend, [170] who suffered much hardship [*āthlos*] for my sake. I had always hoped to entertain him with most marked distinction when the gods had granted us a safe return [*nostos*] from beyond the seas. I should have founded a city for him in Argos, and built him [175] a house. I should have made him leave Ithaca with his goods, his son, and all his people, and should have ransacked for

them some one of the neighboring cities that are subject to me. We should thus have seen one another continually, [180] and nothing but death could have interrupted so close and happy an intercourse. I suppose, however, that the gods grudged us such good fortune, for it has made him, ¹⁸² that wretched one, the only one who has not come home.”

Thus did he speak, and his words set them all to weeping. Helen of Argos, daughter of Zeus, wept, Telemachus [185] wept, and so did Menelaos the son of Atreus, nor could Nestor’s son Peisistratos keep his eyes from filling, when he remembered his dear brother stately Antilokhos whom the son of bright Dawn had killed. Then he said to Menelaos,

[190] “Sir, my father Nestor, when we used to talk about you at home, told me you were a person of rare and excellent understanding. If, then, it be possible, do as I would urge you. I am not fond of crying while I am getting my supper. Morning will come [195] in due course, and in the forenoon I care not how much I cry for those that are dead and gone. This is all we can do for the poor things. We can only shave our heads for them and wring the tears from our cheeks. I had a brother who died at Troy; he was by no means the worst man [200] there; you are sure to have known him—his name was Antilokhos; I never set eyes upon him myself, but they say that he was singularly fleet of foot and in fight valiant.”

“Your discretion, my friend,” answered fair-haired Menelaos, [205] “is beyond your years. It is plain you take after your father. One can soon see when a man is son to one whom Zeus grants blessedness [*olbos*] both as regards wife and offspring—and he has blessed Nestor from first to last all his days, [210] giving him a green old age in his own house, with sons about him who are both well disposed and valiant. We will put an end therefore to all this weeping, and attend to our supper again. Let

water be poured over our hands. Telemachus and I can talk with one another fully [215] in the morning.”

Then Asphalion, one of the servants, poured water over their hands and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them.

Then Zeus’ daughter Helen turned her thoughts to another matter. [220] She [= Helen] put a drug into the wine from which they drank. ²²¹ It [= the drug] was against *penthos* [*nē-penthes*] and against anger [*a-kholon*]. It made one forget all bad things. ²²² Whoever swallowed it, once it was mixed with the wine into the mixing bowl, ²²³ could not shed a tear from his cheeks for that day, ²²⁴ even if his mother and father died [225] or if he had earlier lost a brother or his own dear son, ²²⁶ killed by bronze weapons—even if he saw it all happen with his own eyes. ²²⁷ Such magical things she had, the daughter of Zeus, ²²⁸ things of good outcome [*esthla*], which to her did Polydamna give, wife of Thon. ²²⁹ She was Egyptian. For her, many were the things produced by the life-giving earth, [230] magical things—many good [*esthla*] mixtures and many baneful [*lugra*] ones. Moreover, every one in the whole country is a skilled physician, for they are of the lineage of Paieon. When Helen had put this drug in the bowl, and had told the servants to serve the wine round, she said:

[235] “Menelaos, son of Atreus, dear to Zeus, and you my good friends, sons of honorable men (which is as Zeus wills, for he is the giver both of good and evil, and can do what he chooses). ²³⁸ Sit now and dine in the palace, and be entertained ²³⁹ by the stories. For the things that I will say in proper order are appropriate. [240] I could not possibly tell of or name ²⁴¹ all the struggles that are the share of the enduring Odysseus, ²⁴² but I will tell of this one thing that he did and endured— ²⁴³—that man of power [*kratos*] —in the district of Troy, where you Achaeans suffered pains [*pēma* plural]. feast here as you will, and listen while I tell you a tale in season. [240] I cannot indeed name every single one of the

exploits [*āthlos*] of enduring Odysseus, but I can say what he did when he was in the Trojan *dēmos*, and you Achaeans were in all sorts of difficulties. He covered himself with wounds and bruises, dressed himself [245] all in rags, and entered the enemy's city looking like a menial or a beggar, quite different from how he looked when he was among his own people. In this disguise he entered the city of Troy, and no one said anything to him. [250] I alone recognized him and began to question him, but he was too cunning for me. When, however, I had washed and anointed him and had given him clothes, and after I had sworn a solemn oath not to betray him to the Trojans [255] till he had got safely back to his own camp and to the ships, he explained to me the whole plan [*noos*] of the Achaeans. He killed many Trojans and got much information before he reached the Argive camp, for all which things the Trojan women made lamentation, but for my own part [260] I was glad, for my heart was beginning to long after my home, and I was unhappy about the wrong [*atē*] that Aphrodite had done me in taking me over there, away from my country, my girl, and my lawful wedded husband, who is indeed by no means deficient either in looks or understanding.”

[265] Then fair-haired Menelaos said, “All that you have been saying, my dear wife, is true. I have traveled much, and have learned the plans and *noos* of many a hero, [270] but I have never seen such another man as enduring Odysseus. What endurance too, and what courage he displayed within the wooden horse, wherein all the bravest of the Argives were lying in wait to bring death and destruction upon the Trojans. At that moment you came up to us; [275] some superhuman force [*daimōn*] who wished well to the Trojans must have set you on to it and you had Deiphobos the godlike with you. Three times did you go all round our hiding place and pat it; you called our chiefs each by his own name, ²⁷⁹ making your voice like [*eiskein*] the voices of their wives. [280] Diomedes, great Odysseus, and I from our seats inside heard what a noise you made. Diomedes and I could not make up our minds whether to spring out then and there, or to answer you from inside, but Odysseus held us all in check, [285] so we sat quite still, all except

Antiklos, who was beginning to answer you, when Odysseus clapped his two brawny hands over his mouth, and kept them there. It was this that saved us all, for he muzzled Antiklos till Athena took you away again.” [290] “How sad,” exclaimed the spirited Telemachus, “that all this was of no avail to save him, nor yet his own iron courage. But now, sir, be pleased to send us all to bed, that we may lie down [295] and enjoy the blessed boon of sleep.”

Then Helen of Argos told the maid servants to set beds in the room that was in the gatehouse, and to make them with good red rugs, and spread coverlets on the top of them with woolen cloaks for the guests to wear. So the maids [300] went out, carrying a torch, and made the beds, to which a man-servant presently conducted the strangers. Thus, then, did the hero Telemachus and glorious Peisistratos sleep there in the forecourt, while the son of Atreus lay in an inner room [305] with lovely Helen by his side.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Menelaos rose and dressed himself. He bound his sandals on to his comely feet, [310] girded his sword about his shoulders, and left his room looking like an immortal god. Then, taking a seat near Telemachus he said:

“And what, Telemachus, has led you to take this long sea voyage to shining Lacedaemon? Are you on public or private business? Tell me all about it.”

[315] “I have come, sir,” replied Telemachus, “to see if you can tell me anything about my father. I am being eaten out of house and home; my fair estate is being wasted, and my house is full of miscreants who in overweening *hubris* [320] keep killing great numbers of my sheep and oxen, on the pretence of wooing my mother. Therefore, I am suppliant at your knees if haply you may tell me about my father’s melancholy end, whether you saw it with your own eyes, or heard it from [325] some other traveler; for he was a man born to trouble. Do not soften

things out of any pity for myself, but tell me in all plainness exactly what you saw. If my brave father Odysseus ever did you loyal service either by word or deed, [330] when you Achaeans were harassed in the *dēmos* of the Trojans, bear it in mind now as in my favor and tell me truly all.”

Menelaos on hearing this was very much shocked. “So,” he exclaimed, “these cowards would usurp a brave man’s bed? [335] A hind might as well lay her new born young in the lair of a lion, and then go off to feed in the forest or in some grassy dell: the lion when he comes back to his lair will make short work with the pair of them— [340] and so will Odysseus with these suitors. By father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, ³⁴² being such a man as the one who [i.e. Odysseus], in well-founded Lesbos, ³⁴³ in rivalry stood up and wrestled Philomeleides ³⁴⁴ and threw him down mightily, and all the Achaeans were glad— [345] if he is still such and were to come near these suitors, they would have a swift doom and a sorry wedding. As regards your questions, however, I will not prevaricate nor deceive you, [350] but will tell you without concealment all that the old man of the sea told me.

³⁵¹ In Egypt did they hold me up, the gods did, though I sorely wanted to make a homecoming [*neesthai*] back here [*deuro* = at home, where I am speaking now]. ³⁵² Yes, they held me up, since [*epei*] I did not perform for them a perfect sacrifice of one hundred cattle [*hekatombai*].

³⁵³ The gods always wanted their protocols to be kept in mind. Now off Egypt, about as far as a ship can sail in a day with a good stiff breeze behind her, there is an island [355] called Pharos—it has a good harbor from which vessels can get out into open sea when they have taken in water— [360] and the gods becalmed me twenty days without so much as a breath of fair wind to help me forward ³⁶³ and by now all the food would have wasted away, and along with it the strength of the men, if a goddess had not taken pity upon me and saved me [365] in the person of

Eidothea, daughter to mighty Proteus, the old man of the sea, for she had taken a great fancy to me.

She came to me one day when I was by myself, as I often was, for the men used to go with their barbed hooks, all over the island in the hope of catching a fish or two to save them from the pangs of hunger. [370] ‘Stranger,’ said she, ‘it seems to me that you like starving in this way—at any rate it does not greatly trouble you, for you stick here day after day, without even trying to get away though your men are dying by inches.’

[375] ‘Let me tell you,’ said I, ‘whichever of the goddesses you may happen to be, that I am not staying here of my own accord, but must have offended the gods that live in the sky. Tell me, therefore, for the gods know everything: which [380] of the immortals it is that is hindering me in this way, and tell me also how I may sail the sea so as to reach my home [*nostos*]?’

‘Stranger,’ replied she, ‘I will make it all quite clear to you. There is an old ever truthful immortal who lives under the sea hereabouts and whose name is Proteus. [385] He is an Egyptian, and people say he is my father; he is Poseidon’s head man and knows every inch of ground all over the bottom of the sea. If you can snare him and hold him tight, he will tell you about your voyage, what courses you are to take, [390] and how you are to sail the sea so as to have a homecoming [*nostos*]. He will also tell you, illustrious one, if you so will, all that has been going on at your house both good and bad, while you have been away on your long and dangerous journey.’

‘Can you show me,’ said I, [395] ‘some strategy by means of which I may catch this old god without his suspecting it and finding me out? For a superhuman force [*daimōn*] is not easily caught—not by a mortal man.’

‘Stranger,’ said she, shining among goddesses, ‘I will make it all quite clear to you. [400] About the time when the sun shall have reached the mid-point in the sky, the ever-truthful old man of the sea comes up from under the waves, heralded by the West wind that furs the water over his head. As soon as he has come up he lies down, and goes to sleep in a great sea cave, where the seals— [Halosydne’s chickens as they call them]— [405] come up also from the gray sea, and go to sleep in shoals all round him; and a very strong and fish-like smell do they bring with them. Early tomorrow morning I will take you to this place and will lay you in ambush. Pick out [*krinein*], therefore, the three best men you have in your fleet, [410] and I will tell you all the tricks that the old man will play you.

First he will look over all his seals, and count them; then, when he has seen them and tallied them on his five fingers, he will go to sleep among them, as a shepherd among his sheep. The moment you see that he is asleep seize him; [415] put forth all your strength [*biē*] and hold him fast, for he will do his very utmost to get away from you. He will turn himself into every kind of creature that goes upon the earth, and will become also both fire and water; but you must hold him fast and grip him tighter and tighter, [420] till he begins to talk to you and comes back to what he was when you saw him go to sleep; then you may slacken your hold [*biē*] and let him go; and you can ask him which of the gods it is that is angry with you, and what you must do to have a homecoming [*nostos*] over the fishy sea.’

[425] Having so said she dived under the waves, whereon I turned back to the place where my ships were ranged upon the shore; and my heart was clouded with care as I went along. When I reached my ship we got supper ready, for night was falling, [430] and camped down upon the beach. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I took the three men on whose prowess of all kinds I could most rely, and went along by the sea-side, praying heartily to the gods. [435] Meanwhile the goddess fetched me up four seal skins from the bottom

of the sea, all of them just skinned, for she meant to play a trick upon her father. Then she dug four pits for us to lie in, and sat down to wait till we should come up. When we were close to her, [440] she made us lie down in the pits one after the other, and threw a seal skin over each of us. Our ambushade would have been intolerable, for the stench of the fishy seals was most distressing—who would go to bed with a sea monster if he could help it?—but here, too, the goddess helped us, and thought of something that gave us great relief, [445] for she put some ambrosia under each man's nostrils, which was so fragrant that it killed the smell of the seals.

We waited the whole morning and made the best of it, watching the seals come up in hundreds to bask upon the sea shore, [450] till at noon the old man of the sea came up too, and when he had found his fat seals he went over them and counted them. We were among the first he counted, and he never suspected any guile, but laid himself down to sleep as soon as he had done counting. Then we rushed upon him with a shout and [455] seized him; on which he began at once with his old tricks, and changed himself first into a lion with a great mane; then all of a sudden he became a dragon, a leopard, a wild boar; the next moment he was running water, and then again directly he was a tree, but we stuck to him and never lost hold, [460] till at last the cunning old creature became distressed, and said, 'Which of the gods was it, Son of Atreus, that hatched this plot with you for snaring me and seizing me against my will? What do you want?'

'You know that yourself, old man,' I answered. [465] 'You will gain nothing by trying to put me off. It is because I have been kept so long in this island, and see no sign of my being able to get away. I am losing all heart; tell me, then, for you gods know everything, which of the immortals it is that is hindering me, [470] and tell me also how I may sail the sea so as to have a homecoming [*nostos*].'

‘Then,’ he said, ‘if you would finish your voyage and get home quickly, you must offer sacrifices to Zeus and to the rest of the gods before embarking; [475] for it is decreed that you shall not get back to your friends, and to your own house, till you have returned to the sky-fed stream of Egypt, and offered holy hecatombs to the immortal gods that reign in the sky. [480] When you have done this they will let you finish your voyage.’

I was broken-hearted when I heard that I must go back all that long and terrifying voyage to Egypt; nevertheless, I answered, [485] ‘I will do all, old man, that you have laid upon me; but now tell me, and tell me true, whether all the Achaeans whom Nestor and I left behind us when we set sail from Troy have got home safely, or whether any one of them came to a bad end either on board his own ship [490] or among his friends when the days of his fighting were done.’

‘Son of Atreus,’ he answered, ‘why ask me? You had better not know my mind [*noos*], for your eyes will surely fill when you have heard my story. [495] Many of those about whom you ask are dead and gone, but many still remain, and only two of the chief men among the bronze-armored Achaeans perished during their return home. As for what happened on the field of battle—you were there yourself. A third Achaean leader is still at sea, alive, but hindered from returning [*nostos*]. Ajax was wrecked, [500] for Poseidon drove him on to the great rocks of Gyrai; nevertheless, he let him get safe out of the water, and in spite of all Athena’s hatred he would have escaped death, if he had not ruined himself by boasting. He said the gods could not drown him even though they had tried to do so, [505] and when Poseidon heard this large talk, he seized his trident in his two brawny hands, and split the rock of Gyrai in two pieces. The base remained where it was, but the part on which Ajax was sitting fell headlong into the sea [510] and carried Ajax with it; so he drank salt water and was drowned.

⁵¹² But your brother [= Agamemnon] escaped from the forces of destruction, and he slipped away ⁵¹³ in his hollow ships. Hera had saved [*sōzein*] him. But when he was just about to reach the high promontory of Malea, [515] a gust of wind [*thuella*] ⁵¹⁶ carried him, heavily groaning, over the fishy [*ikhthuois*] sea [*pontos*] and drove him to the foreland where Thyestes used to dwell, but where Aegisthus was then living. By and by, however, it seemed as though he was to have his return [*nostos*], [520] safe after all, for the gods backed the wind into its old quarter and they reached home; whereon Agamemnon kissed his native soil, and shed tears of joy at finding himself in his own country.

Now there was a watchman whom Aegisthus kept always on the watch, and to whom he had [525] promised two talents of gold. This man had been looking out for a whole year to make sure that Agamemnon did not give him the slip and prepare war; when, therefore, this man saw Agamemnon go by, he went and told Aegisthus who at once began to lay a plot for him. [530] He picked [*krinein*] twenty of his bravest warriors from the *dēmos* and placed them in ambush on one side of the hall, while on the opposite side he prepared a banquet. Then he sent his chariots and horsemen to Agamemnon, and invited him to the feast, but he meant foul play. [535] He got him there, all unsuspecting of the doom that was awaiting him, and killed him when the banquet was over as though he were butchering an ox in the shambles; not one of Agamemnon's followers was left alive, nor yet one of Aegisthus', but they were all killed there in the halls.'

Thus spoke Proteus, and I was broken hearted as I heard him. I sat down upon the sands and wept; I felt as though I could no longer [540] bear to live nor look upon the light of the sun. Presently, when I had had my fill of weeping and writhing upon the ground, the ever-truthful old man of the sea said, 'Son of Atreus, do not waste any more time in crying so bitterly; it can do no manner of good; find your way home [545] as fast

as ever you can, for Aegisthus be still alive, and even though Orestes anticipates you in killing him, you may yet come in for his funeral.'

Then I took comfort in my my heart and bold spirit [*thūmos*] in spite of all my sorrow, [550] and said, 'I know, then, about these two; tell me, therefore, about the third man of whom you spoke; is he still alive, but at sea, and unable to get home? Or is he dead? Tell me, no matter how much it may grieve me.'

'The third man,' he answered, [555] 'is Odysseus, son of Laertes, who dwells in Ithaca. I can see him in an island sorrowing bitterly in the house of the nymph Kalypsō, who is keeping him prisoner, and he cannot reach his home for he has no ships nor sailors [560] to take him over the sea. As for your own end, Menelaos, fostered son of Zeus, you shall not die in horse-pasturing Argos, but the gods will take you to the Elysian plain, which is at the ends of the world. There fair-haired Rhadamanthus [565] reigns, and men lead an easier life than any where else in the world, for in Elysium there is no snow, nor heavy winter-storm, nor rain, ⁵⁶⁷ but the Okeanos sends up the gusts of shrill-blowing Zephyros ⁵⁶⁸ at all times, so as to reanimate men. This will happen to you because you have married Helen, and are [570] Zeus' son-in-law.'

As he spoke he dived under the waves, whereon I turned back to the ships with my companions, and my heart was clouded with care as I went along. When we reached the ships we got supper ready, for night was falling, [575] and camped down upon the beach. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we drew our ships into the water, and put our masts and sails within them; then we went on board ourselves, took our seats on the benches, [580] and smote the gray sea with our oars. I again stationed my ships in the sky-fed stream of Egypt, and offered hecatombs that were full and sufficient. When I had thus appeased the anger of the gods, I raised a tomb to the memory of Agamemnon that his *kleos* [585] might be inextinguishable, after which I had a quick passage home, for the gods sent me a fair wind.

And now for yourself—stay here some ten or twelve days longer, and I will then speed you on your way. I will make you a noble [590] present of a chariot and three horses. I will also give you a beautiful chalice that so long as you live you may think of me whenever you make a drink-offering to the immortal gods.”

“Son of Atreus,” replied the spirited Telemachus, “do not press me to stay longer; [595] I should be contented to remain with you for another twelve months; I find your conversation so delightful that I should never once wish myself at home with my parents; but my crew whom I have left at Pylos are already impatient, and you are detaining me from them. [600] As for any present you may be disposed to make me, I had rather that it should be a stored keepsake. I will take no horses back with me to Ithaca, but will leave them to adorn your own stables, for you have much flat ground in your kingdom where lotus thrives, as also meadowsweet and wheat and barley, and oats with their white and spreading ears; [605] whereas in Ithaca we have neither open fields nor racecourses, and the country is more fit for goats than horses, and I like it the better for that. None of our islands have much level ground, suitable for horses, and Ithaca least of all.”

Menelaos smiled [610] and took Telemachus’ hand within his own. “What you say,” said he, “shows that you come of good family. I both can, and will, make this exchange for you, by giving you the finest and most precious stored keepsake in all my house. [615] It is a mixing-bowl by Hephaistos’ own hand, of pure silver, except the rim, which is inlaid with gold. The hero Phaidimos, king of the Sidonians, gave it me in the course of a visit which I paid him when I returned there on my homeward journey. I will make you a present of it.”

[620] Thus did they converse as guests kept coming to the king’s house. They brought sheep and wine, while their wives had put up bread for them to take with them; so they were busy cooking their dinners in the courts.

[625] Meanwhile the suitors were throwing discs or aiming with spears at a mark on the leveled ground in front of Odysseus' house, and were behaving with all their old *hubris*. Antinoos and Eurymakhos, who were their ringleaders and much the foremost in *aretē* among them all, were sitting together [630] when Noemon, son of Phronios, came up and said to Antinoos,

“Have we any idea, Antinoos, on what day Telemachus returns from Pylos? He has a ship of mine, and I want it, [635] to cross over to Elis: I have twelve brood mares there with yearling mule foals by their side not yet broken in, and I want to bring one of them over here and break him.”

They were astounded when they heard this, for they had been sure that Telemachus had not gone to the city of Neleus. They thought he was only away somewhere [640] on the farms, and was with the sheep, or with the swineherd; so Antinoos, son of Eupheithes, said, “When did he go? Tell me truly, and what young men did he take with him? Were they freemen or his own bondsmen—for he might manage that too? [645] Tell me also, did you let him have the ship of your own free will because he asked you, or did he take it by force [*biē*] without your leave?”

“I lent it him,” answered Noemon. “What else could I do [650] when a man of his position said he was in a difficulty and asked me to oblige him? I could not possibly refuse. As for those who went with him they were the best young men we have in the *dēmos*, and I saw Mentor go on board as captain—or some god who was exactly like him. [655] I cannot understand it, for I saw splendid Mentor here myself yesterday morning, and yet he was then setting out for Pylos.”

Noemon then went back to his father's house, but Antinoos and Eurymakhos were very angry. They told the others to leave off competing [*āthlos*], and to come and sit down along with themselves.

[660] When they came, Antinoos, son of Eupheithes, spoke in anger. His heart was black with rage, and his eyes flashed fire as he said:

“Skies above! This voyage of Telemachus is a very serious matter; we had been sure that it would come to nothing, [665] but the young man has got away in spite of us, and with a crew picked [*krinein*] from the best of the *dēmos*, too. He will be giving us trouble presently; may Zeus destroy him with violence [*biē*] before he is full grown. Find me a ship, therefore, with a crew of twenty men, [670] and I will lie in wait for him in the straits between Ithaca and Samos; he will then rue the day that he set out to try and get news of his father.”

Thus did he speak, and the others applauded his saying; they then all of them went inside the buildings.

[675] It was not long before Penelope came to know what the suitors were plotting; for a manservant, Medon, overheard them from outside the outer court as they were laying their schemes within, and went to tell his mistress. [680] As he crossed the threshold of her room Penelope said: “Medon, what have the suitors sent you here for? Is it to tell the maids to leave their godlike master’s business and cook dinner for them? I wish they [685] may neither woo nor dine henceforward, neither here nor anywhere else, but let this be the very last time, for the waste you all make of my high-spirited son’s estate. Did not your fathers tell you when you were children how good Odysseus had been to them—never doing anything high-handed, [690] nor speaking harshly to anybody in the *dēmos*? Such is the justice [*dikē*] of divine kings: they may take a fancy to one man and dislike another, but Odysseus never did an unjust thing by anybody—which shows what bad hearts you have, [695] and that there is no such thing as gratitude [*kharis*] left in this world.”

Then Medon, a man of spirited mind said, “I wish, Madam, that this were all; but they are plotting something much more dreadful now—may the gods frustrate their design. [700] They are going to try and

murder Telemachus as he is coming home from Pylos and glorious Lacedaemon, where he has been to get news of his father.”

Then Penelope’s heart sank within her, and for a long time she was speechless; her eyes [705] filled with tears, and she could find no utterance. At last, however, she said, “Why did my son leave me? What business had he to go sailing off in fast-running ships that make long voyages over the ocean like sea-horses? [710] Does he want to die without leaving any one behind him to keep up his name?”

“I do not know,” answered Medon, “whether some god set him on to it, or whether he went on his own impulse to see if he could find out if his father was dead, or alive and on his way home [*nostos*].”

[715] Then he went downstairs again, leaving Penelope in an agony of grief [*akhos*]. There were plenty of seats in the house, but she had no heart for sitting on any one of them; she could only fling herself on the floor of her own room and cry; whereon all the maids in the house, [720] both old and young, gathered round her and began to cry too, till at last in a transport of sorrow she exclaimed,

“My dears, the gods have been pleased to try me with more affliction than any other woman of my age and country. First I lost my brave and lion-hearted husband, [725] who had every good quality [*aretē*] under the sky, and whose *kleos* was great over all Hellas and middle Argos; ⁷²⁷ But now the gusts of wind [*thuellai*] have abducted my beloved son, without my having heard one word about his leaving home. You hussies, there was not one of you would so much as think [730] of giving me a call out of my bed, though all of you very well knew when he was starting. If I had known he meant taking this voyage, he would have had to give it up, no matter how much he was bent upon it, or leave me a corpse behind him—one or other. Now, however, [735] go some of you and call old man Dolios, who was given me by my father on my marriage, and who is my gardener. Bid him go at once and tell

everything to Laertes, who may be able to hit on some plan [740] for enlisting public sympathy on our side, as against those who hanker ⁷⁴¹ to destroy [*pthinein*] his progeny [i.e., of Laertes] which is also that of godlike Odysseus.”

Then the dear old nurse Eurykleia said, “You may kill me, Madam, or let me live on in your house, whichever you please, but I will tell you the real truth. [745] I knew all about it, and gave him everything he wanted in the way of bread and wine, but he made me take my solemn oath that I would not tell you anything for some ten or twelve days, unless you asked or happened to hear of his having gone, for he did not want you to spoil your beauty by crying. [750] And now, Madam, wash your face, change your dress, and go upstairs with your maids to offer prayers to Athena, daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, for she can save him even though he be in the jaws of death. Do not trouble Laertes: he has trouble enough already. [755] Besides, I cannot think that the gods hate the lineage of the son of Arkeisios so much, but there will be a son left to come up after him, and inherit both the house and the fair fields that lie far all round it.”

With these words she made her mistress leave off crying, and dried the tears from her eyes. Penelope washed her face, changed her dress, [760] and went upstairs with her maids. She then put some bruised barley into a basket and began praying to Athena.

“Hear me,” she cried, “Daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, the one who cannot be worn down. If ever resourceful Odysseus while he was here burned you fat thigh bones of sheep or heifer, [765] bear it in mind now as in my favor, and save my darling son from the villainy of the suitors.”

She cried aloud as she spoke, and the goddess heard her prayer; meanwhile the suitors were clamorous throughout the covered hall, and one of them said:

[770] “The queen is preparing for her marriage with one or other of us. Little does she dream that her son has now been doomed to die.”

This was what they said, but they did not know what was going to happen. Then Antinoos said, “Comrades, let there be no loud [775] talking, lest some of it get carried inside. Let us be up and do that in silence, about which we are all of a mind.”

He then chose [*krinein*] twenty men, and they went down to their ship and to the sea side; [780] they drew the vessel into the water and got her mast and sails inside her; they bound the oars to the thole-pins with twisted thongs of leather, all in due course, and spread the white sails aloft, while their fine servants brought them their armor. [785] Then they made the ship fast a little way out, came on shore again, got their suppers, and waited till night should fall.

But circumspect Penelope lay in her own room upstairs unable to eat or drink, and wondering whether her brave son would escape, [790] or be overpowered by the wicked suitors. Like a lioness caught in the toils with huntsmen hemming her in on every side she thought and thought till she sank into a slumber, and lay on her bed bereft of thought and motion.

[795] Then owl-vision goddess Athena turned her thoughts to another matter, and made a vision in the likeness of Penelope’s sister, Iphthime, daughter of great-hearted Ikarios, who had married Eumelos and lived in Pherai. She told the vision to go to the house of godlike Odysseus, [800] and to make Penelope leave off crying, so it came into her room by the hole through which the thong went for pulling the door to, and hovered over her head, saying,

“You are asleep, Penelope: [805] the gods who live at ease will not suffer you to weep and be so sad. Your son has done them no wrong, so he will yet come back to you.”

Circumspect Penelope, who was sleeping sweetly at the gates of dreamland, answered, [810] “Sister, why have you come here? You do not come very often, but I suppose that is because you live such a long way off. Am I, then, to leave off crying and refrain from all the sad thoughts that torture me? I, who have lost my brave [*esthlos*] and lion-hearted husband, [815] who had every good quality [*aretē*] under the sky, noble [*esthlos*], and whose *kleos* was great over all Hellas and middle Argos; and now my darling son has gone off on board of a ship—a foolish man who has never been used to undergoing ordeals [*ponoi*], nor to going about among gatherings of men. I am even more anxious about him than about my husband; [820] I am all in a tremble when I think of him, lest something should happen to him, either from the people in the *dēmos* where he has gone, or at sea, for he has many enemies who are plotting against him, and are bent on killing him before he can return home.”

Then the vision said, [825] “Take heart, and be not so much dismayed. There is one gone with him whom many a man would be glad enough to have stand by his side, I mean Athena; it is she who has compassion upon you, and who has sent me to bear you this message.”

[830] “Then,” said circumspect Penelope, “if you are a god or have been sent here by divine commission, tell me also about that other unhappy one—is he still alive, or is he already dead and in the house of Hādēs?”

[835] And the vision said, “I shall not tell you for certain whether he is alive or dead, and there is no use in idle conversation.”

Then it vanished through the thong-hole of the door and was dissipated into thin air; [840] but Penelope rose from her sleep refreshed and comforted, so vivid had been her dream.

Meantime the suitors went on board and sailed their ways over the sea, intent on murdering Telemachus. Now there is a rocky islet called

Asteris, of no great size, [845] in mid channel between Ithaca and Samos, and there is a harbor on either side of it where a ship can lie. Here then the Achaeans placed themselves in ambush.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 5

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] And now, as Dawn rose from her couch beside haughty Tithonos—harbinger of light alike to mortals and immortals—the gods met in council and with them, Zeus the lord of thunder, who is their king. [5] Then Athena began to tell them of the many sufferings of Odysseus, for she pitied him away there in the house of the nymph Kalypsō.

“Father Zeus,” said she, “and all you other gods that live in everlasting bliss, I hope there may never be such a thing as a kind and well-disposed ruler any more, nor one who will govern equitably. [10] I hope they will be all henceforth cruel and unjust, for there is not one of his subjects who has not forgotten godlike Odysseus, who ruled them as though he were their father. There he is, lying in great pain in an island where dwells the nymph Kalypsō, who will not let him go; [15] and he cannot get back to his own country, for he can find neither ships nor sailors to take him over the sea. Furthermore, wicked people are now trying to murder his only son Telemachus, [20] who is coming home from Pylos and glorious Lacedaemon, where he has been to see if he can get news of his father.”

“What, my dear, are you talking about?” replied her father. “Did you not send him there yourself, because you thought [*noos*] it would help Odysseus to get home and punish the suitors? [25] Besides, you are perfectly able to protect Telemachus, and to see him safely home again, while the suitors have to come hurrying back without having killed him.”

When he had thus spoken, he said to his beloved son Hermes, “Hermes, you are our messenger, [30] go therefore and tell Kalypsō we have decreed that poor enduring Odysseus is to return home [*nostos*]. He is to be convoyed neither by gods nor men, but after a perilous voyage of twenty days upon a raft he is to reach fertile Skheria, [35] the land of the Phaeacians, who are near of kin to the gods, and will honor him as though he were one of ourselves. They will send him in a ship to his own country, and will give him more bronze and gold and raiment than he would have brought back from Troy, [40] if he had had all his prize wealth and had got home without disaster. This is how we have settled that he shall return to his country and his friends.”

Thus he spoke, and Hermes, guide and guardian, slayer of Argos, did as he was told. Right away he bound on his glittering golden sandals [45] with which he could fly like the wind over land and sea. He took the wand with which he seals men’s eyes in sleep or wakes them just as he pleases, and flew holding it in his hand over Pieria; [50] then he swooped down through the firmament till he reached the level of the sea, whose waves he skimmed like a cormorant that flies fishing every hole and corner of the ocean, and drenching its thick plumage in the spray. He flew and flew over many a weary wave, [55] but when at last he got to the island which was his journey’s end, he left the sea and went on by land till he came to the cave where the nymph Kalypsō lived.

He found her at home. There was a large fire burning on the hearth, and one could smell from far the fragrant reek of burning cedar [60] and sandalwood. As for herself, she was busy at her loom, shooting her golden shuttle through the warp and singing beautifully. Round her cave there was a thick wood of alder, poplar, and sweet smelling cypress trees, [65] wherein all kinds of great birds had built their nests—owls, hawks, and chattering sea-crows that have their business in the waters. A vine loaded with grapes was trained and grew luxuriantly about the mouth of the cave; [70] there were also four running rills of water in channels cut pretty close together, and turned here and there so as to

irrigate the beds of violets and luscious herbage over which they flowed. Even a god could not help being charmed with such a lovely spot, [75] so Hermes stood still and looked at it; but when he had admired it sufficiently he went inside the cave.

Kalypsō knew him at once— [80] for the gods all know each other, no matter how far they live from one another—but great-hearted Odysseus was not within; he was on the sea-shore as usual, looking out upon the barren ocean with tears in his eyes, groaning and breaking his heart for sorrow. [85] Kalypsō, shining among goddesses, gave Hermes a seat and said: “Why have you come to see me, Hermes—honored, and ever welcome—for you do not visit me often? Say what you want; I will do it for you at once [90] if I can, and if it can be done at all; but come inside, and let me set refreshment before you.

As she spoke she drew a table loaded with ambrosia beside him and mixed him some red nectar, so Hermes ate and drank [95] till he had had enough, and then said:

“We are speaking god and goddess to one another, and you ask me why I have come here, and I will tell you truly as you would have me do. Zeus sent me; it was no doing of mine; [100] who could possibly want to come all this way over the sea where there are no cities full of people to offer me sacrifices or choice hecatombs? Nevertheless I had to come, for none of us other gods can cross aegis-bearing Zeus, nor transgress his orders [his *noos*]. [105] He says that you have here the most ill-starred of all those who fought nine years before the city of King Priam and sailed home in the tenth year after having ransacked it. During their homecoming [*nostos*] they sinned against Athena, who raised both wind and waves against them, [110] so that all his brave companions perished, and he alone was carried here by wind and tide. Zeus says that you are to let this by man go at once, for it is decreed that he shall not perish here, far from his own people, but shall return [115] to his house and country and see his friends again.”

Kalypsō, shining among divinities, trembled with rage when she heard this, “You gods,” she exclaimed, “ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You are always jealous and hate seeing a goddess take a fancy [120] to a mortal man, and live with him in open matrimony. So when rosy-fingered Dawn made love to Orion, you precious gods were all of you furious till Artemis went and killed him in Ortygia. [125] So again when Demeter of the lovely hair fell in love with Iasion, and yielded to him in a thrice plowed fallow field, Zeus came to hear of it before so long and killed Iasion with his thunder-bolts. And now you are angry with me too because [130] I have a man here. I found the poor creature sitting all alone astride of a keel, for Zeus had struck his ship with lightning and sunk it in mid ocean, so that all his crew were drowned, while he himself was driven by wind and waves on to my island. [135] I got fond of him and cherished him, and had set my heart on making him immortal, so that he should never grow old all his days; still I cannot cross aegis-bearing Zeus, nor bring his counsels [*noos*] to nothing; therefore, if he insists upon it, [140] let the man go beyond the seas again; but I cannot send him anywhere myself for I have neither ships nor men who can take him. Nevertheless I will readily give him such advice, in all good faith, as will be likely to bring him safely to his own country.”

[145] “Then send him away,” said Hermes, “and fear the *mēnis* of Zeus, lest he grow angry and punish you.”

Then he took his leave, [150] and Kalypsō went out to look for great-hearted Odysseus, for she had heard Zeus’ message. She found him sitting upon the beach with his eyes ever filled with tears, his sweet life wasting away as he wept for his homecoming [*nostos*]; for he had got tired of Kalypsō, and though he was forced to sleep with her [155] in the cave by night, it was she, not he, that would have it so. As for the daytime, he spent it on the rocks and on the sea-shore, weeping, crying aloud for his despair, and always looking out upon the sea. Kalypsō then went close up to him said:

[160] “My poor man, you shall not stay here grieving and fretting your life out any longer. I am going to send you away of my own free will; so go, cut some beams of wood, and make yourself a large raft with an upper deck that it may carry you safely over the sea. [165] I will put bread, wine, and water on board to save you from starving. I will also give you clothes, and will send you a fair wind to take you home, if the gods in the sky so will it— [170] for they know more about these things, and can settle them better than I can.”

Long-suffering great Odysseus shuddered as he heard her. “Now goddess,” he answered, “there is something behind all this; ¹⁷³ when you devise this you are devising something else, and it’s not sending me on my way home when you bid me do such a dreadful [*deinon*] thing as put to sea [175] on a raft. Not even a well-found ship with a fair wind could venture on such a distant voyage: nothing that you can say or do shall make me go on board a raft unless you first solemnly swear that you mean me no mischief.”

[180] Kalypsō, shining among divinities, smiled at this and caressed him with her hand: “You know a great deal,” said she, “but you are quite wrong here. May the sky above and earth below be my witnesses, [185] with the waters of the river Styx—and this is the most solemn oath which a blessed god can take—that I mean you no sort of harm, ¹⁸⁸ but I think and ponder only the kinds of things ¹⁸⁹ that I would devise for myself if I were in such need. [190] I have a decent disposition [*noos*] and my ¹⁹¹ heart [*thūmos*] is not of iron. It’s a compassionate heart.”

When she had thus spoken she led the way rapidly before him, and Odysseus followed in her steps; so the pair, goddess and man, went on and on till they came to Kalypsō’s cave, [195] where he took the seat that Hermes had just left. The nymph set before him all kinds of food to eat and drink of the kind that mortals consume; but she herself sat opposite godlike Odysseus, and her maids set ambrosia and nectar before her, [200] and they laid their hands on the good things that were before

them. When they had satisfied themselves with meat and drink, shining goddess Kalypsō spoke, saying:

“Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, so you would start home [205] to your own land at once? Good luck go with you, but if you could only know how much suffering is in store for you before you get back to your own country, you would stay where you are, keep house along with me, and let me make you immortal, no matter how anxious you may be to see [210] this wife of yours, of whom you are thinking all the time, day after day; yet I flatter myself that I am no whit less tall or well-looking than she is, for it is not to be expected that a mortal woman should compare in beauty with an immortal.”

“Goddess,” replied resourceful Odysseus, [215] “do not be angry with me about this. I am quite aware that my wife, circumspect Penelope, is nothing like so tall or so beautiful as yourself. She is only a woman, whereas you are an immortal. Nevertheless, I want to get home, [220] and can think of nothing else. If some god wrecks me when I am on the sea, I will bear it and make the best of it. I have had infinite trouble both by land and sea already, so let this go with the rest.”

[225] Presently the sun set and it became dark, whereon the pair retired into the inner part of the cave and went to bed.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Odysseus put on his khiton and cloak, [230] while the goddess wore a dress of a light gossamer fabric, very fine and graceful, with a beautiful golden waistband about her waist and a veil to cover her head. She at once set herself to think how she could speed great-hearted Odysseus on his way. So she gave him a great bronze axe that suited his hands; [235] it was sharpened on both sides, and had a beautiful olive-wood handle fitted firmly on to it. She also gave him a sharp adze, and then led the way to the far end of the island where the largest trees grew—alder, poplar and pine, that reached the sky— [240] very dry and well seasoned, so as to

sail light for him in the water. Then, when she had shown him where the best trees grew, Kalypsō, shining among divinities, went home, leaving him to cut them, which he soon finished doing. He cut down twenty trees in all and adzed them smooth, [245] squaring them by rule in good workmanlike fashion. Meanwhile Kalypsō, the shining goddess, came back with some augers, so he bored holes with them and fitted the timbers together with bolts and rivets. He made the raft as broad as a skilled shipwright [250] makes the beam of a large vessel, and he filed a deck on top of the ribs, and ran a gunwale all round it. He also made a mast with a yard arm, [255] and a rudder to steer with. He fenced the raft all round with wicker hurdles as a protection against the waves, and then he threw on a quantity of wood. By and by Kalypsō, the shining goddess, brought him some linen to make the sails, and he made these too, excellently, [260] making them fast with braces and sheets. Last of all, with the help of levers, he drew the raft down into the water.

In four days he had completed the whole work, and on the fifth shining Kalypsō sent him from the island after washing him and giving him some clean clothes. [265] She gave him a goat skin full of black wine, and another larger one of water; she also gave him a wallet full of provisions, and found him much good meat. Moreover, she made the wind fair and warm for him, and gladly did glorious Odysseus spread his sail before it, [270] while he sat and guided the raft skillfully by means of the rudder. He never closed his eyes, but kept them fixed on the Pleiades, on late-setting Boötes, and on the Bear—which men also call the wagon, and which turns round and round where it is, facing Orion: [275] she alone has no share in the baths of Okeanos—for Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, had told him to keep this to his left. Seventeen days did he sail over the sea, and on the eighteenth the dim outlines of the mountains [280] on the nearest part of the Phaeacian coast appeared, rising like a shield on the horizon.

But lord Poseidon, the strong Earthshaker, who was returning from the Ethiopians, caught sight of Odysseus a long way off, from the

mountains of the Solymoi. He could see him sailing upon the sea, and it made him very angry, [285] so he wagged his head and muttered to himself, saying, "Heavens, so the gods have been changing their minds about Odysseus while I was away in Ethiopia, and now he is close to the land of the Phaeacians, where it is decreed that he shall escape from the calamities that have befallen him. [290] Still, he shall have plenty of hardship yet before he has done with it."

Then he gathered his clouds together, grasped his trident, stirred it round in the sea, and roused the rage of every wind that blows till earth, sea, and sky were hidden in cloud, and night sprang forth out of the sky. [295] Winds from East, South, North, and West fell upon him all at the same time, and a tremendous sea got up, so that Odysseus' heart began to fail him. "Alas," he said to himself in his dismay, "what ever will become of me? [300] I am afraid Kalypsō was right when she said I should have trouble by sea before I got back home. It is all coming true. How black is Zeus making the sky with his clouds, and what a sea the winds [305] are raising from every quarter at once. I am now safe to perish. Blest and thrice blest were those Danaans who fell at Troy in the cause [*kharis*] of the sons of Atreus. Would that I had been killed on the day when the Trojans [310] were pressing me so sorely about the dead body of Achilles, for then I should have had due burial³¹¹ and then the Achaeans would have carried on my [*kleos*]; but now it seems that I shall come to a most pitiable end."

As he spoke a sea broke over him with such terrific fury that the raft reeled again, [315] and he was carried overboard a long way off. He let go the helm, and the force of the hurricane was so great that it broke the mast half way up, and both sail and yard went over into the sea. For a long time Odysseus was under water, and it was all he could do [320] to rise to the surface again, for the clothes Kalypsō had given him weighed him down; but at last he got his head above water and spat out the bitter brine that was running down his face in streams. In spite of all this, however, he did not lose sight of his raft, [325] but swam as fast as he

could towards it, got hold of it, and climbed on board again so as to escape drowning. The sea took the raft and tossed it about as Autumn winds whirl thistledown round and round upon a road. [330] [It was as though the South, North, East, and West winds were all playing battledore and shuttlecock with it at once.]

³³³ He [= Odysseus] was seen by the daughter of Kadmos. She is Ino, with the beautiful ankles, ³³⁴ and she is also called the White Goddess [Leukotheā], but she had been a mortal before that, endowed with a special voice [*audē*]. [335] But now, in the depths, she had a share in the honor [*tīmē*] that belongs to gods. ³³⁶ She took pity on Odysseus, lost at sea and suffering pains [*algea*]. ³³⁷ Appearing as a winged diving bird [*aithuia*], she emerged from the waters ³³⁸ and perched on the raft, addressing him with this set of words [*mūthos*]: ³³⁹ “Unfortunate man, why on earth is Poseidon the earth-shaker [340] so terribly hateful toward you, creating so many bad experiences for you? ³⁴¹ But I now see that he will not destroy you, much as he wants to. ³⁴² Do as I tell you, and I think you will not miss in your mind what I tell you: ³⁴³ get out of these clothes of yours and let your raft be carried off by the winds. ³⁴⁴ Just let it go. Then start paddling with your hands and strive for your homecoming [*nostos*] [345] by heading for the land of the Phaeacians, where your destiny [*moira*] for escape awaits you. ³⁴⁶ Here, take my veil [*krēdemnon*] and wrap it around your chest. ³⁴⁷ It is a veil that is immortalizing [*ambroton*], and there is nothing to be afraid of: you will not suffer anything or be destroyed. ³⁴⁸ But as soon as you touch land with your hands, ³⁴⁹ at that moment take off the veil and throw it into the wine-colored sea [*pontos*]. [350] Throw it as far back as you can into the sea, while you turn in the other direction.” ³⁵¹ Speaking these words, the goddess took off her veil [*krēdemnon*] and gave it him. ³⁵² Then she plunged down again into the seething sea [*pontos*], ³⁵³ looking like the diving bird [*aithuia*], and vanished beneath the dark waves.

But long-suffering great Odysseus did not know what to think. [355] “Alas,” he said to himself in his dismay, “this is only some one or other of the gods who is luring me to ruin by advising me to quit my raft. At any rate I will not do so at present, for the land where she said I should be quit of all troubles seems to be still a good way off. [360] I know what I will do—I am sure it will be best—no matter what happens I will stick to the raft as long as her timbers hold together, but when the sea breaks her up I will swim for it; I do not see how I can do any better than this.”

[365] While he was thus in two minds, Poseidon, shaker of the earth, sent a terrifying great wave that seemed to rear itself above his head till it broke right over the raft, which then went to pieces [370] as though it were a heap of dry chaff tossed about by a whirlwind. Odysseus got astride of one plank and rode upon it as if he were on horseback; he then took off the clothes divine Kalypsō had given him, bound Ino’s veil under his arms, and plunged into the sea— [375] meaning to swim on shore. King Poseidon, the strong Earthshaker, watched him as he did so, and wagged his head, muttering to himself and saying, “There now, swim up and down as you best can till you fall in with well-to-do people. I do not think you will be able to say that I have let you off too lightly.” [380] Then he lashed his fair-maned horses and drove to Aigai where his palace is.

But Athena, daughter of Zeus, resolved to help Odysseus, so she bound the ways of all the winds except one, and made them lie quite still; [385] but she roused a good stiff breeze from the North that should lay the waters till Zeus-sprung Odysseus reached the land of the oar-loving Phaeacians where he would be safe.

Then he floated about for two nights and two days in the water, with a heavy swell on the sea and death staring him in the face; [390] but when the third day broke, the wind fell and there was a dead calm without so much as a breath of air stirring. As he rose on the swell he looked eagerly

ahead, and could see land quite near. Then, as children rejoice when their dear father [395] begins to get better after having for a long time borne sore affliction sent him by some angry spirit, but the gods deliver him from evil, so was Odysseus thankful when he again saw land and trees, and swam on with all his strength that he might once more set foot upon dry ground. [400] When, however, he got within earshot, he began to hear the surf thundering up against the rocks, for the swell still broke against them with a terrific roar. Everything was enveloped in spray; there were no harbors where a ship might ride, nor shelter of any kind, [405] but only headlands, low-lying rocks, and mountain tops.

Odysseus' heart now began to fail him, and he said despairingly to himself, "Alas, Zeus has let me see land after swimming so far that I had given up all hope, [410] but I can find no landing place, for the coast is rocky and surf-beaten, the rocks are smooth and rise sheer from the sea, with deep water close under them so that I cannot climb out for want of foothold. [415] I am afraid some great wave will lift me off my legs and dash me against the rocks as I leave the water—which would give me a sorry landing. If, on the other hand, I swim further in search of some shelving beach or harbor, a hurricane may [420] carry me out to sea again sorely against my will, or the gods may send some great monster of the deep to attack me; for Amphitrite breeds many such, and I know that Poseidon, the renowned Earthshaker, is very angry with me."

While he was thus in two minds [425] a wave caught him and took him with such force against the rocks that he would have been smashed and torn to pieces if the owl-vision goddess Athena had not shown him what to do. He caught hold of the rock with both hands and clung to it groaning with pain till the wave retired, so he was saved [430] that time; but presently the wave came on again and carried him back with it far into the sea—tearing his hands as the suckers of an octopus are torn when some one plucks it from its bed, and the stones come up along with it—even so did the rocks [435] tear the skin from his strong hands, and then the wave drew him deep down under the water.

Here poor Odysseus would have certainly perished even in spite of his own destiny, if the owl-vision goddess Athena had not helped him to keep his wits about him. He swam seaward again, beyond reach of the surf that was beating against the land, and at the same time he kept looking towards the shore to see if he could find [440] some haven, or a spit that should take the waves aslant. By and by, as he swam on, he came to the mouth of a river, and here he thought would be the best place, for there were no rocks, and it afforded shelter from the wind. He felt that there was a current, so he prayed inwardly and said: [445] “Hear me, O King, whoever you may be, and save me from the anger of the sea-god Poseidon, for I approach you prayerfully. Anyone who has lost his way has at all times a claim even upon the gods, wherefore in my distress I draw near to your stream, and cling to the knees of your riverhood. [450] Have mercy upon me, O King, for I declare myself your suppliant.”

Then the god stayed his stream and stilled the waves, making all calm before him, and bringing him safely into the mouth of the river. Here at last Odysseus’ knees and strong hands failed him, for the sea had completely broken him. [455] His body was all swollen, and his mouth and nostrils ran down like a river with sea-water, so that he could neither breathe nor speak, and lay swooning from sheer exhaustion; presently, when he had got his breath and came to himself again, he took off the scarf that Ino had given him [460] and threw it back into the salt stream of the river, whereon Ino received it into her hands from the wave that bore it towards her. Then he left the river, laid himself down among the rushes, and kissed the bounteous earth.

“Alas,” he cried to himself in his dismay, [465] “what ever will become of me, and how is it all to end? If I stay here upon the river-bed through the long watches of the night, I am so exhausted that the bitter cold and damp may make an end of me—for towards sunrise there will be a keen wind blowing from off the river. [470] If, on the other hand, I climb the hill side, find shelter in the woods, and sleep in some thicket, I may

escape the cold and have a good night's rest, but some savage beast may take advantage of me and devour me.”

In the end [475] he thought it best to take to the woods, and he found one upon some high ground not far from the water. There he crept beneath two shoots of olive that grew from a single stock—the one ungrafted, while the other had been grafted. No wind, however squally, could break through the cover they afforded, nor could the sun's rays pierce them, [480] nor the rain get through them, so closely did they grow into one another. Odysseus crept under these and began to make himself a bed to lie on, for there was a great litter of dead leaves lying about—enough to make a covering for two [485] or three men even in hard winter weather. He was glad enough to see this, so he laid himself down and heaped the leaves all round him. Then, as one who lives alone in the country, far from any neighbor, [490] hides a brand as fire-seed in the ashes to save himself from having to get a light elsewhere, even so did Odysseus cover himself up with leaves; and Athena shed a sweet sleep upon his eyes, closed his eyelids, and made him lose all memories of his sorrows.

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Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 6

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] So here long-suffering great Odysseus slept, overcome by sleep and toil; but Athena went off to the *dēmos* and city of the Phaeacians—a people who used to live in the fair town of Hypereia, [5] near the lawless Cyclopes. Now the Cyclopes were stronger in force [*biē*] than they and plundered them, so their king, godlike Nausithoös, moved them thence and settled them in Skheria, far from all other people. He surrounded the city with a wall, built houses [10] and temples, and divided the lands among his people; but he was dead and gone to the house of Hādēs, and King Alkinoos, whose counsels were inspired by the gods, was now reigning. To his house, then, did owl-vision goddess Athena go in furtherance of the return [*nostos*] of great-hearted Odysseus. [15] She came into the private chamber, with its many adornments, where the girl [= Nausicaa] ₁₆ was sleeping. Like the immortal goddesses, in shape and in looks [*eidos*], she [= Nausicaa] was looking like [*homoieē*] them. Nausicaa, daughter to great-hearted King Alkinoos. Two maid servants were sleeping near her, both very pretty, one on either side of the doorway, which was closed with well-made folding doors. [20] Athena took the form of the famous sea captain Dymas' daughter, who was a bosom friend of Nausicaa and just her own age; then, coming up to the girl's bedside like a breath of wind, she hovered over her head and said: [25] "Nausicaa, what can your mother have been about, to have such a lazy daughter? Here are your clothes all lying in disorder, yet you are going to be married almost immediately, and should not only be well dressed yourself, but should find good clothes for those who attend you. This is the way to get yourself a good name, [30] and to make your father and mother proud of you. Suppose, then, that we make tomorrow

a washing day, and start at daybreak. I will come and help you so that you may have everything ready as soon as possible, for all the best young men [35] throughout your own *dēmos* are courting you, and you are not going to remain a young girl much longer. Ask your father, therefore, to have a wagon and mules ready for us at daybreak, to take the rugs, robes, and belts; and you can ride, too, which will be much pleasanter for you [40] than walking, for the washing-cisterns are some way from the town.”

When she had said this owl-vision Athena went away to Olympus, which they say is the everlasting home of the gods. Here no wind beats roughly, and neither rain nor snow can fall; but it abides [45] in everlasting sunshine and in a great peacefulness of light, wherein the blessed gods are illumined for ever and ever. This was the place to which the owl-vision goddess went when she had given instructions to the girl. By and by morning came, throned in splendor, and woke Nausicaa, who began wondering about her dream; [50] she therefore went to the other end of the house to tell her father and mother all about it, and found them in their own room. Her mother was sitting by the fireside spinning her purple yarn with her maids around her, and she happened to catch her father just as he was going out to attend a meeting of the town council, [55] which the proud Phaeacian aldermen had convened. She stopped him and said:

“Papa dear, could you manage to let me have a good big wagon? I want to take all our dirty clothes to the river and wash them. [60] You are the chief man here, so it is only right that you should have a clean khiton when you attend meetings of the council. Moreover, you have five sons at home, two of them married, while the other three are good-looking bachelors; you know they always like to have clean linen [65] when they go to a dance [*khoros*], and I have been thinking about all this.”

She did not say a word about her own wedding, for she did not like to, but her father knew and said, “You shall have the mules, my love, and

whatever else you have a mind for. Be off with you, and the men shall get you [70] a good strong wagon with a body to it that will hold all your clothes.”

Then he gave his orders to the servants, who got the wagon out, harnessed the mules, and put them to, while the girl brought the clothes down from the linen room [75] and placed them on the wagon. Her mother prepared her a basket of provisions with all sorts of good things, and a goat skin full of wine; the girl now got into the wagon, and her mother gave her also a golden cruse of oil, [80] that she and her women might anoint themselves. Then she took the whip and reins and lashed the mules on, whereon they set off, and their hoofs clattered on the road. They pulled without flagging, and carried not only Nausicaa and her wash of clothes, but the maids also who were with her.

[85] When they reached the water side they went to the washing-cisterns, through which there ran at all times enough pure water to wash any quantity of linen, no matter how dirty. Here they unharnessed the mules and turned them out [90] to feed on the sweet juicy herbage that grew by the water side. They took the clothes out of the wagon, put them in the water, and vied with one another in treading them in the pits to get the dirt out. After they had washed them and got them quite clean, they laid them out by the sea side, where [95] the waves had raised a high beach of shingle, and set about washing themselves and anointing themselves with olive oil. Then they got their dinner by the side of the stream, and waited for the sun to finish drying the clothes. When they had done dinner [100] they threw off the veils that covered their heads and began to play at ball, while Nausicaa of the white arms sang for them. As the huntress Artemis, who showers arrows, goes forth upon the mountains of Taygetos or Erymanthos to hunt wild boars or deer, [105] and the wood-nymphs, daughters of Aegis-bearing Zeus, take their sport along with her (then is Leto proud at seeing her daughter stand a full head taller than the others, and eclipse the loveliest amid a whole bevy of beauties), even so did the girl outshine her handmaids.

[110] When it was time for them to start home, and they were folding the clothes and putting them into the wagon, owl-vision goddess Athena began to consider how Odysseus should wake up and see the handsome girl who was to conduct him to the city of the Phaeacians.

[115] The girl, therefore, threw a ball at one of the maids, which missed her and fell into deep water. Then they all shouted, and the noise they made woke noble Odysseus, who sat up in his bed of leaves and began to wonder what it might all be.

“Alas,” said he to himself, “what kind of people have I come amongst?

[120] Are they cruel, savage, and uncivilized [= not *dikaios*], or hospitable and endowed with a god-fearing mind [*noos*]? I seem to hear the voices of young women, and they sound like those of the nymphs that haunt mountain tops, or springs of rivers and meadows of green grass. At any rate I am [125] among a lineage of men and women. Let me try if I cannot manage to get a look at them.”

As he said this he crept from under his bush, and broke off a bough covered with thick leaves to hide his nakedness. [130] He looked like some lion of the wilderness that stalks about exulting in his strength and defying both wind and rain; his eyes glare as he prowls in quest of oxen, sheep, or deer, for he is famished, and will dare break even into a well-fenced homestead, trying to get at the sheep— [135] even such did Odysseus seem to the young women, as he drew near to them all naked as he was, for he was in great want. On seeing one so unkempt and so begrimed with salt water, the others scampered off along the spits that jutted out into the sea, but the daughter of Alkinoos stood firm, for Athena [140] put courage into her heart and took away all fear from her. She stood right in front of Odysseus, and he doubted whether he should go up to her, throw himself at her feet, and embrace her knees as a suppliant, or stay where he was and entreat her to give him some clothes and show him the way to the town. [145] In the end he thought it best to entreat her from a distance in case the girl should take offence at his

coming near enough to clasp her knees, so he addressed her in honeyed and persuasive language.

“O queen,” he said, “I implore your aid—but tell me, are you a goddess or are you a mortal woman? [150] If you are a goddess and dwell in the sky, I can only conjecture that you are Zeus’ daughter Artemis, for your face and figure resemble none but hers; if on the other hand you are a mortal and live on earth, thrice happy are your father and mother— [155] thrice happy, too, are your brothers and sisters; how proud and delighted they must feel when they see so fair a scion as yourself going out to a dance [*khoros*]; most happy, however, of all will he be whose wedding gifts have been the richest, and who takes you to his own [160] home. I never yet saw any one so beautiful, neither man nor woman, and am lost in admiration as I behold you. I can only compare you to a young palm tree which I saw when I was at Delos growing near the altar of Apollo—for I was there, too, with much people after me, [165] when I was on that journey which has been the source of all my troubles. Never yet did such a young plant shoot out of the ground as that was, and I admired and wondered at it exactly as I now admire and wonder at yourself. I dare not clasp your knees, but I am in great distress [*penthos*]; [170] yesterday made the twentieth day that I had been tossing about upon the sea. The winds and waves have taken me all the way from the Ogygian island, and now a superhuman force [*daimōn*] has flung me upon this coast that I may endure still further suffering; for I do not think that I have yet come to the end of it, but rather that the gods have still much evil in store for me.

[175] And now, O queen, have pity upon me, for you are the first person I have met, and I know no one else in this country. Show me the way to your town, and let me have anything that you may have brought here to wrap your clothes in. [180] May the gods grant you in all things your heart’s desire—husband, house, and a happy, peaceful home; for there is nothing better in this world than that man and wife should be of one mind in a house. It discomfits their enemies, [185] makes the hearts of

their friends glad, and they themselves know more about it than any one.”

To this Nausicaa of the white arms answered, “Stranger, you appear to be a sensible, well-disposed person. There is no accounting for luck; Zeus, the Olympian, gives prosperity [*olbos*] to rich and poor just as he chooses, [190] so you must take what he has seen fit to send you, and make the best of it. Now, however, that you have come to this our country, you shall not want for clothes nor for anything else that a foreigner in distress may reasonably look for. I will show you the way to the town, and will tell you the name of our people: [195] we are called Phaeacians, and I am daughter to great-hearted Alkinoos, in whom the whole strength and power [*biē*] of the state is vested.”

Then she called her maids and said, “Stay where you are, you girls. Can you not see a man without running away from him? [200] Do you take him for a robber or a murderer? Neither he nor any one else can come here to do us Phaeacians any harm, for we are dear to the gods, and live apart on a land’s end [205] that juts into the sounding sea, and have nothing to do with any other people. This is only some poor man who has lost his way, and we must be kind to him, for strangers and foreigners in distress are under Zeus’ protection, and will take what they can get and be thankful; so, girls, give the poor man something to eat and drink, [210] and wash him in the stream at some place that is sheltered from the wind.”

Then the maids left off running away and began calling one another back. They made Odysseus sit down in the shelter as Nausicaa had told them, and brought him a khiton and cloak. [215] They also brought him the little golden cruse of oil, and told him to go wash in the stream. But glorious Odysseus said, “Young women, please to stand a little on one side that I may wash the brine from my shoulders and anoint myself with oil, [220] for it is long enough since my skin has had a drop of oil

upon it. I cannot wash as long as you all keep standing there. I am ashamed to strip before a number of good-looking young women.”

Then they stood on one side and went to tell the girl, while great Odysseus washed himself in the stream and scrubbed [225] the brine from his back and from his broad shoulders. When he had thoroughly washed himself, and had got the brine out of his hair, he anointed himself with oil, and put on the clothes which the girl had given him; Athena, daughter of Zeus, then made him look taller and stronger [230] than before, she also made the hair grow thick on the top of his head, and flow down in curls like hyacinth blossoms; she poured down gracefulness [*kharis*] over his head and shoulders as a skilful workman who has studied art of all kinds under Hephaistos and Athena enriches it by gilding it— [235] and his work is full of beauty. Then he went and sat down a little way off upon the beach, looking quite young and full of charm [*kharis*], and the girl gazed on him with admiration; then she said to her maids:

“Hush, my dears, for I want to say something. [240] I believe the gods who live in the sky have sent this man to the Phaeacians. When I first saw him I thought him plain, but now his appearance is like that of the gods who dwell in the sky. I should like my future husband to be just such another as he is, [245] if he would only stay here and not want to go away. However, give him something to eat and drink.”

They did as they were told, and set food before noble and long-suffering Odysseus, who ate and drank ravenously, [250] for it was long since he had had food of any kind. Meanwhile, Nausicaa of the white arms turned her thoughts to another matter. She got the linen folded and placed in the wagon, she then yoked the mules, and, as she took her seat, she called Odysseus:

[255] “Stranger,” said she, “rise and let us be going back to the town; I will introduce you at the house of my excellent father, where I can tell

you that you will meet all the best people among the Phaeacians. But be sure and do as I bid you, for you seem to be a sensible person. As long as we are going past the fields and farm lands, [260] follow briskly behind the wagon along with the maids and I will lead the way myself.

Presently, however, we shall come to the town, where you will find a high wall running all round it, and a good harbor on either side with a narrow entrance into the city, [265] and the ships will be drawn up by the roadside, for every one has a place where his own ship can lie. You will see the market place with a temple of Poseidon in the middle of it, and paved with large stones bedded in the earth. Here people deal in ship's gear of all kinds, such as cables and sails, and here, too, are the places where oars are made, [270] for the Phaeacians are not a nation of archers; they know nothing about bows and arrows, but are a sea-faring folk, and pride themselves on their masts, oars, and ships, with which they travel far over the sea.

I am afraid of the gossip and scandal that may be set on foot against me later on; for the people in the *dēmos* here are very ill-natured, [275] and some lowly man, if he met us, might say, 'Who is this fine-looking stranger that is going about with Nausicaa? Where did she find him? I suppose she is going to marry him. Perhaps he is a vagabond sailor whom she has taken from some foreign vessel, for we have no neighbors; [280] or some god has at last come down from the sky in answer to her prayers, and she is going to live with him all the rest of her life. It would be a better thing if she would take herself away and find a husband somewhere else, for she will not look at one of the many excellent young Phaeacians in the *dēmos* who woo her.' [285] This is the kind of disparaging remark that would be made about me, and I could not complain, for I should myself be scandalized at seeing any other girl do the like, and go about with men in spite of everybody, while her father and mother were still alive, and without having been married in the face of all the world.

If, therefore, [290] you want my father to give you an escort and to help you to your homecoming [*nostos*], do as I bid you; you will see a beautiful grove of poplars by the roadside dedicated to Athena; it has a well in it and a meadow all round it. Here my father has a field of rich garden ground, about as far from the town as a man's voice will carry. [295] Sit down there and wait for a while till the rest of us can get into the town and reach my father's house. Then, when you think we must have done this, come into the town and ask the way to the house of my father, great-hearted Alkinoos. [300] You will have no difficulty in finding it; any child will point it out to you, for no one else in the whole town has anything like such a fine house as he has. When you have got past the gates and through the outer court, go right across the inner court till you come to [305] my mother. You will find her sitting by the fire and spinning her purple wool by firelight. It is a fine sight to see her as she leans back against one of the bearing-posts with her maids all ranged behind her. Close to her seat stands that of my father, on which he sits and drinks wine like an immortal god. [310] Never mind him, but go up to my mother, and lay your hands upon her knees if you would get home quickly. If you can win her over, you may hope to see your own country again, [315] no matter how distant it may be."

So saying she lashed the mules with her whip and they left the river. The mules drew well and their hoofs went up and down upon the road. She was careful not to go too fast for Odysseus [320] and the maids who were following on foot along with the wagon, so she plied her whip with judgment [*noos*]. As the sun was going down they came to the sacred grove of Athena, and there great Odysseus sat down and prayed to the mighty daughter of Zeus.

"Hear me," he cried, "daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, the one who cannot be worn down, [325] hear me now, for you gave no heed to my prayers when Poseidon was wrecking me. Now, therefore, have pity upon me and grant that I may find friends and be hospitably received by the Phaeacians."

Thus did he pray, and Athena heard his prayer, but she would not show herself to him openly, for she was afraid of her [330] uncle, Poseidon, who was still furious in his endeavors to prevent godlike Odysseus from getting home.

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2020-12-15

Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 7

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thus, then, did long-suffering great Odysseus wait and pray; but the girl drove on to the town. When she reached her father's house she drew up at the gateway, and her brothers [5] —comely as the gods—gathered round her, took the mules out of the wagon, and carried the clothes into the house, while she went to her own room, where an old servant, Eurymedousa of Apeira, lit the fire for her. This old woman had been brought by sea [10] from Apeira, and had been chosen as a prize for Alkinoos because he was king over the Phaeacians, and the people in the *dēmos* obeyed him as though he were a god. She had been nurse to white-armed Nausicaa, and had now lit the fire for her, and brought her supper for her into her own room.

Presently Odysseus got up to go towards the town; and Athena [15] shed a thick mist all round him to hide him in case any of the proud Phaeacians who met him should be rude to him, or ask him who he was. Then, as he was just entering the town, she came towards him in the likeness [20] of a little girl carrying a pitcher. She stood right in front of him, and great Odysseus said:

“My dear, will you be so kind as to show me the house of King Alkinoos? I am an unfortunate foreigner in distress, [25] and do not know one in your town and country.”

Then owl-vision goddess Athena said, “Yes, father stranger, I will show you the house you want, for Alkinoos lives quite close to my own father. [30] I will go before you and show the way, but say not a word as you go, and do not look at any man, nor ask him questions; for the people

here cannot abide strangers, and do not like men who come from some other place. They are a sea-faring folk, and sail [35] the seas by the grace of Poseidon in ships that glide along like thought, or as a bird in the air.”

Then she led the way, and Odysseus followed in her steps; but not one of the Phaeacians could see him [40] as he passed through the city in the midst of them; for the great goddess Athena in her good will towards him had hidden him in a thick cloud of darkness. He admired their harbors, ships, places of assembly, and the lofty [45] walls of the city, which, with the palisade on top of them, were very striking, and when they reached the king’s house Athena, the owl-vision goddess, said:

“This is the house, father stranger, which you would have me show you. You will find a number of great people [50] sitting at table, but do not be afraid; go straight in, for the bolder a man is the more likely he is to carry his point, even though he is a stranger. First find the queen. Her name is Arete, and she comes of the same [55] family as her husband Alkinoos. They both descend originally from Poseidon, shaker of the Earth, who was father to Nausithoös by Periboia, a woman of great beauty. Periboia was the youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedon, who at one time reigned over the giants, [60] but he ruined his ill-fated people and lost his own life to boot.

Poseidon, however, lay with his daughter, and she had a son by him, the great-hearted Nausithoös, who reigned over the Phaeacians. Nausithoös had two sons Rhexenor and Alkinoos; Apollo of the silver bow killed the first of them [65] while he was still a bridegroom and without male issue; but he left a daughter Arete, whom Alkinoos married, and honors as no other woman is honored of all those that keep house along with their husbands. Thus she both was, and still is, respected beyond measure [70] by her children, by Alkinoos himself, and by the whole people, who look upon her as a goddess, and greet her whenever she goes about the city, for she is a thoroughly good woman both in mind [*noos*] and heart, and when any women are friends of hers, she will help their husbands

also to settle their disputes. [75] If you can gain her good will, you may have every hope of seeing your friends again, and getting safely back to your home and country.”

⁷⁸ Speaking thus, Athena [*Athēnē*], with the looks of an owl, went off ⁷⁹ over the barren sea, leaving behind lovely Skheria. [80] She came to Marathon and to Athens [*Athēnē*], with its wide causeways, ⁸¹ and she entered the well-built house of Erekhtheus. But Odysseus ⁸² went toward the renowned house of Alkinoos, and he pondered much as he paused a while before reaching the threshold of bronze. ⁸⁴ There was a gleam [*aiglē*] there, which was like the gleam of the sun or the moon, [85] spreading throughout that palace famed for its high ceilings, that home of great-hearted Alkinoos. ⁸⁶ There were walls made of bronze [*khalkeoi*], along either side ⁸⁷ stretching all the way from the threshold to the inner chamber, and all around the walls was a frieze of blue. ⁸⁸ Doors made of gold closed off the sturdy building on the inside, ⁸⁹ and posts made of silver were set in place into the threshold made of bronze [*khalkeos oudos*]. [90] Silver was the lintel, and golden was the handle of the door.

On either side there stood gold and silver mastiffs which Hephaistos, with his consummate skill, had fashioned expressly to keep watch over the palace of great-hearted king Alkinoos; so they were immortal and could never grow old. [95] Seats were ranged all along the wall, here and there from one end to the other, with coverings of fine woven work which the women of the house had made. Here the chief persons of the Phaeacians used to sit and eat and drink, for there was abundance at all seasons; [100] and there were golden figures of young men with lighted torches in their hands, raised on pedestals, to give light by night to those who were at table. There are fifty maid servants in the house, some of whom are always grinding rich yellow grain at the mill, [105] while others work at the loom, or sit and spin, and their shuttles go, backwards and forwards like the fluttering of aspen leaves, while the linen is so

closely woven that it will turn oil. As the Phaeacians are the best sailors in the world, so their women [110] excel all others in weaving, for Athena has taught them all manner of useful arts, and they are very intelligent.

Outside the gate of the outer court there is a large garden of about four acres with a wall all round it. It is full of beautiful trees— [115] pears, pomegranates, and the most delicious apples. There are luscious figs also, and olives in full growth. The fruits never rot nor fail all the year round, neither winter nor summer, for the air is so soft that a new crop ripens before the old has dropped. [120] Pear grows on pear, apple on apple, and fig on fig, and so also with the grapes, for there is an excellent vineyard: on the level ground of a part of this, the grapes are being made into raisins; in another part they are being gathered; [125] some are being trodden in the wine tubs, others further on have shed their blossom and are beginning to show fruit, others again are just changing color. In the furthest part of the ground there are beautifully arranged beds of flowers that are in bloom all the year round. Two streams go through it, the one turned in ducts throughout the whole [130] garden, while the other is carried under the ground of the outer court to the house itself, and the town's people draw water from it. Such, then, were the splendors with which the gods had endowed the house of King Alkinoos.

So here long-suffering great Odysseus stood for a while and looked about him, but when he had looked long enough [135] he crossed the threshold and went within the precincts of the house. There he found all the chief people among the Phaeacians making their drink-offerings to sharp-eyed Hermes, which they always did the last thing before going away for the night. He went straight through the court, [140] still hidden by the cloak of darkness in which Athena had enveloped him, till he reached Arete and King Alkinoos; then he laid his hands upon the knees of the queen, and at that moment the miraculous darkness fell away from him and he became visible. Every one was speechless with

surprise at seeing a man there, [145] but Odysseus began at once with his petition.

“Queen Arete,” he exclaimed, “daughter of godlike Rhexenor, in my distress I humbly pray you, as also your husband and these your guests (whom may the gods make prosperous with long life and happiness [*olbos*], and may they leave their possessions to their children, [150] and all the honors conferred upon them by the state [*dēmos*]) to help me home to my own country as soon as possible; for I have been long in trouble and away from my friends.”

Then he sat down on the hearth among the ashes and they all held their peace, [155] till presently the old hero Ekhenes, who was an excellent speaker and an elder among the Phaeacians, plainly and in all honesty addressed them thus:

“Alkinoos,” said he, “it is not creditable to you [160] that a stranger should be seen sitting among the ashes of your hearth; everyone is waiting to hear what you are about to say; tell him, then, to rise and take a seat on a stool inlaid with silver, and bid your servants mix some wine and water that we may make a drink-offering to Zeus, the lord of thunder, [165] who takes all well-disposed suppliants under his protection; and let the housekeeper give him some supper, of whatever there may be in the house.”

When Alkinoos heard this he took the high-spirited and much-devising Odysseus by the hand, raised him from the hearth, [170] and bade him take the seat of powerful Laodamas, who had been sitting beside him and was his favorite son. A maid servant then brought him water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for him to wash his hands, and she drew a clean table beside him; [175] an upper servant brought him bread and offered him many good things of what there was in the house, and long-suffering great Odysseus ate and drank. Then Alkinoos, the hallowed prince, said to the herald [*kēruks*],

“Pontonoos, mix a cup of wine and hand it round [180] that we may make drink-offerings to Zeus the lord of thunder, who is the protector of all well-disposed suppliants.”

Pontonoos then mixed wine and water, and handed it round after giving every man his drink-offering. When they had made their offerings, and had drunk each as much as he was minded, [185] Alkinoos said:

“Aldermen and town councilors of the Phaeacians, hear my words. You have had your supper, so now go home to bed. Tomorrow morning I shall invite a still larger number of aldermen, [190] and will give a sacrificial banquet in honor of our guest; we can then discuss the question of his escort, and consider how we may at once send him back rejoicing to his own country without toil [*ponos*] or inconvenience to himself, no matter how distant it may be. [195] We must see that he comes to no harm while on his homeward journey, but when he is once at home he will have to take the luck he was born with for better or worse like other people. It is possible, however, that the stranger is one of the immortals who has come down from the sky to visit us; [200] but in this case the gods are departing from their usual practice, for hitherto they have made themselves perfectly clear to us when we have been offering them hecatombs. They come and sit at our feasts just like one of our selves, and if any solitary wayfarer happens to stumble upon some one or other of them, [205] they affect no concealment, for we are as near of kin to the gods as the Cyclopes and the savage giants are.”

Then resourceful Odysseus said: “Pray, Alkinoos, do not take any such notion into your head. I have nothing of the immortal about me, [210] neither in body nor mind, and most resemble those among you who are the most afflicted. Indeed, were I to tell you all that the gods have seen fit to lay upon me, you would say that I was still worse off than they are. [215] Nevertheless, let me sup in spite of sorrow, for an empty stomach is a very importunate thing, and thrusts itself on a man’s notice no matter how dire is his distress [*penthos*]. I am in great distress [*penthos*],

[220] yet it insists that I shall eat and drink, bids me lay aside all memory of my sorrows and dwell only on the due replenishing of itself. As for yourselves, do as you propose, and at break of day set about helping me to get home. I shall be content to die if I may first once more [225] behold my property, my bondsmen, and all the greatness of my house.”

Thus did he speak. Every one approved his saying, and agreed that he should have his escort inasmuch as he had spoken reasonably. Then when they had made their drink-offerings, and had drunk each as much as he was minded they went home to bed every man in his own abode, [230] leaving great Odysseus in the hall with Arete and godlike Alkinoos while the servants were taking the things away after supper. White-armed Arete was the first to speak, for she recognized the khiton, cloak, [235] and good clothes that Odysseus was wearing, as the work of herself and of her maids; so she said, “Stranger, before we go any further, there is a question I should like to ask you. Who, and whence are you, and who gave you those clothes? Did you not say you had come here from beyond the sea?”

[240] And resourceful Odysseus answered, “It would be a long story, my Lady, were I to relate in full the tale of my misfortunes, for the hand of the gods has been laid heavy upon me; but as regards your question, there is an island far away in the sea which is called ‘the Ogygian’. [245] Here dwells the cunning and powerful goddess Kalypsō, daughter of Atlas. She lives by herself far from all neighbors human or divine. A superhuman force [*daimōn*], however, led me to her hearth all desolate and alone, for Zeus struck my ship with his thunderbolts, [250] and broke it up in mid-ocean. My brave comrades were drowned every man of them, but I stuck to the keel and was carried here and there for the space of nine days, till at last during the darkness of the tenth night the gods brought me to the Ogygian island where the great goddess Kalypsō of ordered hair [255] lives. She took me in and treated me with the utmost kindness; indeed she wanted to make me immortal that I might never grow old, but she could not persuade me to let her do so.

I stayed with Kalypsō seven years straight on end, and watered [260] the good clothes she gave me with my tears during the whole time; but at last when the eighth year came round she bade me depart of her own free will, either because Zeus had told her she must, or because she had changed her mind [*noos*]. She sent me from her island on a raft, which she provisioned [265] with abundance of bread and wine. Moreover she gave me good stout clothing, and sent me a wind that blew both warm and fair. Seventeen days did I sail over the sea, and on the eighteenth I caught sight of the first outlines of the mountains upon your coast—and glad indeed was I to set eyes upon them. [270] Nevertheless there was still much trouble in store for me, for at this point the Earthshaker Poseidon would let me go no further, and raised a great storm against me; the sea was so terribly high that I could no longer keep to my raft, [275] which went to pieces under the fury of the gale, and I had to swim for it, till wind and current brought me to your shores.

There I tried to land, but could not, for it was a bad place and the waves dashed me against the rocks, [280] so I again took to the sea and swam on till I came to a river that seemed the most likely landing place, for there were no rocks and it was sheltered from the wind. Here, then, I got out of the water and gathered my senses together again. Night was coming on, so I left the river, [285] and went into a thicket, where I covered myself all over with leaves, and presently the gods sent me off into a very deep sleep. Sick and sorry as I was I slept among the leaves all night, and through the next day till afternoon, when I woke as the sun was setting in the west, [290] and saw your daughter's maid servants playing upon the beach, and your daughter among them looking like a goddess. I besought her aid, and she proved to be of an excellent disposition, much more so than could be expected from so young a person—for young people are apt to be thoughtless. [295] She gave me plenty of bread and wine, and when she had had me washed in the river she also gave me the clothes in which you see me. Now, therefore, though it has pained me to do so, I have told you the whole truth [*alētheia*].”

Then Alkinoos said, “Stranger, [300] it was very wrong of my daughter not to bring you on at once to my house along with the maids, seeing that she was the first person whose aid you asked.”

“Pray do not scold her,” replied resourceful Odysseus; “she is not to blame. She did tell me to follow along with the maids, [305] but I was ashamed and afraid, for I thought you might perhaps be displeased if you saw me. Every human being is sometimes a little suspicious and irritable.”

“Stranger,” replied Alkinoos, “I am not the kind of man [310] to get angry about nothing; it is always better to be reasonable; but by Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, now that I see what kind of person you are, and how much you think as I do, I wish you would stay here, marry my daughter, and become my son-in-law. If you will stay I will give you a house and an estate, [315] but no one (may the gods forbid) shall keep you here against your own wish, and that you may be sure of this I will attend tomorrow to the matter of your escort. You can sleep during the whole voyage if you like, and the men shall sail you over smooth waters [320] either to your own home, or wherever you please, even though it be a long way further off than Euboea, which those of my people who saw it when they took yellow-haired Rhadamanthus to see Tityos the son of Gaia, tell me is the furthest of any place— [325] and yet they did the whole voyage in a single day without distressing themselves, and came back again afterwards. You will thus see how much my ships excel all others, and what magnificent oarsmen my sailors are.”

Then was long-suffering great Odysseus glad [330] and prayed aloud saying, “Father Zeus, grant that Alkinoos may do all as he has said, for so he will win an imperishable *kleos* among humankind, and at the same time I shall return to my country.”

Thus did they converse. [335] Then Arete of the white arms told her maids to set a bed in the room that was in the gatehouse, and make it

with good red rugs, and to spread coverlets on the top of them with woolen cloaks for Odysseus to wear. The maids then went out with torches in their hands, [340] and when they had made the bed they came up to Odysseus and said, “Rise, sir stranger, and come with us for your bed is ready,” and glad indeed was he to go to his rest.

So long-suffering great Odysseus slept in a bed [345] placed in a room over the echoing gateway; but Alkinoos lay in the inner part of the house, with the queen his wife by his side.

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Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 8

Translated by Samuel Butler

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[1] Now when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Alkinoos, the hallowed prince, and Odysseus, ransacker of cities, both rose, and Alkinoos led the way [5] to the Phaeacian place of assembly, which was near the ships. When they got there they sat down side-by-side on a seat of polished stone, while Athena took the form of one of the servants of the high-spirited Alkinoos, and went round the town in order to contrive *nostos* for great-hearted Odysseus. [10] She went up to the townspeople, man by man, and said, “Aldermen and town councilors of the Phaeacians, come to the assembly all of you and listen to the stranger who has just come off a long voyage to the house of high-spirited King Alkinoos; he looks like an immortal god.”

[15] With these words she made them all want to come, and they flocked to the assembly till seats and standing room were alike crowded. Every one was struck with the appearance of Odysseus, high-spirited son of Laertes, for Athena had given him gracefulness [*kharis*] about the head and shoulders, [20] making him look taller and stouter than he really was, that he might impress the Phaeacians favorably as being a very remarkable man, and might come off well in the many trials [*āthlos*] of skill to which they would challenge him. Then, when they were got together, [25] Alkinoos spoke:

“Hear me,” said he, “aldermen and town councilors of the Phaeacians, that I may speak even as I am minded. This stranger, whoever he may be, has found his way to my house from somewhere or other either East or West. [30] He wants an escort and wishes to have the matter settled. Let us then get one ready for him, as we have done for others before

him; indeed, no one who ever yet came to my house has been able to complain of me for not speeding on his way soon enough. Let us draw a ship into the sea— [35] one that has never yet made a voyage—and man her with two and fifty of our choicest [*krinein*] young sailors in the *dēmos*. Then when you have made fast your oars each by his own seat, leave the ship and come to my house to prepare a feast. I will provide you with everything. [40] I am giving these instructions to the young men who will form the crew, for as regards you sceptered kings, you will join me in entertaining our guest in the halls. I can take no excuses, and we will have Demodokos to sing to us; for there is no bard like him [45] whatever he may choose to sing about.”

Alkinoos then led the way, and the others followed after, while a herald [*kērux*] went to fetch Demodokos. The fifty-two picked [*krinein*] oarsmen went to the sea shore as they had been told, [50] and when they got there they drew the ship into the water, got her mast and sails inside her, bound the oars to the thole-pins with twisted thongs of leather, all in due course, and spread the white sails aloft. [55] They moored the vessel a little way out from land, and then came on shore and went to the house of high-spirited King Alkinoos. The outhouses, yards, and all the precincts were filled with crowds of men in great multitudes both old and young; and Alkinoos killed them a dozen sheep, eight [60] full grown pigs, and two oxen. These they skinned and dressed so as to provide a magnificent banquet.

⁶² The herald came near, bringing with him a singer, very trusted, ⁶³ whom the Muse loved exceedingly. She gave him both a good thing and a bad thing. ⁶⁴ For she took away from him his eyes but gave him the sweetness of song [*aoidē*]. [65] For him did Pontonoos place a chair, silver studded, ⁶⁶ right in the midst of the people who were feasting, propping the chair against a tall column, ⁶⁷ and the herald took from a peg the clear-sounding phorminx that was hanging there ⁶⁸ above his head, and he presented it to him so he could take it in his hands. ⁶⁹ The

herald did this. And next to him he [= the herald] put a beautiful basket and a table. [70] He put next to him also a cup of wine to drink from whenever he [= Demodokos] felt in his heart the need to do so. ⁷¹ And, with hands reaching out swiftly, they made for the good things that were prepared and waiting.

⁷² When they had satisfied their desire for drinking and eating, ⁷³ the Muse impelled the singer to sing the glories [*kleos* plural] of men, ⁷⁴ starting from a thread [*oimē*] [of a song] that had at that time a glory [*kleos*] reaching all the way up to the vast sky. [75] It was the quarrel [*neikos*] of Odysseus and Achilles son of Peleus, ⁷⁶ how they once upon a time [*pote*] fought at a sumptuous feast of the gods, ⁷⁷ with terrible words, and the king of men, Agamemnon, ⁷⁸ was happy in his mind [*noos*] that the best of the Achaeans [*aristoi Akhaiōn*] were fighting. ⁷⁹ For [*gar*] thus had oracular Phoebus Apollo prophesied to him, [80] at holy Delphi, when he [Agamemnon] had crossed the stone threshold ⁸¹ to consult the oracle. For [*gar*] then [*tote*] it was that the beginning of pain [*pēma*] started rolling down [*kulindesthai*] ⁸² upon both Trojans and Danaans [= Achaeans], all on account of the plans [*boulai*] of great Zeus. ⁸³ These things, then, the singer sang, whose fame goes far and wide.

As for Odysseus ⁸⁴ he took hold of his great purple cloak in his powerful hands [85] and he pulled it over his head, veiling that face of his with its comely looks, ⁸⁶ since he felt shame in front of the Phaeacians as tears started flowing from beneath his brows. ⁸⁷ And whenever the divine singer would leave off [*lēgein*] the singing, ⁸⁸ he would wipe away the tears as he removed the cloak from his head, ⁸⁹ and, holding up a drinking cup, he would offer a libation to the gods. [90] But then, whenever he [= the singer] started [*arkhesthai*] singing all over again [*aps*], urged to do so ⁹¹ by the best of the Phaeacians, since they took delight [*terpesthai*] in the words of his song, ⁹² Odysseus would veil his head and start lamenting [*goân*] all over again.

⁹³ So there he was, escaping the notice of all while he kept pouring out his tears [*dakrua*]. ⁹⁴ But Alkinoos was the only one of all of them who was aware, and he took note [*noeîn*]; [95] he was sitting near him, and heard the heavy sighs that he was heaving. So he at once said, “Aldermen and town councilors of the oar-loving Phaeacians, we have had enough now, both of the feast, and of the minstrelsy that is its due accompaniment; [100] let us proceed therefore to the athletic sports [*āthlos*], so that our guest on his return home may be able to tell his friends how much we surpass all other nations as boxers, wrestlers, jumpers, and runners.”

With these words he led the way, and the others followed after. [105] A servant hung Demodokos’ lyre on its peg for him, led him out of the hall, and set him on the same way as that along which all the chief men of the Phaeacians were going to see the sports; a crowd of several thousand people followed them, [110] and there were many excellent competitors for all the prizes: Akroneos, Okyalos, Elatreus, Nauteus, Prymneus, Ankhialos, Eretmeus, Ponteus, Proreus, Thoön, Anabesineos, and Amphialos, son of Polyneos, son of Tekton. [115] There was also Euryalos, son of Naubolos, who was like manslaughtering Arēs himself, and was the best looking man among the Phaeacians except Laodamas. Three sons of stately Alkinoos, stately Laodamas, Halios, and godlike Klytoneus, competed also.

[120] The foot races came first. The course was set out for them from the starting post, and they raised a dust upon the plain as they all flew forward at the same moment. Stately Klytoneus came in first by a long way; he left every one else behind him by the length of the furrow that a couple of mules can plow [125] in a fallow field. They then turned to the painful art of wrestling, and here Euryalos proved to be the best man. Amphialos excelled all the others in jumping, while at throwing the disc there was no one who could approach Elatreus. [130] Alkinoos’ fine son Laodamas was the best boxer, and he it was who presently said, when they had all been diverted with the games [*āthlos*], “Let us ask the

stranger whether he excels in any of these sports [*āthlos*]; he seems very powerfully built; [135] his thighs, calves, hands, and neck are of prodigious strength, nor is he at all old, but he has suffered much lately, and there is nothing like the sea for making havoc with a man, no matter how strong he is.”

[140] “You are quite right, Laodamas,” replied Euryalos, “go up to your guest and speak to him about it yourself.”

When Laodamas heard this he made his way into the middle of the crowd and said to Odysseus, [145] “I hope, sir, that you will enter yourself in some one or other of our competitions [*āthloi*] if you are skilled in any of them—for you seem to know of sports [*āthloi*]. There is no greater *kleos* for a man all his life long as the showing himself good with his hands and feet. Have a try therefore at something, and banish all sorrow from your mind. [150] Your return home will not be long delayed, for the ship is already drawn into the water, and the crew is found.”

Resourceful Odysseus answered, “Laodamas, why do you taunt me in this way? My mind is set rather on cares than contests [*āthloi*]; [155] I have been through infinite trouble, and am come among you now as a suppliant, praying your king and people [*dēmos*] to further my homecoming [*nostos*].”

Then Euryalos reviled him outright and said, “I gather, then, that you are unskilled [160] in any of the many sports [*āthloi*] that men generally delight in. I suppose you are one of those grasping traders that go about in ships as captains or merchants, and who think of nothing but of their outward freights and homeward cargoes. There does not seem to be much of the athlete [*āthlētēs*] about you.”

[165] “For shame, sir,” answered resourceful Odysseus, fiercely, “you are an insolent man—so true is it that the gods do not grace all men alike in

speech, person, and understanding. One man may be of weak presence, [170] but the gods have adorned him with such a good conversation that he charms every one who sees him; his honeyed moderation [*aidōs*] carries his hearers with him so that he is leader in all assemblies of his fellows, and wherever he goes he is looked up to. Another may be as handsome as a god, [175] but his good looks are not crowned with verbal grace [*kharis*]. This is your case. No god could make a finer looking man than you are, but you are empty with respect to *noos*. Your ill-judged [= without *kosmos*] remarks have made me exceedingly angry, for I excel [180] in a great many athletic exercises [*āthlos*]; indeed, so long as I had youth and strength, I was among the first athletes of the age. Now, however, I am worn out by labor and sorrow, for I have gone through much both on the field of battle and by the waves of the weary sea; still, in spite of all this I will engage in the competition [*āthlos*], [185] for your taunts have stung me to the quick.”

So he hurried up without even taking his cloak off, and seized a disc, larger, more massive and much heavier than those used by the Phaeacians when disc-throwing among themselves. Then, swinging it back, he threw it from his brawny hand, [190] and it made a humming sound in the air as he did so. The Phaeacians quailed beneath the rushing of its flight as it sped gracefully from his hand, and flew beyond any mark [*sēma*] that had been made yet. Athena, in the form of a man, came and marked the place where it had fallen. [195] “A blind man, sir,” said she, “could easily tell your mark [*sēma*] by groping for it—it is so far ahead of any other. You may make your mind easy about this contest [*āthlos*], for no Phaeacian can come near to such a throw as yours.”

Much-enduring great Odysseus was glad [200] when he found he had a friend among the lookers-on, so he began to speak more pleasantly. “Young men,” said he, “come up to that throw if you can, and I will throw another disc as heavy or even heavier. If anyone wants to have a bout with me [205] let him come on, for I am exceedingly angry; I will

box, wrestle, or run, I do not care what it is, with any man of you all except Laodamas, but not with him because I am his guest, and one cannot compete with one's own personal friend. At least I do not think it a prudent or a sensible thing [210] for a guest to challenge his host's family at any game [*āthlos*], especially when he is in a foreign *dēmos*. He will cut the ground from under his own feet if he does; but I make no exception as regards any one else, for I want to have the matter out and know which is the best man. I am a good hand at every kind of athletic sport [*āthlos*] known among humankind. [215] I am an excellent archer. In battle I am always the first to bring a man down with my arrow, no matter how many more are taking aim at him alongside of me. Philoctetes was the only man who could shoot better than I could [220] when we Achaeans were before the *dēmos* of the Trojans. I far excel every one else in the whole world, of those who still eat bread upon the face of the earth, but I should not like to shoot against the mighty dead, such as Hēraklēs, or Eurytos of Oikhalia— [225] men who could shoot against the gods themselves. This in fact was how great Eurytos came prematurely by his end, for Apollo was angry with him and killed him because he challenged him as an archer. I can throw a dart farther than any one else can shoot an arrow. [230] Running is the only point in respect of which I am afraid some of the Phaeacians might beat me, for I have been brought down very low at sea; my provisions ran short, and therefore I am still weak."

They all held their peace [235] except King Alkinoos, who began, "Sir, we have had much pleasure in hearing all that you have told us, from which I understand that you are willing to show your prowess [*aretē*], as having been displeased with some insolent remarks that have been made to you by one of our athletes, and which could never have been uttered [240] by any one who knows how to talk with propriety. I hope you will apprehend my meaning, and will explain to any one of your chief men who may be dining with yourself and your family when you get home, that we have an hereditary aptitude [*aretē*] [245] for accomplishments of all kinds. We are not particularly remarkable for our boxing, nor yet as

wrestlers, but we are singularly fleet of foot and are excellent sailors. ²⁴⁸ Dear to us always is feasting [*dais*], also the kitharis, and occasions of singing and dancing [*khoroi*], ²⁴⁹ also the changing of costumes from one occasion to the next, also warm baths and lying around in bed. [250] Let's get started. I want the best of the Phaeacian acrobatic dancers [*bētarmones*] ²⁵¹ to perform their sportive dance [*paizein*], so that the stranger, our guest, will be able to tell his near-and-dear ones, ²⁵² when he gets home, how much better we (Phaeacians) are than anyone else ²⁵³ in sailing and in footwork, in dance and song. ²⁵⁴ One of you go and get for Demodokos the clear-sounding phorminx, [255] bringing it to him. It is in the palace somewhere." ²⁵⁶ Thus spoke Alkinoos, the one who looks like the gods, and the herald [*kērux*] got up, ²⁵⁷ ready to bring the well carved phorminx from the palace of the king. ²⁵⁸ And the organizers [*aisumnētai*], the nine selectmen, all got up ²⁵⁹ —they belonged to the district [*dēmos*]—and they started arranging everything according to the rules of the competition [*agōn*]. [260] They made smooth the place of the singing and dancing [*khoros*], and they made a wide space of competition [*agōn*]. ²⁶¹ The herald [*kērux*] came near, bringing the clear-sounding phorminx ²⁶² for Demodokos. He moved to the center of the space. At his right and at his left were boys [*kouroi*] ²⁶³ in the first stage of adolescence [*prōthēboi*], standing there, well versed in dancing [*orkhēthmos*]. ²⁶⁴ They pounded out with their feet a dance [*khoros*], a thing of wonder, and Odysseus [265] was observing the sparkling footwork. He was amazed in his heart [*thūmos*].

²⁶⁶ And he [= Demodokos], playing on the phorminx [*phormizein*], started [*anaballesthai*] singing beautifully ²⁶⁷ about [*amphi*] the bonding [*philotēs*] of Arēs and of Aphrodite, the one with the beautiful garlands [*stephanoi*], ²⁶⁸ about how they, at the very beginning, mated with each other in the palace of Hephaistos, ²⁶⁹ in secret Arēs made Aphrodite many presents, and defiled [270] lord Hephaistos' marriage bed, so the sun, who saw what they were about, told Hephaistos. Hephaistos was

very angry when he heard such dreadful news, so he went to his smithy brooding mischief, got his great anvil into its place, and began to forge some chains [275] which none could either unloose or break, so that they might stay there in that place. When he had finished his snare he went into his bedroom and festooned the bed-posts all over [280] with chains like cobwebs; he also let many hang down from the great beam of the ceiling. Not even a god could see them, so fine and subtle were they. As soon as he had spread the chains all over the bed, he made as though he were setting out for the fair state of strong-founded Lemnos, which of all places in the world was the one he was most fond of. [285] But Arēs kept no blind look out, and as soon as he saw him start, hurried off to his house, burning with love for sweet-garlanded Aphrodite.

Now Aphrodite was just come in from a visit [290] to her father Zeus, the powerful son of Kronos, and was about sitting down when Arēs came inside the house, and said as he took her hand in his own, “Let us go to the couch of Hephaistos: he is not at home, but is gone off to Lemnos among the Sintians, whose speech is barbarous.”

[295] She was not unwilling, so they went to the couch to take their rest, whereon they were caught in the toils which cunning Hephaistos had spread for them, and could neither get up nor stir hand or foot, but found too late that they were in a trap. [300] Then glorious Hephaistos of the strong arms came up to them, for he had turned back before reaching Lemnos, when his scout the sun told him what was going on. He was in a furious passion, [305] and stood in the vestibule making a dreadful noise as he shouted to all the gods.

“Father Zeus,” he cried, “and all you other blessed gods who live for ever, come here and see the ridiculous and disgraceful sight that I will show you. Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite is always dishonoring me because I am lame. She is in love with ruinous Arēs, [310] who is handsome and clean built, whereas I am a cripple—but my parents are responsible [*aitioi*] for that, not I; they ought never to have begotten me. Come and see the

pair together asleep on my bed. It makes me furious to look at them. [315] They are very fond of one another, but I do not think they will lie there longer than they can help, nor do I think that they will sleep much; there, however, they shall stay till her father has repaid me the sum I gave him for his bitch-eyed daughter, [320] who is fair but not honest.”

Then the gods gathered to the house of Hephaistos. Earth-encircling Poseidon came, and kindly Hermes, the bringer of luck, and lord Apollo, but the goddesses stayed at home all of them for shame. [325] Then the givers of all good things stood in the doorway, and the blessed gods roared with inextinguishable laughter, as they saw how cunning Hephaistos had been, whereon one would turn towards his neighbor saying:

“Ill deeds do not bring excellence [*aretē*], and the weak [330] confound the strong. See how limping Hephaistos, lame as he is, has caught Arēs who is the fleetest god in the sky; and now Arēs will be cast in heavy damages.”

Thus did they converse, but lord Apollo said to Hermes, [335] “Messenger Hermes, giver of good things, you would not care how strong the chains were, would you, if you could sleep with Aphrodite the golden?”

“King Apollo,” answered Hermes, “I only wish [340] I might get the chance, though there were three times as many chains—and you might look on, all of you, gods and goddesses, but I would sleep with her if I could.”

The immortal gods burst out laughing as they heard him, but Poseidon took it all seriously, and kept on imploring [345] Hephaistos to set Arēs free again. “Let him go,” he cried, “and I will undertake, as you require, that he shall pay you all the damages that are held reasonable among the immortal gods.”

“Do not,” replied renowned Hephaistos of the strong arms, [350] “ask me to do this; a bad man’s bond is bad security; what remedy could I enforce against you if Arēs should go away and leave his debts behind him along with his chains?”

“Hephaistos,” said Poseidon, shaker of the Earth, [355] “if Arēs goes away without paying his damages, I will pay you myself.” So mighty Hephaistos answered, “In this case I cannot and must not refuse you.”

Then he loosed the bonds that bound them, [360] and as soon as they were free they scampered off, Arēs to Thrace and laughter-loving Aphrodite to Cyprus and to Paphos, where is her grove and her altar fragrant with burnt offerings. Here the Graces bathed her, and anointed her with oil of ambrosia [365] such as the immortal gods make use of, and they clothed her in raiment of the most enchanting beauty.

³⁶⁷ These things, then, the singer [*aoidos*] was singing [*aeidein*], that very famous singer. As for Odysseus, ³⁶⁸ he felt delight [*terpesthai*] in his heart as he was listening—and so too did all the others feel, ³⁶⁹ the Phaeacians, those men with their long oars, men famed for their ships.

[370] Then Alkinoos told Laodamas and Halios to dance alone, for there was no one to compete with them. So they took a red ball which Polybos, the skilled craftsman, had made for them, and one of them bent himself backwards and threw it up towards the clouds, [375] while the other jumped from off the ground and caught it with ease before it came down again. When they had done throwing the ball straight up into the air they began to dance, and at the same time kept on throwing it backwards and forwards to one another, while all the young men [380] in the ring applauded and made a great stamping with their feet. Then great Odysseus said:

“King Alkinoos, pre-eminent among all people, you said your people were the nimblest dancers in the world, and indeed they have proved

themselves to be so. I was astonished as I saw them.”

[385] The hallowed king was delighted at this, and exclaimed to the oar-loving Phaeacians “Aldermen and town councilors, our guest seems to be a person of singular judgment; let us give him such proof of our hospitality as he may reasonably expect. [390] There are twelve chief men throughout the *dēmos*, and counting myself there are thirteen; contribute, each of you, a clean cloak, a khiton, and a talent of fine gold; let us give him all this in a lump down at once, [395] so that when he gets his supper he may do so with a light heart. As for Euryalos, he will have to make a formal apology and a present too, for he has been rude.”

Thus did he speak. The others all of them applauded his saying, and sent their servants to fetch the presents. [400] Then Euryalos said, “Great King Alkinoos, I will give the stranger all the satisfaction you require. He shall have a sword, which is of bronze, all but the hilt, which is of silver. I will also give him the scabbard of newly sawn ivory [405] into which it fits. It will be worth a great deal to him.”

As he spoke he placed the sword in the hands of Odysseus and said, “Good luck to you, father stranger; if anything has been said amiss may the winds blow it away [410] with them, and may the gods grant you a safe return, for I understand you have been long away from home, and have gone through much hardship.”

To which resourceful Odysseus answered, “Good luck to you too my friend, and may the gods grant you every happiness [*olbos*]. I hope you will not miss the sword you have given [415] me along with your apology.”

With these words he girded the sword about his shoulders and towards sundown the presents began to make their appearance, as the servants of the donors kept bringing them to the house of King Alkinoos; here his sons [420] received them, and placed them under their mother’s charge.

Then Alkinoos led the way to the house and bade his guests take their seats.

“Wife,” said he, turning to Queen Arete, “Go, fetch the best chest we have, [425] and put a clean cloak and khiton in it. Also, set a copper on the fire and heat some water; our guest will take a warm bath; see also to the careful packing of the presents that the noble Phaeacians have made him ⁴²⁹ so that he [= Odysseus] might take delight [*terpesthai*] in the feast [*dais*] and in listening to the *humnos* of the song. [430] I shall myself give him this golden goblet—which is of exquisite workmanship—that he may be reminded of me for the rest of his life whenever he makes a drink-offering to Zeus, or to any of the gods.”

Then Arete told her maids to set a large tripod upon the fire as fast as they could, [435] whereon they set a tripod full of bath water on to a clear fire; they threw on sticks to make it blaze, and the water became hot as the flame played about the belly of the tripod. Meanwhile Arete brought a magnificent chest from her own room, and inside it she packed all the beautiful presents [440] of gold and raiment which the Phaeacians had brought. Lastly she added a cloak and a good khiton from Alkinoos, and said to Odysseus:

“See to the lid yourself, and have the whole bound round at once, for fear any one should rob you [445] by the way when you are asleep in your ship.”

When long-suffering great Odysseus heard this he put the lid on the chest and made it fast with a bond that Circe had taught him. He had done so before an upper servant told him to come [450] to the bath and wash himself. He was very glad of a warm bath, for he had had no one to wait upon him ever since he left the house of fair-haired Kalypsō, who as long as he remained with her had taken as good care of him as though he had been a god. When the servants had done washing and anointing him with oil, [455] and had given him a clean cloak and

khiton, he left the bathing room and joined the guests who were sitting over their wine. Lovely Nausicaa, with the gods' loveliness on her, stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the hall, and admired him as she saw him pass. [460] "Farewell stranger," said she, "do not forget me when you are safe at home again, for it is to me first that you owe a ransom for having saved your life."

And resourceful Odysseus said, "Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alkinoos, [465] may Zeus, the mighty, high-thundering husband of Hera, grant that I may reach my home and see my day of homecoming [*nostos*]; so shall I bless you as a goddess all my days, for it was you who saved me."

When he had said this, he seated himself beside Alkinoos. [470] Supper was then served, and the wine was mixed for drinking. A servant led in the favorite bard, Demodokos, and set him in the midst of the company, near one of the bearing-posts supporting the hall, that he might lean against it. [475] Then resourceful Odysseus cut off a piece of roast pork with plenty of fat (for there was abundance left on the joint) and said to a servant, "Take this piece of pork over to Demodokos and tell him to eat it; for all the pain his lays may cause me I will salute him none the less; bards are honored [480] and get respect [*aidōs*] throughout the world, for the Muse teaches them their songs and loves them."

The servant carried the pork in his fingers over to the hero Demodokos, who took it and was very much pleased. They then laid their hands on the good things that were before them. [485] When they had satisfied their desire for drinking and eating, ⁴⁸⁶ then Odysseus, the one with many a stratagem, addressed Demodokos: ⁴⁸⁷ "Demodokos, I admire and pointedly praise you, more than any other human. ⁴⁸⁸ Either the Muse, child of Zeus, taught you, or Apollo. ⁴⁸⁹ All too well, in accord with its *kosmos*, do you sing the fate of the Achaeans [490] —all the things the Achaeans did and all the things that were done to them, and they suffered for it— ⁴⁹¹ you sing it as if you yourself had been present or had

heard it from someone else. ⁴⁹² But come now, move ahead and shift forward [*metabainein*] and sing the *kosmos* of the horse, ⁴⁹³ the wooden horse that Epeios made with the help of Athena, ⁴⁹⁴ the one that Odysseus, the radiant one, once upon a time took to the acropolis as a stratagem, [495] having filled it with men, who ransacked Ilion. ⁴⁹⁶ If you can tell me in due order [*katalegein*], in accord with proper apportioning [*moira*], ⁴⁹⁷ then right away I will say the authoritative word [*mūthos*] to all mortals: ⁴⁹⁸ I will say, and I see it as I say it, that the god, favorably disposed toward you, granted you a divinely sounding song.”

⁴⁹⁹ And he [= Demodokos], setting his point of departure [*hormētheis*], started [*arkhesthai*] from the god. And he made visible [*phainein*] the song, [500] taking it from the point where they [= the Achaeans], boarding their ships with the strong benches, ⁵⁰¹ sailed away, setting their tents on fire. ⁵⁰² That is what some of the Argives [= Achaeans] were doing. But others of them were in the company of Odysseus most famed, and they were already ⁵⁰³ sitting hidden inside the Horse, which was now in the meeting place of the Trojans. ⁵⁰⁴ The Trojans themselves had pulled the Horse into the acropolis. [505] So there it was, standing there, and they talked a great deal about it, in doubt about what to do, ⁵⁰⁶ sitting around it. There were three different plans: ⁵⁰⁷ to split the hollow wood with pitiless bronze, ⁵⁰⁸ or to drag it to the heights and push it down from the rocks, ⁵⁰⁹ or to leave it, great artifact that it was, a charm [*thelktērion*] of the gods [510] —which, I now see it, was exactly the way it was going to end [*teleutân*], ⁵¹¹ because it was fate [*aisa*] that the place would be destroyed, once the city had enfolded in itself ⁵¹² the great Wooden Horse, when all the best men were sitting inside it, ⁵¹³ the Argives [= Achaeans], that is, bringing slaughter and destruction upon the Trojans. ⁵¹⁴ He sang how the sons of the Achaeans destroyed the city, [515] pouring out of the Horse, leaving behind the hollow place of ambush. ⁵¹⁶ He sang how the steep citadel was destroyed by different

men in different places. ⁵¹⁷ —how Odysseus went to the palace of Deiphobos, ⁵¹⁸ how he was looking like Arēs, and godlike Menelaos went with him, ⁵¹⁹ and how in that place, I now see it, he [= Demodokos] said that he [= Odysseus] dared to go through the worst part of the war, [520] and how he emerged victorious after that, with the help of Athena, the one with the mighty heart [*thūmos*].

⁵²¹ So these were the things that the singer [*aoidos*] most famed was singing. As for Odysseus, ⁵²² he dissolved [*tēkesthai*] into tears. He made wet his cheeks with the tears flowing from his eyelids, ⁵²³ just as a woman cries, falling down and embracing her dear husband, ⁵²⁴ who fell in front of the city and people he was defending, [525] trying to ward off the pitiless day of doom that is hanging over the city and its children. ⁵²⁶ She sees him dying, gasping for his last breath, ⁵²⁷ and she pours herself all over him as she wails with a piercing cry. But there are men behind her, ⁵²⁸ prodding her with their spears, hurting her back and shoulders, ⁵²⁹ and they bring for her a life of bondage, which will give her pain and sorrow. [530] Her cheeks are wasting away with a sorrow [*akhos*] that is most pitiful [*eleeinon*]. ⁵³¹ So also did Odysseus pour out a piteous tear [*dakruon*] from beneath his brows; ⁵³² there he was, escaping the notice of all while he kept pouring out his tears [*dakrua*]. ⁵³³ But Alkinoos was the only one of all of them who was aware, and he took note [*noeîn*]. [535] The king, therefore, at once rose and said:

“Aldermen and town councilors of the oar-loving Phaeacians, ⁵³⁷ It is high time for Demodokos to hold off and stop the song of that lyre of his with its clear sound. ⁵³⁸ I say that because the beauty and the pleasure he gives [*kharizestai*] as he sings these things does not at all extend to everyone here. ⁵³⁹ As soon as we began dining and as soon as the divine singer got started, [540] ever since then there has been no pause in grief-filled lamentation [*goos*] on the part of this one, ⁵⁴¹ I mean, on the part of this guest here. It seems to me that sorrow [*akhos*] has overcome his

thinking, very much so. ⁵⁴² This one [= the singer] must now hold off [on his singing], so that we may take delight [*terpesthai*] all together ⁵⁴³—I mean, not only we as the hosts but also he as the guest. It would be much more beautiful that way. For all these festivities, with the escort and the presents that we are making with so much good will, are wholly in his honor, [545] and any one with even a moderate amount of right feeling knows that he ought to treat a guest and a suppliant as though he were his own brother.

Therefore, sir, do you on your part affect no more concealment nor reserve in the matter about which I shall ask you; it will be more polite in you to give me a plain answer; [550] tell me the name by which your father and mother over yonder used to call you, and by which you were known among your neighbors and fellow-townpeople. There is no one, neither rich nor poor, who is absolutely without any name whatever, for people's fathers and mothers give them names as soon as they are born. [555] Tell me also your country, district [*dēmos*], and city, that our ships may shape their purpose accordingly and take you there. For the Phaeacians have no pilots; their vessels have no rudders as those of other nations have, but the ships themselves understand what it is that we are thinking about and want; [560] they know all the cities and countries in the whole world, and can traverse the sea just as well even when it is covered with mist and cloud, so that there is no danger of being wrecked or coming to any harm. Still I do remember hearing my father say [565] that Poseidon was angry with us for being too easy-going in the matter of giving people escorts. He said that one of these days he should wreck a ship of ours as it was returning from having escorted some one, and bury our city under a high mountain. [570] That is what the old man said. And the god [Poseidon] could either bring these things to fulfillment ⁵⁷¹ or they could be left unfulfilled, however it was pleasing to his heart.

And now, tell me and tell me true. Where have you been wandering, and in what countries have you traveled? Tell us of the peoples themselves,

[575] and of their cities—who were hostile, savage and uncivilized [non-*dikaíos*], and who, on the other hand, hospitable and endowed with a god-fearing mind [*noos*]. ⁵⁷⁷ Tell us why you are weeping and lamenting in your heart [*thūmos*] ⁵⁷⁸ when you hear the fate of the Argive Danaans [= Achaeans] or the fate of Troy. ⁵⁷⁹ The gods arranged all this, and they wove the fate of doom [580] for mortals, so that future generations might have something to sing about. ⁵⁸¹ Did you lose some kinsman of your wife's when you were at Troy? ⁵⁸² Some such noble person? Or a son-in-law or father-in-law? Such people are most certainly ⁵⁸³ the nearest relations a man has outside his own flesh and blood. ⁵⁸⁴ Or was it perhaps a comrade [*hetairos*] who was well aware of the things that were most pleasing to you? [585] Some such noble person? For not any less prized than your own brother ⁵⁸⁶ is a comrade [*hetairos*] who is well aware of things you think about.”

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 9

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] And resourceful Odysseus answered, “King Alkinoos, pre-eminent among all people, ³ This is indeed a beautiful thing, to listen to a singer [*aoidos*] ⁴ such as this one [= Demodokos], the kind of singer that he is, comparable to the gods in the way he speaks [*audē*], [5] for I declare, there is no outcome [*telos*] that has more pleasurable beauty [*kharis*] ⁶ than the moment when the spirit of festivity [*euphrosunē*] prevails throughout the whole community [*dēmos*] ⁷ and the people at the feast [*daitumones*], throughout the halls, are listening to the singer [*aoidos*] ⁸ as they sit there—you can see one after the other—and they are sitting at tables that are filled ⁹ with grain and meat, while wine from the mixing bowl is drawn [10] by the one who pours the wine and takes it around, pouring it into their cups. ¹¹ This kind of thing, as I see it in my way of thinking, is the most beautiful thing in the whole world. Now, however, since you are inclined to ask the story of my sorrows, and rekindle my own sad memories in respect of them, I do not know how to begin, nor yet how to continue and conclude my tale, [15] for the hand of the gods has been laid heavily upon me.

Firstly, then, I will tell you my name that you too may know it, and that one day, if I outlive this time of sorrow, I may become a guest-friend to you, though I live so far away from all of you. ¹⁹ I am Odysseus son of Laertes, and I, with all [*pāsi*] my acts of trickery, [20] I-am-on-the-minds-of [*melō*] all [*pāsi*] humans, and my glory [*kleos*] reaches all the way up to the sky. I live in Ithaca, where there is a high mountain called Neriton, covered with forests; and not far from it there is a group of islands very near to one another—Doulikhion, Samē, and the wooded

island of Zakynthos. [25] It lies squat on the horizon, all highest up in the sea towards the sunset, while the others lie away from it towards dawn. It is a rugged island, but it breeds brave men, and my eyes know none that they better love to look upon. The goddess Kalypsō, shining among divinities, kept me [30] with her in her cave, and wanted me to marry her, as did also the cunning Aeaean goddess Circe; but they could neither of them persuade me, for there is nothing dearer to a man than his own country and his parents, [35] and however splendid a home he may have in a foreign country, if it be far from father or mother, he does not care about it.

Now, however, I will tell you of the many hazardous adventures which by Zeus' will I met with on my return [*nostos*] from Troy. When I had set sail thence the wind took me first to Ismaros, [40] which is the city of the Kikones. There I ransacked the town and put the people to the sword. We took their wives and also much booty, which we divided equitably amongst us, so that none might have reason to complain. I then said that we had better make off at once, but my men very foolishly would not obey me, [45] so they stayed there drinking much wine and killing great numbers of sheep and oxen on the sea shore. Meanwhile the Kikones cried out for help to other Kikones who lived inland. These were more in number, and stronger, and they were more skilled in the art of war, for they could fight, [50] either from chariots or on foot as the occasion served; in the morning, therefore, they came as thick as leaves and bloom in summertime [*hōrā*], and the hand of the gods was against us, so that we were hard pressed. They set the battle in array near the [55] ships, and the armies aimed their bronze-shod spears at one another. So long as the day waxed and it was still morning, we held our own against them, though they were more in number than we; but as the sun went down, towards the time when men let loose their oxen, the Kikones got the better of us, [60] and we lost half a dozen men from every ship we had; so we got away with those that were left.

Thence we sailed onward with sorrow in our hearts, but glad to have escaped death though we had lost our comrades, nor did we leave [65] till we had thrice invoked each one of the poor men who had perished by the hands of the Kikones. Then cloud-gathering Zeus raised the North wind against us till it blew a hurricane, so that land and sky were hidden in thick clouds, and night sprang forth out of the sky. [70] We let the ships run before the gale, but the force of the wind tore our sails to tatters, so we took them down for fear of shipwreck, and rowed our hardest towards the land. There we lay two days and two nights suffering [75] much alike from toil and distress of mind, but on the morning of the third day we again raised our masts, set sail, and took our places, letting the wind and steersmen [*kubernētēs*] direct our ship. I should have got home at that time unharmed [80] had not the North wind and the currents been against me as I was doubling Cape Malea, and set me off my course hard by the island of Cythera.

I was driven thence by foul winds for a space of nine days upon the sea, but on the tenth day we reached the land of the Lotus-eaters, who live on a food that comes from a kind of flower. [85] Here we landed to take in fresh water, and our crews got their mid-day meal on the shore near the ships. When they had eaten and drunk [90] I chose [*krinein*] two of my company to go see what manner of men the people of the place might be, and they had a third man under them. They started at once, and went about among the Lotus-eaters, who did them no harm, but gave them to eat of the lotus, which was so delicious that those who ate of it [95] left off caring about home, and did not even want to go back and say what had happened to them, but were for staying and munching lotus with the Lotus-eaters without thinking further of their *nostos*; nevertheless, though they wept bitterly I forced them back to the ships and made them [100] fast under the benches. Then I told the rest to go on board at once, lest any of them should taste of the lotus and leave off wanting to get home [*nostos*], so they took their places and smote the gray sea with their oars.

[105] We sailed hence, always in much distress, till we came to the land of the lawless and inhuman Cyclopes. Now the Cyclopes neither plant nor plow, but trust in providence, and live on such [110] wheat, barley, and grapes as grow wild without any kind of tillage, and their wild grapes yield them wine as the sun and the rain may grow them. They have no laws nor assemblies of the people, but live in caves on the tops of high mountains; each is lord and master [115] in his family, and they take no account of their neighbors.

Now off their harbor there lies a wooded and fertile island not quite close to the land of the Cyclopes, but still not far. It is overrun with wild goats, that breed there in great numbers and are never disturbed by foot of man; [120] for sportsmen—who as a rule will suffer so much hardship in forest or among mountain precipices—do not go there, nor yet again is it ever plowed or fed down, but it lies a wilderness untilled and unsown from year to year, and has no living thing upon it but only goats. [125] For the Cyclopes have no ships, nor yet shipwrights who could make ships for them; they cannot therefore go from city to city, or sail over the sea to one another's country as people who have ships can do; [130] if they had had these they would have colonized the island, for it is a very good one, and would yield everything in due season. There are meadows that in some places come right down to the sea shore, well watered and full of luscious grass; grapes would do there excellently; there is level land for plowing, and it would always yield heavily [135] at harvest time [*hōrā*], for the soil is deep. There is a good harbor where no cables are wanted, nor yet anchors, nor need a ship be moored, but all one has to do is to beach one's vessel and stay there till the wind becomes fair for putting out to sea again. [140] At the head of the harbor there is a spring of clear water coming out of a cave, and there are poplars growing all round it.

Here we entered, but so dark was the night that some god must have brought us in, for there was nothing whatever to be seen. A thick mist hung all round our ships; the moon [145] was hidden behind a mass of

clouds so that no one could have seen the island if he had looked for it, nor were there any breakers to tell us we were close in shore before we found ourselves upon the land itself; when, however, we had beached the ships, we took down the sails, [150] went ashore and camped upon the beach till daybreak.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, we admired the island and wandered all over it, while the nymphs, Zeus of the aegis' daughters, [155] roused the wild goats that we might get some meat for our dinner. Then we fetched our spears and bows and arrows from the ships, and dividing ourselves into three bands began to shoot the goats. Heaven sent us excellent sport; I had twelve ships with me, and each ship got nine goats, [160] while my own ship had ten; thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we ate and drank our fill—and we had plenty of wine left, for each one of us had taken [165] many jars full when we ransacked the city of the Kikones, and this had not yet run out. While we were feasting we kept turning our eyes towards the land of the Cyclopes, which was hard by, and saw the smoke of their stubble fires. We could almost fancy we heard their voices and the bleating of their sheep and goats, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped down upon the beach, [170] and next morning I called a council.

‘Stay here, my brave men,’ said I, ‘all the rest of you, while I go with my ship and make trial of these people myself: [175] I want to see if they are uncivilized [= not *dikaios*] savages, or a population that is hospitable and endowed with a god-fearing *noos*.’

I went on board, bidding my men to do so also and loose the hawsers; [180] so they took their places and smote the gray sea with their oars. When we got to the land, which was not far, there, on the face of a cliff near the sea, we saw a great cave overhung with laurels. It was a station for a great many sheep and goats, and outside there was a large yard, [185] with a high wall round it made of stones built into the ground and

of trees both pine and oak. This was the abode of a huge monster who was then away from home shepherding his flocks. He would have nothing to do with other people, but led the life of an outlaw. [190] He was a horrid creature, not like a human being at all, but resembling rather some crag that stands out boldly against the sky on the top of a high mountain.

I told my men to draw the ship ashore, and stay where they were, [195] all but the twelve best [*krinein*] among them, who were to go along with myself. I also took a goatskin of sweet black wine which had been given me by Maron, son of Euanthes, who was priest of Apollo, the patron god of Ismaros, and lived within the wooded precincts of the temple. When we were ransacking the city we respected him, and spared his life, as also his wife and child; [200] so he made me some presents of great value—seven talents of fine gold, and a bowl of silver, with twelve jars of sweet wine, unblended, [205] and of the most exquisite flavor. Not a man nor maid in the house knew about it, but only himself, his wife, and one housekeeper: when he drank it he mixed twenty parts of water to one of wine, [210] and yet the fragrance from the mixing-bowl was so exquisite that it was impossible to refrain from drinking. I filled a large skin with this wine, and took a wallet full of provisions with me, for my mind misgave me that I might have to deal with some savage who would be of great strength, [215] and would respect neither right [*dike*] nor law.

We soon reached his cave, but he was out shepherding, so we went inside and took stock of all that we could see. His cheese-racks were loaded with cheeses, and he had more lambs and kids than his pens could hold. [220] They were kept in separate flocks; first there were the piglets, then the oldest of the younger lambs and lastly the very young ones all kept apart from one another; as for his dairy, all the vessels, bowls, and milk pails into which he milked, were swimming with whey. When they saw all this, my men begged me [225] to let them first steal some cheeses, and make off with them to the ship; they would then return,

drive down the lambs and kids, put them on board and sail away with them. It would have been indeed better if we had done so but I would not listen to them, for I wanted to see the owner himself, in the hope that he might give me a present. [230] When, however, we saw him my poor men found him ill to deal with.

We lit a fire, offered some of the cheeses in sacrifice, ate others of them, and then sat waiting till the Cyclops should come in with his sheep. When he came, he brought in with him a huge load of dry firewood to light the fire for his supper, [235] and this he flung with such a noise on to the floor of his cave that we hid ourselves for fear at the far end of the cavern. Meanwhile he drove all the ewes inside, as well as the she-goats that he was going to milk, leaving the males, both rams and he-goats, outside in the yards. Then [240] he rolled a huge stone to the mouth of the cave—so huge that two and twenty strong four-wheeled wagons would not be enough to draw it from its place against the doorway. When he had so done he sat down and milked his ewes and [245] goats, all in due course, and then let each of them have her own young. He curdled half the milk and set it aside in wicker strainers, but the other half he poured into bowls that he might drink it for his supper. [250] When he had got through with all his work, he lit the fire, and then caught sight of us, whereon he said:

‘Strangers, who are you? Where do sail from? Are you traders, or do you sail the sea as rovers, [255] with your hands against every man, and every man’s hand against you?’

We were frightened out of our senses by his loud voice and monstrous form, but I managed to say, ‘We are Achaeans on our way home from Troy, but by the will of Zeus, [260] and stress of weather, we have been driven far out of our course. We are the people of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, who has won infinite *kleos* throughout the whole world, [265] by ransacking so great a city and killing so many people. We therefore humbly pray you to show us some hospitality, and otherwise make us

such presents as visitors may reasonably expect. May your excellency revere [give *aidōs* to] the gods, for we are your suppliants, [270] and Zeus takes all respectable travelers under his protection, for he is the avenger of all suppliants and foreigners in distress.'

To this he gave me but a pitiless answer, 'Stranger,' said he, 'you are a fool, or else you know nothing of this country. Talk to me, indeed, about fearing the gods or shunning their anger? [275] We Cyclopes do not care about Zeus of the aegis or any of your blessed gods, for we are ever so much stronger than they. I shall not spare either yourself or your companions out of any regard for Zeus, unless I am in the humor for doing so. And now tell me [280] where you made your ship fast when you came on shore. Was it round the point, or is she lying straight off the land?'

He said this to draw me out, but I was too cunning to be caught in that way, so I answered with a lie: 'Poseidon, shaker of the Earth,' said I, 'sent my ship on to the rocks at the far end of your country, [285] and wrecked it. We were driven on to them from the open sea, but I and those who are with me escaped the jaws of death.'

The cruel wretch granted me not one word of answer, but with a sudden clutch he gripped up two of my men at once and dashed them down upon the ground as though they had been puppies. [290] Their brains were shed upon the ground, and the earth was wet with their blood. Then he tore them limb from limb and supped upon them. He gobbled them up like a lion in the wilderness, flesh, bones, marrow, and entrails, without leaving anything uneaten. As for us, we wept and lifted up our hands to the sky on seeing [295] such a horrid sight, for we did not know what else to do; but when the Cyclops had filled his huge paunch, and had washed down his meal of human flesh with a drink of neat milk, he stretched himself full length upon the ground among his sheep, and went to sleep. I was at first inclined [300] to seize my sword, draw it, and drive it into his vitals, but I reflected that if I did we should all

certainly be lost, for we should never be able to shift [305] the stone which the monster had put in front of the door. So we stayed sobbing and sighing where we were till morning came.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, he again lit his fire, milked his goats and ewes, all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; [310] as soon as he had got through with all his work, he clutched up two more of my men, and began eating them for his morning's meal. Presently, with the utmost ease, he rolled the stone away from the door and drove out his sheep, but he at once put it back again—as easily as though he were merely clapping the lid on to a quiver full of arrows. [315] As soon as he had done so he shouted, and cried 'Shoo, shoo,' after his sheep to drive them on to the mountain; so I was left to scheme some way of taking my revenge and covering myself with glory.

In the end I thought it would be the best plan to do as follows. The Cyclops had a great club which was lying near one of the sheep pens; [320] it was of green olive wood, and he had cut it intending to use it for a staff as soon as it should be dry. It was so huge that we could only compare it to the mast of a twenty-oared merchant vessel of large burden, and able to venture out into open sea. [325] I went up to this club and cut off about six feet of it; I then gave this piece to the men and told them to fine it evenly off at one end, which they proceeded to do, and lastly I brought it to a point myself, charring the end in the fire to make it harder. When I had done this I hid it under dung, [330] which was lying about all over the cave, and told the men to cast lots which of them should venture along with myself to lift it and bore it into the monster's eye while he was asleep. The lot fell upon the very four whom I should have chosen, [335] and I myself made five. In the evening the wretch came back from shepherding, and drove his flocks into the cave—this time driving them all inside, and not leaving any in the yards; I suppose some fancy must have taken him, or a god must have prompted him to do so. [340] As soon as he had put the stone back to its place

against the door, he sat down, milked his ewes and his goats all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; when he had got through with all this work, he gripped up two more of my men, and made his supper off them. [345] So I went up to him with an ivy-wood bowl of black wine in my hands:

‘Look here, Cyclops,’ said I, ‘you have been eating a great deal of man’s flesh, so take this and drink some wine, that you may see what kind of liquor we had on board my ship. I was bringing it to you as a drink-offering, in the hope that you would take compassion upon me [350] and further me on my way home, whereas all you do is to go on ramping and raving most intolerably. You ought to be ashamed yourself; how can you expect people to come see you any more if you treat them in this way?’

He then took the cup and drank. He was so delighted with the taste of the wine that he begged me for another bowl full. [355] ‘Be so kind,’ he said, ‘as to give me some more, and tell me your name at once. I want to make you a present that you will be glad to have. We have wine even in this country, for our soil grows grapes and the sun ripens them, but this drinks like nectar and ambrosia all in one.’

[360] I then gave him some more; three times did I fill the bowl for him, and three times did he drain it without thought or heed; then, when I saw that the wine had got into his head, I said to him as plausibly as I could: ‘Cyclops, you ask my name and I will tell it you; [365] give me, therefore, the present you promised me; my name is Noman [*ou tis*]; this is what my father and mother and my friends have always called me.’

But the cruel wretch said, ‘Then I will eat all Noman’s [*ou tis*] comrades before Noman [*ou tis*] himself, [370] and will keep Noman [*ou tis*] for the last. This is the present that I will make him.’

As he spoke he reeled, and fell sprawling face upwards on the ground. His great neck hung heavily backwards and a deep sleep took hold upon him. Presently he turned sick, and threw up both wine and the gobbets of human flesh on which he had been gorging, for he was very drunk. [375] Then I thrust the beam of wood far into the embers to heat it, and encouraged my men lest any of them should turn faint-hearted. When the wood, green though it was, was about to blaze, [380] I drew it out of the fire glowing with heat, and my men gathered round me, for a superhuman force [*daimōn*] had filled their hearts with courage. We drove the sharp end of the beam into the monster's eye, and bearing upon it with all my weight I kept turning it round and round as though I were boring a hole in a ship's plank with an auger, [385] which two men with a wheel and strap can keep on turning as long as they choose. Even thus did we bore the red hot beam into his eye, till the boiling blood bubbled all over it as we worked it round and round, so that the steam from the burning eyeball scalded his eyelids [390] and eyebrows, and the roots of the eye sputtered in the fire. As a blacksmith plunges an axe or hatchet into cold water to temper it—for it is this that gives strength to the iron—and it makes a great hiss as he does so, even thus did the Cyclops' eye hiss round the beam of olive wood, [395] and his hideous yells made the cave ring again. We ran away in a fright, but he plucked the beam all besmirched with gore from his eye, and hurled it from him in a frenzy of rage and pain, shouting as he did so to the other Cyclopes who lived [400] on the bleak headlands near him; so they gathered from all quarters round his cave when they heard him crying, and asked what was the matter with him.

‘What ails you, Polyphemus,’ said they, ‘that you make such a noise, breaking the stillness of the night, and preventing us from being able to sleep? [405] Surely no man [*mē tis*] is carrying off your sheep? Surely no man [*mē tis*] is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force [*biē*]?’

But Polyphemus shouted to them from inside the cave, ‘Noman [*ou tis*] is killing me by fraud! Noman [*ou tis*] is killing me by force [*biē*]!’

‘Then,’ said they, [410] ‘if no man [*mē tis*] is attacking you, you must be ill; when Zeus makes people ill, there is no help for it, and you had better pray to your father Poseidon.’

Then they went away, and I laughed inwardly at the success of my clever stratagem [*mētis*], [415] but the Cyclops, groaning and in an agony of pain, felt about with his hands till he found the stone and took it from the door; then he sat in the doorway and stretched his hands in front of it to catch anyone going out with the sheep, for he thought I might be foolish enough to attempt this.

[420] As for myself I kept on puzzling to think how I could best save my own life [*psūkhē*] and those of my companions; I schemed and schemed, as one who knows that his life depends upon it, for the danger was very great. In the end I thought that this plan would be the best. [425] The male sheep were well grown, and carried a heavy black fleece, so I bound them noiselessly in threes together, with some of the reeds on which the wicked monster used to sleep. There was to be a man under the middle sheep, [430] and the two on either side were to cover him, so that there were three sheep to each man. As for myself there was a ram finer than any of the others, so I caught hold of him by the back, ensconced myself in the thick wool under his belly, [435] and hung on patiently to his fleece, face upwards, keeping a firm hold on it all the time.

Thus, then, did we wait in great fear of mind till morning came, but when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, the male sheep hurried out to feed, while the ewes remained bleating about the pens waiting to be milked, for their udders [440] were full to bursting; but their master in spite of all his pain felt the backs of all the sheep as they stood upright, without being sharp enough to find out that the men were underneath their bellies. As the ram was going out, last of all, [445] heavy with its fleece and with the weight of my crafty self; powerful Polyphemus laid hold of it and said:

‘My good ram, what is it that makes you the last to leave my cave this morning? You are not wont to let the ewes go before you, but lead the mob with a run whether [450] to flowery mead or bubbling fountain, and are the first to come home again at night; but now you lag last of all. Is it because you know your master has lost his eye, and are sorry because that wicked Noman and his horrid crew have got him down in his drink and blinded him? [455] But I will have his life yet. If you could understand and talk, you would tell me where the wretch is hiding, and I would dash his brains upon the ground till they flew all over the cave. [460] I should thus have some satisfaction for the harm this no-good Noman has done me.’

As he spoke he drove the ram outside, but when we were a little way out from the cave and yards, I first got from under the ram’s belly, and then freed my comrades; as for the sheep, which were very fat, by constantly heading them in the right direction [465] we managed to drive them down to the ship. The crew rejoiced greatly at seeing those of us who had escaped death, but wept for the others whom the Cyclops had killed. However, I made signs to them by nodding and frowning that they were to hush their crying, and told them to get all [470] the sheep on board at once and put out to sea; so they went aboard, took their places, and smote the gray sea with their oars. Then, when I had got as far out as my voice would reach, I began to jeer at the Cyclops.

[475] ‘Cyclops,’ said I, ‘you should have taken better measure of your man before eating up his comrades in your cave. You wretch, do you intend by violence [*biē*] to eat up your visitors in your own cave? You might have known that your sin would find you out, and now Zeus and the other gods have punished you.’

[480] He got more and more furious as he heard me, so he tore the top from off a high mountain, and flung it just in front of my ship so that it was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash [485] of the wave it raised carried us back

towards the mainland, and forced us towards the shore. But I snatched up a long pole and kept the ship off, making signs to my men by nodding my head, [490] that they must row for their lives, whereon they laid out with a will. When we had got twice as far as we were before, I was for jeering at the Cyclops again, but the men begged and prayed of me to hold my tongue.

‘Do not,’ they exclaimed, ‘be mad enough to provoke this savage creature further; [495] he has thrown one rock at us already which drove us back again to the mainland, and we were sure it had been the death of us; if he had then heard any further sound of voices he would have pounded our heads and our ship’s timbers into a jelly with the rugged rocks he would have heaved at us, for he can throw them a long way.’

[500] But I would not listen to them, and shouted out to him in my rage, ‘Cyclops, if anyone asks you who it was that put your eye out and spoiled your beauty, say it was the valiant warrior Odysseus, ransacker of cities, [505] son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca.’

Then he groaned, and cried out, ‘Alas, alas, then the old prophecy about me is coming true. There was a prophet [*mantis*] here, at one time, a man both brave and of great stature, Telemos, son of Eurymos, who was an excellent seer, [510] and did all the prophesying for the Cyclopes till he grew old; he told me that all this would happen to me some day, and said I should lose my sight by the hand of Odysseus. I have been all along expecting some one of imposing presence and superhuman strength, [515] whereas he turns out to be a little insignificant weakling, who has managed to blind my eye by taking advantage of me in my drink; come here, then, Odysseus, that I may make you presents to show my hospitality, and urge Poseidon, glorious shaker of the Earth, to help you forward on your journey—for Poseidon and I are father and son. [520] He, if he so will, shall heal me, which no one else neither god nor man can do.’

Then I said, 'I wish I could be as sure of killing you outright and sending you down, bereft of your *psūkhē*, to the house of Hādēs, as I am [525] that it will take more than Poseidon to cure that eye of yours.' Then he lifted up his hands to the firmament of the sky and prayed, saying, 'Hear me, great Poseidon, who encircles the Earth; if I am indeed your own true-begotten son, [530] grant that Odysseus, ransacker of cities, son of Laertes, who makes his home in Ithaca may never reach his home alive; or if he must get back to his friends at last, let him do so late and in sore plight after losing all his men let him reach his home [535] in another man's ship and find trouble in his house.'

Thus did he pray, and Poseidon heard his prayer. Then he picked up a rock much larger than the first, swung it aloft and hurled it with prodigious force. It fell just short of the ship, [540] but was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised drove us onwards on our way towards the shore of the island.

When at last we got to the island where we had left the rest of our ships, we found our comrades [545] lamenting us, and anxiously awaiting our return. We ran our vessel upon the sands and got out of her on to the sea shore; we also landed the Cyclops' sheep, and divided them equitably amongst us so that none might have reason to complain. [550] As for the ram, my companions agreed that I should have it as an extra share; so I sacrificed it on the sea shore, and burned its thigh bones to Zeus, dark-clouded son of Kronos, who is the lord of all. But he heeded not my sacrifice, and only thought how he might destroy [555] my ships and my comrades.

Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we feasted our fill on meat and drink, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped upon the beach. [560] When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I bade my men on board and loose the hawsers. Then they took their places and smote the gray sea with their

oars; so we sailed on with sorrow in our hearts, but glad to have escaped death though we had lost our comrades.

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2019-12-18

Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 10

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thence we went on to the Aeolian island where lives Aiolos, son of Hippotas, dear to the immortal gods. It is an island that floats (as it were) upon the sea, iron bound with a wall that girds it. [5] Now, Aiolos has six daughters and six sons in the bloom of youth, so he made the sons marry the daughters, and they all live with their dear father and mother, feasting and enjoying every conceivable kind of luxury. [10] All day long the atmosphere of the house is loaded with the savor of roasting meats till it groans again, yard and all; but by night they sleep on their well-made bedsteads, each with his own wife between the blankets. These were the people among whom we had now come.

Aiolos entertained me for a whole month asking me questions all the time [15] about Troy, the Argive fleet, and the return [*nostos*] of the Achaeans. I told him exactly how everything had happened, and when I said I must go, and asked him to further me on my way, he made no sort of difficulty, but set about doing so at once. Moreover, he flayed me a prime ox-hide [20] to hold the ways of the roaring winds, which he shut up in the hide as in a sack—for Zeus, son of Kronos, had made him captain over the winds, and he could stir or still each one of them according to his own pleasure. He put the sack in the ship and bound the mouth so tightly with a silver thread that not even a breath [25] of a side-wind could blow from any quarter. The West wind, which was fair for us, did he alone let blow as it chose; but it all came to nothing, for we were lost through our own folly.

Nine days and nine nights did we sail, and on the tenth day our native land showed on the horizon. [30] We got so close in that we could see

the stubble fires burning, and I, being then dead tired, fell into a light sleep, for I had never let the rudder out of my own hands, that we might get home the faster. Then the men fell to talking among themselves, [35] and said I was bringing back gold and silver in the sack that great-hearted Aiolos, son of Hippotas, had given me. ‘Bless my heart,’ would one turn to his neighbor, saying, ‘how this man gets honored and makes friends in whatever city or country he may go. [40] See what fine prizes he is taking home from Troy, while we, who have traveled just as far as he has, come back with hands as empty as we set out with— and now Aiolos has given him ever so much more. Quick—let us see what it all is, [45] and how much gold and silver there is in the sack he gave him.’

Thus they talked and evil counsels prevailed. They loosed the sack, whereupon the wind flew howling forth and raised a storm that carried us weeping out to sea and away from our own country. Then I awoke, [50] and knew not whether to throw myself into the sea or to live on and make the best of it; but I bore it, covered myself up, and lay down in the ship, while the men lamented bitterly as the fierce winds bore our fleet [55] back to the Aeolian island.

When we reached it we went ashore to take in water, and dined hard by the ships. Immediately after dinner I took a herald and one of my men [60] and went straight to the famous house of Aiolos, where I found him feasting with his wife and family; so we sat down as suppliants on the threshold. They were astounded when they saw us and said, ‘Odysseus, what brings you here? What superhuman force [*daimōn*] has been ill-treating you? [65] We took great pains to further you on your way home to Ithaca, or wherever it was that you wanted to go to.’

Thus did they speak, but I answered sorrowfully, ‘My men have undone me; they, and cruel sleep, have ruined me. My friends, mend me this mischief, for you can if you will.’ [70] I spoke as movingly as I could, but they said nothing, till their father answered, ‘Vilest of humankind, get you gone at once out of the island; him whom the gods hate will I

in no way help. [75] Be off, for you come here as one abhorred of the gods.' And with these words he sent me sorrowing from his door.

Thence we sailed sadly on till the men were worn out with long and fruitless rowing, for there was no longer any wind to help them. [80] Six days, night and day did we toil, and on the seventh day we reached the rocky stronghold of Lamos—Telepylos, the city of the Laestrygonians, where the shepherd who is driving in his sheep and goats [to be milked] salutes him who is driving out his flock [to feed] and this last answers the salute. In that country a man who could do without sleep might earn [85] double wages, one as a herdsman of cattle, and another as a shepherd, for they work much the same by night as they do by day.

When we reached the harbor we found it land-locked under steep cliffs, [90] with a narrow entrance between two headlands. My captains took all their ships inside, and made them fast close to one another, for there was never so much as a breath of wind inside, but it was always dead calm. [95] I kept my own ship outside, and moored it to a rock at the very end of the point; then I climbed a high rock to reconnoiter, but could see no sign neither of man nor cattle, only some smoke rising from the ground. [100] So I sent two of my company with an attendant to find out what sort of people the inhabitants were.

The men when they got on shore followed a level road by which the people draw their firewood from the mountains into the town, [105] till presently they met a young woman who had come outside to fetch water, and who was daughter to a Laestrygonian named Antiphates. She was going to the sweet-running fountain Artakia from which the people bring in their water, and when my men had come close up to her, they asked her [110] who the king of that country might be, and over what kind of people he ruled; so she directed them to her father's house, but when they got there they found his wife to be a giantess as huge as a mountain, and they were horrified at the sight of her.

She at once called her husband, famous Antiphates, [115] from the place of assembly, and right away he set about killing my men. He snatched up one of them, and began to make his dinner of him then and there, whereon the other two ran back to the ships as fast as ever they could. But Antiphates raised a hue and cry after them, [120] and thousands of sturdy Laestrygonians sprang up from every quarter—ogres, not men. They threw vast rocks at us from the cliffs as though they had been mere stones, and I heard the horrid sound of the ships crunching up against one another, and the death cries of my men, as the Laestrygonians speared them like fishes and took them home to eat them. [125] While they were thus killing my men within the harbor I drew my sword, cut the cable of my own ship, and told my men to row with all their might if they too would not fare like the rest; [130] so they laid out for their lives, and we were thankful enough when we got into open water out of reach of the rocks they hurled at us. As for the others there was not one of them left.

Thence we sailed sadly on, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our comrades, [135] and came to the Aeaeon island, where Circe of the lovely hair lives, a great and cunning goddess who is own sister to the magician Aietes—for they are both children of the sun, Helios who shines on mortals, by Perse, who is daughter to Okeanos. [140] We brought our ship into a safe harbor without a word, for some god guided us there, and having landed we stayed there for two days and two nights, worn out in body and mind. When the fair-haired morning of the third day came [145] I took my spear and my sword, and went away from the ship to reconnoiter, and see if I could discover signs of human handiwork, or hear the sound of voices. Climbing to the top of a high look-out I espied the smoke of Circe's house [150] rising upwards amid a dense forest of trees, and when I saw this I doubted whether, having seen the smoke, I would not go on at once and find out more, but in the end I thought it best to go back to the ship, give [155] the men their dinners, and send some of them instead of going myself.

When I had nearly got back to the ship some god took pity upon my solitude, and sent a fine antlered stag right into the middle of my path. He was coming down his pasture in the forest to drink of the river, [160] for the heat of the sun drove him, and as he passed I struck him in the middle of the back; the bronze point of the spear went clean through him, and he lay groaning in the dust until the life went out of him. Then I set my foot upon him, drew my spear from [165] the wound, and laid it down; I also gathered rough grass and rushes and twisted them into a fathom or so of good stout rope, with which I bound the four feet of the noble creature together; having so done I hung him round my neck and walked back to the ship [170] leaning upon my spear, for the stag was much too big for me to be able to carry him on my shoulder, steadying him with one hand. As I threw him down in front of the ship, I called the men and spoke cheerfully man by man to each of them. 'Look here my friends,' said I, 'we are not going to die so much before our time after all, [175] and at any rate we will not starve so long as we have got something to eat and drink on board.' Then they uncovered their heads upon the sea shore [180] and admired the stag, for he was indeed a splendid specimen. Then, when they had feasted their eyes upon him sufficiently, they washed their hands and began to cook him for dinner.

Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we stayed there eating and drinking our fill, [185] but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped upon the sea shore. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I called a council and said, [190] My friends, I am speaking this way because I do not know which place is west and which place is east ¹⁹¹ —which is the place where the sun, bringing light for mortals, goes underneath the earth ¹⁹² and which is the place where it rises. Still, let us start thinking it through, as quickly as we can, ¹⁹³ whether there is still any craft [*mētis*] left. I must tell you, though, I think there is none. We are certainly on an island, for I went as high as I could this morning, [195] and saw the sea reaching all round it

to the horizon; it lies low, but towards the middle I saw smoke rising from out of a thick forest of trees.'

¹⁹⁸ So I spoke. And their heart was broken ¹⁹⁹ as they remembered the deeds of Antiphates the Laestrygonian [200] and the *biē* of the great-hearted Cyclops, the man eater. ²⁰¹ And they wept loud and shrill, letting many a tear fall. ²⁰² But crying did not get them anywhere. So I divided my strong-greaved men into two companies and set a captain over each; [205] I gave one company to godlike Eurylokhos, while I took command of the other myself. Then we cast lots in a helmet, and the lot fell upon great-hearted Eurylokhos; so he set out with his twenty-two men, and they wept, as also did we who were left behind.

[210] When they reached Circe's house they found it built of cut stones, on a site that could be seen from far, in the middle of the forest. There were wild mountain wolves and lions prowling all round it—poor bewitched creatures whom she had tamed by her enchantments and drugged into subjection. They did not attack my men, but wagged their great tails, [215] fawned upon them, and rubbed their noses lovingly against them. As hounds crowd round their master when they see him coming from dinner—for they know he will bring them something—even so did these wolves and lions with their great claws fawn upon my men, but the men were terribly frightened at seeing such strange creatures. [220] Presently they reached the gates of the goddess' house, and as they stood there they could hear Circe within, singing most beautifully as she worked at her loom, making a web so fine, so soft, and of such dazzling colors as no one but a goddess could weave. Then Polites, leader of men, [225] whom I valued and trusted more than any other of my men, said, 'There is some one inside working at a loom and singing most beautifully; the whole place resounds with it, let us call her and see whether she is woman or goddess.'

They called her [230] and she came down, unfastened the door, and bade them enter. They, thinking no evil, followed her, all except

Eurylokhos, who suspected mischief and stayed outside. When she had got them into her house, she set them upon benches and seats and mixed them a drink with cheese, honey, meal, [235] and Pramnian wine but she drugged it with wicked poisons to make them forget their homes, and when they had drunk she turned them into pigs by a stroke of her wand, and shut them up in her pigsties. They were like pigs—head, hair, and all, [240] and they grunted just as pigs do; but their senses [*noos*] were the same as before, and they remembered everything.

Thus then were they shut up squealing, and Circe threw them some acorns and beech masts such as pigs eat, but Eurylokhos hurried back [245] to tell me about the sad fate of our comrades. He was so overcome with dismay that though he tried to speak he could find no words to do so; his eyes filled with tears and he could only sob and sigh, till at last we forced his story out of him, [250] and he told us what had happened to the others.

‘We went,’ said he, ‘as you told us, through the forest, and in the middle of it there was a fine house built with cut stones in a place that could be seen from far. There we found a woman, or else she was a goddess, working at her loom and singing sweetly; [255] so the men shouted to her and called her, whereon she at once came down, opened the door, and invited us in. The others did not suspect any mischief so they followed her into the house, but I stayed where I was, for I thought there might be some treachery. From that moment I saw them no more, [260] for not one of them ever came out, though I sat a long time watching for them.’

Then I took my sword of bronze and slung it over my shoulders; I also took my bow, and told Eurylokhos to come back with me and show me the way. But he laid hold of me with both his hands [265] and spoke piteously, saying, ‘Sir, do not force me to go with you, but let me stay here, for I know you will not bring one of them back with you, nor even

return alive yourself; let us rather see if we cannot escape at any rate with the few that are left us, for we may still save our lives.'

[270] 'Stay where you are, then,' answered I, 'eating and drinking at the ship, but I must go, for I am most urgently bound to do so.' With this I left the ship and went up inland. [275] When I got through the charmed grove, and was near the great house of the enchantress Circe, I met Hermes with his golden wand, disguised as a young man in the hey-day of his youth and beauty with the down just coming upon his face. [280] He came up to me and took my hand within his own, saying, 'My poor unhappy man, where are you going over this mountain top, alone and without knowing the way? Your men are shut up in Circe's pigsties, like so many wild boars in their lairs. You surely do not fancy that you can set them free? I can tell you [285] that you will never get back and will have to stay there with the rest of them. But never mind, I will protect you and get you out of your difficulty. Take this herb, which is one of great virtue, and keep it about you when you go to Circe's house, it will be a talisman to you against every kind of mischief.

And I will tell you of all the wicked witchcraft that Circe will try to practice upon you. [290] She will mix a potion for you to drink, and she will drug the meal with which she makes it, but she will not be able to charm you, for the virtue of the herb that I shall give you will prevent her spells from working. I will tell you all about it. When Circe strikes you with her wand, draw your sword [295] and spring upon her as though you were going to kill her. She will then be frightened and will desire you to go to bed with her; on this you must not point blank refuse her, for you want her to set your companions free, and to take good care also of yourself, but you make her swear solemnly by all the blessed that she [300] will plot no further mischief against you, or else when she has got you naked she will unman you and make you fit for nothing.'

As he spoke he pulled the herb out of the ground and showed me what it was like. The root was black, while the flower was as white as milk;

[305] the gods call it Moly, and mortal men cannot uproot it, but the gods can do whatever they like.

Then Hermes went back to high Olympus passing over the wooded island; but I fared onward to the house of Circe, and my heart was clouded with care as I walked along. [310] When I got to the gates I stood there and called the goddess, and as soon as she heard me she came down, opened the door, and asked me to come in; so I followed her—much troubled in my mind. She set me on a richly decorated seat [315] inlaid with silver, there was a footstool also under my feet, and she mixed a mixture in a golden goblet for me to drink; but she drugged it, for she meant me mischief. When she had given it me, and I had drunk it without its charming me, she struck me with her wand. [320] ‘There now,’ she cried, ‘be off to the pigsty, and make your lair with the rest of them.’

But I rushed at her with my sword drawn as though I would kill her, whereon she fell with a loud scream, clasped my knees, and spoke piteously, saying, [325] ‘Who and whence are you? From what place and people have you come? How can it be that my drugs have no power to charm you? Never yet was any man able to stand so much as a taste of the herb I gave you; you must have some sort of spell-proof *noos*. [330] You must be Odysseus of many turns [*polutropos*], about whose ³³¹ future coming he used to talk to me always—the one with the golden rod, the Argeiphontes [= Hermes] — who he always said would come here some day with his ship while on his way home from Troy; so be it then; sheathe your sword and let us go to bed, [335] that we may make friends and learn to trust each other.’

And I answered, ‘Circe, how can you expect me to be friendly with you when you have just been turning all my men into pigs? And now that you have got me here myself, you mean me mischief [340] when you ask me to go to bed with you, and will unman me and make me fit for

nothing. I shall certainly not consent to go to bed with you unless you will first take your solemn oath to plot no further harm against me.'

[345] So she swore at once as I had told her, and when she had completed her oath then I went to bed with her.

Meanwhile her four servants, who are her housemaids, set about their work. [350] They are the children of the groves and fountains, and of the holy waters that run down into the sea. One of them spread a fair purple cloth over a seat, and laid a carpet underneath it. Another brought tables of silver up to the seats, [355] and set them with baskets of gold. A third mixed some sweet wine with water in a silver bowl and put golden cups upon the tables, while the fourth brought in water and set it to boil in a large cauldron over a good fire which she had lighted. [360] When the water in the cauldron was boiling, she poured cold into it till it was just as I liked it, and then she set me in a bath and began washing me from the cauldron about the head and shoulders, to take the tire and stiffness out of my limbs. As soon as she had done washing me and anointing me with oil, [365] she arrayed me in a good cloak and khiton and led me to a richly decorated seat inlaid with silver; there was a footstool also under my feet. A maid servant then brought me water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin [370] for me to wash my hands, and she drew a clean table beside me; an upper servant brought me bread and offered me many things of what there was in the house, and then Circe bade me eat, but I would not, and sat without heeding what was before me, still moody and suspicious.

[375] When Circe saw me sitting there without eating, and in great grief [*penthos*], she came to me and said, 'Odysseus, why do you sit like that as though you were dumb, gnawing at your own heart, and refusing both meat and drink? Is it [380] that you are still suspicious? You ought not to be, for I have already sworn solemnly that I will not hurt you.'

And I said, 'Circe, no man with any sense of what is right can think of either eating or drinking in your house [385] until you have set his friends free and let him see them. If you want me to eat and drink, you must free my men and bring them to me that I may see them with my own eyes.'

When I had said this she went straight through the court with her wand in her hand and opened the pigsty doors. [390] My men came out like so many prime hogs and stood looking at her, but she went about among them and anointed each with a second drug, whereon the bristles that the bad drug had given them fell off, [395] and they became men again, younger than they were before, and much taller and better looking. They knew me at once, seized me each of them by the hand, and wept for joy till the whole house was filled with the sound of their shouting, [400] and Circe herself was so sorry for them that she came up to me and said, 'Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, go back at once to the sea where you have left your ship, and first draw it on to the land. Then, hide all your ship's gear and property in some cave, [405] and come back here with your men.'

I agreed to this, so I went back to the sea shore, and found the men at the ship weeping and wailing most piteously. [410] When they saw me the inept blubbing characters began frisking round me as calves break out and gambol round their mothers, when they see them coming home to be milked after they have been feeding all day, and the homestead resounds with their lowing. [415] They seemed as glad to see me as though they had got back to their own rugged Ithaca, where they had been born and bred. 'Sir,' said the affectionate creatures, 'we are as glad to see you back [420] as though we had got safe home to Ithaca; but tell us all about the fate of our comrades.'

I spoke comfortingly to them and said, 'We must draw our ship on to the land, and hide the ship's gear with all our property in some cave; [425] then come with me all of you as fast as you can to Circe's house,

where you will find your comrades eating and drinking in the midst of great abundance.' Then the men would have come with me at once, but Eurylokhos tried to hold them back [430] and said, 'Alas, poor wretches that we are, what will become of us? Rush not on your ruin by going to the house of Circe, who will turn us all into pigs or wolves or lions, and we shall have to keep guard over her house. [435] Remember how the Cyclops treated us when our comrades went inside his cave, and bold Odysseus with them. It was all through his sheer folly that those men lost their lives.'

When I heard him I was in two minds whether or no to draw the keen blade that hung by my sturdy thigh [440] and cut his head off in spite of his being a near relation of my own; but the men interceded for him and said, 'Sir, if it may so be, let this man stay here and mind [445] the ship, but take the rest of us with you to Circe's house.'

Then we all went inland, and Eurylokhos was not left behind after all, but came on too, for he was frightened by the severe reprimand that I had given him.

Meanwhile Circe had been seeing that the men who had been left behind [450] were washed and anointed with olive oil; she had also given them woolen cloaks and khitons, and when we came we found them all comfortably at dinner in her house. As soon as the men saw each other face to face and knew one another, they wept for joy and cried aloud till the whole place rang again. [455] Then Circe came up to me and said, 'Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, tell your men to leave off crying; I know ⁴⁵⁸ how much suffering you underwent in the fishy [*ikhthuoëis*] sea [*pontos*], and how ill you have fared among cruel savages on the mainland, [460] but that is over now, so stay here, and eat and drink till you are once more as strong and hearty as you were when you left Ithaca; for at present you are weakened both in body and mind; you keep all the time thinking of the hardships

you have suffered during your travels, so that you have no more [465] cheerfulness left in you.'

Thus did she speak and we assented. We stayed with Circe for a whole twelvemonth feasting upon an untold quantity both of meat and wine. But when the year had passed, [470] and the seasons [*hōrai*] had turned round, and the waning of moons and the long days had begun, my men called me apart and said, 'Sir, it is time you began to think about going home, if so be it you are to be spared to see your house and native country at all.'

[475] Thus did they speak and I assented. Then through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we feasted our fill on meat and wine, but when the sun went down and it came on dark the men laid themselves down to sleep in the covered halls. [480] I, however, after I had got into bed with Circe, besought her by her knees, and the goddess listened to what I had got to say. 'Circe,' said I, 'please keep the promise you made me about furthering me on my homeward voyage. I want to get back [485] and so do my men, they are always pestering me with their complaints as soon as ever your back is turned.'

And the goddess answered, 'Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, you shall none of you stay here any longer if you do not want to, [490] but first you [= Odysseus] must bring to fulfillment [*teleîn*] another journey and travel until you enter ⁴⁹¹ the palace of Hādēs and of the dreaded Peresepnone, ⁴⁹² and there you all will consult [*khre-*] the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Teiresias of Thebes, ⁴⁹³ the blind seer [*mantis*], whose thinking [*phrenes*] is grounded [*empedoi*]: ⁴⁹⁴ to him, even though he was dead, Persephone gave consciousness [*noos*], [495] so as to be the only one there who has the power to think [*pepnusthai*]. But the others [in Hādēs] just flit about, like shadows [*skiai*].'

I was dismayed when I heard this. I sat up in bed and wept, and would gladly have lived no longer to see the light of the sun, but presently when I was tired of weeping and tossing myself about, [500] I said, ‘And who shall guide me upon this voyage—for the house of Hādēs is a port that no ship can reach.’

[505] ‘You will want no guide,’ she answered; ‘raise your mast, set your white sails, sit quite still, and the North Wind will blow you there of itself. When your ship has traversed the waters of Okeanos, you will reach the fertile shore of Persephone’s country [510] with its groves of tall poplars and willows that shed their fruit untimely; here beach your ship upon the shore of deep-eddying Okeanos, and go straight on to the dark abode of Hādēs. You will find it near the place where the rivers Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus (which is a branch of the river Styx) flow into Acheron, and you will see [515] a rock near it, just where the two roaring rivers run into one another.

When you have reached this spot, as I now tell you, dig a trench a cubit or so in length, breadth, and depth, and pour into it as a drink-offering to all the dead, first, honey mixed with milk, then wine, [520] and in the third place water—sprinkling white barley meal over the whole.

Moreover you must offer many prayers to the poor feeble spirits, and promise them that when you get back to Ithaca you will sacrifice a barren heifer to them, the best you have, and will load the pyre with good things. More particularly you must promise that Teiresias shall have a black [525] sheep all to himself, the finest in all your flocks.

When you shall have thus besought the spirits with your prayers, offer them a ram and a black ewe, bending their heads towards Erebos; but yourself turn away from them as though you would make towards the river. Then, [530] many dead men’s spirits [*psūkhai*] will come to you, and you must tell your men to skin the two sheep that you have just killed, and offer them as a burnt sacrifice with prayers to Hādēs the powerful and to revered Persephone. [535] Then draw your sword and sit

there, so as to prevent any other poor spirit [*psūkhē*] from coming near the spilt blood before Teiresias shall have answered your questions. The seer [*mantis*] will presently come to you, and will tell you about your voyage—what stages you are to make, [540] and how you are to sail the sea so as to reach your homecoming [*nostos*].’

It was day-break by the time she had done speaking, so she dressed me in my khiton and cloak. As for herself she threw a beautiful light gossamer fabric over her shoulders, [545] fastening it with a golden waistband round her waist, and she covered her head with a mantle. Then I went about among the men everywhere all over the house, and spoke kindly to each of them man by man: ‘You must not lie sleeping here any longer,’ said I to them, ‘we must be going, for Lady Circe has told me all about it.’ [550] And this they did as I bade them.

Even so, however, I did not get them away without misadventure. We had with us a certain youth named Elpenor, not very remarkable for sense or courage, who had got drunk [555] and was lying on the house-top away from the rest of the men, to sleep off his liquor in the cool. When he heard the noise of the men bustling about, he jumped up on a sudden and forgot all about coming down by the main staircase, so he tumbled right off the roof [560] and broke his neck, and his spirit [*psūkhē*] went down to the house of Hādēs.

When I had got the men together I said to them, ‘You think you are about to start home again, but Circe has explained to me that instead of this, we have got to go to the house of Hādēs and revered Persephone [565] to consult the spirit of the Theban prophet Teiresias.’

The men were broken-hearted as they heard me, and threw themselves on the ground groaning and tearing their hair, but they did not mend matters by crying. When we reached the sea shore, [570] weeping and lamenting our fate, Circe brought the ram and the ewe, and we made them fast hard by the ship. She passed through the midst of us without

our knowing it, for who can see the comings and goings of a god, if the god does not wish to be seen?

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2019-12-12

Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 11

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Then, when we had got down to the sea shore we drew our ship into the water and got her mast and sails into her; we also put the sheep on board and [5] took our places, weeping and in great distress of mind. Circe, that great and cunning goddess, sent us a fair wind that blew dead aft and stayed steadily with us keeping our sails all the time well filled; so we did whatever wanted doing to the ship's gear [10] and let her go as the wind and helmsman [*kubernētēs*] headed her. All day long her sails were full as she held her course over the sea, but when the sun went down and darkness was over all the earth, we got into the deep waters of the river Okeanos, where lie the district [*dēmos*] and city of the Cimmerians [15] who live enshrouded in mist and darkness which the rays of the radiant sun never pierce neither at his rising nor as he goes down again out of the sky, but the poor wretches live in one long melancholy night. [20] When we got there we beached the ship, took the sheep out of her, and went along by the waters of Okeanos till we came to the place of which Circe had told us.

Here Perimedes and Eurylokhos held the victims, while I drew my sword [25] and dug the trench a cubit each way. I made a drink-offering to all the dead, first with honey and milk, then with wine, and thirdly with water, and I sprinkled white barley meal over the whole, praying earnestly to the poor feckless spirits, and promising [30] them that when I got back to Ithaca I would sacrifice a barren heifer for them, the best I had, and would load the pyre with good things. I also particularly promised that Teiresias should have a black sheep to himself, the best in all my flocks. When I had prayed sufficiently [35] to the dead, I cut the throats of the two sheep and let the blood run into the trench, whereon

the spirits [*psūkhai*] came trooping up from Erebos—brides, young bachelors, old men worn out with toil, maids who had been crossed in love, [40] and brave men who had been killed in battle, with their armor still smirched with blood; they came from every quarter and flitted round the trench with a strange kind of screaming sound that made me turn pale with fear. When I saw them coming I told the men to be quick and flay [45] the carcasses of the two dead sheep and make burnt offerings of them, and at the same time to repeat prayers to Hādēs and to revered Persephone; but I sat where I was with my sword drawn and would not let the poor feckless [50] spirits come near the blood till Teiresias should have answered my questions.

The first spirit [*psūkhē*] that came was that of my comrade Elpenor, for he had not yet been laid beneath the earth. We had left his body unwaked and unburied in Circe's house, for other labor [*ponos*] was pressing us. [55] I was very sorry for him, and cried when I saw him: 'Elpenor,' said I, 'how did you come down here into this gloom and darkness? You have come here on foot quicker than I have with my ship.'

[60] 'Sir,' he answered with a groan, 'it was all bad luck of a superhuman force [*daimōn*], and my own unspeakable drunkenness. I was lying asleep on the top of Circe's house, and never thought of coming down again by the great staircase, but fell right off the roof [65] and broke my neck, so my spirit [*psūkhē*] went down to the house of Hādēs. And now I beseech you by all those whom you have left behind you, though they are not here, by your wife, by the father who brought you up when you were a child, and by Telemachus who is the one hope of your house, do what I shall now ask you. I know that when you leave this place [70] you will again hold your ship for the Aeaeon island. Do not go thence leaving me unwaked and unburied behind you, or I may bring the gods' anger upon you; but burn me with whatever armor I have, [75] heap up a tomb [*sēma*] for me at the shore of the gray sea, ⁷⁶ wretched man that I am, so that even those who live in the future will learn about it. ⁷⁷ Make

this ritual act [*teleîn*] for me, and stick the oar on top of the tomb [*tumbos*]⁷⁸ —the oar that I used when I was rowing with my comrades [*hetairoi*].’ And I said, [80] ‘My poor man, I will do all that you have asked of me.’

Thus, then, did we sit and hold sad talk with one another, I on the one side of the trench with my sword held over the blood, and the spirit of my comrade saying all this to me from the other side. Then came the spirit [*psūkhē*] of my dead mother [85] Antikleia, daughter to great-hearted Autolykos. I had left her alive when I set out for sacred Troy and was moved to tears when I saw her, but even so, for all my sorrow I would not let her come near the blood till I had asked my questions of Teiresias.

[90] Then came also the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Theban Teiresias,⁹¹ with a golden scepter in his hand. He recognized me and said,⁹² ‘Odysseus, you who are descended from the gods, noble son of Laertes,⁹³ why, wretched man, have you left the light of day⁹⁴ and come down to see the dead in this place without any delights? [95] Stand back from the trench and draw back your sharp sword⁹⁶ so that I may drink of the blood and tell you unmistakably true things.’

⁹⁷ So he spoke, and I [= Odysseus] drew back, and sheathed my silver-studded sword,⁹⁸ putting it back into the scabbard, and then he [= Teiresias], after he had drunk the black blood,⁹⁹ began to address me with his words, faultless seer [*mantis*] that he was:

[100] ‘It’s your homecoming [*nostos*] that you seek, a homecoming sweet as honey, O radiant Odysseus.¹⁰¹ But the god will make this painful for you. I say that because I do not think¹⁰² that the earth-shaking god [= Poseidon] will not take notice, who has lodged in his heart [*thūmos*] an anger [*kotos*] against you,¹⁰³ being angry that you blinded his dear son [= Polyphemus].¹⁰⁴ Still, even so, after enduring

many bad experiences, you all may get home [105] if you are willing to restrain your own heart [*thūmos*] and the heart of your comrades [*hetairoi*]¹⁰⁶ when you pilot your well-built ship to¹⁰⁷ the island of Thrinacia, seeking refuge from the violet-colored sea,¹⁰⁸ and when you find the grazing cattle and the sturdy sheep¹⁰⁹ that belong to the god of the sun, Hēlios, who sees everything and hears everything. [110] If you leave these herds unharmed and think only about homecoming [*nostos*],¹¹¹ then you could still make it to Ithaca, arriving there after having endured many bad experiences.¹¹² But if you harm the herds, then I forewarn you of destruction¹¹³ both for your ship and for your comrades [*hetairoi*], and, even if you may yourself escape,¹¹⁴ you will return [*neesthai*] in a bad way, losing all your comrades [*hetairoi*], [115] in someone else's ship, not your own, and you will find painful things happening in your house,¹¹⁶ I mean, you will find high-handed men there who are devouring your livelihood¹¹⁷ while they are courting your godlike wife and offering wedding-presents to her.

¹¹⁸ But you will avenge the outrages committed by those men when you get home.¹¹⁹ But after you kill the suitors in your own house, [120] killing them either by trickery or openly, by way of sharp bronze,¹²¹ you must go on a journey then, taking with you a well-made oar,¹²² until you come to a place where men do not know what the sea is¹²³ and do not even eat any food that is mixed with sea salt,¹²⁴ nor do they know anything about ships, which are painted purple on each side, [125] and well-made oars that are like wings for ships.¹²⁶ And I will tell you a sign [*sēma*], a very clear one, which will not get lost in your thinking.¹²⁷ Whenever someone on the road encounters you¹²⁸ and says that it must be a winnowing shovel that you have on your radiant shoulder,¹²⁹ at that point you must stick into the ground the well-made oar [130] and sacrifice beautiful sacrifices to Lord Poseidon¹³¹ a ram, a bull, and a boar that mounts sows.¹³² And then go home and offer sacred hecatombs¹³³ to the immortal gods who possess the vast expanses of the skies.¹³⁴

Sacrifice to them in proper order, one after the other. As for yourself, death shall come to you from the sea, [135] a gentle death, that is how it will come, and this death will kill you ¹³⁶ as you lose your strength in a prosperous old age. And the people all around [your corpse] ¹³⁷ will be blessed [*olbioi*]. All the things I say are unmistakably true.'

'This,' I answered, 'must be as it may please the gods, [140] but tell me and tell me true, I see my poor mother's spirit [*psūkhē*] close by us; she is sitting by the blood without saying a word, and though I am her own son she does not remember me and speak to me; tell me, Sir, how I can make her know me.'

[145] 'That,' said he, 'I can soon do. Any spirit that you let taste of the blood will talk with you like a reasonable being, but if you do not let them have any blood they will go away again.'

[150] Then the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Teiresias went back to the house of Hādēs, for his prophecies had now been spoken, but I sat still where I was until my mother came up and tasted the blood. Then she knew me at once and spoke fondly to me, saying, [155] 'My son, how did you come down to this abode of darkness while you are still alive? It is a hard thing for the living to see these places, for between us and them there are great and terrifying waters, and there is Okeanos, which no man can cross on foot, but he must have a good ship to take him. Are you [160] all this time trying to find your way home from Troy, and have you never yet got back to Ithaca nor seen your wife in your own house?'

'Mother,' said I, [165] 'I was forced to come here to consult the spirit [*psūkhē*] of the Theban prophet Teiresias. I have never yet been near the Achaean land nor set foot on my native country, and I have had nothing but one long series of misfortunes from the very first day that I set out with Agamemnon for Ilion, the land of noble steeds, to fight the Trojans. [170] But tell me, and tell me true, in what way did you die? Did you have a long illness, or did Artemis, shooter of arrows, approach

and slay you with her gentle shafts? Tell me also about my father, and the son whom I left behind me; is [175] my property still in their hands, or has some one else got hold of it, who thinks that I shall not return to claim it? Tell me again what my wife intends doing, and in what mind [*noos*] she is; does she live with my son and guard my estate securely, ¹⁷⁹ or has whoever is the best [*aristos*] of the Achaeans already married her?

[180] My mother answered, ‘Your wife still remains in your house, but she is in great distress of mind and spends her whole time in tears both night and day. No one as yet has got possession of your fine property, and [185] Telemachus still holds your lands undisturbed. He has to entertain largely, as of course he must, considering his position as a magistrate, and how every one invites him; your father remains at his old place in the country and never goes near the town. He has no comfortable bed nor bedding; [190] in the winter he sleeps on the floor in front of the fire with the men and goes about all in rags, but in summer, when the warm weather comes on again, he lies out in the vineyard on a bed of vine leaves thrown anyhow upon the ground, feeling grief [*akhos*]. [195] He is in continual sorrow [*penthos*] about your never having a homecoming [*nostos*], and suffers more and more as he grows older. As for my own end it was this way: the gods did not take me swiftly and painlessly in my own house, [200] nor was I attacked by any illness such as those that generally wear people out and kill them, but my longing to know what you were doing and the force of my affection for you—this it was that was the death of me.’

Then I tried to find some way [205] of embracing my mother’s spirit [*psūkhē*]. Thrice I sprang towards her and tried to clasp her in my arms, but each time she flitted from my embrace as it were a dream or phantom, and being touched to the quick I said to her, [210] ‘Mother, why do you not stay still when I would embrace you? If we could throw our arms around one another we might find sad comfort in the sharing of our grief [*akhos*] even in the house of Hādēs; does proud Persephone

want to lay a still further load of grief upon me by mocking me with a phantom only?’

[215] ‘My son,’ she answered, ‘most ill-fated of all humankind, it is not Persephone, daughter of Zeus, that is beguiling you, but all people are like this when they are dead. The sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together; [220] these perish in the fierceness of consuming fire as soon as life has left the body, and the spirit [*psūkhē*] flits away as though it were a dream. Now, however, go back to the light of day as soon as you can, and note all these things that you may tell them to your wife hereafter.’

[225] Thus did we converse, and then proud Persephone sent up the spirits of the wives and daughters of all the most famous men. They gathered in crowds about the blood, and I considered how I might question them severally. [230] In the end I thought that it would be best to draw the keen blade that hung by my sturdy thigh, and keep them from all drinking the blood at once. So they came up one after the other, and each one as I questioned her told me her birth and lineage.

[235] The first I saw was gloriously descended Tyro. She was daughter of stately Salmoneus and wife of Kretheus, the son of Aiolos. She fell in love with the river, godlike Enipeus, who is much the most beautiful river in the whole world. [240] Once when she was taking a walk by his side as usual, Poseidon, disguised as her lover, lay with her at the mouth of the river, and a huge blue wave arched itself like a mountain over them to hide both woman and god, [245] whereon he loosed her virgin waistband and laid her in a deep slumber. When the god had accomplished the deed of love, he took her hand in his own and said, ‘Tyro, rejoice in all good will; the embraces of the gods [250] are not fruitless, and you will have fine twins about this time twelve months. Take great care of them. I am the Earthshaker Poseidon, so now go home, but hold your tongue and do not tell anyone.’

Then he dived under the sea, and she in due course bore Pelias and Neleus, [255] who both of them served Zeus with all their might. Pelias was a great breeder of sheep and lived in Iolkos, but the other lived in sandy Pylos. The rest of her children were by Kretheus, namely, Aison, Pheres, and Amythaon, who was a mighty warrior and charioteer.

[260] Next to her I saw Antiope, daughter to Asopos, who could boast of having slept in the arms of even Zeus himself, and who bore him two sons, Amphion and Zethos. These founded seven-gated Thebes with its seven gates, and built a wall all round it; for strong though they were they could not [265] hold Thebes of wide spaces till they had walled it.

Then I saw Alkmene, the wife of Amphitryon, who also bore to Zeus indomitable Hēraklēs, lion-hearted and bold of purpose; and Megara, who was daughter to high-spirited King Creon, [270] and married the terrifying son of Amphitryon.

I also saw fair Epikaste, mother of King Oedipus, whose terrible lot it was to marry her own son without suspecting it in her mind [*noos*]. He married her after having killed his father, but the gods proclaimed the whole story to the world; [275] whereon he remained king of beloved Thebes, in great grief for the spite the gods had borne him; but Epikaste went to the house of the mighty jailer Hādēs, having hanged herself for grief, [280] and the avenging spirits haunted him as for an outraged mother—to his ruing bitterly thereafter.

Then I saw Khloris, surpassingly lovely, whom Neleus married for her beauty, having given priceless presents for her. She was youngest daughter to Amphion, son of Iasos and king of Minyan Orkhomenos, [285] and was Queen in Pylos. She bore Nestor, Khromios, and proud Periklymenos, and she also bore that marvelously lovely woman Pero, who was wooed by all the country round; but Neleus would only give her to him who should raid the [290] cattle of Iphikles from the grazing grounds of Phylake, and this was a hard task. The only man who would

undertake to raid them was a certain excellent seer [*mantis*], but the will of the gods was against him, for the rangers of the cattle caught him and put him in prison; nevertheless when a full year had passed [295] and the same season [*hōrā*] came round again, Iphikles set him at liberty, after he had expounded all the oracles of the gods. Thus, then, was the will of Zeus accomplished.

And I saw Leda the wife of Tyndareus, who bore him two famous sons, [300] Castor [Kastor], breaker of horses, and Pollux [Polydeukes], the mighty boxer. Both these heroes are lying under the earth, though they are still alive, for by a special dispensation of Zeus, they die and come to life again, each one of them every other day throughout all time, and they have the rank of gods.

[305] After her I saw Iphimedeia, wife of Aloeus, who boasted the embrace of Poseidon. She bore two sons Otos and far-famed Ephialtes, but both were short lived. They were the finest children that were ever born in this world, [310] and the best looking, famous Orion only excepted; for at nine years old they were nine fathoms high, and measured nine cubits round the chest. They threatened to make war with the gods in Olympus, [315] and tried to set Mount Ossa on the top of Mount Olympus, and Mount Pelion on the top of Ossa, that they might scale the sky itself, and they would have done it, too, if they had been grown up, but Apollo, son of Leto, killed both of them, before they had got so much as a sign of hair [320] upon their cheeks or chin.

Then I saw Phaedra, and Procris, and fair Ariadne, daughter of the malignant magician Minos, whom Theseus was carrying off from Crete to Athens, but he did not enjoy her, for before he could do so Artemis killed her [325] in the island of Dia on account of what Dionysus had said against her.

I also saw Maira and Klymene and hateful Eriphyle, who sold her own husband for gold. But it would take me all night if I were to name every

single one of the wives and daughters of heroes whom I saw, [330] and it is time [*hōrā*] for me to go to bed, either on board ship with my crew, or here. As for my escort, the gods and yourselves will see to it.”

Here he ended, and the guests sat all of them enthralled and speechless throughout the covered hall. [335] Then white-armed Arete said to them:

“What do you think of this man, O Phaeacians? Is he not tall and good looking, and is he not clever? True, he is my own guest, but all of you share in the distinction. Do not be in a hurry to send him away, nor be withholding [340] in the presents you make to one who is in such great need, for the gods have blessed all of you with great abundance.”

Then spoke the aged hero Ekheneus who was one of the oldest men among them, “My friends,” said he, “what our august queen has just said to us is both reasonable [345] and to the purpose, therefore be persuaded by it; but the decision whether in word or deed rests ultimately with King Alkinoos.”

“The thing shall be done,” exclaimed Alkinoos, “as surely as I still live and reign over the oar-loving Phaeacians. [350] Our guest is indeed very anxious to his homecoming [*nostos*], still we must persuade him to remain with us until tomorrow, by which time I shall be able to get together the whole sum that I mean to give him. As regards his escort it will be a matter for you all, and mine above all others as the chief person in the district [*dēmos*].”

And resourceful Odysseus answered, [355] “Great King Alkinoos, if you were to bid me to stay here for a whole twelve months, and then speed me on my way, loaded with your noble gifts, I should obey you gladly and it would redound greatly to my advantage, for I should return fuller-handed to my own people, [360] and should thus be more respected and beloved by all who see me when I get back to Ithaca.”

“Odysseus,” replied Alkinoos, “not one of us who sees you has any idea that you are a charlatan or a swindler. I know there are many people [365] going about who tell such plausible stories that it is very hard to see through them, but there is a style about your language which assures me of your good disposition. Moreover you have told the story of your own misfortunes, and those of the Argives, as though you were a practiced bard; [370] but tell me, and tell me true, whether you saw any of the mighty heroes who went to Troy at the same time with yourself, and perished there. ³⁷³ This night is very long—immeasurably so. It is not yet time [*hōrā*] ³⁷⁴ to sleep in the palace. But go on telling me about your wondrous deeds. [375] And I myself could hold out until the bright dawn, if only ³⁷⁶ you could bear to tell me, here in the palace, of your sufferings.”

“Great Alkinoos, pre-eminent among all people,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “there is a time [*hōrā*] for making speeches, and a time [*hōrā*] for going to bed; [380] nevertheless, since you so desire, I will not refrain from telling you the still sadder tale of those of my comrades who did not fall fighting with the Trojans, but perished on their return [*nostos*], through the treachery of a wicked woman.

[385] When chaste Persephone had dismissed the female spirits [*psūkhai*] in all directions, the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, came sadly up to me, surrounded by those who had perished with him in the house of Aegisthus. [390] As soon as he had tasted the blood he knew me, and weeping bitterly stretched out his arms towards me to embrace me; but he had no strength nor substance any more, [395] and I too wept and pitied him as I beheld him. ‘How did you come by your death,’ said I, ‘most lordly King Agamemnon? Did Poseidon [400] raise his winds and waves against you when you were at sea, or did your enemies make an end of you on the mainland when you were cattle-lifting or sheep-stealing, or while they were fighting in defense of their wives and city?’

‘Resourceful Odysseus,’ he answered, [405] ‘noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, I was not lost at sea in any storm of Poseidon’s raising, nor did my foes dispatch me upon the mainland, but Aegisthus [410] and my wicked wife were the death of me between them. He asked me to his house, feasted me, and then butchered me most miserably as though I were a fat beast in a slaughter house, while all around me my comrades were slain like sheep or pigs [415] for the wedding breakfast, or dinner-party, or gourmet feast of some great nobleman. You must have seen numbers of men killed either in a general engagement, or in single combat, but you never saw anything so truly pitiable as the way in which we fell in that hall, with the mixing-bowl and the loaded [420] tables lying all about, and the ground reeking with our blood. I heard Priam’s daughter Cassandra scream as treacherous Clytemnestra killed her close beside me. I lay dying upon the earth with the sword in my body, and raised my hands to kill the slut of a murderess, [425] but she slipped away from me; she would not even close my lips nor my eyes when I was dying, for there is nothing in this world so cruel and so shameless as a woman when she has fallen into such guilt as hers was. [430] Fancy murdering her own husband! I thought I was going to be welcomed home by my children and my servants, but her abominable crime has brought disgrace on herself and all women who shall come after—even on the good ones.’

[435] And I said, ‘In truth Zeus of the wide brows has hated the house of Atreus from first to last in the matter of their women’s counsels. See how many of us fell for Helen’s sake, and now it seems that Clytemnestra hatched mischief against you too during your absence.’

[440] ‘Be sure, therefore,’ continued Agamemnon, ‘and not be too friendly even with your own wife. Do not tell her all that you know perfectly well yourself. Tell her a part only, and keep your own counsel about the rest. Not that your wife, Odysseus, is likely to murder you, [445] for circumspect Penelope is a very admirable woman, and has an excellent nature. We left her a young bride with an infant at her breast

when we set out for Troy. This child no doubt is now grown up to man's estate, [450] in a happy [*olbios*] way, and he and his father will have a joyful meeting and embrace one another as it is right they should do, whereas my wicked wife did not even allow me the happiness of looking upon my son, but killed me before I could do so. Furthermore I say—and lay my saying to your heart— [455] do not tell people when you are bringing your ship to Ithaca, but steal a march upon them, for after all this there is no trusting women. But now tell me, and tell me true, can you give me any news of my son Orestes? Is he in Orkhomenos, or at sandy Pylos, [460] or is he at Sparta with Menelaos—for I presume that he is still living.'

And I said, 'Agamemnon, why do you ask me? I do not know whether your son is alive or dead, and it is not right to talk when one does not know.'

[465] As we two sat weeping and talking thus sadly with one another the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Peleus's son, Achilles, came up to us with Patroklos, stately Antilokhos, and Ajax, who was the finest and best man [470] of all the Danaans after the swift-footed son of Peleus. The *psūkhē* of the fleet descendant of Aiakos knew me and spoke piteously, saying, 'Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, what deed of daring will you undertake next, [475] that you venture down to the house of Hādēs among us inept dead, who are but the spirits of them that can labor no more?'

And I said, 'Achilles, son of Peleus, foremost champion of the Achaeans, I came to consult Teiresias, and see if he could advise me [480] about my return home to Ithaca, for I have never yet been able to get near the Achaean land, nor to set foot in my own country, but have been in trouble all the time. As for you, Achilles, no one was ever yet so fortunate as you have been, nor ever will be, for you were adored by all us Argives as long as you were alive, [485] and now that you are here you

are a great prince among the dead. Do not, therefore, take it so much to heart even if you are dead.'

'Say not a word,' he answered, 'in death's favor; [490] I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead. But give me news about my son; is he gone to the wars and will he be a great warrior, or is this not so? Tell me also if you have heard anything about my father stately Peleus— [495] does he still rule among the Myrmidons, or do they show him no respect throughout Hellas and Phthia now that he is old and his limbs fail him? Could I but stand by his side, in the light of day, with the same strength that I had when [500] I killed the bravest of our foes upon the plain of Troy—could I but be as I then was and go even for a short time to my father's house, anyone who tried to do him violence or supersede him would soon feel my strength and invincible hands.'

[505] 'I have heard nothing,' I answered, 'of stately Peleus, but I can tell you the truth [*alētheia*] about your beloved son Neoptolemos, for I took him in my own ship from Skyros with the strong-greaved Achaeans. [510] In our councils of war at Troy he was always first to speak, and his judgment was unerring. Godlike Nestor and I were the only two who could surpass him; and when it came to fighting on the plain of Troy, he would never remain with [515] the body of his men, but would dash on far in front, foremost of them all in valor. Many a man did he kill in battle—I cannot name every single one of those whom he slew while fighting on the side of the Argives, but will only say how he killed that valiant hero [520] Eurypylos, son of Telephos, who was the handsomest man I ever saw except Memnon; many others also of the Keteioi fell around him by reason of a woman's bribes. Moreover, when all the bravest of the Argives went inside the horse that Epeios had made, and it was left to me to settle [525] when we should either open the door of our ambushade, or close it, though all the other leaders and chief men among the Danaans were drying their eyes and quaking in every limb, I never once saw him turn pale [530] nor wipe a tear from his cheek; he

was all the time urging me to break out from the horse—grasping the handle of his sword and his bronze-shod spear, and breathing fury against the foe. Yet when we had ransacked the city of Priam he got his handsome share of the prize wealth and [535] went on board (such is the fortune of war) without a wound upon him, neither from a thrown spear nor in close combat, for the rage of Arēs is a matter of great chance.’

When I had told him this, the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Achilles strode off across a meadow full of asphodel, [540] exulting over what I had said concerning the prowess of his son.

The spirits [*psūkhai*] of other dead men stood near me and told me each his own melancholy tale; but the *psūkhē* of swift-footed Ajax, son of Telamon, alone held aloof—still angry with me for having won [545] the cause in our dispute about the armor of Achilles. Thetis had offered it as a prize, but the Trojan prisoners and Athena were the judges. Would that I had never gained the day in such a contest [*āthlos*], for it cost the life of [550] Ajax, who was foremost of all the Danaans after the stately son of Peleus, alike in stature and prowess.

When I saw him I tried to pacify him and said, ‘Ajax, son of stately Telamon, will you not forget and forgive even in death, but must the judgment about that hateful armor still rankle with you? [555] It cost us Argives dear enough to lose such a tower of strength as you were to us. We mourned you as much as we mourned Achilles, son of Peleus himself, nor can anything be blamed [*aitios*] except the spite that Zeus bore against the Danaans, [560] for it was this that made him counsel your destruction—come here, therefore, bring your proud spirit into subjection, and hear what I can tell you.’

He would not answer, but turned away to Erebos and to the other spirits [*psūkhai*]; [565] nevertheless, I should have made him talk to me in spite

of his being so angry, or I should have gone talking to him, only that there were still others among the dead whom I desired to see.

⁵⁶⁸ There I saw Minos, radiant son of Zeus, ⁵⁶⁹ who was holding a golden scepter as he dispensed justice among the dead. [570] He was seated, while they [= the dead] asked the lord for his judgments [*dikai*]. ⁵⁷¹ Some of them [= the dead] were seated, and some were standing, throughout the house of Hādēs, with its wide gates.

After him I saw huge Orion in a meadow full of asphodel driving the spirits of the wild beasts that he had killed upon the mountains, [575] and he had a great bronze club in his hand, unbreakable for ever and ever.

And I saw Tityos, glorious son of Gaia, stretched upon the plain and covering some nine acres of ground. Two vultures on either side of him were digging their beaks into his liver, and he kept on trying to beat them off with his hands, but could not; [580] for he had violated Zeus' honored mistress Leto as she was going through Panopeus on her way to Pytho.

I saw also the dreadful fate of Tantalus, who stood in a lake that reached his chin; he was dying to quench his thirst, but could never reach the water, [585] for whenever the poor creature stooped to drink, it dried up and vanished, so that there was nothing but dry ground—parched by a superhuman force [*daimōn*]. There were tall trees, moreover, that shed their fruit over his head—pears, pomegranates, apples, [590] sweet figs and juicy olives, but whenever the poor creature stretched out his hand to take some, the wind tossed the branches back again to the clouds.

And I saw Sisyphus at his endless task raising his prodigious stone [595] with both his hands. With hands and feet he tried to roll it up to the top of the hill, but always, just before he could roll it over on to the other side, its weight would be too much for him, and the pitiless stone would

come thundering down again on to the plain. Then he would begin trying to push it up hill again, and the sweat ran [600] off him and the steam rose after him.

After him I saw mighty Hēraklēs, but it was his phantom [*eidōlon*] only, for he [*autos*] is feasting ever with the immortal gods, and has lovely Hebe to wife, who is daughter of Zeus and Hera of the golden sandals. [605] The spirits were screaming round him like scared birds flying in all directions. He looked black as night with his bare bow in his hands and his arrow on the string, glaring around as though ever on the point of taking aim. About his breast there was a wondrous golden [610] belt adorned in the most marvelous fashion with bears, wild boars, and lions with gleaming eyes; there was also war, battle, and death. The man who made that belt, do what he might, would never be able to make another like it. [615] Hēraklēs knew me at once when he saw me, and spoke piteously, saying, ‘My poor resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, are you too leading the same sorry kind of life that I did when I was above ground? [620] I was son of Kronian Zeus, but I went through an infinity of suffering, for I became bondsman to one who was far beneath me—a lowly man who set me all manner of labors [*āthloi*]. He once sent me here to fetch the hound of Hādēs—for he did not think he could find any *āthlos* harder for me than this, [625] but I got the hound out of Hādēs and brought him to him, for Hermes and Athena helped me.’

Then Hēraklēs went down again into the house of Hādēs, but I stayed where I was in case some other of the mighty dead [630] should come to me. And I should have seen still other of them that are gone before, whom I would like to have seen—Theseus and Perithoös glorious children of the gods, but so many thousands of spirits came round me and uttered such appalling cries, that I was panic stricken lest proud Persephone should send up [635] from the house of Hādēs the head of that terrifying monster Gorgon. Then I hastened back to my ship and ordered my men to go on board at once and loose the hawsers; so they

embarked and took their places, whereon the ship went down the stream of the river Okeanos. [640] We had to row at first, but presently a fair wind sprang up.

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2019-12-12

Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 12

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] But when the ship left the stream of the river Okeanos, ² and reached the waves of the sea with its wide-flung paths, ³ and then the Island Aiaia—and there are the abode and the dancing places [*khoroi*] ⁴ of early-born Eos, and the sunrises of Helios, [5] we then drew our ship on to the sands and disembarked onto the shore, where we went to sleep and waited till day should break.

Then, when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I sent some men to Circe's house [10] to fetch the body of Elpenor. We cut firewood from a wood where the headland jutted out into the sea, and after we had wept over him and lamented him we performed his funeral rites. When his body and armor had been burned to ashes, ¹⁴ We heaped up a tomb [*tumbos*] for him, and then, erecting as a column on top, [15] we stuck his well-made oar into the very top of the tomb [*tumbos*].

While we were doing all this, Circe, who knew that we had got back from the house of Hādēs, dressed herself and came to us as fast as she could; and her maid servants came with her bringing us bread, meat, and wine. [20] Then she stood in the midst of us and said, ²¹ 'Wretched men! You went down to the House of Hādēs while you were still alive. ²² You are *dis-thanees* [= you experience death twice], whereas other mortals die only once; now, then, stay here for the rest of the day, feast your fill, [25] and go on with your voyage at daybreak tomorrow morning. In the meantime I will tell Odysseus about your course, and will explain everything to him so as to prevent your suffering from misadventure either by land or sea.'

We agreed to do as she had said, [30] and feasted through the livelong day to the going down of the sun, but when the sun had set and it came on dark, the men laid themselves down to sleep by the stern cables of the ship. Then Circe took me by the hand and bade me be seated away from the others, while she reclined by my side and asked me all about our adventures.

[35] ‘So far so good,’ said she, when I had ended my story, ‘and now pay attention to what I am about to tell you—the god himself, indeed, will recall it to your recollection. First you will come to the Sirens who enchant [40] all who come near them. If anyone unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again, for they sit in a green field and warble him to death with the sweetness of their song. [45] There is a great heap of dead men’s bones lying all around, with the flesh still rotting off them. Therefore pass these Sirens by, and stop your men’s ears with wax that none of them may hear; but if you like you can listen yourself, [50] for you may get the men to bind you in the swift ship, hands and feet, upright in the step of the mast, and have the ends of the ropes fastened to the mast itself, that you may have the pleasure of listening. If you beg and pray the men to unloose you, then they must bind you faster.

[55] When your crew have taken you past these Sirens, I cannot give you coherent directions as to which of two courses you are to take; I will lay the two alternatives before you, and you must consider them for yourself. On the one hand there are some overhanging rocks against which [60] the deep blue waves of dark-eyed Amphitrite beat with terrific fury; the blessed gods call these rocks the Wanderers. Here not even a bird may pass, no, not even the timid doves that bring ambrosia to Father Zeus, but the sheer rock always carries off one of them, [65] and Father Zeus has to send another to make up their number; no ship that ever yet came to these rocks has got away again, but the waves and whirlwinds of fire are freighted with wreckage and with the bodies of dead men. ⁶⁹ The only seafaring ship that has ever yet sailed past that [rock] was [70] the

Argo, which-is-on-the-minds-of [*melousa*] all [*pāsi*], and this was when it sailed away from Aietes, and she too would have gone against these great rocks, only that Hera piloted her past them for the love she bore to Jason.

Of these two rocks the one reaches the sky and its peak is lost in a dark cloud. [75] This never leaves it, so that the top is never clear not even in summer and early autumn. No man though he had twenty hands and twenty feet could get a foothold on it and climb it, for it runs sheer up, as smooth as though it had been polished. [80] In the middle of it there is a large cavern, looking West and turned towards Erebos; you must take your ship this way, but the cave is so high up that not even the stoutest archer could send an arrow into it. [85] Inside it Scylla sits and yelps with a voice that you might take to be that of a young hound, but in truth she is a dreadful monster and no one—not even a god—could face her without being terror-struck. She has twelve misshapen feet, and six [90] necks of the most prodigious length; and at the end of each neck she has a frightful head with three rows of teeth in each, all set very close together, so that they would crunch anyone to death in a moment, [95] and she sits deep within her shady cell thrusting out her heads and peering all round the rock, fishing for dolphins or dogfish or any larger monster that she can catch, of the thousands with which Amphitrite teems. No ship ever yet got past her without losing some men, for she shoots out all her heads at once, [100] and carries off a man in each mouth.

You will find the other rocks lie lower, but they are so close together that there is not more than a bowshot between them. A large fig tree in full leaf grows upon it, and under it lies the sucking whirlpool of shining Charybdis. [105] Three times in the day does she vomit forth her waters, and three times she sucks them down again; see that you be not there when she is sucking, for if you are, Poseidon the Earthshaker himself could not save you; you must hug the Scylla side and drive the ship by as

fast as you can, [110] for you had better lose six men than your whole crew.'

'Is there no way,' said I, 'of escaping deadly Charybdis, and at the same time keeping Scylla off when she is trying to harm my men?'

[115] 'You daring man,' replied the goddess, 'you are always wanting to fight somebody or something and to undergo an ordeal [*ponos*]; you will not let yourself be beaten even by the immortals. For Scylla is not mortal; moreover she is savage, extreme, rude, cruel and invincible. [120] There is no help for it; your best chance will be to get by her as fast as ever you can, for if you dawdle about her rock while you are putting on your armor, she may catch you with a second cast of her six heads, and snap up another half dozen of your men; so drive your ship past her at full speed, and roar out lustily to Krataiis, [125] who is Scylla's mother, bad luck to her; she will then stop her from making a second raid upon you.

You will now come to the Thrinacian island, and here you will see many herds of cattle and flocks of sheep belonging to the sun-god, Helios—seven herds of cattle and seven flocks of sheep, [130] with fifty head in each flock. They do not breed, nor do they become fewer in number, and they are tended by the goddesses with sweet hair, Phaethousa and Lampetie, who are children of the sun-god Hyperion by Neaira. Their mother when she had borne them and had done suckling them [135] sent them to the Thrinacian island, which was a long way off, to live there and look after their father's flocks and herds. If you leave these flocks unharmed, and think of nothing but getting home [*nostos*], you may yet after much hardship reach Ithaca; but if you harm them, then I forewarn you of the destruction both [140] of your ship and of your comrades; and even though you may yourself escape, you will return late, in bad plight, after losing all your men.'

Here she ended, and dawn enthroned in gold began to show in the sky, whereon she returned inland. I then went on board and told my men

[145] to loose the ship from her moorings; so they at once got into her, took their places, and began to smite the gray sea with their oars. Presently the great and cunning goddess fair-haired Circe, who talks with mortals, befriended us with a fair wind that blew dead aft, and stayed steadily with us, [150] keeping our sails well filled, so we did whatever wanted doing to the ship's gear, and let her go as wind and helmsman [*kubernētēs*] headed her.

Then, being much troubled in mind, I said to my men, 'My friends, it is not right that one or two of us alone [155] should know the prophecies that Circe, bright among goddesses, has made me, I will therefore tell you about them, so that whether we live or die we may do so with our eyes open. First she said we were to keep clear of the Sirens, who sit and sing most beautifully in a field of flowers; but she said [160] I might hear them myself so long as no one else did. Therefore, take me and bind me to the crosspiece half way up the mast; bind me as I stand upright, with a bond so fast that I cannot possibly break away, and lash the rope's ends to the mast itself. If I beg and pray you to set me free, then bind me more tightly still.'

[165] I had hardly finished telling everything to the men before we reached the island of the two Sirens, for the wind had been very favorable. Then all of a sudden it fell dead calm; there was not a breath of wind nor a ripple upon the water, [170] so the men furled the sails and stowed them; then taking to their oars they whitened the water with the foam they raised in rowing. Meanwhile I took a large wheel of wax and cut it up small with my sword. Then I kneaded the wax in my strong [175] hands till it became soft, which it soon did between the kneading and the rays of the sun-god son of Hyperion. Then I stopped the ears of all my men, and they bound me hands and feet to the mast as I stood upright on the crosspiece; [180] but they went on rowing themselves. When we had got within earshot of the land, and the ship was going at a good rate, the Sirens saw that we were getting in shore and began with their singing.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Come here, Odysseus, famed for your many riddling words [*ainoi*], you great glory to the Achaean name, [185] stop your ship so that you may hear our two voices. ¹⁸⁶ No man has ever yet sailed past us with his dark ship ¹⁸⁷ without staying to hear the sweet sound of the voices that come from our mouths, ¹⁸⁸ and he who listens will not only experience great pleasure before he goes back home [*neesthai*] but will also be far more knowledgeable than before, ¹⁸⁹ for we know everything that happened at Troy, that expansive place, [190] —all the sufferings caused by the gods for the Argives [= Achaeans] and Trojans ¹⁹¹ and we know everything on earth, that nurturer of so many mortals—everything that happens.’

They sang these words most musically, and as I longed to hear them further I made by frowning to my men that they should set me free; but they quickened their stroke, [195] and Eurylokhos and Perimedes bound me with still stronger bonds till we had got out of hearing of the Sirens’ voices. Then my men took the wax from their ears [200] and unbound me.

Immediately after we had got past the island I saw a great wave from which spray was rising, and I heard a loud roaring sound. The men were so frightened that they loosed hold of their oars, for the whole sea resounded with the rushing of the waters, but the ship stayed where it was, [205] for the men had left off rowing. I went round, therefore, and exhorted them man by man not to lose heart.

‘My friends,’ said I, ‘this is not the first time that we have been in danger, and we are in nothing like so bad a case as when the Cyclops [210] shut us up in his cave by forceful violence [*biē*]; nevertheless, my excellence [*aretē*] and wise counsel [*noos*] saved us then, and we shall live to look back on all this as well. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say, [215] trust in Zeus and row on with might and main. As for you, helmsman [*kubernētēs*], these are your orders; attend to them, for the ship is in your

hands; turn her head away from these steaming rapids and hug the rock, [220] or she will give you the slip and be over yonder before you know where you are, and you will be the death of us.'

So they did as I told them; but I said nothing about the terrifying monster Scylla, for I knew the men would not go on [225] rowing if I did, but would huddle together in the hold. In one thing only did I disobey Circe's strict instructions—I put on my armor. Then seizing two strong spears I took my stand on the ship's bows, [230] for it was there that I expected first to see the monster of the rock, who was to do my men so much harm; but I could not make her out anywhere, though I strained my eyes with looking the gloomy rock all over and over.

Then we entered the Straits in great fear of mind, for on the one hand [235] was Scylla, and on the other dread Charybdis kept sucking up the salt water. As she vomited it up, it was like the water in a cauldron when it is boiling over upon a great fire, and the spray reached the top of the rocks on either side. [240] When she began to suck again, we could see the water all inside whirling round and round, and it made a deafening sound as it broke against the rocks. We could see the bottom of the whirlpool all black with sand and mud, and the men were at their wit's ends for fear. While we were taken up with this, and were expecting each moment to be our last, [245] Scylla pounced down suddenly upon us and with violence [*biē*] snatched up my six best men. I was looking at once after both ship and men, and in a moment I saw their hands and feet ever so high above me, struggling in the air as Scylla was carrying them off, and I heard them call out my name [250] in one last despairing cry. As a fisherman, seated, spear in hand, upon some jutting rock throws bait into the water to deceive the poor little fishes, and spears them with the ox's horn with which his spear is shod, throwing them gasping on to the land as he catches them one by one— [255] even so did Scylla land these panting creatures on her rock and munch them up at the mouth of her den, while they screamed and stretched out their

hands to me in their mortal agony. This was the most sickening sight that I saw throughout all my voyages.

[260] When we had passed the Wandering rocks, with Scylla and terrifying Charybdis, we reached the noble island of the sun-god, where were the goodly cattle and sheep belonging to the sun Hyperion. While still at sea in my ship [265] I could bear the cattle lowing as they came home to the yards, and the sheep bleating. Then I remembered what the blind Theban prophet [*mantis*] Teiresias had told me, and how carefully Aeaean Circe had warned me to shun the island of the blessed sun-god. [270] So being much troubled I said to the men, 'My men, I know you are hard pressed, but listen while I tell you the prophecy that Teiresias made me, and how carefully Aeaean Circe warned me to shun the island of the blessed sun-god, [275] for it was here, she said, that our worst danger would lie. Head the ship, therefore, away from the island.'

The men were in despair at this, and Eurylokhos at once gave me an insolent answer. 'Odysseus,' said he, 'you are cruel; [280] you are very strong yourself and never get worn out; you seem to be made of iron, and now, though your men are exhausted with toil and want of sleep, you will not let them land and cook themselves a good supper upon this island, but bid them put out to sea [285] and go faring fruitlessly on through the watches of the fleeing night. It is by night that the winds blow hardest and do so much damage; how can we escape should one of those sudden squalls spring up from South West or West, which so often [290] wreck a vessel when our lords the gods are unpropitious? Now, therefore, let us obey the call of night and prepare our supper here hard by the ship; tomorrow morning we will go on board again and put out to sea.'

Thus spoke Eurylokhos, and the men approved his words. [295] I saw that a superhuman force [*daimōn*] meant us mischief and said, 'You force me to yield, for you are many against one, but at any rate each one of you must take his solemn oath that if he meet with a herd of cattle or a

large flock of sheep, [300] he will not be so mad as to kill a single head of either, but will be satisfied with the food that immortal Circe has given us.'

They all swore as I bade them, and when they had completed their oath [305] we made the ship fast in a harbor that was near a stream of fresh water, and the men went ashore and cooked their suppers. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, they began talking about their poor comrades [310] whom Scylla had snatched up and eaten; this set them weeping and they went on crying till they fell off into a sound sleep.

In the third watch of the night when the stars had shifted their places, Zeus raised a great gale of wind that flew a hurricane so that [315] land and sea were covered with thick clouds, and night sprang forth out of sky. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, we brought the ship to land and drew her into a cave wherein the sea-nymphs hold their courts and dances [*khoros*], and I called the men together in council.

[320] 'My friends,' said I, 'we have meat and drink in the ship, let us mind, therefore, and not touch the cattle, or we shall suffer for it; for these cattle and sheep belong to the mighty sun, who sees and gives ear to everything.' And again they promised that they would obey.

[325] For a whole month the wind blew steadily from the South, and there was no other wind, but only South and East. As long as wheat and wine held out the men did not touch the cattle when they were hungry; when, however, they had eaten all there was in the ship, [330] they were forced to go further afield, with hook and line, catching birds, and taking whatever they could lay their hands on; for they were starving. One day, therefore, I went up inland that I might pray the gods to show me some means of getting away. [335] When I had gone far enough to be clear of all my men, and had found a place that was well sheltered

from the wind, I washed my hands and prayed to all the gods in Olympus till by and by they sent me off into a sweet sleep.

Meanwhile Eurylokhos had been giving evil counsel to the men, [340] ‘Listen to me,’ said he, ‘my poor comrades. All deaths are bad enough but there is none so bad as famine. Why should not we drive in the best of these cows and offer them in sacrifice to the immortal gods? [345] If we ever get back to Ithaca, we can build a fine temple to the sun-god and enrich it with every kind of ornament; if, however, he is determined to sink our ship out of revenge for these horned cattle, and the other gods are of the same mind, [350] I for one would rather drink salt water once for all and have done with it, than be starved to death by inches in such a desert island as this is.’

Thus spoke Eurylokhos, and the men approved his words. Now the cattle, so fair and goodly, [355] were feeding not far from the ship; the men, therefore drove in the best of them, and they all stood round them saying their prayers, and using young oak-shoots instead of barley-meal, for there was no barley left. When they had done praying they killed the cows and dressed their carcasses; [360] they cut out the thigh bones, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, and set some pieces of raw meat on top of them. They had no wine with which to make drink-offerings over the sacrifice while it was cooking, so they kept pouring on a little water from time to time while the innards were being grilled; then, when the thigh bones were burned and they had tasted the innards, [365] they cut the rest up small and put the pieces upon the spits.

By this time my deep sleep had left me, and I turned back to the ship and to the sea shore. As I drew near I began to smell hot roast meat, [370] so I groaned out a prayer to the immortal gods. ‘Father Zeus,’ I exclaimed, ‘and all you other gods who live in everlasting bliss, you have inflicted on me a cruel aberration [*atē*] by the sleep into which you have sent me; see what fine work these men of mine have been making in my absence.’

Meanwhile Lampetie of the light robes went straight off to the sun [375] and told him we had been killing his cows, whereon he flew into a great rage, and said to the immortals, 'Father Zeus, and all you other gods who live in everlasting bliss, I must have vengeance on the crew of Laertes' son Odysseus' ship: they have had the insolence to kill my cows, which were the one thing I loved to [380] look upon, whether I was going up the sky or down again. If they do not square accounts with me about my cows, I will go down to Hādēs and shine there among the dead.'

[385] 'Sun,' said Zeus, 'go on shining upon us gods and upon humankind over the fruitful earth. I will shiver their ship into little pieces with a bolt of white lightning as soon as they get out to sea.'

I was told all this by fair-haired Kalypsō, [390] who said she had heard it from the mouth of Hermes.

As soon as I got down to my ship and to the sea shore I rebuked each one of the men separately, but we could see no way out of it, for the cows were dead already. And indeed the gods began at once to show signs and wonders among us, [395] for the hides of the cattle crawled about, and the joints upon the spits began to low like cows, and the meat, whether cooked or raw, kept on making a noise just as cows do.

For six days my men kept driving in the best cows and feasting upon them, but when Zeus, the son of Kronos, had added a seventh [400] day, the fury of the gale abated; we therefore went on board, raised our masts, spread sail, and put out to sea. As soon as we were well away from the island, and could see nothing but sky and sea, [405] the son of Kronos raised a black cloud over our ship, and the sea grew dark beneath it. We did not get on much further, for in another moment we were caught by a terrific squall from the West that snapped the forestays [410] of the mast so that it fell aft, while all the ship's gear tumbled about at the bottom of the vessel. The mast fell upon the head of the helmsman in

the ship's stern, so that the bones of his head were crushed to pieces, and he fell overboard as though he were diving, with no more life left in him.

[415] Then Zeus let fly with his thunderbolts, and the ship went round and round, and was filled with fire and brimstone as the lightning struck it. The men all fell into the sea; they were carried about in the water round the ship, looking like so many sea-gulls, but the god presently deprived them of all chance of any homecoming [*nostos*].

[420] I stuck to the ship till the sea knocked her sides from her keel (which drifted about by itself) and struck the mast out of her in the direction of the keel; but there was a backstay of stout ox-thong still hanging about it, and with this I lashed the mast and keel together, [425] and getting astride of them was carried wherever the winds chose to take me.

The gale from the West had now spent its force, and the wind got into the South again, which frightened me lest I should be taken back to the terrifying whirlpool of Charybdis. This indeed was what actually happened, for I was borne along by the waves all night, and by sunrise [430] had reached the rock of Scylla, and the dreaded whirlpool. She was then sucking down the salt sea water, but I was carried aloft toward the fig tree, which I caught hold of and clung on to like a bat. I could not plant my feet anywhere so as to stand securely, [435] for the roots were a long way off and the boughs that overshadowed the whole pool were too high, too vast, and too far apart for me to reach them; so I hung patiently on, waiting till the pool should discharge my mast and raft again—and a very long while it seemed. One who judges [*krinein*] is not more glad to get home to supper, [440] after having been long detained in court by troublesome cases, than I was to see my raft beginning to work its way out of the whirlpool again. At last I let go with my hands and feet, and fell heavily into the sea, hard by my raft on to which I then got, and began to row with my hands. [445] As for

Scylla, the father of gods and men would not let her get further sight of me—otherwise I should have certainly been lost.

Hence I was carried along for nine days till on the tenth night the gods stranded me on the Ogygian island, where dwells the great and powerful fair-haired goddess Kalypsō. [450] She took me in and was kind to me, but I need say no more about this, for I told you and your noble wife all about it yesterday, and it is hateful [*ekhthron*] to me to say the same thing over and over again.”

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2019-12-12

Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 13

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Thus did he speak, and they all held their peace throughout the covered hall, enthralled by the charm of his story, till presently Alkinoos began to speak.

“Odysseus,” said he, “now that you have reached my bronze-founded house [5] I doubt not you will get home without further misadventure no matter how much you have suffered in the past. To you others, however, who come here night after night to drink my choicest wine and listen to my bard, I would insist as follows. [10] Our guest has already packed up the clothes, wrought gold, and other valuables which you have brought for his acceptance; let us now, therefore, present him further, each one of us, with a large tripod and a cauldron. We will recoup ourselves by the levy of a general rate [15] throughout the district [*dēmos*]; for private individuals cannot be expected to bear the burden of such a handsome present.”

Every one approved of this, and then they went home to bed each in his own abode. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, they hurried down to the ship and brought their cauldrons with them. [20] Alkinoos, the hallowed prince, went on board and saw everything so securely stowed under the ship’s benches that nothing could break adrift and injure the rowers. Then they went to the house of Alkinoos, the hallowed prince, to get dinner. ²⁴ On their [= the Phaeacians’] behalf Alkinoos, the one with the holy power, sacrificed an ox [25] to Zeus, the one who brings dark clouds, the son of Kronos, and he rules over all. ²⁶ Then, after burning the thigh-pieces, they feasted, feasting most gloriously, ²⁷ and they were feeling delight [*terpesthai*]; in their midst

sang-and-danced [*melpesthai*] the divine singer [*aoidos*], ²⁸ Demodokos, honored by the people. But Odysseus kept on turning his eyes towards [30] the sun, as though to hasten his setting, for he was longing to be on his way. As one who has been all day plowing a fallow field with a couple of oxen keeps thinking about his supper and is glad when night comes that he may go and get it, for it is all his legs can do to carry him, [35] even so did Odysseus rejoice when the sun went down, and he at once said to the oar-loving Phaeacians, addressing himself more particularly to King Alkinoos, pre-eminent among all others:

“Sir, and all of you, farewell. Make your drink-offerings and send me on my way rejoicing, [40] for you have fulfilled my heart’s desire by giving me an escort, and making me presents, and may the gods grant that I turn those things into blessed [*olbia*] possessions; may I find my admirable wife living in peace among friends, and may you whom I leave behind me give satisfaction to your [45] wives and children; may the gods grant you every kind of good accomplishment [*aretē*], and may no evil thing come among your people.”

Thus did he speak. His hearers all of them approved his saying and agreed that he should have his escort inasmuch as he had spoken reasonably. Alkinoos therefore said to his servant, [50] “Pontonoos, mix some wine and hand it round to everybody, that we may offer a prayer to father Zeus, and speed our guest upon his way.”

Pontonoos mixed the wine and handed it to every one in turn; the others each from his own seat made a drink-offering [55] to the blessed gods that live in the sky, but Odysseus rose and placed the double cup in the hands of Queen Arete.

“Farewell, Queen,” said he, “henceforward and for ever, till age [60] and death, the common lot of humankind, lay their hands upon you. I now take my leave; be happy in this house with your children, your people, and with King Alkinoos.”

As he spoke he crossed the threshold, and Alkinoos sent a man [65] to conduct him to his ship and to the sea shore. Arete also sent some maid servants with him—one with a clean khiton and cloak, another to carry his strong-box, and a third with wheat and wine. [70] When they got to the water side the crew took these things and put them on board, with all the meat and drink; but for Odysseus they spread a rug and a linen sheet on deck that he might sleep [75] soundly in the stern of the ship. Then he too went on board and lay down without a word, but the crew took every man his place in order [*kosmos*] and loosed the hawser from the pierced stone to which it had been bound. ⁷⁸ When they [= the Phaeacian seafarers] began rowing out to sea, ⁷⁹ he [= Odysseus] felt a sweet sleep falling upon his eyelids. [80] It was a deep sleep, the sweetest, and most similar to death.

⁸¹ Meanwhile, the ship was speeding ahead, just as a team of four stallions drawing a chariot over a plain ⁸² speeds ahead in unison as they all feel the stroke of the whip, ⁸³ galloping along smoothly, with feet raised high as they make their way forward, ⁸⁴ so also the prow of the ship kept curving upward as if it were the neck of a stallion, and, behind the ship, waves that were [85] huge and seething raged in the waters of the roaring sea. ⁸⁶ The ship held steadily on its course, and not even a falcon, ⁸⁷ raptor that he is, swiftest of all winged creatures, could have kept pace with it. ⁸⁸ So did the ship cut its way smoothly through the waves, ⁸⁹ carrying a man who was like the gods in his knowledge of clever ways, [90] who had beforehand suffered very many pains [*algea*] in his heart [*thūmos*], ⁹¹ taking part in wars among men and forging through so many waves that cause pain, ⁹² but now he was sleeping peacefully, forgetful of all he had suffered.

⁹³ And when the brightest of all stars began to show, the one that, more than any other star, comes to announce the light of the Dawn born in her earliness [95] that is when the ship, famed for its travels over the seas, drew near to the island. Now there is in the locale [*dēmos*] of Ithaca a

haven of Phorkys, the Old One of the sea, which lies between two points that break the line of the sea and shut the harbor in. These shelter it from the storms of wind and sea [100] that rage outside, so that, when once within it, a ship may lie without being even moored. At the head of this harbor there is a large olive tree, and at no distance a fine overarching cavern sacred to the nymphs who are called [105] Nymphs of Wellsprings, Naiads. There are mixing-bowls within it and wine-jars of stone, and the bees hive there. Moreover, there are great looms of stone on which the nymphs weave their robes of sea purple—very curious to see—and at all times there is water within it. It has two entrances, [110] one facing North by which mortals can go down into the cave, while the other comes from the South and is more mysterious; mortals cannot possibly get in by it, it is the way taken by the gods.

Into this harbor, then, they took their ship, for they knew the place. [115] She had so much way upon her that she ran half her own length on to the shore; when, however, they had landed, the first thing they did was to lift Odysseus with his rug and linen sheet out of the ship, and lay him down upon the sand still fast asleep. Then [120] they took out the presents which great-hearted Athena had persuaded the haughty Phaeacians to give him when he was setting out on his voyage homewards. They put these all together by the root of the olive tree, away from the road, for fear some passer by might come and steal them before Odysseus awoke; and then they made the best of their way home again.

[125] But Poseidon, the Earthshaker, did not forget the threats with which he had already threatened Odysseus, so he took counsel with Zeus. “Father Zeus,” said he, “I shall no longer be held in any sort of respect among you gods, [130] if mortals like the Phaeacians, who are my own flesh and blood, show such small regard for me. I said I would get Odysseus home when he had suffered sufficiently. I did not say that he should never achieve a homecoming [*nostos*] at all, for I knew you had already nodded your head about it, and promised that he should do

so; but now they have brought him over the sea in a ship fast asleep [135] and have landed him in Ithaca after loading him with more magnificent presents of bronze, gold, and raiment than he would ever have brought back from Troy, if he had had his share of the spoil and got home without misadventure.”

And Zeus answered, [140] “What, O Lord of the Earthquake, are you talking about? The gods are by no means wanting in respect for you. It would be monstrous were they to insult one so old and honored as you are. As regards mortals, however, if any of them is indulging in insolence [*biē*] and treating you disrespectfully, it will always rest with yourself to deal with him as you may think proper, [145] do as you wish and as was pleasing to your heart.”

“I should have done so at once,” replied Poseidon, shaker of the Earth, “if I were not anxious to avoid anything that might displease you; ¹⁴⁹ so now I want to smash the very beautiful ship of the Phaeacians [150] when it comes back, in a misty crossing of the sea, from its conveying mission, ¹⁵¹ so that these people [= the Phaeacians] will hold off, at long last, and stop their practice of conveying ¹⁵² humans. And I want to make a huge mountain envelop their city.”

“My good friend,” answered Zeus, “I should recommend you [155] at the very moment [155] when all the people of the city look out and see the ship sailing in, ¹⁵⁶ turn it into a rock, just as it is about to reach land. ¹⁵⁷ Make it look like a swift ship, so that people will look at it with wonder ¹⁵⁸ —all of humanity will do so; and make the huge mountain envelop their city.”

When earth-encircling Poseidon heard this he went [160] to Skheria where the Phaeacians live, and stayed there till the ship, which was making rapid way, had got close-in. Then he went up to it, turned it into stone, and drove it down with the flat of his hand so as to root it in the ground. After this he went away. [165] The Phaeacians of the long

oars then began talking among themselves, and one would turn towards his neighbor, saying, “Who is it that can have rooted the ship in the sea just as she was getting into port? We could see the whole of her only a moment ago.”

[170] This was how they talked, but they knew nothing about it; and Alkinoos said, “I remember now the old prophecy of my father. He said that Poseidon would be angry with us for taking every one so safely over the sea, [175] He once said that he [Poseidon] will smash the very beautiful ship of the Phaeacian men ¹⁷⁶ when it comes back, in a misty crossing of the sea, from its conveying mission, ¹⁷⁷ and that he will make a huge mountain envelop our city. ¹⁷⁸ That is what the old man said. And now you and I see that all these things are being brought to fulfillment. ¹⁷⁹ But come, let us all comply with exactly what I am about to say. [180] In the first place we must leave off giving people escorts when they come here, and in the next let us sacrifice twelve picked [*krinein*] bulls to Poseidon ¹⁸² in hopes that he will take pity ¹⁸³ and will not make the tall mountain envelop our city.” When the people heard this they were afraid and got ready the bulls.

[185] Thus did the chiefs and rulers of the district [*dēmos*] of the Phaeacians pray to king Poseidon, standing round his altar; and at the same moment great Odysseus woke up, once more upon his own soil. He had been so long away that he did not know it again; moreover, Zeus’ daughter Athena [190] had made it a foggy day, so that people might not know of his having come, and that she might tell him everything without either his wife or his fellow townspeople and friends recognizing him until he had taken his revenge upon the wicked suitors. Everything, therefore, seemed quite different to him— [195] the long straight tracks, the harbors, the precipices, and the goodly trees, appeared all changed as he started up and looked upon his native land. So he smote his thighs with the flat of his hands and cried aloud despairingly.

[200] “Alas,” he exclaimed, “among what manner of people am I fallen? Are they savage and uncivilized [non-*dikaios*] or hospitable and endowed with god-fearing mind [*noos*]? Where shall I put all this treasure, and which way shall I go? I wish I had stayed over there with the Phaeacians; [205] or I could have gone to some other great chief who would have been good to me and given me an escort. As it is I do not know where to put my treasure, and I cannot leave it here for fear somebody else should get hold of it. In good truth the chiefs and rulers of the Phaeacians have not been dealing in a fair [*dikaios*] way with me, [210] and have left me in the wrong country; they said they would take me back to Ithaca and they have not done so: may Zeus the protector of suppliants chastise them, for he watches over everybody and punishes those who do wrong. [215] Still, I suppose I must count my goods and see if the crew have gone off with any of them.”

He counted his goodly coppers and cauldrons, his gold and all his clothes, but there was nothing missing; still he kept grieving about not being in his own country, [220] and wandered up and down by the shore of the sounding sea bewailing his hard fate. Then Athena came up to him disguised as a young shepherd of delicate and princely mien, with a good cloak folded double about her shoulders; [225] she had sandals on her comely feet and held a javelin in her hand. Odysseus was glad when he saw her, and went straight up to her.

“My friend,” said he, “you are the first person whom I have met with in this country; I salute you, therefore, and beg you to be well disposed towards me in your thinking [*noos*]. [230] Protect these my goods, and myself too, for I embrace your knees and pray to you as though you were a god. Tell me, then, and tell me truly, what land and country [*dēmos*] is this? Who are its inhabitants? Am I on an island, or is this the sea board [235] of some continent?”

Owl-vision Athena answered, “Stranger, you must be very simple, or must have come from somewhere a long way off, not to know what

country this is. It is a very celebrated place, [240] and everybody knows it East and West. It is rugged and not a good driving country, but it is by no means a bad island for what there is of it. It grows any quantity of wheat and also [245] wine, for it is watered both by rain and dew; it breeds cattle also and goats; all kinds of timber grow here, and there are watering places where the water never runs dry; so, sir, the name of Ithaca is known even as far as Troy, which I understand to be a long way off from this Achaean country.”

[250] Resourceful great Odysseus was glad at finding himself, as Athena told him, in his own country, and he began to answer, but he did not speak the truth [*alēthēs*], and made up a lying story [255] in the instinctive wiliness of his mind [*noos*].

“I heard of Ithaca,” said he, “when I was in Crete beyond the seas, and now it seems I have reached it with all these treasures. I have left as much more behind me for my children, but am fleeing because I killed Orsilokhos, a man of swift feet and son of Idomeneus, [260] the fleetest runner in Crete. I killed him because he wanted to rob me of the spoils I had got from Troy with so much trouble and danger both on the field of battle and by the waves of the weary sea; [265] he said I had not served his father loyally in the Trojan district [*dēmos*] as vassal, but had set myself up as an independent ruler, so I lay in wait for him and with one of my followers by the roadside, and speared him as he was coming into town from the country. It was a very dark night and nobody saw us; it was not known, therefore, [270] that I had killed him, but as soon as I had done so I went to a ship and besought the owners, who were Phoenicians, to take me on board and set me in Pylos [275] or in shining Elis where the Epeioi rule, giving them as much spoil as satisfied them. They meant no guile, but the wind drove them off their course, and we sailed on till we came here by night. It was all we could do to get inside the harbor, [280] and none of us said a word about supper though we wanted it badly, but we all went on shore and lay down just as we were. I was very tired and fell asleep directly, so they took my

goods out of the ship, and placed them beside me where I was lying upon the sand. [285] Then they sailed away to Sidonia, and I was left here in great distress of mind.”

Such was his story, but owl-vision Athena smiled and caressed him with her hand. Then she took the form of a woman, fair, stately, and high-spirited. [290] “He must be indeed a shifty lying character,” said she, “who could surpass you in all manner of craft [*kerdos*] even though you had a god for your antagonist. Daring that you are, full of guile, unwearied in deceit [*atē*], [295] can you not drop your tricks and your instinctive falsehood, even now that you are in your own country again? We will say no more, however, about this, for we both of us know craftiness [*kerdos*] upon occasion—you are the best counselor and orator among all humankind, while I for diplomacy and crafty ways [*kerdea*] have fame [*kleos*] among the gods. [300] Did you not know Zeus’ daughter Athena—me, who have been ever with you, who kept watch over you in all your ordeals [*ponos*], and who made the Phaeacians take so great a liking to you? And now, again, I am come here to talk things over with you, and help you to hide the treasure I made the haughty Phaeacians [305] give you; I want to tell you about the troubles that await you in your own house; you have got to face them, but tell no one, neither man nor woman, that you have come home again. Bear everything, and put up with [310] every man’s violent insolence [*biē*], without a word.”

And resourceful Odysseus answered, “A man, goddess, may know a great deal, but you are so constantly changing your appearance that when he meets you it is a hard matter for him to know whether it is you or not. This much, however, I know exceedingly well; you were very kind to me [315] as long as we Achaeans were fighting at Troy, but from the day on which we went on board ship after having ransacked the city of Priam, and the gods dispersed us—from that day, Athena, I saw no more of you, and cannot ever remember your coming to my ship to help me in a difficulty; [320] I had to wander on sick and sorry till the gods

delivered me from evil and I reached the district [*dēmos*] of the Phaeacians, where you encouraged me and took me into the town. And now, I beseech you in your father's name, tell me the truth, for I do not believe [325] I am really back in Ithaca. I am in some other country and you are mocking me and deceiving me in all you have been saying. Tell me then truly, have I really got back to my own country?"

[330] "You are always taking something of that sort into your head," replied owl-vision goddess Athena, "and that is why I cannot desert you in your afflictions; you are so plausible, shrewd and shifty. Any one but yourself on returning from so long a voyage would at once have gone home to see his wife and children, but you do not [335] seem to care about asking after them or hearing any news about them till you have made trial of your wife, who remains at home vainly grieving for you, and having no peace night or day for the tears she sheds on your behalf. As for my not coming near you, I was never uneasy about you, for I was certain [340] you would get back safely though you would lose all your men, and I did not wish to quarrel with my uncle Poseidon, who never forgave you for having blinded his son. I will now, however, point out to you the lie of the land, and you will then perhaps believe me. [345] This is the haven of the old merman Phorkys, and here is the olive tree that grows at the head of it; [near it is the cave sacred to the Naiads;] here too is the overarching cavern in which [350] you have offered many an acceptable hecatomb to the Nymphs of Wellsprings, Naiads, and this is the wooded mountain Neriton."

As she spoke the goddess dispersed the mist and the land appeared. Then long-suffering great Odysseus rejoiced at finding himself again in his own land, and kissed the bounteous soil; [355] he lifted up his hands and prayed to the nymphs, saying, "Naiad nymphs, daughters of Zeus, I was sure that I was never again to see you, now therefore I greet you with all loving salutations, and I will bring you offerings as in the old days, if Zeus' terrifying daughter will grant me [360] life, and bring my son to manhood."

“Take heart, and do not trouble yourself about that,” rejoined owl-vision Athena, “let us rather set about stowing your things at once in the cave, where they will be quite safe. [365] Let us see how we can best manage it all.”

Therewith she went down into the cave to look for the safest hiding places, while Odysseus brought up all the treasure of gold, bronze, and good clothing which the Phaeacians had given him. [370] They stowed everything carefully away, and Athena set a stone against the door of the cave. Then the two sat down by the root of the great olive, and consulted how to compass the destruction of the wicked suitors.

[375] “Resourceful Odysseus,” said Athena, “noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, think how you can lay hands on these disreputable people who have been lording it in your house these three years, courting your godlike wife and making wedding presents to her, while she does nothing but mourning your *nostos*, [380] giving hope and sending encouraging messages to every one of them, but meaning [in her *noos*] the very opposite of all she says.”

And resourceful Odysseus answered, “In good truth, goddess, it seems I should have come to much the same bad end in my own house as Agamemnon did, [385] if you had not given me such timely information. Advise me how I shall best avenge myself. Stand by my side and put your courage into my heart as on the day when we loosed Troy’s fair diadem from her brow. Help me now as you did then, [390] and I will fight three hundred men, if you, goddess, will be with me.”

“Trust me for that,” said she, “I will not lose sight of you when once we set about it, and I would imagine that some of those who are devouring your substance will then [395] bespatter the pavement with their blood and brains. I will begin by disguising you so that no human being shall know you; I will cover your body with wrinkles; you shall lose all your yellow hair; I will clothe you [400] in a garment that shall fill all who see

it with loathing; I will blear your fine eyes for you, and make you an unseemly object in the sight of the suitors, of your wife, and of the son whom you left behind you. Then go at once to the swineherd [405] who is in charge of your pigs; he has been always well affected towards you, and is devoted to circumspect Penelope and your son; you will find him feeding his pigs near the rock that is called Raven by the fountain Arethousa, where they are fattening on beechmast [410] and spring water after their manner. Stay with him and find out how things are going, while I proceed to Sparta and see your son, who is with Menelaos at Lacedaemon, the country of lovely women, [415] where he has gone to try and find out [*kleos*] whether you are still alive.”

“But why,” said resourceful Odysseus, “did you not tell him, for you knew all about it? Did you want him too to go sailing about amid all kinds of hardship while others are eating up his estate?”

[420] Owl-vision Athena answered, “Never mind about him, I sent him that he might be well spoken [*kleos*] of for having gone. He is in no sort of difficulty [*ponos*], but is staying quite comfortably with Menelaos, and is surrounded with abundance of every kind. [425] The suitors have put out to sea and are lying in wait for him, for they mean to kill him before he can get home. I do not much think they will succeed, but rather that some of those who are now eating up your estate will first find a grave themselves.”

As she spoke Athena touched him with her wand and covered him with wrinkles, took away all his yellow hair, [430] and withered the flesh over his whole body; she blearied his eyes, which were naturally very fine ones; she changed his clothes and threw an old rag of a wrap about him, and a khiton, [435] tattered, filthy, and begrimed with smoke; she also gave him an undressed deer skin as an outer garment, and furnished him with a staff and a wallet all in holes, with a twisted thong for him to sling it over his shoulder.

When the pair had thus laid their plans they parted, and the goddess [440] went straight to Lacedaemon to fetch Telemachus, the son of Odysseus.

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2017-08-02

Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 14

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Odysseus now left the haven, and took the rough track up through the wooded country and over the crest of the mountain till he reached the place where Athena had said that he would find the swineherd, who was the most thrifty servant he had. [5] He found him sitting in front of his hut, which was by the yards that he had built on a site which could be seen from far. He had made them spacious and fair to see, with a free run for the pigs all round them; he had built them during his master's absence, [10] of stones which he had gathered out of the ground, without saying anything to Penelope or old Laertes, and he had fenced them on top with thorn bushes. Outside the yard he had run a strong fence of oaken posts, split, and set pretty close together, while inside he had built twelve sties near one another for the sows to lie in. [15] There were fifty pigs wallowing in each sty, all of them breeding sows; but the boars slept outside and were much fewer in number, for the suitors kept on eating them, and the swineherd had to send them the best he had [20] continually. There were three hundred and sixty boar pigs, and the herdsman's four hounds, which were as fierce as wolves, slept always with them. The swineherd was at that moment cutting out a pair of sandals from a good stout ox-hide. [25] Three of his men were out herding the pigs in one place or another, and he had sent the fourth to town with a boar that he had been forced to send the suitors that they might sacrifice it and have their fill of meat.

When the hounds saw Odysseus [30] they set up a furious barking and flew at him, but Odysseus was cunning enough to sit down and loose his hold of the stick that he had in his hand: still, he would have been torn by them in his own homestead had not the swineherd dropped his

ox-hide, rushed full speed through the gate of the yard [35] and driven the dogs off by shouting and throwing stones at them. Then he said to Odysseus, “Old man, the dogs were likely to have made short work of you, and then you would have got me into trouble. The gods have given me quite enough worries without that, [40] for I have lost the best of masters, and am in continual grief on his account. I have to attend swine for other people to eat, while he, if he yet lives to see the light of day, is starving in some distant locale [*dēmos*]. [45] But come inside, and when you have had your fill of bread and wine, tell me where you come from, and all about your misfortunes.”

Then the swineherd led the way into the hut and bade him sit down. He strewed a good thick bed of rushes [50] upon the floor, and on the top of this he threw the shaggy chamois skin—a great thick one—on which he used to sleep by night. Odysseus was pleased at being made thus welcome, and said “May Zeus, sir, and the rest of the gods grant you your heart’s desire in return for the kind way in which you have received me.”

[55] To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “Stranger, though a still poorer man should come here, it would not be right for me to insult him, for all strangers and beggars are from Zeus. You must take what you can get and be thankful, for servants [60] live in fear when they have young lords for their masters; and this is my misfortune now, for the gods have hindered the return [*nostos*] of him who would have been always good to me and given me something of my own—a house, a piece of land, a good looking wife, [65] and all else that a liberal master allows a servant who has worked hard for him, and whose labor the gods have prospered as they have mine in the situation which I hold. If my master had grown old here he would have done great things by me, but he is gone, and I wish that Helen’s whole lineage were utterly destroyed, for she has been the death of many [70] a good man. It was this matter that took my master to Ilion, the land of noble steeds, to fight the Trojans in the cause of King Agamemnon.”

As he spoke he bound his belt round him and went to the sties where the young sucking pigs were penned. He picked out two which he brought back with him and sacrificed. [75] He singed them, cut them up, and spitted on them; when the meat was cooked he brought it all in and set it before Odysseus, hot and still on the spit, whereon Odysseus sprinkled it over with white barley meal. The swineherd then mixed wine in a bowl of ivy-wood, and taking a seat opposite Odysseus told him to begin.

[80] “Fall to, stranger,” said he, “on a dish of servant’s pork. The fat pigs have to go to the suitors, who eat them up without shame or scruple; but the blessed gods love not such shameful doings, and respect those who do what is lawful and right [*dikē*]. [85] Even the fierce pirates who go raiding on other people’s land, and Zeus gives them their spoil—even they, when they have filled their ships and got home again live conscience-stricken, and look fearfully for judgment; but some god seems to have told these people [90] that Odysseus is dead and gone; they will not, therefore, go back to their own homes and make their offers of marriage in the proper [*dikaïos*] way, but waste his estate by force, without fear or stint. Not a day or night comes out of the sky, but they sacrifice not one victim nor [95] two only, and they take the run of his wine, for he was exceedingly rich. No other great man either in Ithaca or on the mainland is as rich as he was; he had as much as twenty men put together. I will tell you what he had. [100] There are twelve herds of cattle upon the mainland, and as many flocks of sheep, there are also twelve droves of pigs, while his own men and hired strangers feed him twelve widely spreading herds of goats. Here in Ithaca he runs even large flocks of goats on the far end of the island, and they are in the charge of excellent goatherds. [105] Each one of these sends the suitors the best goat in the flock every day. As for myself, I am in charge of the pigs that you see here, and I have to keep picking [*krinein*] out the best I have and sending it to them.”

This was his story, but Odysseus went on eating and drinking [110] ravenously without a word, brooding his revenge. When he had eaten enough and was satisfied, the swineherd took the bowl from which he usually drank, filled it with wine, and gave it to Odysseus, who was pleased, and said as he took it in his hands, [115] “My friend, who was this master of yours that bought you and paid for you, so rich and so powerful as you tell me? You say he perished in the cause of King Agamemnon; tell me who he was, in case I may have met with such a person. Zeus and the other gods know, [120] but I may be able to give you news of him, for I have traveled much.” Eumaios answered, “Old man, no traveler who comes here with news will get Odysseus’ wife and son to believe his story. ¹²⁴ It’s no use! Wanderers in need of food [125] are liars [*pseudontai*], and they are unwilling to tell true things [*alēthea mūthēsasthai*]; every one who finds his way to the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca goes to my mistress and tells her falsehoods, whereon she takes them in, makes much of them, and asks them all manner of questions, crying all the time [130] as women will when they have lost their husbands. And you too, old man, for a khiton and a cloak would doubtless make up a very pretty story. But the wolves and birds of prey have long since torn Odysseus to pieces, and his *psūkhē* left him behind; [135] or the fish devoured him in the sea [*pontos*], and his bones are lying buried deep in sand upon some foreign shore; he is dead and gone, and a bad business it is for all his friends—for me especially; go where I may I shall never find so good a master, [140] not even if I were to go home to my mother and father where I was bred and born. I do not so much care, however, about my parents now, though I should dearly like to see them again in my own country; it is the loss of Odysseus that grieves me most; [145] I cannot speak of him without reverence though he is here no longer, for he was very fond of me, and took such care of me that wherever he may be I shall always honor his memory.”

“My friend,” replied long-suffering great Odysseus, “you are very positive, [150] and very hard of belief about your master’s coming home again, nevertheless I will not merely say, but will swear, that he is

coming. Do not give me anything for my news till he has actually come, you may then give me a khiton and cloak of good wear if you will. [155] I am in great want, but I will not take anything at all till then, for hateful [*ekhthros*] as Hādēs to me is a man who lets his poverty tempt him into lying. I swear by King Zeus, by the rites of hospitality, and by that hearth of blameless Odysseus to which I have now come, [160] that all will surely happen as I have said it will. Odysseus will return in this self same year; with the end of this moon and the beginning of the next he will be here to do vengeance on all those who are ill treating his wife and son.”

[165] To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “Old man, you will neither get paid for bringing good news, nor will Odysseus ever come home; drink your wine in peace, and let us talk about something else. Do not keep on reminding me of all this; [170] it always pains me when any one speaks about my honored master. As for your oath we will let it alone, but I only wish he may come, as do Penelope, his old father Laertes, and his son, godlike Telemachus. I am terribly unhappy too about [175] this same boy of his; he was running up fast into manhood, and bade fare to be no worse man, face and figure, than his father, but some one, either god or man, has been unsettling his mind, so he has gone off [180] to Pylos to try and get news of his father, and the suitors are lying in wait for him as he is coming home, in the hope of leaving the house of Arkeisios without a name in Ithaca. But let us say no more about him, and leave him to be taken, or else to escape if the son of Kronos holds his hand over him to protect him. [185] And now, old man, tell me your own story; tell me also, for I want to know, who you are and where you come from. Tell me of your town and parents, what manner of ship you came in, what crew brought you to Ithaca, and from what country they professed to come— [190] for you cannot have come by land.”

And resourceful Odysseus answered, “I will tell you all about it. If there were meat and wine enough, [195] and we could stay here in the hut

with nothing to do but to eat and drink while the others go to their work, I could easily talk on for a whole twelve months without ever finishing the story of the sorrows with which it has pleased the gods to visit me.

¹⁹⁹ I say solemnly that I was born and raised in Crete, the place that reaches far and wide; [200] my father was a well-to-do man, who had many sons born in marriage, whereas I was the son of a slave whom he had purchased for a concubine; nevertheless, my father Castor, son of Hylax (whose lineage I claim, [205] and who was held in the highest honor in the locale [*dēmos*] of the Cretans for his wealth, prosperity [*olbos*], and the valor of his sons) put me on the same level with my brothers who had been born in wedlock. When, however, death took him to the house of Hādēs, his sons divided his estate and cast lots for their shares, [210] but to me they gave a holding and little else; nevertheless, my excellence [*aretē*] enabled me to marry into a rich family, for I was not given to bragging, or shirking on the field of battle. It is all over now; still, if you look at the straw you can see [215] what the ear was, for I have had trouble enough and to spare. Arēs and Athena made me doughty in war; when I had picked [*krinein*] my men to surprise the enemy with an ambushade I never gave death so much as a thought, [220] but was the first to leap forward and spear all whom I could overtake. Such was I in battle, but I did not care about farm work, nor the frugal home life of those who would bring up children. My delight was in ships, [225] fighting, javelins, and arrows—things that most men shudder to think of; but one man likes one thing and another, and this was what I was most naturally inclined to. Before the Achaeans went to Troy, [230] nine times was I in command of men and ships on foreign service, and I amassed much wealth. I had my pick of the spoil in the first instance, and much more was allotted to me later on.

My house grew apace and I became a great man among the Cretans, [235] but when Zeus counseled that terrifying expedition, in which so many perished, the people required me and renowned Idomeneus to lead

their ships to Troy, and there was no way out of it, for the judgment of the people of the district [*dēmos*] insisted on our doing so. [240] There we fought for nine whole years, but in the tenth we ransacked the city of Priam and sailed home again as the gods dispersed us. Then it was that Zeus devised evil against me. I spent but one month happily with my children, [245] wife, and property, and then I conceived the idea of making a descent on Egypt, so I fitted out a fine fleet and manned it. I had nine ships, and the people flocked to fill them. For six days I and my men [250] made feast, and I found them many victims both for sacrifice to the gods and for themselves, but on the seventh day we went on board and set sail from Crete with a fair North wind behind us though we were going down a river. Nothing went ill [255] with any of our ships, and we had no sickness on board, but sat where we were and let the ships go as the wind and steersmen took them. On the fifth day we reached the river Aegyptus; there I stationed my ships in the river, bidding my men stay [260] by them and keep guard over them while I sent out scouts to reconnoiter from every point of vantage.

But the men disobeyed with insolence [*hubris*] my orders, took to their own devices, and ravaged the land of the Egyptians, killing the men, and taking their wives and children captive. [265] The alarm was soon carried to the city, and when they heard the war cry, the people came out at daybreak till the plain was filled with horsemen and foot soldiers and with the gleam of armor. Then Zeus spread panic among my men, [270] and they would no longer face the enemy, for they found themselves surrounded. The Egyptians killed many of us, and took the rest alive to do forced labor for them. Zeus, however, put it in my mind to do thus—and I wish I had died then and [275] there in Egypt instead, for there was much sorrow in store for me—I took off my helmet and shield and dropped my spear from my hand; then I went straight up to the king's chariot, clasped his knees and kissed them, whereon he spared my life, [280] bade me get into his chariot, and took me weeping to his own home. Many made at me with their ashen spears and tried to kill me in their fury, but the king protected me, for he feared the anger

[*mēnis*] of Zeus the protector of strangers, who punishes those who do evil.

[285] I stayed there for seven years and got together much wealth among the Egyptians, for they all gave me something; but when it was now going on for eight years there came a certain Phoenician, a cunning rascal, who had already committed all sorts of villainy, [290] and this man talked me over into going with him to Phoenicia, where his house and his possessions lay. I stayed there for a whole twelve months, but at the end of that time when months and days had gone by till the same season [*hōrā*] had come round again, [295] he set me on board a ship bound for Libya, on a pretence that I was to take a cargo along with him to that place, but really that he might sell me as a slave and take the wealth I fetched. I suspected his intention, but went on board with him, for I could not help it.

The ship ran before a fresh North wind [300] till we had reached the sea that lies between Crete and Libya; there, however, Zeus counseled their destruction, for as soon as we were well out from Crete and could see nothing but sea and sky, he raised a black cloud over our ship and the sea grew dark beneath it. [305] Then Zeus let fly with his thunderbolts and the ship went round and round and was filled with fire and brimstone as the lightning struck it. The men fell all into the sea; they were carried about in the water round the ship looking like so many sea-gulls, but the god presently deprived them of all chance of homecoming [*nostos*]. [310] I was all dismayed; Zeus, however, sent the ship's mast within my reach, which saved my life, for I clung to it, and drifted before the fury of the gale. Nine days did I drift but in the darkness of the tenth night [315] a great wave bore me on to the Thesprotian coast. There Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, entertained me hospitably without charging me anything at all, for his son found me when I was nearly dead with cold and fatigue, whereon he raised me by the hand, took me to his father's house [320] and gave me clothes to wear.

There it was that I heard news of Odysseus, for the king told me he had entertained him, and shown him much hospitality while he was on his homeward journey. He showed me also the treasure of gold and wrought iron that Odysseus had got together. [325] There was enough to keep his family for ten generations, so much had he left in the house of King Pheidon. But the king said Odysseus had gone to Dodona that he might learn Zeus' mind from the god's high oak tree, and know whether after so long an absence he should return to the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca [330] openly, or in secret. Moreover the king swore in my presence, making drink-offerings in his own house as he did so, that the ship was by the water side, and the crew found, that should take him to his own country. He sent me off however before Odysseus returned, for there happened to be a Thesprotian ship [335] sailing for the wheat-growing island of Doulikhion, and he told those in charge of her to be sure and take me safely to King Akastos.

These men hatched a plot against me that would have reduced me to the very extreme of misery, for when the ship had got some way out from land [340] they resolved on selling me as a slave. They stripped me of the khiton and cloak that I was wearing, and gave me instead the tattered old clouts in which you now see me; then, towards nightfall, they reached the tilled lands of sunny Ithaca, [345] and there they bound me with a strong rope fast in the ship, while they went on shore to get supper by the sea side. But the gods soon undid my bonds for me, and having drawn my rags over my head I slid down [350] the rudder into the sea, where I struck out and swam till I was well clear of them, and came ashore near a thick wood in which I lay concealed. They were very angry at my having escaped [355] and went searching about for me, till at last they thought it was no further use and went back to their ship. The gods, having hidden me thus easily, then took me to a good man's door—for it seems that I am not to die yet awhile.”

[360] To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “Poor unhappy stranger, I have found the story of your misfortunes extremely

interesting, but that part about Odysseus is not in order [*kosmos*]; and you will never get me to believe it. Why should a man like you [365] go about telling lies in this way? I know all about the return [*nostos*] of my master. The gods one and all of them detest him, or they would have taken him at Troy, or let him die with friends around him when the days of his fighting were done; for then the Achaeans would have built a mound over his ashes [370] and his son would have been heir to his glory [*kleos*], but now the storm winds have spirited him away we know not where.

As for me I live out of the way here with the pigs, and never go to the town unless when circumspect Penelope sends for me on the arrival of some news about Odysseus. [375] Then they all sit round and ask questions, both those who grieve over the king's absence, and those who rejoice at it because they can eat up his property without paying for it. For my own part I have never cared about asking anyone else since the time when I was taken in by an Aetolian, [380] who had killed a man and come a long way till at last he reached my station, and I was very kind to him. He said he had seen Odysseus with Idomeneus among the Cretans, refitting his ships which had been damaged in a gale. He said Odysseus would return in the following summer or autumn with his men, [385] and that he would bring back much wealth. And now you, you unfortunate old man, since a superhuman force [*daimōn*] has brought you to my door, do not try to flatter me in this way with vain hopes. It is not for any such reason that I shall treat you kindly, but only out of respect for Zeus the god of hospitality, as fearing him and pitying you."

[390] Resourceful Odysseus answered, "I see that you are of an unbelieving mind; I have given you my oath, and yet you will not credit me; let us then make a bargain, and call all the gods in the sky to witness it. [395] If your master comes home, give me a cloak and khiton of good wear, and send me to Doulikhion where I want to go; but if he does not come as I say he will, set your men on to me, and tell them to throw me

from yonder precipice, [400] as a warning to tramps not to go about the country telling lies.”

“And excellence [*aretē*] famed among men would be mine”replied Eumaios, “both now and hereafter, if I were [405] to kill you after receiving you into my hut and showing you hospitality. I should have to say my prayers in good earnest if I did; but it is just time [*hōrā*] for supper, and I hope my men will come in directly, that we may cook something savory for supper.”

Thus did they converse, [410] and presently the swineherds came up with the pigs, which were then shut up for the night in their sties, and a tremendous squealing they made as they were being driven into them. But Eumaios called to his men and said, “Bring in the best pig you have, that I may sacrifice for this stranger, [415] and we will take toll of him ourselves. We have had trouble enough this long time feeding pigs, while others reap the fruit of our labor.”

Then he began chopping firewood, while the others brought in a fine fat five year old boar pig, [420] and set it at the altar. Eumaios did not forget the gods, for he was a man of good principles, so the first thing he did was to cut bristles from the pig’s face and throw them into the fire, praying to all the gods as he did so that Odysseus might return home again. [425] Then he clubbed the pig with a billet of oak which he had kept back when he was chopping the firewood, and its *psūkhē* left it, while the others slaughtered and singed it. Then they cut it up, and Eumaios began by putting raw pieces from each joint on to some of the fat; these he sprinkled with barley meal, and laid upon the embers; [430] they cut the rest of the meat up small, put the pieces upon the spits and roasted them till they were done; when they had taken them off the spits they threw them on to the dresser in a heap. The swineherd, who was a most equitable man, then stood up to give every one his share. He made seven portions; [435] one of these he set apart for Hermes, the son of Maia and the nymphs, praying to them as he did so; the others he dealt

out to the men man by man. He gave Odysseus some slices cut lengthways down the loin as a mark of especial honor, and resourceful Odysseus was much pleased. [440] “I hope, Eumaios,” said he, “that Zeus will be as well disposed towards you as I am, for the respect you are showing to an outcast like myself.”

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “Eat, my good man, and enjoy your supper, such as it is. A god grants this, and withholds that, [445] just as he thinks right, for he can do whatever he chooses.”

As he spoke he cut off the first piece and offered it as a burnt sacrifice to the immortal gods; then he made them a drink-offering, put the cup in the hands of Odysseus, ransacker of cities, and sat down to his own portion. Mesaulios brought them their bread; [450] the swineherd had bought this man on his own account from among the Taphians during his master’s absence, and had paid for him with his own wealth without saying anything either to his mistress or old Laertes. They then laid their hands upon the good things that were before them, and when they had had enough to eat and drink, [455] Mesaulios took away what was left of the bread, and they all went to bed after having made a hearty supper.

Now the night came on stormy and very dark, for there was no moon. It poured without ceasing, and the wind blew strong from the West, which is a wet quarter, so Odysseus thought he would see whether Eumaios, in the excellent care he took of him, [460] would take off his own cloak and give it him, or make one of his men give him one. ⁴⁶²

“Listen to me now, Eumaios and all you other companions [*hetairoi*]! ⁴⁶³ Speaking proudly, I will tell you a wording [*epos*]. ⁴⁶⁴ The wine, which sets me loose, is telling me to do so. [465] Wine impels even the thinking man to sing and to laugh softly. And it urges him on to dance.

⁴⁶⁶ It even prompts an *epos* that may be better left unsaid. ⁴⁶⁷ But now that I have shouted out loud, I will not suppress it. Would that I still had youth and strength [*biē*] as when we got up an ambushcade at Troy. [470] Atreus’s son, Menelaos, and Odysseus were the leaders, but I was in

command also, for the other two would have it so. When we had come up to the wall of the city we crouched down beneath our armor and lay there under cover of the reeds and thick brush-wood that grew about the swamp. [475] It came on to freeze with a North wind blowing; the snow fell small and fine like hoar frost, bitter cold, and our shields were coated thick with rime. [480] The others had all got cloaks and khitons, and slept comfortably enough with their shields about their shoulders, but I had carelessly left my cloak behind me, not thinking that I should be too cold, and had gone off in nothing but my khiton and shield. When the night was two-thirds through and the stars had shifted their places, [485] I nudged Odysseus who was close to me with my elbow, and he at once gave me his ear.

‘Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,’ said I, ‘this cold will be the death of me, for I have no cloak; some superhuman force [*daimōn*] fooled me into setting off with nothing on but my khiton, and I do not know what to do.’

[490] Odysseus, who was as crafty as he was valiant, hit upon the following plan [*noos*]: ‘Keep still,’ said he in a low voice, ‘or the others will hear you.’ Then he raised his head on his elbow.

[495] ‘My friends,’ said he, ‘I have had a dream from the gods in my sleep. We are a long way from the ships; I wish someone would go down and tell Agamemnon to send us up more men at once.’

Then Thoas, son of Andraimon, [500] threw off his cloak and set out running to the ships, whereon I took the cloak and lay in it comfortably enough till morning. Would that I still had youth and strength [*biē*] as I did in those days, for then some one of you swineherds would give me a cloak [505] both out of good will and for the respect [*aidōs*] due to a brave warrior; but now people look down upon me because my clothes are shabby.”

And Eumaios answered, “Old man, you have told us an excellent riddling speech [*ainos*], and have said nothing so far but what is quite satisfactory; [510] for the present, therefore, you shall want neither clothing nor anything else that a stranger in distress may reasonably expect, but tomorrow morning you have to shake your own old rags about your body again, for we have not many spare cloaks nor khitons up here, but every man has only one. [515] When Odysseus’ son comes home again he will give you both cloak and khiton, and send you wherever you may want to go.”

With this he got up and made a bed for Odysseus by throwing some goatskins and sheepskins on the ground in front of the fire. [520] Here Odysseus lay down, and Eumaios covered him over with a great heavy cloak that he kept for a change in case of extraordinarily bad weather.

Thus did Odysseus sleep, and the young men slept beside him. But the swineherd [525] did not like sleeping away from his pigs, so he got ready to go and Odysseus was glad to see that he looked after his property during his master’s absence. First he slung his sword over his brawny shoulders and put on a thick cloak to keep out the wind. [530] He also took the skin of a large and well fed goat, and a javelin in case of attack from men or dogs. Thus equipped he went to his rest where the pigs were camping under an overhanging rock that gave them shelter from the North wind.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 15

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] But Athena went to the fair city of Lacedaemon to tell the shining son of great-hearted Odysseus that he was to achieve his homecoming [*nostos*] any moment. She found him and glorious Peisistratos [5] sleeping in the forecourt of worshipful Menelaos' house; Peisistratos was fast asleep, but Telemachus could get no rest all night for thinking of his unhappy father, so owl-vision Athena went close up to him and said:

[10] "Telemachus, you should not remain so far away from home any longer, nor leave your property with such dangerous people in your house; they will eat up everything you have among them, and you will have been on a fool's errand. Ask Menelaos to send you home [15] at once if you wish to find your excellent mother still there when you get back. Her father and brothers are already urging her to marry Eurymakhos, who has given her more than any of the others, and has been greatly increasing his wedding presents. I hope nothing valuable may have been taken from the house in spite of you, [20] but you know what women are—they always want to do the best they can for the man who marries them, and never give another thought to the children of their first husband, nor to their father either when he is dead and done with. Go home, therefore, and put everything [25] in charge of the most respectable woman servant that you have, until it shall please the gods to send you a wife of your own. Let me tell you also of another matter which you had better attend to. The chief men among the suitors are lying in wait for you in the Strait between Ithaca and Samos, [30] and they mean to kill you before you can reach home. I do not much think they will succeed; it is more likely that some of those who are now eating up your property will find a grave themselves. Sail night and day,

and keep your ship well away from the islands; the god who watches [35] over you and protects you will send you a fair wind. As soon as you get to Ithaca send your ship and men on to the town, but yourself go straight to the swineherd who has charge of your pigs; he is well disposed towards you, [40] stay with him, therefore, for the night, and then send him to circumspect Penelope to tell her that you have got back safe from Pylos.”

Then she went back to Olympus; but Telemachus stirred Nestor’s son Peisistratos [45] with his heel to rouse him, and said, “Wake up Peisistratos, son of Nestor, and yoke the horses to the chariot, for we must set off home.”

But Peisistratos, son of Nestor said, “No matter what hurry we are in [50] we cannot drive in the dark. It will be morning soon; wait till spear-famed Menelaos, the son of Atreus, has brought his presents and put them in the chariot for us; and let him say good-bye to us in the usual way. So long as he lives a guest should never forget [55] a host who has shown him kindness.”

As he spoke day began to break, and Menelaos of the great war cry, who had already risen, leaving sweet-haired Helen in bed, came towards them. When Telemachus saw him [60] he put on his khiton as fast as he could, threw a great cloak over his shoulders, and went out to meet him. “Great Menelaos, son of Atreus,” said he, the dear son of godlike Odysseus [65] “let me go back now to my own country, for I want to have my homecoming [*nostos*].”

And Menelaos answered, “Telemachus, if you insist on going I will not detain you. I do not like to see a host [70] either too fond of his guest or too rude to him. Moderation is best in all things, and not letting a man go when he wants to do so is as bad as telling him to go if he would like to stay. One should treat a guest well as long as he is in the house and speed him when he wants to leave it. [75] Wait, then, till I can get your

beautiful presents into your chariot, and till you have yourself seen them. I will tell the women to prepare a sufficient dinner for you of what there may be in the house; it will be at once more proper and cheaper for you to get your dinner before setting out on such a long journey. If, moreover, [80] you have a fancy for making a tour in Hellas or in the Peloponnese, I will yoke my horses, and will conduct you myself through all our principal cities. No one will send us away empty handed; every one will give us something— [85] a bronze tripod, a couple of mules, or a gold cup.”

“Great Menelaos, son of Atreus,” replied the spirited Telemachus, “I want to go home at once, for when I came away I left my property without protection, [90] and fear that while looking for my father I shall come to ruin myself, or find that something valuable has been stolen during my absence.”

When Menelaos of the great war cry heard this he immediately told his wife and servants to prepare a sufficient dinner from what there might be in the house. [95] At this moment Eteoneus the son of Boethoös, joined him, for he lived close by and had just got up; so Menelaos told him to light the fire and cook some meat, which he at once did. Then Menelaos of the great war cry went down into his fragrant store room, [100] not alone, but Helen went too, with Megapenthes. When he reached the place where the treasures of his house were kept, he selected a double cup, and told his son Megapenthes to bring also a silver mixing-bowl. Meanwhile Helen, shining among women, went to the chest [105] where she kept the lovely dresses which she had made with her own hands, and took out one that was largest and most beautifully pattern-woven; it glittered like a star, and lay at the very bottom of the chest. Then they all came back through the house again till they got to [110] Telemachus, and fair-haired Menelaos said, “Telemachus, may Zeus, the mighty husband of Hera, give you a safe homecoming [*nostos*] according to your desire. [115] I will now present you with the finest and most precious stored keepsake in all my house. It is a mixing-bowl

of pure silver, except the rim, which is inlaid with gold, and it is the work of Hephaistos. Phaidimos, king of the Sidonians, made me a present of it in the course of a visit that I paid him while I was on my return home. I should like to give it to you.”

[120] With these words he placed the double cup in the hands of Telemachus, while Megapenthes brought the beautiful mixing-bowl and set it before him. Hard by stood lovely Helen with the robe ready in her hand.

[125] “I too, my son,” said she, “have something for you as a keepsake from the hand of Helen; it is for your bride to wear at the time [*hōrā*] of her wedding. Till then, get your dear mother to keep it for you; thus may you go back rejoicing to your own country and to your home.”

[130] So saying she gave the robe over to him and he received it gladly. Then the hero Peisistratos put the presents into the chariot, and admired them all as he did so. Presently fair-haired Menelaos took Telemachus and Peisistratos into the house, and they both of them sat down to table.

[135] A maid servant brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and she drew a clean table beside them; an upper servant brought them bread and offered them many good things of what there was in the house.

[140] Eteoneus, son of Boethoös, carved the meat and gave them each their portions, while Megapenthes poured out the wine. Then they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them, but as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Telemachus and Peisistratos, the glorious son of Nestor, [145] yoked the horses, and took their places in the chariot. They drove out through the inner gateway and under the echoing gatehouse of the outer court, and fair-haired Menelaos, the son of Atreus, came after them with a golden goblet of wine in his right hand that they might make a drink-offering [150] before they set out. He stood in front of the horses and pledged them, saying, “Farewell to both of you; see that you tell Nestor, shepherd of the people, how I have

treated you, for he was as kind to me as any father could be while we Achaeans were fighting at Troy.”

[155] “We will be sure, sir,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “to tell him everything as soon as we see him. I wish I were as certain of finding Odysseus returned when I get back to Ithaca, that I might tell him of the very great kindness you have shown me and of the many beautiful presents I am taking with me.”

[160] As he was thus speaking a bird flew on his right hand—an eagle with a great white goose in its talons which it had carried off from the farm yard—and all the men and women were running after it and shouting. It came quite close up to them and flew away on their right hands in front of the horses. [165] When they saw it they were glad, and their hearts took comfort within them, whereon Peisistratos, son of Nestor, said, “Tell me, Menelaos, ¹⁶⁸ did the god make as a vision this portent [*teras*] for you or for the two of us?”

Warlike Menelaos was thinking [170] what would be the most proper answer for him to make, but Helen was too quick for him and said, “I will read this matter as the gods have put it in my heart, and as I doubt not that it will come to pass. The eagle came from the mountain where it was bred [175] and has its nest, and in like manner Odysseus, after having traveled far and suffered much, will return to take his revenge—if indeed he is not back already and hatching mischief for the suitors.”

[180] “May Zeus, high thundering husband of Hera, so grant it,” replied the spirited Telemachus; “if it should prove to be so, I will make vows to you as though you were a god, even when I am at home.”

As he spoke he lashed his horses and they started off at full speed through the town towards the open country. They swayed the yoke upon their necks and traveled the whole day long [185] till the sun set and darkness was over all the land. Then they reached Pherai, where Diokles lived

who was son of Ortilokhos, the son of Alpheus. There they passed the night and were treated hospitably. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, [190] they again yoked their horses and took their places in the chariot. They drove out through the inner gateway and under the echoing gatehouse of the outer court. Then Peisistratos lashed his horses on and they flew forward nothing loath; before long they came to Pylos, and then Telemachus said:

[195] “Peisistratos, son of Nestor, I hope you will promise to do what I am going to ask you. You know our fathers were old friends before us; moreover, we are both of an age, and this journey has brought us together still more closely; do not, therefore, take me past my ship, but leave me [200] there, for if I go to your father’s house he will try to keep me in the warmth of his good will towards me, and I must go home at once.”

Peisistratos, son of Nestor, thought how he should do as he was asked, and in the end he thought it best [205] to turn his horses towards the ship, and put Menelaos’ beautiful presents of gold and raiment in the stern of the vessel. Then he said, “Go on board at once and tell your men to do so also [210] before I can reach home to tell my father. I know how obstinate he is, and am sure he will not let you go; he will come down here to fetch you, and he will not go back without you. But he will be very angry.”

[215] With this he drove his goodly steeds back to the city of the Pylians and soon reached his home, but Telemachus called the men together and gave his orders. “Now, my men,” said he, “get everything in order on board the ship, and let us set out home.”

[220] Thus did he speak, and they went on board even as he had said. But as Telemachus was thus busied, praying also and sacrificing to Athena in the ship’s stern, there came to him a man from a distant locale [*dēmos*], a seer [*mantis*], who was fleeing from Argos because he had

killed a man. [225] He was descended from Melampos, who used to live in Pylos, the land of sheep; he was rich and owned a great house, but he was driven into exile by the great and powerful King Neleus. [230] Neleus seized by force [*biē*] his goods and held them for a whole year, during which he was a close prisoner in the house of King Phylakos, and in much distress of mind both on account of the daughter of Neleus and because he was haunted by a great aberration [*atē*] that dread Furies [*Erinyes*] had laid upon him. [235] In the end, however, he escaped with his life, drove the cattle from Phylake to Pylos, avenged the wrong that had been done him, and gave the daughter of Neleus to his brother. Then he left the *dēmos* and went to horse-pasturing Argos, where it was ordained [240] that he should reign over much people. There he married, established himself, and had two famous sons Antiphates and Mantios. Antiphates became father of great-hearted Oikles, and Oikles of Amphiaraios, [245] who was dearly loved both by Zeus and by Apollo, but he did not live to old age, for he was killed in Thebes by reason of a woman's gifts. His sons were Alkmaion and Amphilokhos. Mantios, the other son of Melampos, was father to Polypheides and Kleitos. [250] The Dawn goddess, throned in gold, carried off Kleitos ²⁵¹ on account of his beauty, so that he might be among the Immortals, but Apollo made high-hearted Polypheides the greatest seer [*mantis*] in the whole world now that Amphiaraios was dead. He quarreled with his father and went to live in Hyperesia, [255] where he remained and prophesied for all men.

His son, Theoklymenos, it was who now came up to Telemachus as he was making drink-offerings and praying in his ship. [260] "Friend," said he, "now that I find you sacrificing in this place, I beseech you by your sacrifices themselves, and by the superhuman force [*daimōn*] to whom you make them, I pray you also by your own head and by those of your followers, tell me the truth and nothing but the truth. Who and whence are you? Tell me also of your town and parents."

[265] The spirited Telemachus said, "I will answer you quite truly. I am from Ithaca, and my father is Odysseus, as surely as that he ever lived. But he has come to some miserable end. Therefore I have taken this ship and got my crew together [270] to see if I can hear any news of him, for he has been away a long time."

"I too," answered godlike Theoklymenos, "am an exile, for I have killed a man of my own lineage. He has many brothers and kinsmen in horse-pasturing Argos, and they have great power among the Argives. [275] I am fleeing to escape death at their hands, and am thus doomed to be a wanderer on the face of the earth. I am your suppliant; take me, therefore, on board your ship that they may not kill me, for I know they are in pursuit."

[280] "I will not refuse you," replied the spirited Telemachus, "if you wish to join us. Come, therefore, and in Ithaca we will treat you hospitably according to what we have."

Then he received Theoklymenos' spear and laid it down on the deck of the ship. He went on board [285] and sat in the stern, bidding Theoklymenos sit beside him; then the men let go the hawsers. Telemachus told them to catch hold of the ropes, and they made all haste to do so. They set the mast [290] in its socket in the cross plank, raised it and made it fast with the forestays, and they hoisted their white sails with sheets of twisted ox-hide. The owl-vision goddess Athena sent them a fair wind that blew fresh and strong to take the ship on her course as fast as possible. [295] Thus then they passed by Krounoi and Khalkis.

Presently the sun set and darkness was over all the land. The vessel made a quick passage to Pheai and thence on to Elis, where the Epeioi rule. Telemachus then headed her for the flying islands, [300] wondering within himself whether he should escape death or should be taken prisoner.

Meanwhile Odysseus and the swineherd were eating their supper in the hut, and the men supped with them. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, Odysseus began trying to prove the swineherd and see [305] whether he would continue to treat him kindly, and ask him to stay on at the station or pack him off to the city; so he said: “Eumaios, and all of you, tomorrow I want to go away and begin begging about the town, so as to be no more trouble to you or to your men. Give me [310] your advice therefore, and let me have a good guide to go with me and show me the way. I will go the round of the city begging as I needs must, to see if anyone will give me a drink and a piece of bread. I should like also to go to the house of godlike Odysseus and bring news of her husband to the queen, circumspect Penelope. [315] I could then go about among the suitors and see if out of all their abundance they will give me a dinner. I should soon make them an excellent servant in all sorts of ways. Listen and believe when I tell you that by the blessing of Hermes, the guide, who gives grace [*kharis*] [320] and good name to the works of all men, there is no one living who would make a more handy servant than I should—to put fresh wood on the fire, chop fuel, carve, cook, pour out wine, and do all those services that poor men have to do for their betters.”

[325] The swineherd was very much disturbed when he heard this. “Heaven help me,” he exclaimed, “what ever can have put such a notion as that into your head? If you go near the suitors you will be undone to a certainty, for their overweening pride [*hubris*] and violent insolence [*biē*] reach [330] all the way to the sky. They would never think of taking a man like you for a servant. Their servants are all young men, well dressed, wearing good cloaks and khitons, with well looking faces and their hair always tidy, the well-polished tables are kept quite clean and are loaded with bread, meat, and wine. [335] Stay where you are, then; you are not in anybody’s way; I do not mind your being here, no more do any of the others, and when Telemachus, dear son of Odysseus, comes home he will give you a khiton and cloak and will send you wherever you want to go.”

[340] Much-enduring great Odysseus answered, "I hope you may be as dear to the gods as you are to me, for having saved me from going about and getting into trouble; there is nothing worse than being always on the tramp; still, when men have once got low down in the world [345] they will go through a great deal on behalf of their miserable bellies. Since however you press me to stay here and await the return of Telemachus, tell about godlike Odysseus' mother, and his father whom he left on the threshold of old age when he set out for Troy. Are they still living [350] or are they already dead and in the house of Hādēs?"

"I will tell you all about them," replied Eumaios, the swineherd and leader of men. "Laertes is still living and prays the gods to let him depart peacefully his own house, [355] for he is terribly distressed about the absence of his son, and also about the death of his wife, which grieved him greatly and aged him more than anything else did. She came to an unhappy end through sorrow for her son: may no friend or neighbor who has dealt kindly by me [360] come to such an end as she did. As long as she was still living, though she was always grieving, I used to like seeing her and asking her how she did, for she brought me up along with her daughter Ktimene of the light robes, the youngest of her children; [365] we were boy and girl together, and she made little difference between us. When, however, we both grew up, they sent Ktimene to Samē and received a splendid dowry for her. As for me, my mistress gave me a good khiton and cloak with a pair of sandals for my feet, [370] and sent me off into the country, but she was just as fond of me as ever. This is all over now. Still it has pleased the gods to make my work prosper in the situation which I now hold. I have enough to eat and drink, and can find something for any respectable stranger who comes here; but there is no getting [375] a kind word or deed out of my mistress, for the house has fallen into the hands of wicked people. Servants want sometimes to see their mistress and have a talk with her; they like to have something to eat and drink at the house, and something too to take back with them into the country. This is what will keep servants in a good humor."

[380] Resourceful Odysseus answered, “Then you must have been very little, Eumaios, when you were taken so far away from your home and parents. Tell me, and tell me true, was the city [385] in which your father and mother lived ransacked and pillaged, or did some enemies carry you off when you were alone tending sheep or cattle, ship you off here, and sell you for whatever your master gave them?”

[390] “Stranger,” replied Eumaios, the swineherd and leader of men, “as regards your question: sit still, make yourself comfortable, drink your wine, and listen to me. The nights are now at their longest; there is plenty of time both for sleeping and sitting up talking together; you ought not to go to bed till it is time [*hōrā*], too much sleep is [395] as bad as too little; if any one of the others wishes to go to bed let him leave us and do so; he can then take my master’s pigs out when he has done breakfast in the morning. We two will sit here eating and drinking in the hut, and telling one another stories [400] about our misfortunes; for when a man has suffered much, and been buffeted about in the world, he takes pleasure in recalling the memory of sorrows that have long gone by.

As regards your question, then, my tale is as follows: You may have heard of an island called Syra that lies over above Ortygia, where the land begins to turn round and look in another direction. [405] It is not very thickly peopled, but the soil is good, with much pasture fit for cattle and sheep, and it abounds with wine and wheat. Dearth never comes there, nor are the people [*dēmos*] plagued by any sickness, but when they grow old [410] Apollo of the silver bow comes with Artemis and kills them with his painless shafts. It contains two communities, and the whole country is divided between these two. My father Ktesios, son of Ormenos, a man comparable to the gods, reigned over both.

[415] Now to this place there came some cunning traders from Phoenicia (for the Phoenicians are great mariners) in a ship which they had freighted with trinkets of all kinds. There happened to be a

Phoenician woman in my father's house, very tall and comely, and an excellent servant; these scoundrels got hold of her one day [420] when she was washing near their ship, seduced her, and cajoled her in ways that no woman can resist, no matter how good she may be by nature. The man who had seduced her asked her who she was and where she came from, and on this she told him her father's name. [425] 'I come from Sidon,' said she, 'and am daughter to Arybas, a man rolling in wealth and rich in bronze. One day as I was coming into the town from the country some Taphian pirates seized me and took me here over the sea, where they sold me to the man who owns this house, and he gave them their price for me.'

[430] The man who had seduced her then said, 'Would you like to come along with us to see the house of your parents and your parents themselves? They are both alive and are said to be well off.'

[435] 'I will do so gladly,' answered she, 'if you men will first swear me a solemn oath that you will do me no harm by the way.'

They all swore as she told them, and when they had completed their oath the woman said, [440] 'Hush; and if any of your men meets me in the street or at the well, do not let him speak to me, for fear some one should go and tell my master, in which case he would suspect something. He would put me in prison, and would have all of you murdered; [445] keep your own counsel therefore; buy your merchandise as fast as you can, and send me word when you have done loading. I will bring as much gold as I can lay my hands on, and there is something else also that I can do [450] towards paying my fare. I am nurse to the son of the good man of the house, a funny little thing just able to run about. I will carry him off in your ship, and you will get a great deal of wealth for him if you take him and sell him in foreign parts.'

Then she went back to the house. [455] The Phoenicians stayed a whole year till they had loaded their ship with much precious merchandise, and

then, when they had got freight enough, they sent to tell the woman. Their messenger, a very cunning man, came to my father's house [460] bringing a necklace of gold with amber beads strung among it; and while my mother and the servants had it in their hands admiring it and bargaining about it, he made a sign quietly to the woman and then went back [465] to the ship, whereon she took me by the hand and led me out of the house. In the fore part of the house she saw the tables set with the cups of guests who had been feasting with my father, as being in attendance on him; these were now all gone to an assembly of the district [*dēmos*], so she snatched up three cups and carried them off in the bosom of her dress, [470] while I followed her, for I knew no better. The sun was now set, and darkness was over all the land, so we hurried on as fast as we could till we reached the harbor, where the fast-running Phoenician ship was lying. [475] When they had got on board they sailed their ways over the sea, taking us with them, and Zeus, son of Kronos, sent them a fair wind; six days did we sail both night and day, but on the seventh day Artemis of the showering arrows struck the woman and she fell heavily down into the ship's hold as though she were a sea gull alighting on the water; [480] so they threw her overboard to the seals and fishes, and I was left all sorrowful and alone. Presently the winds and waves took the ship to Ithaca, where Laertes gave sundry of his chattels for me, and thus it was that ever I came to set eyes upon this country."

[485] Illustrious Odysseus answered, "Eumaios, I have heard the story of your misfortunes with the most lively interest and pity, but Zeus has given you good as well as evil, for in spite of everything you have a good [490] master, who sees that you always have enough to eat and drink; and you lead a good life, whereas I am still going about begging my way from city to city."

Thus did they converse, and they had only a very little time left for sleep, [495] for it was soon daybreak. In the meantime Telemachus and his crew were nearing land, so they loosed the sails, took down the mast,

and rowed the ship into the harbor. They cast out their mooring stones and made fast the hawsers; they then got out upon the sea shore, [500] mixed their wine, and got dinner ready. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink the spirited Telemachus said, "Take the ship on to the town, but leave me here, for I want to look after the herdsmen on one of my farms. [505] In the evening, when I have seen all I want, I will come down to the city, and tomorrow morning in return for your trouble I will give you all a good dinner with meat and wine."

Then godlike Theoklymenos said, 'And what, my dear young friend, is to become of me? To whose house, [510] among all your chief men, am I to repair? Or shall I go straight to your own house and to your mother?'

"At any other time," replied the spirited Telemachus, "I should have bidden you go to my own house, for you would find no want of hospitality; at the present moment, however, you would not be comfortable there, [515] for I shall be away, and my mother will not see you; she does not often show herself even to the suitors, but sits at her loom weaving in an upper chamber, out of their way; but I can tell you a man whose house you can go to—I mean Eurymakhos, the godlike son of prudent Polybos, [520] who is held in the highest estimation by every one in Ithaca. He is much the best man and the most persistent wooer, of all those who are paying court to my mother and trying to take Odysseus' place. Zeus the Olympian alone, however, in his celestial dwelling knows whether or not they will come to a bad end before the marriage takes place."

[525] As he was speaking a bird flew by upon his right hand—a hawk, Apollo's messenger. It held a dove in its talons, and the feathers, as it tore them off, fell to the ground midway between Telemachus and the ship. Then Theoklymenos called him apart [530] and caught him by the hand. "Telemachus," said he, "that bird did not fly on your right hand without having been sent there by some god. As soon as I saw it I knew

it was an omen; it means that you will remain powerful and that there will be no house in the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca more royal than your own.”

[535] “I wish it may prove so,” answered the spirited Telemachus. “If it does, I will show you so much good will and give you so many presents that all who meet you will congratulate you.” Then he said to his friend Piraïos, [540] “Piraïos, son of Klytios, you have throughout shown yourself the most willing to serve me of all those who have accompanied me to Pylos; I wish you would take this stranger to your own house and entertain him hospitably till I can come for him.”

And spear-famed Piraïos answered, [545] “Telemachus, you may stay away as long as you please, but I will look after him for you, and he shall find no lack of hospitality.”

As he spoke he went on board, and bade the others do so also and loose the hawsers, so they took their places in the ship. [550] But Telemachus bound on his sandals, and took a long and doughty spear with a head of sharpened bronze from the deck of the ship. Then they loosed the hawsers, thrust the ship off from land, and made on towards the city as they had been told to do, [555] while Telemachus, beloved son of godlike Odysseus, strode on as fast as he could, till he reached the homestead where his countless herds of swine were feeding, and where dwelt the excellent swineherd, who was so devoted a servant to his master.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 16

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Meanwhile Odysseus and the noble swineherd had lit a fire in the hut and were getting breakfast ready at daybreak, for they had sent the men out with the pigs. When Telemachus came up, [5] the dogs did not bark, but fawned upon him, so great Odysseus, hearing the sound of feet and noticing that the dogs did not bark, said to Eumaios:

“Eumaios, I hear footsteps; I suppose one of your men or some one of your acquaintance is coming here, [10] for the dogs are fawning upon him and not barking.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth before his son stood at the door. Eumaios sprang to his feet, and the bowls in which he was mixing wine fell from his hands, as he made towards his master. [15] He kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes, and wept for joy. A father could not be more delighted at the return of an only son, the child of his old age, after ten years' absence in a foreign country and after having gone through much hardship. [20] He embraced him, kissed him all over as though he had come back from the dead, and spoke fondly to him saying:

“So you are come, Telemachus, light of my eyes that you are. When I heard you had gone to Pylos I was sure I was never going to see you any more. [25] Come in, my dear child, and sit down, that I may gladden my heart [*thūmos*] looking at you now you are home again; it is not very often you come into the country to see us herdsmen; you stick pretty close to the town generally. I suppose you think it better to keep an eye on what the suitors are doing.”

[30] “So be it, old friend,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “but I am come now because I want to see you, and to learn whether my mother is still at her old home or whether some one else has married her, so that the bed of Odysseus [35] is without bedding and covered with cobwebs.”

“She is still at the house,” replied Eumaios, “grieving and breaking her heart, and doing nothing but weep, both night and day continually.”

[40] As he spoke he took Telemachus’ spear, whereon he crossed the stone threshold and came inside. Odysseus rose from his seat to give him place as he entered, but Telemachus checked him; “Sit down, stranger.” said he, “I can easily find another seat, [45] and there is one here who will lay it for me.”

Odysseus went back to his own place, and Eumaios strewed some green brushwood on the floor and threw a sheepskin on top of it for Telemachus to sit upon. Then the swineherd brought them platters of cold [50] meat, the remains from what they had eaten the day before, and he filled the bread baskets with bread as fast as he could. He mixed wine also in bowls of ivy-wood, and took his seat facing godlike Odysseus. Then they laid their hands on the good things that were before them, [55] and as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Telemachus said to noble Eumaios,

“Old friend, where does this stranger come from? How did his crew bring him to Ithaca, and who were they?—for assuredly he did not come here by land” [60] To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “My son, I will tell you what is really true [*alēthēs*]. ⁶² He proclaims that he is by birth from Crete [plural], the far-and-wide, ⁶³ and he says that he has wandered around over many cities of mortals, ⁶⁴ veering from his path. [65] At this moment he is running away from a Thesprotian ship, and has refuge at my station, so I will put him into your hands. Do whatever you like with him, only remember that he is your suppliant.”

“I am very much distressed,” said the spirited Telemachus, “by what you have just told me. [70] How can I take this stranger into my house? I am as yet young, and am not strong enough to hold my own if any man attacks me. My mother cannot make up her mind whether to stay where she is and look after the house out of respect for the opinion of the people of the district [*dēmos*] [75] and for the memory of her husband, or whether the time is now come for her to take the best man of those who are wooing her, and the one who will make her the most advantageous offer; still, as the stranger has come to your station I will find him a cloak and khiton of good wear, [80] with a sword and sandals, and will send him wherever he wants to go. Or if you like you can keep him here at the station, and I will send him clothes and food that he may be no burden on you and on your men; [85] but I will not have him go near the suitors, for they have much insolence [*hubris*], and they are sure to ill-treat him in a way that would give me grief [*akhos*]; no matter how valiant a man may be he can do nothing against numbers, for they will be too strong for him.”

[90] Then long-suffering great Odysseus said, “Sir, it is right that I should say something myself. I am much shocked about what you have said about the insolent way in which the suitors are behaving in despite of such a man [95] as you are. Tell me, do you submit to such treatment tamely, or do the people of your district [*dēmos*], following the voice of some god, consider you hateful [*ekhthros*]? May you not complain of your brothers—for it is to these that a man may look for support, however great his quarrel may be? I wish I were as young as you are and in my present mind; [100] if I were son to stately Odysseus, or, indeed, Odysseus himself, I would rather some one came and cut my head off, but I would go to the house of the son of Laertes and be the bane of every one of these men. [105] If they were too many for me—I being single-handed—I would rather die fighting in my own house than see such disgraceful sights day after day, strangers grossly maltreated, and men dragging the women servants about the house in an unseemly way,

[110] wine drawn recklessly, and bread wasted all to no purpose for an end that shall never be accomplished.”

And the spirited Telemachus answered, “I will tell you truly everything. There is no enmity between me and the people of my district [*dēmos*], [115] nor can I complain of brothers, to whom a man may look for support however great his quarrel may be. Zeus has made us a lineage of only sons. Laertes was the only son of Arkeisios, and Odysseus only son of Laertes. [120] I am myself the only son of Odysseus who left me behind him when he went away, so that I have never been of any use to him. Hence it comes that my house is in the hands of numberless marauders; for the chiefs from all the neighboring islands, Doulikhion, Samē, wooded Zakynthos, as also all the principal men of Ithaca itself, [125] are eating up my house under the pretext of paying court to my mother, who will neither say point blank that she will not marry, nor yet bring matters to an end, so they are making havoc of my estate, and before long will do so with myself into the bargain. The issue, however, rests with the gods. [130] But do you, old friend Eumaios, go at once and tell Penelope that I am safe and have returned from Pylos. Tell it to herself alone, and then come back here without letting anyone else know, for there are many who are plotting mischief against me.”

[135] “I understand and heed you,” replied Eumaios; “you need instruct me no further, only as I am going that way say whether I had not better let poor Laertes know that you are returned. [140] He used to superintend the work on his farm in spite of his bitter sorrow about Odysseus, and he would eat and drink at will along with his servants; but they tell me that from the day on which you set out for Pylos he has neither eaten nor drunk as he ought to do, nor does he look after his farm, [145] but sits weeping and wasting the flesh from off his bones.”

“More is the pity,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “I am sorry for him, but we must leave him to himself just now. If people could have everything their own way, the first thing I should choose would be the

return of my father; [150] but go, and give your message; then make haste back again, and do not turn out of your way to tell Laertes. Tell my mother to send one of her women secretly with the news at once, and let him hear it from her.”

Thus did he urge the swineherd; [155] Eumaios, therefore, took his sandals, bound them to his feet, and started for the town. Athena watched him well off the station, and then came up to it in the form of a woman—fair, stately, and high-spirited. She stood against the side of the entry, and revealed herself to Odysseus, [160] but Telemachus could not see her, and knew not that she was there, for the gods do not let themselves be seen by everybody. Odysseus saw her, and so did the dogs, for they did not bark, but went scared and whining off to the other side of the yards. She nodded her head and motioned to noble Odysseus with her eyebrows; [165] whereon he left the hut and stood before her outside the main wall of the yards. Then she said to him:

“Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, it is now time for you to tell your son: do not keep him in the dark any longer, but lay your plans for the destruction of the suitors, [170] and then make for the town. I will not be long in joining you, for I too am eager for the fray.”

¹⁷² So spoke Athena, and she touched him [= Odysseus] with her golden wand. ¹⁷³ First she made his mantle and his tunic to be cleanly washed, ¹⁷⁴ she made it be that way, what he was wearing over his chest, and she augmented his size and his youthfulness. [175] His tan complexion came back, and his jaws got firmed up, ¹⁷⁶ and dark again became the beard around his chin. ¹⁷⁷ Then she [= Athena], having done her work, went back where she came from, while ¹⁷⁸ Odysseus headed for the shelter. His dear son [= Telemachus] marveled at him, ¹⁷⁹ and, in his amazement, he [= Telemachus] cast his gaze away from him, in another direction, fearing that he [= Odysseus] might be a god. [180] And he [= Telemachus] addressed him [= Odysseus], speaking winged words:

¹⁸¹ “As a different kind of person [*alloios*], stranger, have you appeared [*phainesthai*] to me just now, different than before. ¹⁸² You have different clothes and your complexion is no longer the same kind [*homoios*]. ¹⁸³ You must be some god, one of those gods who hold the wide sky. ¹⁸⁴ So be gracious, in order that we may give you pleasing sacrifices [185] and golden gifts of good workmanship. Have mercy on us.”

¹⁸⁶ And he [= Telemachus] was answered then by the one who suffered many things, the radiant Odysseus: ¹⁸⁷ “I am not some god. Why do you liken [*eiskein*] me to the immortals? ¹⁸⁸ But I am your father, for whom you mourn and ¹⁸⁹ suffer many pains, enduring the violent acts of men.”

[190] Having said these things, he kissed his son and let fall from his cheeks ¹⁹¹ a tear, letting it fall to the ground. Until then he had persisted in showing no sign of pity. ¹⁹² And Telemachus, since he was not yet convinced that he [= Odysseus] was his father, ¹⁹³ once again addressed him with words in reply: ¹⁹⁴ “You are not Odysseus my father. Instead, some superhuman force [*daimōn*] [195] is enchanting me, and it makes me weep and mourn even more. ¹⁹⁶ I say this because no mortal man could craft these things that are happening to me, ¹⁹⁷ no mortal could do these things by way of his own devising [*noos*], unless a god comes in person ¹⁹⁸ and, if he so wishes, easily makes someone a young man or makes him an old man. ¹⁹⁹ Why, just a little while ago you were an old man wearing unseemly clothes, [200] but now you look like [= perfect of *eiskein*] the gods who hold the wide sky.”

²⁰¹ He was answered by Odysseus, the one with many kinds of craft, who addressed him thus: ²⁰² “Telemachus, it does not seem right [= perfect of *eiskein*] for you to be amazed at your father who is right here inside [the shelter], ²⁰³ for you to be amazed too much or to feel overwhelmed. ²⁰⁴ There will never again be some different [*allos*] person who comes here, some different Odysseus, [205] but here I am such

[*toiosde*] as I am. I have had many bad things happen to me. I have been detoured in many different ways. ²⁰⁶ But now I am here, having come back in the twentieth year to the land of my ancestors. ²⁰⁷ I tell you, this was the work of Athena, the giver of prizes, ²⁰⁸ who has made me be such [*toios*] as she wants me to be, for she has the power. ²⁰⁹ One moment, she has made me to be looking like [*enalinkios*] a beggar, and then, the next moment, [210] like a young man who has beautiful clothes covering his complexion. ²¹¹ It is easy for the gods, who hold the wide sky, ²¹² to make a mortal man become exalted with radiance or to debase him.”

As he spoke he sat down, and Telemachus threw his arms about his father [215] and wept. They were both so much moved that they cried aloud like eagles or vultures with crooked talons that have been robbed of their half fledged young by peasants. Thus piteously did they weep, [220] and the sun would have gone down upon their mourning if Telemachus had not suddenly said, “In what ship, my dear father, did your crew bring you to Ithaca? Of what nation did they declare themselves to be—for you cannot have come by land?”

[225] “I will tell you the truth [*alētheia*], my son,” replied long-suffering great Odysseus. “It was the Phaeacians who brought me here. They are great sailors, and are in the habit of giving escorts to anyone who reaches their coasts. They took me over the sea while I was fast asleep, [230] and landed me in Ithaca, after giving me many presents in bronze, gold, and raiment. These things by the gods’ mercy are lying concealed in a cave, and I am now come here on the suggestion of Athena that we may consult about killing our enemies. [235] First, therefore, give me a list of the suitors, with their number, that I may learn who, and how many, they are. I can then turn the matter over in my mind, and see whether we two can fight the whole body of them ourselves, or whether we must find others to help us.”

[240] To this the spirited Telemachus answered, “Father, I have always heard of your renown [*kleos*] both in the field and in council, but the task you talk of is a very great one: I am awed at the mere thought of it; two men cannot stand against many and brave ones. [245] There are not ten suitors only, nor twice ten, but ten many times over; you shall learn their number at once. There are fifty-two chosen [*krinein*] youths from Doulikhion, and they have six servants; from Samē there are twenty-four; [250] twenty young Achaeans from Zakynthos, and twelve from Ithaca itself, all of them well born. They have with them a servant Medon, a bard, and two men who can carve at table. If we face such numbers as this, [255] you may have bitter cause to rue your coming, and your violent revenge [*biē*]. See whether you cannot think of some one who would be willing to come and help us.”

“Listen to me,” replied long-suffering great Odysseus, [260] “and think whether Athena and her father Zeus may seem sufficient, or whether I am to try and find some one else as well.”

“Those whom you have named,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “are a couple of good allies, for though they dwell high up among the clouds they have power [265] over both gods and men.”

“These two,” continued long-suffering great Odysseus, “will not keep long out of the fray, when the suitors and we join fight in my house. [270] Now, therefore, return home early tomorrow morning, and go about among the suitors as before. Later on the swineherd will bring me to the city disguised as a miserable old beggar. If you see them ill-treating me, [275] steel your heart against my sufferings; even though they drag me feet foremost out of the house, or throw things at me, look on and do nothing beyond gently trying to make them behave more reasonably; but they will not [280] listen to you, for the day of their reckoning is at hand. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart, when Athena shall put it in my mind, I will nod my head to you, and on seeing me do this you must collect all the armor that is in the

house [285] and hide it in the strong store room. Make some excuse when the suitors ask you why you are removing it; say that you have taken it to be out of the way of the smoke, inasmuch as it is no longer what it was when Odysseus went away, [290] but has become soiled and begrimed with soot. Add to this more particularly that you are afraid Zeus, son of Kronos, may set them on to quarrel over their wine, and that they may do each other some harm which may disgrace both banquet and wooing, for the sight of arms sometimes tempts people to use them. [295] But leave a sword and a spear apiece for yourself and me, and a couple ox-hide shields so that we can snatch them up at any moment; Zeus and Athena will then soon quiet these people. There is also another matter; [300] if you are indeed my son and my blood runs in your veins, let no one know that Odysseus is within the house—neither Laertes, nor yet the swineherd, nor any of the servants, nor even Penelope herself. Let you and me make trial of the women alone, [305] and let us also make trial of some other of the men servants, to see who is on our side and whose hand is against us.”

“Father,” replied Telemachus, “you will come to know me by and by, [310] and when you do you will find that I can keep your counsel. I do not think, however, the plan you propose will be a gain [*kerdos*] for either of us. Think it over. It will take us a long time to go the round of the farms and exploit the men, and all the time the suitors [315] will be wasting your estate with impunity and without compunction. Prove the women by all means, to see who are disloyal and who guiltless, but I am not in favor of going round and trying the men. We can attend to that later on, [320] if you really have some sign from Zeus of the aegis that he will support you.”

Thus did they converse, and meanwhile the ship which had brought Telemachus and his crew from Pylos had reached the town of Ithaca. When they had come inside the harbor [325] they drew the ship on to the land; their servants came and took their armor from them, and they left all the presents at the house of Klytios. Then they sent a servant to

tell circumspect Penelope that [330] Telemachus had gone into the country, but had sent the ship to the town to prevent her from being alarmed and made unhappy. This servant and Eumaios happened to meet when they were both on the same errand of going to tell Penelope. [335] When they reached the house, the servant stood up and said to the queen in the presence of the waiting women, “Your son, Madam, is now returned from Pylos”; but Eumaios went close up to Penelope, and said privately that her son had [340] bidden him tell her. When he had given his message he left the house with its outbuildings and went back to his pigs again.

The suitors were surprised and angry at what had happened, so they went outside the great wall that ran round the outer court, and held a council near the main entrance. [345] Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, was the first to speak.

“My friends,” said he, “this voyage of Telemachus’ is a very serious matter; we had been sure that it would come to nothing. Now, however, let us draw a ship into the water, and get a crew together to send after the others [350] and tell them to come back as fast as they can.”

He had hardly done speaking when Amphinomos turned in his place and saw the ship inside the harbor, with the crew lowering her sails, and putting by their oars; so he laughed, and said to the others, [355] “We need not send them any message, for they are here. Some god must have told them, or else they saw the ship go by, and could not overtake her.”

Then they rose and went to the water side. The crew then drew the ship on shore; [360] their servants took their armor from them, and they went up in a body to the place of assembly, but they would not let anyone old or young sit along with them, and Antinoos, son of Eupeithes, spoke first.

“Skies above,” said he, “see how the gods have saved this man from destruction. [365] We kept a succession of scouts upon the headlands all day long, and when the sun was down we never went on shore to sleep, but waited in the ship all night till morning in the hope of capturing and killing him; [370] but some superhuman force [*daimōn*] has conveyed him home in spite of us. Let us consider how we can make an end of him. He must not escape us; our affair is never likely to come off while he is alive, for he is very shrewd in thinking [*noos*], [375] and public feeling is by no means all on our side. We must make haste before he can call the Achaeans in assembly; he will lose no time in doing so, for he will be furious with us, and will tell all the world how we plotted to kill him, but failed to take him. [380] The people will not like this when they come to know of it; we must see that they do us no hurt, nor drive us from our own locale [*dēmos*] into exile. Let us try and lay hold of him either on his farm away from the town, or on the road here. [385] Then we can divide up his property amongst us, and let his mother and the man who marries her have the house. If this does not please you, and you wish Telemachus to live on and hold his father’s property, then we must not gather here and eat up [390] his goods in this way, but must make our offers to Penelope each from his own house, and she can marry the man who will give the most for her, and whose lot it is to win her.”

They all held their peace until Amphinomos rose to speak. He was [395] the son of Nisos, who was son to king Aretias, and he was foremost among all the suitors from the wheat-growing and well grassed island of Doulikhion; his conversation, moreover, was more agreeable to Penelope than that of any of the other for he was a man of good natural disposition. [400] “My friends,” said he, speaking to them plainly and in all honesty, “I am not in favor of killing Telemachus. It is a heinous thing to kill one who is of noble blood. Let us first take counsel of the gods, and if the oracles of great Zeus advise it, I will both help to kill him myself, and will urge everyone else to do so; [405] but if they dissuade us, I would have you hold your hands.”

Thus did he speak, and his words pleased them well, so they rose right away and went to the house of Odysseus where they took their accustomed seats.

Then circumspect Penelope resolved [410] that she would show herself to the suitors, men full of outrage [*hubris*]. She knew of the plot against Telemachus, for the servant Medon had overheard their counsels and had told her; she went down therefore to the court attended by her maidens, and when she reached the suitors [415] she stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the hall holding a veil before her face, and rebuked Antinoos saying:

“Antinoos, full of outrage [*hubris*], wicked schemer, they say you are the best speaker and counselor [420] of any man your own age in the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca, but you are nothing of the kind. Madman, why should you try to compass the death of Telemachus, and take no heed of suppliants, whose witness is Zeus himself? It is not right for you to plot thus against one another. Do you not remember how your father fled to this house [425] in fear of the people [*dēmos*], who were enraged against him for having gone with some Taphian pirates and plundered the Thesprotians who were at peace with us? They wanted to tear him in pieces and eat up everything he had, but [430] Odysseus stayed their hands although they were infuriated, and now you devour his property without paying for it, and break my heart by wooing his wife and trying to kill his son. Leave off doing so, and stop the others also.”

To this Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, answered, [435] “Take heart, circumspect Queen Penelope daughter of Ikarios, and do not trouble yourself about these matters. The man is not yet born, nor never will be, who shall lay hands upon your son Telemachus, while I yet live to look upon the face of the earth. [440] I say—and it shall surely be—that my spear shall be reddened with his blood; for many a time has Odysseus taken me on his knees, held wine up to my lips to drink, and put pieces of meat into my hands. Therefore [445] Telemachus is much the dearest

friend I have, and has nothing to fear from the hands of us suitors. Of course, if death comes to him from the gods, he cannot escape it.” He said this to quiet her, but in reality he was plotting against Telemachus.

Then Penelope went upstairs again [450] and mourned her husband till owl-vision goddess Athena shed sleep over her eyes. In the evening Eumaios got back to Odysseus and his son, who had just sacrificed a young pig of a year old and were ready; helping one another to get supper ready; Athena therefore [455] came up to Odysseus, son of Laertes, turned him into an old man with a stroke of her wand, and clad him in his old clothes again, for fear that the swineherd might recognize him and not keep the secret, but go and tell circumspect Penelope.

[460] Telemachus was the first to speak. “So you have got back, Eumaios,” said he. “What is the news [*kleos*] of the town? Have the suitors returned, or are they still waiting over yonder, to take me on my way home?”

[465] “I did not think of asking about that,” replied Eumaios, “when I was in the town. I thought I would give my message and come back as soon as I could. I met a man sent by those who had gone with you to Pylos, and he was the first to tell the news to your mother, [470] but I can say what I saw with my own eyes; I had just got on to the crest of the hill of Hermes above the town when I saw a ship coming into harbor with a number of men in her. They had many shields and spears, [475] and I thought it was the suitors, but I cannot be sure.”

On hearing this Telemachus, the hallowed prince, smiled to his father, but so that Eumaios could not see him.

Then, when they had finished their labor [*ponos*] and the meal was ready, they ate it, and every man had his full share so that all were satisfied. [480] As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, they laid down to rest and enjoyed the boon of sleep.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 17

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Telemachus, beloved son of godlike Odysseus, bound on his sandals and took a strong spear that suited his hands, [5] for he wanted to go into the city. “Old friend,” said he to the swineherd, “I will now go to the town and show myself to my mother, for she will never leave off grieving till she has seen me. [10] As for this unfortunate stranger, take him to the town and let him beg there of any one who will give him a drink and a piece of bread. I have trouble enough of my own, and cannot be burdened with other people. If this makes him angry [15] so much the worse for him, but I like to tell what is true [*alēthēs*].”

Then resourceful Odysseus said, “Sir, I do not want to stay here; a beggar can always do better in town than country, for anyone who likes can give him something. [20] I am too old to care about remaining here at the beck and call of a master. Therefore let this man do as you have just told him, and take me to the town as soon as I have had a warm by the fire, and the day has got a little heat in it. My clothes are wretchedly thin, [25] and this frosty morning I shall be perished with cold, for you say the city is some way off.”

Then Telemachus strode off through the yards, brooding his revenge upon the suitors. When he reached home he stood his spear against a bearing-post of the hall, crossed the stone floor of the hall itself, [30] and went inside.

Nurse Eurykleia saw him long before any one else did. She was putting the fleeces on to the seats, and she burst out crying as she ran up to him;

all the other maids of patient-hearted Odysseus came up too, [35] and covered his head and shoulders with their kisses. Circumspect Penelope came out of her room looking like Artemis or golden Aphrodite, and wept as she flung her arms about her son. She kissed his forehead and both his beautiful eyes, [40] “Light of my eyes,” she cried as she spoke fondly to him, “so you are come home again; I was sure I was never going to see you any more. To think of your having gone off to Pylos without saying anything about it or obtaining my consent. But come, tell me what you saw.”

[45] “Do not scold me, mother,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “nor vex me, seeing what a narrow escape I have had, but wash your face, change your dress, go upstairs with your [50] maids, and promise full and sufficient hecatombs to all the gods if Zeus will only grant us our revenge upon the suitors. I must now go to the place of assembly to invite a stranger who has come back with me from Pylos. I sent him on with my crew, [55] and told Piraïos to take him home and look after him till I could come for him myself.”

She heeded her son’s words, washed her face, changed her dress, and vowed full and sufficient hecatombs to all the gods [60] if they would only grant her revenge upon the suitors.

Telemachus went through, and out of, the halls spear in hand—not alone, for his two fleet dogs went with him. Athena endowed him with a presence of such divine comeliness [*kharis*] that all marveled at him as he went by, [65] and the suitors gathered round him with fair words in their mouths and malice in their hearts; but he avoided them, and went to sit with Mentor, Antiphos, and Halitherses, old friends of his father’s house, [70] and they made him tell them all that had happened to him. Then Piraïos came up with Theoklymenos, whom he had escorted through the town to the place of assembly, whereon Telemachus at once joined them. Piraïos was first to speak: [75] “Telemachus,” said he, “I wish you

would send some of your women to my house to take away the presents Menelaos gave you.”

“We do not know, Piraios,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “what may happen. If the suitors kill me in my own house [80] and divide my property among them, I would rather you had the presents than that any of those people should get hold of them. If on the other hand I manage to kill them, I shall be much obliged if you will kindly bring me my presents.”

With these words he took Theoklymenos to [85] his own house. When they got there they laid their cloaks on the benches and seats, went into the baths, and washed themselves. When the maids had washed and anointed them, and had given them cloaks and khitons, [90] they took their seats at table. A maid servant then brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands; and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread [95] and offered them many good things of what there was in the house. Opposite them sat Penelope, reclining on a couch by one of the bearing-posts of the hall, and spinning. Then they laid their hands on the good things that were before them, and as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink [100] circumspect Penelope said:

“Telemachus, I shall go upstairs and lie down on that sad couch, which I have not ceased to water with my tears, from the day Odysseus set out for Troy with the sons of Atreus. You failed, however, to make it clear to me [105] before the suitors came back to the house, whether or not you had been able to hear anything about the return [*nostos*] of your father.”

“I will tell you then the truth [*alētheia*],” replied her spirited son. “We went to Pylos and saw Nestor, shepherd of the people, [110] who took me to his house and treated me as hospitably as though I were a son of his own who had just returned after a long absence; so also did his sons;

but he said he had not heard a word from any human being about enduring Odysseus, [115] whether he was alive or dead. He sent me, therefore, with a chariot and horses to Atreus's son, spear-famed Menelaos. There I saw Helen, for whose sake so many, both Argives and Trojans, were in the gods' wisdom doomed to suffer. Menelaos [120] asked me what it was that had brought me to Lacedaemon, and I told him the whole truth [*alētheia*], whereon he said, 'So, then, these cowards would usurp [125] a brave man's bed? A hind might as well lay her newborn young in the lair of a lion, and then go off to feed in the forest or in some grassy dell. The lion, when he comes back to his lair, [130] will make short work of the pair of them, and so will Odysseus with these suitors. By Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, ¹³³ being such a man as the one who [i.e. Odysseus], in well-founded Lesbos, ¹³⁴ in rivalry stood up and wrestled Philomeleides [135] and threw him down mightily, and all the Achaeans were glad —if he is still such, and were to come near these suitors, they would have a swift doom and a sorry wedding. As regards your question, however, I will not prevaricate nor deceive you, [140] but what the ever-truthful old man of the sea told me, so much will I tell you in full. He said he could see Odysseus on an island sorrowing bitterly in the house of the nymph Kalypsō, who was keeping him prisoner, and he could not reach his home, [145] for he had no ships nor sailors to take him over the sea.' This was what Atreus's son, spear-famed Menelaos told me, and when I had heard his story I came away; the gods then gave me a fair wind and soon brought me safe home again."

[150] With these words he moved the heart of Penelope. Then Theoklymenos said to her:

"Madam, respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, Telemachus, a godlike man, does not understand these things; listen therefore to me, for I can divine them surely, and will hide nothing from you. [155] May Zeus, the king of the skies, be my witness, and the rites of hospitality, with that hearth of Odysseus to which I now come, that blameless Odysseus himself is even now in Ithaca, and, either going about the

country or staying in one place, is inquiring into all these evil deeds and preparing a day of reckoning for the suitors. [160] I saw an omen when I was on the ship which meant this, and I told Telemachus about it.”

“May it be even so,” answered circumspect Penelope; “if your words come true, you shall have such gifts and such good will [165] from me that all who see you shall congratulate you.”

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile the suitors were throwing discs, or aiming with spears at a mark on the leveled ground in front of the house, and behaving with all their old insolence [*hubris*]. [170] But when it was now time for dinner, and the flock of sheep and goats had come into the town from all the country round, with their shepherds as usual, then Medon, who was their favorite servant, and who waited upon them at table, said, “Now then, my young masters, you have had enough sport [*āthlos*], [175] so come inside that we may get dinner ready. Dinner is not a bad thing, when it is time [*hōrā*] for dinner.”

They left their sports as he told them, and when they were within the house, they laid their cloaks on the benches and seats inside, [180] and then sacrificed some sheep, goats, pigs, and a heifer, all of them fat and well grown. Thus they made ready for their meal. In the meantime Odysseus and the swineherd were about starting for the town, and the swineherd said, [185] “Stranger, I suppose you still want to go to town to-day, as my master said you were to do; for my own part I should have liked you to stay here as a station hand, but I must do as my master tells me, or he will scold me later on, and a scolding from one’s master is a very serious thing. [190] Let us then be off, for it is now broad day; it will be night again directly and then you will find it colder.”

“I know and understand you,” replied resourceful Odysseus; “you need say no more. Let us be going, [195] but if you have a stick ready cut, let me have it to walk with, for you say the road is a very rough one.”

As he spoke he threw his shabby old tattered wallet over his shoulders, by the cord from which it hung, and Eumaios gave him a stick to his liking. [200] The two then started, leaving the station in charge of the dogs and herdsmen who remained behind; the swineherd led the way and his master followed after, looking like some broken-down old tramp as he leaned upon his staff, and his clothes were all in rags. When they had got over the rough steep ground [205] and were nearing the city, they reached the fountain from which the townspeople drew their water. This had been made by Ithacus, Neritos, and Polyktor. There was a grove of water-loving poplars planted in a circle all round it, [210] and the clear cold water came down to it from a rock high up, while above the fountain there was an altar to the nymphs, at which all wayfarers used to sacrifice. Here Melanthios, son of Dolios, overtook them as he was driving down some goats, the best in his flock, for the suitors' dinner, and there were two shepherds with him. [215] When he saw Eumaios and Odysseus he reviled them with outrageous and unseemly language, which made Odysseus very angry.

“There you go,” cried he, “and a precious pair you are. See how the gods bring birds of the same feather to one another. Where, pray, master swineherd, are you taking this poor [220] miserable object? It would make any one sick to see such a creature at table. A person like this never won a prize for anything in his life, but will go about rubbing his shoulders against every man's door post, and begging, not for swords and cauldrons like a man, but only for a few scraps not worth begging for. If you would give him to me for a hand on my station, [225] he might do to clean out the folds, or bring a bit of sweet feed to the kids, and he could fatten his thighs as much as he pleased on whey; but he has taken to bad ways and will not go about any kind of work; he will do nothing but beg victuals all over the district [*dēmos*], to feed his insatiable belly. I say, therefore, and it shall surely be— [230] if he goes near godlike Odysseus' house he will get his head broken by the stools they will fling at him, till they turn him out.”

Then, as he passed, he gave Odysseus a kick on the hip out of pure wantonness, [235] but Odysseus stood firm, and did not budge from the path. For a moment he doubted whether or not to fly at Melanthios and kill him with his staff, or fling him to the ground and beat his brains out; he resolved, however, to endure it and keep himself in check, but the swineherd looked straight at Melanthios and rebuked him, lifting up his hands and praying to the gods as he did so.

[240] “Fountain nymphs,” he cried, “children of Zeus, if ever Odysseus burned you thigh bones covered with fat whether of lambs or kids, grant my prayer that a superhuman force [*daimōn*] may send him home. He would soon put an end to the swaggering threats with which such men as you go about insulting people— [245] gadding all over the town while your flocks are going to ruin through bad shepherding.”

Then Melanthios the goatherd answered, “You ill-conditioned cur, what are you talking about? Some day or other I will put you on board ship and take you [250] to a foreign country, where I can sell you and keep the wealth you will fetch. I wish I were as sure that Apollo, silver-bowed, would strike Telemachus dead this very day, or that the suitors would kill him, as I am sure that Odysseus will never come home again.”

With this he left them to come on at their leisure, [255] while he went quickly forward and soon reached the house of his master. When he got there he went in and took his seat among the suitors opposite Eurymakhos, who liked him better than any of the others. The servants brought him a portion of meat, and an upper woman servant set bread before him that he might eat. [260] Presently Odysseus and the swineherd came up to the house and stood by it, amid a sound of music, for Phemios was just beginning to sing to the suitors. Then Odysseus took hold of the swineherd’s hand, and said:

“Eumaios, this house of Odysseus is a very fine place. [265] No matter how far you go you will find few like it. One building keeps following

on after another. The outer court has a wall with battlements all round it; the doors are double folding, and of good workmanship; it would be a hard matter to take it by force of arms. I perceive, too, that there are many people banqueting within it, [270] for there is a smell of roast meat, and I hear a sound of music, which the gods have made to go along with feasting.”

Then Eumaios said, “You have perceived aright, as indeed you generally do; but let us think what will be our best course. [275] Will you go inside first and join the suitors, leaving me here behind you, or will you wait here and let me go in first? But do not wait long, or some one may see you loitering about outside, and throw something at you. Consider this matter I pray you.”

[280] And much-enduring great Odysseus answered, “I understand and heed. Go in first and leave me here where I am. I am quite used to being beaten and having things thrown at me. I have been so much buffeted about [285] in war and by sea that I am case-hardened, and this too may go with the rest. But a man cannot hide away the cravings of a hungry belly; this is an enemy which gives much trouble to all men; it is because of this that ships are fitted out to sail the seas, and to make war upon other people.”

[290] As they were thus talking, a dog that had been lying asleep raised his head and pricked up his ears. This was Argos, whom patient-hearted Odysseus had bred before setting out for Troy, but he had never had any work out of him. In the old days he used to be taken out by the young men [295] when they went hunting wild goats, or deer, or hares, but now that his master was gone he was lying neglected on the heaps of mule and cow dung that lay in front of the stable doors till the men should come and draw it away to manure the great field; [300] and he was full of fleas. As soon as he saw Odysseus standing there, he dropped his ears and wagged his tail, but he could not get close up to his master.

When Odysseus saw the dog on the other side of the yard, [305] he dashed a tear from his eyes without Eumaios seeing it, and said:

“Eumaios, what a noble hound that is over yonder on the manure heap: his build is splendid; is he as fine as he looks, or is he only one of those dogs that come begging about a table, [310] and are kept merely for show?” “This hound,” answered Eumaios, “belonged to him who has died in a far country. If he were what he was when Odysseus left for Troy, [315] he would soon show you what he could do. There was not a wild beast in the forest that could get away from him when he was once on its tracks. But now he has fallen on evil times, for his master is dead and gone, and the women take no care of him. [320] Servants never do their work when their master’s hand is no longer over them, for Zeus of the wide brows takes half the goodness [*aretē*] out of a man when he makes a slave of him.”

As he spoke he went [325] inside the buildings to the hall where the suitors were, but Argos died as soon as he had recognized his master.

Godlike Telemachus saw Eumaios long before any one else did, and beckoned him [330] to come and sit beside him; so he looked about and saw a seat lying near where the carver sat serving out their portions to the suitors; he picked it up, brought it to Telemachus’ table, and sat down opposite him. Then the servant [335] brought him his portion, and gave him bread from the bread-basket.

Immediately afterwards Odysseus came inside, looking like a poor miserable old beggar, leaning on his staff and with his clothes all in rags. He sat down upon the threshold of ash-wood [340] just inside the doors leading from the outer to the inner court, and against a bearing-post of cypress-wood which the carpenter had skillfully planed, and had made to join truly with rule and line. Telemachus took a whole loaf from the bread-basket, with as much meat as he could hold in his two hands, and said to Eumaios, [345] “Take this to the stranger, and tell him to go the

round of the suitors, and beg from them; a beggar must not feel circumspection [*aidōs*].”

So Eumaios went up to him and said, [350] “Stranger, Telemachus sends you this, and says you are to go the round of the suitors begging, for beggars must not feel circumspection [*aidōs*].”

Resourceful Odysseus answered, “May lord Zeus grant all happiness [*olbos*] to Telemachus, [355] and fulfill the desire of his heart.” Then with both hands he took what Telemachus had sent him, and laid it on the dirty old wallet at his feet. He went on eating it while the bard was singing, and had just finished his dinner as he left off. [360] The suitors applauded the bard, whereon Athena went up to Odysseus, son of Laertes, and prompted him to beg pieces of bread from each one of the suitors, that he might see what kind of people they were, and tell the good from the bad; [365] but come what might she was not going to save a single one of them. Odysseus, therefore, went on his round, going from left to right, and stretched out his hands to beg as though he were a real beggar. Some of them pitied him, and were curious about him, asking one another who he was and where he came from; whereon the goatherd Melanthios said, [370] “Suitors of my noble mistress, I can tell you something about him, for I have seen him before. The swineherd brought him here, but I know nothing about the man himself, nor where he comes from.”

Then Antinoos began to abuse the swineherd. [375] “You precious idiot,” he cried, “what have you brought this man to town for? Have we not tramps and beggars enough already to pester us as we sit at meat? Do you think it a small thing that such people gather here to waste your master’s property and must you needs bring this man as well?” [380] And Eumaios answered, ³⁸¹ “Antinoos! Though you are noble, you do not speak properly. ³⁸² What man who is from somewhere else himself ³⁸³ will invite yet another guest-stranger [*xenos*], unless he [the *xenos*] is one of those who are workers of the district [*dēmos*], ³⁸⁴ such as a seer

[*mantis*], or a healer of illnesses, or a carpenter who works on wood,
[385] or even an inspired singer who can give delight with his singing?
³⁸⁶ For such men are apt to be invited anywhere in the world. ³⁸⁷ But one
would not invite a beggar; such a man would feed on his host. You are
always harder on Odysseus' servants than any of the other suitors are,
and above all on me, but I [390] do not care so long as godlike
Telemachus and circumspect Penelope are alive and here."

But the spirited Telemachus said, "Hush, do not answer him; Antinoos
has the bitterest tongue of all the suitors, [395] and he makes the others
worse."

Then turning to Antinoos he said, "Antinoos, you take as much care of
my interests as though I were your son. Why should you want to see this
stranger turned out of the house? Heaven forbid; [400] take something
and give it him yourself; I do not grudge it; I bid you take it. Never
mind my mother, nor any of the other servants in the house of godlike
Odysseus; but I know you will not do what I say, for you are more fond
of eating things yourself than of giving them to other people."

[405] "What do you mean, high-spoken intemperate Telemachus,"
replied Antinoos, "by this swaggering talk? If all the suitors were to give
him as much as I will, he would not come here again for another three
months."

As he spoke he drew the stool [410] on which he rested his dainty feet
from under the table, and made as though he would throw it at
Odysseus, but the other suitors all gave him something, and filled his
wallet with bread and meat; he was about, therefore, to go back to the
threshold and eat what the suitors had given him, but he first went up to
Antinoos and said:

[415] Give, friend! For you seem to be not the worst of the Achaeans, ⁴¹⁶
but the best [*aristos*], since you seem like a king; therefore you should be

the better giver, and I will tell far and wide of your bounty. I too was a rich [*olbios*] man once, and had a fine house of my own; [420] in those days I gave to many a tramp such as I now am, no matter who he might be nor what he wanted. I had any number of servants, and all the other things which people have who live well and are accounted wealthy, but it pleased Zeus, son of Kronos, to take all away from me. [425] He sent me with a band of roving robbers to Egypt; it was a long voyage and I was undone by it. I stationed my ships in the river Aegyptus, and bade my men stay by them and keep guard over them, [430] while I sent out scouts to reconnoiter from every point of vantage.

But the men disobeyed my orders with insolence [*hubris*], took to their own devices, and ravaged the land of the Egyptians, killing the men, and taking their wives and children captives. The alarm was soon carried to the city, [435] and when they heard the war-cry, the people came out at daybreak till the plain was filled with soldiers—horse and foot—and with the gleam of armor. Then Zeus spread panic among my men, and they would no longer face the enemy, for they found themselves surrounded. [440] The Egyptians killed many of us, and took the rest alive to do forced labor for them; as for myself, they gave me to a friend who met them, to take to Cyprus, Dmetor by name, son of Iasos, who was a great man in Cyprus. From there have I come here in a state of great misery.”

[445] Then Antinoos said, “What superhuman force [*daimōn*] can have sent such a pestilence to plague us during our dinner? Get out, into the open part of the court, or I will give you Egypt and Cyprus over again for your insolence and importunity; [450] you have shamelessly begged of all the others, and they have given you lavishly, for they have abundance round them, and it is easy to be free with other people’s property when there is plenty of it.”

Then resourceful Odysseus began to move off, and said, “Your looks, my fine sir, are better than your breeding; [455] if you were in your own

house you would not spare a poor man so much as a pinch of salt, for though you are in another man's, and surrounded with abundance, you cannot find it in you to give him even a piece of bread."

This made Antinoos very angry, and he scowled at him saying, [460] "You shall pay for this before you get clear of the court." With these words he threw a footstool at him, and hit him on the right shoulder-blade near the top of his back. Odysseus stood firm as a rock and the blow did not even stagger him, [465] but he shook his head in silence as he brooded on his revenge. Then he went back to the threshold and sat down there, laying his well-filled wallet at his feet.

"Listen to me," he cried, "you suitors of glorious Queen Penelope, that I may speak even as I am minded. [470] A man knows neither ache [*akhos*] nor pain [*penthos*] if he gets hit while fighting for his wealth, or for his sheep or his cattle; and even so Antinoos has hit me while in the service of my miserable belly, which is always getting people into trouble. Still, [475] if the poor have gods and avenging deities at all, I pray them that Antinoos, son of Eupeithes, may come to a bad end before his marriage."

"Sit where you are, and eat your victuals in silence, or be off elsewhere," shouted Antinoos. "If you say more I will have you dragged [480] hand and foot through the courts, and the servants shall flay you alive."

The other suitors were much displeased at this, and one of the young men said, "Antinoos, you did ill in striking that poor wretch of a tramp: it will be worse for you if he should turn out to be some god— [485] and we know the gods go about disguised in all sorts of ways as people from foreign countries, and travel about the world to see who do things of outrage [*hubris*] and who do things of righteousness."

Thus said the suitors, but Antinoos paid them no heed. Meanwhile Telemachus felt much grief [*penthos*] [490] about the blow that had been

given to his father, and though no tear fell from him, he shook his head in silence and brooded on his revenge.

Now when circumspect Penelope heard that the beggar had been struck in the banqueting-hall, she said before her maids, “Would that Apollo would so strike you, Antinoos,” [495] and her waiting woman, Eurynome, answered, “If our prayers were answered not one of the suitors would ever again see the sun rise.” Then circumspect Penelope said, “Nurse, every single one of them is hateful [*ekhthroi*] to me, for they mean nothing but mischief, [500] but I hate Antinoos like the darkness of death itself. A poor unfortunate tramp has come begging about the house for sheer want. Every one else has given him something to put in his wallet, but Antinoos has hit him on the right shoulder-blade with a footstool.”

[505] Thus did she talk with her maids as she sat in her own room, and in the meantime great Odysseus was getting his dinner. Then she called for the swineherd and said, “Noble Eumaios, go and tell the stranger to come here, I want to see him [510] and ask him some questions. He seems to have traveled much, and he may have seen or heard something of my unhappy husband.”

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “If these Achaeans, Madam, would only keep quiet, ⁵¹⁴ the kind of things he tells about—it would put your heart in a trance. [515] I had him three days and three nights with me in my hut, which was the first place he reached after running away from his ship, and he has not yet completed the story of his misfortunes. ⁵¹⁸ As when a man is looking at a singer [*aoiodos*] who has learned his words from the gods ⁵¹⁹ and the words give pleasure to mortals, [520] who yearn to hear him without pause when he sings— ⁵²¹ so also that one was putting a trance on me as he sat in my house. He says there is an old friendship between his house and that of Odysseus, and that he comes from Crete where the descendants of Minos live, after having been driven here and there by every kind of misfortune; [525] he

also declares that he has heard of Odysseus as being alive and near at hand in the district [*dēmos*] of the Thesprotians, and that he is bringing great wealth home with him.”

“Call him here, then,” said Penelope, “that I too may hear his story. [530] As for the suitors, let them take their pleasure indoors or out as they will, for they have nothing to fret about. Their wheat and wine remain unwasted in their houses with none but servants to consume them, while they keep hanging about our house day after day [535] sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness, for we have now no Odysseus to protect us. If he were to come again, [540] he and his son would soon have a revenge full of violence [*biē*].”

As she spoke Telemachus sneezed so loudly that the whole house resounded with it. Penelope laughed when she heard this, and said to Eumaios, “Go and call the stranger; [545] did you not hear how my son sneezed just as I was speaking? This can only mean that all the suitors are going to be killed, and that not one of them shall escape. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart: if I am satisfied that the stranger is speaking the truth [550] I shall give him a khiton and cloak of good wear.”

When Eumaios heard this he went straight to Odysseus and said, “Father stranger, my mistress circumspect Penelope, mother of Telemachus, has sent for you; she is in great grief, but she wishes to hear anything [555] you can tell her about her husband, and if she is satisfied that you are speaking the truth, she will give you a khiton and cloak, which are the very things that you are most in want of. As for bread, you can get enough of that to fill your belly, by begging about the *dēmos*, and letting those give that will.”

[560] “I will tell the daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,” answered much-enduring great Odysseus, “nothing but what is strictly true. I know all about her husband, and have been partner with him in affliction, but I am afraid of passing through this crowd of cruel suitors, [565] for their overweening pride [*hubris*] and violent insolence [*biē*] reach the sky. Just now, moreover, as I was going about the house without doing any harm, a man gave me a blow that hurt me very much, but neither Telemachus nor any one else defended me. Tell Penelope, therefore, to be patient and wait [570] till sundown. Let her give me a seat close up to the fire, for my clothes are worn very thin—you know they are, for you have seen them ever since I first asked you to help me—she can then ask me about the return of her husband.”

The swineherd went back when he heard this, [575] and Penelope said as she saw him cross the threshold, “Why do you not bring him here, Eumaios? Is he afraid that some one will ill-treat him, or is he shy of coming inside the house at all? Beggars should not be shamefaced.”

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, [580] “The stranger is quite reasonable. He is avoiding the suitors, men full of outrageousness [*hubris*], and is only doing what any one else would do. He asks you to wait till sundown, and it will be much better, madam, that you should have him all to yourself, when you can hear him and talk to him as you will.”

[585] “The man is no fool,” answered circumspect Penelope, “it would very likely be as he says, for there are no such abominable people in the whole world as these men are.”

When she had done speaking Eumaios went back [590] to the suitors, for he had explained everything. Then he went up to Telemachus and said in his ear so that none could overhear him, “My dear sir, I will now go back to the pigs, to see after your property and my own business. You will look to what is going on [595] here, but above all be careful to

keep out of danger, for there are many who bear you ill will. May Zeus bring them to a bad end before they do us a mischief.”

“Very well,” replied the spirited Telemachus, “go home when you have had your dinner, [600] and in the morning come here with the victims we are to sacrifice for the day. Leave the rest to the gods and me.”

Then Eumaios took his seat again, and when he had finished his dinner he left the courts and the hall [605] with the men at table, and went back to his pigs. As for the suitors, they presently began to amuse themselves with singing and dancing, for it was now getting on towards evening.

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Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 18

Translated by Samuel Butler

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[1] And there came a beggar, belonging to all the district [*dēmos*], ² who used to go begging throughout the town of Ithaca; he was renowned ³ for his endless eating and drinking with his greedy [*margē*] belly. ⁴ And he had no force [*īs*], nor might [*biē*], but in appearance he was big to look at. [5] His real name, the one his mother gave him, was Arnaios, but the young men of the place called him Iros, because he used to run errands for any one who would send him. As soon as he came he began to insult Odysseus, and to try and drive him out of his own house.

[10] “Be off, old man,” he cried, “from the doorway, or you shall be dragged out neck and heels. Do you not see that they are all giving me the wink, and wanting me to turn you out by force, only I do not like to do so? Get up then, and go of yourself, or we shall come to blows.”

Resourceful Odysseus frowned on him and said, [15] “You *daimonios*! I am harming you by neither deed nor word. ¹⁶ And I do not begrudge [I have no *phthonos*] that someone should be a giver, after having been a taker in great quantities. ¹⁷ But this threshold will accommodate both of us, and you should not ¹⁸ have *phthonos* about the property of others. You seem to be a beggar like me, ¹⁹ and it is the gods who are likely to grant prosperity [*olbos*]. [20] Do not, however, talk too much about fighting or you will incense me, and old though I am, I shall cover your mouth and chest with blood. I shall have more serenity [*hēsukhiā*] tomorrow if I do, for you will not come to the house of Odysseus, son of Laertes, any more.”

[25] Iros was very angry and answered, “You filthy glutton, you run on like an old fish-hag. I have a good mind to lay both hands about you, and knock your teeth out of your head [30] like so many boar’s tusks. Get ready, therefore, and let these people here stand by and look on. You will never be able to fight one who is so much younger than yourself.”

Thus roundly did they rate one another on the smooth pavement in front of the doorway, and when Antinoos, the sacred prince, saw what was going on [35] he laughed heartily and said to the others, “This is the finest sport that you ever saw; the gods never yet sent anything like it into this house. The stranger and Iros have quarreled and are going to fight, let us set them on to do so at once.”

[40] The suitors all came up laughing, and gathered round the two ragged tramps. “Listen to me,” said Antinoos, son of Eupeithes, “there are some goats’ paunches down at the fire, which we have filled [45] with blood and fat, and set aside for supper; he who is victorious and proves himself to be the better man shall have his pick of the lot; he shall be free of our table and we will not allow any other beggar about the house at all.”

[50] The others all agreed, but resourceful Odysseus, to throw them off the scent, said, “Sirs, an old man like myself, worn out with suffering, cannot hold his own against a young one; but my irrepressible belly urges me on, though I know it can only end in my getting a drubbing. [55] You must swear, however that none of you will give me a foul blow to favor Iros and secure him the victory.”

They swore as he told them, and when they had completed their oath [60] The hallowed prince Telemachus put in a word and said, “Stranger, if your heart and bold spirit [*thūmos*] urges you to settle with this, you need not be afraid of any one here. Whoever strikes you will have to fight more than one. I am host, [65] and the other chiefs, Antinoos and

Eurymakhos, both of them men of understanding, are of the same mind as I am.”

Every one assented, and Odysseus girded his old rags about his loins, thus baring his stalwart thighs, his broad chest and shoulders, and his mighty arms; but Athena [70] came up to him and made his limbs even stronger still. The suitors were beyond measure astonished, and one would turn towards his neighbor saying, “The stranger has brought such a thigh out of his old rags that there will soon be nothing left of Iros.”

[75] Iros began to be very uneasy as he heard them, but the servants girded him by force, and brought him into the open part of the court in such a fright that his limbs were all of a tremble. Antinoos scolded him and said, “You swaggering bully, [80] you ought never to have been born at all if you are afraid of such an old broken-down creature as this tramp is. I say, therefore—and it shall surely be—if he beats you and proves himself the better man, I shall pack you off on board ship to the mainland and send you [85] to King Ekhetos, who kills every one that comes near him. He will cut off your nose and ears, and draw out your entrails for the dogs to eat.”

This frightened Iros still more, but they brought him into the middle of the court, and the two men raised their hands to fight. [90] Then much-enduring great Odysseus considered whether he should let drive so hard at Iros as to make his *psūkhē* leave him there and then as he fell, or whether he should give him a lighter blow that should only knock him down; in the end he thought it best to give the lighter blow for fear the Achaeans should begin to suspect who he was. [95] Then they began to fight, and Iros hit Odysseus on the right shoulder; but Odysseus gave Iros a blow on the neck under the ear that broke in the bones of his skull, and the blood came gushing out of his mouth; he fell groaning in the dust, gnashing his teeth and kicking on the ground, but the suitors [100] threw up their hands and nearly died of laughter, as Odysseus caught hold of him by the foot and dragged him into the outer court as

far as the gate-house. There he propped him up against the wall and put his staff in his hands. [105] "Sit here," said he, "and keep the dogs and pigs off; you are a pitiful creature, and if you try to make yourself king of the beggars any more you shall fare still worse."

Then he threw his dirty old wallet, all tattered and torn, over his shoulder with the cord by which it hung, [110] and went back to sit down upon the threshold; but the suitors went within the halls, laughing and saluting him, "May Zeus, and all the other gods," said they, "grant you whatever you want for having put an end to the importunity of this insatiable tramp. [115] We will take him over to the mainland presently, to King Ekhetos, who kills every one that comes near him."

Great Odysseus hailed this as of good omen, and Antinoos set a great goat's paunch before him filled with blood and fat. Amphinomos took [120] two loaves out of the bread-basket and brought them to him, pledging him as he did so in a golden goblet of wine. "Good luck to you," he said, "father stranger, you are very badly off at present, but I hope you will have better fortune [*olbos*] by and by."

To this resourceful Odysseus answered, [125] "Amphinomos, you seem to be a man of good understanding, as indeed you may well be, seeing whose son you are. I have heard good reports [*kleos*] about your father; he is Nisos of Doulikhion, a man both brave and wealthy. They tell me you are his son, and you appear to be a considerable person; listen, therefore, and take heed to what I am saying. [130] Man is the vainest of all creatures that have their being upon earth. As long as the gods grant him excellence [*aretē*] and his knees are steady, he thinks that he shall come to no harm hereafter, and even when the blessed gods bring sorrow upon him, [135] he bears it as he needs must, and makes the best of it; for the father of gods and men gives men their daily minds [*noos*] day by day. I know all about it, for I was a rich [*olbios*] man once, and did much wrong in the stubbornness [*biē*] of my pride, [140] and in the confidence that my father and my brothers would support me; therefore

let a man be pious in all things always, and take the good that the gods may see fit to send him without vainglory. Consider the infamy of what these suitors are doing; see how they are wasting the estate, and doing dishonor to the wife, [145] of one who is certain to return some day, and that, too, not long hence. I tell you, he will be here soon; may a superhuman force [*daimōn*] send you home quietly first that you may not meet with him in the day of his coming, for once he is here [150] the suitors and he will not part bloodlessly.”

With these words he made a drink-offering, and when he had drunk he put the gold cup again into the hands of Amphinomos, who walked away serious and bowing his head, for he foreboded evil. [155] But even so he did not escape destruction, for Athena had doomed him to fall by the hand of Telemachus. So he took his seat again at the place from which he had come.

Then the owl-vision goddess Athena put it into the mind of circumspect Penelope [160] to show herself to the suitors, that she might make them still more enamored of her, and win still further honor from her son and husband. So she feigned a mocking laugh and said, “Eurynome, I have changed my mind [165] and have a fancy to show myself to the suitors although I detest them. I should like also to give my son a hint that he had better not have anything more to do with them. They speak fairly enough but they mean mischief.”

[170] “My dear child,” answered Eurynome, “all that you have said is true, go and tell your son about it, but first wash yourself and anoint your face. Do not go about with your cheeks all covered with tears; it is not right that you should grieve so incessantly; [175] for Telemachus, whom you always prayed that you might live to see with a beard, is already grown up.”

“I know, Eurynome,” replied circumspect Penelope, “that you mean well, but do not try and persuade me to wash and to anoint myself, [180] for

the gods robbed me of all my beauty on the day my husband sailed; nevertheless, tell Autonoe and Hippodamia that I want them. They must be with me when I am in the hall; I am not going among the men alone; it would not be proper for me to do so.”

[185] Then the old woman went out of the room to bid the maids go to their mistress. In the meantime the owl-vision goddess Athena turned her thoughts to another matter, and sent Penelope, daughter of Ikarios, off into a sweet slumber; so she lay down on her couch and her limbs became heavy with sleep. [190] Then the goddess shed grace and beauty over her that all the Achaeans might admire her. She washed her face with the ambrosial loveliness that Aphrodite wears when she goes to the dance [*khoros*] with the Graces; [195] she made her taller and of a more commanding figure, while as for her complexion it was whiter than sawn ivory. When Athena had done all this she went away, whereon the maids came in from the women’s room and woke Penelope with the sound of their talking.

[200] “What an exquisitely delicious sleep I have been having,” said she, as she passed her hands over her face, “in spite of all my misery. I wish Artemis would let me die so sweetly now at this very moment, that I might no longer waste in despair for the loss of my dear husband, who possessed [205] every kind of good quality [*aretē*] and was the most distinguished man among the Achaeans.”

With these words she came down from her upper room, not alone but attended by two of her maidens, and when she, shining among women, reached the suitors she stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the hall, [210] holding a veil before her face, and with a staid maid servant on either side of her. As they beheld her the suitors were so overpowered and became so desperately enamored of her, that each one prayed he might win her for his own bedmate.

[215] “Telemachus,” said she, addressing her beloved son, “I fear you are no longer so discreet and well conducted as you used to be. When you were younger you had a subtler thoughtfulness [*kerdos*]; now, however, that you are grown up, though a stranger to look at you would take you for the son of a well-to-do [*olbios*] father as far as size and good looks go, [220] your conduct is by no means what it should be. What is all this disturbance that has been going on, and how came you to allow a stranger to be so disgracefully ill-treated? What would have happened if he had suffered serious injury while a suppliant in our house? [225] Surely this would have been very discreditable to you.”

“I am not surprised, my dear mother, at your displeasure,” replied the spirited Telemachus, “I understand all about it and know when things are not as they should be, which I could not do when I was younger; [230] I cannot, however, behave with perfect propriety at all times. First one and then another of these wicked people here keeps driving me out of my mind, and I have no one to stand by me. After all, however, this fight between Iros and the stranger did not turn out as the suitors meant it to do, for the stranger got the best of it. [235] I wish Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo would break the neck of every one of these wooers of yours, some inside the house and some out; and I wish they might all be as limp as Iros is over yonder in the gate of the outer court. [240] See how he nods his head like a drunken man; he has had such a thrashing that he cannot stand on his feet nor achieve a homecoming [*nostos*], wherever that may be, for has no strength left in him.”

Thus did they converse. Eurymakhos then came up and said, [245] “Circumspect Queen Penelope, daughter of Ikarios, if all the Achaeans in Iasian Argos could see you at this moment, you would have still more suitors in your house by tomorrow morning, for you are the most admirable woman in the whole world both as regards personal beauty and strength of understanding.” [250] To this circumspect Penelope replied, “Eurymakhos, the gods robbed me of all my excellence [*aretē*] whether of face or figure when the Argives set sail for Troy and my dear

husband with them. If he were to return and look after my affairs, [255] I should both be more respected [*kleos*] and show a better presence to the world. As it is, I am oppressed with care, and with the afflictions which a superhuman force [*daimōn*] has seen fit to heap upon me. My husband foresaw it all, and when he was leaving home he took my right wrist in his hand—‘Wife,’ he said, ‘we shall not all of us [260] come safe home from Troy, for the Trojans fight well both with bow and spear. They are excellent also at fighting from chariots, and nothing decides [*krinein*] the issue of a fight sooner than this. [265] I know not, therefore, whether the gods will send me back to you, or whether I may not fall over there at Troy. In the meantime do you look after things here. Take care of my father and mother as at present, and even more so during my absence, but when you see our son growing a beard, then [270] marry whom you will, and leave this your present home.’ This is what he said and now it is all coming true. A night will come when I shall have to yield myself to a marriage which I detest, for Zeus has taken from me all hope of happiness [*olbos*]. This further grief [*akhos*], moreover, cuts me to the very heart. [275] You suitors are not wooing me after the custom [*dikē*] of my country. When men are courting a woman who they think will be a good wife to them and who is of noble birth, and when they are each trying to win her for himself, they usually bring oxen and sheep to feast the friends of the lady, and they make her magnificent presents, [280] instead of eating up other people’s property without paying for it.”

This was what she said, and much-enduring great Odysseus was glad when he heard her trying to get presents out of the suitors, and flattering them with fair words which he knew she did not mean in her mind [*noos*].

Then Antinoos said, [285] “Circumspect Queen Penelope, daughter of Ikarios, take as many presents as you please from any one who will give them to you; it is not well to refuse a present; but we will not go about our business nor stir from where we are, till you have married the best man among us, whoever he may be.”

[290] The others applauded what Antinoos had said, and each one sent his servant to bring his present. Antinoos' man returned with a large and lovely dress most exquisitely pattern-woven. It had twelve beautifully made brooch pins of pure gold with which to fasten it. [295] Eurymakhos immediately brought her a magnificent chain of gold and amber beads that gleamed like sunlight. Eurydamas' two men returned with some earrings fashioned into three radiant pendants which glistened in beauty [*kharis*]; while King Peisandros, [300] son of Polyktor, gave her a necklace of the rarest workmanship, and every one else brought her a beautiful present of some kind.

Then the queen went back to her room upstairs, and her maids brought the presents after her. Meanwhile the suitors took to singing and dancing, [305] and stayed till evening came. They danced and sang till it grew dark; they then brought in three braziers to give light, and piled them up with chopped firewood very well seasoned and dry, [310] and they lit torches from them, which the maids held up turn and turn about. Then illustrious resourceful Odysseus said:

“Maids, servants of Odysseus who has so long been absent, go to the queen inside the house; [315] sit with her and amuse her, or spin, and pick wool. I will hold the light for all these people. They may stay till morning, but shall not beat me, for I can stand a great deal.”

[320] The maids looked at one another and laughed, while pretty Melantho began to gibe at him contemptuously. She was daughter to Dolios, but had been brought up by Penelope, who used to give her toys to play with, and looked after her when she was a child; but in spite of all this she showed no consideration for the sorrows [*penthos*] of her mistress, [325] and used to misconduct herself with Eurymakhos, with whom she was in love.

“Poor wretch,” said she, “are you gone clean out of your mind? Go and sleep in some smithy, or place of public gossips, instead of chattering

here. [330] Are you not ashamed of opening your mouth before your betters—so many of them too? Has the wine been getting into your head, or do you always babble in this way? You seem to have lost your wits because you beat the tramp Iros; take care that a better man than he does not come [335] and cudgel you about the head till he pack you bleeding out of the house.”

“Vixen,” replied resourceful Odysseus, scowling at her, “I will go and tell Telemachus what you have been saying, and he will have you torn limb from limb.”

[340] With these words he scared the women, and they went off into the body of the house. They trembled all over, for they thought he would do as he said in a true [*alēthēs*] way. But Odysseus took his stand near the burning braziers, holding up torches and looking at the people— [345] brooding the while on things that should surely come to pass.

But Athena would not let the suitors for one moment cease their insolence, for she wanted Odysseus, son of Laertes, to become even more bitter [*akhos*] against them; she therefore set Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, on [350] to gibe at him, which made the others laugh. “Listen to me,” said he, “you suitors of Queen Penelope, that I may speak even as I am minded. It is not for nothing that this man has come to the house of Odysseus; I believe the light has not been coming from the torches, [355] but from his own head—for his hair is all gone, every bit of it.”

Then turning to Odysseus he said, “Stranger, will you work as a servant, if I send you to the moor and see that you are well paid? Can you build a stone fence, or plant trees? [360] I will have you fed all the year round, and will find you in shoes and clothing. Will you go, then? Not you; for you have got into bad ways, and do not want to work; you had rather fill your belly by going round the district [*dēmos*] begging.”

[365] “Eurymakhos,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “if you and I were to work one against the other in the time [*hōrā*] of early summer when the days are at their longest—give me a good scythe, and take another yourself, and let us see [370] which will fast the longer or mow the stronger, from dawn till dark when the mowing grass is about. Or if you will plow against me, let us each take a yoke of tawny oxen, well-mated and of great strength and endurance: turn me into a four acre field, [375] and see whether you or I can drive the straighter furrow. If, again, war were to break out this day, give me a shield, a couple of spears and a helmet fitting well upon my temples—you would find me foremost in the fray, [380] and would cease your gibes about my belly. You are insolent and your mind [*noos*] is cruel, and you think yourself a great man because you live in a little world, and that a bad one. If Odysseus comes to his own again, [385] the doors of his house are wide, but you will find them narrow when you try to flee through them.”

Eurymakhos was furious at all this. He scowled at him and cried, “You wretch, I will soon pay you out [390] for daring to say such things to me, and in public too. Has the wine been getting into your head or do you always babble in this way? You seem to have lost your wits because you beat the tramp Iros.” With this he caught hold of a footstool, but Odysseus [395] sought protection at the knees of Amphinomos of Doulikhion, for he was afraid. The stool hit the cupbearer on his right hand and knocked him down: the man fell with a cry flat on his back, and his wine-jug fell ringing to the ground. The suitors in the covered hall were now in an uproar, [400] and one would turn towards his neighbor, saying, “I wish the stranger had gone somewhere else, bad luck to hide, for all the trouble he gives us. We cannot permit such disturbance about a beggar; if such ill counsels are to prevail we shall have no more pleasure at our banquet.”

[405] Then the hallowed prince Telemachus came forward and said, “Sirs, are you mad? Can you not carry your meat and your liquor decently? Some evil spirit has possessed you. I do not wish to drive any

of you away, but you have had your suppers, and the sooner you all go home to bed the better.”

[410] The suitors bit their lips and marveled at the boldness of his speech; but Amphinomos, the son of Nisos, who was son to Aretias, said, “Do not let us take offence; [415] it is reasonable [*dikaios*], so let us make no answer. Neither let us do violence to the stranger nor to any of godlike Odysseus’ servants. Let the cupbearer go round with the drink-offerings, that we may make them and go home to our rest. [420] As for the stranger, let us leave Telemachus to deal with him, for it is to his house that he has come.”

Thus did he speak, and his saying pleased them well, so Moullos of Doulikhion, servant to Amphinomos, mixed them a bowl of wine and water [425] and handed it round to each of them man by man, whereon they made their drink-offerings to the blessed gods. Then, when they had made their drink-offerings and had drunk each one as he was minded, they took their several ways each of them to his own abode.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 19

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Great Odysseus was left in the hall, pondering on the means whereby with Athena's help he might be able to kill the suitors. Presently he said to Telemachus, "Telemachus, we must get the armor together and take it [5] down inside. Make some excuse when the suitors ask you why you have removed it. Say that you have taken it to be out of the way of the smoke, inasmuch as it is no longer what it was when Odysseus went away, but has become soiled and begrimed with soot. [10] Add to this more particularly that you are afraid a superhuman force [*daimōn*] may set them on to quarrel over their wine, and that they may do each other some harm which may disgrace both banquet and wooing, for the sight of arms sometimes tempts people to use them."

Telemachus approved of what his father had said, [15] so he called nurse Eurykleia and said, "Nurse, shut the women up in their room, while I take the armor that my father left behind him down into the store room. No one looks after it now my father is gone, and it has got all smirched with soot during my own boyhood. [20] I want to take it down where the smoke cannot reach it."

"I wish, child," answered Eurykleia, "that you would take the management of the house into your own hands altogether, and look after all the property yourself. But who is to go with you and light you to the store room? [25] The maids would have so, but you would not let them."

"The stranger," said the spirited Telemachus, "shall show me a light; when people eat my bread they must earn it, no matter where they

come from.”

Eurykleia did as she was told, [30] and bolted the women inside their room. Then Odysseus and his son made all haste to take the helmets, shields, and spears inside; and Athena went before them with a gold lamp in her hand that shed a soft and brilliant radiance, [35] whereon Telemachus said, “Father, my eyes behold a great marvel: the walls, with the rafters, crossbeams, and the supports on which they rest are all aglow as with a flaming fire. [40] Surely there is some god here who has come down from the sky.”

“Hush,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “hold your thoughts [*noos*] in peace and ask no questions, for this is the manner [*dikē*] of the gods. Get you to your bed, and leave me here to talk [45] with your mother and the maids. Your mother in her grief will ask me all sorts of questions.”

Then Telemachus went by torch-light to the other side of the inner court, to the room in which he always slept. [50] There he lay in his bed till morning, while Odysseus was left in the hall pondering on the means whereby with Athena’s help he might be able to kill the suitors.

Then circumspect Penelope came down from her room looking like golden Aphrodite or Artemis, [55] and they set her a seat inlaid with scrolls of silver and ivory near the fire in her accustomed place. It had been made by Ikmalios and had a footstool all in one piece with the seat itself; and it was covered with a thick fleece: on this she [60] now sat, and the white-armed maids came from the women’s room to join her. They set about removing the tables at which the wicked suitors had been dining, and took away the bread that was left, with the cups from which they had drunk. They emptied the embers out of the braziers, and heaped much wood upon them to give both light and heat; [65] but Melantho began to rail at Odysseus a second time and said, “Stranger, do you mean to plague us by hanging about the house all night and spying

upon the women? Be off, you wretch, outside, and eat your supper there, or you shall be driven out with a firebrand.”

[70] Resourceful Odysseus scowled at her and answered, “My good woman, why should you be so angry with me? Is it because I am not clean, and my clothes are all in rags, and because I am obliged to go begging about the *dēmos* after the manner of tramps and beggars general? [75] I too was a rich [*olbios*] man once, and had a fine house of my own; in those days I gave to many a tramp such as I now am, no matter who he might be nor what he wanted. I had any number of servants, and all the other things which people have who live well and are accounted wealthy, [80] but it pleased Zeus, son of Kronos, to take all away from me; therefore, woman, beware lest you too come to lose that pride and place in which you now wanton above your fellows; have a care lest you get out of favor with your mistress, and lest Odysseus should come home, for there is still a chance that he may do so. [85] Moreover, though he be dead as you think he is, yet by Apollo’s will he has left a son behind him, Telemachus, who will note anything done amiss by the maids in the house, for he is now no longer in his boyhood.”

Circumspect Penelope heard what he was saying [90] and scolded the maid, “Impudent baggage,” said she, “I see how abominably you are behaving, and you shall smart for it. You knew perfectly well, for I told you myself, that I was going to see the stranger and ask him [95] about my husband, for whose sake I am in such continual sorrow.”

Then she said to her head waiting woman Eurynome, “Bring a seat with a fleece upon it, for the stranger to sit upon while he tells his story, and listens to what I have to say. I wish to ask him some questions.”

[100] Eurynome brought the seat at once and set a fleece upon it, and as soon as much-enduring great Odysseus had sat down Penelope began by

saying, “Stranger, I shall first ask you [105] who and whence are you? Tell me of your town and parents.”

¹⁰⁷ “My lady,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “who among mortals throughout the limitless stretches of earth ¹⁰⁸ would dare to quarrel [neikeîn] against you with words? For truly your glory [kleos] reaches the wide firmament of the sky itself ¹⁰⁹ —like the glory of some faultless king [basileus], who, godlike as he is, [110] and ruling over a population that is multitudinous and vigorous, ¹¹¹ upholds acts of good dikē [= eu-dikiai], while the dark earth produces ¹¹² wheat and barley, the trees are loaded with fruit, ¹¹³ the ewes steadily bring forth lambs, and the sea abounds with fish, ¹¹⁴ by reason of the good directions he gives, and his people are meritorious [aretân] under his rule. [115] Nevertheless, as I sit here in your house, ask me some other question and do not seek to know my lineage and family, or you will recall memories that will yet more increase my sorrow. I am full of heaviness, but I ought not to sit weeping and wailing in another person’s house, [120] nor is it well to be thus grieving continually. I shall have one of the servants or even yourself complaining of me, and saying that my eyes swim with tears because I am heavy with wine.”

Then circumspect Penelope answered, “Stranger, the immortal gods robbed me of all excellence [aretē], whether of face or figure, [125] when the Argives set sail for Troy and my dear husband with them. If he were to return and look after my affairs I would have more fame [kleos] and would show a better presence to the world. As it is, I am oppressed with care, and with the afflictions which a superhuman force [daimōn] has seen fit to heap upon me. [130] The chiefs from all our islands—Doulikhion, Samē, and wooded Zakynthos, as also from Ithaca itself, are wooing me against my will and are wasting my estate. I can therefore show no attention to strangers, nor suppliants, [135] nor to people who say that they are skilled artisans, but am all the time brokenhearted about Odysseus. They want me to marry again at once, and I have to invent

stratagems in order to deceive them. In the first place a superhuman force [*daimōn*] put it in my mind to set up a great loom in my room, and to begin working upon [140] an enormous fine web. Then I said to them, ‘Sweethearts, great Odysseus is indeed dead, still, do not press me to marry again immediately; wait—for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded—till I have finished making a shroud for the hero Laertes, to be ready [145] against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the district [*dēmos*] will talk if he is laid out without a shroud.’ This was what I said, and they assented; whereon I used to keep working at my great web all day long, [150] but at night I would undo it again by torch light. I fooled them in this way for three years without their finding it out, but as time [*hōrā*] wore on and I was now in my fourth year, in the waning of moons, and many days had been accomplished, those good-for-nothing hussies my maids [155] betrayed me to the suitors, who broke in upon me and caught me; they were very angry with me, so I was forced to finish my work whether I would or no. And now I do not see how I can find any further shift for getting out of this marriage. My parents are putting great pressure upon me, and my son chafes at the ravages the suitors are making upon his estate, [160] for he is now old enough to understand all about it and is perfectly able to look after his own affairs, for the gods have blessed him with an excellent disposition. Still, notwithstanding all this, tell me who you are and where you come from—for you must have had father and mother of some sort; ¹⁶³ for surely you are not from an oak, as in the old stories, or from a rock.”

Then resourceful Odysseus answered, [165] “My Lady, wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, since you persist in asking me about my family, I will answer, no matter what it costs me: people must expect to feel grief [*akhos*] when they have been exiles as long as I have, [170] and suffered as much among as many peoples. Nevertheless, as regards your question I will tell you all you ask. ¹⁷² There’s a land called Crete, in the middle of the sea that looks like wine. ¹⁷³ It’s beautiful and fertile, surrounded by

the waves, and the people who live there ¹⁷⁴ are so many that you can't count them. They have ninety cities. [175] Different people speak different languages, all mixed together. ¹⁷⁶ There are Eteo-Cretans, those great-hearted ones. And Cydonians. ¹⁷⁷ There are Dorians, with their three divisions, and luminous Pelasgians. ¹⁷⁸ In this land [plural] is Knossos, a great city. There it was that Minos, ¹⁷⁹ who was renewed every nine years [*enneōros*], ruled as king. He was the companion [*oaristēs*] of Zeus the mighty. [180] And he was the father of my father, Deukalion, the one with the big heart. ¹⁸¹ Deukalion was my father, and the father also of Idomeneus the king. ¹⁸² That man [= Idomeneus], in curved ships, went off to Ilion [= Troy], ¹⁸³ yes, he went there together with the sons of Atreus [= Agamemnon and Menelaos]. As for my name, which is famous, it is Aithōn. ¹⁸⁴ I'm the younger one by birth. As for the other one [= Idomeneus], he was born before me and is superior to me. [185] There [in Crete] is where I [= Aithōn] saw Odysseus and gave him gifts of guest-host friendship [*xeniā*]. ¹⁸⁶ You see, he had been forced to land at Crete by the violent power of a wind. ¹⁸⁷ He was trying to get to Troy, but the wind detoured him as he was sailing past the headlands of Maleiai, ¹⁸⁸ and he was dropped off [by the violent wind] at Amnisos, exactly where the cave of Eileithuia is situated. ¹⁸⁹ It was a harsh landing, and he just barely avoided being destroyed by the blasts of the sea-gales. [190] Right away he asked to see Idomeneus as soon as he came to the city [= Knossos]. ¹⁹¹ You see, he was saying that he was a guest-friend [*xenos*] [of Idomeneus] and that they had a relationship of mutual respect. ¹⁹² But it was by now already the tenth or eleventh day since he [= Idomeneus] ¹⁹³ had departed, sailing off with a fleet of curved ships on his way to Ilion [Troy], so I took him to my own house and showed him [195] every kind of hospitality, for I had abundance of everything. Moreover, I fed the men who were with him with barley meal from the public store, and got subscriptions of wine and oxen for them to sacrifice to their heart's content. They stayed with me twelve days, for there was a gale blowing [200] from the North so strong that one could hardly keep

one's feet on land. I suppose some unfriendly superhuman force [*daimōn*] had raised it for them, but on the thirteenth day the wind dropped, and they got away."

²⁰³ He made likenesses [*eiskein*], saying many deceptive [*pseudea*] things looking like [*homoia*] genuine [*etuma*] things, and Penelope wept as she listened, for her heart was melted. [205] As the snow wastes upon the mountain tops when the winds from South East and West have breathed upon it and thawed it till the rivers run bank full with water, even so did her cheeks overflow with tears for the husband who was all the time sitting by her side. Odysseus [210] in his heart [*thūmos*] felt pity for her, but he kept his eyes as hard as horn or iron without letting them so much as quiver, so cunningly did he restrain his tears. Then, when she had relieved herself by weeping, she turned to him again and said: [215] "Now, stranger, I shall put you to the test and see whether or not you really did entertain my husband and his godlike men, as you say you did. Tell me, then, how he was dressed, what kind of a man he was to look at, and so also with his companions."

[220] "My Lady," answered resourceful Odysseus, "it is such a long time ago that I can hardly say. Twenty years are come and gone since he left my home, and went elsewhere; but I will tell you as well as I can recollect. [225] Great Odysseus wore a mantle of purple wool, double lined, and it was fastened by a gold brooch with two catches for the pin. On the face of this there was a device that showed a dog holding a spotted fawn between his fore paws, and watching it as it lay panting upon the ground. Every one marveled [230] at the way in which these things had been done in gold, the dog looking at the fawn, and strangling it, while the fawn was struggling convulsively to escape. ²³² And I noticed [*noein*] the tunic that he wore next his skin; it was so soft that it fitted him like the skin of an onion, and glistened in the sunlight [235] to the admiration of all the women who beheld it. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart, that I do not know whether Odysseus wore these clothes when he left home, or whether one of his

companions had given them to him while he was on his voyage; or possibly some one at whose house he was staying made him a present of them, for he was a man of many friends [240] and had few equals among the Achaeans. I myself gave him a sword of bronze and a beautiful purple mantle, double lined, with a khiton that went down to his feet, and I sent him on board his ship with every mark of honor. He had a servant with him, a little older than himself, [245] and I can tell you what he was like; his shoulders were hunched, he was dark, and he had thick curly hair. His name was Eurybates, and Odysseus treated him with greater familiarity than he did any of the others, as being the most like-minded with himself.”

Penelope was moved still more deeply [250] as she heard the indisputable signs [*sēmata*] that Odysseus laid before her; and when she had again found relief in tears she said to him, “Stranger, I was already disposed to pity you, but henceforth you shall be honored and made welcome in my house. [255] It was I who gave Odysseus the clothes you speak of. I took them out of the store room and folded them up myself, and I gave him also the gold brooch to wear as an ornament. Alas! I shall never welcome him home again. It was by an ill fate that he ever set out [260] for that detested city whose very name I cannot bring myself even to mention.”

Then resourceful Odysseus answered, “My Lady, wife of Odysseus, do not disfigure yourself further by grieving thus bitterly for your loss, though I can hardly blame you for doing so. [265] A woman who has loved her husband and borne him children, would naturally be grieved at losing him, even though he were a worse man than Odysseus, who they say was like a god. Still, cease your tears and listen to what I can tell. I will hide nothing from you, and can say with perfect truth [270] that I have lately heard of Odysseus as being alive and on his way home [*nostos*]; he is in the district [*dēmos*] of the Thesprotians, and is bringing back much valuable treasure that he has begged from one and another of them; but his ship and all his crew were lost [275] as they were leaving the Thrinacian island, for Zeus and the sun-god were angry with him

because his men had slaughtered the sun-god's cattle, and they were all drowned to a man. But Odysseus stuck to the keel of the ship and was drifted on to the land of the Phaeacians, who are near of kin to the immortals, [280] and who treated him as though he had been a god, giving him many presents, and wishing to escort him home safe and sound. In fact Odysseus would have been here long ago, had he not thought better to go from land to land gathering wealth; [285] for there is no man living who is full of craftiness [*kerdos*] as he is; there is no one can compare with him. Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me all this, and he swore to me—making drink-offerings in his house as he did so—that the ship was by the water side and the crew found [290] who would take Odysseus to his own country. He sent me off first, for there happened to be a Thesprotian ship sailing for the wheat-growing island of Doulikhion, but he showed me all the treasure Odysseus had got together, and he had enough lying in the house of King Pheidon to keep his family for ten generations; [295] but the king said Odysseus had gone to Dodona that he might learn Zeus' mind from the high oak tree, and know whether after so long an absence he should return to Ithaca openly or in secret. [300] So you may know he is safe and will be here shortly; he is close at hand and cannot remain away from home much longer; nevertheless I will confirm my words with an oath, and call Zeus who is the first and mightiest of all gods to witness, as also that hearth of blameless Odysseus to which I have now come, [305] that all I have spoken shall surely come to pass. Odysseus will return in this self same year; with the end of this moon and the beginning of the next he will be here."

"May it be even so," answered circumspect Penelope; "if your words come true [310] you shall have such gifts and such good will from me that all who see you shall congratulate you; but I know very well how it will be. Odysseus will not return, neither will you get your escort hence, for so surely as that Odysseus ever was, [315] there are now no longer any such masters in the house as he was, to receive honorable strangers or to further them on their way home. And now, you maids, wash his

feet for him, and make him a bed on a couch with rugs and blankets, that he may be warm and quiet till morning. [320] Then, at day break wash him and anoint him again, that he may sit in the hall and take his meals with Telemachus. It shall be the worse for any one of these hateful people who is uncivil to him; like it or not, he shall have no more to do in this house. [325] For how, sir, shall you be able to learn whether or no I am superior to others of my sex both in goodness of heart and understanding [*noos*], if I let you dine in my halls squalid and ill clad? Men live but for a little season; ³²⁹ if a man is harsh himself and thinks harsh thoughts, [330] all men pray that pains should befall him hereafter ³³¹ while he is alive. And when he is dead, all men ridicule [*ephepsioōntai*] him. ³³² But if a man is blameless himself and thinks blameless thoughts, ³³³ the guest-strangers [*xenoi*] he has entertained carry his *kleos* far and wide ³³⁴ to all mankind, and many are they who call him worthy [*esthlos*].”

[335] Resourceful Odysseus answered, “My Lady, respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, I have foresworn rugs and blankets from the day that I left the snowy ranges of Crete to go on shipboard. I will lie as I have lain on many a sleepless night hitherto. [340] Night after night have I passed in any rough sleeping place, and waited for morning. Nor, again, do I like having my feet washed; I shall not let any [345] of the young hussies about your house touch my feet; but, if you have any old and respectable woman who has gone through as much trouble as I have, I will allow her to wash them.”

To this circumspect Penelope said, [350] “My dear sir, of all the guests who ever yet came to my house there never was one who spoke in all things with such admirable propriety as you do. There happens to be in the house a most respectable old woman— [355] the same who received my poor dear husband in her arms the night he was born, and nursed him in infancy. She is very feeble now, but she shall wash your feet. Come here,” said she, “Circumspect Eurykleia, and wash your master’s

age-mate; I suppose Odysseus' hands and feet are very much the same now as his are, [360] for trouble ages all of us dreadfully fast."

On these words the old woman covered her face with her hands; she began to weep and made lamentation saying, "My dear child, I cannot think whatever I am to do with you. I am certain no one was ever more god-fearing than yourself, and yet Zeus hates you. [365] No one in the whole world ever burned him more thigh portions, nor gave him finer hecatombs when you prayed you might come to a green old age yourself and see your son grow up to take after you; yet see how he has prevented you alone from ever getting back to your own home. [370] I have no doubt the women in some foreign palace which Odysseus has got to are gibing at him as all these sluts here have been gibing you. I do not wonder at your not choosing to let them wash you after the manner in which they have insulted you; [375] I will wash your feet myself gladly enough, as circumspect Penelope, daughter of Ikarios, has said that I am to do so; I will wash them both for Penelope's sake and for your own, for you have raised the most lively feelings of compassion in my mind; and let me say this moreover, which pray attend to; we have had all kinds of strangers in distress come here before now, [380] but I make bold to say that no one ever yet came who was so like Odysseus in figure, voice, and feet as you are."

"Those who have seen us both," answered resourceful Odysseus, "have always said we were wonderfully like [385] each other, and now you have noticed it too."

Then the old woman took the cauldron in which she was going to wash his feet, and poured plenty of cold water into it, adding hot till the bath was warm enough. Odysseus sat by the fire, but before long he turned away from the light, [390] for it occurred to him that when the old woman had hold of his leg she would recognize a certain scar which it bore, whereon the whole truth would come out. And indeed as soon as she began washing her master, she at once knew the scar as one that had

been given him by a wild boar when he was hunting on Mount Parnassus with his excellent grandfather Autolykos— [395] who was the most accomplished thief and perjurer in the whole world—and with the sons of Autolykos. Hermes himself had endowed him with this gift, for he used to burn the thigh bones of goats and kids to him, so he took pleasure in his companionship. It happened once that Autolykos had gone to the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca [400] and had found the child of his daughter just born. As soon as he had done supper Eurykleia set the infant upon his knees and said, ⁴⁰³ “Autolykos! You yourself must find a name, whatever name you give him, ⁴⁰⁴ for the dear child of your child, since he is the one who has been very much wished-for [*polu-ārētos*] by you [*toi*].”

[405] “Son-in-law and daughter,” replied Autolykos, “call the child thus: I am highly displeased with a large number of people in one place and another, both men and women; so name the child ‘Odysseus,’ or the child of anger. When he grows up [410] and comes to visit his mother’s family on Mount Parnassus, where my possessions lie, I will make him a present and will send him on his way rejoicing.”

Odysseus, therefore, went to Parnassus to get the presents from Autolykos, who with his sons [415] shook hands with him and gave him welcome. His grandmother Amphithea threw her arms about him, and kissed his head, and both his beautiful eyes, while Autolykos desired his sons to get dinner ready, and they did as he told them. [420] They brought in a five year old bull, flayed it, made it ready and divided it into joints; these they then cut carefully up into smaller pieces and spitted them; they roasted them sufficiently and served the portions round. Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun [425] they feasted, and every man had his full share so that all were satisfied; but when the sun set and it came on dark, they went to bed and enjoyed the boon of sleep.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, [430] the sons of Autolykos went out with their hounds hunting, and noble Odysseus went too. They climbed the wooded slopes of Parnassus and soon reached its breezy upland valleys; but as the sun was beginning to beat upon the fields, fresh-risen from the slow still currents of Okeanos, [435] they came to a mountain dell. The dogs were in front searching for the tracks of the beast they were chasing, and after them came the sons of Autolykos, among whom was noble Odysseus, close behind the dogs, and he had a long spear in his hand. Here was the lair of a huge boar among some thick brushwood, [440] so dense that the wind and rain could not get through it, nor could the sun's rays pierce it, and the ground underneath lay thick with fallen leaves. The boar heard the noise of the men's feet, and the hounds baying on every side as the huntsmen came up to him, [445] so rushed from his lair, raised the bristles on his neck, and stood at bay with fire flashing from his eyes. Odysseus was the first to raise his spear and try to drive it into the brute, but the boar was too quick for him, and charged him sideways, ripping him [450] above the knee with a gash that tore deep though it did not reach the bone. As for the boar, Odysseus hit him on the right shoulder, and the point of the spear went right through him, so that he fell groaning in the dust until the life went out of him. [455] The sons of Autolykos busied themselves with the carcass of the boar, and bound stately godlike Odysseus' wound; then, after saying a spell to stop the bleeding, they went home as fast as they could. But when Autolykos and his sons [460] had thoroughly healed Odysseus, they made him some splendid presents, and sent him back to Ithaca with much mutual good will. When he got back, his father and mother were rejoiced to see him, and asked him all about it, [465] and how he had hurt himself to get the scar; so he told them how the boar had ripped him when he was out hunting with Autolykos and his sons on Mount Parnassus.

As soon as Eurykleia had got the scarred limb in her hands and had well hold of it, she recognized it and dropped the foot at once. The leg fell into the bath, which rang out [470] and was overturned, so that all the

water was spilt on the ground; Eurykleia's eyes between her joy and her grief filled with tears, and she could not speak, but she caught Odysseus by the beard and said, "My dear child, I am sure you must be Odysseus himself, only I did not know you [475] till I had actually touched and handled you."

As she spoke she looked towards Penelope, as though wanting to tell her that her dear husband was in the house, but Penelope was unable to look in that direction and observe what was going on, for Athena had diverted her attention [*noos*]; so Odysseus [480] caught Eurykleia by the throat with his right hand and with his left drew her close to him, and said, "Nurse, do you wish to be the ruin of me, you who nursed me at your own breast, now that after twenty years of wandering I am at last come to my own home again? [485] Since the gods have allowed you to recognize me, hold your tongue, and do not say a word about it to anyone else in the house, for if you do, then I tell you—and it shall surely be—that if the gods grant me to take the lives of these suitors, I will not spare you, though you are my own nurse, [490] when I am killing the other women."

"My child," answered circumspect Eurykleia, "what are you talking about? You know very well that nothing can either bend or break me. I will hold my tongue like a stone or a piece of iron; [495] furthermore let me say, and lay my saying to your heart, when the gods have delivered the suitors into your hand, I will give you a list of the women in the house who have been ill-behaved, and of those who are guiltless."

And resourceful Odysseus answered, [500] "Nurse, you ought not to speak in that way; I am well able to form my own opinion about one and all of them; hold your tongue and leave everything to the gods."

As he said this Eurykleia left the hall to fetch some more water, for the first had been [505] all spilt; and when she had washed him and anointed him with oil, Odysseus drew his seat nearer to the fire to warm himself,

and hid the scar under his rags. Then circumspect Penelope began talking to him and said:

“Stranger, I should like to speak with you briefly about another matter. [510] It is indeed nearly bed time—for those, at least, who can sleep in spite of sorrow. As for myself, a superhuman force [*daimōn*] has given me a life of such unmeasurable woe [*penthos*], that even by day when I am attending to my duties and looking after the servants, I am still weeping and lamenting during the whole time; [515] then, when night comes, and we all of us go to bed, I lie awake thinking, and my heart becomes prey to the most incessant and cruel tortures. ⁵¹⁸As when the daughter of Pandareos, the nightingale [*aēdōn*] in the green ⁵¹⁹sings beautifully at the onset anew of springtime, [520] perched in the dense foliage of trees, ⁵²¹and she pours forth, changing it around thick and fast, a voice with many resoundings, ⁵²²lamenting her child, the dear Itylos, whom once upon a time with weapon of bronze ⁵²³she killed inadvertently, the son of Zethos the king— even so does my mind toss and turn in its uncertainty whether [525] I ought to stay with my son here, and safeguard my substance, my bondsmen, and the greatness of my house, out of regard to the opinion of the local populace [*dēmos*] and the memory of my late husband, or whether it is not now time for me to go with the best [*aristos*] of these suitors who are wooing me and making me such magnificent presents. [530] As long as my son was still disconnected [*nēpios*], and unable to understand, he would not hear of my leaving my husband’s house, but now that he is full grown he begs and prays me to do so, being incensed at the way in which the suitors are eating up his property. [535] Come, respond [*hupo-krinesthai*] to my dream, and hear my telling of it and interpret it [= make a *hupo-krisis* of it] for me if you can. I have twenty geese about the house that eat mash out of a trough, and of which I am exceedingly fond. I dreamed that a great eagle came swooping down from a mountain, and dug his curved beak into the neck of each of them till he had killed them all. Presently he soared off into the sky, [540] and left them lying dead about the yard;

whereon I wept in my room till all my fair-haired maids gathered round me, so piteously was I grieving because the eagle had killed my geese. Then he came back again, and perching on a projecting [545] rafter spoke to me with human voice, and told me to leave off crying. 'Be of good courage,' he said, 'daughter of far-famed Ikarios; this is no dream, but a vision of good omen that shall surely come to pass. The geese are the suitors, and I am no longer an eagle, but your own husband, who am come back to you, [550] and who will bring these suitors to a disgraceful end.' Then I woke, and when I looked out I saw my geese at the trough eating their mash as usual."

[555] "This dream, my Lady," replied resourceful Odysseus, "can admit but of one interpretation [*hupo-krisis*], for had not Odysseus himself told you how it shall be fulfilled? The death of the suitors is portended, and not one single one of them will escape."

And circumspect Penelope answered, [560] "Stranger, dreams are very curious and unaccountable things, and they do not by any means invariably come true. There are two gates through which these unsubstantial fancies proceed; the one is of horn, and the other ivory. Those that come through the gate of ivory [565] are fatuous, but those from the gate of horn mean something to those that see them. I do not think, however, that my own dream came through the gate of horn, though I and my son should be most thankful if it proves to have done so. [570] Furthermore I say—and lay my saying to your heart—the coming dawn will usher in the ill-omened day that is to sever me from the house of Odysseus, for I am about to hold a tournament [*āthlos*] of axes. My husband used to set up twelve axes in the court, one in front of the other, like the stays [575] upon which a ship is built; he would then go back from them and shoot an arrow through the whole twelve. I shall make the suitors try to perform the same feat [*āthlos*], and whichever of them can string the bow most easily, and send his arrow through all the twelve axes, him will I follow, and quit this house [580]

of my lawful husband, so goodly and so abounding in wealth. But even so, I doubt not that I shall remember it in my dreams.”

Then resourceful Odysseus answered, “Madam wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, you need not defer your tournament [*āthlos*], [585] for Odysseus will return before ever they can string the bow, handle it how they will, and send their arrows through the iron.”

To this circumspect Penelope said, “As long, sir, as you will sit here [590] and talk to me, I can have no desire to go to bed. Still, people cannot do permanently without sleep, and the gods have appointed us dwellers on earth a time for all things. I will therefore go upstairs [595] and recline upon that couch which I have never ceased to flood with my tears from the day Odysseus set out for the city with a hateful name.”

[600] She then went upstairs to her own room, not alone, but attended by her maidens, and when there, she lamented her dear husband till owl-vision Athena shed sweet sleep over her eyelids.

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2020-07-20

Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 20

Translated by Samuel Butler

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[1] Noble Odysseus slept in the hall upon an undressed bullock's hide, on the top of which he threw several skins of the sheep the suitors had eaten, and Eurynome threw a cloak over him after he had laid himself down. [5] There, then, Odysseus lay wakefully brooding upon the way in which he should kill the suitors; and by and by, the women who had been in the habit of misconducting themselves with them, left the house giggling and laughing with one another. This made Odysseus very angry, [10] and he doubted whether to get up and kill every single one of them then and there, or to let them sleep one more and last time with the suitors. His heart growled within him, and as a bitch with puppies [15] growls and shows her teeth when she sees a stranger, so did his heart growl with anger at the evil deeds that were being done: but he beat his breast and said, "Heart, be still, you had worse than this to bear on the day when the terrifying Cyclops ate [20] your brave companions; yet you bore it in silence till your cunning got you safe out of the cave, though you were sure of being killed."

Thus he chided with his heart, and checked it into endurance, [25] but he tossed about as one who turns a paunch full of blood and fat in front of a hot fire, doing it first on one side and then on the other, that he may get it cooked as soon as possible, even so did he turn himself about from side to side, thinking all the time how, single handed as he was, he should contrive to kill so large a body of men [30] as the wicked suitors. But by and by Athena came down from the sky in the likeness of a woman, and hovered over his head saying, "My poor unhappy man, why do you lie awake in this way? This is your house: your wife is safe

inside it, and so is [35] your son who is just such a young man as any father may be proud of.”

“Goddess,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “all that you have said is true, but I am in some doubt as to how I shall be able to kill these wicked suitors single handed, [40] seeing what a number of them there always are. And there is this further difficulty, which is still more considerable. Supposing that with Zeus’ and your assistance I succeed in killing them, I must ask you to consider where I am to escape to from their avengers when it is all over.”

[45] “For shame,” replied the owl-vision goddess Athena, “why, anyone else would trust a worse ally than myself, even though that ally were only a mortal and less wise than I am. Am I not a goddess, and have I not protected you throughout in all your ordeals [*ponos*]? I tell you plainly that even though there were fifty bands of men [50] surrounding us and eager to kill us, you should take all their sheep and cattle, and drive them away with you. But go to sleep; it is a very bad thing to lie awake all night, and you shall be out of your troubles before long.”

As she, shining among goddesses, spoke she shed sleep over his eyes, [55] and then went back to Olympus.

While Odysseus was thus yielding himself to a very deep slumber that eased the burden of his sorrows, his admirable wife awoke, and sitting up in her bed began to cry. When she had relieved herself by weeping [60] she prayed to Artemis saying, “Great Goddess Artemis, daughter of Zeus, drive an arrow into my heart and slay me; ⁶³ or later, may a gust of wind [*thuella*] abduct me; ⁶⁴ may it go off and take me away along misty ways, [65] and plunge me into the streams of Okeanos, which flows in a circle. ⁶⁶ as when the *thuellai* took away the daughters of Pandareos. The daughters of Pandareos lost their father and mother, for the gods killed them, so they were left orphans. But radiant Aphrodite took care of them, and fed them on cheese, honey, and sweet [70] wine. Hera taught

them to excel all women in beauty of form and understanding; chaste Artemis gave them an imposing presence, and Athena endowed them with every kind of accomplishment; but one day when bright Aphrodite had gone up to Olympus to see Zeus about getting them married [75] (for well does he know both what shall happen and what not happen to every one) ⁷⁷ then the whirlwinds [*harpuiai*] abducted the girls to become handmaids to the dread Furies [*Erinyes*]. Even so I wish that the gods who live in the sky [80] would hide me from mortal sight, or that sweet-haired Artemis might strike me, for I want to go even beneath the sad earth if I might do so still looking towards Odysseus only, and without having to yield myself to a worse man than he was. Besides, no matter how much people may grieve by day, [85] they can put up with it so long as they can sleep at night, for when the eyes are closed in slumber people forget good and ill alike; whereas my miserable fate [*daimōn*] haunts me even in my dreams. This very night I thought there was one lying by my side who was like Odysseus as he was when he went away with his army, [90] and I rejoiced, for I believed that it was no dream, but the very truth itself.”

Then the day broke, but great Odysseus heard the sound of her weeping, and it puzzled him, for it seemed as though she already knew him and was by his side. [95] Then he gathered up the cloak and the fleeces on which he had lain, and set them on a seat in the hall, but he took the bullock’s hide out into the open. He lifted up his hands to the sky, and prayed, saying “Father Zeus, since you have seen fit to bring me over land and sea to my own home after all the afflictions you have laid upon me, [100] give me a sign out of the mouth of some one or other of those who are now waking within the house, and let me have another sign of some kind from outside.”

Thus did he pray. Zeus of the counsels heard his prayer and right away thundered high up among the clouds from the splendor of Olympus, and noble Odysseus was glad when he heard it. [105] At the same time within the house, a miller-woman from hard by in the mill room lifted

up her voice and gave him another sign. There were twelve miller-women whose business it was to grind wheat and barley which are the staff of life. The others had ground their task and had gone to take their rest, [110] but this one had not yet finished, for she was not so strong as they were, and when she heard the thunder she stopped grinding and gave the sign [*sēma*] to her master. “Father Zeus,” said she, “you who rule over the sky and earth, you have thundered from a clear sky without so much as a cloud in it, and this means something for somebody; [115] grant the prayer, then, of me your poor servant who calls upon you, and let this be the very last day that the suitors dine in the house of Odysseus. They have worn me out with the labor of grinding meal for them, and I hope they may never have another dinner anywhere at all.”

[120] Great Odysseus was glad when he heard the omens conveyed to him by the woman’s speech, and by the thunder, for he knew they meant that he should avenge himself on the suitors.

Then the other maids in the house rose and lit the fire on the hearth; Telemachus, a man like a god, also rose [125] and put on his clothes. He girded his sword about his shoulder, bound his sandals on his comely feet, and took a doughty spear with a point of sharpened bronze; then he went to the threshold of the hall and said to Eurykleia, “Nurse, did you make the stranger comfortable [130] both as regards bed and board, or did you let him shift for himself?—for my mother, good woman though she is, has a way of paying great attention to second-rate people, and of neglecting others who are in reality much better men.”

[135] “Do not find fault, child,” said circumspect Eurykleia, “when there is no one to find fault with. The stranger sat and drank his wine as long as he liked: your mother did ask him if he would take any more bread and he said he would not. When he wanted to go to bed she told the servants to make one for him, [140] but he said he was such a wretched outcast that he would not sleep on a bed and under blankets; he insisted

on having an undressed bullock's hide and some sheepskins put for him in the hall and I threw a cloak over him myself."

Then Telemachus went out of the court [145] to the place where the Achaeans were meeting in assembly; he had his spear in his hand, and he was not alone, for his two light-footed dogs went with him. But Eurykleia, shining among women, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor, called the maids and said, "Come, wake up; set about sweeping the halls [150] and sprinkling them with water to lay the dust; put the covers on the seats; wipe down the tables, some of you, with a wet sponge; clean out the mixing-jugs and the cups, and go for water from the fountain at once; [155] the suitors will be here directly; they will be here early, for it is a feast day."

Thus did she speak, and they did even as she had said: twenty of them went to the fountain for water, and the others set themselves busily to work about the house. [160] The men who were in attendance on the suitors also came up and began chopping firewood. By and by the women returned from the fountain, and the swineherd came after them with the three best pigs he could pick out. These he let feed about the premises, [165] and then he said good-humoredly to Odysseus, "Stranger, are the suitors treating you any better now, or are they as insolent as ever?"

"May the gods," answered resourceful Odysseus, "requite to them the wickedness [170] with which they deal high-handedly in another man's house without any sense of shame [*aidōs*]."

Thus did they converse; meanwhile Melanthios the goatherd came up, for he too was bringing in his best goats [175] for the suitors' dinner; and he had two shepherds with him. They tied the goats up under the gatehouse, and then Melanthios began gibing at Odysseus. "Are you still here, stranger," said he, "to pester people by begging about the house? Why can you not go [180] elsewhere? You and I shall not come to an

understanding before we have given each other a taste of our fists. You beg without any sense of decency [*kosmos*]: are there not feasts elsewhere among the Achaeans, as well as here?”

Resourceful Odysseus made no answer, but bowed his head and brooded. [185] Then a third man, Philoitios, leader of people, joined them, who was bringing in a barren heifer and some goats. These were brought over by the boatmen who are there to take people over when anyone comes to them. So Philoitios made his heifer and his goats secure under the gatehouse, [190] and then went up to the swineherd. “Who, Swineherd,” said he, “is this stranger that is lately come here? Is he one of your men? What is his family? Where does he come from? Poor man, he looks as if he had been some great man, [195] but the gods give sorrow to whom they will—even to kings if it so pleases them.”

As he spoke he went up to Odysseus and saluted him with his right hand; “Good day to you, father stranger,” said he, [200] “you seem to be very poorly off now, but I hope you will have better times [*olbos*] by and by. Father Zeus, of all gods you are the most malicious. We are your own children, yet you show us no mercy in all our misery and afflictions. A sweat came over me when I saw this man, and my eyes filled with tears, [205] for he reminds me of blameless Odysseus, who I fear is going about in just such rags as this man’s are, if indeed he is still among the living. If he is already dead and in the house of Hādēs, then, alas! for my good master, who made me [210] his stockman when I was quite young in the district [*dēmos*] of the Kephallēnians, and now his cattle are countless; no one could have done better with them than I have, for they have bred like ears of wheat; nevertheless I have to keep bringing them in for others to eat, who take no heed of his son though he is in the house, [215] and fear not the wrath of the gods, but are already eager to divide Odysseus’ property among them because he has been away so long. I have often thought—only it would not be right while his son is living—of going off with the cattle to some foreign district [*dēmos*]; bad as this would be, [220] it is still harder to stay here and be ill-treated

about other people's herds. My position is intolerable, and I should long since have run away and put myself under the protection of some other chief, only that I believe my poor master will yet return, [225] and send all these suitors fleeing out of the house."

"Stockman," answered resourceful Odysseus, "you seem to be a very well-disposed person, and I can see that you are a man of sense. Therefore I will tell you, and will confirm my words with an oath: [230] by Zeus, the chief of all gods, and by that hearth of blameless Odysseus to which I am now come, Odysseus shall return before you leave this place, and if you are so minded you shall see him killing the suitors who are now masters here."

[235] "If Zeus, son of Kronos, were to bring this to pass," replied the stockman, "you should see how I would do my very utmost to help him."

And in like manner Eumaios prayed that the spirited Odysseus might return home. [240] Thus did they converse. Meanwhile the suitors were hatching a plot to murder Telemachus: but a bird flew near them on their left hand—an eagle with a dove in its talons. Then Amphinomos said, [245] "My friends, this plot of ours to murder Telemachus will not succeed; let us go to dinner instead."

The others assented, so they went inside and laid their cloaks on the benches and seats. [250] They sacrificed the sheep, goats, pigs, and the heifer, and when the innards were cooked they served them round. They mixed the wine in the mixing-bowls, and the swineherd gave every man his cup, while Philoitios, leader of men, handed round the bread [255] in the breadbaskets, and Melanthios poured them out their wine. Then they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them.

Telemachus, with craftiness [*kerdos*], made Odysseus sit in the part of the hall that was paved with stone; he gave him a shabby-looking seat at

a little table to himself, [260] and had his portion of the innards brought to him, with his wine in a gold cup. “Sit there,” said he, “and drink your wine among the great people. I will put a stop to the gibes and blows of the suitors, for this is no public house, [265] but belongs to Odysseus, and has passed from him to me. Therefore, suitors, keep your hands and your tongues to yourselves, or there will be trouble.”

The suitors bit their lips, and marveled at the boldness of his speech; [270] then Antinoos, son of Eupheithes said, “We do not like such language but we will put up with it, for Telemachus is threatening us in good earnest. If Zeus son of Kronos had let us we should have put a stop to his brave talk before now.”

[275] Thus spoke Antinoos, but Telemachus heeded him not. Meanwhile the heralds were bringing the holy hecatomb through the city, and the Achaeans gathered under the shady grove of Apollo.

Then they roasted the outer meat, drew it off the spits, [280] gave every man his portion, and feasted to their hearts’ content; those who waited at table gave godlike Odysseus exactly the same portion as the others had, for Telemachus had told them to do so.

But Athena would not let [285] the suitors for one moment drop their insolence, for she wanted Odysseus, son of Laertes, to feel even more bitterness [*akhos*] against them. Now there happened to be among them a ribald character, whose name was Ktesippos, and who came from Samē. This man, confident in his great wealth, [290] was paying court to the wife of Odysseus, and said to the suitors, “Hear what I have to say. The stranger has already had as large a portion as anyone else; this is well, for it is not right nor reasonable [*dikaios*] to ill-treat any [295] guest of Telemachus who comes here. I will, however, make him a present on my own account, that he may have something to give to the bath-woman, or to some other of godlike Odysseus’ servants.” As he spoke he picked up a heifer’s foot [300] from the meat-basket in which

it lay, and threw it at Odysseus, but Odysseus turned his head a little aside, and avoided it, smiling sardonically as he did so, and it hit the wall, not him. Then Telemachus spoke fiercely to Ktesippos, “It is a good thing for you,” said he, “that the stranger turned his head so that [305] you missed him. If you had hit him I should have run you through with my spear, and your father would have had to see about getting you buried rather than married in this house. So let me have no more unseemly behavior from any of you, for I am grown up now to the knowledge of good [310] and evil and understand what is going on, instead of being the child that I have been heretofore. I have long seen you killing my sheep and making free with my wheat and wine: I have put up with this, for one man is no match for many, but do me no further violence. [315] Still, if you wish to kill me, kill me; I would far rather die than see such disgraceful scenes day after day—guests insulted, and men dragging the women servants about the house in an unseemly way.”

[320] They all held their peace till at last Agelaos, son of Damastor, said, “No one should take offence at what has just been said, nor gainsay it, for it is quite reasonable [*dikaios*]. Leave off, therefore, ill-treating the stranger, or anyone else [325] of the servants who are about the house; I would say, however, a friendly word to Telemachus and his mother, which I trust may commend itself to both. ‘As long,’ I would say, ‘as you had ground for hoping that Odysseus would one day come home, [330] no one could complain of [= “there will be no *nemesis* as a result of”] your waiting and suffering the suitors to be in your house. It would have been better that he should have returned, but it is now sufficiently clear that he will never do so; therefore talk all this quietly over with your mother, [335] and tell her to marry the best man, and the one who makes her the most advantageous offer. Thus you will yourself be able to manage your own inheritance, and to eat and drink in peace, while your mother will look after some other man’s house, not yours.”

To this the spirited Telemachus answered, “By Zeus, Agelaos, and by the sorrows [340] of my unhappy father, who has either perished far from Ithaca, or is wandering in some distant land, I throw no obstacles in the way of my mother’s marriage; on the contrary I urge her to choose whomsoever she will, and I will give her numberless gifts into the bargain, but I dare not insist point blank that she shall leave the house against her own wishes. Heaven forbid that I should do this.”

[345] Athena now made the suitors fall to laughing immoderately, and set their wits wandering; but they were laughing with a forced laughter. Their meat became smeared with blood; their eyes filled with tears, and their hearts were heavy with forebodings. [350] Godlike Theoklymenos saw this and said, “Unhappy men, what is it that ails you? There is a shroud of darkness drawn over you from head to foot, your cheeks are wet with tears; the air is alive with wailing voices; the walls and roof-beams drip blood; [355] the gate of the halls and the court beyond them are full of spirits trooping down into the night of the netherworld; the sun is blotted out of the sky, and a blighting gloom is over all the land.”

Thus did he speak, and they all of them laughed heartily. Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, then said, [360] “This stranger who has lately come here has lost his senses. Servants, turn him out into the streets, since he finds it so dark here.”

But godlike Theoklymenos said, “Eurymakhos, you need not send anyone with me. [365] I have eyes, ears, and a pair of feet of my own, to say nothing of an understanding mind [*noos*]. I will take these out of the house with me, ³⁶⁷ since I notice [*noein*] that evil fortune is coming upon you, from which not one of you men who are insulting people [370] and plotting ill deeds in the house of godlike Odysseus will be able to escape.”

He left the house as he spoke, and went back to Piraios who gave him welcome, but the suitors kept looking at one another and provoking

Telemachus by laughing at the strangers. [375] One insolent man said to him, “Telemachus, you are not happy in your guests; first you have this importunate tramp, who comes begging bread and wine and has no skill for work or for hard fighting [*biē*], but is perfectly useless, [380] and now here is another man who is setting himself up as a prophet. Let me persuade you, for it will be much better, to put them on board ship and send them off to the Sicilians to sell for what they will bring.”

Telemachus gave him no heed, [385] but sat silently watching his father, expecting every moment that he would begin his attack upon the suitors.

Meanwhile the daughter of Ikarios, high-spirited Penelope, had had a rich seat placed for her facing the court and halls, so that she could hear what every one was saying. [390] The dinner indeed had been prepared amid merriment; it had been both good and abundant, for they had sacrificed many victims; but the supper was yet to come, and nothing can be conceived more gruesome than the meal which a goddess and a brave man were soon to lay before them—for they had brought their doom upon themselves.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 21

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] The owl-vision goddess Athena now put it in daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope's, mind to make the suitors try their skill with the bow and with the iron axes, in contest among themselves, as a means of bringing about their destruction. [5] She went upstairs and got the store room key, which was made of bronze and had a handle of ivory; she then went with her maidens into the store room at the end of the house, where her husband's treasures [10] of gold, bronze, and wrought iron were kept, and where was also his bow, and the quiver full of deadly arrows that had been given him by a friend whom he had met in Lacedaemon—Iphitos, the son of Eurytos, one like the immortal gods. [15] The two fell in with one another in Messene at the house of high-spirited Ortilokhos, where Odysseus was staying in order to recover a debt that was owing from the whole district [*dēmos*]; for the Messenians had carried off three hundred sheep from Ithaca, and had sailed away with them and with their shepherds. [20] In quest of these Odysseus took a long journey while still quite young, for his father and the other chieftains sent him on a mission to recover them. Iphitos had gone there also to try and get back twelve brood mares that he had lost, and the mule foals that were running with them. These mares were the death of him in the end, [25] for when he went to the house of strong-hearted Zeus' son, mighty Hēraklēs, who performed such prodigies of valor, Hēraklēs to his shame killed him, though he was his guest, for he feared not the gods' vengeance, nor yet respected his own table which he had set before Iphitos, but killed him in spite of everything, [30] and kept the mares himself. It was when claiming these that Iphitos met Odysseus, and gave him the bow which mighty Eurytos had been used to carry, and which on his death had been left by him to his son. Odysseus gave

him in return a sword and a spear, [35] and this was the beginning of a fast friendship, although they never visited at one another's houses, for Zeus' son Hēraklēs killed Iphitos before they could do so. This bow, then, given him by Iphitos, son of Eurytos, one like the gods, had not been taken with him by Odysseus when he sailed for Troy; [40] he had used it so long as he had been at home, but had left it behind as having been a keepsake from a valued friend.

Penelope presently reached the oak threshold of the store room; the carpenter had planed this duly, [45] and had drawn a line on it so as to get it quite straight; he had then set the door posts into it and hung the doors. She loosed the strap from the handle of the door, put in the key, and drove it straight home to shoot back the bolts that held the doors; these flew open with a noise [50] like a bull bellowing in a meadow, and Penelope stepped upon the raised platform, where the chests stood in which the fair linen and clothes were laid by along with fragrant herbs: reaching thence, she took down the bow with its bow case from the peg on which it hung. [55] She sat down with it on her knees, weeping bitterly as she took the bow out of its case, and when her tears had relieved her, she went to the hall where the suitors were, carrying the bow and the quiver, [60] with the many deadly arrows that were inside it. Along with her came her maidens, bearing a chest that contained much iron and bronze that her husband had won as prizes. When she reached the suitors, she stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the hall, [65] holding a veil before her face, and with a maid on either side of her. Then she said:

“Listen to me you suitors, who persist in abusing the hospitality of this house [70] because its owner has been long absent, and without other pretext than that you want to marry me; this, then, being the prize that you are contending for, I will bring out the mighty bow of godlike Odysseus, [75] and whomsoever of you shall string it most easily and send his arrow through each one of twelve axes, him will I follow and

quit this house of my lawful husband, so goodly, and so abounding in wealth. But even so I doubt not that I shall remember it in my dreams.”

[80] As she spoke, she told Eumaios the noble swineherd to set the bow and the pieces of iron before the suitors, and Eumaios wept as he took them to do as she had bidden him. Hard by, the stockman wept also when he saw his master’s bow, but Antinoos scolded them. [85] “You country louts,” said he, “inept simpletons; why should you add to the sorrows of your mistress by crying in this way? She has enough to grieve her in the loss of her husband; sit still, therefore, and eat your dinners in silence, or go [90] outside if you want to cry, and leave the bow behind you. We suitors shall have to engage in a contest [*āthlos*] for it with might and main, for we shall find it no light matter to string such a bow as this is. There is not a man of us all who is such another as Odysseus; for I have seen him [95] and remember him, though I was then only a child.”

This was what he said, but all the time he was expecting to be able to string the bow and shoot through the iron, whereas in fact he was to be the first that should taste of the arrows from the hands of blameless Odysseus, whom he was dishonoring [100] in his own house—egging the others on to do so also.

Then the hallowed prince Telemachus spoke. “Skies above!” he exclaimed, “Zeus, son of Kronos, must have robbed me of my senses. Here is my dear and excellent mother saying she will quit this house and marry again, [105] yet I am laughing and enjoying myself as though there were nothing happening. But, suitors, as the contest [*āthlos*] has been agreed upon, let it go forward. It is for a woman whose peer is not to be found in Pylos, Argos, or Mycenae, nor yet in Ithaca nor on the mainland. [110] You know this as well as I do; what need have I to speak in praise [*ainos*] of my mother? Come on, then, make no excuses for delay, but let us see whether you can string the bow or no. I, too, will make trial of it, for if I can string it and shoot through the iron, [115] I

shall not suffer my mother to quit this house with a stranger, not if I can win the prizes which my father won before me.”

As he spoke he sprang from his seat, threw his crimson cloak from him, and took his sword from his shoulder. [120] First he set the axes in a row, in a long groove which he had dug for them, and had made straight by line. Then he stamped the earth tight round them, and everyone was surprised when they saw him set up so orderly, though he had never seen anything of the kind before. This done, he went on to the threshold to make trial of the bow; [125] three times did he tug at it, trying with all his might to draw the string, and three times he had to rest his strength [*biē*], though he had hoped to string the bow and shoot through the iron. He was trying, with all his strength [*biē*], for the fourth time, and would have strung it had not Odysseus made a sign to check him in spite of all his eagerness. [130] So he said:

“Alas! I shall either be always feeble and of no prowess, or I am too young, and have not yet reached my full strength so as to be able to hold my own if any one attacks me. You others, therefore, who have more strength [*biē*] than I, [135] make trial of the bow and get this contest [*āthlos*] settled.” Then he put the bow down, letting it lean against the door [that led into the house] with the arrow standing against the top of the bow. Then he sat down on the seat from which he had risen, [140] and Antinoos, son of Eupeithes, said:

“Come on each of you in his turn, going towards the right from the place at which the cupbearer begins when he is handing round the wine.”

The rest agreed, and Leiodes, son of Oinops, was the first to rise. [145] He was sacrificial priest to the suitors, and sat in the corner near the mixing-bowl. He was the only man to whom their evil deeds were hateful [*ekhthrai*] and was indignant with the others. He was now the first to take the bow and arrow, so he went on to the threshold to make

his trial, [150] but he could not string the bow, for his hands were weak and unused to hard work, they therefore soon grew tired, and he said to the suitors, “My friends, I cannot string it; let another have it; this bow shall take the life and spirit [*psūkhē*] out of many a chief among us, for it is better to die [155] than to live after having missed the prize that we have so long striven for, and which has brought us so long together. Some one of us is even now hoping and praying that he may marry Penelope, wife of Odysseus, but when he has seen this bow and tried it, [160] let him woo and make bridal offerings to some other fair-robed woman, and let Penelope marry whoever makes her the best offer and whose lot it is to win her.”

Then he put the bow down, letting it lean against the door, [165] with the arrow standing against the tip of the bow. Then he took his seat again on the seat from which he had risen; and Antinoos rebuked him saying: “Leiodes, what are you talking about? Your words are monstrous and intolerable; it makes me angry to listen to you. [170] Shall, then, this bow take the life [*psūkhē*] of many a chief among us, merely because you cannot bend it yourself? True, you were not born to be an archer, but there are others who will soon string it.”

[175] Then he said to Melanthios the goatherd, “Look sharp, light a fire in the court, and set a seat hard by with a sheep skin on it; bring us also a large ball of lard, from what they have in the house. Let us warm the bow and grease it; [180] we will then make trial of it again, and bring the contest [*āthlos*] to an end.”

Melanthios lit the fire, and set a seat covered with sheep skins beside it. He also brought a great ball of lard from what they had in the house, and the suitors warmed the bow and again made trial of it, but they were unable [185] to string it, and they were by far inferior in strength [*biē*]. Nevertheless there still remained Antinoos and Eurymakhos, who were the ringleaders among the suitors and much the foremost in excellence [*aretē*] among them all.

Then the swineherd and the stockman left the halls together, [190] and great Odysseus followed them. When they had got outside the gates and the outer yard, Odysseus said to them quietly:

“Stockman, and you swineherd, I have something in my mind which I am in doubt whether to say or no; but I think I will say it. [195] What manner of men would you be to stand by Odysseus, if some god should bring him back here all of a sudden? Say which you are disposed to do—to side with the suitors, or with Odysseus?”

[200] “Father Zeus,” answered the stockman, “would indeed that you might so ordain it. If some superhuman force [*daimōn*] were but to bring Odysseus back, you should see with what might and main I would fight for him.”

In like words Eumaios prayed to all the gods that the spirited Odysseus might return; [205] when, therefore, he saw for certain what mind [*noos*] they were of, Odysseus said, “It is I, Odysseus, who am here. I have suffered much, but at last, in the twentieth year, I am come back to my own country. I find that you two alone of all my servants [210] are glad that I should do so, for I have not heard any of the others praying for my return. To you two, therefore, will I unfold the truth [*alētheia*] as it shall be. If the gods shall deliver the suitors into my hands, I will find wives for both of you, will give you [215] house and holding close to my own, and you shall be to me as though you were brothers and friends of Telemachus. I will now give you a convincing sign [*sēma*] that you may know me and be assured. See, here is the scar from the boar’s tooth [220] that ripped me when I was out hunting on Mount Parnassus with the sons of Autolykos.”

As he spoke he drew his rags aside from the great scar, and when they had examined it thoroughly, they both of them wept about the high-spirited Odysseus, threw their arms round him and kissed his head and shoulders, [225] while Odysseus kissed their hands and faces in return.

The sun would have gone down upon their mourning if high-spirited Odysseus had not checked them and said:

“Cease your weeping, lest some one should come outside and see us, and tell those who are within. When you go in, [230] do so separately, not both together; I will go first, and do you follow afterwards. Let this moreover be the sign [*sēma*] between us; the suitors will all of them try to prevent me from getting hold of the bow and quiver; do you, therefore, Eumaios, [235] place it in my hands when you are carrying it about, and tell the women to close the doors of their apartment. If they hear any groaning or uproar as of men fighting about the house, they must not come out; they must keep quiet, and stay where they are at their work. [240] And I charge you, noble Philoitios, to make fast the doors of the outer court, and to bind them securely at once.”

When he had thus spoken, he went back to the house and took the seat that he had left. Presently, his two servants followed him inside.

[245] At this moment the bow was in the hands of Eurymakhos, who was warming it by the fire, but even so he could not string it, and he was greatly grieved. He heaved a deep sigh and said, “I feel grief [*akhos*] for myself and for us all; [250] I grieve that I shall have to forgo the marriage, but I do not care nearly so much about this, for there are plenty of other women in Ithaca and elsewhere; ²⁵³ but if indeed we are so inferior in *biē* ²⁵⁴ to godlike Odysseus that we cannot [255] string his bow, this will disgrace us in the eyes of those who are yet unborn.”

“It shall not be so, Eurymakhos,” said Antinoos, son of Eupeithes, “and you know it yourself. To-day is the feast of Apollo throughout all the district [*dēmos*]; who can string a bow on such a day as this? Put it on one side— [260] as for the axes they can stay where they are, for no one is likely to come to the house and take them away: let the cupbearer go round with his cups, that we may make our drink-offerings and drop this matter of the bow; [265] we will tell Melanthios the goatherd to

bring us in some goats tomorrow—the best he has; we can then offer thigh bones to Apollo, the mighty archer, and again make trial of the bow, so as to bring the contest [*āthlos*] to an end.”

The rest approved his words, [270] and then men servants poured water over the hands of the guests, while pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water and handed it round after giving every man his drink-offering. Then, when they had made their offerings and had drunk each as much as he desired, resourceful Odysseus craftily said: [275] “Suitors of the illustrious queen, listen that I may speak even as I am minded. I appeal more especially to Eurymakhos, and to godlike Antinoos who has just spoken with so much reason. Cease shooting for the present and leave the matter to the gods, [280] but in the morning let the gods give victory to whom they will. For the moment, however, give me the bow that I may prove the power of my hands among you all, and see whether I still have as much strength as I used to have, or whether travel and neglect have made an end of it.”

[285] This made them all very angry, for they feared he might string the bow; Antinoos therefore rebuked him fiercely saying, “Wretched creature, you have not so much as a grain of sense in your whole body; you ought to think yourself lucky in being allowed to dine unharmed among your betters, [290] without having any smaller portion served you than we others have had, and in being allowed to hear our conversation. No other beggar or stranger has been allowed to hear what we say among ourselves; the wine must have been doing you a mischief, as it does with all those who drink immoderately. [295] It was wine that inflamed the Centaur, famous Eurytion, when he was staying with great-hearted Perithoös among the Lapiths. When the wine had got into his head he went mad and did ill deeds about the house of Perithoös; this gave grief [*akhos*] to the heroes who were there assembled, so they rushed at him [300] and cut off his ears and nostrils; then they dragged him through the doorway out of the house, so he went away crazed, and bore the burden [*atē*] of his crime, bereft of understanding. Henceforth,

therefore, there was war between humankind and the centaurs, but he brought it upon himself through his own drunkenness. [305] In like manner I can tell you that it will go hardly with you if you string the bow: you will find no mercy from any one in our district [*dēmos*], for we shall at once ship you off to king Ekhetos, who kills every one that comes near him: you will never get away alive, so drink and keep quiet [310] without getting into a quarrel with men younger than yourself.”

Circumspect Penelope then spoke to him. “Antinoos,” said she, “it is not right [*dikaios*] that you should ill-treat any guest of Telemachus who comes to this house. If the stranger should prove that he has strength [*biē*] [315] enough to string the mighty bow of Odysseus, can you suppose that he would take me home with him and make me his wife? Even the man himself can have no such idea in his mind: none of you need let that disturb his feasting; it would be out of all reason.”

[320] “Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Queen Penelope,” answered Eurymakhos, son of Polybos, “we do not suppose that this man will take you away with him; it is impossible; but we are afraid lest some of the baser sort, men or women among the Achaeans, [325] should go gossiping about and say, ‘These suitors are a feeble folk; they are paying court to the wife of a brave man whose bow not one of them was able to string, and yet a beggarly tramp who came to the house strung it at once and sent an arrow through the iron.’ This is what will be said, and it will be a scandal against us.”

[330] “Eurymakhos,” circumspect Penelope answered, “people who persist in eating up the estate of a great chieftain and dishonoring his house must not expect others in the district [*dēmos*] to think well of them. Why then should you mind if men talk as you think they will? This stranger is strong and well-built, [335] he says moreover that he is of noble birth. Give him the bow, and let us see whether he can string it or no. I say—and it shall surely be—that if Apollo grants him the glory of stringing it, I will give him a cloak and khiton of good wear, [340] with

a javelin to keep off dogs and robbers, and a sharp sword. I will also give him sandals, and will see him sent safely wherever he wants to go.”

Then the spirited Telemachus said, “Mother, I am the only man either in Ithaca or in the islands that are over against Elis [345] who has the right to let any one have the bow or to refuse it. No one shall force me one way or the other, not even though I choose to make the stranger a present of the bow outright, and let him take it away with him. [350] Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants. This bow is a man’s matter, and mine above all others, for it is I who am master here.”

She went wondering back into the house, [355] and laid her son’s saying in her heart. Then going upstairs with her handmaids into her room, she mourned her dear husband till owl-vision Athena sent sweet sleep over her eyelids.

The swineherd now took up the bow and was for taking it to Odysseus, her beloved husband, [360] but the suitors clamored at him from all parts of the halls, and one of them said, “You idiot, where are you taking the bow to? Are you out of your wits? If Apollo [365] and the other gods will grant our prayer, your own boarhounds shall get you into some quiet little place, and worry you to death.”

Eumaios was frightened at the outcry they all raised, so he put the bow down then and there, but Telemachus shouted out at him from the other side of the halls, and threatened him saying, “Father Eumaios, bring the bow on in spite of them, [370] or young as I am I will pelt you with stones back to the country, for I am the stronger [*biē*] man of the two. I wish I was as much stronger than all the other suitors in the house as I am than you, I would soon send some of them off sick and sorry, [375] for they mean mischief.”

Thus did he speak, and they all of them laughed heartily, which put them in a better humor with Telemachus; so Eumaios brought the bow on and placed it in the hands of high-spirited Odysseus. [380] When he had done this, he called Eurykleia apart and said to her, “Circumspect Eurykleia, Telemachus says you are to close the doors of the women’s apartments. If they hear any groaning or uproar as of men fighting about the house, they are not [385] to come out, but are to keep quiet and stay where they are at their work.”

Eurykleia did as she was told and closed the doors of the women’s apartments. Meanwhile Philoitios slipped quietly out and made fast the gates of the outer court. [390] There was a ship’s cable of byblus fiber lying in the gatehouse, so he made the gates fast with it and then came in again, resuming the seat that he had left, and keeping an eye on Odysseus, who had now got the bow in his hands, and was turning it every way about, and proving it all over [395] to see whether the worms had been eating into its two horns during his absence. Then would one turn towards his neighbor saying, “This is some tricky old bow-fancier; either he has got one like it at home, or he wants to make one, in such workmanlike style [400] does the old vagabond handle it.”

Another said, “I hope he may be no more successful in other things than he is likely to be in stringing this bow.”

But resourceful Odysseus, [405] when he had taken it up and examined it all over, strung it as easily as a skilled bard strings a new peg of his lyre and makes the twisted gut fast at both ends. [410] Then he took it in his right hand to prove the string, and it sang sweetly under his touch like the twittering of a swallow. The suitors felt dismay [*akhos*], and turned color as they heard it; at that moment, moreover, Zeus thundered loudly as a sign [*sēma*], and the heart of long-suffering great Odysseus rejoiced [415] as he heard the omen that the son of scheming Kronos had sent him.

He took an arrow that was lying upon the table—for those which the Achaeans were so shortly about to taste were all inside the quiver—he laid it on the center-piece of the bow, and drew the notch of the arrow [420] and the string toward him, still seated on his seat. When he had taken aim he let fly, and his arrow pierced every one of the handle-holes of the axes from the first onwards till it had gone right through them, and into the outer courtyard. Then he said to Telemachus:

[425] “Your guest has not disgraced you, Telemachus. I did not miss what I aimed at, and I was not long in stringing my bow. I am still strong, and not as the suitors reproach me with being. Now, however, it is time [*hōrā*] for the Achaeans to prepare supper while there is still daylight, and then otherwise ⁴²⁹ to get amusement [430] with singing and the lyre: for these are the things that go on at a feast [*dais*].”

As he spoke he made a sign with his eyebrows, and Telemachus girded on his sword, grasped his spear, and stood armed beside his father’s seat.

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Homeric *Odyssey* Rhapsody 22

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Then resourceful Odysseus tore off his rags, and sprang on to the broad threshold with his bow and his quiver full of arrows. He shed the arrows on to the ground at his feet and said to the suitors, [5] “The mighty contest [*āthlos*] is at an end. I will now see whether Apollo will grant it to me to hit another mark which no man has yet hit.”

Then he aimed a deadly arrow at Antinoos, who was about to take up a two-handled [10] gold cup to drink his wine and already had it in his hands. He had no thought of death—who amongst all the revelers would think that one man, however brave, would stand alone among so many and kill him? [15] The arrow struck Antinoos in the throat, and the point went clean through his neck, so that he fell over and the cup dropped from his hand, while a thick stream of blood gushed from his nostrils. He kicked [20] the table from him and upset the things on it, so that the bread and roasted meats were all soiled as they fell over on to the ground. The suitors were in an uproar when they saw that a man had been hit; they sprang in dismay one and all of them from their seats and looked everywhere towards the walls, [25] but there was neither shield nor spear, and they rebuked Odysseus very angrily. “Stranger,” said they, “you shall pay for shooting people in this way: you shall see no other contest [*āthlos*]; you are a doomed man; he whom you have slain was the foremost [30] youth in Ithaca, and the vultures shall devour you for having killed him.”

Thus they spoke, for they thought that he had killed Antinoos by mistake, and did not perceive that death was hanging over the head of every one of them. But resourceful Odysseus glared at them and said:

[35] “Dogs, did you think that I should not come back from the district [*dēmos*] of the Trojans? You have wasted my substance, have forced my women servants to lie with you, and have wooed my wife while I was still living. You have feared neither the gods [40] nor that there would be future *nemesis* from men, and now you shall die.” They turned pale with fear as he spoke, and every man looked round about to see where he might flee for safety, but Eurymakhos alone spoke.

[45] “If you are Odysseus,” said he, “then what you have said is just. We have done much wrong on your lands and in your house. But Antinoos, who was the head and front of the guilty [*aitios*], lies low already. It was all his doing. [50] It was not that he wanted to marry Penelope; he did not so much care about that; what he wanted was something quite different, and Zeus, son of Kronos, has not granted it to him; he wanted to kill your son and to be chief man in strong-founded Ithaca. Now, therefore, that he has met the death which was his due, spare the lives [55] of your people. We will make everything good among ourselves in the district [*dēmos*], and pay you in full for all that we have eaten and drunk. Each one of us shall pay you a fine worth twenty oxen, and we will keep on giving you gold and bronze till your heart is softened. Until we have done this no one can complain of your being enraged against us.”

[60] Resourceful Odysseus again glared at him and said, “Though you should give me all that you have in the world both now and all that you ever shall have, I will not stay my hand till I have paid all of you in full. [65] You must fight, or flee for your lives; and flee, not a man of you shall.”

Their hearts sank as they heard him, but Eurymakhos again spoke saying:

[70] “My friends, this man will give us no quarter. He will stand where he is and shoot us down till he has killed every man among us. Let us

then show fight; draw your swords, and hold up the tables to shield you [75] from his arrows. Let us have at him with a rush, to drive him from the threshold and doorway: we can then get through into the town, and raise such an alarm as shall soon stay his shooting.”

As he spoke he drew his keen blade [80] of bronze, sharpened on both sides, and with a loud cry sprang towards Odysseus, but noble Odysseus instantly shot an arrow into his breast that caught him by the nipple and fixed itself in his liver. He dropped his sword and fell [85] doubled up over his table. The cup and all the meats went over on to the ground as he smote the earth with his forehead in the agonies of death, and he kicked the stool with his feet until his eyes were closed in darkness.

Then Amphinomos drew his sword [90] and made straight at glorious Odysseus to try and get him away from the door; but Telemachus was too quick for him, and struck him from behind; the spear caught him between the shoulders and went right through his chest, so that he fell heavily to the ground and struck the earth with his forehead. [95] Then Telemachus sprang away from him, leaving his spear still in the body, for he feared that if he stayed to draw it out, some one of the Achaeans might come up and hack at him with his sword, or knock him down, so he set off at a run, and immediately was at his father’s side. [100] Then he addressed him with winged words:

“Father, let me bring you a shield, two spears, and a brass helmet for your temples. I will arm myself as well, and will bring other armor for the swineherd and the stockman, for we had better be armed.”

[105] “Run and fetch them,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “while my arrows hold out, or when I am alone they may get me away from the door.”

Telemachus did as his father said, and went off to the store room [110] where the armor was kept. He chose four shields, eight spears, and four

brass helmets with horse-hair plumes. He brought them with all speed to his father, and armed himself first, while the stockman and the swineherd also put on [115] their armor, and took their places near resourceful Odysseus. Meanwhile Odysseus, as long as his arrows lasted, had been shooting the suitors one by one, and they fell thick on one another: when his arrows gave out, [120] he set the bow to stand against the end wall of the house by the door post, and hung a shield four hides thick about his shoulders; on his comely head he set his helmet, well wrought with a crest of horse-hair that nodded menacingly above it, [125] and he grasped two terrifying bronze-shod spears.

Now there was a trap door on the wall, while at one end of the threshold there was an exit leading to a narrow passage, and this exit was closed by a well-made door. Odysseus told noble Philoitios to stand [130] by this door and guard it, for only one person could attack it at a time. But Agelaos shouted out, "Cannot some one go up to the trap door and tell the people what is going on? Help would come at once, and we should soon make an end of this man and his shooting."

[135] "This may not be, illustrious Agelaos," answered Melanthios the goatherd, "the mouth of the narrow passage is dangerously near the entrance to the outer court. One brave man could prevent any number from getting in. But I know what I will do, I will bring you arms from the store room, [140] for I am sure it is there that Odysseus and his son have put them."

Then the goatherd Melanthios went by back passages to the store room of Odysseus' house. There he chose twelve shields, with as many [145] helmets and spears, and brought them back as fast as he could to give them to the suitors. Odysseus' heart began to fail him when he saw the suitors putting on their armor and brandishing their spears. He saw the greatness of the danger, [150] and said to Telemachus, "Some one of the women inside is helping the suitors against us, or it may be Melanthios."

The spirited Telemachus answered, "The one who is responsible [*aitios*], father, is I, and I alone; [155] I left the store room door open, and they have kept a sharper look out than I have. Go, Eumaios, put the door to, and see whether it is one of the women who is doing this, or whether, as I suspect, it is Melanthios, the son of Dolios."

[160] Thus did they converse. Meanwhile Melanthios was again going to the store room to fetch more armor, but the swineherd saw him and said to Odysseus who was beside him, "Resourceful Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, [165] it is that scoundrel Melanthios, just as we suspected, who is going to the store room. Say, shall I kill him, if I can get the better of him, or shall I bring him here that you may take your own revenge for all the many wrongs that he has done in your house?"

[170] Resourceful Odysseus answered, "Telemachus and I will hold these suitors in check, no matter what they do; go back both of you and bind Melanthios' hands and feet behind him. Throw him into the store room and make the door fast behind you; [175] then fasten a noose about his body, and string him close up to the rafters from a high bearing-post, that he may linger on in an agony."

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said; they went to the store room, which they entered before Melanthios saw them, [180] for he was busy searching for arms in the innermost part of the room, so the two took their stand on either side of the door and waited. By and by Melanthios the goatherd came out with a helmet in one hand, and an old dry-rotted shield in the other, [185] which had been borne by the hero Laertes when he was young, but which had been long since thrown aside, and the straps had become unsewn; on this the two seized him, dragged him back by the hair, and threw him struggling to the ground. They bent his hands and feet well behind his back, [190] and bound them tight with a painful bond as enduring Odysseus, son of Laertes, had told them; then they fastened a noose about his body and strung

him up from a high pillar till he was close up to the rafters, and over him did you then vaunt, O swineherd Eumaios, saying, [195] “Melanthios, you will pass the night on a soft bed as you deserve. You will know very well when morning comes from the streams of Okeanos, and it is time for you to be driving in your goats for the suitors to feast on.”

[200] There, then, they left him in very cruel bondage, and having put on their armor they closed the door behind them and went back to take their places by the side of resourceful Odysseus; whereon the four men stood in the hall, fierce and full of fury; nevertheless, those who were in the body of the court were still both brave and many. [205] Then Zeus’ daughter Athena came up to them, having assumed the voice and form of Mentor. Odysseus was glad when he saw her and said, “Mentor, lend me your help, and forget not your old comrade, nor the many good turns he has done you. Besides, you are my age-mate.”

[210] But all the time he felt sure it was Athena, leader of armies, and the suitors from the other side raised an uproar when they saw her. Agelaos, son of Damastor, was the first to reproach her. “Mentor,” he cried, “do not let Odysseus beguile you into siding with him and fighting the suitors. [215] This is what we will do [= “this will be our *noos*”]: when we have killed these people, father and son, we will kill you too. You shall pay for it with your head, and when we have killed you, [220] we will take all you have, indoors or out, and bring it together with Odysseus’ property; we will not let your sons live in your house, nor your daughters, nor shall your widow continue to live in the city of Ithaca.”

This made Athena still more furious, [225] so she scolded Odysseus very angrily. ²²⁶ “no longer, Odysseus, do you have your old power [*menos*] and strength [*alkē*] as when you fought for nine long years among the Trojans about the noble lady Helen. You killed many a man in those days, [230] and it was through your stratagem that Priam’s city was taken. How comes it that you are so lamentably less valiant now that you

are on your own ground, face to face with the suitors in your own house? Come on, my good man, stand by my side and see how Mentor, son of Alkinoos, shall fight your foes [235] and requite your kindnesses conferred upon him.”

But she would not give him full victory as yet, for she wished still further to prove his own prowess and that of his brave son, [240] so she flew up to one of the rafters in the roof of the hall and sat upon it in the form of a swallow.

Meanwhile Agelaos, son of Damastor, Eurynomos, Amphimedon, Demoptolemos, Peisandros, and high-spirited Polybos, son of Polyktor, bore the brunt of the fight upon the suitors’ side; of all those who were still fighting for their lives [*psūkhai*], [245] they were by far the most distinguished in their efforts [*aretē*], for the others had already fallen under the arrows of Odysseus. Agelaos shouted to them and said, “My friends, he will soon have to leave off, for Mentor has gone away after having done nothing for him but brag. [250] They are standing at the doors unsupported. Do not aim at him all at once, but six of you throw your spears first, and see if you cannot cover yourselves with glory by killing him. When he has fallen we need not be uneasy about the others.”

[255] They threw their spears as he bade them, but Athena made them all of no effect. One hit the door post; another went against the door; the pointed shaft of another struck the wall; [260] and as soon as they had avoided all the spears of the suitors much-enduring great Odysseus said to his own men, “My friends, I should say we too had better let drive into the middle of them, or they will crown all the harm they have done us by killing us outright.”

[265] They therefore aimed straight in front of them and threw their spears. Odysseus killed Demoptolemos, Telemachus Euryades, Eumaios Elatos the swineherd while the stockman killed Peisandros. These all bit

the dust, [270] and as the others drew back into a corner Odysseus and his men rushed forward and regained their spears by drawing them from the bodies of the dead. The suitors now aimed a second time, but again Athena made their weapons for the most part without effect. One hit a bearing-post [275] of the hall; another went against the door; while the pointed shaft of another struck the wall. Still, Amphimedon just took a piece of the top skin from off Telemachus' wrist, and Ktesippos managed to graze Eumaios' [280] shoulder above his shield; but the spear went on and fell to the ground. Then Odysseus and his men let drive into the crowd of suitors. Odysseus, stormer of cities, hit Eurydamas, Telemachus Amphimedon, and Eumaios hit Polybos. [285] After this the stockman hit Ktesippos in the breast, and taunted him saying, "Foul-mouthed son of Polytherses, do not be so foolish as to talk wickedly another time, but let the gods direct your speech, for they are far stronger than men. [290] I make you a present of this advice to repay you for the foot which you gave godlike Odysseus when he was begging about in his own house."

Thus spoke the stockman, and Odysseus struck the son of Damastor with a spear in close fight, while Telemachus hit Leokritos, son of Euenor, [295] in the belly, and the dart went clean through him, so that he fell forward full on his face upon the ground. Then Athena from her seat on the rafter held up her deadly aegis, and the hearts of the suitors quailed. They fled to the other end of the court like a herd of cattle [300] maddened by the gadfly in the season [*hōrā*] of early summer when the days are at their longest. As eagle-beaked, crooked-taloned vultures from the mountains swoop down on the smaller birds that cower in flocks upon the ground, [305] and kill them, for they cannot either fight or flee, and lookers-on enjoy the sport—even so did Odysseus and his men fall upon the suitors and smite them on every side. They made a horrible groaning as their brains were being battered in, and the ground seethed with their blood.

[310] Leiodes then caught the knees of Odysseus and said, “Odysseus I beseech you have mercy upon me and spare me. I never wronged any of the women in your house either in word or deed, [315] and I tried to stop the others. I saw them, but they would not listen, and now they are paying for their folly. I was their sacrificing priest; if you kill me, I shall die without having done anything to deserve it, and shall have got no thanks [*kharis*] for all the good that I did.”

[320] Resourceful Odysseus looked sternly at him and answered, “If you were their sacrificing priest, you must have prayed many a time that it might be long before my homecoming [*nostos*], and that you might marry my wife [325] and have children by her. Therefore you shall die.”

With these words he picked up the sword that Agelaos had dropped when he was being killed, and which was lying upon the ground. Then he struck Leiodes on the back of his neck, so that his head fell rolling in the dust while he was yet speaking.

[330] The minstrel Phemios, son of Terpes—he who had been forced by the suitors to sing to them—now tried to save his life. He was standing near towards the trap door, and held his lyre in his hand. He did not know whether to flee out of the hall and sit down by the altar of [335] Zeus that was in the outer court, and on which both Laertes and Odysseus had offered up the thigh bones of many an ox, or whether to go straight up to Odysseus and embrace his knees, but in the end he thought it best to embrace Odysseus’ knees. [340] So he laid his lyre on the ground between the mixing-bowl and the silver-studded seat; then going up to Odysseus he caught hold of his knees and said, “Odysseus, I beseech you have mercy on me and spare me. [345] You will feel grief [*akhos*] for it afterwards if you kill a bard who can sing both for gods and men as I can. I am self-taught, and the god implanted every kind of lay in my *phrenes*. I would sing to you as though you were a god, do not therefore be in such a hurry to cut my head off. [350] Your own son Telemachus will tell you that I did not want to frequent your house and

sing to the suitors after their meals, but they were too many and too strong for me, so they made me.”

The hallowed prince Telemachus heard him, [355] and at once went up to his father. “Hold!” he cried, “the man is guiltless, do him no hurt; and we will spare Medon, our herald, too, who was always good to me when I was a boy, unless Philoitios or Eumaios has already killed him, [360] or he has fallen in your way when you were raging about the court.”

Medon caught these words of Telemachus, for he was crouching under a seat beneath which he had hidden by covering himself up with a freshly flayed heifer’s hide, so he threw off the hide, went up to Telemachus, [365] and laid hold of his knees. “Here I am, my dear sir,” said he, “stay your hand therefore, and tell your father, or he will kill me in his rage against the suitors [370] for having wasted his substance and been so foolishly disrespectful to yourself.”

Resourceful Odysseus smiled at him and answered, “Fear not; Telemachus has saved your life, that you may know in future, and tell other people, how greatly better good deeds prosper than evil ones. [375] Go, therefore, outside the halls into the outer court, and be out of the way of the slaughter—you and the bard—while I finish my work here inside.”

The pair went into the outer court as fast as they could, and sat down [380] by Zeus’ great altar, looking fearfully round, and still expecting that they would be killed. Then Odysseus searched the whole court carefully over, to see if anyone had managed to hide himself and was still living, but he found them all lying in the dust and weltering in their blood. They were like fishes which fishermen [385] have netted out of the sea, and thrown upon the beach to lie gasping for water till the heat of the sun makes an end of them. Even so were the suitors lying all huddled up one against the other.

[390] Then resourceful Odysseus said to Telemachus, “Call nurse Eurykleia; I have something to say to her.”

Telemachus went and knocked at the door of the women’s room. [395] “Make haste,” said he, “you old woman who have been set over all the other women in the house. Come outside; my father wishes to speak to you.”

When Eurykleia heard this she unfastened the door of the women’s room [400] and came out, following Telemachus. She found Odysseus among the corpses bespattered with blood and filth like a lion that has just been devouring an ox, and his breast and both his cheeks are [405] all bloody, so that he is a fearful sight; even so was Odysseus besmirched from head to foot with gore. When she saw all the corpses and such a quantity of blood, she was beginning to cry out for joy, for she saw that a great deed had been done; but Odysseus checked her, [410] “Old woman,” said he, “rejoice in silence; restrain yourself, and do not make any noise about it; it is an unholy thing to vaunt over dead men. Heaven’s doom and their own evil deeds have brought these men to destruction, for they respected no man in the whole world, [415] neither rich nor poor, who came near them, and they have come to a bad end as a punishment for their wickedness and folly. Now, however, tell me which of the women in the house have misconducted themselves, and who are innocent.”

[420] “I will tell you the truth [*alētheia*], my son,” answered Eurykleia. “There are fifty women in the house whom we teach to do things, such as carding wool, and all kinds of household work. Of these, twelve in all have misbehaved, [425] and have been wanting in respect to me, and also to Penelope. They showed no disrespect to Telemachus, for he has only lately grown and his mother never permitted him to give orders to the female servants; but let me go upstairs and tell your wife all that has happened, for some god has been sending her to sleep.”

[430] “Do not wake her yet,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “but tell the women who have misconducted themselves to come to me.”

Eurykleia left the hall to tell the women, and make them come to Odysseus; [435] in the meantime he called Telemachus, the stockman, and the swineherd. “Begin,” said he, “to remove the dead, and make the women help you. Then, get sponges and clean water to swill down the tables and seats. [440] When you have thoroughly cleansed the whole hall, take the women into the space between the domed room and the wall of the outer court, and run them through with your swords till they are quite dead, and have forgotten all about love [445] and the way in which they used to lie in secret with the suitors.”

Then the women came down in a body, weeping and wailing bitterly. First they carried the dead bodies out, [450] and propped them up against one another in the gatehouse. Odysseus ordered them about and made them do their work quickly, so they had to carry the bodies out. When they had done this, they cleaned all the tables and seats with sponges and water, while Telemachus and the two others [455] shoveled up the blood and dirt from the ground, and the women carried it all away and put it out of doors. Then when they had made the whole place quite clean and orderly, they took the women out and [460] hemmed them in the narrow space between the wall of the domed room and that of the yard, so that they could not get away: and the spirited Telemachus said to the other two, “I shall not let these women die a clean death, for they were insolent to me and my mother, and used to sleep with the suitors.”

[465] So saying he made a ship’s cable fast to one of the bearing-posts that supported the roof of the domed room, and secured it all around the building, at a good height, lest any of the women’s feet should touch the ground; and as thrushes or doves beat against a net that has been set for them in a thicket just as they were getting to their nest, and a terrifying fate awaits them, [470] even so did the women have to put their heads in

nooses one after the other and die most miserably. Their feet moved convulsively for a while, but not for very long.

As for Melanthios, they took him through the hall into the inner court. There they cut off his nose and his ears; [475] they drew out his vitals and gave them to the dogs raw, and then in their fury they cut off his hands and his feet.

When they had done this they washed their hands and feet and went back into the house, for all was now over; and Odysseus said to the dear old nurse Eurykleia, [480] “Bring me sulfur, which cleanses all pollution, and fetch fire also that I may burn it, and purify the halls. Go, moreover, and tell Penelope to come here with her attendants, and also all the maid servants that are in the house.”

[485] “All that you have said is true,” answered beloved Eurykleia, “but let me bring you some clean clothes—a khiton and cloak. Do not keep these rags on your back any longer. It is not right.”

[490] “First light me a fire,” replied resourceful Odysseus.

She brought the fire and sulfur, as he had bidden her, and Odysseus thoroughly purified the halls and both the inner and outer courts. [495] Then she went inside to call the women and tell them what had happened; whereon they came from their apartment with torches in their hands, and pressed round Odysseus to embrace him, kissing his head and shoulders [500] and taking hold of his hands. It made him feel as if he should like to weep, for he remembered every one of them.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 23

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Eurykleia now went upstairs laughing to tell her mistress that her dear husband had come home. Her aged knees became young again and her feet were nimble for joy as she went up to her mistress and bent over her head to speak to her. “Wake up Penelope, my dear child,” she exclaimed, “and see with your own eyes something that you have been wanting this long time past. Odysseus has at last indeed come home again, and has killed the suitors who were giving so much trouble in his house, eating up his estate and ill-treating his son.”

[10] “My good nurse,” answered circumspect Penelope, “you must be mad. The gods sometimes send some very sensible people out of their minds, and make foolish people become sensible. This is what they must have been doing to you; for you always used to be a reasonable person.

[15] Why should you thus mock me when I have trouble enough already—talking such nonsense, and waking me up out of a sweet sleep that had taken possession of my eyes and closed them? I have never slept so soundly from the day my poor husband went to that city with the ill-omened name. [20] Go back again into the women’s room; if it had been any one else, who had woke me up to bring me such absurd news I should have sent her away with a severe scolding. As it is, your age shall protect you.”

[25] “My dear child,” answered beloved Eurykleia, “I am not mocking you. It is quite true as I tell you that Odysseus is come home again. He was the stranger whom they all kept on treating so badly in the hall. Telemachus knew all the time that he was come back, [30] but kept his father’s secret that he might have his revenge on all these wicked people.”

Then Penelope sprang up from her couch, threw her arms round Eurykleia, and wept for joy. [35] “But my dear nurse,” said she, “explain this to me; if he has really come home as you say, how did he manage to overcome the wicked suitors single handed, seeing what a number of them there always were?”

[40] “I was not there,” answered beloved Eurykleia, “and do not know; I only heard them groaning while they were being killed. We sat crouching and huddled up in a corner of the women’s room with the doors closed, till your son came to fetch me because his father sent him. [45] Then I found Odysseus standing over the corpses that were lying on the ground all round him, one on top of the other. You would have enjoyed it if you could have seen him standing there all bespattered with blood and filth, and looking just like a lion. But the corpses are now all piled up in the gatehouse that is in the outer court, [50] and Odysseus has lit a great fire to purify the house with sulfur. He has sent me to call you, so come with me that you may both be happy together after all; for now at last the desire of your heart has been fulfilled; [55] your husband is come home to find both wife and son alive and well, and to take his revenge in his own house on the suitors who behaved so badly to him.”

“My dear nurse,” said circumspect Penelope, “do not exult too confidently over all this. You know [60] how delighted every one would be to see Odysseus come home—more particularly myself, and the son who has been born to both of us; but what you tell me cannot be really true. It is some god who is angry with the suitors for their great wickedness [*hubris*], and has made an end of them; [65] for they respected no man in the whole world, neither rich nor poor, who came near them, and they have come to a bad end in consequence of their iniquity. Odysseus is dead far away from the Achaean land; he will never have his homecoming [*nostos*].”

Then beloved nurse Eurykleia said, [70] “My child, what are you talking about? But you were all hard of belief and have made up your mind that

your husband is never coming, although he is in the house and by his own fire side at this very moment. Besides I can give you another sign [*sēma*]; when I was washing him I perceived the scar which the wild boar gave him, [75] and I wanted to tell you about it, but in his wisdom [*noos*] he would not let me, and clapped his hands over my mouth; so come with me and I will make this bargain with you—if I am deceiving you, you may have me killed by the cruelest death you can think of.”

[80] “My dear nurse,” said Penelope, “no matter who you are, you cannot really fathom the counsels of the gods. Nevertheless, we will go in search of my son, that I may see the corpses of the suitors, and the man who has killed them.”

[85] Then she came down from her upper room, and while doing so she considered whether she should keep at a distance from her husband and question him, or whether she should at once go up to him and embrace him. When, however, she had crossed the stone floor of the hall, she sat down opposite Odysseus by the fire, [90] against the wall at right angles to that by which she had entered, while Odysseus sat near one of the bearing-posts, looking upon the ground, and waiting to see what his wife would say to him when she saw him. For a long time she sat silent and as one lost in amazement. At one moment she looked him full in the face, [95] but then again directly, she was misled by his shabby clothes and failed to recognize him, till Telemachus began to reproach her and said:

“Mother—but you are so hard that I cannot call you by such a name—why do you keep away from my father in this way? Why do you not sit by his side and begin talking to him and asking him questions? [100] No other woman could bear to keep away from her husband when he had come back to her after twenty years of absence, and after having gone through so much; but your heart always was as hard as a stone.”

Circumspect Penelope answered, [105] “My son, I am so lost in astonishment that I can find no words in which either to ask questions or to answer them. I cannot even look him straight in the face. Still, if he really is Odysseus come back to his own home again, we shall get to understand one another better by and by, for there are signs [*sēmata*] [110] with which we two are alone acquainted, and which are hidden from all others.”

Much-enduring noble Odysseus smiled at this, and said to Telemachus, “Let your mother put me to any proof she likes; she will make up her mind about it presently. [115] She rejects me for the moment and believes me to be somebody else, because I am covered with dirt and have such bad clothes on; let us, however, consider what we had better do next. When one man has killed another in a district [*dēmos*], even though he was not one who would leave many friends to take up his quarrel, the man who has killed him [120] must still say good bye to his friends and flee the country; whereas we have been killing the stay of a whole city, and all the picked youth of Ithaca. I would have you consider this matter.”

“Look to it yourself, father,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “for they say [125] you are the wisest counselor in the world, and that there is no other mortal man who can compare with you. We will follow you with right good will, nor shall you find us fail you in so far as our strength holds out.”

[130] “I will say what I think will be best,” answered resourceful Odysseus. “First wash and put your khitons on; tell the maids also to go to their own room and dress; Phemios shall then strike up a dance tune on his lyre, so that if people [135] outside hear, or any of the neighbors, or some one going along the street happens to notice it, they may think there is a wedding in the house, and no rumors [*kleos*] about the death of the suitors will get about in the town, before we can escape to the

woods upon my own land. Once there, [140] we will settle which of the courses of action [*kerdos*] the gods grant us shall seem wisest.”

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. First they washed and put their *khitons* on, while the women got ready. Then Phemios took his lyre and set them all longing [145] for sweet song and stately dance. The house re-echoed with the sound of men and women dancing, and the people outside said, “I suppose the queen has been getting married at last. [150] She ought to be ashamed of herself for not continuing to protect her husband’s property until he comes home.”

This was what they said, but they did not know what it was that had been happening. The upper servant, Eurynome, washed and anointed great-hearted Odysseus in his own house [155] and gave him a *khiton* and cloak, while Athena made him look taller and stronger than before; she also made the hair grow thick on the top of his head, and flow down in curls like hyacinth blossoms; she shed *kharis* about his head and shoulders just as a skillful workman [160] who has studied art of all kinds under Hephaistos or Athena—and his work is full of *kharis*—enriches a his work by gilding it. ¹⁶³ He emerged from the bathtub [*asaminthos*], looking like [*homoios*] the immortals in size, and sat down [165] opposite his wife on the seat he had left. “My dear,” said he, “the gods have endowed you with a heart more unyielding than woman ever yet had. No other woman could bear to keep away from her husband [170] when he had come back to her after twenty years of absence, and after having gone through so much. But come, nurse, get a bed ready for me; I will sleep alone, for this woman has a heart as hard as iron.”

“My dear,” answered circumspect Penelope, “I have no wish to set myself up, nor to depreciate you; [175] but I am not struck by your appearance, for I very well remember what kind of a man you were when you set sail from Ithaca. Nevertheless, Eurykleia, take his bed outside the bed chamber that he himself built. Bring the bed outside this room, and put bedding upon it [180] with fleeces, good coverlets, and blankets.”

She said this to try him, but Odysseus was very angry and said, “Wife, I am much displeased at what you have just been saying. Who has been taking my bed from the place in which I left it? He must have found it a hard task, [185] no matter how skilled a workman he was, unless some god came and helped him to shift it. There is no man living, however strong and in his prime, who could move it from its place. For it was wrought to be a great sign [*sēma*]; it is a marvelous curiosity which I made with my very own hands. [190] There was a young olive growing within the precincts of the house, in full vigor, and about as thick as a bearing-post. I built my room round this with strong walls of stone and a roof to cover them, and I made the doors strong and well-fitting. [195] Then I cut off the top boughs of the olive tree and left the stump standing. This I dressed roughly from the root upwards and then worked with carpenter’s tools well and skillfully, straightening my work by drawing a line on the wood, and making it into a bed-prop. I then bored a hole down the middle, and made it the center-post of my bed, at which I worked till I had finished it, [200] inlaying it with gold and silver; after this I stretched a hide of crimson leather from one side of it to the other. So you see I know all about this sign [*sēma*], and I desire to learn whether it is still there, or whether any one has been removing it by cutting down the olive tree at its roots.”

[205] When she heard the sure signs [*sēmata*] Odysseus now gave her, she fairly broke down. She flew weeping to his side, flung her arms about his neck, and kissed him. “Do not be angry with me Odysseus,” she cried, [210] “you, who are the wisest of humankind. We have suffered, both of us. Heaven has denied us the happiness of spending our youth, and of growing old, together; do not then be aggrieved or take it amiss that I did not embrace you thus as soon as I saw you. [215] I have been shuddering all the time through fear that someone might come here and deceive me with a lying story; for there are many people who plan wicked schemes [*kerdos*]. Zeus’ daughter, Helen of Argos, would never have yielded herself to a man from a foreign country, [220] if she had known that the warlike sons of Achaeans would come after her and

bring her back. Heaven put it in her heart to do wrong, and she gave no thought to that transgression [*atē*], which has been the source of all our sorrows [*penthos*]. [225] Now, however, that you have convinced me by showing that you know all the signs [*sēmata*] of our bed (which no human being has ever seen but you and I and a single maid servant, the daughter of Aktor, who was given me by my father on my marriage, and who keeps the doors of our room), [230] hard of belief though I have been, I can mistrust no longer.”

Then Odysseus in his turn melted, and wept as he clasped his dear and faithful wife to his bosom. As the sight of land is welcome to men who are swimming towards the shore, when Poseidon has wrecked their ship [235] with the fury of his winds and waves—a few alone reach the land, and these, covered with brine, are thankful when they find themselves on firm ground and out of danger—even so was her husband welcome to her as she looked upon him, [240] and she could not tear her two fair arms from about his neck. Indeed they would have gone on indulging their sorrow till rosy-fingered morn appeared, had not the owl-vision goddess Athena determined otherwise, and held night back in the far west, while she would not suffer Dawn of the golden throne to leave Okeanos, [245] nor to yoke ²⁴⁶ Lampos and Phaethōn, who are the horses that pull Ēōs to break the day upon humankind.

At last, however, Odysseus said, “Wife, we have not yet reached the end of our trials [*āthloi*]. I have an unknown amount of toil [*ponos*] still to undergo. [250] It is long and difficult, but I must go through with it, for thus the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Teiresias prophesied concerning me, on the day when I went down into Hādēs to ask about my return [*nostos*] and that of my companions. But now let us go to bed, that we may [255] lie down and enjoy the blessed boon of sleep.”

“You shall go to bed as soon as you please,” replied circumspect Penelope, “now that the gods have sent you home to your own good house and to your country. [260] But as the gods have put it in your mind to speak of

it, tell me about the task [*āthlos*] that lies before you. I shall have to hear about it later, so it is better that I should be told at once.”

“My dear,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “why should you press me [265] to tell you? ²⁶⁶ Your heart [*thūmos*] will not be pleased, nor am I ²⁶⁷ pleased [by the telling of these adventures], since he [= Teiresias] instructed me to go to very many cities of mortals ²⁶⁸ while holding my well-made oar in my hands, till I came to a country where the people have never heard [270] of the sea, and do not even mix salt with their food. They know nothing about ships, nor oars that are as the wings of a ship. He gave me this certain sign [*sēma*] which I will not hide from you. He said that a wayfarer should meet me and ask me [275] whether it was a winnowing shovel that I had on my shoulder. Then, I was to fix my oar in the ground and sacrifice a ram, a bull, and a boar to Poseidon; after which I was to go home and offer hecatombs [280] to all the gods in the sky, one after the other. As for myself, he said that death should come to me from the sea, and that my life should ebb away very gently when I was full of years and peace of mind, and my people should be prosperous [*olbios*]. All this, he said, should surely come to pass.”

[285] And circumspect Penelope said, “If the gods are going to grant you a happier time in your old age, you may hope then to have some respite from misfortune.”

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile Eurynome and the nurse took torches and made the bed ready [290] with soft coverlets; as soon as they had laid them, the nurse went back into the house to go to her rest, leaving the bed chamber woman, Eurynome, to show Odysseus and Penelope to bed by torch light. [295] When she had conducted them to their room she went back, and they then came joyfully to the rites of their own old bed. Telemachus, Philoitios, and the swineherd now left off dancing, and made the women leave off also. They then laid themselves down to sleep in the halls. [300] When Odysseus and Penelope had had their fill of love they fell talking with one another. She,

Penelope, shining among women, told him how much she had to bear in seeing the house filled with a crowd of wicked suitors who had killed so many sheep and oxen on her account, [305] and had drunk so many casks of wine. Odysseus in his turn told her what he had suffered, and how much trouble he had himself given to other people. He told her everything, and she was so delighted to listen that she never went to sleep till he had ended his whole story.

[310] He began with his victory over the Kikones, and how he thence reached the fertile land of the Lotus-eaters. He told her all about the Cyclops and how he had punished him for having so ruthlessly eaten his brave comrades; how he then went on to Aiolos, who received him hospitably [315] and furthered him on his way, but even so he was not to reach home, for a gust of wind [*thuella*]³¹⁷ carried him, heavily groaning, over the fishy [*ikhthuoëis*] sea [*pontos*]; how he went on to the Laestrygonian city Telepylos, where the people destroyed all his ships with their crews, [320] save himself and his own ship only. Then he told of cunning Circe and her craft, and how he sailed to the chill house of Hādēs, to consult the spirit [*psūkhē*] of the Theban prophet Teiresias, and how he saw his old comrades in arms, [325] and his mother who bore him and brought him up when he was a child; how he then heard the wondrous singing of the Sirens, and went on to the wandering rocks and terrifying Charybdis and to Scylla, whom no man had ever yet passed in safety; how his men then ate the cattle of the sun-god, [330] and how Zeus therefore struck the ship with his thunderbolts, so that all his men perished together, himself alone being left alive; how at last he reached the Ogygian island and the nymph Kalypsō, who kept him there [335] in a cave, and fed him, and wanted him to marry her, in which case she intended making him immortal so that he should never grow old, but she could not persuade him to let her do so; and how after much suffering he had found his way to the Phaeacians, who had treated him as though he had been a god, and sent him [340] back in a ship to his own country after having given him gold, bronze, and raiment in great

abundance. This was the last thing about which he told her, for here a deep sleep took hold upon him and eased the burden of his sorrows.

Then the owl-vision goddess Athena thought of another matter. [345] When she thought that Odysseus had had enough both of his wife and of repose, she bade gold-enthroned Dawn rise out of Okeanos that she might shed light upon humankind. Then, Odysseus rose from his comfortable bed and said to Penelope, [350] “Wife, we have both of us had our full share of trials [*āthlos*], you, here, in lamenting my absence, and I in being prevented from homecoming [*nostos*] though I was longing all the time to do so. Now, however, that we have at last come together, [355] take care of the property that is in the house. As for the sheep and goats which the wicked suitors have eaten, I will take many myself by force from other people, and will compel the Achaeans to make good the rest till they shall have filled all my yards. I am now going to the wooded lands out in the country [360] to see my father who has so long been grieved on my account, and to yourself I will give these instructions, though you have little need of them. At sunrise it will at once get abroad that I have been killing the suitors; go upstairs, therefore, [365] and stay there with your women. See nobody and ask no questions.”

As he spoke he girded on his armor. Then he roused Telemachus, Philoitios, and Eumaios, and told them all to put on their armor also. This they did, and armed themselves. When they had done so, [370] they opened the gates and sallied forth, Odysseus leading the way. It was now daylight, but Athena nevertheless concealed them in darkness and led them quickly out of the town.

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Homeric *Odyssey*

Rhapsody 24

Translated by Samuel Butler

Revised by Soo-Young Kim, Kelly McCray, Gregory Nagy, and Timothy Power

[1] Then Hermes of Cyllene summoned the spirits [*psūkhai*] of the suitors, and in his hand he held the fair golden wand with which he seals men's eyes in sleep or wakes them just as he pleases; [5] with this he roused the spirits and led them, while they followed gibbering behind him. As bats fly squeaking in the hollow of some great cave, when one of them has fallen out of the cluster in which they hang, even so did the spirits squeak as Hermes [10] the healer of sorrow led them down into the dark abode of death. When they had passed the waters of Okeanos and the Rock Leukas, they came to the Gates of the Sun and the District [*dēmos*] of Dreams, whereon they reached the Meadow of Asphodel where dwell the spirits and shadows of them that can labor no more.

[15] Here they found the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Achilles, son of Peleus, with those of Patroklos, Antilokhos, and Ajax, who was the finest and handsomest man of all the Danaans after the son of Peleus himself. They gathered round the spirit of the son of Peleus, [20] and the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, joined them, sorrowing bitterly.

Round him were gathered also the spirits of those who had perished with him in the house of Aegisthus; and the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Achilles spoke first.

“Son of Atreus,” it said, “we used to say that Zeus had loved you [25] better from first to last than any other hero, for you were captain over many and brave men, when we were all fighting together in the district [*dēmos*] of the Trojans; yet the hand of death, which no mortal can

escape, was laid upon you all too early. [30] Better for you had you fallen in the Trojan *dēmos* in the hey-day of your renown, for the Achaeans would have built a mound over your ashes, and your son would have been heir to your *kleos*, whereas it has now been your lot to come to a most miserable end.”

[35] Then the spirit of the son of Atreus answered him: ³⁶ “O you blessed [*olbios*] son of Peleus, godlike Achilles, ³⁷ you who died at Troy far from Argos. And others, those all around you [= your corpse], ³⁸ were being slaughtered, sons of both Trojans and Achaeans, the best, ³⁹ as they were fighting over you [= your corpse]. There you were, lying in a swirl of dust. [40] You lay there so huge in all your hugeness, no longer thinking about your feats of charioteering, heedless now of your chivalry. We fought the whole of the livelong day, nor should we ever have left off if Zeus had not sent a stormy wind to stay us. ⁴³ Then, when we had taken you [= your corpse] to the ships, out of the battlezone, ⁴⁴ we laid you on your bed and cleansed your beautiful skin [45] with warm water and with oil. And, crying over you, many tears ⁴⁶ did the Danaans [= Achaeans] shed, hot tears, and they cut their hair. ⁴⁷ Your mother came, with her immortal sea nymphs, from out of the sea, ⁴⁸ as soon as she heard, and the sound of a great wailing went forth over the sea, ⁴⁹ a sound too wondrous for words, and all the Achaeans were overcome with trembling. [50] They would have fled panic-stricken to their ships had not the wise old Nestor whose counsel was ever truest checked them saying, ‘Hold, Argives, flee not, sons of the Achaeans, [55] this is his mother coming from the sea with her immortal nymphs to view the body of her son.’

Thus he spoke, and the great-hearted Achaeans feared no more. ⁵⁸ Standing around you were the daughters of the Old One of the sea [= Nereus], ⁵⁹ weeping piteously, and they [= the Nereids] clothed you [= the corpse of Achilles] in immortalizing [*ambrota*] clothes. [60] The nine Muses also came, all of them, and sang antiphonally with a beautiful

voice, ⁶¹ singing their song of lament [*thrēneîn*]; you could not spot a single person who was not shedding tears, ⁶² of all the Argives [= Achaeans], so loudly did the piercing sound of lament rise up. ⁶³ Days and nights seven and ten ⁶⁴ we mourned you, we mortals and immortals alike, [65] but on the eighteenth day we gave you to the flames, and, over the fire, many ⁶⁶ fat sheep and many horned oxen did we slay in sacrifice. ⁶⁷ You were burning while clothed in the clothes of the gods, and with plenty of olive oil, ⁶⁸ also sweet honey. And a multitude of Achaean heroes ⁶⁹ were dancing in their armor around the pyre as you were burning. [70] There were footsoldiers and charioteers, and a great din arose. ⁷¹ But when the flames of Hephaistos had consumed you, ⁷² we gathered your white bones at dawn, O Achilles, and laid them ⁷³ in unmixed wine and in oil. Your mother gave ⁷⁴ a golden amphora to hold them—she had received it as a gift from Dionysos, [75] she said, and it was the work of the famed Hephaistos himself; ⁷⁶ in this [*amphora*] were placed your white bones, O luminous Achilles, ⁷⁷ mixed together with the bones of Patroklos who had died before you, ⁷⁸ and separately from the bones of Antilokhos, whom you honored most of all ⁷⁹ your other comrades [*hetairoi*] after Patroklos had died.

[80] Over these bones a huge and faultless tomb [*tumbos*] ⁸¹ was built; it was a tumulus that we the sacred army of spear-fighting Argives [= Achaeans] heaped up, ⁸² at a headland jutting out over the open Hellespont, ⁸³ so that it might be visible, shining forth from afar, for men at sea [*pontos*] ⁸⁴ now living and for those that will be born hereafter. [85] Your mother [Thetis] asked for and received from the gods very beautiful prizes [*āthla*], ⁸⁶ and she placed them in the middle of the place for competition [*agōn*] among the noblest of the Achaeans. ⁸⁷ You must have been present at funerals of many men ⁸⁸ who were heroes, and so you know how, at the death of some great king, ⁸⁹ the young men gird themselves and make ready to contend for prizes [*āthla*], [90] but even you would have been most amazed in your heart [*thūmos*] to see those

things, ⁹¹ I mean, those beautiful prizes that were set up by the goddess in your honor [*epi soi*], ⁹² by Thetis with the silver steps. For you were so very dear to the gods. ⁹³ Thus, even in death, your glorious name, Achilles, has not been lost, and you will have for all eternity, ⁹⁴ among all humankind, a glory [*kleos*] that is genuine, Achilles. [95] As for me, what solace had I in this, that the days of my fighting in war were over? ⁹⁶ For, in the course of my homecoming [*nostos*], Zeus masterminded a disastrous [*lugros*] destruction for me, ⁹⁷ at the hands of Aegisthus and of my disastrous [*oulomenē*] wife.”

Thus did they converse, and presently Hermes came up to them [100] with the spirits of the suitors who had been killed by Odysseus. The spirits [*psūkhai*] of Agamemnon and Achilles were astonished at seeing them, and went up to them at once. The spirit [*psūkhē*] of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, recognized glorious Amphimedon, son of Melaneus, who lived in Ithaca and had been his host, [105] so it began to talk to him.

“Amphimedon,” it said, “what has happened to all you choice [*krinein*] young men—all of an age too—that you are come down here under the ground? One could select [*krinein*] no finer body of men from any city. Did Poseidon [110] raise his winds and waves against you when you were at sea, or did your enemies make an end of you on the mainland when you were cattle-lifting or sheep-stealing, or while fighting in defense of their wives and city? Answer my question, for I have been your guest. [115] Do you not remember how I came to your house with godlike Menelaos, to persuade Odysseus to join us with his ships against Troy? It was a whole month before we could resume our voyage, for we had hard work to persuade Odysseus, ransacker of cities, to come with us.”

[120] And the spirit [*psūkhē*] of Amphimedon answered, “Agamemnon, son of Atreus, king of men, I remember everything that you have said, and will tell you fully and accurately about the way in which our end

was brought about. [125] Odysseus had been long gone, and we were courting his wife, who did not say point blank that she would not marry, nor yet bring matters to an end, for she meant to compass our destruction: this, then, was the trick she played us. She set up a great loom in her room and began to weave [130] an enormous fine web. ‘Sweethearts,’ said she, ‘Great Odysseus is indeed dead, still, do not press me to marry again immediately; wait—for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded—till I have completed a shroud for the hero Laertes, against the time when [135] death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the district [*dēmos*] will talk if he is laid out without a shroud.’ This is what she said, and we assented; whereupon we could see her working upon her great web all day long, [140] but at night she would undo it again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years without our finding it out, but as time [*hōrā*] wore on and she was now in her fourth year, and the waning of moons and many days had been accomplished, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, [145] and we caught her in the act of undoing her work, so she had to finish it whether she would or not; and when she showed us the robe she had made, after she had had it washed, its splendor was as that of the sun or moon.

Then some malicious superhuman force [*daimōn*] conveyed Odysseus [150] to the upland farm where his swineherd lives. There presently came also his son, returning from a voyage to Pylos, and the two came to the town when they had hatched their plot for our destruction. [155] Telemachus came first, and then after him, accompanied by the swineherd, came Odysseus, clad in rags and leaning on a staff as though he were some miserable old beggar. He came so unexpectedly that [160] none of us knew him, not even the older ones among us, and we reviled him and threw things at him. He endured both being struck and insulted without a word, though he was in his own house; but when the will [*noos*] of aegis-bearing Zeus inspired him, [165] he and Telemachus took the armor and hid it in an inner chamber, bolting the doors behind them. Then he cunningly made his wife offer his bow and a quantity of

iron to be contended for by us ill-fated suitors; and this was the beginning of our end, [170] for not one of us could string the bow—nor nearly do so. When it was about to reach the hands of Odysseus, we all of us shouted out that it should not be given him, no matter what he might say, [175] but Telemachus insisted on his having it. When he had got it in his hands he strung it with ease and sent his arrow through the iron. Then he stood on the floor of the hall and poured his arrows on the ground, glaring fiercely about him. First he killed Antinoos, [180] and then, aiming straight before him, he let fly his deadly darts and they fell thick on one another. It was plain that some one of the gods was helping them, for they fell upon us with might and main throughout the halls, and there was a hideous sound of groaning [185] as our brains were being battered in, and the ground seethed with our blood. This, Agamemnon, is how we came by our end, and our bodies are lying still uncared for in the house of Odysseus, for our friends at home do not yet know what has happened, so that they cannot [190] lay us out and wash the black blood from our wounds, making moan over us according to the offices due to the departed.”

The the *psūkhē* of the son of Atreus answered him: ¹⁹² “O blessed [*olbios*] son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, ¹⁹³ it is truly with great merit [*aretē*] that you got to have your wife. ¹⁹⁴ For the thinking [*phrenes*] of faultless Penelope was sound: [195] she, daughter of Ikarios, kept Odysseus, well in mind, ¹⁹⁶ that properly-wedded [*kouridios*] husband of hers. Thus the glory [*kleos*] will never perish for him, ¹⁹⁷ the glory that comes from his merit [*aretē*], and a song will be created for earth-bound humans ¹⁹⁸ by the immortals—a song that brings beautiful and pleasurable recompense for sensible Penelope ¹⁹⁹ —unlike the daughter of Tyndareos [= Clytemnestra], who masterminded evil deeds, [200] killing her properly-wedded [*kouridios*] husband, and a hateful subject of song ²⁰¹ she will be throughout all humankind, and she will give a harsh reputation ²⁰² to women, female [*thēluterai*] that they are—even for the kind of woman who does noble things.”

Thus did they converse in the house of Hādēs deep down within the bowels of the earth. [205] Meanwhile Odysseus and the others passed out of the town and soon reached the fair and well-tilled farm of Laertes, which he had reclaimed with infinite labor. Here was his house, with a lean-to running all round it, where the slaves who worked for him [210] slept and sat and ate, while inside the house there was an old Sicilian woman, who looked after him in this his country-farm. When Odysseus got there, he said to his son and to the other two: “Go to the house, [215] and kill the best pig that you can find for dinner. Meanwhile I want to see whether my father will know me, or fail to recognize me after so long an absence.”

He then took off his armor and gave it to Eumaios and Philoitios, [220] who went straight on to the house, while he turned off into the vineyard to make trial of his father. As he went down into the great orchard, he did not see Dolios, nor any of his sons nor of the other bondsmen, for they were all gathering thorns to make a fence [225] for the vineyard, at the place where the old man had told them; he therefore found his father alone, hoeing a vine. He had on a dirty old khiton, patched and very shabby; his legs were bound round with thongs of ox-hide to save him from the brambles, [230] and he also wore sleeves of leather; he had a goat skin cap on his head, and was looking full of grief [*penthos*]. When much-enduring great Odysseus saw him so worn, so old and full of sorrow [*penthos*], he stood still under a tall pear tree and began to weep. [235] He doubted whether to embrace him, kiss him, and tell him all about his having come home, or whether he should first question him and see what he would say. In the end he thought it best [240] to be crafty with him, so in this mind he went up to his father, who was bending down and digging about a plant.

²⁴⁴ “Old sir,” said noble Odysseus, “it is clear that you are most knowledgeable in tending [245] an orchard [*orkhatos*]. It is well tended, with care [*komidē*], and there is nothing, ²⁴⁶ no plant at all—no fig tree no grapevine no olive tree ²⁴⁷ no pear tree no bed for herbs—no, there is

nothing in this whole garden [*kēpos*] that lacks for care [*komidē*]. I trust, however, that you will not be offended if I say that you take better care of your garden than of yourself. [250] You are old, unsavory, and very meanly clad. It cannot be because you are idle that your master takes such poor care of you, indeed your face and figure have nothing of the slave about them, and proclaim you of noble birth. I should have said that you were one of those who should wash well, eat well, [255] and lie soft at night as old men have a right [*dikē*] to do; but tell me, and tell me true, whose laborer are you, and in whose garden are you working? Tell me also about another matter. Is this place that I have come to really Ithaca? I met a man just now [260] who said so, but he was a dull character, and had not the patience to hear my story out when I was asking him about an old friend of mine, whether he was still living, or was already dead and in the house of Hādēs. [265] Believe me when I tell you that this man came to my house once when I was in my own country and never yet did any stranger come to me whom I liked better. He said that his family came from Ithaca [270] and that his father was Laertes, son of Arkeisios. I received him hospitably, making him welcome to all the abundance of my house, and when he went away I gave him all customary presents. I gave him seven talents of fine gold, [275] and a cup of solid silver with flowers chased upon it. I gave him twelve light cloaks, and as many pieces of tapestry; I also gave him twelve cloaks of single fold, twelve rugs, twelve fair mantles, and an equal number of khitons. To all this I added four good looking women skilled in all useful arts, and I let him take his choice.”

[280] His father shed tears and answered, “Sir, you have indeed come to the country that you have named, but it is fallen into the hands of wicked people. All this wealth of presents has been given to no purpose. If you could have found your friend here alive in the district [*dēmos*] of Ithaca, [285] he would have entertained you hospitably and would have requited your presents amply when you left him—as would have been only right considering what you have already given him. But tell me, and tell me true, how many years is it since you entertained this guest—

my unhappy son, as ever was? Alas! [290] He has perished far from his own country; ²⁹¹ or perhaps the fish devoured him in the sea [*pontos*], or he has fallen a prey to the birds and wild beasts of some continent. Neither his mother, nor I his father, who were his parents, could throw our arms about him and wrap him in his shroud, nor could his excellent and richly dowered wife, circumspect Penelope, [295] bewail her husband as was natural upon his death bed, and close his eyes according to the offices due to the departed. But now, tell me truly for I want to know. Who and whence are you—tell me of your town and parents? Where is the ship lying that has brought you [300] and your men to Ithaca? Or were you a passenger on some other man's ship, and those who brought you here have gone on their way and left you?"

"I will tell you everything," answered resourceful Odysseus, "quite truly. I come from Alybas, where I have a fine house. [305] I am son of King Apheidas, who is the son of Polypemon. My own name is Eperitos; a superhuman force [*daimōn*] drove me off my course as I was leaving Sikania, and I have been carried here against my will. As for my ship it is lying over yonder, off the open country outside the town, and this is the fifth year [310] since Odysseus left my country. Poor man, yet the omens were good for him when he left me. The birds all flew on our right hands, and both he and I rejoiced to see them as we parted, for we had every hope that we should have another friendly meeting and exchange presents."

[315] A dark cloud of sorrow [*akhos*] fell upon Laertes as he listened. He filled both hands with the dust from off the ground and poured it over his gray head, groaning heavily as he did so. The heart of Odysseus was touched, and his nostrils quivered as he looked upon his father; [320] then he sprang towards him, flung his arms about him and kissed him, saying, "I am he, father, about whom you are asking—I have returned after having been away for twenty years. But cease your sighing and lamentation—we have no time to lose, for I should tell you [325] that I

have been killing the suitors in my house, to punish them for their insolence and crimes.”

“If you really are my son Odysseus,” replied Laertes, “and have come back again, you must give me such manifest proof [*sēma*] of your identity as shall convince me.”

[330] “First observe this scar,” answered resourceful Odysseus, “which I got from a boar’s tusk when I was hunting on Mount Parnassus. You and my mother had sent me to Autolykos, my mother’s father, to receive [335] the presents which when he was over here he had promised to give me. Furthermore I will point out to you the trees in the vineyard which you gave me, and I asked you all about them as I followed you round the garden. We went over them all, and you told me their names and what they all [340] were. You gave me thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees, and forty fig trees; you also said you would give me fifty rows of vines; there was wheat planted between each row, and they yield grapes of every kind when the seasons [*hōrai*] of Zeus have been laid heavy upon them.”

[345] Laertes’ strength failed him when he heard the convincing signs [*sēmata*] which his son had given him. He threw his arms about him, and Odysseus had to support him, or he would have gone off into a swoon; but as soon as he came to, and was beginning to recover [350] his senses, he said, “O Father Zeus, then you gods are still in Olympus after all, if the suitors have really been punished for their insolence [*hubris*] and folly. Nevertheless, I am much afraid that I shall have all the townspeople of Ithaca up here directly, and they will be sending [355] messengers everywhere throughout the cities of the Kephallēnians.”

Resourceful Odysseus answered, “Take heart and do not trouble yourself about that, but let us go into the house hard by your garden. I have already told Telemachus, Philoitios, [360] and Eumaios to go on there and get dinner ready as soon as possible.”

Thus conversing the two made their way towards the house. When they got there they found Telemachus with the stockman and the swineherd cutting up meat and mixing wine with water. [365] Then the old Sicilian woman took Laertes inside and washed him and anointed him with oil. She put him on a good cloak, and Athena came up to him and gave him a more imposing presence, making him taller and stouter than before. [370] And he emerged from the bathtub [*asaminthos*]. His dear son marveled at him, ³⁷¹ when he saw him, face to face, looking like [*enalinkios*] the immortal gods, and said to him, “My dear father, some one of the gods has been making you much taller and better-looking.”

[375] The spirited Laertes answered, “Would, by Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, that I were the man I was when I ruled among the Kephallēnians, and took Nerikon, that strong fortress on the foreland. If I were still what I then was and had been in our house yesterday with my armor on, [380] I should have been able to stand by you and help you against the suitors. I should have killed a great many of them, and you would have rejoiced to see it.”

Thus did they converse; but the others, when they had finished their work and the feast was ready, left off working [*ponos*], [385] and took each his proper place on the benches and seats. Then they began eating; by and by old Dolios and his sons left their work and came up, for their mother, the Sicilian woman who [390] looked after Laertes now that he was growing old, had been to fetch them. When they saw Odysseus and were certain it was he, they stood there lost in astonishment; but Odysseus scolded them good-naturedly and said, “Sit down to your dinner, old man, and never mind about your surprise; [395] we have been wanting to begin for some time and have been waiting for you.”

Then Dolios put out both his hands and went up to Odysseus. “Sir,” said he, seizing his master’s hand and kissing it at the wrist, [400] “we have long been wishing you home: and now the gods have restored you to us after we had given up hoping. All hail, therefore, and may the gods make

you prosperous [*olbios*]. But tell me, does circumspect Penelope already know [405] of your return, or shall we send some one to tell her?"

"Old man," answered great Odysseus, "she knows already, so you need not trouble about that." Then he took his seat, and the sons of Dolios gathered round Odysseus [410] to give him greeting and embrace him one after the other; then they took their seats in due order near Dolios, their father.

While they were thus busy getting their dinner ready, Rumor went round the town, and noised abroad the terrifying fate that had befallen the suitors; [415] as soon, therefore, as the people heard of it they gathered from every quarter, groaning and hooting before the house of Odysseus. They took the dead away, buried every man his own, and put the bodies of those who came from elsewhere on board the fishing vessels, for the fishermen to take each of them to his own place. [420] They then met angrily in the place of assembly, and when they were got together Eupeithes rose to speak. He was overwhelmed with grief [*penthos*] for the death of his son, Antinoos, who had been the first man killed by Odysseus, [425] so he said, weeping bitterly, "My friends, this man has done the Achaeans great wrong. He took many of our best men away with him in his fleet, and he has lost both ships and men; now, moreover, on his return he has been killing all the foremost men among the Kephallēnians. [430] Let us be up and doing before he can get away to Pylos or to shining Elis where the Epeioi rule, or we shall be ashamed of ourselves for ever afterwards. It will be an everlasting disgrace to us if we do not avenge the murder of our sons and brothers. [435] For my own part I should have no more pleasure in life, but had rather die at once. Let us be up, then, and after them, before they can cross over to the mainland."

He wept as he spoke and every one pitied him. But Medon and the bard Phemios had now woken up, [440] and came to them from the house of Odysseus. Every one was astonished at seeing them, but they stood in

the middle of the assembly, and Medon said, “Hear me, men of Ithaca. Odysseus did not do these things against the will [445] of the gods. I myself saw an immortal god take the form of Mentor and stand beside him. This god appeared, now in front of him encouraging him, and now going furiously about the court and attacking the suitors whereon they fell thick on one another.”

[450] Then pale fear laid hold of them, and old Halitherses, son of Mastor the old warrior, rose to speak, for he was the only man among them who knew both past and future; so he spoke to them plainly and in all honesty, saying,

“Men of Ithaca, [455] it is all your own fault that things have turned out as they have; you would not listen to me, nor yet to Mentor, shepherd of the people, when we bade you check the folly of your sons who were doing much wrong in the wantonness of their hearts—wasting the substance and dishonoring the wife [460] of a chieftain who they thought would not return. Now, however, let it be as I say, and do as I tell you. Do not go out against Odysseus, or you may find that you have been drawing down evil on your own heads.”

This was what he said, and more than half raised a loud shout, and at once left the assembly. But the rest stayed where they were, [465] for the speech of Halitherses displeased them, and they sided with Eupheithes; they therefore hurried off for their armor, and when they had armed themselves, they met together in front of the city, and Eupheithes led them on in their folly. He thought [470] he was going to avenge the murder of his son, whereas in truth he was never to return, but was himself to perish in his attempt.

Then Athena said to Zeus, son of Kronos, “Father, son of Kronos, king of kings, answer me this question—What does your mind [*noos*] bid you? [475] Will you set them fighting still further, or will you make peace between them?”

And Zeus gatherer of clouds answered, “My child, why should you ask me? Was it not by your own plan [*noos*] [480] that noble Odysseus came home and took his revenge upon the suitors? Do whatever you like, but I will tell you what I think will be the most reasonable arrangement. Now that Odysseus is revenged, let them swear to a solemn covenant, in virtue of which he shall continue to rule, while we cause the others to forgive and forget the massacre of their sons and brothers. [485] Let them then all become friends as heretofore, and let peace and plenty reign.”

This was what Athena was already eager to bring about, so down she darted from off the topmost summits of Olympus.

Now when Laertes and the others had done dinner, [490] much-enduring great Odysseus began by saying, “Some of you go out and see if they are not getting close up to us.” So one of Dolios’ sons went as he was bid. Standing on the threshold he could see them all quite near, and said to Odysseus, [495] “Here they are, let us put on our armor at once.”

They put on their armor as fast as they could—that is to say Odysseus, his three men, and the six sons of Dolios. Laertes also and Dolios did the same—warriors by necessity in spite of their gray hair. [500] When they had all put on their armor, they opened the gate and sallied forth, Odysseus leading the way.

Then Zeus’ daughter, Athena, came up to them, having assumed the form and voice of Mentor. Much-enduring great Odysseus was glad when he saw her, [505] and said to his beloved son Telemachus, “Telemachus, now that you are about to fight in an engagement, which will show every man’s mettle, be sure not to disgrace your ancestors, who were eminent for their strength and courage all the world over.”

[510] “You say truly, my dear father,” answered the spirited Telemachus, “and you shall see, if you will, that I am in no mind to disgrace your

family.”

Laertes was delighted when he heard this. “Skies above!” he exclaimed, “what a day I am enjoying: I do indeed rejoice at it. [515] My son and grandson are vying with one another in the matter of valor [*aretē*].”

Then owl-vision Athena came close up to him and said, “Son of Arkeisios—best friend I have in the world—pray to the owl-vision damsel, and to Zeus her father; then poise your spear and hurl it.”

[520] As she spoke she infused fresh vigor into him, and when he had prayed to her he poised his spear and hurled it. He hit Eupheithes’ helmet, and the spear went right through it, for the helmet stayed it not, [525] and his armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. Meantime Odysseus and his son fell the front line of the foe and smote them with their swords and spears; indeed, they would have killed every one of them, and prevented them from ever getting home again, only Athena [530] raised her voice aloud, and made every one pause. “Men of Ithaca,” she cried, “cease this dreadful war, and settle the matter at once without further bloodshed.”

Then pale fear seized every one; they were so frightened that their arms dropped from their hands [535] and fell upon the ground at the sound of the goddess’ voice, and they fled back to the city for their lives. But much-enduring Odysseus gave a great cry, and gathering himself together swooped down like a soaring eagle. Then the son of Kronos sent a thunderbolt of fire [540] that fell just in front of owl-vision Athena, so she said to Odysseus, “Odysseus, noble son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, stop this strife, or Zeus will be angry with you.”

[545] Thus spoke Athena, and Odysseus obeyed her gladly. Then Athena, daughter of Zeus of the aegis, assumed the form and voice of Mentor, and presently made a covenant of peace between the two contending parties.

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2018-12-12

The Epic Cycle

Translated by Gregory Nagy

revised by Eugenia Lao

Proclus' Summary of the *Cypria*, attributed to Stasinus of Cyprus

- {p.102} 13 Zeus, together with Themis, plans the Trojan
14 War. For Eris, while attending a feast of the gods
15 at the wedding of Peleus, instigates a feud [*neikos*]
among Athena,
16 Hera, and Aphrodite about beauty. They, by
17 order of Zeus, are led by Hermes to Mount Ida for
judgment by Alexandros. Alexandros
18 judges for Aphrodite, encouraged by a promise of
Helen in marriage.
19 On the advice of Aphrodite, he has ships built.
20 Helenos prophesies to him about what is going to
happen.
- {p103} 1 Aphrodite tells Aeneas to sail with him. Then
2 Cassandra foretells the events of the future. When he
gets
3 to Lacedaemonia, Alexandros is entertained as a
xenos by the sons of Tyndareus,
4 and afterwards by Menelaos at Sparta.
5 Alexandros gives Helen gifts during the feast. After

6 this Menelaos sails off to Crete, telling Helen to
provide proper hospitality for their guests [*xenoi*]
while he is away.

8 Aphrodite brings Helen and Alexandros together.
9 After their intercourse, they load up a great many
valuables and
10 sail away by night. Hera sends a storm down upon
them.

11 Landing at Sidon, Alexandros captures the city.
12 They sail to Ilion. Alexandros marries Helen.

13 In the meantime, Kastor and Polydeukes
14 are caught stealing the cattle of Idas and Lynkeus.
Kastor
15 is killed by Idas, but Idas and Lynkeus are killed by
Polydeukes. And Zeus gives them both immortality
16 on alternate days.

17 After this Iris goes and tells Menelaos
18 what has been happening at home. He returns and
19 plans an expedition against Ilion with his brother.

20 Menelaos goes to see Nestor. Nestor, in
21 a digression, tells him the story of how Epopeus
seduced and
22 carried off the daughter of Lykos, and the story of
Oidipous [Oedipus], and the
23 madness of Hēraklēs, and the story of Theseus and
Ariadne.

24 Then they go through Hellas and gather the leaders
together
25 Odysseus pretends to be insane because he does not
26 want to go to the war. But they find him out; on
advice of Palamedes,

27 they kidnap his son Telemachus as a threat, thus
forcing him to go.

{p104} 1 After this the leaders come together at Aulis to
sacrifice. The happenings
2 concerning the snake and the sparrows are
described.
3 Kalkhas foretells the future events for them.
4 They put to sea and land at Teuthrania, and they
mistake it
5 for Ilion and destroy it. Telephos comes to its aid,
6 and kills Thersandros, son of Polyneikes; but he
himself is wounded by Achilles.
7 As the Achaeans sail away from Mysia a storm
comes on them and
8 their ships are scattered. Achilles lands at Skyros
9 and marries Deidameia, daughter of Lykomedes.
Telephos,
10 guided by an oracle, comes to Argos.
11 Achilles heals him, in order that he become their
guide for the voyage to Ilion.
12 The expedition gathers at Aulis for the second time.
13 Agamemnon kills a deer on the hunt and boasts that
he surpasses
14 even Artemis. The goddess gets *mēnis* and holds
them back
15 from the voyage by sending them bad weather. But
Kalkhas explains
16 the *mēnis* of the goddess and tells them to sacrifice
Iphigeneia to Artemis.

12 many of the surrounding cities and he kills Troilos.
13 Patroklos takes Lykaon to Lemnos and sells him and
14 from the ransom Achilles takes Brisēis as his prize
and
15 Agamemnon, Khrysēis. Then there is the death of
Palamedes
16 and Zeus' plan to relieve the Trojans
17 by pulling Achilles out of the Achaean alliance and a
catalogue
18 of all those who fought together against the Trojans.

[The *Iliad* follows the *Cypria* and precedes the
Aithiopis.]

Proclus' Summary of the *Aithiopis*, attributed to Arctinus of Miletus

[The *Aithiopis*, in five scrolls, follows the *Iliad*.]

22 The Amazon Penthesileia arrives,
23 as an ally of the Trojans. She is the daughter of Arēs
and Thracian
24 by birth. In the middle of her *aristeiā* [= greatest epic
moments], Achilles kills her, and the Trojans
25 arrange for her funeral. And Achilles kills Thersites,
who reviled
26 him with abusive words for conceiving a passionate
love for Penthesileia,
27 so he said. From this a quarrel arises

3 constructs the wooden horse, under direction of
Athena.
4 Odysseus, disfiguring himself,
5 goes into Ilion as a spy. He is recognized by Helen;
6 jointly, they plan the capture of the city. Odysseus kills
several
Trojans and returns to the ships. And after this [= after
7 Odysseus infiltrates Troy in a previous adventure] he
[= Odysseus] along with
8 Diomedes takes out [*ek-komizein*] the Palladium from
Ilion. Then
9 after putting the best men [*aristoi*] into the wooden
horse and
10 burning their tents, the rest of the Greeks
11 sail away to Tenedos. The Trojans conclude that they
have been released from the siege.
12 They accept the wooden horse into the city,
13 pulling down part of the wall, and they feast as if they
had conquered
14 the Greeks.

Proclus' Summary of the *Iliou Persis*, attributed to Arctinus of Miletus

[The *Iliou Persis* (Destruction of Ilion), in two scrolls, follows the *Little Iliad*.]

After the preceding [= four scrolls of the *Little Iliad*,
16 by Lesches of Lesbos], there follow two scrolls of the
Iliou Persis, by Arctinus

17 of Miletus, containing the following. With regard to
the things concerning the Horse, the
18 Trojans, suspicious about the horse, stand around
wondering what they should
19 do. Some think it should be pushed off a cliff, while
others
20 think it should be burned down, and still others say
that it should be dedicated as sacred [*hieros*] to Athena.
21 In the end, the opinion of the third group wins out.
They turn
22 to merriment, feasting as if they had been freed from
the war.
23 At this point two serpents appear and
24 destroy Laocoön and one of his sons. At the sight of
25 this marvel, Aeneas and his followers get upset and
withdraw
26 to Mount Ida. Sinon lights signal fires for the
Achaeans.
He had previously entered the city, using a pretext.
27 And they [= the Achaeans], some of them sailing from
Tenedos
28 [toward Troy] and others of them emerging from the
Wooden Horse, fall upon
29 their enemies. They kill many, and the city
30 is taken by force. Neoptolemos kills
31 Priam, who has taken refuge at the altar of Zeus
Herkeios.

{p108} 1 Menelaos finds Helen and takes her back down to the
ships, after

2 slaughtering Deiphobos. Ajax son of Oileus takes
Kassandra by
3 force, dragging her away from the wooden statue
[*xoanon*] of Athena. At the sight
4 of this, the Achaeans get angry and decide to stone
Ajax to death, but he takes refuge at the altar of
5 Athena, and so
6 is preserved from his impending destruction. Then
7 the Achaeans put the city to the torch. They slaughter
Polyxena on the
8 tomb [*taphos*] of Achilles. Odysseus kills Astyanax,
9 and Neoptolemos takes Andromache as his prize. The
rest
10 of the spoils are distributed. Demophon and Akamas
find Aithra
11 and take her with them. Then the Greeks sail off [from
Troy],
12 and Athena begins to plan destruction for them at sea.

Proclus' Summary of the *Nostoi*, attributed to Agias of Trozen

[The *Nostoi* (Songs of Homecoming), in five books, follows the *Iliou Persis*.]

16 Athena causes a quarrel between Agamemnon and
17 Menelaos about the voyage from Troy. Agamemnon
18 then stays on to appease the anger of Athena.
19 Diomedes and Nestor set sail and arrive back home
safely.
20 After them, Menelaos sets sail. With five ships

21 he reaches Egypt, the rest having been lost in a storm
22 at sea. Meanwhile, those who followed Kalkhas and
Leonteus and
23 Polypoites travel by land to Kolophon, and
24 they arrange a funeral for Teiresias, who died there. As
for those who followed Agamemnon,
25 the image [*eidōlon*] of Achilles appeared to them as
they were sailing off, and it tried
26 to prevent them from going on by prophesying future
events. Then
27 the storm at the rocks called Kapherides is described,
and the destruction of Ajax
28 the Locrian. Neoptolemos, warned by Thetis,
29 makes his journey by land, and,
30 coming to Thrace, meets Odysseus at Maroneia, and
31 then finishes the rest of his journey, after arranging a
funeral for Phoinix [Phoenix], who dies along the
way. He himself

{p109} 1 arrives in the land of the Molossoi and is recognized
by Peleus. Then
2 comes the murder of Agamemnon by Aigisthos
[Aegisthus] and Klytaimestra [Clytemnestra] and
3 the vengeance of Orestes and
4 the safe return of Menelaos.

Hesiodic *Theogony*

1–115: Translated by Gregory Nagy

116–1022: Translated by J. Banks

Adapted by Gregory Nagy

Invocation

Let me begin to sing of the Muses of Helikon, who abide on the great and holy Mount Helikon. Around the deep-blue spring, with dainty feet, they dance, and around the altar of the mighty son of Kronos. 5 Washing their tender skin in the waters of the Permessos or of the Horse's Spring or of holy Olmeios, they set up their choral songs-and-dances on the highest point of Helikon. Beautiful and lovely, these [these songs-and-dances]. They are nimble with their feet. Starting from there [the top of Helikon], covered in plenty of mist [invisible], 10 they go about at night, sending forth a very beautiful voice, singing of Zeus the aegis-bearer and lady Hera of Argos, who walks about in golden sandals, and the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, Athena, and Phoebus Apollo and Artemis who shoots her arrows, 15 and Poseidon, the earth-holder and earth-shaker, and the honorable Themis as well as Aphrodite, whose eyes go from side to side, and Hebe with the golden garland, and beautiful Dione, and Leto, Iapetos, and Kronos with his devious plans, and the Dawn [Eos] and the great Sun [Helios] and the bright Moon [Selene], 20 and the Earth [Gaia] and great Okeanos and dark Night [Nyx], and the sacred *genos* of all the other immortals, who are forever.

²² [It was the Muses] who taught me, Hesiod,¹ their beautiful song. ²³ It happened when I was tending flocks of sheep in a valley of Helikon, that holy mountain. ²⁴ And the very first thing that the goddesses said to me, 25 those Muses of Mount Olympus, those daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis, was this wording [*mūthos*]: ²⁶ “Shepherds camping in the

fields, base objects of reproach, mere bellies! ²⁷ We know how to say many deceptive things looking like genuine [*etuma*] things, ²⁸ but we also know how, whenever we wish it, to proclaim things that are true [*alēthea*].”² ²⁹ That is how they spoke, those daughters of great Zeus, who have words [*epea*] that fit perfectly together, **30** and they gave me a scepter [*skēptron*], a branch of flourishing laurel, ³¹ having plucked it. And it was a wonder to behold. Then they breathed into me a voice [*audē*], ³² a godlike one, so that I may make glory [*kleos*] for things that will be and things that have been, ³³ and then they told me to sing how the blessed ones [*makares* = the gods] were generated, the ones that are forever, ³⁴ and that I should sing them [= the Muses] first and last.

The Muses

35 But why should I care about those things that keep going around an oak or a rock?³ Listen! Let me begin with the Muses, who please Zeus the father with their song, pleasing his great *noos* as he abides in Olympus. They tell of things that are, that will be, and that were before, having their words fitted together as they sound forth. And their voice pours forth without ever being worn down, **40** coming sweetly from their mouths. Glad is the palace of father Zeus the loud-thunderer over the delicate voice of the goddesses which reaches far and wide. It echoes against the peaks of snowy Olympus and the abodes of the immortals. And they [the Muses] send forth an immortal voice as they give *kleos* first to the *genos* of the gods, a matter of reverence, **45** starting from the beginning, telling about who were generated from Earth [Gaia] and the vast Sky [Ouranos], and what gods, givers of good things, were born from them. Next, they [the Muses] sing of Zeus, father of gods and men, both when they begin and when they end their song. They sing how much he is the most important of the gods and the greatest in power. **50** Then again, they sing of the *genos* of men and of the strong Giants, thus pleasing the *noos* of Zeus, who abides in Olympus.

They are the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus. They were born in Pieria. The father was Zeus, son of Kronos. Their mother, who mated with him, was Mnemosyne [Memory], who rules over the heights of Eleuther. 55 They were born to be the forgetting of misfortunes and the cessation of worries. For nine nights did Zeus the Planner lie coupled with their mother, entering her holy bed, remote from the immortals. When a year was up, and the seasons came round as the months were waning and the many days were coming to fulfillment, 60 she [Mnemosyne] gave birth to nine daughters, all like-minded, who have song on their minds, in their breast. They have a *thūmos* without worries. There they are, poised to descend from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus. That is where they have their bright dancing-places and their beautiful abodes. Near them the *Kharites* [Graces] and Himeros [Desire] have their abodes, 65 amidst festivities. And they [the Muses], sending forth a lovely voice, sing and make *kleos* for the norms [*nomoi*] and accustomed ways of all the immortals, as they send forth a lovely voice.

Anyway, back then, they went to Olympus, glorying in their beautiful voice with immortal song. And the dark earth resounded all around them 70 as they sang, and the lovely steppings of their feet made a sound from below as they proceeded towards their father, the one who is king in the sky, with sole possession of the thunder and the gleaming thunderbolt, having defeated, with his power, Kronos his father. Each thing was well arranged by him, as he assigned the norms and marked out the *tīmai*⁴ for the immortals. 75 These things, then, the Muses sang, they who have abodes in Olympus, the nine daughters begotten by great Zeus, Kleio [Clio] and Euterpe and Thaleia [Thalia, ‘Festivity’] and Melpomene and Terpsichore and Erato and Polyhymnia and Ourania [Urania] and Kalliope [Calliope]. That one [Calliope] is the most important of them all, 80 for she accompanies revered kings.⁸¹ Whosoever among sky-nourished kings is honored [*timân*] by these daughters of great Zeus [= the Muses]⁸² and is beheld by them when he

is born, ⁸³ for such a man they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, ⁸⁴ and from his mouth flow sweet words. The people, **85** all of them, look towards him as he sorts out [*dia-krinein*] the divine laws [*themis* plural] ⁸⁶ by way of straight judgments [*dikai*]. And he, speaking without stumbling ⁸⁷ and with his powers of understanding, can even put an end to a great quarrel [*neikos*].⁵ ⁸⁸ It is for this reason that there are kings, kings with good thinking [*phrenes*], namely, because when people ⁸⁹ are wronged in the assembly [*agorā*], they [= the kings] can turn things right around for them, **90** quite easily, speaking in a deflecting way by using soft words. ⁹¹ And when he [= the just king] goes to a gathering [*agōn*], the people turn to him as if he were a god, ⁹² because of his gentle command of respect [*aidōs*], and he stands out among the assembled. ⁹³ Such is the sacred gift of the Muses for humankind. ⁹⁴ For it is because of the Muses and far-shooting Apollo **95** that there are singers [*aoidoi*] and players of the lyre [*kitharis*] on this earth. ⁹⁶ And it is because of Zeus that there are kings. Blessed [*olbios*] is he whom the Muses ⁹⁷ love. And a sweet voice [*audē*] flows from his mouth. For when someone has sorrow [*penthos*] in his *thūmos* beset by new worries and is distressed by sorrow in his heart, and when the singer [poet], **100** *therapōn* of the Muses, sings the *klea* of men who came before and the blessed gods who abide in Olympus, right away such a man forgets [*lēth-*] his troubled thoughts, and his cares he no longer remembers [*mnē-*]. Quickly the gifts of the goddesses turn him away from these things.

Be pleased and show your pleasure, children of Zeus, by giving me a lovely song. **105** Give *kleos* to the holy *genos* of the immortals who have always been, who were born of Ge [Gaia] and starry Ouranos and of dark Night—the gods who were nurtured by the salty Pontos. Tell how the gods and the earth were generated at the very beginning, and the rivers and the boundless *pontos*, seething with waves, **110** and the shining stars and the vast sky above. Tell of the gods, givers of good things, who were generated from them, and how they divided up their

wealth and how each one chose his or her *tīmē*.⁶ And how in the very beginning they came to possess Olympus with its many ridges. Tell me these things, Olympian Muses, you who abide in Olympus, 115 tell it from the beginning, about what was generated first from among them all.

The Cosmogony

First it was Chaos, and next broad-bosomed Earth, ever secure seat of all the immortals, who inhabit the peaks of snow-capped Olympus, and dark dim Tartaros in a recess of Earth having-broad-ways, 120 and Eros [Love], who is most beautiful among immortal gods, Eros that relaxes the limbs, and in the breasts of all gods and all men, subdues their reason and prudent counsel. But from Chaos were born Erebos and black Night; and from Night again sprang forth Aether and Day, 125 whom she bore after having conceived, by union with Erebos in love. And Earth bore first like to herself in size starry Sky, that he might shelter her around on all sides, that so she might be ever a secure seat for the blessed gods; and she brought forth vast mountains, lovely haunts of deities, 130 the Nymphs who dwell along the woodland hills. She too bore also the barren Sea, rushing with swollen stream, the Pontos, I mean, without delightful love; but afterward, having bedded with Sky, she bore deep-eddying Okeanos, Koios and Kreios, Hyperion and Iapetos, 135 Thea and Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, and Phoebe with golden coronet, and lovely Tethys. And after these was born, youngest, wily Kronos, most savage of their children; and he hated his vigor-giving father.

Then brought she forth next the Kyklopes [Cyclopes], having an over-bearing spirit: 140 Brontes, and Steropes, and stout-hearted Arges, who gave to Zeus his thunder, and forged his lightnings. Now these were in other respects, it is true, like to gods, but a single eye was fixed in their mid-foreheads. And Kyklopes was their appropriate name, because 145 in their foreheads one circular eye was fixed.⁷ Strength, *biē*,

and contrivances were in their works. But again, from Earth and Sky sprung other three sons, great and mighty, scarce to be mentioned, Kottos and Briareus and Gyas, children exceeding proud. 150 From the shoulders of these moved actively a hundred hands, not brooking approach, and to each above sturdy limbs there grew fifty heads from their shoulders.

Castration of Ouranos

Now monstrous strength is powerful, joined with vast size. For of as many sons as were born of Earth and Sky, 155 they were the fiercest, and were hated by their father from the very first: as soon as any of these was born, he would hide them all, and not send them up to the light, in a cave of the earth, and Sky exulted over the work of mischief, while huge Earth groaned from within, 160 straitened as she was; and she devised a subtle and evil scheme. For quickly having produced a stock of white iron, she forged a large sickle, and gave the word to her children and said encouragingly, though troubled in her heart: "Children of me and of a father madly violent, if you 165 would obey me, we shall avenge the baneful injury of your father; for he was the first that devised acts of indignity." So spoke she, but fear seized on them all, nor did any of them speak; till, having gathered courage, great and wily Kronos addressed his dear mother thus in reply: 170 "Mother, this deed at any rate I will undertake and accomplish, since for our father, of-detested-name, I care not, for he was the first that devised acts of indignity." Thus spoke he, and huge Earth rejoiced much at heart, and hid and planted him in ambush: in his hand she placed 175 a sickle with jagged teeth, and suggested to him all the stratagem. Then came vast Sky bringing Night with him, and, eager for love, brooded around Earth, and lay stretched on all sides: but his son from out his ambush grasped at him with his left hand, while in his right he took the huge sickle, long and jagged-toothed, and hastily 180 mowed off the genitals of his father, and threw them backwards to be carried away behind him.

Aphrodite

Not for no purpose did they slip from his hand; for as many gory drops as jetted forth from there, Earth received them all; and when the years rolled round, 185 she gave birth to stern Furies [Erinyes], and mighty Giants, gleaming in arms, with long spears in hand, and nymphs whom men call Ash-nymphs, [Meliai] over the boundless earth. But the genitals, as after first severing them with the steel, he had cast them into the heaving sea from the continent, 190 so kept drifting long time up and down the deep, and all around kept rising a white foam from the immortal flesh; and in it a maiden was nourished; first she drew near divine Kythera, and thence came next to wave-washed Cyprus. Then forth stepped an awesome, beauteous goddess; and beneath her delicate feet the grass throve around: 195 gods and men name her Aphrodite, the foam-sprung goddess, and fair-wreathed Kytherea—the first because she was nursed in foam, but Kytherea, because she touched at Kythera; and Cyprus-born, because she was born in wave-dashed Cyprus; 200 and lover of smiles,⁸ because she emerged out of the genitals. And Eros accompanied her and fair Desire followed her, when first she was born, and came into the host of the gods. And from the beginning this honor has she, and this part has she obtained by lot among men and immortal gods, 205 the amorous converse of maidens, their smiles and wiles, their sweet delights, their love, and blandishment.

Night and Her Children

Now those sons, their father, mighty Sky, called by surname Titans, upbraiding those whom he had himself begotten; and he was accustomed to say that, out-stretching their hands in recklessness, they had wrought 210 a grave act, but that there should be vengeance for it hereafter. Night bore also hateful Destiny, and black Fate, and Death; she bore Sleep likewise, she bore the tribe of dreams; these did the goddess, gloomy Night bear after union with none. Next again Blame [*Mōmos*],

and Care full-of-woes, 215 and the Hesperides, whose care are the fair golden apples beyond the famous Okeanos, and trees yielding fruit; and she produced the Destinies [*Moirai*], and ruthlessly punishing Fates: Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who assign to men at their births to have good and evil; 220 who also pursue transgressions both of men and gods, nor do the goddesses ever cease from dread wrath, before they have repaid sore vengeance to him, whosoever shall have sinned. Then pernicious Night also bore *Nemesis*, a woe to mortal men; and after her she brought forth Fraud, and Wanton-love, 225 and mischievous Old Age, and stubborn-hearted *Eris*. But odious *Eris* gave birth to grievous Trouble, and Oblivion, and Famine, and tearful Woes, Contests and Slaughters, Fights and Homicides, Quarrelings [*Neikos* pl.], Falsehoods, Words, Disputes, 230 Lawlessness and Atē, intimates one of the other, and the Oath, which most hurts men on the earth, whensoever one has sworn voluntarily a perjured oath.

Pontos and His Descendants

And Pontos begat trusty and truthful Nereus, eldest indeed of his children, but men call him old, 235 because he is unerring as well as mild, neither does he forget the laws, but knows just and gentle purposes. And next again, by union with Earth, great Thaumas, and strong Phorkys, and Keto with fair-cheek, and Eurybia, having in her breast a soul of adamant. 240 From Nereus and fair-haired Doris, daughter of Okeanos, perfect stream, sprung lovely daughters of goddesses in the barren sea: Proto, Eukrante, Sao, and Amphitrite; Eudora, Thetis, Galene, Glauke, 245 Kymothoe, Speio, Thoe, and charming Halia; graceful Melite, and Eulimene, and Agaue, Pasithea, Erato, and rosy-armed Eunike, Doto and Proto, Pherousa, and Dynamene, Nesaia, and Aktaia, and Protomedeia, 250 Doris and Panope, and beauteous Galatea, lovely Hippothoe, and rosy-armed Hipponoe, and Kymothoe, who along with Kymatolege, and neat-ankled Amphitrite, calms with ease the waves on the misty sea, and the

blasts of violent winds; 255 Kymo and Eione, and Halimede with
beauteous wreath, and blithe Glaukonome, and Pontoporeia, Leiagora,
Euagore, Laomedeia, Polynome, Autonoe, and Lysianassa, and Euarne,
both lovely in shape and in beauty faultless, 260 and Psamathe, graceful
in person, and divine Menippe, Neso, Eupompe, Themisto, Pronoe, and
Nemertes, who has the mind of her immortal father. These were born of
blameless Nereus, fifty maidens, versed in blameless labors.

265 And Thaumasp wedded Electra, daughter of deep-flowing
Okeanos: she bore rapid Iris, and the fair-tressed Harpies, Aello and
Okypete, who accompany the wind-blasts and birds, with swift wings,
for they fly high above the earth. 270 But to Phorkys next Keto of-fair-
cheek bore the Graiai, gray from their birth, whom in fact immortal
gods as well as men walking on the ground call Graiai; namely,
Pemphredo handsomely-clad, and Enyo of saffron-vestment, and the
Gorgons, who dwell beyond famous Okeanos, 275 in the most remote
quarter night-ward, where are the clear-voiced Hesperides, Stheno,
Euryale, and Medusa having-suffered sadly. The latter was mortal, but
they, the other two, were immortal and ageless, and it was with that one
[Medusa] that the azure-haired god lay in the soft meadow, and amid
the flowers of spring. 280 From her too when, as the tale is, Perseus had
cut off the head, up sprang huge Khrysaor and the steed Pegasus. To the
latter came his name because he was born near the springs of Okeanos,
while the other had a golden sword in his hands. And he indeed,
winging his flight away, left Earth, the mother of flocks, 285 and came
to the immortals; in Zeus's house he dwells, bearing to counselor Zeus
thunder and lightning. But Khrysaor, by union with Kallirhoe, daughter
of famous Okeanos, begat three-headed Geryon. Indeed then mighty
Hēraklēs slew him, 290 amidst his trailing-footed oxen in sea-girt
Erythia, on the very day when he drove the broad-browed oxen to
sacred Tiryns, having crossed the path of Okeanos, and having slain
beyond famous Okeanos Orthos, and the herdsman Eurytion in a dusky
stall.

295 And she brought forth another monster, irresistible, in no way like mortal men, or immortal gods, in a hollow cavern; the divine stubborn-hearted Echidna, half nymph, with dark eyes and fair cheeks; and half, on the other hand, a serpent huge, and terrible, and vast, 300 speckled, and flesh-devouring, beneath caves of sacred Earth. For there is her cavern, deep under a hollow rock, far from immortal gods as well as mortal men: there have the gods assigned to her famous abodes to inhabit. But she, the destructive Echidna, was confined in Arima beneath the earth, 305 a nymph immortal, and all her days insensible to age. With her they say that Typhaon associated in love, a terrible and lawless ravisher for the dark-eyed maid. And she, having conceived, bore fierce-hearted children. The dog Orthos first she bore for Geryon, and next, 310 in the second place, she brought forth their irresistible and ineffable flesh-devourer Cerberus, dog of hell, with brazen voice and with fifty heads, a bold and strong beast. Thirdly, again she gave birth to the Lernaean Hydra subtle in destruction, whom Hera, white-armed goddess, reared, 315 implacably hating the mighty Hēraklēs. And Zeus's son, Hēraklēs, named of Amphitryon—along with warlike Iolaos, and by the counsels of Pallas the despoiler—slaughtered it with ruthless sword.

But she [Echidna] bore Chimaera, breathing resistless fire, 320 fierce and huge, fleet-footed as well as strong; this monster had three heads: one indeed of a grim-visaged lion, one of a goat, and another of a serpent, a fierce dragon; in front a lion, a dragon behind, and in the midst a goat; breathing forth the dread strength of burning fire. 325 Pegasus, with brave Bellerophon, slew her. But she, compelled by Orthos, brought forth in sooth the destructive Sphinx, a destruction to the Kadmeians; and the Nemean lion, whom Hera, Zeus's glorious consort, reared, and settled in the corn-lands of Nemea, a woe to mankind. 330 There abiding truly used he to devour the tribes of men, while he held sway over Tretos of Nemea, and over Apesas: but the might of strong Hēraklēs subdued him. And Keto mingling in love with Phorkys, brought forth, as youngest-born, a terrible serpent, 335 which

in hiding-places of dark earth, guards all-golden apples, in wide bounds.
Such then is the brood of Keto and Phorkys.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Tethys and Okeanos

But Tethys to Okeanos bore eddying rivers, Nile and Alpheus, and deep-eddying Eridanos; Strymon, and Maeander and Istros of-fair-stream, 340 Phasis, Rhesus, and Akhelōios with silvery-tide, Nessos, and Rhodios, Haliakmon and Heptaporos, Granikos, Aisepos, and divine Simoeis, Peneios, Hermos, and pleasant-flowing Kaikos; and vast Sangarios, Ladon, Parthenios, 345 Euenus, and Ardeskos and divine Skamandros. And she bore a sacred race of daughters, who with King Apollo and the rivers all earth over bring up men to manhood, and have this prerogative from Zeus, namely, Peitho, Admete, Ianthe, Electra, 350 Doris and Prymno, and goddess-like Urania, Hippo, and Klymene, Rhodia, and Kallirhoe, Zeuxo and Klytia, Iduia and Pasithoe, Plexaure, Galaxaure, lovely Dione, Melobosis, and Thoe, and fair Polydora, and 355 Kerkeis in nature amiable, and bright-eyed Plouto, Perseis, Ianeira, Akaste, and Xanthe, and winsome Petraia, Menesto, and Europa, Mētis, Eurynome, and saffron-robed Telesto, Krenaeis, Asia as well as desire-kindling Kalypsō, 360 Eudora, Tyche, Amphiro, and Okyrhoë, and Styx, who truly is eldest of them all. Now these were born eldest daughters of Okeanos and Tethys; there are, however, many others also: for thrice a thousand are the tapering-ankled Okeanos-nymphs, 365 who truly spreading far and near, bright children of the gods, haunt everywhere alike earth and the depths of the lake. And again, as many other rivers flowing with a ringing noise, sons of Okeanos, whom august Tethys bore. It would be hard for mortal man to tell the names of all of them, 370 but they who dwell around them know the names of each..

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Theia and Hyperion

And Theia, overcome in the embrace of Hyperion, brought forth the great Sun, and bright Moon, and Dawn, that shines for all that-dwell-on-the-earth, and for immortal gods, who occupy the broad sky.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Kreios and Eurybia

375 Eurybia too, a goddess among goddesses, bore to Kreios, after union in love, huge Astraioi, and Pallas, and Perses, who was transcendent in all knowledge. And to Astraioi Dawn brought forth the strong-spirited winds, Argestes, Zephyr, swift-speeding Boreas, 380 and Notos, when she, a goddess, had mingled in love with a god. And after them the goddess of morning produced the star Morning Star, and the brilliant stars with which the sky is crowned. And Styx, daughter of Okeanos, after union with Pallas, bore within the house Zēlos and beauteous-ankled Victory; 385 and she gave birth to Strength [*Kratos*] and Force [*Biē*], illustrious children, whose abode is not apart from Zeus, nor is there any seat, or any way, where the god does not go before them; but always they sit beside deep-thundering Zeus. For thus counseled Styx, imperishable Okeanos-nymph, 390 at the time when the Olympian Lightener summoned all the immortal gods to broad Olympus, and said that whoso of the gods would fight with him against the Titans, none of them would he rob of his rewards, but each should have the honor that he had earlier among the immortal gods. 395 And he said that anyone who was unhonored or ungifted by Kronos, he would establish in honor, and rewards, according to justice. Then first came imperishable Styx to Olympus along with her children through the counsels of her father. And Zeus honored her, and gave her exceeding gifts. 400 For he ordained her to be the great Oath-witness of the gods, and her children to be dwellers-with-her all their days. And even as he promises, he performed to them all for ever: for he has power and reigns mightily.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Phoebe and Koios

And next Phoebe came to the much-beloved couch of Koios: 405 then in truth having conceived, a goddess by love of a god, she bore dark-robed Leto, ever mild, gentle to mortals and immortal gods, mild from the beginning, most kindly within Olympus. And she bore renowned Asteria, whom once Perses 410 led to an ample palace to be called his bride.

Hekatē

And she, becoming pregnant, brought forth Hekatē, whom Zeus, the son of Kronos, honored beyond all and provided for her splendid gifts, to wit, to hold a share of earth and of barren sea. But she has obtained honor also from starry Sky, 415 and has been honored chiefly by immortal gods. For even now when anywhere some one of men upon-the-earth duly propitiates them by doing worthy sacrifice, he calls on Hekatē; and abundant honor very speedily attends him, whose vows the goddess shall receive, that is to say, graciously, 420 and to him she presents wealth, for she has the power. For as many as were born of Earth and Sky, and received a share of honor, of all these she has the lot, neither did the son of Kronos force any portion from her, nor did he take away as many honors as she has obtained by lot among the elder gods, the Titans, 425 but she has them, as at the first the distribution was from the beginning. Nor, because she is sole-begotten, has the goddess obtained less of honor, and her prerogative on earth, and in the sky, and sea, but even still much more, seeing that Zeus honors her. And to whom she wills, she is greatly present, and benefits him, 430 and he is distinguished, whom she wants that way, in the assembly among the people; and when men arm for mortal-destroying war, then the goddess draws nigh to whom she will, kindly to proffer victory and to extend renown to them: and in judgment she sits beside august kings: 435 and propitiously again, when men contend in the games, there the goddess stands near these also, and helps them. And when he has conquered by strength and might, a man carries with ease a noble prize, and

rejoicingly presents glory to his parents. Propitious is she also to be present with horsemen, whenever she wishes; **440** and to them who ply the rough silvery main; and they pray to Hekatē and the loud-sounding Earth-shaker. Easily too the glorious goddess presents an ample spoil, and easily is she accustomed to withdraw it when it is shown, that is, if she is so disposed in her mind. And propitious along with Hermes to increase the flock in the folds, **445** the herds of cattle, and the droves, and broad herds of goats, and flocks of fleecy sheep, if she chooses in her heart, she makes great from small, and is accustomed to make less from being many. Thus, in truth, though being sole-begotten from her mother, she has been honored with rewards amidst all the immortals. **450** And the son of Kronos made her the nursing-mother-of-children, who after her have beheld with their eyes the light of far-seeing Dawn. Thus is she from the beginning nursing-mother, and such are her honors.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Rhea and Kronos

Rhea too, embraced by Kronos, bore renowned children, Hestia, Demeter, and Hera of-the-golden-sandals, **455** and mighty Hādēs, who inhabits halls beneath the earth, having a ruthless heart; and loud-resounding Poseidon, and counseling Zeus, father of gods as well as men, by whose thunder also the broad earth quakes. And them indeed did huge Kronos devour, **460** namely, every one who came to the mother's knees from her holy womb, with this intent, that none other of the illustrious sky-born might hold royal honor among the immortals. For he had heard from Earth and starry Sky that it was fated for him, strong though he was, to be subdued by his own child, **465** through the counsels of mighty Zeus: wherefore he did not keep a careless watch, but lying in wait for them, kept devouring his own sons; while a grief not-to-be-forgotten possessed Rhea. But when at length she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods as well as men, then it was that she essayed to supplicate her parents dear, **470** Earth and starry Sky, to contrive a plan how she might without observation bring forth her son, and avenge the furies of their father, against his children, whom great

and wily Kronos devoured. And they duly heard and complied with their dear daughter, 475 and explained to her as much as it had been fated should come to pass concerning king Kronos, and his strong-hearted son. And they sent her to Lyktos, to the fertile tract of Crete, when she was about to bear the youngest of her sons, mighty Zeus: whom indeed vast earth received from her 480 to rear and nurture in broad Crete. Thereupon indeed came she, bearing him through the swift dark night, to Lyktos first, and took him in her hands and hid him in a deep cave, beneath the recesses of the divine earth, in the dense and wooded Aegean Mount.

485 But to the great prince, the son of Sky, former sovereign of the gods, she gave a huge stone, having wrapped it in swaddling clothes: which he then took in his hands, and stowed away into his belly, wretch as he was, nor did he consider in his mind that against him for the future his own invincible and untroubled son was left instead of a stone, 490 who was shortly about to subdue him by strength of hand, and to drive him from his honors, and himself to reign among the immortals. Quickly then throve the spirit and beauteous limbs of the king, and, as years came round, having been beguiled by the wise counsels of Earth 495 huge Kronos, wily counselor, let loose again his offspring, having been conquered by the arts and strength of his son. And first he disgorged the stone, since he swallowed it last. This stone Zeus fixed down upon the earth with-its-broad-ways, in divine Pytho [Delphi], beneath the clefts of Parnassus, 500 to be a *sēma* thereafter, a marvel to mortal men. Then he loosed from destructive bonds his father's brethren, the sons of Sky, whom his father had bound in his folly. And they showed gratitude to him for his kindnesses, and gave him the thunder, and the smoking bolt, 505 and lightning; but earlier huge Earth had hidden them; trusting on these, he rules over mortals and immortals.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Iapetos and Klymene

Iapetos, moreover, wedded the damsel Klymene, a fair-ankled Okeanos-daughter, and ascended into a common bed. And she bore him Atlas, a stout-hearted son, 510 and brought forth exceeding-famous Menoitios, and artful Prometheus, full of various wiles, and Epimetheus of-erring-mind, who was from the first an evil to gain-seeking men: for he first received from Zeus the clay-formed woman, a virgin. But the insolent Menoitios wide-seeing Zeus 515 thrust down to Erebos, having, stricken him with flaming lightning, on account of his arrogance, and overweening strength. But Atlas upholds broad Sky by strong necessity, before the clear-voiced Hesperides, standing on earth's verge, with head and unwearied hands. 520 For this lot counseling Zeus apportioned to him.

Prometheus

And wily-minded Prometheus he bound in indissoluble bonds, with painful chains, having thrust them through the middle of a column. And he urged against him an eagle with-wings-outspread: but it kept feeding on his immortal liver, while it would increase to a like size 525 all-round by night, to what the eagle with-wings-outspread had eaten during the whole day before. Indeed Hēraklēs, valiant son of fair-ankled Alkmene, slew this bird, and repelled from the son of Iapetos the baneful pest, and released him from his anxieties, not against the wiles of high-reigning Olympian Zeus, 530 so that the *kleos* of Thebes-born Hēraklēs might be yet more than before over the many-feeding earth. Thus he honors his very famous son, through veneration for him. And, though incensed, he [Zeus] ceased from the wrath which he was harboring because he [Hēraklēs] strove in plans against the almighty son of Kronos.

Prometheus: Zeus's Choice of the Sacrifice

535 When the gods and mortal men were contending at Mekone, then did he [Prometheus] set before him [Zeus] a huge ox, having

divided it with ready mind, studying to deceive the wisdom of Zeus. For here, on the one hand, he deposited the flesh and entrails with rich fat on the hide, having covered it with the belly of the ox; and there, on the other hand, he laid down, **540** having well disposed them with subtle craft, the white bones of the ox, covering them with white fat. Then it was that the father of gods and men addressed him, "Son of Iapetos, far-famed among all kings, how unfairly, good friend, you have divided the portions." **545** Thus spoke rebukingly Zeus, skilled in imperishable counsels. And him in his turn wily Prometheus addressed, laughing low, but he was not forgetful of subtle craft: "Most glorious Zeus, greatest of ever-living gods, choose which of these your inclination within your breast bids you." He spoke in subtlety: **550** but Zeus knowing imperishable counsels was aware, in fact, and not ignorant of his guile; and was boding in his heart evils to mortal men, which also were about to find accomplishment. Then with both hands he lifted up the white fat. But he was incensed in mind, and wrath came around him in spirit, **555** when he saw the white bones of the ox arranged with guileful art. And thenceforth the tribes of men on the earth burn to the immortals white bones on fragrant altars. Then cloud-compelling Zeus addressed him, greatly displeased: "Son of Iapetos, skilled in wise plans beyond all, **560** you do not, good sir, yet forget subtle craft." Thus spoke in his wrath Zeus knowing imperishable counsels: from that time forward, ever mindful of the fraud, he did not give the strength of untiring fire to wretched mortal men, who dwell upon the earth. **565** But the good son of Iapetos cheated him, and stole the far-seen splendor of untiring fire in a hollow fennel-stalk; but it stung High-thundering Zeus to his heart's core, and incensed his spirit, when he saw the radiance of fire conspicuous among men.

Prometheus: Pandora and the Lineage of Women

570 Forthwith then he fashioned evil for men in requital for the fire bestowed. For from the earth the famous Hephaistos, halting in both feet, fashioned the image of a modest maiden, through the counsels of

the son of Kronos. And the goddess glancing-eyed Athena girded and arrayed her in silver-white raiment; 575 and from her head she held with her hands a curiously embellished veil, a marvel to look upon: and Pallas Athena placed around her about her head lovely garlands fresh-budding with meadow-flowers, and around her head she set a golden coronet, which renowned Hephaistos lame with both feet had made himself, 580 having wrought it carefully by hand, out of compliment to Zeus his father. On it had been wrought many curious monsters, a marvel to view, as many as in great abundance the continent and the sea maintain. Many of these he introduced, and much elegance beamed from it, of wondrous beauty, like to living animals gifted with sounds. 585 But when he had wrought a beauteous evil instead of good, he led her forth even where were the rest of gods and men, exulting as she was in the adornment of the gleaming-eyed daughter-of-a-strong-father: and wonder seized immortal gods as well as mortal men, when they beheld a deep snare, against which man's craftiness is in vain.

590 From her is the race of tender women. For from her is a pernicious race. Tribes of women, a great source of hurt, dwell with mortal men, helpmates not in consuming poverty, but in surfeit. And as when in close-roofed hives bees 595 feed drones, sharers in bad works, the former through the whole day till sunset are busy day by day, and make white combs, while the latter, remaining within in the close-roofed hives, reap the labors of others for their own stomachs. 600 Just as to mortal men high-thundering Zeus gave women as an evil, accomplices of painful toils: another evil too did he provide instead of good; to wit whosoever shunning marriage and the ills that women work, declines to marry, and has come to old age pernicious, 605 through want of one to tend his final days; he lives not, it is true, in lack of subsistence, but, when he is dead, distant kindred divide his possessions; while to whomsoever, on the other hand, the lot of marriage shall have fallen, and he has had a good wife congenial to his heart, to him then forever ill contends with good to be with him: 610 but whoso

finds a baneful breed, lives with an incessant care to spirit and heart within his breast, and it is an irremediable woe. Thus it is not possible to deceive or overreach the mind of Zeus, for neither did Prometheus, helpful son of Iapetos, 615 escape from beneath his severe wrath; but a great chain, by necessity, constrains him, very knowing though he is.

Titanomachy

But when first their father became angry in spirit against Briareus, Kottos, and Gyes, he bound them with a strong bond, admiring their overweening courage, and also their form 620 and bulk; and he made them dwell beneath the roomy earth. Then they in grief dwelling beneath the earth, sat at the verge, on the extremities of vast Earth, very long, afflicted, having a great woe at heart; but them the son of Kronos, and other immortal gods, 625 whom fair-haired Rhea bore in the embrace of Kronos, by the counsels of Earth brought up again to light: for she recounted to them at large everything, how they should along with those [Briareus, Kottos, and Gyes] gain victory and splendid glory. Long time then they fought, incurring soul-vexing toil, 630 the Titan gods and as many as were born from Kronos, in opposition to each other in stout conflicts; the one side, the glorious Titans from lofty Othrys, and the other, the gods, givers of good things, whom Rhea the fair-haired had borne to Kronos, in union with him, from Olympus.

635 They then in soul-distressing battle, one party with the other, were fighting continuously more than ten years. Nor was there any riddance or end of severe contention to either party, and the completion of the war was extended equally to either. But when at length Zeus set before them all things agreeable, 640 to wit, nectar and ambrosia, on which the gods themselves feed, a noble spirit grew in the breasts of all. And when they had tasted the nectar and delightful ambrosia, then at length the father of gods and men addressed them: "Hear me, illustrious children of Earth and Sky, 645 that I may speak what my spirit within my breast prompts me to speak. For now a very long space we are

fighting, each in opposition to other, concerning victory and power, all our days, the Titan gods and as many of us are sprung from Kronos. 650 Now you must show against the Titans in deadly fight both mighty force and hands invincible, in gratitude for our mild loving-kindness, namely, after how many sufferings you came back again to the light, from afflictive bondage, through our counsels, from the murky gloom.” Thus he spoke; and him in turn blameless Kottos addressed in answer: 655 “Excellent Lord, you do not tell things unlearned by us; but we too are aware that your wisdom is excellent, and excellent your intellect, and that you have been to the immortals an averter of terrible destruction. And back again, from harsh bonds, have we come from the murky darkness, through your thoughtful care, 660 O royal son of Kronos, having experienced treatment unhopèd-for. Wherefore also now with steadfast purpose and prudent counsel we will protect your might in dread conflict, fighting with the Titans in stout battles.”

Thus he spoke; and the gods, givers of good, approved, 665 when they had heard his speech: and their spirit was eager for battle still more than before, and they stirred up unhappy strife all of them, female as well as male, on that day, both Titan gods, and as many as had sprung from Kronos, and they whom Zeus sent up to light from Erebos, beneath the earth, 670 terrible and strong, having overweening *biē*. From the shoulders of these a hundred hands outsprung to all alike, and to each fifty heads grew from their shoulders over their sturdy limbs. They then were pitted against the Titans in deadly combat, 675 holding huge rocks in their sturdy hands. But the Titans on the other side made strong their phalanxes with alacrity, and both sides were showing work of hand and *biē* at the same time, and the boundless sea re-echoed terribly, and earth resounded loudly, and the broad sky groaned, 680 being shaken, and vast Olympus was convulsed from its base under the violence of the immortals, and a severe quaking came to murky Tartaros, namely, a hollow sound of countless chase of feet, and of strong battle-strokes: to such an extent did they hurl groan-causing weapons. 685 And the voice

of both sides reached the starry sky as they cheered, for they came together with a great war-cry.

No longer did Zeus restrain his fury, but then forthwith his heart was filled with fierceness, and he began also to exhibit all his *biē*: then, from the sky and from Olympus **690** he went forth lightening continually, and the bolts close together with thunder and lightning flew duly from his sturdy hand, whirling a sacred flash, in frequent succession, while all-around life-giving Earth was crashing in conflagration, and the immense forests on all sides crackled loudly with fire. **695** All land was boiling, and the streams of Okeanos, and the barren sea. Hot vapor was circling the earth-born Titans, and the incessant blaze reached the divine dense-atmosphere, while flashing radiance of thunderbolt and lightning was bereaving their eyes of sight, strong though they were. **700** Fearful heat likewise possessed Chaos; and it seemed, to look at, face to face, with the eye, and to hear the sound with the ear, just as if earth and the broad sky from above were threatening to meet: for such an exceeding crash would have arisen from earth falling in ruins, and the sky dashing it down from above. **705** Such a din there rose when the gods clashed in strife. The winds too at the same time were stirring up quaking and dust together, thunder and lightning and smoking bolt, shafts of the mighty Zeus; and they were bearing shout and battle-cry into the midst, one of another; then a terrible noise **710** of dreadful strife was roused, strength of prowess was put forth, and the battle was inclined; but before that time assailing one another, they were fighting incessantly in stern conflict. Now the others among the first ranks roused the keen fight, Kottos, Briareus, and Gyes insatiable in war, **715** who truly were hurling from sturdy hands three hundred rocks close upon each other, and they had overshadowed the Titans with missiles, sent them beneath the broad-wayed earth, and bound them in painful bonds, having conquered them with their hands, over-haughty though they were, **720** as far beneath under earth as the sky is from the earth, for equal is the space from earth to murky Tartaros.

Depiction of the Underworld

For nine nights and days also would a brazen anvil be descending from the sky, and come on the tenth to the earth; and nine days as well as nights again would a brazen anvil be descending 725 from the earth, to reach on the tenth to Tartaros. Around it moreover a brazen fence has been forged, and about it Night is poured in three rows around the neck; but above spring the roots of Earth and barren Sea. There, under murky darkness, the Titan gods 730 lie hidden by the counsels of cloud-compelling Zeus in a dark, dreary place, where are the extremities of vast Earth. These may not go forth, for Poseidon has placed above them brazen gates, and a wall goes round them on both sides. There dwell Gyes, and Kottos, and high-spirited Briareus, 735 faithful guards of aegis-bearing Zeus. And there are the sources and boundaries of dusky Earth, of murky Tartaros, of barren Sea, and starry Sky, all in their order: boundaries oppressive and gloomy, which also even gods abhor, 740 a vast chasm, not even for a whole round of a year would one reach the ground, after having first been within the gates: but gusts of wind following one upon the other would bear him onward hither and thither, distressing him, and dreadful even to immortal gods is this prodigy.

There the dread abodes of gloomy Night 745 stand shrouded in dark clouds. In front of these the son of Iapetos stands and holds broad Sky, with his head and unwearied hands, unmovedly, where Night and Day also drawing near are accustomed to salute each other, as they cross the vast 750 brazen threshold. The one is about to go down within, while the other comes forth abroad, nor ever does the abode constrain both within; but constantly one at any rate being outside the dwelling, wanders over the earth, while the other again being within the abode, awaits the season of her journey, until it comes; 755 the one having a far-seeing light for men-on-the-earth, and the other, destructive Night, having Sleep, the brother of Death, in its hands, being shrouded in hazy mist. And there the sons of obscure Night hold their habitation, Sleep

and Death, dread gods: nor ever does 760 the bright sun look upon them with his rays, as he ascends the sky, or descends from the sky. Of whom indeed the one tarries on the earth and the broad surface of the sea, silently and soothingly to men; but of the other, iron is the heart, and brazen is his 765 ruthless soul within his breast; and whomsoever of men he may have first caught, he holds: and he is hostile even to immortal gods. There in the front stand the resounding abodes of the infernal god, of mighty Hādēs, and awesome Persephone besides; and a fierce dog keeps guard in front, a ruthless dog; 770 and he has an evil trick: those who enter he fawns upon with his tail and both ears alike, yet he allows them not to go forth back again, but lies in wait and devours whomsoever he may have caught going forth outside the gates of strong Hādēs and dread Persephone.

775 There too dwells a goddess odious to immortals, dread Styx, eldest daughter of back-flowing Okeanos: and apart from the gods she inhabits renowned dwellings vaulted by huge rocks; and round about on all sides they are strengthened to Sky by silver columns. 780 And seldom goes the fleet-footed daughter of Thaumas, Iris, on a message over the broad back of the sea, namely, when by chance strife and quarrel shall have arisen among the immortals: and whosoever of them that hold Olympian dwellings, utters falsehood, then also Zeus is accustomed to send Iris to bring 785 from far in a golden ewer the great oath of the gods, the renowned water, cold as it is, which also runs down from a steep and lofty rock; but in abundance beneath the roomy Earth flows a branch of Okeanos from the sacred river through black Night; and a tenth portion has been assigned to it. 790 In nine portions indeed, rolling around Earth and also the broad back of the Sea with silver whirlpools, he [Okeanos] falls into the brine; but the other part flows forth from a rock, a great bane to the gods. Whosoever of immortals that occupy the top of snowy Olympus, shall have offered of this as a libation, and sworn over it a false oath, 795 lies breathless until the completion of a year, nor ever comes near the repast of nectar and ambrosia, but also lies breathless

and speechless on a strewn couch, and a baneful stupor over-shrouds him. But when he has fulfilled his malady until the full year, 800 then another after another more severe trouble succeeds for him. And for nine years he is parted from the ever-living gods; nor ever does he mix with them in council nor in feasts for nine whole years; but in the tenth he mingles again in the assemblies of the gods immortal, who occupy Olympian dwellings. 805 Such a grave oath have the gods made the imperishable water of Styx, that ancient water, which also runs through a very rugged tract.

There too are the sources and boundaries of dusky Earth, and murky Tartaros, and barren Sea, and starry Sky, all in order; 810 boundaries oppressive and gloomy, which also even gods abhor. And there are gleaming gates and a brazen threshold, unshaken and fixed upon far-extending foundations, self-growing; and before it, outside of all the gods, beyond gloomy Chaos, the Titans dwell. 815 But the famed allies of loud-crashing Zeus inhabit dwellings under the foundations of the Okeanos, namely, Kottos and Gyes. Briareus indeed, for his part, strong as he was, deep-sounding Earth-shaker made his son-in-law, and gave him to wife his daughter Kymopolia.

Typhonomachy

820 But when Zeus had driven the Titans out from Sky, huge Earth bore her youngest-born son, Typhoeus, by the embrace of Tartaros, through golden Aphrodite. Whose hands, indeed, are apt for deeds on the score of strength, and untiring the feet of the strong god; and from his shoulders 825 there were a hundred heads of a serpent, a fierce dragon, playing with dusky tongues, and from the eyes in his wondrous heads fire was gleaming, as he looked keenly. In all his terrible heads, too, were voices 830 sending forth every kind of sound ineffable. For a while they would utter sounds, so as for the gods to understand, and at another time again the voice of a loud-bellowing bull, untamable in force, and proud in utterance; at another time, again, that of a lion possessing a

daring spirit; at another yet again they would sound like to whelps, wondrous to hear; 835 and at another he would hiss, and the lofty mountains resound.

And, in fact, it was then that there would have been done a deed past remedy, and he, yes, he, would have reigned over mortals and immortals, unless the father of gods and men had quickly observed him. Harshly then he thundered, and heavily, 840 and terribly the earth re-echoed around; and the broad sky above, and the sea, and streams of Okeanos, and the abysses of earth. But beneath his immortal feet vast Olympus trembled, as the king rose up, and earth groaned beneath. And the heat from both caught the dark-colored sea, 845 both of the thunder and lightning, and fire from the monster, the heat arising from the thunderstorms, winds, and burning lightning. And all earth and sky and sea were boiling; and huge billows roared around the shores about and around, beneath the violence of gods; and unallayed quaking arose. 850 Hādēs trembled, monarch over the dead beneath; and the Titans under Tartaros, standing about Kronos, trembled also, on account of the unceasing tumult and dreadful contention. But then Zeus had raised high his wrath, and had taken his arms, his thunder and lightning, and smoking bolt, leapt up, 855 and smote him from Olympus, and scorched all-around all the wondrous heads of the terrible monster. But when at length he had quelled it, after having smitten it with blows, the monster fell down lamed, and huge Earth groaned. But the flame from the lightning-blasted monster flashed forth 860 in the mountain-hollows, hidden and rugged, when he was stricken, and much was the vast earth burnt and melted by the boundless vapor, like pewter, heated by the craft of youths, and by the well-bored melting-pit; or iron, which is the hardest of metals, 865 subdued in the dells of the mountain by blazing fire, melts in the sacred earth beneath the hands of Hephaistos. So was earth melted in the glare of burning fire. Then, troubled in spirit, he hurled him into wide Tartaros.

Now from Typhoeus is the strength of winds moist-blowing, 870
except the southwest, the north, and Argestes, and Zephyr, who also
indeed are a race from the gods, a great blessing to mortals. But the
others, being random gusts, breathe over the sea. And these falling upon
the darksome deep rage with baneful gusts, a great hurt to mortals; 875
and now here, now there they blow, and scatter ships, and destroy sailors:
nor is there any relief from ill to men, who encounter them on the sea.
But these again over the boundless flowery earth spoil the pleasant works
of earth-born men, 880 filling them with dust and wearisome uproar.

Descendants of Kronos: Children of Zeus

But when the blessed [*makar*] gods had fulfilled their labor [*ponos*],
and contended with the Titans perforce on the score of honors [*tīmai*],
then it was, I say, that they urged far-seeing Zeus, by the advice of
Earth, to rule and reign 885 over immortals: and he duly distributed
honors [*tīmai*] amongst them. And Zeus, king of the gods, made Mētis
first his wife; Mētis, most wise of deities as well as mortal men. But
when at last she was about to give birth to Athena, gleaming-eyed
goddess, then it was that having by deceit beguiled her mind 890 with
flattering words, he placed her [*Mētis*] within his own belly by the
advice of earth, and of starry Sky. For thus they persuaded him, lest other
of ever-living gods should possess sovereign honor in the room of Zeus.
For of her [*Mētis*] it was fated that wise children should be born: 895
first the glancing-eyed Tritonian maiden, having equal might and
prudent counsel with her father; and then she [*Mētis*] was going to give
birth to a son, as king of gods and men, with an overbearing spirit, if it
had not been for the fact that Zeus deposited her first in his own belly,
900 that the goddess might indicate to him both good and bad.

Next he wedded bright Themis, who bore the Hōrai: Eunomia,
Dikē, and blooming Peace, who care for their works for mortal men; and
the Fates [*moirai*], to whom counseling Zeus gives most honor, 905

Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who also give to men good and evil to possess. And Eurynome, daughter of Okeanos, having a very lovely form, bore him the fair-cheeked Kharites [Graces]: Aglaia, and Euphrosyne, and winsome Thalia; **910** from whose eyelids also as they gazed dropped Love, unnerving limbs, and sweetly too they look from under their brows. But he came to the couch of much-nourishing Demeter, who bore him white-armed Persephone; her whom Hādēs ravished from her mother: and sage Zeus gave her away. And next he was enamored of beautiful-haired **915** Mnemosyne, of whom were born to him the Muses nine, with-golden-fillets, to whom festivals, and the delight of song, are a pleasure. But Apollo and Artemis, rejoicing-in-arrows, a lovely off-spring beyond all the sky-dwellers, Leto **920** brought forth, after union in love with aegis-bearing Zeus. And last made he blooming Hera his spouse. She bore Hebe, and Arēs, and Eileithuia, having been united in love with the king of gods and men. But by himself, from his head, he produced glancing-eyed Tritonis [Athena], **925** fierce, strife-stirring, army-leading, unsubdued, and awesome, to whom dins, and wars, and battle are a delight.

Descendants of Kronos: Hera's Child, Hephaistos

And Hera, without having been united in love, brought forth famous Hephaistos, as she was furious and quarrelling with her husband; Hephaistos, distinguished in crafts from amongst all the sky-born.

Descendants of Kronos: Children of Poseidon

930 But from Amphitrite and the loud-roaring Earth-shaker sprang great and widely-powerful Triton, who occupies the depth of the sea, and inhabits golden houses beside his dear mother and his royal father, being a terrible god.

Descendants of Zeus

To shield-piercing Arēs, however, Kytherea [Aphrodite] bore Fear and Terror, **935** formidable deities, who route dense phalanxes of men in horrid war, with the help of city-spoiler Arēs; and Harmonia, whom high-spirited Kadmos [Kadmos] made his spouse. Then to Zeus Maia, daughter of Atlas, bore glorious Hermes, herald of immortals, having ascended his holy couch. **940** And to him Semele, daughter of Kadmos, bore an illustrious son, Dionysus bringer of joys, after union in love, mortal though she was, an immortal. But now both are deities. And Alkmene after union in love with cloud-compelling Zeus bore Hēraklēs the strong. **945** But Hephaistos, far-famed, crippled god, took to wife blooming Aglaia, youngest of the Kharites [Graces]. And Dionysus, of golden hair, took for his blooming bride blond-tressed Ariadne, daughter of Minos. And the son of Kronos made her immortal, and unsusceptible of old age for him. And fair-ankled Alkmene's valiant son, mighty Hēraklēs, having accomplished grievous toils, **950** made Hebe, daughter of mighty Zeus and Hera-with-golden-sandals, his bashful wife in snowy Olympus: happy hero, who having achieved a great work, **955** dwells among the immortals uninjured and ageless evermore.

Circe and Medea

To the unwearied Sun the famous daughter of Okeanos, Perseis, bore Circe and king Aietes. And Aietes, son of man-enlightening Sun, **960** wedded beauteous-cheeked Iduia, daughter of Okeanos, perfect through golden Aphrodite, brought forth to him fair-ankled Medea.

Children of Immortal Goddesses and Mortal Men

Take pleasure [in my performance], gods dwelling in Olympian abodes, islands and continents, and briny pontos within; and now Olympian Muses, sweet of speech, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, **965** sing you the generation of goddesses, as many as, having been united, though immortal, with mortal men, gave birth to children resembling

gods. Demeter, divine among goddesses, after union in delightful love, 970 bore Ploutos [Wealth] to the hero Iasios, in a thrice-plowed fallow field, in the fertile country of Crete, a kind god, who goes over all the earth, and the broad surface of the sea; and to him that has chanced upon him, and into whose hands he may have come, him, I say, he is accustomed to make rich, and presents to him much wealth [*olbos*]. 975 And to Kadmos, Harmonia, daughter of golden Aphrodite, bore Ino, Semele, and fair-cheeked Agaue, and Autonoe, whom Aristaios of-clustering-locks wedded, and Polydoros in tower-circled Thebes. But Kallirhoe, daughter of Okeanos, united to brave-hearted Khrysaor 980 in union of all-golden Aphrodite, bore a son the strongest of all mortals, Geryon, whom mighty Hēraklēs slew, for the sake of the trailing-footed oxen in island Erytheia.

And to Tithonos Eos bore Memnon with-brazen-helm, 985 king of the Ethiopians, and the sovereign Emathion. But to Kephalos in truth she [Eos] produced an illustrious son, the brave Phaethon, comparable to the gods, whom, when young, in the tender flower of glorious youth, a lad, conscious only of young fancies, laughter-loving Aphrodite 990 snatched up, and rushed away, and she made him, in her sacred shrine, the temple-keeper of her inner sanctum, a radiant *daimōn*. And the daughter of Aietes, Zeus-descended king, Jason, son of Aison, by the counsels of ever-living gods, carried off from Aietes, after he had fulfilled the grievous toils, 995 which, being many in number, the great and overbearing king, insolent and reckless Pelias, doer of deeds of violence, imposed upon him. Which having achieved, after having toiled much, the son of Aison arrived at Iolkos, bearing in his fleet ship a dark-eyed maiden, and her he made his blooming bride. Yes, and she [Medea], 1000 having been yoked with Jason, shepherd of his people, bore a son Medeus, whom Cheiron, son of Philyra, reared on the mountains; while the purpose of mighty Zeus was being fulfilled.

But of the daughters of Nereus, ancient sea-god, Psamathe, divine among goddesses, bore Phokos **1005** in the embrace of Aiakos, through golden Aphrodite: and the goddess Thetis, of the silver feet, yielding to Peleus, gave birth to Achilles the lion-hearted, who-broke-the-ranks-of-men. Fair-wreathed Kytherea [Aphrodite] too, blending in delightful love with the hero Anchises, bore Aineias [Aeneas] **1010** on the peaks of many-valleyed, woody Ida. But Circe, daughter of the Sun, born-of-Hyperion, by the love of Odysseus of-enduring-heart, gave birth to Agrios and blameless and strong Latinus; Telegonos also she bore through golden Aphrodite. **1015** Now these, very far in a recess of sacred isles, reigned over all the very renowned Tyrrhenians. But Kalypsō, divine among goddesses, bore to Odysseus Nausithoös and Nausinoös after union in delightful love.

1020 These, though immortal, having been united with mortal men, gave birth to children like unto the gods. And now sing you the generation of women, you sweet-spoken Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The name *Hēsiodos* means ‘he who sends forth the voice’, corresponding to the description of the Muses themselves at lines 10, 43, 65, 67. The element *-odos* ‘voice’ of *Hēsiodos* is apparently cognate with *audē* ‘voice’, the word used at line 31 to designate what was ‘breathed’ into Hesiod by the Muses.

[[back](#)] 2. “‘Truth’, which itinerant would-be oral poets are ‘unwilling’ to tell because of their need for survival [*Odyssey* 14.124-125], may be ‘willingly’ conferred by the Muses [‘whenever we are willing’ at *Theogony* line 28]. We see here what can be taken as a manifesto of pan-

Hellenic poetry, in that the poet Hesiod is to be freed from being a mere ‘belly’—one who owes his survival to his local audience with its local traditions: all such local traditions are *pseudea* ‘falsehoods’ in face of the *alēthea* ‘true things’ that the Muses impart specially to Hesiod. The conceit inherent in the pan-Hellenic poetry of Hesiod is that this overarching tradition is capable of achieving something that is beyond the reach of individual local traditions.”—G. Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca 1990; paperback 1992) 45. The pan-Hellenic nature of Hesiodic poetry is conveyed by the absolutist concept of *alēthēs/alētheia* ‘true/truth’ [‘what is not subject to forgetting or mental disconnection’, as expressed by *lēth* – ‘forget, be mentally disconnected’].

[[back](#)] 3. I take it that the poet, in embracing a pan-Hellenic perspective, is ostentatiously rejecting local traditions as being too separatist and provincial. From the standpoint of local creation myths, humankind was generated out of oak trees (another variant: ash trees) or out of rocks.

[[back](#)] 4. West *Theogony* commentary p. 180 translates ‘provinces’ or ‘spheres of influence’, citing some very interesting illustrations of this sense.

[[back](#)] 5. Compare the context of *neikos* at *Works and Days* 35.

[[back](#)] 6. See note 4.

[[back](#)] 7. Folk etymology from *kuklos* ‘circle’ and *ops* ‘eye’.

[[back](#)] 8. A play on the like-sounding forms *meid-* ‘smile’ and *mēd(ea)* ‘genitals’: *philommeidēs* means ‘lover of smiles’, while *philommēdēs* would mean ‘lover of genitals’.

Hesiodic *Works and Days*

Translated by Gregory Nagy

₁Muses of Pieria, you who make glory [*kleos*] with your songs,

₂come and tell of Zeus, making a song about your father,

₃on account of whom there are mortals both unworthy of talk and worthy,

₄both worth speaking of and not—all on account of great Zeus.

5 Easily he gives power, and just as easily he ruins the powerful.

₆Easily he diminishes the distinguished, and magnifies the undistinguished.

₇Easily he makes straight the crooked and withers the overweening

₈—Zeus, the one who thunders on high, who lives in the highest abode.

₉Heed me, seeing and hearing as you do, and with justice [*dikē*] make straight [*ithunein*] the divine laws [*themis* plural].

10 While you do that, I am ready to tell genuine [*etētuma*] things to Perses.

So then, the *genos* of the *Erides* was not a single one, but on Earth there are two of them. One is to be praised when a person takes note in his *noos*,

but the other is to be blamed. They have the opposite kinds of *thūmos*.

One of them promotes evil war and strife,

15 the wretched one! No mortal loves this one, but, by necessity,

in accord with the will of the immortals, humans give *tīmē* to this burdensome *Eris*.

As for the other one, she was the first of the two to be born of dark Night.

And Zeus, seated on high, abiding in the aether, made her to be far better for men, rooted in Earth as she is.

20 She rouses even the resourceless person to work.

For when one man who needs work looks at another man

who is rich, who strives to plow, to plant,

to keep his household in order, then it is that neighbor envies neighbor,

as the rich man is striving for his wealth. This *Eris* is good for mortals.

25 Potter envies potter, carpenter envies carpenter.

Beggar envies beggar, singer envies singer.

You, Perses, must place these things in your *thūmos*.

Do not let the *Eris* who rejoices at others' misfortunes keep your *thūmos* away from work,

as you skulk about looking and listening for occasions of quarreling [*neikea*] in the *agorā*.

30 The *hōrā* for quarreling [*neikea*] and *agorai* is a short one indeed

for anyone who does not have lasting supplies of life-sustenance

as provided by the *hōrai*. The Earth bears the sustenance, which is the grain of Demeter.

Feeding on this sustenance to the point of *koros*, you are ready to promote quarreling [*neikea*] and strife

over the property of others. Well, you will not be getting a second chance

35 to do what you are now doing. But come, let us now sort out
[*dia- krinesthai*] for ourselves the quarrel [*neikos*],

³⁶with straight judgments [*dikai*], which are the best when they
come from Zeus.

Earlier, we divided up our inheritance, and then you seized and
took away

much more than was yours, thus increasing the glory of kings

who devour gifts, who voluntarily render this *dikē*.

40 They are inept [*nēpioi*], not knowing how much the half is more
than the total

or how much of a good thing there is to be found in mallow or
asphodel.

The gods had hidden away the true means of livelihood for
humankind, and they still keep it that way.

If it were otherwise, it would be easy for you to do in just one day
all the work you need to do,

and have enough to last you a year, idle though you would be.

45 Right away, you could store your steering-oar over the fireplace,

and what you had plowed with your oxen or hard-working mules
could go to waste.

But Zeus hid it [the true means of livelihood for humankind],
angry in his thoughts,

because Prometheus, with crooked plans, deceived him.

For that reason he [Zeus] devised plans that were to be baneful for
humankind.

50 And he [Zeus] hid fire. But [deceiving Zeus again] the good son
of Iapetos [Prometheus]

stole it for humankind from Zeus the Planner

inside a hollow fennel-stalk, escaping the notice of Zeus the
Thunderer.

Angered at him, Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, spoke:

“Son of Iapetos, knowing more schemes than anyone else,

55 you rejoice over stealing the fire and over deceiving my thinking.

But a great pain awaits both you and future mankind.

To make up for the fire, I will give them an evil thing, in which they may all

take their delight in their hearts, embracing this evil thing of their own making.”

Thus spoke the father of men and gods, and he laughed out loud.

60 Then he ordered Hephaistos, renowned all over, to shape some wet clay as soon as possible, and to put into it a human voice

and strength, and to make it look like the immortal goddesses,

with the beautiful and lovely appearance of a virgin. And he ordered Athena

to teach her own craft to her, weaving a very intricate web.

65 And he ordered Aphrodite to shed golden charm over her head;

also harsh longing, and anxieties that eat away at the limbs.

And he ordered Hermes, the messenger and Argos-killer,

to put inside her an intent that is doglike and a temperament that is stealthy.

Zeus spoke, and the gods obeyed the Lord Son of Kronos.

70 Right away the famed Lame One shaped out of the clay of the Earth

something that looked like a comely virgin—all on account of the will of Zeus, son of Kronos.

Athena dressed her and tied her girdle, adorning her.

And the goddesses who are named *Kharites* [Graces], as well as the Lady Peithō [Persuasion],

placed golden necklaces on its skin, and the *Hōrai*,

75 with their beautiful hair, plaited springtime garlands around her head.

Pallas Athena placed on her skin every manner of ornament [*kosmos*].

And within her breast the messenger and Argos-killer fashioned

falsehoods [*pseudea*], crafty words, and a stealthy disposition,

according to the plans of Zeus the loud-thunderer. And the messenger of the gods

80 put inside her a voice, and he called this woman

Pandōrā, because all the gods who abide in Olympus

gave her as a gift [*dōron*], a pain for grain-eating men.

But when the gods completed this deception of sheer doom,
against which there is no remedy,

Father Zeus sent the famed Argos-killer to Epimetheus,

85 the swift messenger of the gods, bringing the gift [*dōron*]. Nor
did Epimetheus

take notice [verb *phrazesthai*] how Prometheus had told him
never to accept a gift [*dōron*]

from Zeus the Olympian, but to send it

right back, lest an evil thing happen to mortals.

But he [Epimetheus] accepted it, and only then did he take note
in his *noos* that he had an evil thing on his hands.

90 Before this, the various kinds of humanity lived on earth

without evils and without harsh labor,

92 without wretched diseases that give disasters to men.

94 But the woman took the great lid off the jar

95 and scattered what was inside. She devised baneful anxieties for humankind.

The only thing that stayed within the unbreakable contours of the jar was *Elpis* [Hope].

It did not fly out.

Before it could, she put back the lid on top of the jar,

according to the plans of aegis-bearing Zeus, the cloud-gatherer.

100 But as for the other things, countless baneful things, they are randomly scattered all over humankind.

Full is the earth of evils, full is the sea.

Diseases for humans are a day-to-day thing. Every night,

they wander about at random, bringing evils upon mortals

silently—for Zeus had taken away their voice.

105 So it is that there is no way to elude the intent [*noos*] of Zeus.

Now, if you are so disposed, I shall sum up for you another thing I have to say.

I shall do it well, and with expertise, and you should put it in your thoughts.

Here it is: the gods and mortal humans have the same origins.

In the very beginning, a Golden Generation of shining-faced humans

110 was made by the immortals who abide in Olympian homes.

They were in the time of Kronos, when he was king over the sky.

They lived like gods, having a *thūmos* without anxieties,

without labor and woe. Nor did wretched old age

weigh upon them. Their feet and hands did not change,

115 and they had good times [verb *terpesthai*] at feasts [*thaliai*],
exempt from all evils.

And when they died, it was as if they were overcome by sleep. All
manner of good things [*esthla*]

belonged to them. And the grain-giving [root *dōr-*] earth,
without prompting,

bore produce aplenty. And they, placidly

and in serenity [*hēsukhiā*], lived off their fields, amidst much material wealth.

120 They were rich in flocks, *philoī* to the blessed gods.

¹²² And they [= the Golden Generation of humankind] are superhumans [*daimones*].

They exist because of the Will of Zeus.

¹²³ They are the good, the earthbound [*epi-khthonioi*], the guardians of mortal humans.

¹²⁴ They guard acts of justice [*dikē*] and they guard against wretched acts of evil.

125 Enveloped in mist, they roam everywhere throughout the earth.

¹²⁶ They are givers of prosperity. And they had this as a privilege [*geras*], a kingly one [*basilēion*].

¹²⁷ Then a second Generation, a much worse one, a later one,

¹²⁸ the Silver, was made by the gods who abide in their Olympian homes.

¹²⁹ They were like the Golden one neither in their nature nor in their power of perception [*noēma*].

130 As a boy, each was be raised for a hundred years by dear mother,

¹³¹ each one was playing around, quite inept [*nēpios*], at home.

¹³² But when the time of maturing [*hēbân*] and the full measure of maturity [*hēbē*] arrived,

¹³³ they lived only for a very short time, suffering pains [*algea*]

¹³⁴ for their acts of heedlessness [*aphradiai*],¹ since they could not keep overweening *hubris*

135 away from each other, and they were not willing to care for [*therapeuein*] the immortal gods,

¹³⁶ not willing at all, nor were they willing to make sacrifice on the sacred altars of the blessed [*makares*] gods,

¹³⁷ the way humans are required by cosmic law [*themis*] to behave, each group according to its own customs. Anyway, they too, when the time came,

¹³⁸ were hidden away by Zeus son of Kronos. He was angry at them because they did not give honors [*tīmai*],

¹³⁹ no they did not, to the blessed [*makares*] gods who possess Olympus.

140 But when the earth covered over this generation [*genos*] as well

¹⁴¹ —and they are called the blessed [*makares*],² abiding below the
earth [*hupokhthonioi*],³ mortals that they are,

¹⁴² the Second Ones, though they too [like the First Ones, who are
the Golden Generation] get their share of honor [*tīmē*].

¹⁴³ And Zeus the father made another Generation of mortal men,
the Third.

¹⁴⁴ He made it of Bronze, not at all the like the Silver.

145 A Generation born from ash trees, violent and terrible. Their
minds were set on the woeful deeds of Arēs

¹⁴⁶ and on acts of hubris. Grain

¹⁴⁷ they did not eat, but their hard-dispositioned heart [*thūmos*]
was made of hard rock.

¹⁴⁸ They were forbidding: they had great force [*biē*] and
overpowering hands

¹⁴⁹ growing out of their shoulders, with firm foundations for limbs.

150 Their implements were bronze, their houses were bronze,

¹⁵¹ and they did their work with bronze. There was no black iron.

¹⁵² And they were wiped out when they killed each other with
their own hands,

¹⁵³ and went nameless to the dank house of chill Hādēs,

¹⁵⁴ yes, nameless [*nōnumnoi*!]! Death still took them, terrifying as
they were,

155 yes, black Death took them, and they left behind them the bright
light of the Sun.

¹⁵⁶ But when this Generation too was covered over by the earth,

¹⁵⁷ Zeus made yet another Generation on earth, which nurtures
many, a fourth one.

¹⁵⁸ This one, by contrast [with the third], was just [*dikaion*]. It was
better.

¹⁵⁹ It was the godlike generation of men who were heroes [*hērōes*],
who are called

160 demigods [*hēmi-theoi*]; they are the previous generation [=
previous to ours] who lived throughout the boundless earth.

¹⁶¹ These [*demigods*] were overcome by evil war and the terrible
din of battle.

¹⁶² Some died at the walls of seven-gated Thebes, the land of
Kadmos,

¹⁶³ as they fought over the sheep of Oedipus.

¹⁶⁴ Others were taken away by war over the great yawning
stretches of sea

165 to Troy, all on account of Helen with the beautiful hair.

¹⁶⁶ Then they [= this Generation]⁴ were covered over by the finality
of death.

¹⁶⁷ But they received, apart from other humans, a life and a place
to live

¹⁶⁸ from Zeus the son of Kronos, who translated them to the edges
of the earth,

¹⁶⁹ far away from the immortal gods. And Kronos is king over
them.⁵

170 And they live with a carefree heart [*thūmos*]

¹⁷¹ on the Islands of the Blessed [*Nēsoi Makarōn*] on the banks of
the deep-swirling river Okeanos,

¹⁷² blessed [*olbioi*] heroes [*hērōes*] that they are, and for them there
is a honey-sweet harvest [*karpos*]

¹⁷³ that comes to fruition three times each year, produced by the
life-giving land.

¹⁷⁴ If only I did not have to be in the company of the Fifth
Generation

175 of men, and if only I had died before it [= the Fifth Generation] or
been born after it,

¹⁷⁶ since now is the time of the Iron Generation. What will now
happen is that men will not even have a day or night

free from toil and suffering.

They will be worn down, and the gods will give harsh cares.

Still, despite all this, even they will have some good mixed in with
the bad.

180 But Zeus will destroy even this Generation of mortal men,

when the time comes that children will be born with gray hair at
their temples.

This will be a time when the father will not have equanimity with his children, nor the children with their father,

nor the guest [*xenos*] with his host, nor comrade with comrade.

Nor will a brother be *philos*, as he had been before.

185 Once men grow old, their sons will give them no *tīmē*.

They will reproach their parents, shouting at them with harsh words.

Wretches! Men who do not know about the retribution of the gods! Such men would not even give to their aging parents the honor that is their due.

These deciders of *dikē* by violence! They will destroy each other's cities.

190 There will be no appreciation [*khāris*] for the man who swears correctly, for the man of *dikē*,

for the *agathos* man. Instead, it will be the doer of evil deeds and the man of *hubris*

that they will give *tīmē* to. In the grip of violence will be *dikē* and *aidōs*.

The inferior man will harm the superior one,

speaking with crooked words, under oath.

195 A constant companion of all of wretched humankind will be
Envy,

the badmouthing one, the one that delights over the misfortunes
of others, the one with the hateful face.

And then, flying off to Olympus, away from the broad earth,

covering their beautiful complexion with white veils,

heading for the race of immortals and leaving humans behind,

200 *Aidōs* and *Nemesis* will depart. What will be left behind are
baneful pains

for mortal humans. And there will be nothing to ward off evil.

Now I will tell an *ainos* to kings, discerning as they presumably
are.

This is what the hawk said to the nightingale, the one with the
patterned voice,

grasping her in his talons, carrying her far off into the clouds.

205 She in the meantime, pierced by the curved talons,

was lamenting. But he spoke to her from his position of superior power:

“What *daimōn* makes you cry out this way? One who is far more powerful holds you fast.

You will go wherever I take you, singer [poet] that you are.

I can do what I wish with you: either make a meal out of you or let you go.

210 Foolish is the one who is ready to stand up to those who are more powerful.

Such a person is deprived of victory, suffering pains in addition to the disgrace of defeat.”

So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird.

You, Perses, must listen to *dikē*, and you must not make *hubris* thrive.

For *hubris* is bad for the wretched mortal. A noble [*esthlos*] man cannot

215 easily bear the burden, and he is weighed down under it [*hubris*],
incurring *Atai*. It is better to go the other way,

towards the things of *dikē*. The *dikē* comes out prevailing over *hubris*

in the end. The inept [*nēpios*] person learns only by going through the experience.

Horkos ['Oath' personified] runs in pursuit, catching up with crooked *dikai*,

220 and there is a clamor as *Dikē* is dragged off by men who take her wherever they want,

devourers of gifts, as they sort out, with crooked *dikai*, what is or is not *themis*.

Weeping, she [*Dikē*] pursues the city and the haunts of its inhabitants.

Invisible, she brings evil upon men

who exile her and apportion her so as to make her crooked.

225 As for those who render straight *dikai* for *xenoi* and for local people alike,

and who do not veer away from what is *dikaion*,

for them, their city flourishes, and the inhabitants blossom.

Peace, the nurturer of young men, ranges about the land, and
never do they have

wretched war manifested for them by Zeus who sees far and
wide.

230 Men who have straight *dikē* are never visited by Hunger

or by *atē*. Instead, at feasts, they reap the rewards of the works that
they industriously cared about.

For them the earth bears much life-sustenance. On the
mountains, the oak tree

bears acorns at the top and bees in the middle.

Their wooly sheep are laden with fleeces.

235 Their wives bear children resembling their fathers.

They flourish with all good things, without fail. And they do not
have to find their way home

on ships, but the grain-giving land bears fruit.

But those who have evil *hubris* and wanton deeds on their minds

for them the son of Kronos, wide-seeing Zeus, marks out *dikē*.

240 Many times it happens that an entire *polis* suffers the
consequences on account of just one evil man

who transgresses and plans reckless deeds.

For these men the son of Kronos brings down from the skies a
great disaster,

famine along with pestilence. And the people waste away.

Their women do not give birth, and their households are depleted
—

245 all on account of the plans of Zeus the Olympian. There will be a
time when

Zeus will destroy their vast host of fighting men. Or he can exact
retribution against them by destroying their city-walls

or their ships sailing over the *pontos*.

You kings! Mark well, all of you,

this *dikē*. For nearby and present among humankind

250 are the immortals, and they take note of those who, with crooked
dikai,

oppress each other, not caring about the retribution of the gods.

They are countless—no, more, they are three times countless—
ranging all over the earth, nurturer of many.

They are the immortal ones, coming from Zeus, guardians
[*phulakes*] of mortal men,

who watch over the *dikai* and guard against reckless deeds.

255 They are invisible, ranging everywhere over the land.

Then there is the virgin *Dikē*, born of Zeus.

She has great esteem and *aidōs* among the gods who abide in
Olympus.

Whenever someone does her harm, using crooked words,

right away she takes her place at the side of Zeus son of Kronos,

260 and she proclaims the *noos* of men that is without *dikē*, with the
result that the people have to pay retribution

for the deeds of recklessness committed by their kings. These
kings, having baneful thoughts in their *noos*,

pronounce *dikai* in a crooked way, making them veer and go
astray.

You kings! Guard against these things and make straight your words,

you devourers of gifts! And put crooked *dikai* out of your mind completely.

265 The man who plans misfortune for another man is planning misfortune for himself.

A bad plan is the worst plan for the one who planned it.

The Eye of Zeus sees all and takes note of all in his *noos*.

If he so wishes, he will watch over the present situation. It does not escape his notice

what kind of *dikē* this present *dikē* is that the *polis* holds within itself.

270 The way things are now, I would not want myself or a son of mine to be a man of *dikē* in my dealings with men—

if it were true that a man of no *dikē* [justice] would have a *dikē* [judgment] going more his way—

that is, if it were true that it is a misfortune to be a man of *dikē*.

But my hope is that such a state of affairs has not yet been brought to pass by Zeus the Planner.^{[6](#)}

Perses! I call on you to put these things in your mind.

275 Heed *dikē*, and put *biē* completely out of your mind.

For this way [of *biē*] is the norm that Zeus has imposed

on the fish and beasts and winged birds,

that is, to eat each other. For they have no *dikē*.

But to humans he gave *dikē*, which is by far the best.

280 For if anyone stands ready to speak publicly the things of *dikē*,

with full awareness,⁷ to him Zeus grants bliss [*olbos*].

But whoever knowingly swears a false oath as he bears witness,

lying, such a man harms *dikē*, bringing about a damage that cannot be compensated.

The future lineage of such a man will be left darkened over.

285 But the future lineage of a man who swears properly will be superior.

Inept [*nēpios*] Perses! As I speak to you, I have good thoughts in my *noos* towards you.

To be evil is an easy choice, and there are many ways to do it.

The way of evil is smooth and accessible.

But the immortal gods have put between them and us the sweat
that goes with *aretē*.

290 The path towards it [*aretē*] is long and steep.

It is rough at first, but, as it reaches the top,
it finally becomes easy, hard as it was before.

The best man is the one who, unlike the others, takes note of
everything in his *noos*,

marking well what is for the best in the future and in the
fulfillment of time.

295 Noble [*esthlos*] is he who puts his trust in one who speaks what is
genuine.

But whoever does not think with his *noos* nor listens to one who
does,

taking it to his *thūmos*, such a man is worthless.

Keep in mind what I urge you to do,

Perses, and get to work, you offshoot of Zeus, so that Hunger
300 may hate you, and that you may be loved by Demeter with the
beautiful garlands,

the honorable one, and that she may fill your granary with life-
sustenance.

Hunger is the natural companion of the utterly idle man.

Both gods and men begrudge helping such a man who is idle
in his life. He is similar in temperament to the stingless drones
305 who, idle as they are, waste away the hard work of the bees,

eating it all up. Let it be *philon* for you to make arrangements in
moderation,

so that your granaries may be filled with seasonal life-sustenance.

It is from working that men get many sheep and wealth.

And it is by working that a man becomes more *philos* than other
men to the immortals
310 and to mortals. They all hate the idle.

Working is no cause for reproach [*oneidos*]. Not working is cause for *oneidos*.

If you do work, the idle man will envy you

as you get wealthy. Your wealth is attended by *aretē* and god-given glory [*kudos*].

Whatever kind of *daimōn* you have, working is the better way,

315 if only you would turn your deranged *thūmos* away from the property of others

and directed it towards work, as I urge you.

There is no genuine *aidōs* in looking after the needs of a man who is wanting.

Aidōs can be of great harm or benefit to men.

Aidōs goes with being poor. Brazenness goes with being wealthy.

320 Wealth is not to be seized by force. The god-given things of life are by far better.

For if someone takes hold of great wealth by force and violence,

or robs it by way of the tongue, as often

happens, whenever the sense for personal gain leads the *noos* of humans astray,

as the sense of Dishonorableness [*An-aideia*] drives away the sense of Honorableness [*Aidōs*],

325 then the gods, with the greatest of ease, blot over such a man, and they deplete his household,

and wealth stays with him for but a short time.

And whoever treats badly the suppliant and the *xenos* as well,

or whoever enters the bed of his brother,

sleeping secretly with the brother's wife, thus committing an act that veers from what is right,

330 or whoever heedlessly wrongs orphans,

or whoever directs against his own aged father at the threshold of old age

harsh words of quarreling [*neikos*],

either Zeus himself manifests his anger at such a man, or, in the end,

the man pays a harsh penalty in retribution.

335 But you should keep your deranged *thūmos* completely away from these things,

and, to the best of your ability, you must make sacrifice to the immortal gods,

in a holy and pure fashion, and you must burn splendid thigh-
portions.

On other occasions, you must supplicate them with libations and with burnt offerings,

both when you go to bed and when the sacred light of dawn comes,

340 so that they may have a propitious heart and *thūmos* towards you.

This way, you will be buying the arable land of others, not the other way around.

Invite for a feast the man who is *philos* to you; but the man who is an enemy [*ekhthros*], let him go.

The man who is most important to invite is the one who lives nearest to you.

For if some misfortune happens in any given place,

345 the neighbors come over in haste, ungirt, but the in-laws come girt.

A bad neighbor is as much a pain as a good one is a great boon.

Whoever has the good fortune to have a good neighbor has the good fortune of having *tīmē*.

You will never lose as much as an ox if you have a good neighbor.

Have the grain measured out properly when you borrow from a neighbor, and pay it back properly

350 in the same measure or even better, if you can.

This way, when you are in need, you can find something to rely on.

Do not seek personal gain that is evil. Evil personal gain leads to some kind of *atē* or other.

Be *philos* to the one who is *philos* to you, and seek the company of those who seek yours.

Give to the one who would give to you, and do not give to the one who would not.

355 One gives to the giver, and gives not to the one who gives not.

The act of Giving [*Dōs*] is good, while the act of Taking forcibly [*Harpax*] is bad, the giver of death.

Whoever willingly gives a gift, no matter how great,
rejoices in the giving and takes pleasure in his *thūmos*.

But the man who seizes something [instead of having it as a gift],
yielding to dishonorableness [*anaideia*],

360 no matter how small it is, it will freeze over the heart [of the
person who is being robbed].

For even if you are storing things up just bit by bit,
even that would become a big thing if you do it often.

But whoever adds something to what is already there wards off
burning-bright hunger.

Whatever is already stored up at home will not take care of a man.

365 At home it is better [for storing up more things], for outside it is
risky.

It is a good thing to take from what is at hand, and it is a pain for
the *thūmos*

to be without what is no longer at hand. And I urge you to take
note of these things.

Take your fill when the jar [of wine] is up to the top or nearing the bottom,

and be sparing in the middle. Thrift is dreadful when you reach the bottom.

370 Let the wages that you agree upon be adequate for a man who is *philos* to you.

But get a witness—you can do it with a smile—even if you are dealing with your own brother.

Men have been undone both by being trusting and by not being so.

Let not a woman who dresses to show off her behind deceive your *noos*, cajoling you with her crafty words, ready to infest your granary.

375 Whoever puts his trust in a woman puts his trust in tricksters.

It is the best thing to have an only child to maintain the ancestral household.

That is the way that wealth can increase in the house.

Then, as an old man, you should leave behind one more young boy

[apparently an only grandson] by the time you die.

But Zeus, if he wants to, can easily give untold wealth to a greater number of people.

380 The more attention to work there is by more people, the greater the surplus.

If the *thūmos* within your *phrenes* yearns for wealth,

this is the way you should work, working on tasks one after another.

When the Pleiades rise above the horizon [just before sunrise],

that is the time to start reaping. When they set [just before sunrise], start plowing.

385 They are hidden for forty nights and forty days.

As that time of the year comes around again,

they appear for the first time when the iron [used for reaping] is getting sharpened.

This is the way it is done on the plains. But it is near the sea

that others live, while still others live in the glens of hillsides,

390 far away from the waves of the sea, abiding on a rich land.

When you sow, do it with your clothes stripped off. The same goes for when you drive your oxen as you plow.

And for when you reap. Do this if you want all the produce that you gather in

from Demeter to be in season, so that all the crops

may each grow in season. This way, you will avoid being in need in the future,

395 having to go begging to the households of others—and accomplishing nothing.

Just the way it is now, as you come to me. But I will not give you anything. Thus I will add nothing to what you got in the first place.

Nothing more will be measured out for you. Get to work, you inept [*nēpios*] Perses!

Get to work on the tasks that the gods have marked out for humans,

so that you will never have to feel pain in your *thūmos* over your children and your wife

400 as you go looking for life-sustenance by approaching one neighbor after the next, and they will not care.

For I can easily imagine that you could succeed twice, or maybe even three times.

But if you keep on importuning them,

you will not succeed in your quest. You can talk all you want, and it will be in vain.

No matter how your words range from one direction to the next, you will not succeed. So I urge you

to make plans to pay off your debts and to ward off hunger.

405 The first thing is to have a farmhouse with a woman and an ox for plowing.

I do not mean a wife. I mean a woman that you own as a slave. Such a woman can help out while you plow with the oxen.

And you must make sure that you have all the property that you need in the household.

This way, you will not have to ask someone else to lend you this or that. While you are trying to talk someone into it who is unwilling,

the season will pass you by and your yield will be depleted.

410 And do not put things off till the next day or the day after.

For a man who is an idle worker will not fill his granary

by putting things off. Attention to your work will make the yield increase.

The man who postpones work is always wrestling with the Spirits of *atē*.

When the power of the searing sun abates,

415 with its burning heat that makes men sweat, and when the autumn rains

of mighty Zeus arrive, as the human complexion turns

much lighter, and as the constellation Sirius

starts to travel much less over the heads of death-bound mortals

and starts to take much more enjoyment from the night,

420 then it is that wood is most worm-free when it is cut,

as the leaves fall to the earth from the branches.

Then it is that you should be mindful [*memnēmenos*] to cut wood, which is now the seasonal task.

Then you can cut out a three-foot length for a mortar and a three-cubit length for a pestle,

and a seven-foot length for an axle. That is the way that is fitting.

425 And if you make it eight feet, then you can cut out of it the head of a mallet.

Cut out a three-span length for the segment of an oxcart the length of ten quarter-feet.

There are also many kinds of wood used for bent shapes. When you find a tree with the shape of a plow-base,

take it right home, whether you find it on a mountainside or in the field,

especially if it is holm-oak. Which is the most sturdy for oxen to plow with,

430 when the servant of Athena [a carpenter] fixes it to the stock of the plow

with pegs and fastens it to the yoke-pole.

And take the trouble to have two plows in the household,

one with a natural curve and another jointed into a curve. It is better this way.

This way, if you break the one, you have the other to hitch up to your oxen.

435 Yoke-poles made of laurel or elm-wood are the most worm-free.

The same goes for stocks made of oak and for plow-bases made of holm-oak. As for oxen, get two males nine years old.

Their strength cannot be worn down,

since they are in their prime. They will be the best to do work with.

They will not get into a fight with each other right in the middle of plowing,

440 breaking the plow and making futile all the work done up to then.

Let the oxen be driven by a sturdy man of forty years.

For his meal, let him eat a loaf scored into eight portions and broken into four.

Let him make the furrow straight, paying close attention to his work

and not taking sidelong glances at his peers. Instead, let him keep

445 his *thūmos* on his work. Someone else no younger than he would
be just right

for spreading the grain around, avoiding oversowing.

A younger man would let his attention flutter towards his peers.

Mark well when you hear the sound of the crane,

sending forth her call from above, the same time every year.

450 She brings the *sēma* for plowing every year; and she marks

the season of rainy winter. And it stings the heart of the man who
does not own oxen.

Then it is that you should give fodder to the horned oxen in their
stalls.

For it is easy to say: “Give me two oxen and an oxcart.”

But it is easy to say no in reply: “There is work here to be done by
my oxen.”

455 A man who fancies that he is rich will say: “Well then, build an
oxcart!”

How inept he is! He does not even know that it takes a hundred
pieces of wood to build an oxcart.

The thing is to take care of first things first and to put one's own house in order.

When the time for plowing reveals itself for mortal men,

everyone must set out to work, servants and master alike,

460 plowing dry or moist land, according to the season.

Get to work early, so that your fields will yield produce in plenty.

Work over your fields in the spring. But fallow land broken up in the summer will not disappoint you.

Sow on fallow land when it is still loose [from the rain].

Fallow land can be a talisman, warding off disaster.

465 Pray to Zeus of the Underground, and to holy Demeter,

that the sacred grain of Demeter may become heavy with ripeness,

as you begin the plowing, laying hold of the end of the plow-handle

and coming down on the backs of your oxen with a switch

as they pull at the yoke-pole with their strappings. Standing a bit further back,

470 the servant who has the mattock should give the birds grief

as he makes the seed disappear inside the earth. Good management is the best thing

for mortal men, while bad management is the worst.

So also with the grapes: they will be weighed down, teeming with their juices,

if the Olympian one himself grants a good ripening.

475 Then you can clear your wine-jars of cobwebs. And I expect that you

will take pleasure as you partake of the life-sustenance that is within your household.

And so you will be well off as you approach gray springtime, and you will not

be looking wistfully in the direction of others. Instead, it will be the other person who will be in need of your help.

But if you plow the Zeus-given earth at the [winter] solstice,

480 you will reap squatting, having little to grasp in your hand,

binding the sheaves the wrong way. You will be covered with dust, an unhappy man.

You could fit into a basket everything you have to bring back. Few people indeed will marvel at you.

The *noos* of Zeus is different at different times,

and it is hard for mortal men to take note of it in their *noos*.

485 For if you plow late, you could have this remedy that I will now tell you.

When the cuckoo first sounds its call amidst the leaves of the oak tree,

bringing pleasure to mortals throughout the boundless earth,

then it is that Zeus might rain on the third day, and it might not stop

till the water rises to a point where it does not quite spill over inside the imprint of an ox's hoof.

490 And then it is that the one who plows late will compete with the early.

Keep all this well in your *thūmos*, and do not fail to mark

the gray spring, when it comes, and the rain in season.

Pass by and do not go inside the abode of the smith and its heated lounge

in the season of winter, when the cold keeps men from their work in the field.

495 For it is at this time that a man who is not idle can make his household greatly thrive.

This way, the resourcelessness of evil winter will not seize you

with poverty, as you hold your emaciated hand down on your swollen foot.^{[8](#)}

Many are the evils that an idle man, who keeps expecting that his empty hope will become the real thing,

in want of life-sustenance, takes to his *thūmos*.

It is not a real hope that cares for a man who is in need,

500 as he sits around in a lounge while he has no adequate means.

Point out to your servants, even in the middle of the summer:

“Summer will not last forever; build your granaries.”

As for the month of Lenaion, bad days, all of them bad enough to
take the hide off an ox,

505 make sure you take measures against it, along with its frosts,

which are wretched when the wind Boreas blows over the land,

which rushes across horse-breeding Thrace and then stirs up the
wide sea

with a blast. And the earth and the forest roar.

Many oaks with their leaves on high, and many a thick fir

510 does it bring crashing down to earth, nourisher of many, in
mountain glens,

as it sets down upon them while the whole immense forest
resounds.

The beasts shudder, putting their tails under their genitals,

even those that have fur covering their skin. Even for them

the cold one [Boreas] blows right through them, shaggy-chested
though they are.

515 He [Boreas] goes right through even the hide of an ox; even that
will not stop it.

He blows through the fine hair of a goat. But not at all through
the fleeces of sheep,

because their wool is thick:

the force of the wind Boreas does not blow through them. But it
makes the old man all curved over.

And yet it does not blow through a tender-skinned maiden,

520 who stays indoors with her *philē* mother.

She has not yet learned the works of golden Aphrodite.

There she is: she has washed well her tender skin and anointed it
with rich olive oil,

as she is lying down in the inner room of the household

on a winter's day—while the Boneless One gnaws at his own foot

525 in his fireless house and wretched haunts.^{[9](#)}

The sun shows him no range to head towards.

Instead, it [the sun] comes and goes over the community and the
city of dark-skinned men.

But it shines more tardily for all the Hellenes.

Then it is that the creatures of the forest, horned and unhorned
alike,

530 gnash their teeth pitifully as they flee through the woods of the
glens.

For all of them there is one thing in their *phrenes*:

how to find some cover in cozy nooks

in a hollow rock. Then, like a three-legged one,

whose back is broken down and whose head looks down upon
the ground,

535 like such a one they range about, trying to escape the white snow.

At that time wear, as I bid you, something that will shield your
skin,

a soft cloak and a tunic that reaches to the feet.

You must weave thick woof on a thin warp.

Wear this, and the hairs will not bristle,

540 standing on end all over your body.

As for your feet, fasten onto them tight-fitting boots made from
the hide of a slaughtered ox.

Make them snug with felt on the inside.

When the frost comes around in due season, stitch together the
skins of first-born goats

with the sinew of an ox. This way, you will have on your back

545 something to keep off the rain. And on your head

wear a shaped hat made of felt. This way, your ears will not get
wet.

For the dawn is cold when the wind Boreas swoops down.

At dawn, a wheat-bearing mist, coming from the starry sky,

spreads upon the fields of men thus blessed, all over the land.

550 It draws its wetness from the ever-flowing rivers,

rising high over the earth with the help of a gust of wind.

Sometimes it turns into rain, towards evening time,

and other times into wind, as Thracian Boreas drives the thick
clouds.

Finish your work and get home before he [Boreas] comes,
555 so that a dark cloud, coming down from the sky, may not envelop
you,
making your skin clammy as it soaks your clothes.
Avoid it, for this is the month that is most harsh.
It is wintry, harsh for livestock and harsh for men.
Then it is that your oxen should have half their usual share of
food. But let the hired man have the greater part of his portion.
560 For the nights, helpful as they may be, are long.
Keep these things in mind until the year comes full circle,
when the days and nights are the same length, when once again
Earth, the mother of all, bears her varied produce.
When Zeus has had sixty wintry days take their due course after
the solstice,
565 then the star Arcturus [Watcher of the Bear] leaves the sacred
stream of the Okeanos
and first rises at dusk above the horizon.

After him [Arcturus] rises the daughter of Pandion, the swallow,
the one whose call sounds at dawn.

She comes back to the light for humankind, as springtime begins
anew.

570 Before she comes, prune the vines. It is better this way.

When the House-Carrier¹⁰ climbs up from the ground and onto
the plants,

fleeing the Pleiades, then there should be no more digging of
vineyards.

Instead, sharpen your sickles and wake your servants in the
morning, to get them busy.

Avoid sitting down in shady places and sleeping till dawn

575 in the season of harvesting, when the sun scorches the skin.

At this time, exert yourself and bring home the produce,

getting up at dawn. This way, you will have sufficient life-
sustenance.

For the period of dawn takes up a third part of a full day's work.

Dawn gets you started on your journey, and it gets you started on your work.

580 When dawn appears, it gets many mortals started on their journeys

and it puts yokes on many oxen.

When the golden thistle is in bloom and the loud-sounding cicada,^{[11](#)}

perched on a tree, pours down his clearly-heard song

incessantly from under his wings, in the season of summer, with all its labors,

585 then it is that goats are fattest, wine is best,

women are most wanton, and men are weakest;

for Sirius dries up their heads and their knee-caps,

and the skin gets dry from the heat. At this time, at long last,

let there be a shady place under a rock, wine from [Thracian] Biblos,

590 barley-cake soaked in milk, the milk of goats that are reaching the end of their lactation,

and the meat of a cow fed in the woods, one that has not yet calved,

and of first-born kid goats. That is the time to drink bright-colored wine,

sitting in the shade, having one's heart sated with food,

turning one's face towards the cooling Zephyr.

595 Then, from an ever-flowing spring that flows downward,
untainted by mud,

pour a drink that is three parts water, but make the fourth part wine.

Get your servants busy with winnowing the sacred grain of Demeter,

when strong Orion first appears,

on a threshing-floor that is exposed to the winds and is smoothed over

600 Then, with a measure, store it in jars. And when you have finally

stored all your life-sustenance safely inside your house,

then I bid you to seek out and hire a man with no household of his own and a servant-woman who has no children of her own.

A servant-woman with a little calf under her [a child to nurse] is a bad thing.

Take good care of the sharp-toothed dog. Do not begrudge him his food.

605 Otherwise, the man who sleeps by day [the robber] will take your possessions

Bring in the fodder and the chaff. This way, there will be enough for your oxen and your mules. After that,

let your servants give a rest to their knees and unyoke your pair of oxen.

But when Orion and Sirius reach the middle of the sky [at dawn],

610 and when rosy-fingered Dawn sees Arcturus,

then it is, Perses,^{[12](#)} that you should cut off and take home all the grape-clusters.

Show them to the sun ten days and ten nights.

Then shade them over for five more, and, on the sixth, draw off into jars

the gifts of joyous Dionysus. But when

615 the Pleiades and the Hyades and strong Orion

begin to set, then it is that you should be mindful [*memnēmenos*]
to plow

in season. And so the *pleiōn*¹³ may be lodged well and firmly
under the earth.

But let us suppose that the desire for stormy navigation seizes
you,

when the Pleiades, fleeing the strong and violent Orion,

620 plunge into the misty *pontos*,

and the blasts of winds of all kind rage.

At this time you must not have ships sailing the wine-colored sea.

Instead, be mindful [*memnēmenos*] to work the land, as I bid you.

Haul up your ship on dry land and pack it with stones

625 all over, which will stand up to the power of the winds blowing
their dampness.

And pull out the plug of the bilge-drain; otherwise, the rain of
Zeus will rot it

[the ship].

Put away in your house all the tackle and fittings,

and store neatly the wings [sails] of your *pontos*-traveling ship.

Hang up the well-made steering-oar over the smoke [of the fireplace].

630 And you yourself should wait until the time for seasonal navigation has come.^{[14](#)}

Then you can haul your ship back to the sea, and put cargo

safely into it, so that you may bring home with you some profit [*kerdos*],

just as my father and yours, you inept [*nēpios*] Perses,

used to sail around in ships, lacking a genuine [*esthlos*] livelihood.

635 One day, he came to this place right here, having crossed a great stretch of *pontos*.

He left behind him the Aeolic [city of] Kyme, sailing on a dark-colored ship,

fleeing not wealth, not riches, not material bliss [*olbos*].

No, he was fleeing wretched [*kakē*] poverty, which Zeus gives to men.

And he settled down near Helikon, in a settlement afflicted with human woes,

640 Ascra by name. It is a place that is bad [*kakē*] in the wintertime,
difficult in the summertime. It is a place that is never really good.

But you, Perses, you must be mindful [*memnēmenos*] of all the things that require work,

each to be done in season. That goes especially for navigation.

Praise the small ship, but put your cargo into a big one.

The greater the cargo, the more profit [*kerdos*] you can pile on top of profit [*kerdos*] —

645 provided the winds hold back their evil [*kakai*] blasts.^{[15](#)}

But if you turn your *thūmos*, with its veering thoughts, towards trading by navigation,

fleeing debts and joyless hunger,

I will show you how to take measure of the raging sea,

even though I have no skills in navigation or in ships.

650 For never yet have I sailed in a ship over the wide *pontos*,

unless you count the time when I went to Euboea from Aulis, the
place where, once upon a time, the Achaeans,

having gathered together a mighty host of fighting men, were
waiting out a storm.

They had come from all over sacred Hellas and were heading for
Troy, known for its beautiful women.

It was there that I, heading for the funeral games of warlike
Amphidamas,

655 crossed over to Khalkis.^{[16](#)} And there were many games

and prizes arranged in advance by the sons of great-hearted
Amphidamas.^{[17](#)} And I say solemnly that it was there [in Khalkis]

that I won a contest in song and that I carried off as a victory
prize a tripod with handles on it.

And I dedicated this [tripod] to the Muses of Helikon,

in the place where they first put me on the path of clear-sounding
song.

660 This much is my experience in many-pegged ships.

Even so, I will tell you the *noos* of aegis-bearing Zeus,

for the Muses have taught me to sing a song that has no
limitations on it.^{[18](#)}

Fifty days after the [summer] solstice,

towards the end of the labor-filled season of summer,

665 that is when navigation is seasonal for mortals. Then your ship

will not be wrecked and the sailors will not be destroyed by the
sea,

unless Poseidon the earth-shaker is intent upon doing so,

or unless Zeus the king of the immortals wishes to destroy them.

For the fulfillment of all things, both good and bad, is in their
hands.

670 At this time the winds are well-defined and the *pontos* is not
harsh.

At this time, you can be free from anxiety as you entrust your
swift ship to the winds.

Haul your ship down to the *pontos* and put in all your cargo.

But exert yourself to get back home as quickly as possible,

and do not wait for the time of the new wine and the autumn rains

675 and the approaching bad weather, with the terrible blasts of the wind Notos,

who stirs up the sea as he comes along with the rain of Zeus,

that plentiful autumn rain, and he makes the *pontos* harsh.

Another time of navigation for humankind is in the spring,

when a man first sees, as large a footprint as a crow

makes, leaves that are that size

680 on the top of the fig-tree. Then you are ready do embark upon the sea.

This, then, is the time of navigation in the spring. But I

do not recommend it. It is not pleasing to my *thūmos*.

It is a matter of grasping at opportunities, and it is a difficult thing to avoid

misfortune. And yet, even these things

685 are done by men, in their acts of ignorance in matters of *noos*.

For wealth is life [*psūkhē*] itself for wretched mortals.

It is a fearful thing to die among the waves. But I bid you

to take note of all these things in your *phrenes*, as I tell you.

Do not put all your means of livelihood inside hollow ships.

690 Leave the greater part behind, and put the lesser part in as cargo.

It is a fearful thing to happen upon a disaster among the waves of
the *pontos*.

Just as it is a fearful thing to put too great a load on your oxcart,

thus breaking the axle and spoiling your haul.

Take care to keep things moderate. Timing [*kairos*] is best in all
things.

695 Make sure that you are the right age [seasonal, having the right
hōrā] when you bring home a wife to your house,

when you are not much less than thirty years old

nor much more than that. This is a seasonal marriage.

The wife should have four years after puberty, and then she can marry in the fifth year.

Marry a virgin, so that you may teach her the ways of affection.

700 Try your hardest to marry someone who lives near you.

And take a good look all around you, so that you will not marry someone who will become the occasion for jokes by your neighbors.

There is no better possession for a man than a wife

who is good. And there is nothing worse than a bad one,

one who sneaks away the dinner for herself. The man, no matter how strong he may be,

705 is burned out by the fire of such a woman. No need for a torch!
And she brings him to a raw old age.

Guard against the anger of the blessed immortals.

Do not make a comrade equal to a brother.

But if you do, you should not beat him to it by hurting him first.

And do not lie just to please your tongue. But if he wrongs you first,

710 either saying or doing something that is contrary to your *thūmos*,
then be mindful [*memnēmenos*] to repay him double. But if he
takes you back into the state of being *philoī*,¹⁹ and is ready to
offer *dikē*,

then accept him. A wretched man is he who makes different
philoī at different times. Let not your *noos* make into a lie your
appearance [of friendship].

715 Avoid the reputation of having too many *xenoi* or none at all.

Or of being the companion of wretched people. Or of being one
who brings a quarrel [*neikos*] against noble people.

Do not ever bring yourself to reproaching [making *oneidos*
against] a man for having baneful poverty, the kind that eats away
at the *thūmos*.

It [the poverty] is sent by the blessed immortals.

The best treasure for mortals is a tongue that is sparing.

720 And the greatest *kharis* is a tongue that moves in moderation.

For if you say something bad, soon you will hear something
spoken about you that is even worse.

Do not be stormy²⁰ at a banquet attended by many *xenoi*.

When it [a banquet] is a common effort, the gratification is very great and the expense is very small.

Do not pour a libation of bright-colored wine to Zeus after dawn

725 with unwashed hands. Nor should you do so to any other immortal.

Otherwise, they will not heed your prayers but will spit them back.

Do not stand upright, with your face turned toward the sun, when you urinate.

Be mindful [*memnēmenos*] to do so after it [the sun] sets and before it rises.

And if you are traveling [at nighttime], do not urinate either on the road or off the road,

730 and do not get naked. The nights belong to the blessed ones [the gods].

The godly person, who knows what is sensible, does it squatting.

Or else, he goes to the wall of an enclosed court.

Do not expose your genitals, splattered with semen, inside your house

when you approach the fireplace. Avoid this.

735 When you return from a funeral where words of bad omen have been uttered,

do not try to beget a descendant. But do so after a banquet of the gods.

Do not ever cross the beautifully running streams of ever-flowing rivers

on foot before you pray, keeping your eye on the beautiful streams and having washed your hands in the lovely clear water.

740 Whoever crosses a river with hands unwashed of wickedness incurs the anger of the gods, who will cause him pains in the future.

From the five-branched one,^{[21](#)} at a festive banquet of the gods,

do not cut the withered from the green^{[22](#)} with gleaming iron.

Do not put the wine-pouring vessel on top of the wine-mixing vessel

745 when people are drinking. For a baneful fate results in
compensation for this.^{[23](#)}

When you build a house, do not leave it rough-hewn.

Otherwise, a cawing crow may roost on it and make a croaking
sound.

From cauldrons that do not have the correct ritual words
pronounced over them,

do not take anything to eat or to wash with. For there is a
retribution in compensation for these acts.

750 As for things that it is sacrilegious to disturb by moving, it is not
good

to let a twelve-year-old boy sit on them. It makes a man unmanly.

Nor let a twelve-month-old boy do so. For here too a similar
thing happens.

A man should not wash himself in water that has been used by a
woman for her ablutions.

In the course of time, there is a baneful retribution in
compensation for this act as well.

755 When you come upon sacrificial offerings all ablaze^{[24](#)}

do not engage in mockery [*mōmos*] of the fire-ritual. The god is angry at this as well.

Do not urinate into the streams of rivers that flow towards the sea,
nor into springs. Avoid it at all costs.

And do not relieve yourself into them. It is not a very good thing to do that.

760 Act this way, and you will avoid the ominous talk of men—a thing to be dreaded.

For ominous talk is a bad thing. It gets off the ground easily,
very easily, but it is burdensome thing to bear, and it is hard to put aside.

Ominous talk never completely dies down, since many
will utter it. Ominous talk is even a god.^{[25](#)}

765 Take care to mark the days^{[26](#)} [of the month], which come from Zeus, giving each day its due.

Do this for your servants. The thirtieth day of the month is best

for inspecting different kinds of work that have to be done and for apportioning food-supplies.

This is the day that people spend by sorting out [*krinein*] what is *alētheia* and what is not.^{[27](#)}

For what I now tell you are the days of Zeus the Planner.^{[28](#)}

770 To begin with, the first,^{[29](#)} fourth,^{[30](#)} and the seventh^{[31](#)} are each a holy day

—it was on the seventh that Leto gave birth to Apollo of the golden sword.

So too the eighth^{[32](#)} and the ninth.^{[33](#)} And yet, these two days of the waxing part of the month

are particularly good for various kinds of work by mortals.^{[34](#)}

The eleventh and the twelfth are both good

775 for shearing sheep and for gathering the benign grain.

But the twelfth is much better than the eleventh.

It is on that day that the spider, levitating in the air, spins its web

in full day,^{[35](#)} while the Knowledgeable One^{[36](#)} amasses her pile.

On that day a woman should set up her loom and get on with her work.

780 Avoid the thirteenth day of the waxing part of the month

for beginning to sow. But it is the best day for getting your plants bedded in.

The sixth day of the middle of the month is very unfavorable for plants,

but it is good for giving birth to male descendants. As for females, it is not at all favorable

either to be born at all on that day or to get married.

785 Nor is the first sixth day an appropriate one for a girl to be born.

But, for gelding kid goats and sheep

it is a kindly day. Also for making an enclosure for the sheep.

It is good for the birth of a boy, but such a child will grow up liking to utter words of mocking reproach,

which are lies, crafty words, and stealthy relations.^{[37](#)}

790 On the eighth day of the month geld the boar and the loud-roaring bull.

Do the same with the work-enduring asses on the twelfth.

On the Great Twentieth, a full day,³⁸ a knowledgeable man
should be born.³⁹ Such a man is very sound in his *noos*.

The tenth is favorable for a boy to be born; for a girl, it is the
fourth

795 of the mid-month. On that day, sheep and shambling horned
oxen,

as well as the sharp-toothed dog and work-enduring asses,

are to be tamed to the touch of the hand. But take care in your
thūmos

to avoid the fourth of the beginning and ending of the month.

Do not have your heart eaten away with troubles on this day,
which is very much a day when the gods bring things to
fulfillment.

800 On the fourth of the month bring home your wedded wife,

having sorted out the bird-omens, which are best for doing this.

Avoid fifth days. They are harsh and ominous.

For they say that it was on the fifth that the Erinyes assisted

at the birth of Horkos [Oath], to whom Eris gave birth, to be a pain to those who break an oath.

805 On the seventh of the mid-month cast the sacred grain of Demeter

upon the smoothed-over threshing floor, looking carefully about you.

Have the woodman cut beams for the rooms in your house

and plenty of ship-timbers which are suitable for ships.

On the fourth, begin to build sleek ships.

810 The ninth of the mid-month is better when evening approaches.

But the first ninth is the most painless for humans.

It is good for conception and for being born

for man and woman alike. It is never a completely bad day.

Or again, few people know that the thrice-nine of the month is best

815 for opening a wine-jar and for putting yokes on the necks

of oxen, mules, and swift-footed horses,

or for hauling a swift ship with many oars down to the wine-colored *pontos*.

Few give it its *alēthēs*⁴⁰ name.

Open your jar on the fourth. The fourth of the mid-month is the most holy of them all.

820 Again, few do it [give it its true name].⁴¹ I mean the after-twenty [the twenty-first],⁴² which is best

when dawn comes. As evening approaches, it is less good.

These, then, are the days, a great blessing for earth-bound men.

The others fall in between. There is no doom attached to them, and they bring nothing.

Different people praise different days,⁴³ but few really know.⁴⁴

825 Sometimes the day is a step-mother, and sometimes it is a mother.⁴⁵

With respect to all of these days, *eudaimōn* and *olbios* is he who

knows all these things as he works the land, without being responsible to the immortals for any evil deed,

as he sorts out [*krinein*] the bird-omens, and as he avoids any acts of transgression.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. This noun *aphradia* ‘heedlessness’ is derived from *phrazesthai* ‘take note’, a verb that designates the activity of *mētis*.

[[back](#)] 2. This word is in opposition to *epi-khthonioi* ‘earth-bound’ at line 123; and *that* word is in opposition to the epithet of the gods, *ep-ouranioi* ‘sky-bound’. Whereas *epi-khthonioi* does not exclude the category of *hupo-khthonioi*, in that they can be imagined as being either below the earth or simply earth-bound; the *hupo-khthonioi*, on the other hand, must be imagined as being below the earth.

[[back](#)] 3. The Proclus commentary reads *phulakes* ‘guardians’.

[[back](#)] 4. I interpret the *mén* here as parallel to *mén* at lines 122, 137, 141, 161, not to *mén* at line 162 (*pace* West WD commentary p. 192).

[[back](#)] 5. In a longer version, as attested in a papyrus, this line, 169, is followed by four lines not attested elsewhere; in this version, these five lines, labeled 173a (= 169), 173b, 173c, 173d, 173e in West’s edition, follow line 173 (and 168 is followed by 170). These additional lines tell of the releasing of Kronos by Zeus and introduce the subject of the Fifth Generation.

[[back](#)] 6. Cf. West WD commentary p. 225.

[[back](#)] 7. The use of *gignōskein* ‘be aware’ here is parallel to what we find in Theognis 670.

[[back](#)] 8. In the Proclus commentary, there is a reference to a law, native to the city of Ephesus, to the effect that a child could not be exposed until the father's feet were swollen.

[[back](#)] 9. It was a common belief that the octopus would eat its own 'foot' when it was starving. West *WD* commentary p. 289 comments: "The starved man squeezing his swollen foot would lead on to the octopus who nibbles his foot for lack of food."

[[back](#)] 10. That is, the snail.

[[back](#)] 11. Sometimes wrongly translated as 'grasshopper'. The same goes for the Aesop fable "The Grasshopper and the Ant," which is really "The Cicada and the Ant" (no. 373 in the B.E. Perry edition).

[[back](#)] 12. West *WD* commentary p. 40 remarks: "Perses is not named again [after line 397] until the final paragraph of the agricultural section 609–17, and there only as a colourless vocative. He seems to be resurrected at this point precisely because it is the final paragraph. The vocative indicates that a particularly significant point has been reached, and it gives us a final reminder of the addressee's identity."

[[back](#)] 13. At present there is no consensus about the meaning of this word. In this context, it may be understood as 'seed'. I believe that it is connected with the name of the Pleiades and with a myth concerning a plunge by one of them beneath the horizon.

[[back](#)] 14. This right time is defined starting with line 663.

[[back](#)] 15. Lines 643–645 seem to me sarcastic in tone.

[[back](#)] 16. In Euboea.

[[back](#)] 17. There is a 'son of Amphidamas' mentioned in *Iliad* 23.87: he was killed by Patroklos in a fit of rage over a dice-game. It is on account

of this deed that Patroklos had to leave his own household and to move in with Peleus.

[[back](#)] 18. Commentators follow H. Fränkel, *Festschrift Wackernagel* (1923) pp. 281f.

[[back](#)] 19. There is a striking parallel to this expression in the poetry of Sappho.

[[back](#)] 20. The word is *duspemphelos*, applied to ‘navigation’ at line 618 above. In the present context, it carries with it the civic “ship of state” metaphor.

[[back](#)] 21. That is, the hand with five fingers. This is a kenning.

[[back](#)] 22. A vegetal metaphor for the cutting of the withered from the quick part of the fingernail.

[[back](#)] 23. In storage, the wine-pouring vessel is in fact customarily on top of the wine-mixing vessel. West *WD* commentary p. 340 remarks: “So the essence of the rule is that while the utensils are in use one must avoid an arrangement which is normal when they are not in use. The reason is unclear.” I think that the reason may not be quite so unclear. Note that the “normal” use is in a ritual context. In a ritual context, the meaning of a word or an act can be the symmetrical opposite of the meaning of the same word or act in a non-ritual context. For example, *muō* means ‘I have my eyes closed’ or ‘I have my mouth closed’ in a secular context and ‘I see a special vision’ or ‘I speak a special utterance’ in a ritual context.

[[back](#)] 24. The implication is that the person who comes upon the sacrifice here is a casual observer, not necessarily acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of the local ritual. In Menander *Dyscolus* 447ff, we find a brief reference to such idiosyncrasies.

[\[back\]](#) 25. In other words, you can think of it as a personified divine force.

[\[back\]](#) 26. First we had the “works”; now we have the “days.”

[\[back\]](#) 27. West WD commentary p. 351 remarks: “Civil calendars often fell out of step with the moon..., and it was on the 30th that errors arose. Each month had to be allowed either 29 or 30 days, but the last day was called *triakas* (or in Athens *henē kai nea*, ‘the old and the new’) in either case, the preceding day being omitted in a ‘hollow’ month. So it was always a question of when to have the 30th.” In other words, each *polis* had its own traditions about the calendar (West here calls these traditions “civil calendars”). At the time of the 30th, then, there is a crisis about arriving at a pan-Hellenic norm from the standpoint of each *polis*. This norm is conveyed here by the notion of *alētheiē* ‘truth’ (see the note at *Theogony* line 28). [On the civic calendars of the various Greek city-states, see A. E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology (Handb. d. Altertumswiss.* I.7), 1972.]

[\[back\]](#) 28. The 30th may be a crisis point, varying from *polis* to *polis*, but the crisis leads to a shared pan-Hellenic perspective. The poet has blotted over the differences, simply noting that *alētheia* ‘truth’ is being sorted out [= is in a crisis: the verb is *krīnō* on the 30th. After the 30th, it is possible to arrive at a fixed sequence of given days traditionally spent in given ways by all Hellenes (for the apparent exception in the 4-*polis* island of Keos, see the passages quoted by West p. 351). The poet will now highlight this fixed sequence, which is the pan-Hellenic perspective. Zeus, as the god who is the planner of the universe, is an appropriate symbol for the the organizing principle that underlies the pan-Hellenic perspective.

[\[back\]](#) 29. In the *Odyssey*, the new moon is the context for a festival of Apollo (14.162 = 19.307; 20.156, 276-278, 21.258).

[[back](#)] 30. For example, Aphrodite was specially worshiped on this day.

[[back](#)] 31. The most important holy day of Apollo.

[[back](#)] 32. For example, the 8th at Athens was the day for honoring Poseidon and Theseus.

[[back](#)] 33. For example, the 9th at Athens inaugurated the City Dionysia.

[[back](#)] 34. That is, they may be holy days, but they are not necessarily holidays. This hedge suggests that the 8th and the 9th are less “pan-Hellenic” than the 1st, 4th, and 7th.

[[back](#)] 35. The waxing and waning of the day are in symmetry with the waxing and waning of the moon.

[[back](#)] 36. That is, the ant. See the note on the cicada at line 582.

[[back](#)] 37. The stealthy relations may include sexually suggestive “sweet-talk.” The features enumerated here are characteristic of a traditional persona such as Perses, or such as portrayed in the poetry of Archilochus.

[[back](#)] 38. See the note on line 778.

[[back](#)] 39. The characterization seems to suit the persona of Hesiod himself.

[[back](#)] 40. The Hesiodic name ‘thrice-nine’ would be the pan-Hellenic designation, as implied by the word *alēthēs*. See the note about *alētheia* at line 768. Local designations of this day may have been subject to tabu. The number thrice-nine is particularly sacred: see the references collected by West WD commentary p. 361.

[[back](#)] 41. This interpretation differs from what is found in the standard editions.

[[back](#)] 42. Note again the periphrasis, as in the case of thrice-nine at line 814.

[[back](#)] 43. Here we see the localized perspective.

[[back](#)] 44. Here we see the pan-Hellenic perspective. The word ‘know’ is to be understood in the sense that we have seen at line 792.

[[back](#)] 45. This riddle can be better understood by reading Georges Dumézil, *Camillus: A Study of Indo-European Religion as Roman History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980).

Herodotus Part 1 (Selection from Scroll 1)

First phase of translation by Lynn Sawlivich

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Note: The language of Herodotus in referring to the myths and rituals of the ancient world is exquisitely precise, and we have much to learn from it. Accordingly, the translators have taken special care in tracking key words above and beyond the vocabulary that is tracked in the rest of the Sourcebook.

Scroll 1: Croesus

This is the making public [*apodexis*] of the inquiry [*historiā*] of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that what arises from human essence not become faded [*exitēla*] by time, and that great and wondrous deeds, some performed [*apodekh-*] by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians, not lose their *kleos*, including for what cause [*aitiā*] they waged war against each other.

1. The learned men [*logioi*] of the Persians say that the Phoenicians were responsible [*aitioi*] for the quarrel. When these men came from the sea called Red to this sea and settled in the place which they now inhabit,¹ they immediately engaged in long voyages, carrying Egyptian and Assyrian cargoes and reaching, among other places, Argos. At that time Argos in all ways surpassed the people in what is now called Hellas. The Phoenicians arrived at this Argos and laid out their merchandise. On the fifth or sixth day after their arrival, when they had sold almost everything, there came down to the sea many women, including the daughter of the king. Her name was Io, daughter of Inakhos, and the Hellenes say the same thing. As they stood along the stern of the ship buying the merchandise they most desired, the Phoenicians gave the signal and rushed at them. Most of the women got away, but Io was

carried off with some others. They put them aboard the ship and sailed away to Egypt.

2. The Persians say that Io came to Egypt in this way—but the Hellenes do not—and that this was the first of the acts without justice [*dikē*]. They say that after this some of the Hellenes—they are unable to relate the names—landed at Tyre in Phoenicia and carried off Europa, the daughter of the king. These would be the Cretans. So they got even with each other, but afterwards the Hellenes were responsible [*aitioi*] for the injustice [action without *dikē*]. They [= Jason and the Argonauts] sailed across to Aia in Colchis and to the river Phasis, and when they had accomplished the other things they had gone there for, they carried off Medea, the daughter of the king. The Colchian king sent a herald to Hellas and requested compensation [*dikai*] for the abduction and demanded back his daughter. The Hellenes answered that they [= the Phoenicians] had not been given compensation [*dikai*] for the abduction of Argive Io, so they themselves would not give it.

3. They [= the Persians] say that, in the second generation after this, Alexander the son of Priam heard of these things and wished to have a wife from Hellas by way of abduction, supposing that he would not pay compensation [*dikai*], since they had not. So he abducted Helen, and the Hellenes at first saw fit to send messengers and demand the return of Helen and compensation [*dikai*] for the abduction. When they made these demands, they were reproached with the abduction of Medea: that they themselves had neither given compensation [*dikai*] nor returned her when demanded, yet they wished to have compensation [*dikai*] from others.

4. Up to this point there were only thefts of women from each other, but after this the Hellenes were very guilty [*aitioi*], for they invaded Asia before the Persians invaded Europe. The Persians say they consider carrying off women to be the work of unjust [*adikoi*] men, but only

foolish men seriously seek vengeance for women who have been carried off. Moderate [*sōphrones*] men, they say, pay no heed at all to the abduction of women, for it is clear that they would not be abducted unless they wanted it. The Persians say that the men from Asia took no account of their women who had been abducted, but the Hellenes, because of a woman of Lacedaemon,² mounted a great expedition, then came to Asia and destroyed the empire of Priam. From then on they have always considered the Hellenes to be their enemy. The Persians claim Asia and the barbarian peoples inhabiting it as their own, but they consider Europe and the Hellenes as separate.

5. This is how the Persians say it was, and they find the conquest of Troy to be the beginning of their hostility [= state of being *ekhthros*] toward the Hellenes. The Phoenicians do not agree with the Persians about Io. They say that they did not resort to abduction when they carried her to Egypt, but that she had sex with the captain of the ship in Argos. When she learned that she was pregnant, out of respect [*aidōs*] for her parents she voluntarily sailed with the Phoenicians so that she not be found out. This is what the Persians and Phoenicians say. ^{1.5.3} Concerning these things, I am not going to say that they were so or otherwise, but I will indicate [*sēmainein*] the one who I myself know [*oida*] first began unjust [*a-dika*] deeds against the Hellenes. I will go on further in my account, treating equally of great and small cities of humankind, ^{1.5.4} for many of those that were great in the past have become small, and those that were great in my day were formerly small. Knowing that human good fortune [*eudaimoniā*] never remains in the same state, I will mention both equally.

6. Croesus was Lydian in lineage [*genos*], the son of Alyattes, and *turannos* of the lands this side of the river Halys, which flows from the south between the Syrians and Paphlagonians and towards the north enters the sea called the Euxine.³ This Croesus was the first of the barbarians we know of [*oida*] to reduce some of the Hellenes to payment

of tribute [*phoros*] and to attach others to himself as *philoi*. He subdued the Ionians and Aeolians and Dorians in Asia, and made friends [*philoi*] of the Lacedaemonians. Before the rule of Croesus all Hellenes were free. The expedition of the Kimmerians which reached Ionia before the time of Croesus was not a conquest of the cities, but an expedition to raid and pillage.

7. In the following way the kingship belonging to the Hērakleidai⁴ passed over to the lineage [*genos*] of Croesus, called the Mermnadai. Kandaules, whom the Hellenes call Myrsilos, was the *turannos* of Sardis and the descendant of Alkaïos son of Hēraklēs. Agron son of Ninos son of Belos son of Alkaïos was the first of the Herakleidai to be king of Sardis, Kandaules son of Myrsos the last. The kings of this land before Agron were descendants of Lydos son of Atys, from whom the entire population is called Lydian; previously it was called Meian. From them the Herakleidai received the kingship and held power due to an oracle. They were the offspring of Hēraklēs and a female slave of Iardanos, and ruled for 22 generations, 505 years, son inheriting rule from his father, up to Kandaules son of Myrsos.

8. This Kandaules was passionately in love with his own wife, and in his passion he considered his wife to be the most beautiful of all women. There was one of his bodyguard he was especially pleased with, Gyges son of Daskylos, and he used to share with this Gyges even his most important affairs, including great praise of the beauty of his wife, since he thought it so. After a little while—for it was fated to go badly [*adv. kakōs*] for Kandaules—he said to Gyges: “I do not think you believe me when I talk of the beauty of my wife, since people trust their ears less than their eyes. Find a way to see her naked.” Gyges cried out loudly and said, “Master, what unsound word do you speak, commanding me to see my queen naked? When a woman takes off her clothes she takes off her shame [*aidōs*] with them. Long ago men discovered many good things, from which it is necessary to learn. Among them is this one: let

each look to his own. I believe that she is the most beautiful of all women, and I ask you not to request what is inappropriate according to customary law [*nomos*].”

9. He said this trying to get out of it, fearful that something bad [*kakon*] might happen to him from it. Kandaules answered, “Take heart, Gyges. Do not be afraid of me, that I am making this speech to test you, nor of my wife, that she may harm you in some way. I will work it so that she will not even know that she has been seen by you. In the room in which we sleep, I will place you behind the open door. After I go in, my wife will also come to bed. There is a chair near the entrance, and on it she will put each of her clothes as she takes them off, giving you the opportunity to see her at your leisure. When she walks from the chair to the bed and has her back to you, take care then that she not see you going out the door.”

10. Since he could not get out of it, he was ready. When Kandaules felt it was time [*hōrā* for bed, he led Gyges into the room. Immediately afterwards his wife came in, and Gyges watched her as she entered and took off her clothes. As she went to the bed, her back was to him and out he crept. But the woman saw him as he was going out. Understanding what her husband had done, she did not cry out, although disgraced, nor did she seem to notice, having it in mind [*noos*] to punish Kandaules. Among the Lydians, as among almost all other barbarians, to be seen naked carries the greatest disgrace, even for a man.

11. She kept quiet revealing nothing then. But as soon as it was day, she made ready those of her servants she considered most faithful to her and summoned Gyges. He did not think she knew anything of what had been done and came when summoned, for it was his custom even before this to attend on the queen whenever she called. When Gyges arrived, the woman said: “Now, Gyges, I offer you the choice of taking one of two roads open to you. Either kill Kandaules and take possession of both me and the kingship of the Lydians, or you yourself must die on the

spot, so that you may not in the future obey Kandaules in everything and see what you should not see. Either he who planned this must perish, or you, who saw me naked and acted unlawfully.” For a while Gyges was astonished at what she had said, but then he pleaded with her not to bind him by the necessity of making such a decision [*dia-krinein*. But he did not persuade her, and he saw the necessity truly [*alēthēs*, adverb] before him either to kill his master or to himself be killed by others. He chose his own survival. He asked, “Since you compel me to kill my master against my will, come, let me hear in what way we will attack him.” She answered, “The onset will be from the same room in which he displayed me naked, and the attack will be in his sleep.”

12. They prepared the plot and night came on. Gyges was not released, and there was no escape for him at all: either he or Kandaules must die. He followed the woman into the chamber, and she gave him a dagger and hid him behind the same door. Later, when Kandaules was asleep, Gyges crept out and killed him, taking possession of his wife and his kingship. Archilochus of Paros, who lived at the same time, mentioned Gyges in a composition shaped in iambic trimeter.

13. He took possession of the kingship and was confirmed by the Delphic oracle. The Lydians were indignant at what-was-suffered [*pathos*] by Kandaules and took up arms, but the partisans of Gyges and the rest of the Lydians made an agreement that if the oracle answered that he was king of the Lydians then he would be king, but if not he would give the rule back to the Hērakleidai. The oracle answered yes and in this way Gyges became king. But the Pythia⁵ added that vengeance would come on behalf of the Hērakleidai in the fifth generation after Gyges. The Lydians and their kings took no account of this thing-said [*epos*] until it came to fulfillment [*telos*].

14. In this way the Mermnadai held the power of the *turannos*, taking it from the Hērakleidai. When Gyges became *turannos*, he sent offerings to Delphi, and not just a few. Most of the silver offerings in Delphi are his,

and besides the silver he dedicated an immense amount of gold, including the golden bowls dedicated there, six in number, which are very much deserving of mention. These stand in the treasury of the Corinthians and have a weight of 30 talents.⁶ To speak the truth [*alēthēs*], the treasury does not belong to the state of the Corinthians, but to Kypselos son of Eëtion. This Gyges is the first barbarian we know of to make offerings to Delphi after Midas son of Gordias, king of Phrygia. Midas dedicated the royal throne on which he sat when giving judgment, and it is worth seeing. This throne stands in the very same place as the bowls of Gyges. The gold and silver that Gyges dedicated is called Gygian by the Delphians, named after its dedicator. As soon as Gyges took power, he invaded Miletus and Smyrna and captured the city of Colophon, but there was no other great deed by him. He was king 38 years, and having said this much we will leave him.

15. I will mention Ardys son of Gyges, who was king after Gyges. He captured Priene and invaded Miletus. When he was *turannos* of Sardis, the Kimmerians were driven from their homeland by the Scythians and reached Asia, capturing Sardis except for the acropolis.

16. Ardys was king for 49 years. Sadyattes son of Ardys succeeded him and was king for 12 years. Alyattes son of Sadyattes succeeded him. He waged war with Kyaxares, the descendant of Deiokes, and the Medes, drove the Kimmerians out of Asia, captured Smyrna and its colony Colophon, and invaded Klazomenai. But he did not come off as he wished in this, for he stumbled greatly. During his rule he performed the following deeds most worth telling:

17. He fought with the Milesians, inheriting the war from his father. He marched against Miletus and besieged it in this way: whenever the crops in the land were ripe, he invaded, marching to the syrinx⁷ and the lyre and the bass and treble pipe. Reaching Milesian land, he did not tear down the houses in the fields nor burn them, nor rip off their doors, but left them standing throughout the country. He destroyed the trees and

the crops in the land, then departed back again. Since the Milesians controlled the sea, there was no chance for the army in a siege. The Lydian did not tear down the houses so that the Milesians would have a place to set out from to plant and work the land, and so that when he invaded he would have something to plunder after their work.

18. He carried on the war by doing this for eleven years, during which the Milesians suffered two great disasters, fighting in Limeneion in their own country and in the plain of Maeander. For six of these eleven years Sadyattes son of Ardys still ruled the Lydians and invaded the Milesian land, for he was the one who started the war. For the five years following these six, Alyattes son of Sadyattes carried on the war which, as I have shown previously, he had inherited from his father, and conducted it strenuously. None of the Ionians helped lighten this war for the Milesians, except only the Chians. They were repaying an equal service when they gave their help, for the Milesians had earlier helped the Chians wage war against the Erythraeans.

19. In the twelfth year, when the crops were set afire by the army, the following affair happened: As soon as a fire was set in the crops, it was driven by the wind and set on fire the temple of Athena called Assesia. The temple caught fire and burned completely. At the time no one paid any attention, but after the army reached Sardis Alyattes fell sick. His illness became chronic and he sent messengers to Delphi, either because someone advised him to or because it seemed a good idea to him to send and ask the god about his sickness. When they arrived at Delphi, the Pythia said she would not answer them until they rebuilt the temple of Athena which they had burnt at Assesos in the Milesian land.

20. I know [*oida*] this was so because I heard it from the Delphians. To this the Milesians add that Periander son of Kypselos, who was a very great *xenos* of Thrasyboulos, the *turannos* of Miletus at that time, learned of the answer given to Alyattes and sent a messenger to disclose it, so

that Thrasyboulos might be forewarned and make plans for the present circumstances. This is how the Milesians say it was.

21. When this was announced to Alyattes, he immediately sent a herald to Miletus, wishing to make a truce with Thrasyboulos and the Milesians for as long as it took to build the temple. The messenger went to Miletus, but Thrasyboulos knew [*oída*] clearly the whole story beforehand and saw what Alyattes was going to do, so he contrived the following: he piled up in the *agorā* all the grain there was in the city, both his own and private, and proclaimed that when he indicated-by-a-sign [*sēmainein*] everyone should drink and indulge in revelry together.

22. He acted thus and gave this command so that the herald from Sardis might see the great store of grain heaped up and the men in festivity and report it to Alyattes. And that is what happened. The herald saw these things and imparted his instructions from the Lydian to Thrasyboulos, then returned to Sardis. I learn that the reconciliation came about for no other reason. Alyattes had supposed there was great famine in Miletus and the people were worn down to the limit of bad trouble [*kakon*], but he heard from the herald returning [achieving a *nostos*] from Miletus a report opposite to his expectation. Then there was a reconciliation between them, with conditions that they become each other's *xenoi* and allies. Alyattes built two temples to Athena in Assesos instead of one, and he recovered from his sickness. This is how it was for Alyattes concerning his war against the Milesians and Thrasyboulos.

23. Periander, the man who revealed the oracle to Thrasyboulos, was the son of Kypselos. Periander was *turannos* of Corinth. The Corinthians say that the greatest marvel occurred in his lifetime, and the people of Lesbos agree with them. They say that Arion of Methymna was carried ashore at Tainaron on a dolphin. He was a singer second to none in his time, and he is the first man we know of to compose the dithyramb⁸ and name it and teach it in Corinth.

24. They say that this Arion, who spent the greater part of his time with Periander, desired to sail to Italy and Sicily on a tour, and after making a lot of money wished to come back to Corinth. He set out from Tarentum, hiring a ship of Corinthian men since he trusted no one more than the Corinthians. But in the open sea they plotted to throw Arion overboard and take his money. He comprehended the plot and pleaded with them, offering to surrender his money and begging for his life [*psūkhē*]. But he did not persuade them, and the sailors ordered him either to kill himself so that he could meet with burial on land, or to jump into the sea immediately. He was left helpless by these threats and begged them, since they had so decided, to allow him to stand on deck in full dress and sing. He promised to kill himself after singing. They were pleased at the prospect of hearing the best [*aristos*] singer in the world, so they withdrew from the stern to the middle of the ship. He put on his outfit and took up his lyre, stood on the deck and repeated the 'shrill' song [*nomos*]. When the song [*nomos*] was complete [= brought to *telos*], he threw himself into the sea just as he was, full dress and all, and the men sailed off to Corinth. But they say a dolphin took him on its back and carried him ashore at Tainaron. He climbed off and went to Corinth, still in his outfit, and upon arriving related everything that had happened. Periander in disbelief kept him under guard without release and waited intently for the sailors. After they arrived, they were summoned and questioned whether they had any news of Arion. When they said he was safe in Italy and they had left him doing fine in Tarentum, Arion appeared to them just as he was when he jumped overboard. They were dumbfounded and no longer able to deny it under cross-examination. The people of both Corinth and Lesbos say this, and at Tainaron there is a bronze dedication of Arion, not very big, a man on a dolphin.

25. Alyattes the Lydian waged war against the Milesians and later died after being king for 57 years. When he recovered from his illness, he became the second of his house to make offerings to Delphi: a large silver bowl and a stand of welded iron, worthy of seeing among all the

offerings at Delphi, the work of Glaukos of Chios, who alone of all men invented the welding of iron.

26. When Alyattes died, Croesus son of Alyattes inherited the kingship at age 35, and the Ephesians were the first of the Hellenes he attacked. Thereupon the Ephesians under siege by him dedicated the *polis* to Artemis by tying a rope from her temple to the city wall. The distance between the old *polis* which was then besieged and the temple is seven stadium-lengths.⁹ These were the first, but afterwards Croesus attacked each of the Ionians and Aeolians, each in turn, bringing different charges against each. When he was able to find a serious charge he brought it, but against some of them he brought even trivial charges.

27. When the Hellenes in Asia had been reduced to payment of tribute [*phoros*], he then formed a plan to make ships and attack the islanders. When he had everything ready for shipbuilding, some say that Bias of Priene, others Pittakos of Mytilene, arrived at Sardis and stopped the shipbuilding when Croesus asked him if there was any news about Hellas, and he said, “O King, the islanders are buying up 10,000 horses and have in mind [*noos*] to make an expedition against Sardis and against you.” Croesus hoped that he was speaking the truth [*alētheia*] and said, “If only the gods would put it into the minds [*noos*] of the islanders to come against the sons of Lydians with horses!” He replied by saying, “O King, you appear to me to pray heartily to capture the islanders on horseback on the mainland, and your hope is reasonable. But what else do you think the islanders are praying for, as soon as they learned that you were going to build ships against them, than to capture the Lydians on the sea, so that they may punish you on behalf of the Hellenes living on the mainland whom you hold enslaved?” Croesus was mightily pleased by his point and was persuaded by him, for he seemed to speak shrewdly. So he stopped the shipbuilding, and in this way he established reciprocal guest-host relations [*xeniā*] with the Ionians who inhabit the islands.

28. As time passed, almost all the populations living this side of the Halys were subdued. Except for the Cilicians and Lycians, Croesus held all the others in subjection to himself. These are as follows: Lydians, Phrygians, Mysians, Mariandynians, Chalybes, Paphlagonians, Thynian and Bithynian Thracians, Carians, Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians, Pamphylians.

29. Croesus had subdued all these populations and added them to the Lydian empire. His capital Sardis was at the height of its wealth, and to it came, one by one, all the wise [*sophoi*] men of Hellas, including Solon the Athenian. He was spending ten years abroad after having made laws [*nomoi*] for the Athenians at their request. He sailed away on the pretext of taking a sacred voyage [*theōriā*],¹⁰ but the real reason was not to have to repeal any of the laws [*nomoi*] he had made. The Athenians could not do this on their own, having sworn by the strongest oaths to observe for ten years whatever laws [*nomoi*] Solon gave them.

30. So for that reason, and to take a sacred voyage [*theōria*], Solon went to visit Amasis in Egypt and then to Croesus in Sardis. When he got there, Croesus entertained him in the palace, and on the third or fourth day Croesus told his servants [*therapontes*] to show Solon around his treasures. After Solon had seen and thought over how great and fortunate [*olbios*] they were, Croesus found the opportunity to say, ^{1.30.2} “Athenian guest [*xenos*], we have heard much about your wisdom [*sophiā*] and your wandering [*planē*], how you in your love of wise things [*philosophheîn*] have traveled all over the world for the sake of a sacred journey [*theōriā*], so now I desire to ask you who is the most *olbios* of all men you have ever seen.” ^{1.30.3} Croesus asked this question expecting the answer to be himself, but Solon, instead of flattering him, told it as it was and said, “O King, it is Tello the Athenian.” ^{1.30.4} Croesus marveled at what he had said and replied sharply, “In what way do you judge [*krinein*] Tello to be the most *olbios*?” Solon said, “Tello was from a prosperous city [*polis*] and his children were good and noble [*agathoi*].

He saw them all have children of their own, and all of these survived. His life was well off by our standards, and his death was most distinguished: ^{1.30.5} when the Athenians were fighting their neighbors in Eleusis, he came to help, routed the enemy, and died most beautifully. The Athenians buried him at public expense on the spot where he fell, and they honored [*tīmazein*] him greatly.”

31. ^{1.31.1} When Solon had provoked him by referring to the things that happened to Tellos, saying that these things were many and blessed [*olbia*], Croesus asked him [= Solon] what person he saw as the next one after him [= Tellos], since he [= Croesus] quite expected to win second prize. Solon answered, “Kleobis and Biton. ^{1.31.2} They were Argive by lineage [*genos*], and they made a living that was quite sufficient. And, on top of this, they had such great physical strength! Both were prize-winning athletes [*āthlophoroi*]. Here is the story that is told about them. There was a festival [*heortē*] of Hērā in Argos, and it was absolutely necessary for their mother [= the priestess of Hērā] to be conveyed to the sacred precinct [*hieron*] [of Hērā] by a team of oxen. But their oxen had not come back from the fields in time [*hōrā*], so the youths themselves took the yoke upon their shoulders under constraint of time [*hōrā*] and started pulling the wagon, with their mother riding on top of it, transporting her [their mother] forty-five stadium-lengths until they arrived at the sacred precinct [*hieron*] [of Hērā]. ^{1.31.3} After they [= Kleobis and Biton] had done these things and had been seen [*op-*] doing these things by everyone participating in the festival [*panēguris*], the very best fulfillment [*teleutē*] of life now happened for them. And in all this the god showed that it is better for a man to be in a state of death than in a state of life [*zōein*]. For the men of Argos, standing around the two youths, declared them blessed [*makares*] for having such physical strength, while the women of Argos declared the mother of the youths blessed [*makares*] for having such children as these two. ^{1.31.4} And the mother, overjoyed [*perikharēs*] about what had been accomplished and about what had been said about the things that had been accomplished,

stood before the statue [= of Hērā] and prayed on behalf of Kleobis and Biton, her two children, who had so greatly honored [*tīmazein*] her. She prayed that the goddess [= Hērā] should give them [= the two youths] the very best thing that can happen to a mortal. ^{1.31.5} After this prayer, the people sacrificed [*thuein*] and feasted [*eu-ōkheîn*], and the youths went to sleep [*kata-koimâsthai*] right then and there in the sacred precinct [of Hērā]. And they [= the two youths] never got-up [*an-histasthai*] again, but were held-still [*ekhesthai*] in this fulfillment [*telos*]. And the people of Argos made likenesses [*eikōn* plural] of them and dedicated these at Delphi, saying that these were images of men who had become the very best [*aristoi*] of men.”

32. Thus Solon granted second place in happiness [*eudaimoniā*] to these men. Croesus got angry and said, “Athenian guest [*xenos*], do you so much despise our *eudaimoniā* that you do not even make us worthy of commoners?” Solon replied, “Croesus, you ask me about human affairs, and I know that the divine is entirely grudging and troublesome to us. In a long span of time it is possible to see many things that you do not want to, and to suffer them, too. I set the limit of a man’s life at 70 years; these 70 years have 25,200 days, leaving out the intercalary month. But if you make every other year longer by one month, so that the seasons [*hōrai*] agree opportunely, then there are 35 intercalary months during the 70 years, and from these months there are 1,050 days. Out of all these days in the 70 years, all 26,250 of them, not one brings anything at all like another. So, Croesus, a human life is entirely accident. To me you seem to be very rich and to be king of many people, but I cannot answer your question before I hear that your life came to a good *telos*. The very rich man is not more *olbios* than the man who has only his daily needs, unless he chances to have his life come to *telos* with everything turning out well. Many very rich men are not *olbioi*, many of moderate means are lucky. The man who is very rich but not *olbios* surpasses the lucky man in only two ways, while the second of the two surpasses the one who is rich but not *olbios* in many ways. The rich man is more capable

of fulfilling his appetites and of bearing a great disaster [*atē*] that falls upon him, but the other surpasses him in these ways: he is not so able to bear *atē* or appetite as is the rich man, but his luck keeps these things away from him, and he is free from deformity and disease, has no experience of miseries, and has fine children and good looks. 7 If, in addition to all these things [= the examples of good fortune that I have listed], someone reaches the end [*teleutân*] of one's life in a good way, then this someone is the person that you [= Croesus] are looking for, that is, the person who deserves to be called *olbios*; but before someone reaches the end [*teleutân*], you should hold off from calling him *olbios*. Rather, just call him fortunate [*eutukhēs*]. It is impossible for one who is only human to get all these things at the same time, just as no land is self-sufficient in what it produces. Each country has one thing but lacks another; whichever has the most is best [*aristē*]. Just so no human being is self-sufficient; each person has one thing but lacks another. Whoever passes through life with most of them and then comes to the *telos* of his life favorably is the one who, in my opinion, O King, deserves to bear this name. It is necessary to see the reaching of *telos* in every affair, for the god promises prosperity [*olbos*] to many people and then utterly ruins them.”

33. By saying this, Solon did not at all please Croesus, who sent him away and took no further account of him. He thought Solon a great fool because he disregarded present good things [*agatha*] and advised him to look to the reaching of *telos* in every affair.

34. But after Solon went away, great *nemesis* from a god seized Croesus, I guess because he considered himself to be the most *olbios* of all men. Soon a dream stood over him in his sleep, which revealed to him the truth [*alētheia*] of the bad things [*kaka*] that were going to happen concerning his son. Croesus had two sons, one of whom was disabled, being mute, but the other was by far the first among his peers in all respects. This one's name was Atys. The dream indicated [*sēmainein*] to

Croesus that he would lose this Atys when he was struck by an iron spearpoint. When he awoke and thought this over, he took great fright and had his son marry, and although he had been accustomed to lead the Lydian forces he never sent him out to such an event, and he removed from the men's quarters the javelins and spears and all such things which people make use of in war, and piled them in the chambers, so that one hanging above his son might not fall on him.

35. While he had his hands full with his son's marriage, there came to Sardis a man beset by misfortune and with unclean hands, a Phrygian by birth, royal in lineage [*genos*]. This man entered Croesus' house and asked to receive purification according to the local customs [*nomoi*], and Croesus purified him. There is a similar ritual of purification for the Lydians and the Hellenes. When Croesus had performed the accustomed rites, he asked where he was from and who he was, saying as follows: "My good man, who are you and where in Phrygia do you come from to become my suppliant? What man or woman have you murdered?" He answered, "O King, I am the son of Gordias son of Midas, my name is Adrastos, and I have killed my own brother unintentionally. I have come here exiled by my father and deprived of all my goods." Croesus answered him with these words: "You are the descendant of men who are *philo*i and you have come to *philo*i. You will lack nothing while you remain in our house. By bearing this misfortune as lightly as possible you will derive profit [*kerdos*] best."

36. So he dwelled in Croesus' house, and in this same time a huge monster of a boar appeared on Mount Olympus—the mountain by that name in Mysia. This boar repeatedly rushed down from that mountain and devastated the crops and fields of the Mysians, and often the Mysians marched out against him and caused him no trouble [*kakon*], but instead suffered hurt [*paskhein*] from him. Finally [*telos*] messengers of the Mysians came to Croesus and said, "O King, an enormous monster of a boar has arisen in our land and devastates our crops and fields. We are unable to capture it, for all our eagerness. So now we ask

you to send with us your son and carefully chosen young men and dogs, so that we may drive it from our land.” They asked for these things, but Croesus remembered the words [*epea*] of the dream and said, “Do not mention my son again. I would never send him with you. He is a newlywed and is busy with that. However, I will send carefully chosen men of the Lydians and a pack of hunting dogs, and I will command those who go to be most eager to work with you to drive the beast from your land.”

37. Thus he answered. The Mysians were satisfied with these things, but Croesus’ son had heard what the Mysians asked and came in. When Croesus refused to send his son with them, the youth spoke to him as follows: “Father, once it used to be most good and noble for us to go regularly to wars and hunting and enjoy good repute. But now you keep me shut out from both of these, though you have never seen any cowardice or lack of *thūmos* in me. How am I to look now as I go to and from the *agorā*? What sort of person do I seem to the people of the *polis*, what sort to my newly-wedded wife? What sort of husband will she think she lives with? So either let me go to the hunt, or persuade me by word that these things are better for me done in this way.”

38. Croesus answered, “Son, I do this not because I have seen any cowardice or anything else displeasing in you, but because a vision of a dream stood over me in my sleep and said that you would be short-lived, and that I would lose you by an iron spearpoint. Because of this vision I hastened your marriage and I do not send you on our undertakings, keeping guard so that I might be able somehow to keep you hidden away in my lifetime. You are my only son. I do not consider the other, disabled one to be mine.”

39. The youth answered, “I forgive you, father, for keeping me under guard, since you saw such a vision. But the dream has escaped you, and it is right [*dikaion*] for me to show you what you do not understand. You say that the dream said I would die [= reach a *telos*] by an iron

spearpoint. What kind of hands does a boar have, what iron spearpoint which you fear? If the dream had said to you that I would die [= reach a *telos*] by a tusk or by anything else that resembles a boar, you would have to do as you are doing. But it said by a spearpoint. Since our battle is not against men, let me go.”

40. Croesus answered, “Son, you win by declaring your interpretation of the dream. So, since I have been persuaded by you, I change my mind and allow you to go to the hunt.”

41. After saying this, Croesus summoned the Phrygian Adrastos, and said to him when he arrived: “Adrastos, I purified you when you were struck by a dreadful misfortune, and I did not blame you for it. I have entertained you in my house [*oikos*] and provided all your expenses. Since I have done you all this good, you ought to repay me with good deeds. So now I request you to be the guard of my son as he sets out for the hunt, in case any evil-doing robbers appear to you on the road bent on mischief. In addition, you ought to go where you may shine forth by your deeds. This is your heritage, and you are strong enough besides.”

42. Adrastos answered, “O King, I would not otherwise have gone to this contest [*āthlos*]. It is unseemly for a man involved in such a misfortune to go among his comrades who fare well, nor is the desire present, and for many reasons I would have restrained myself. But now, since you are insistent and it is necessary to show you *kharis*—for I ought to repay you with good deeds—I am ready to do this. Expect your son, whom you bid me to guard, to return home [*apo-nosteîn*] to you unharmed [without *pēma*], so far as it concerns his guard.”

43. After he answered Croesus with these words, they then went out furnished with both carefully chosen young men and dogs. They reached Mount Olympus and searched for the beast, and when they found it they stood around it in a circle and threw their javelins at it. Then the *xenos*, the one purified of manslaughter, whose name was

Adrastos, threw his javelin at the boar and missed it, but hit Croesus' son. So he was struck by a spearpoint and fulfilled the prophecy of the dream. A messenger ran to announce to Croesus what had happened, and when he reached Sardis he told [*sēmainein*] him of the battle with the boar and of the death of his son.

44. Croesus was greatly distressed at the death of his son, and considered it all the more terrible because the man he himself had purified of manslaughter had killed him. Terribly incensed by the misfortune, he invoked Zeus the god of purification, calling to witness what he had suffered [*paskhein*] at the hands of his *xenos*, and he invoked Zeus the god-of-the-hearth [*ep-histios*] and the god-of-comrades [*hetairēios*], calling the same god by these appellations. He invoked Zeus-of-the-hearth [*ep-histios*] because he had entertained the guest [*xenos*] in his house [*oikos*] without knowing he was keeping his son's killer, and Zeus-of-comrades [*hetairēios*] because he had sent him as a guard but had found him to be his greatest enemy.

45. Then the Lydians arrived bearing the corpse, and his killer followed behind. This one [= Adrastos] stood before the corpse and surrendered himself to Croesus, stretching out his hands and bidding him slit his throat over the corpse. He mentioned his own earlier misfortune and said that on top of that he had destroyed his purifier and that life was not worth living. Croesus heard this and had pity on Adrastos, even though he was in so much misery [*kakon*] of his own, and said to him, "*xenos*, I have full compensation [*dikē*] from you, since you sentence yourself to death. It is not you who are responsible [*aitios*] for this evil [*kakon*] to me, except so far as you did it unintentionally. I suppose it is one of the gods, who long ago indicated [*sēmainein*] to me what was going to be." Croesus then buried his own son as was fitting. But Adrastos, son of Gordias son of Midas, the one who became the killer of his own brother, the killer of his purifier, when there was a quieting-down [*hēsukhiā*]

around the *sēma*, recognizing that he was the most gravely unfortunate man that he knew of, slit his own throat over the tomb.

46. Croesus, bereft of his son, sat in great sorrow [*penthos*] for two years. But later the empire of Astyages son of Kyaxares was destroyed by Cyrus son of Cambyses, and the affairs of the Persians were on the rise, making Croesus lay aside his *penthos*. He deliberated how it might be possible to destroy their increasing power before the Persians became great. After forming this intention, he immediately tested the oracles in Hellas and the one in Libya, sending separate messengers to each, some going to Delphi, some to Abai in Phocis, some to Dodona. Others were sent to the oracles of Amphiaraos and of Trophonios, still others to the Brankhidai in the region of Miletus. These are the Hellenic oracles Croesus sent to for consultation; he sent other messengers to Ammon in Libya to make inquiry. He sent all these messengers to test what the oracles thought, so that if they were discovered to think the truth [*alētheia*], he would next send messengers and ask if he should attempt an expedition against the Persians.

47. He gave the Lydians these orders when he sent them to test the oracles: They should count the days for all the time from the day they set out from Sardis, and on the hundredth day make inquiry of the oracles, asking what Croesus son of Alyattes, king of the Lydians, happened to be doing. They should write down whatever each of the oracles responded and report it to him. No one says what the rest of the oracles responded, but at Delphi, as soon as the Lydians entered the hall to make inquiry of the god and asked what they had been ordered, the Pythia spoke thus in hexameter:

I know [*oida*] the number of the grains of sand and the
measure of the sea.

I understand the mute and I hear the one who does not
speak.

The smell has come to my senses of a hard-shelled tortoise,

boiling with meat of lamb,
where bronze is spread below, bronze set above.

48. The Pythia gave this response and the Lydians wrote it down and went away to Sardis. When the other messengers who had been sent around were present with their oracles, then Croesus unrolled each of them [= the scrolls] and read what was written. None of them pleased him, but when he heard the one from Delphi he immediately accepted it with a prayer, considering the only true oracle to be the one in Delphi, because it had discovered what he had been doing. For when he sent the messengers around to the oracles, he watched for the right day and contrived the following: devising something that would be impossible to discover or guess, he cut up a tortoise and a lamb and boiled them together himself in a bronze cauldron and put a bronze lid on it.

49. This was the answer Croesus received from Delphi. Concerning the answer of the oracle of Amphiaraos, I am not able to say what answer was given to the Lydians as they performed the accustomed rites of the sacred [*hieros*] precinct, for this is not reported, except that he believed that he also possessed this response that was not false.

50. Then he tried to propitiate the god in Delphi with great sacrifices. He sacrificed 3,000 of all kinds of sacrificial beasts, and he heaped up gilded and silver-plated couches, golden bowls, purple cloaks and tunics, and burned them on a great pyre, hoping to win the god over even more with these things, and he commanded all the Lydians to sacrifice everything of these that each one could. After the sacrifice, he melted down an immense amount of gold and made bricks of it, making them six hands in length, three hands in width, and one hand in height, 117 in number, four of them of refined gold, each weighing two and a half talents, the rest of white gold, two talents in weight. He also had fashioned the statue of a lion, of refined gold, with a weight of ten talents. When the temple in Delphi burned, this lion fell off the bricks—

for it stood upon these—and now lies in the treasury of the Corinthians, weighing six and a half talents, for three and a half talents melted off.

51. Croesus followed through on these things and sent them to Delphi, along with many others: two bowls great in size, gold and silver; the golden one lies on your right as you enter the temple, the silver one on your left. These were also moved at the time of the temple's burning, and the golden one lies in the treasury of the Klazomenians, weighing eight and a half talents, and twelve minae besides, while the silver one lies in the corner of the forecourt, holding 600 amphorae. The Delphians mix wine in it at the Feast of Theophania [= epiphany of the god (Apollo)]. The Delphians say it is the work of Theodoros of Samos, and I think so, for it does not seem to me to be an everyday work. He also sent four jars which stand in the treasury of the Corinthians, and he dedicated two sprinklers, gold and silver. On the golden one "from the Lacedaemonians" is written, claiming that it is their offering, but they do not speak correctly; this too is from Croesus, and one of the Delphians wrote the inscription wishing to please the Lacedaemonians. I know his name but will not mention it. The boy through whose hand water flows is from the Lacedaemonians, but neither of the sprinklers is. Along with these Croesus sent many other remarkable offerings, and circular silver basins, and also the golden statue of a woman, three cubits tall, which the Delphians say is a statue of Croesus' baker-woman. In addition, Croesus dedicated his own wife's necklaces and cinctures.

52. That is what he sent to Delphi. To Amphiaraos, learning of his achievement [*aretē*] and what-he-experienced [*pathos*]¹¹, he offered a shield of gold all over and a spear of solid gold, the shaft and the point equally of gold. Both of these down to my day had a place in Thebes, in the temple of Ismenian Apollo of the Thebans.

53. Croesus instructed those of the Lydians who were going to bring these gifts to the sacred precincts [*hiera*] to ask the oracles if he should march against the Persians and if he should attach any army of men to

himself as *philoî*. Arriving where they had been sent, the Lydians made the offerings and inquired of the oracles by saying, “Croesus, king of the Lydians and other nations, has decided that these oracles are the only ones among men, and has given you gifts worthy of your findings. Now he asks if he should march against the Persians and if he should attach any army of men to himself as allies.” So they asked, and the responses of both oracles agreed, prophesying to Croesus that if he marched against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. They advised him to find out who were the most powerful of the Hellenes and acquire them as *philoî*.

54. When Croesus heard the reported oracles, he was overjoyed by the responses. Completely expecting to destroy the empire of Cyrus, he sent again to Pytho¹² and, after learning their number, made a gift to the Delphians of two staters of gold for each man. The Delphians in turn granted to Croesus and the Lydians first consultation, exemption from fees, front-row seats, and the right for anyone who wished to become a Delphian for all time.

55. After making this gift to the Delphians, Croesus consulted the oracle a third time. Since he had received the truth [*alētheia*] from the oracle, he used it to the full. He made this inquiry of the oracle: whether his monarchy would last a long time. The Pythia responded to him as follows:

When a mule becomes king of the Medes,
then you, Lydian, with the graceful stride, flee along the
[river] Hermos with its many pebbles,
do not stay, do not feel any shame [*aidōs*] about being *kakos*.

56. Croesus was pleased most of all by the coming of this utterance [*epos*], for he supposed that a mule would never become king of the Medes instead of a man, and that he and his offspring would never cease from rule. Then he deliberated and made inquiry whom he should

acquire as *philoî* as being the most powerful of the Hellenes. He discovered by inquiry that the Lacedaemonians excelled in the Dorian lineage [*genos*] and the Athenians in the Ionian lineage. These were the foremost populations, the Ionian being originally Pelasgian, while the Dorian were a Hellenic people. The Pelasgian people have never yet been forced out of their homeland, while the Hellenic have wandered greatly, for in the time of King Deukalion they inhabited [*oikeîn*] the land of Phthia, but in the time of Doros son of Hellen they lived in the land that has the mountains Ossa and Olympus overlooking it, called Histiaia. When they were driven from Histiaia by the Kadmeians, they dwelled in Pindos in the land called Makednia. From there they migrated again into Dryopis, and from Dryopis they came into the Peloponnese and were called Dorians.

57. I cannot say exactly what language the Pelasgians spoke. But if I must make an inference from the Pelasgians who still exist, those who inhabit [*oikeîn*] the *polis* of Kreston beyond the Tyrrhenoi and once bordered the people now called Dorian, at that time inhabiting [*oikeîn*] the land now called Thessalian; from the Pelasgians who lived [verb from *oikos*] in Plakia and Skylake on the Hellespont and came to live with the Athenians; and from all the other Pelasgian cities which changed their names—if I must make an inference from these, the Pelasgians were speakers of a barbarian language. If all the Pelasgian people were such, then the Athenian people, since they were Pelasgian, besides changing their name to Hellenes also learned a new language. For the Krestonians do not speak the same language as any of the people who now dwell [*oikeîn*] around them, nor do the Plakienoi, but they do speak the same language as each other, making clear that they maintain the dialect which they brought with them when they migrated to these territories.

58. It seems clear to me that the Hellenic populations have always used the same language since they came into existence. But they were weak when they were separate from the Pelasgians. Starting from a small

beginning they have increased into a multitude of populations, as they were joined chiefly by the Pelasgians, and also by numerous other barbarian populations. Furthermore, it seems to me that the Pelasgian people never greatly increased when they were barbarian.

59. Of these populations Croesus learned that the Attic¹³ was repressed and divided by Peisistratos son of Hippokrates, who at that time was *turannos* of the Athenians. When Hippokrates as a private citizen was observing [verb of *theōriā*] the Olympics, a great portent appeared to him: as he was performing the sacrifices, the cauldrons standing full of meat and water boiled up and started to overflow without fire. Khilon the Lacedaemonian was there and saw the portent, and advised Hippokrates: first, not to bring a wife of child-bearing years into his household; second, if he had a wife, to divorce her; and if he had a son, to disown him. Khilon gave this advice [*par-aineîn*], but Hippokrates refused to be persuaded by it. Afterwards was born to him Peisistratos, the one who aimed at the tyranny and instituted a third faction [*stasis*], when the coast people and the plain people of the Athenians were at strife [= verb of *stasis*]. Megakles son of Alkmaion was chief of the coast people; Lycurgus son of Aristolaides was chief of the plain. Peisistratos collected partisans [= members of a *stasis*], claiming to be chief of the hill people, then contrived as follows: he wounded himself and his mules and then drove his team into the *agorā* as if escaping from his personal enemies [*ekhthroi*], who wished to kill him as he rode into the country. He asked for a guard from the people [*dēmos*], since he had gained a good reputation in the expedition against Megara by capturing Nisaia and performing other great deeds. The *dēmos* of the Athenians was deceived and they ordained that he select men from the townspeople, who became not the spear-bearers¹⁴ of Peisistratos but his club-bearers, for they followed behind him holding wooden clubs.¹⁵ They set in motion a revolution, with Peisistratos as leader, and took possession of the acropolis. Then Peisistratos ruled the Athenians without disturbing the existing *tīmai* or changing the laws [*thesmia*]. He governed the *polis*

according to the established ways, making-order [= verb of *kosmos*] for it in a good manner.

60. Not much later the partisans [= members of a *stasis*] of Megakles and Lycurgus came to an agreement and drove him out. In this way had Peisistratos taken possession of Athens for the first time, gaining the tyranny and losing it, since it was not yet strongly rooted. Those who drove out Peisistratos quarreled [= verb of *stasis*] with each other all over again. Megakles was hard pressed by the strife [*stasis*] and sent a message to Peisistratos to ask if he wished take Megakles' daughter as his wife in return for the tyranny. Peisistratos consented to the offer and agreed on those terms. For his return they devised by far the most simpleminded thing I have ever found—since from olden days the Hellenic people have been distinguished from the barbarian for being more clever and further removed from foolish simplemindedness—especially if they devised such things among the Athenians, who are said to be the first among the Hellenes in being *sophoi*. In the district [*dēmos*] of Paiania was a woman whose name was Phye,¹⁶ who was three fingers short of being four cubits tall, and beautiful besides. They fitted this woman in full armor, positioned her on a chariot, showed her the bearing she should assume to look most becoming, and rode into town, sending heralds on ahead who spoke as instructed when they arrived in town, saying, “Athenians, receive with good intention [*noos*] Peisistratos to whom Athena herself has given most *tīmē* among men. She is bringing him back to her own acropolis.” They went around saying this, and immediately the rumor reached the people [*dēmos*] that Athena was bringing back Peisistratos. The people in the city believed the woman to be the goddess herself and worshipped her, though human, and accepted Peisistratos.

61. Peisistratos regained the tyranny in the way I have told and married Megakles' daughter according to the agreement made with Megakles. Since he already had grown-up sons and the Alkmaionidai were said to be under a curse,¹⁷ he was unwilling to have children from his new bride

and had sex with her in an unaccustomed¹⁸ [= contrary to *nomos*] manner. The woman kept this hidden at first, but later she told her mother—I do not know whether she asked—who told her husband. Megakles was indignant at being treated without *tīmē* by Peisistratos. All in a huff he reconciled his hostility with the factions [= members of a *stasis*]. Peisistratos learned what was being done against him and got entirely out of the territory, and, reaching Eretria, he took counsel with his sons. The opinion of Hippias to take back possession of the tyranny prevailed, and then they collected gifts from the cities [= plural of *polis*] which were under some obligation to them. Many offered a large sum, but the Thebans surpassed all in giving money. Later, to speak briefly, time passed and everything was ready for their return. Argive mercenaries arrived from the Peloponnese, and a man of Naxos whose name was Lygdamis came as a volunteer, offering the greatest eagerness and bringing money and men.

62. In the eleventh year they set out from Eretria and made their comeback. The first place in Attica¹⁹ they took was Marathon. While they were encamped in this place, partisans [= members of a *stasis*] from the city came to them, and from the districts [= plural of *dēmos*] trickled in others who found tyranny more welcome than freedom. These were mustered. For as long as Peisistratos was collecting money, and later when he held Marathon, the Athenians of the city took no account of him, but when they learned that he was marching from Marathon toward the city, then they marched out against him. They went in full force against the returning exiles, and since the men with Peisistratos started from Marathon and went toward the city, they made contact when they reached the sacred precinct of Athena of Pallene, taking up opposite positions. At that point, Amphilytos the Akarnanian, an interpreter of oracles, who was engaged in a mission brought on by a divine trance, positioned himself next to Peisistratos and, coming up close to him, he gave him the following oracle in hexameter verse:

The throw is made, the net is spread,
the tuna-fish will dart in the moonlit night.

63. He was in a state of being possessed by the gods as he delivered this oracular utterance for him. Peisistratos understood the oracle, said that he accepted the prophecy, and led out his army. The Athenians from the city were then having breakfast, and after breakfast some of them were playing dice, some were sleeping. The men with Peisistratos burst upon the Athenians and routed them. As they were fleeing, Peisistratos then devised a very clever [*sophē*] plan to prevent the Athenians from regrouping and to keep them scattered. He mounted his sons on horseback and sent them ahead. They caught up with the fleeing men and spoke as instructed by Peisistratos, bidding each to take heart and to go off to his own home.

64. The Athenians complied, and in this way Peisistratos got possession of Athens for the third time. He rooted his tyranny with many mercenaries and with revenues of money, some domestic, some coming in from the river Strymon. He took as hostages the sons of the Athenians who had stayed behind and not gone immediately into exile and placed them in Naxos, for he had conquered it, too, by war and handed it over to Lygdamis. In addition to these things, he purified the island of Delos according to the oracles. He purified it in this way: he dug up the corpses from all the territory within sight of the sacred precinct and transferred them to another territory of Delos. And Peisistratos was *turannos* of Athens, while some of the Athenians had fallen in the battle, and others were exiles from their homeland along with the Alkmaionidai.

65. So, Croesus learned that at that time such problems were oppressing the Athenians, but that the Lacedaemonians had escaped from the greatest evils [*kaka*] and had mastered the Tegeans in war. During the kingship of Leon and Hegesikles at Sparta, the Lacedaemonians had been successful in all their other wars but had met disaster only against

the Tegeans. Even before this they had been the worst-governed of nearly all the Hellenes and used to have had no dealings with *xenoi*, but they had changed to a government-with-good-laws [*eunomiā*] in this way: Lycurgus, a man of reputation among the Spartans, went to the oracle at Delphi. As soon as he entered the hall, the priestess said in hexameter:

You have come to my rich temple, Lycurgus,
philos to Zeus and to all who have Olympian homes.
I am in doubt whether to pronounce [= address in an
oracular way; verb of *mantis*] you human or god,
but I expect, the more I think about it, that you are a god,
Lycurgus.

Some say that the Pythia also declared to him the constitution [*kosmos*] that now exists at Sparta, but the Lacedaemonians themselves say that Lycurgus brought it from Crete when he was guardian of his nephew Leobotes, the Spartan king. Once he became guardian he changed all the laws [*nomima*] and took care that no one transgressed the new ones. Lycurgus afterwards established their affairs of war: the sworn divisions [*enōmotiai*], the bands of 30, the common meals; also the ephors and the council of elders.

66. Thus they changed around, switching to a government-by-way-of-good-laws [*eunomiā*], and when Lycurgus reached his end they established a sacred precinct [*hieron*] for him and now worship [*sebesthai*] him in a grand way. Since they had good [*agathē*] land and many men, they immediately flourished [= shot up like a sprout; *ana-trekhein*] and prospered. They were not content to live in peace, but, confident that they were stronger than the Arcadians, they asked the oracle at Delphi about capturing all the Arcadian territory. She replied in hexameter:

You ask me for Arcadia? You ask too much; I grant it not.
There are many men in Arcadia, eaters of acorns,
who will hinder you. But there is one thing I will not
begrudge you.
I will give you Tegea to stomp at with your feet in dancing,
and to measure its beautiful plain with a rope.

When the Lacedaemonians heard the oracle reported, they left the other Arcadians alone and marched on Tegea carrying chains, relying on the deceptive oracle. They were confident they would enslave the Tegeans, but they were defeated in battle. Those taken alive were bound in the very chains they had brought with them, and they measured the Tegean plain with a rope by working the fields. The chains in which they were bound were still preserved in my day, hanging around the temple of Athena Alea.

67. In the previous war the Lacedaemonians were continually being outdone in battle by the Tegeans, but in the time of Croesus and the kingship of Anaxandrides and Ariston in Lacedaemon the Spartans had gained the upper hand. This is how: When they kept being defeated by the Tegeans, they sent ambassadors to Delphi to ask which god they should propitiate to prevail against the Tegeans in war. The Pythia responded that they should bring back the bones of Orestes son of Agamemnon. When they were unable to discover Orestes' tomb, they sent once more to the god to ask where he was buried. The Pythia responded in hexameter to the messengers:

There is a place named Tegea in the smooth plain of Arcadia,
where two winds blow under strong compulsion.
Blow lies upon blow, woe upon woe.
There the life-giving [*phusi-zoos*] earth covers over the son
of Agamemnon.
Bring him back [*komizein*] and you will be the masters of
Tegea.

When the Lacedaemonians heard this, they were no closer to discovery, though they looked everywhere. Finally it was found by Likhes, who was one of the Spartans who are called “doers of good things done [*agatho-ergoi*].” These men are those citizens who retire from the knights, the five oldest each year. They have to spend the year in which they retire from the class of horsemen [*hippeis*] being sent here and there by the Spartan state, never resting in their efforts.

68. It was Likhes, one of these men, who found the tomb in Tegea by a combination of luck and being *sophos*. At that time there was free access to Tegea, so he went into a workshop and watched iron being forged, standing there in amazement at what he saw being done. The smith perceived that he was amazed, so he stopped what he was doing and said, “Laconian *xenos*, if you had seen what I saw, then you would really be amazed, since you marvel so at ironworking. I wanted to dig a well in the courtyard here, and in my digging I came upon a coffin seven cubits long. I could not believe that there had ever been men taller than now, so I opened it and saw that the corpse was just as long as the coffin. I measured it and then reburied it.” So the smith told what he had seen, and Likhes thought over what was said and reckoned that this was Orestes, according to the oracle. In the smith’s two bellows he found the winds, hammer and anvil were blow upon blow, and the forging of iron was woe upon woe, since he figured that iron was discovered as an evil [*kakon*] for humankind. After reasoning this out, he went back to Sparta and told the Lacedaemonians everything. They invented some counterfeit charge against him and sent him into exile. Coming to Tegea, he explained his misfortune to the smith and tried to rent the courtyard, but the smith did not want to lease it. Finally he persuaded him and set up residence [= verb of *oikos*] there. He dug up the grave and collected the bones, then hurried off to Sparta with them. Ever since then, whenever they [= the people of Sparta and Arcadia] encountered each other in war, the Lacedaemonians were far superior, and they had already subdued most of the Peloponnese.

69. Croesus learned all this and sent messengers bearing gifts to Sparta to request an alliance, ordering what they must say. They arrived and said, “We have been sent by Croesus, king of the Lydians and other populations, who says, ‘Lacedaemonians, the god delivered an oracle that I should gain the Hellene as *philos*, and I learn that you are chief of Hellas. So I invite you according to the oracle, wishing to become *philos* and allied without trick or deceit.’” Croesus made this proclamation through messengers, and the Lacedaemonians, who had themselves heard the oracle that Croesus had received, were pleased by the arrival of the Lydians and swore oaths of reciprocal guest-host relations [*xeniā*] and alliance. They had already received some benefits from Croesus previously: the Lacedaemonians had sent men to Sardis to buy gold, wanting to use it for the statue of Apollo that now stands in Thornax in Laconia; when they tried to buy it, Croesus gave it to them as a present.

70. For this reason the Lacedaemonians accepted the alliance, and because he had selected [= verb from *krinein*] them out of all the Hellenes and chosen them as *philo*i. They were ready to accede to his offer. They also made a bronze bowl containing 300 amphorae, filling the outside around the lip with pictures, and conveyed it to him, wishing to give a gift to Croesus in turn. This bowl never reached Sardis, for two conflicting reasons related as follows: The Lacedaemonians say that when the bowl was being transported offshore from Samos on its way to Sardis, the Samians learned of it, sailed out in their long ships, and stole it. But the Samians say that when the Lacedaemonians conveying the bowl were too late and learned that Sardis and Croesus had been captured, they sold the bowl in Samos; some private citizens bought it and dedicated it in the sacred precinct of Hera. Perhaps those who sold it would say when they arrived in Sparta that they had been robbed by the Samians.

71. So it was concerning the bowl. Croesus misinterpreted the oracle and invaded Cappadocia, expecting to destroy Cyrus and the empire of the Persians. While Croesus was making his preparations to attack the

Persians, one of the Lydians, who even before this was considered *sophos*, and after this pronouncement had the greatest name among the Lydians, gave Croesus this advice—his name was Sandanis: “O King, you are preparing to march against men who wear leather trousers, and the rest of their clothes are leather. They eat not as much as they want, but as much as they have, for they possess a rugged territory. Furthermore, they do not use wine, they drink water; and they do not have figs to eat, or anything else that is good. So if you conquer them, what will you rob from people who have nothing? But if you are conquered, understand how many good things [*agatha*] you will throw away. Once they have had a taste of our good things [*agatha*], they will cling to them and it will be impossible to drive them away. I thank [= offer *kharis* to] the gods that they do not put it into the Persians’ thoughts to attack the Lydians.” So he spoke, but he did not persuade Croesus. Before conquering the Lydians, the Persians had no luxury or anything good [*agathon*] at all.

72. The Cappadocians are called Syrians by the Hellenes. These Syrians were subject to the Medes before the Persians ruled, and then to Cyrus. The boundary of the Median empire and the Lydian was the Halys river, which flows from the Armenian range through Cilicia. Then it flows keeping the Matienoi on its right and the Phrygians on the other side. Passing by these, it flows up toward the north where it skirts the Cappadocian Syrians and on the left the Paphlagonians. Thus the Halys river cuts off nearly all the lower part of Asia, from the sea opposite Cyprus to the Euxine sea [= the Black Sea]. This is the neck of this whole territory; a man traveling light uses five days on the journey across.

73. Croesus marched into Cappadocia for the following reasons: out of desire for land he wished to add to his own portion [*moira*], but chiefly he trusted in the oracle and wanted vengeance on Cyrus for Astyages. Astyages son of Kyaxares was Croesus’ brother-in-law and king of the Medes, but Cyrus son of Cambyses held him in subjection. He became

Croesus' brother-in-law in this way: A band of Scythian nomads who were involved in a dispute [= verb of *stasis*] retreated into Median land. At that time Kyaxares son of Phraortes son of Deiokes was *turannos* of the Medes. At first he treated these Scythians well, since they were suppliants, and he thought so much of them that he handed over his sons to them to learn their language and their art of archery. As time passed the Scythians continually went out hunting and always brought something back, but once it happened that they did not catch anything. They came home [= verb of *nostos*] empty-handed and Kyaxares treated them very roughly and insultingly, for he was sharp-tempered, as he showed. When they were treated by Kyaxares this way, they considered it undeserved, so they planned to cut to pieces one of his sons who was being taught among them and to prepare him as they usually prepared the meat of animals, then bring him in and give him to Kyaxares as game, and once they had done it to travel as fast as possible to Alyattes son of Sadyattes in Sardis. So it happened. Kyaxares and the guests who were present ate the meat, and the Scythians after doing this became suppliants of Alyattes.

74. After this, since Alyattes would not surrender the Scythians to Cyrus when he demanded them back, there was war between the Lydians and the Medes for five years, during which the Medes many times defeated the Lydians and the Lydians many times defeated the Medes. They even fought a night-battle: They were waging war equally when during a battle in the sixth year it happened that, while the battle was raging, day suddenly became night. Thales of Miletus had predicted to the Ionians that this eclipse would occur, setting as the date the year in which the eclipse indeed happened. When the Lydians and the Medes saw it become night instead of day, they ceased from battle and both were more anxious to have peace. The ones who reconciled them were Syennesis the Cilician and Labynetos the Babylonian. They were the ones who insisted there be oaths between them and had them make an exchange of marriages. They decided that Alyattes should give his daughter Aryenis to Astyages, the son of Kyaxares, for treaties are

unlikely to remain firm without firm necessity. These nations swear the same oaths as the Hellenes, and in addition they cut their arms at the surface and lick each other's blood.

75. So Cyrus held this Astyages in subjection, his own mother's father, for a reason [*aitiā*] that I will indicate [*sēmainein*] in a later account. Having this complaint against Cyrus, Croesus sent to the oracles asking if he should attack the Persians. When an ambiguous oracle arrived, he thought that the oracle was on his side and marched against the territory [*moira*] of the Persians. When Croesus reached the Halys river, he then transported his army across the existing bridges. So I report, but the more common story among the Hellenes is that Thales of Miletus got them across. It is said that Croesus was at a loss as to how the army would cross the river, for at that time these bridges did not exist. Thales was present in the camp and devised a way to make the river, which was flowing on the army's left side, also to flow on its right. He did this in the following way: starting above the camp, he arranged for the digging of a deep trench, making it crescent-shaped, so that in this way the river, turned from its former channel, might take the encamped army from the back, then pass the camp and flow back into its former course. The result was that as soon as the river was split it became fordable on both sides. Some people say that the former channel was completely dried up, but I do not agree. How in that case could they have crossed it on their way back?

76. Croesus crossed with this army and reached the place called Pteria in Cappadocia. Pteria is the strongest place in that territory and lies approximately in a line with the *polis* of Sinope on the Euxine sea. He camped there and devastated the farm lands of the Syrians. He captured the *polis* of the Pterians and enslaved them, and he captured all its outlying towns and drove the people from their homes, though they had in no way wronged him [*aitios*]. Cyrus collected his own army and took along all the people who dwell [*oikeîn*] between as he went to encounter Croesus. But before he rushed to lead out his army, he sent heralds to the

Ionians trying to get them to revolt from Croesus, but the Ionians were not persuaded. Cyrus arrived and camped opposite Croesus, and they made trials of each other's strength in the Pterian territory. A fierce battle took place and many fell on both sides, but in the end [*telos*] neither prevailed and they parted when night came on. In this way both armies contended.

77. Croesus found fault with his own army on account of its number, for the army he had in battle was much smaller than that of Cyrus. Finding this fault, he marched away to Sardis when Cyrus did not attempt an advance on the next day. He had in mind [*noos*] to summon the Egyptians according to their oath, for he had made an alliance with Amasis, king of Egypt, even before he had with the Lacedaemonians; also to summon the Babylonians, with whom an alliance had been made—at that time Labynetos was *turannos* of the Babylonians; and to instruct the Lacedaemonians to be present at the appointed time. After he had collected these and assembled his own army, he intended to pass the winter and to march against the Persians at the break of spring. With this in mind [= verb of *phrēn*] he reached Sardis and sent heralds to instruct that according to the terms of alliance they should gather in Sardis on the fifth month. From his present army that had fought with the Persians, he released and scattered all that were his *xenoi*, for he never expected that after such evenly-matched fighting Cyrus would march on Sardis.

78. While Croesus was considering these things, the environs of the city became filled with snakes. At their appearance [= verb *phainesthai*] the horses regularly left off feeding in their usual pastures and devoured them. When Croesus saw this, he thought it was a portent, as indeed it was. He immediately sent messengers to the territory of the Telmessian interpreters. They reached the place and learned from the Telmessians what the portent intended to mean [*sēmainein*], but they did not succeed in announcing it to Croesus, for before they sailed back to Sardis Croesus had been captured. The Telmessians interpreted it in this way:

Croesus must expect a foreign army to come against the territory, and at its arrival it would conquer the native inhabitants [*epi-khōrioi*]. They said that the snake was a child of the earth, but the horse was an enemy and a newcomer. The Telmessians gave this answer to Croesus when he had already been captured, but they did not yet know anything concerning Sardis and Croesus himself.

79. As soon as Croesus marched away after the battle that had taken place in Pteria, Cyrus learned that he had gone and that he was going to disband his army. He took counsel and found it his business to march on Sardis as quickly as he could, before the forces of the Lydians were gathered a second time. When he had so resolved, he acted with speed: he marched his army into Lydia and came to Croesus as his own messenger. Then Croesus fell into great despair, since his affairs had turned out contrary to the expectation he had firmly held. Nevertheless, he led the Lydians into battle. At that time there was no population [*ethnos*] in Asia more manly or more valiant than the Lydian. Their method of battle was on horseback: they carried long spears and were good [*agathoi*] at riding.

80. They met on the plain in front of the city of Sardis. It is large and bare, and through it flow many rivers, including the Hyllos. These flow together into the largest, called the Hermos, which flows from the sacred mountain of Mother Dindyme and enters the sea near the *polis* of Phocaea. When Cyrus saw the Lydians marshaled for battle, he dreaded their cavalry and did as follows by the advice of Harpagos, a man of Media: he gathered all the camels that followed his own army carrying provisions and baggage, removed their loads, and mounted on them men who had been equipped in the outfit of cavalry. After equipping them, he commanded them to go in advance of the rest of the army against Croesus' cavalry. He ordered the infantry to follow the camel-corps and arranged all his cavalry behind the footsoldiers. When all his men were drawn up, he ordered them to kill unsparingly every one of the other Lydians who came in the way, but not to kill Croesus, even if he

defended himself when caught. He gave these orders and stationed the camels opposite the cavalry for this reason: the horse is afraid of the camel and cannot bear either to see the look of it or to smell its odor. He thus devised [verb of *sophos*] for this very reason: so that Croesus would have no use of the cavalry by which the Lydian was intending to distinguish himself. When they met in battle, as soon as the horses smelled the camels and saw them, they wheeled back, and Croesus' hope was destroyed. But even then the Lydians were not cowards: when they understood what was happening, they jumped from the horses and fought the Persians on foot. In time, after many men fell on both sides, the Lydians were routed. They were trapped inside the wall and besieged by the Persians.

81. They were in a state of siege. Croesus expected that the siege would last a long time and sent out from the wall other messengers to the allied states. The earlier ones had been sent to instruct them to gather at Sardis on the fifth month, but he sent these out to ask them to come and help as quickly as possible since Croesus was under siege.

82. He sent to the other allied states and to the Lacedaemonians. At this very time strife [*eris*] had befallen the Spartans themselves, with the Argives over the territory called Thyrea. The Lacedaemonians held possession of this Thyrea after cutting it off from the territory [*moira*] of the Argolid. The territory as far as Malea toward the west belonged to the Argives, both the land on the mainland and the island of Kythera and the rest of the islands. When the Argives marched out to their land that was being cut off, they negotiated and agreed that 300 of each side would do battle and that the territory would belong to the side that won. The majority of each army withdrew to its own land and did not remain while they fought, so that, if the armies were present, the others would not help their own men if they saw them being defeated. They made this agreement and departed. Specially chosen men from each side were left behind and started fighting. They were evenly matched and fought until out of 600 men three were left, Alkenor and Khromios of the

Argives and Orthyades of the Lacedaemonians. These men were left when night came on. The two of the Argives ran to Argos as victors, but Orthyades of the Lacedaemonians stripped the corpses of the Argives, carried their weapons to his own camp, and kept his post. On the next day both sides arrived and learned what had happened. For a while each side claimed that they were the winners, one side saying that more of their men had survived, the other side declaring they had fled and that their own man had remained and stripped the corpses of the other side. Finally [*telos*] from this conflict [*eris*] they came to blows and did battle, and after many men fell on both sides the Lacedaemonians prevailed. Ever since this time the Argives cut their hair short, previously wearing it long under compulsion, and they made a law [*nomos*] and pronounced a curse that no Argive man could let his hair grow, nor their wives wear gold, until they win back Thyrea. The Lacedaemonians made a law [*nomos*] opposite to this, to wear their hair long after this time, though before this they had not worn long hair. They say that the one who survived from the 300, Orthyades, felt disgraced to return home to Sparta when all the men in his company had perished, and killed himself there in Thyrea.

83. While these affairs prevailed among the Spartans, the herald from Sardis came and asked them to aid Croesus who was under siege. Still, when they heard the herald, they were eager to help. They had already made their preparations, and their ships were ready, when there came another message that the wall of the Lydians was captured and that Croesus was taken prisoner. So, considering it a great misfortune, they stopped their preparations.

84. In this way Sardis was captured: On the fourteenth day that Croesus was under siege, Cyrus sent horsemen through his army proclaiming that he would give gifts to the first man to mount the wall. Afterwards the army made the attempt without success. Then, after the others had stopped, a man of Mardia tried to climb up—his name was Hyroiades—on that part of the acropolis where no guard had been posted. There was

no fear that it ever be taken from that part, for there the acropolis is an impregnable precipice. This was the only place where Meles, the former king of Sardis, did not carry around the lion which his concubine gave birth to. The Telmessians had determined that Sardis would be impossible to capture if this lion was carried around the wall. Meles had carried the lion around the rest of the wall in the vulnerable part of the acropolis, but he had ignored this part as being an impregnable precipice. It is located in the part of the *polis* that faces Tmolos. This Hyroaides of Mardia on the previous day had seen one of the Lydians climb down this part of the acropolis after his helmet that had rolled down from above and retrieve it. He observed this and put it in his *thūmos*. Then he himself climbed up, and other Persians climbed up after him. Many of them mounted the wall, and in this way Sardis was captured and the whole city was captured.

85. This is what happened to Croesus himself: He had a son, whom I mentioned previously, sound of body in other respects, but mute. In his by-gone prosperity [not *olbos*] Croesus had done everything for him, thinking up many things and even sending to Delphi to consult the oracle about him. The Pythia said to him the following:

Lydian in lineage [*genos*], king of many, very disconnected
[*nēpios*] Croesus,
do not wish to hear in your palace the voice, so much prayed
for,
of your son speaking. It would be much better for you
otherwise.
He will first speak on a day that is not *olbios*.

When the wall had been taken, one of the Persians went ahead to kill Croesus without recognizing him. Croesus saw him coming but paid no heed under his present misfortune [unrelated to *olbos*], for it made no difference to him to die by the blow. But when this mute son saw the Persian coming on, from fear and trouble [*kakon*] he burst into speech,

saying, “My good man, do not kill Croesus.” This was the first utterance he ever made, and afterwards he spoke for the rest of his life.

86. The Persians occupied Sardis and took Croesus prisoner. Croesus had ruled 14 years and been besieged 14 days. According to the oracle, he had destroyed his own great empire. The Persians took him and brought him to Cyrus, who erected a pyre and mounted Croesus atop it, bound in chains, with twice seven sons of the Lydians beside him. Cyrus may have intended [= to have in *noos*] to sacrifice him as a victory-offering to some god, or he may have wished to fulfill a vow [*eukhē*], or perhaps he had heard that Croesus was god-fearing [*theo-sebēs*] and put him atop the pyre to find out if some *daimōn* would deliver him from being burned alive. So Cyrus did this. As Croesus stood on the pyre, although he was in such great trouble [*kakon*], it occurred to him that Solon had spoken with a god’s help when he said that no one among the living is *olbios*. When this occurred to him, he heaved a deep sigh and groaned aloud after a long moment of calmness [*hēsukhiā*], calling out three times the name Solon. Cyrus heard and ordered the interpreters to ask Croesus whom he was invoking. They approached and asked, but Croesus was silent at their questioning, until finally they forced him and he said, “I would prefer to great wealth his coming into discourse with all *turannoi*.” Since what he said was unintelligible, they again asked what he had said, persistently importuning him. He explained that first Solon the Athenian had come and seen all his fortune [*olbos*] and spoken as if he despised it. Now everything had turned out for him as Solon had said, speaking no more of himself than of every human being, especially those who think themselves *olbioi*. While Croesus was relating all this, the pyre had been lit and the edges were on fire. When Cyrus heard from the interpreters what Croesus said, he changed his mind and considered that he, a human [*anthrōpos*], was burning alive another human being, one not inferior to himself in good fortune [*eudaimoniā*]. In addition, he feared retribution, reflecting how there is nothing stable in human affairs. He ordered that the blazing fire be extinguished as quickly as possible, and

that Croesus and those with him be taken down, but despite their efforts they could not master the fire.

87. Then the Lydians say that Croesus understood Cyrus' change of mind, and when he saw everyone trying to extinguish the fire but unable to check it, he invoked Apollo, crying out that if Apollo had ever been given by him any gift with *kharis*, let him offer help and deliver him from the present evil [*kakon*]. Thus he in tears invoked the god, and suddenly out of a clear and windless sky clouds came together, a storm broke, and it rained violently, extinguishing the pyre. Thus Cyrus perceived that Croesus was *philos* to a god and an *agathos* man. He had him brought down from the pyre and asked, "Croesus, who on earth persuaded you to wage war against my land and become my enemy instead of my *philos*?" He replied, "O King, I acted thus for your good fortune [*eudaimoniā*], but for my own misfortune [*kakodaimoniā*]. The god of the Hellenes is responsible [*aitios*] for this by inciting me to wage war. No one is so senseless as to choose war over peace. In peace, sons bury their fathers; in war, fathers bury their sons. I suppose it was *philon* to a *daimōn* that this be so."

88. Thus he spoke, and Cyrus freed him and seated him next to himself, treating him with much care. Cyrus and all around marveled greatly at Croesus. He was sunk in reflection and remained serene [*hēsukhos*]. Then he turned and saw the Persians plundering the city of the Lydians and said, "O King, should I at present tell you what I really think or be silent?" Cyrus bade him take courage and say whatever he wished. He answered him by saying, "What is it that this great massing of people is doing with great eagerness?" Cyrus said, "They are occupying your *polis* and plundering your property." Croesus answered, "It is neither my *polis* nor my property that they are occupying. I no longer have any share in these things. What they are robbing and plundering is yours."

89. Cyrus thought over what Croesus had said, dismissed the others, and asked Croesus what he foresaw for him in what was being done. Croesus said, “Since the gods have given me to you as your slave, I think it right for me to indicate [*sēmainein*] to you if I see anything further. The Persians have *hubris* by nature and lack wealth. So if you allow them to pillage and gain great wealth, this is what you may expect from them: expect that whoever of them acquires the most will rise in rebellion against you. Now if what I say pleases you, do this: place guards from your bodyguard at all the gates, who will take the goods from those who are carrying them out, by saying that it is necessary for them to give a tithe to Zeus. You will not be hated by them for taking their things by force [*biā*], and they will admit that you are acting justly [= doing what is *dikaion*] and willingly surrender it.”

90. Cyrus heard this and was exceedingly pleased, since it seemed like good advice. He praised [= verb of *ainos*] him greatly and instructed his bodyguards to perform what Croesus had advised. He said to Croesus: “Since you, a king, are ready to perform useful deeds and words [*epea*], ask for whatever gift you wish to be yours on the spot.” Croesus said, “Master, you will give me the greatest *kharis* if you allow me to send these fetters to the god of the Hellenes, to whom I gave most *tīmē* among the gods, and ask if it is his custom [*nomos*] to deceive those who treat him well.” Cyrus asked what he was pleading for with this request. Croesus told again his whole intention and the answers of the oracles and especially his offerings, saying that he had marched against the Persians incited by the oracle [= noun related to *mantis*]. He said this and ended by again pleading to be allowed to reproach the god for it. Cyrus laughed and said, “You shall get this from me, Croesus, and everything else you ask for on every occasion.” When Croesus heard this, he sent some Lydians to Delphi, instructing them to place the fetters on the threshold of the temple and then to ask the god if he was not ashamed of inciting Croesus by the oracles to march against the Persians to put down the power of Cyrus, from which these were the victory-offerings,

and to display the fetters at this point. He instructed them to ask these things, and also whether it was the custom [*nomos*] for Hellenic gods to be without *kharis*.

91. It is said that after the Lydians had arrived and spoken their instructions, the Pythia said to them, “It is impossible even for a god to avoid fate [*moira*] as it is allotted [*pe-prō-sthai*]. Croesus has expiated the crime of his ancestor five generations previous, who was the bodyguard of the Hērakleidai but obeyed a woman’s trick, murdered his master, and then took his master’s *tīmē*, though it did not at all belong to him.

Loxias²⁰ was eager that the suffering [*pathos*] of Sardis happen in the time of Croesus’ children and not in that of Croesus himself, but he could not divert the Fates [*moirai*], though he did give *kharis* to him and accomplish as much as they would concede. He was able to put off the capture of Sardis for three years; let Croesus know that he is captured this many years later than was fated. Second, he [= the god] helped him when he was about to be burned. Concerning the oracle [= noun related to *mantis*] that was given, Croesus is not correct [*orthos*] in complaining. Loxias foretold to him that if he marched against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. Thereupon, if he was going to take counsel carefully, he should have sent and asked whether his own or Cyrus’ empire was meant. Since he neither understood what was said nor asked again, let him declare himself to be responsible [*aitios*]. When he consulted the oracle for the final time, he also did not understand the answer that Loxias gave him about the mule. Cyrus was this mule, for he was born of parents from two different populations and not from a single population [*ethnos*]. His mother was more superior [*agathē*] in lineage, his father inferior: she was a Mede and the daughter of Astyages, the king of the Medes, while he was a Persian and under their rule [= the rule of the Medes], beneath them in all respects, and lived with [= verb related to *oikeîn*] a woman who was his superior.” The Pythia gave this answer to the Lydians, which they carried back to Sardis and announced

to Croesus. When he heard it, he confessed that the mistake [*hamartad-*] was his own and not the god's.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. Herodotus means that the Phoenicians came from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea and settled in the area of modern Lebanon.

[[back](#)] 2. Herodotus uses 'Spartans' and 'Lacedaemonians' almost interchangeably. Sparta is the leading city of Lacedaemonia. Lacedaemonia and Laconia are alternate names for the same region in the Peloponnese.

[[back](#)] 3. The basic idea is 'friendly to *xenoi*'. The Black Sea was given that name by the Hellenes in an effort to be euphemistic about this naturally hostile region. Compare the myth of the Symplegades, the crashing rocks at its entrance, in Euripides' *Medea*.

[[back](#)] 4. Hērakleidai means literally 'sons of Hērakles'.

[[back](#)] 5. The name Pythia is the official title of the Priestess of Apollo at Delphi.

[[back](#)] 6. One talent weighs approximately 57 pounds.

[[back](#)] 7. Shepherd's pipe.

[[back](#)] 8. A special form of song and dance performed by a *khoros*.

[[back](#)] 9. One stadion equals 600 feet (the foot in this case is notionally

the size of the foot of Hēraklēs as reckoned at Olympia).

[[back](#)] 10. The word translated as ‘taking a sacred voyage’ is *theōriā*. The word denotes the type of journey that leads to the achievement of a mystical vision.

[[back](#)] 11. The oracle of Amphiaraos was thought to issue pronouncements by way of the spirit of the hero Amphiaraos, one of the Seven against Thebes. The term pathos here refers to the larger-than-life ‘experience’ or ‘passion’ of the hero as commemorated in hero cult.

[[back](#)] 12. That is, the holy of holies at Delphi.

[[back](#)] 13. The adjective ‘Attic’ and the place-name ‘Attica’ refer to the territory of Athens.

[[back](#)] 14. The usual word for bodyguards.

[[back](#)] 15. The hero Hēraklēs was traditionally pictured as brandishing a wooden club.

[[back](#)] 16. The noun *puē* can be translated as something like ‘Natural Grandeur/Beauty’.

[[back](#)] 17. Megakles belonged to the lineage of the Alkmaionidai.

[[back](#)] 18. That is, contrary to *nomos*.

[[back](#)] 19. The name Attica defines the territory of Athens.

[[back](#)] 20. The title of Apollo at Delphi.

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Herodotus Part 2 (Selections from Scrolls 1–9)

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Note: The language of Herodotus in referring to the myths and rituals of the ancient world is exquisitely precise, and we have much to learn from it. Accordingly, the translators have taken special care in tracking key words above and beyond the vocabulary that is tracked in the rest of the Sourcebook.

Scroll 1: Kyrnos

After the fall of Lydia, the Persians conquered the rest of Asia Minor. The citizens of Phocaea abandoned their city and sailed away to their colony in Corsica, where they fought with the neighboring populations.

167. The Carthaginians and the Tyrrhenians drew lots for the men from the Phocaeans ships destroyed in Kyrnos. ¹ The people of Agylla won most of them and led them out and stoned them to death. But later everything from Agylla that passed by the place where the stoned Phocaeans lay, whether flocks or beasts of burden or people, became twisted and lame and apoplexied. When the people of Agylla sent envoys to Delphi to atone for their offense, the Pythia told them to make offerings [*enagizein*] ² to the Phocaeans and to institute a competition [*agōn*] of gymnastics and chariot races. The people of Agylla still fulfil [*epi-teleîn*] these practices. Thus these Phocaeans met their fate [= *moira*], but the others who fled to Rhegion set out from there and founded a city [*polis*] in Oinotria which is now called Hyele. They established [*ktizein*] it after being informed by a man from Poseidonia that when the Pythia gave her oracular pronouncement [*khṛēsai*], she meant to establish Kyrnos as a cult hero [*hērōs*], not to establish the island Kyrnos as a colony. ³ Thus it was concerning Ionian Phocaea.

Scroll 1: Tīmēsios

168. The people of Teos, like the Phocaeans, abandoned their native land rather than endure slavery. When the Persian general Harpagos captured their wall by building a mound, they embarked upon their ships and sailed away to Thrace. There they founded the *polis* of Abdera, which Tīmēsios of Klazomenai had previously established, but he had been driven out by the Thracians and got no benefit from it. He now receives from the people of Teos in Abdera the honors [*tīmai*] of a hero [*hērōs*].

Scroll 2: Hēraklēs

44. I saw in Tyre in Phoenicia another sacred precinct of Hēraklēs, of the Hēraklēs called Thasian. I also went to Thasos, where I discovered a sacred precinct that had been established by the Phoenicians when they sailed looking for Europa and settled Thasos. Now this was five generations before Hēraklēs son of Amphytryon was born in Hellas, so my inquiry plainly shows that Hēraklēs is an ancient god. I think that those Hellenes act most correctly who have established and perform two kinds of worship for Hēraklēs, sacrificing [*thuein*] to one as an immortal, called Olympian, and making offerings [*enagizein*] to the other as a hero.

Scroll 2: Hesiod, Homer

53. Where each of the gods came from, whether they had always existed, and what outward forms they had, the Hellenes did not know until just yesterday or the day before, so to speak. I think that Hesiod

and Homer were 400 years older than I, and no more, and it is they who made a theogony [*theogoniā*] for the Hellenes. They gave names to the gods, apportioned their honors [*tīmai*] and functions [*tekhnai*], and indicated [*sēmainein*] their outward forms [*eidos* plural]. The poets who are said to be earlier than these men I think are later. ⁴ . . . This part involving Hesiod and Homer is my own opinion.

Scroll 5: Philippos

47. Philippos of Kroton, the son of Boutakides, also followed Dorieus the Spartan when he went to establish a colony in Sicily, and was killed along with him by the Phoenicians and the people of Egesta. He had been banished from Kroton when he became engaged to the daughter of Telys of Sybaris, but was cheated of his marriage and sailed away to Kyrene. There he joined the Spartan expedition, providing a ship and men at his own expense. Philippos was an Olympic victor and the handsomest Hellene of his day. Because of his beauty he received from the people of Egesta a thing they grant to no one else: they built a hero shrine [*hērōion*] over his tomb [*taphos*] and [*hilaskesthai*] him with sacrifices [*thusiai*].

Scroll 5: Onesilaos

In 499 the Ionians revolted from Persia.

104. All the people of Cyprus, except for the people of [the city of] Amathus, voluntarily joined the Ionians in revolt against the Medes. Onesilaos ⁵ son of Khersis son of Siromos son of Euelthon was the younger brother of Gorgos, king of Salamis in Cyprus. This man [=

Onesilaos] even previously had urged Gorgos to revolt from the king of Persia, but once he learned that the Ionians had rebelled he tried most urgently to get him to do it. When he could not persuade Gorgos, Onesilaos and his partisans watched for him to go out from the city of the Salaminians, then shut him outside the gates. Gorgos, deprived of his city [*polis*], went into exile among the Medes. Onesilaos ruled Salamis and persuaded all the people of Cyprus to rebel; all, that is, except the people of Amathous. When they chose not to comply, he besieged them.

110. Later the Persians came to the plain of Salamis. The kings of Cyprus arranged the Cyprians in order, matching them against the opposing soldiers, and selected the best [*aristoi*] of the men of Salamis and Soloi to face the Persians. Onesilaos voluntarily took his position against Artybios, the Persian general.

111. Artybios rode a horse taught to rear up against an armed man. Onesilaos had a shield-bearing-attendant [*hup-aspistēs*] who was Carian in lineage [*genos*], highly reputed in warfare and otherwise full of courage. When he learned of the horse, Onesilaos said to his attendant, “I have learned that the horse of Artybios rears up and kills with his feet and mouth any man he attacks. So you consider and tell me now whether you wish to watch for your chance and strike Artybios or his horse.” His attendant [*opāōn*] ⁶ said, “My king, I am ready to do either or both or anything you command. But I will speak out what seems to me to be most fitting for your affairs. I say that a king and a general ought to attack a king and a general. If you bring down your man the general, it is a great thing for you. Secondly, if he brings you down—may it not happen!—the misfortune is halved by dying at the hands of a worthy man. And we subordinates [*hup-ēretai*] ought to attack other subordinates [*hup-ēretai*], and that horse. Have no fear of his tricks [*mēkhanai*]. I promise that he never again shall rise up against any man.”

112. Thus he spoke, and immediately the armies joined battle on land and sea. By sea the Ionians achieved excellence that day and defeated the Phoenicians; among them the Samians were best [*aristoi*]. On land, when the armies came together and fell upon each other in battle, this is what happened to the generals: When Artybios on his horse attacked him, Onesilaos, by arrangement with his shield-bearing-attendant [*hupaspistēs*], struck Artybios as he bore down on him. Then when the horse kicked at the shield of Onesilaos, the Carian struck with his scimitar [*drepanon*] and sheered off its feet. Thus the Persian general Artybios fell there together with his horse.

113. While the others fought, Stesenor, tyrant of Kourion, turned traitor, taking not a small force of men with him. (The people of Kourion are said to be descended from colonizers sent there from Argos.) As soon as the men of Kourion defected, the force of war-charioteers from Salamis did the same. Once this happened the Persians defeated the Cyprians, and in the rout of the army many men fell, including Onesilaos son of Khersis, the one who had caused the revolt of the Cyprians, and Aristocyprus son of Philocyprus, king of Soloi. This Philocyprus was the one whom Solon, coming to Cyprus, praised [*aineîn*] most among the despots [*turannoi*] of that time.

114. Because he had besieged them, the people of Amathous cut off the head [of the dead body] of Onesilaos and brought it to Amathous, where they hanged it up above the gates. As it hung there empty, a swarm of bees entered it and filled it with honeycomb. When they [= the people of Amathous] asked-for-oracular-advice [*khresthai*] about this event, there-was-an-oracular-pronouncement [*manteuesthai*] that they must take the head down and bury it, and to make sacrifice [*thuein*] every year to Onesilaos as a hero [*hērōs*], saying that it would be better for them if they did this. The people of Amathous did as they were told and still perform these rituals even in my day.

Scroll 6: Marathon

In 490 the Persians under Darius invaded the Hellenic mainland.

102. After subduing Eretria, the Persians waited a few days and then sailed away to the land of Attica, pressing ahead in expectation of doing to the Athenians exactly what they had done to the Eretrians. Marathon was the place in Attica most suitable for riding horses and closest to Eretria, so Hippias son of Peisistratos [7](#) led them there.

103. When the Athenians learned this, they too marched out to Marathon, with ten generals leading them. The tenth was Miltiades, and it had befallen his father Kimon son of Stesagoras to be banished from Athens by Peisistratos son of Hippokrates. While in exile he happened to take the Olympic prize in the four-horse chariot race, and by taking this victory he won the same prize as his half-brother Miltiades. In the next Olympics he won with the same horses but permitted Peisistratos to be heralded, and by resigning the victory to that man he came back from exile to his own property under truce. After taking yet another Olympic victory with the same horses, it befell him to be murdered by the sons of Peisistratos; Peisistratos was no longer living. They murdered him by placing men in ambush at night near the prytaneion. Kimon was buried in front of the city, across the road called 'Through the Hollow', and buried opposite him are the mares who won the three Olympic prizes. The mares of Euagoras the Laconian performed as well as these, but none others. Stesagoras, the elder of Kimon's sons, was then being brought up with his uncle Miltiades in the Chersonesus. The younger was with Kimon at Athens, and he took the name Miltiades from Miltiades the founder of the Chersonesus. [8](#)

104. It was this Miltiades who was now Athenian general, after coming from the Chersonese and escaping a two-fold death. The Phoenicians pursued him as far as Imbros, considering it of great importance to catch him and bring him to the king. He got away from them, but when he

reached his own country and thought he was safe his personal enemies met him next. They brought him to court and prosecuted him for tyranny in the Chersonese, but he was acquitted and appointed Athenian general, elected by the community [*dēmos*].

105. While still in the city, the generals first sent to Sparta the herald Philippides, an Athenian and a long-distance runner who made that his calling. As Philippides himself said at the time that he brought the message to the Athenians, when he was in the Parthenian mountain above Tegea [in Arcadia] he encountered Pan. Pan shouted the name of Philippides and told him to ask the Athenians why they paid him no attention, though he was well-disposed toward the Athenians, had often been of service to them, and would be in the future. The Athenians believed that these things were true, and when they became prosperous they established a sacred precinct of Pan beneath the Acropolis. Ever since that message they propitiate him with annual sacrifices and a torch-race.

106. This Philippides was in Sparta on the day after leaving the city of Athens, that time when he was sent by the generals and said that Pan had appeared to him. He came to the magistrates and said, “Lacedaemonians, the Athenians ask you to come to their aid and not allow the most ancient *polis* among the Hellenes to fall into slavery at the hands of the barbarians. Even now Eretria has been enslaved, and Hellas has become weaker with the loss of an important *polis* .” He told them what he had been ordered to say, and they resolved to send help to the Athenians, but they could not do this immediately, for they were unwilling to break the customary law [*nomos*]. It was the ninth day of the rising month, and they said that on the ninth they could not go out to war until the moon’s circle was full.

107. So they waited for the full moon, while the barbarians were guided to Marathon by Hippias son of Peisistratos. The previous night Hippias had a dream in which he slept with his mother. He supposed from the

dream that he would return from exile to Athens, recover his rule, and end his days an old man in his own country. Thus he reckoned from the dream. Then as guide he disembarked the slaves from Eretria onto the island of the Styrians called Aigilia, and brought to anchor the ships that had put ashore at Marathon, then marshaled the barbarians who had disembarked onto land. As he was tending to this, he happened to sneeze and cough more violently than usual. Since he was an elderly man, most of his teeth were loose, and he lost one of them by the force of his cough. It fell into the sand and he put great effort into looking for it, but the tooth could not be found. He groaned aloud and said to those standing by him: "This land is not ours and we will not be able to subdue it. My tooth holds whatever share of it was mine."

108. Hippias supposed that the dream had in this way come true. As the Athenians were marshaled in the sacred space of Hēraklēs, the men of Plataea came to help them in full force. The Plataeans had put themselves under the protection of the Athenians, and the Athenians had undergone many labors on their behalf. This is how they did it: When the Plataeans were pressed by the Thebans, they first tried to put themselves under the protection of Kleomenes son of Anaxandrides and the Lacedaemonians, who happened to be there. But they [= the Lacedaemonians] did not accept them, saying, "We live too far away and our help would be cold comfort to you. You could be enslaved many times over before any of us heard about it. We advise you to put yourselves under the protection of the Athenians, since they are your neighbors and men not bad [*kakoi*] at giving help." The Lacedaemonians gave this advice not so much out of good will toward the Plataeans as wishing to cause trouble for the Athenians with the Boeotians. So the Lacedaemonians gave this advice to the Plataeans, who did not disregard it. When the Athenians were making sacrifices to the twelve gods, they [= the Plataeans] sat at the altar as suppliants and put themselves under protection. When the Thebans heard this they marched against the Plataeans, but the Athenians came to their aid. As they were about to join battle, the Corinthians, who happened to be

there, prevented them and brought about a reconciliation. Both sides appealed to their arbitration, so they fixed the boundaries of the territory on condition that the Thebans leave alone those Boeotians who were unwilling to be enrolled as Boeotian. After rendering this decision, the Corinthians departed. The Boeotians attacked the Athenians as they were leaving but were defeated in battle, and the Athenians went beyond the boundaries the Corinthians had made for the Plataeans, fixing the Asopos river as the boundary for the Thebans in the direction of Plataea and Hysiai. So the Plataeans had put themselves under the protection of the Athenians in the aforesaid manner, and now came to help at Marathon.

109. The Athenian generals were of divided opinion, some advising not to fight because they were too few to attack the army of the Medes; ⁹ others, including Miltiades, advising to fight. Thus they were at odds, and the inferior plan prevailed. An eleventh man had a vote, chosen by lot to be polemarch of Athens, and by ancient custom the Athenians had made his vote of equal weight with the generals. Kallimakhos of Aphidnai was polemarch at this time. Miltiades approached him and said, “Kallimakhos, it is now in your hands to enslave Athens or make it free, and thereby leave behind for all posterity a memorial such as not even Harmodios and Aristogeiton left. ¹⁰ Now the Athenians have come to their greatest danger since they first came into being, and, if we surrender, it is clear what we will suffer when handed over to Hippias. But if the *polis* prevails, it will take first place among Hellenic cities. I will tell you how this can happen, and how the deciding voice on these matters has devolved upon you. The ten generals are of divided opinion, some urging to attack, others urging not to. If we do not attack now, I expect that great strife [*stasis*] will fall upon and shake the spirit of the Athenians, leading them to Medize. But if we attack now, before any corruption befalls the Athenians, we can win the battle, if the gods are fair. All this concerns and depends on you in this way: if you vote with me, your fatherland will be free and your *polis* the first in Hellas. But if

you side with those eager to avoid battle, you will have the opposite to all the good things I enumerated.”

110. By saying this Miltiades won over Kallimakhos. The vote of the polemarch was counted in and the decision to attack was ratified. Thereafter the generals who had voted to fight turned the presidency over to Miltiades as each one's day came in turn. He accepted the office but did not make an attack until it was his own day to preside.

111. When the presidency came round to him, he arrayed the Athenians for battle, with the polemarch Kallimakhos commanding the right wing, since it was then the Athenian law [*nomos*] for the polemarch to hold the right wing. He led, and the other subdivisions [*phūlai*] were numbered out in succession next to each other. The Plataeans were marshaled last, holding the left wing. Ever since that battle, when the Athenians are conducting sacrifices at the festivals every fourth year, the Athenian herald prays for good things for the Athenians and Plataeans together. As the Athenians were marshaled at Marathon, it happened that their line of battle was as long as the line of the Medes. The center, where the line was weakest, was only a few ranks deep, but each wing was strong in numbers.

112. When they had been set in order and the sacrifices were favorable, the Athenians were let go and charged the barbarians at a run. The space between the armies was no less than eight stadium-lengths. The Persians saw them running to attack and prepared to receive them, thinking the Athenians absolutely crazy, since they saw how few of them there were and that they ran up so fast without either cavalry or archers. So the barbarians imagined, but when the Athenians all together fell upon the barbarians they fought memorably. These are the first Hellenes we know of to employ running against the enemy. They are also the first to stand up to looking at Median uniforms and the men wearing it, for up until then just hearing the name of the Medes caused the Hellenes to panic.

113. They fought a long time in Marathon. In the center of the line the barbarians prevailed, where the Persians and Sakai were arrayed. The barbarians prevailed there and broke through in pursuit inland, but on each wing the Athenians and Plataeans prevailed. In victory they let the routed barbarians flee, and brought the wings together to fight those who had broken through the center. The Athenians prevailed, then followed the fleeing Persians and struck them down. When they reached the sea they asked for fire and laid hold of the Persian ships.

114. In this ordeal [*ponos*] Kallimakhos the polemarch was slain, an aristocratic [*agathos*] man, and of the generals Stesilaos son of Thrasyllaos died. Kynegeros ¹¹son of Euphorion fell there, his hand cut off with an axe as he grabbed a ship's figurehead. Many other famous Athenians also fell there.

115. In this way the Athenians mastered seven ships. The barbarians pushed off with the rest, picked up the Eretrian slaves from the island where they had left them, and sailed around Sounion hoping to get to the city before the Athenians. There was an accusation [*aitiā*] at Athens that they devised this by way of a plan of the Alkmaionidai, who were said to have arranged to hold up a shield as a signal once the Persians were in their ships.

116. They sailed around Sounion, but the Athenians marched back to defend the city as fast as their feet could carry them and got there ahead of the barbarians. Coming from the sacred space of Hēraklēs in Marathon, they pitched camp in the sacred space of Hēraklēs in Kynosarges. The barbarians lay at anchor off Phaleron, the Athenian naval port at that time. After riding anchor there, they sailed their ships back to Asia.

117. In the battle at Marathon about 6,400 men of the barbarians were killed, and 192 Athenians; that many fell on each side. The following marvel happened there: an Athenian, Epizelos son of Kouphagoras, was

fighting as an aristocratic [*agathos*] man in the battle when he was deprived of his sight, though struck or hit nowhere on his body, and from that time on he spent [*diateleîn*] the rest of his life in blindness. I have heard that he tells this story about his experience [*pathos*]: he saw opposing him a tall armed man, whose beard overshadowed his shield, but the phantom [*phasma*] passed him by and killed the man next to him. I hear that this is the story Epizelos tells.

Scroll 6: Miltiades

34. Until the Phoenicians subdued the Chersonesus for the Persians, Miltiades son of Kimon son of Stesagoras was despot [*turannos*] there. Miltiades son of Kypselos had gained the rule earlier in this way: The Thracian Dolonkoi were crushed in war by the Apsinthians, so they sent their kings to Delphi to inquire [*khresthai*] about the war. The Pythia answered [*an-heleîn*] that they should bring to their territory as founder [*oikistēs*] the first man who invites them to hospitality [*xeniā*] after they leave the sacred precinct. But as the Dolonkoi passed through Phokis and Boeotia, going along the Sacred Way, no one invited them, so they turned toward Athens.

35. At that time in Athens, Peisistratos held all power, but Miltiades son of Kypselos also had great influence. His household [*oikiā*] was rich enough to maintain four-horse chariot teams, and he traced his earliest descent to Aiakos and [the nymph] Aigina [Aegina], though his later ancestry was Athenian. Philaios son of Ajax was the first of that lineage [*oikiā*] to be an Athenian. Miltiades was sitting on his porch when he saw the Dolonkoi go by with clothing and spears that were not of-local-origin [*en-khōria*], so he called out to them, and when they came over he invited them in for lodging and hospitality [*xeniā*]. They accepted, and after he gave them hospitality [*xeniā*], they revealed all the story of

the oracle to him and asked him to obey the god. He was persuaded as soon as he heard their speech, for he was tired of the rule [*arkhē*] of Peisistratos and wanted to get out of the way. He immediately set out for Delphi to ask the oracle if he should do what the Dolonkoi asked of him.

36. The Pythia also told him to do so. Then Miltiades son of Kypselos, previously an Olympic victor in the four-horse chariot races, recruited any Athenian who wanted to take part in the expedition, sailed off with the Dolonkoi, and took possession of their territory. Those who brought him appointed him *turannos* . His first act was to wall off the isthmus of the Chersonesus from the *polis* of Kardia across to Paktye, so that the Apsinthians not be able to harm them by making inroads into their territory. The isthmus is 36 stadium-lengths across, and to the south of the isthmus the Chersonesus is 420 stadium-lengths.

37. After Miltiades had pushed away the Apsinthians by walling off the neck of the Chersonesus, he made war first on the people of Lampsakos, but the people of that place laid an ambush and took him prisoner. Miltiades, however, stood high in the opinion of Croesus the Lydian, and when Croesus heard what had happened he sent word to the people of Lampsakos and commanded them to release Miltiades. If they did not do so, he threatened to wipe them out like a pine tree. The people of Lampsakos went astray in their counsels as to what the utterance [*epos*] meant with which Croesus had threatened them, saying he would destroy them like a pine tree, until at last one of the elders understood and said what it was: the pine is the only tree that once cut down never emits any shoots; it is utterly destroyed. So out of fear of Croesus the people of Lampsakos freed Miltiades from his bonds and sent him off.

38. So he escaped by the intervention of Croesus, but he later died [*teleutân* 'reached his telos'] childless and left his rule and property to Stesagoras, the son of his half-brother Kimon. Since his death [*teleutân* = reaching of his *telos*], the people of the Chersonesus follow the custom [*nomos*] of sacrificing [*thuein*] to him as their founder [*oikistēs*],

instituting a [seasonal] competition [*agōn*] of gymnastics and chariot-racing. No one from Lampsakos is allowed to compete [*agōnizesthai*] in this event.

Scroll 6: Helen, Astrabakos

Sparta had two kings from rival families that traced their descent from Hēraklēs.

61. While Kleomenes was in Aegina working for the common good [*agatha*] of Hellas, Dēmarātos slandered him, not out of care for the Aeginetans, but out of jealousy and envy. Once Kleomenes returned home [*nosteîn*] from Aegina, he planned to remove Dēmarātos from his kingship, using the following affair as a pretext against him: Ariston, king of Sparta, had married twice but had no children. He did not allow that he was responsible [*aitios*], so he married a third time. This is how it came about: He had among the Spartans a friend [*philos*] to whom he was especially attached. This man's wife was by far the most beautiful woman in Sparta, but she who was now most beautiful had once been the ugliest. Her nurse considered her inferior looks and how she was of prosperous [*olbioi*] people yet unattractive, and, seeing how the parents felt her appearance to be a great misfortune, she contrived to carry her every day to the sacred precinct [*hieron*] of Helen, which is in the place called Therapne, beyond the sacred precinct [*hieron*] of Phoebus [Apollo]. Every time the nurse carried the child there, she set her beside the statue [*agalma*] [of Helen] and prayed to the goddess to release the child from her ugliness. Once as she was leaving the sacred precinct [*hieron*], it is said that a woman appeared [*phainesthai*] to her and asked her what she was carrying in her arms. The nurse said she was carrying a child and the woman asked her to show it to her, but she refused, saying that the parents had forbidden her to show it to anyone. But the

woman strongly told her to show it to her, and when the nurse saw how important it was to her, she showed her the child. The woman stroked the child's head and said that she would be the most beautiful woman in all Sparta. From that day her looks changed, and when she reached the right age [*hōrā*] for marriage, Agētos son of Alkeides married her. This man was the friend [*philos*] of Ariston.

62. So, lust [*erōs*] for this woman pricked Ariston, and he contrived as follows: he promised to give his friend any one thing out of all he owned, whatever Agetos might choose, and he told his friend to make him the same promise. Agētos had no fear about his wife, seeing that Ariston was already married, so he agreed and they took oaths on these terms. Ariston gave Agētos whatever it was that he chose out of all his treasures, and then, seeking equal recompense from him, tried to take his friend's wife. Agētos said that he had agreed to anything but that, but he was forced by his oath—and by being misled through deception [*apatē*]—to let his wife be taken.

63. In this way Ariston married his third wife, after divorcing the second one. But his new wife gave birth to Dēmarātos too soon, before ten [lunar] months had passed. When one of his servants announced to him as he sat in council with the ephors that he had a son, Ariston, knowing the time of the marriage, counted up the months on his fingers and swore on oath, “This could not be mine.” The ephors heard this but did not make anything of it. When the boy grew up, Ariston regretted having said that, for he did think [*nomizein*] Dēmarātos to be his own son. He named him Dēmarātos because before his birth the Spartans, acting-as-the-entirety-of-the people [*pan-dēmei*] had made a prayer [*ārā*] that Ariston, the man most highly esteemed out of all the kings of Sparta, might have a son. Thus he was named Dēmarātos ‘announced-in-prayer-by-the-people [*dēmos*]’. ¹²

64. Time passed and Ariston died, so Dēmarātos held the kingship. But it seems that these matters had to become known and cause Dēmarātos to lose his kingship. He had already had a falling out with Kleomenes when he had brought the army back from Eleusis, and now they were even more at odds when Kleomenes crossed over the sea to attack the Aeginetans who were Medizing. ¹³

65. Kleomenes wanted revenge, so he made a deal with Leotykhides son of Menares son of Agis, of the same lineage [*oikiā*] as Dēmarātos. The deal was that Leotykhides would go with Kleomenes against the Aeginetans if he became king. Leotykhides had already become strongly hostile [*ekhthros*] to Dēmarātos for the following reason: Leotykhides was betrothed to Perkalos, daughter of Demarmenos, but Dēmarātos plotted and robbed him of his marriage, stealing Perkalos and marrying her first. From this affair Leotykhides had hostility [= noun of *ekhthros*] against Dēmarātos, so at the instigation of Kleomenes he took an oath against him, saying that he was not king of the Spartans by right, since he was the son of Ariston. After making this oath, he prosecuted him, recalling [*ana-sōzein*] that the utterance [*epos*] that Ariston had made when the servant told him he had a son, and he counted up the months and swore that it was not his. Taking his stand on this saying, Leotykhides declared that Dēmarātos was not the son of Ariston and that he was not the rightful king of Sparta, bringing as witnesses the ephors who had been sitting beside Ariston and heard him say this.

66. Since there was in the end [*telos*] continued quarreling [*neikos* plural], the Spartans resolved to ask the oracle [*khrestērion*] at Delphi if Dēmarātos was the son of Ariston. At the instigation of Kleomenes this was revealed to the Pythia. He had won over a man of great dynastic influence among the Delphians, Kobon son of Aristophantos, and Kobon persuaded the prophetess [*pro-mantis*], Periallos, to say what Kleomenes wanted her to. When the ambassadors asked if Demaretos was the son of Ariston, the Pythia judged [*krinein*] that he was not. All

this got out later; Kobon was exiled from Delphi, and Perialla the prophetess [*pro-mantis*] was deposed from her position of honor [*tīmē*].

67. So it was concerning the loss by Dēmarātos of his kingship. Then he went into exile from Sparta and defected to the Medes ¹⁴ because of an insult [*oneidos*]. And what follows is the kind of insult it was. After he was deposed from the kingship he was elected to the office [*arkhē*] of archon [*arkhōn*] [of a festival]. It was at the time of the [festival of the] Gymnopaidiai, and Dēmarātos was performing-his-official-role-as-observer [*theāsthai*]. Leotykhides, now the king instead of him [=Dēmarātos], sent an attendant [*therapōn*] to Dēmarātos to ask him, as a joke and an insult, what it was like for him to be-an-archon [*arkhein*] after being king [*basileuein*]. Pained [*algeîn*] at the question, he [=Dēmarātos] said that he had experience of both, while Leotykhides did not, and that this question would be the beginning for Sparta of either immense misery [*kakotēs*] or immense happiness [*eudaimoniā*]. ¹⁵He said this, covered his head, left the viewing-area [*theātron*], and went back to his house, where he immediately made preparations and sacrificed [*thuein*] an ox to Zeus. Then he summoned his mother.

68. When she came in, he put some of the entrails [of the sacrificed ox- in her hands and entreated her, saying, “Mother, appealing to Zeus of-the-household [*herkeios*] and to all the other gods, I beseech you to tell me the truth [*alētheia*]. Who is my father? Tell me the straight story. Leotykhides said in his quarrelling-words [*neikos* plural] that you were already pregnant by your former husband when you came to Ariston. Others say more ineptly that you went to one of the servants [*oiketai*], the keeper-of-donkeys [*ono-phorbos*], and that I am his son. I adjure you by the gods to speak what is true [*alēthes*]. If you have done any of the things they say, you are not the only one; you are in company with many women. There is much talk at Sparta that Ariston did not have

child-bearing seed in him, or his former wives would have given him children.”

69 . Thus he spoke. His mother answered, “My son, since you adjure me by entreaties to speak the truth [*alētheia*], I will speak out to you all that is true [*alēthes*]. On the third night after Ariston brought me to his household, a phantom [*phasma*] resembling him came to me. It slept with me and then put on me the garlands [*stephanoi*] that it had. It went away, and when Ariston came in later and saw me with the garlands [*stephanoi*], he asked who gave them to me. I said he did, but he denied it. I swore an oath that just a little while before he had come in and slept with me and given me the garlands [*stephanoi*], and I said it was not good of him to deny it. When he saw me swearing, he perceived that this was a happening [*pragma*] that was superhuman [*theion*]. For one thing, it was evident [*phanēnai*] that the garlands [*stephanoi*] had come from the hero-shrine [*hērōion*] that is established at the courtyard doors, which they call the shrine of Astrabakos. For another thing, the seers [*mantis* plural] responded [*an-haireîn*] [to those who consulted them] that this was the same hero [*hērōs*] [who had come to me]. Thus, my son, you have all you want to know. Either you are from this hero [*hērōs*] and Astrabakos the hero [*hērōs*] is your father, or Ariston is, since I conceived you that night. As for how your enemies [*ekhthroi*] attack you, mainly saying that Ariston himself, when your birth was announced, denied in front of many who heard it that you were his because the ten months had not yet been completed [*ek-teleîn*], he let that utterance [*epos*] rush out [of his mouth] all too hastily, because of ignorance about such things. Some women give birth after nine months or seven months; not all complete [*ek-teleîn*] the ten months. I gave birth to you, my son, after seven months. A little later Ariston himself recognized that he had blurted out that utterance [*epos*] because of thoughtlessness. Do not believe other stories about your manner of birth. You have heard the whole truth [*alēthēs*]. May the wife of Leotykhides himself, and the wives of the others who say these

things, give birth to children fathered by keepers-of-donkeys [*ono-phorboi*].” ¹⁶

Scroll 7: Artakhaiēs

In preparation for a second invasion, the Persians, now under Xerxes, dug a canal around Mount Athos to avoid the storms on its seaward side.

117. While Xerxes was at Akanthos, it happened that Artakhaiēs, overseer of the digging of the canal, fell sick and died. He was highly esteemed by Xerxes and Achaemenid ¹⁷ in lineage [*genos*]. He was the tallest man in Persia, being just four fingers short of five royal cubits, and had the loudest voice on earth. Xerxes was deeply distressed by his death and gave him a magnificent funeral and burial, with the whole army heaping a mound over his grave. Because of an oracle [*theo-propion*], the people of Akanthos sacrifice [*thuein*] to Artakhaiēs as a hero [*hērōs*], invoking him by name. Thus King Xerxes lamented the death of Artakhaiēs.

Scroll 7: Talthybios

133. Xerxes did not send envoys to Athens and Sparta to demand earth, ¹⁸ because earlier Darius had sent heralds on this same mission, and when they made the demand, the Athenians threw them into a pit and the Spartans cast them into a well, telling them to carry earth and water to the king from there. Therefore Xerxes did not send men to make the demand. I am unable to say what calamitous event befell the Athenians for treating the heralds this way, unless it was the devastation of their territory and city [*polis*], but I do not think that it happened for this cause [*aitiā*].

134. But the anger [*mēnis*] of Talthybios, herald of Agamemnon, did fall upon the Lacedaemonians. In Sparta there is a sacred precinct [*hieron*] of Talthybios, and descendants of Talthybios called the Talthybiadai, are granted the privilege [*geras*] of conducting all embassies from Sparta. Afterwards the Spartans could get no favorable responses to whatever they sacrificed [*thuein*], and this went on for a long time. Feeling overburdened and dismayed, the Lacedaemonians held frequent assemblies and issued a proclamation for one of the Lacedaemonians to volunteer to die on Sparta's behalf. Two Spartans of good birth and highest attainment in wealth, Sperthias son of Anēristos and Boulis son of Nikolaos, volunteered to pay [*tinein*] the penalty [*poinē*] to Xerxes for the heralds of Darius who had been killed in Sparta. So the Spartans sent them away to the Medes to die.

135. The bravery of these men deserves admiration, as do their utterances [*epea*]. On their way to Susa, the Persian capital, they came to Hydarnes, a Persian by lineage *genos* and the general of the coastal inhabitants in Asia, who gave them hospitality [*xeniā*] and feasted them. Treating them as guests [*xenoi*], he asked, "Men of Lacedaemon, why do you avoid being friends [*philoi*] of the king? You can look at me and my affairs and see that the king knows how to give honor [*tīmē*] to men who are noble [*agathoi*]. If you would just give yourselves to the king, since you are reputed by him to be noble [*agathoi*], each of you would rule the land of Hellas by the king's gift." To this they answered, "The advice you give us is not equally good, since you speak partly from knowledge, partly from ignorance. You know about being a slave, but you have no experience of freedom [*eleutheriā*], even to know if it is sweet or not. If you tried it, you would advise us to fight for it not only with spears, but even with axes." Thus they answered Hydarnes.

136. They went from there up to Susa. When they had an audience with the king, the bodyguards commanded them to fall on their knees and bow [*proskuneîn*] before the king. They tried to use force, but the

Spartans said they would never do it, even if they were pushed onto their heads, since it was not their custom [*nomos*] to bow [*proskuneîn*] to a human and that was not their reason for coming. So they got out of doing that, and then said, “King of the Medes, the Lacedaemonians have sent us to pay [*tinein*] the penalty [*poinē*] for the heralds who were killed in Sparta.” Xerxes replied magnanimously that he would not be like the Lacedaemonians, who confound the customs [*nomina* =noun from *nomos*] of all humanity by killing heralds. He said he would not do what he blamed in others, nor would he free the Lacedaemonians from guilt [*aitiā*] by killing these two.

137. At first the anger [*mēnis*] of Talthybios relented against the Spartans once they did this, even though Sperthias and Boulis returned home [*nosteîn*]. But long afterwards the Lacedaemonians say that it awoke again during the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians. What was most superhuman [*theion*], I think, about the affair was this: as was just [*dikaion*], the anger [*mēnis*] of Talthybios fell upon messengers and did not abate until it had its outcome. That it fell upon the sons of those men who went up to the king to appease the anger [*mēnis*]—upon Nikolas son of Boulis and Anērastos son of Sperthias—makes it clear to me that the affair involved divine intervention in consequence of the *mēnis* . Anerastos was the one who landed at Tirynthian Halieis and captured it with the crew of a merchant ship. These two were sent as messengers by the Lacedaemonians to Asia, but at Bisanthe in the Hellespont they were betrayed by Sitalkes son of Teres, king of the Thracians, and by Nymphodoros son of Pytheas, of Abdera. They were taken prisoner and carried away to Attica, where the Athenians executed them, and with them Aristeas son of Adeimantos, a Corinthian. This happened many years after the king’s expedition. ¹⁹ I now go back to my former narrative.

Scroll 7: Thetis

In 480 the Persians invaded, coming by land to Thermopylae and by sea to Magnesia, across from the Hellenic fleet at Artemision.

188. The Persian fleet put to sea and reached the beach of the Magnesians territory, between the city [*polis*] of Kasthanaia and the headland of Sepias. ²⁰ The first ships to arrive moored close to land, with the others after them at anchor; since the beach was not large, they were at anchor in rows eight ships deep out into the sea [*pontos*]. Thus they spent the night, but at dawn out of a clear and windless sky a storm descended upon them and the sea began to boil. A strong east wind blew, which the people inhabiting [*oikeîn*] those parts call *Hellespontiēs* . Those who felt the wind rising or had proper mooring dragged their ships up on shore ahead of the storm and so survived with their ships. But the wind carried those ships caught out in the open against the rocks called the Ovens at Pelion or onto the beach. Some ships were wrecked on the headland of Sepias, others were cast ashore at the city [*polis*] of Meliboia or at Kasthanaia. The storm was indeed beyond endurance.

189. The story is told that because of an oracle [*theo-propion*] the Athenians invoked Boreas, the north wind, to help them, since another oracle [*khrestērion*] told them to summon their son-in-law as an ally. According to the Hellenic story, Boreas had an Attic wife, Oreithyia, the daughter of Erekhtheus, ancient king of Athens. Because of this connection, so the tale goes, the Athenians reckoned Boreas to be their son-in-law. They were stationed off Khalkis in Euboea, and when they saw the storm rising, they then, if they had not already, sacrificed to [*thuesthai*] and called upon [*epi-kaleîn*] Boreas and Oreithyia to help [*tīmōreîn*] them by destroying the barbarian fleet, just as before at Athos. I cannot say whether this was why Boreas descended upon the barbarians as they lay at anchor, but the Athenians say that he had come to their aid before and that he was the agent this time. When they went

home they established a sacred precinct [*hieron*] of Boreas beside the Ilissos river.

190. They say that at the very least no fewer than 400 ships were destroyed in this ordeal [*ponos*], along with innumerable men and abundant property. This shipwreck proved useful to Ameinokles son of Kretines, a man of Magnesia who owned land around Sepias, for he later picked up many gold and silver cups cast up on shore, found the Persian treasures, and acquired other untold wealth. Although he became very rich from his gleanings, he did not enjoy luck in everything, for even he was grieved by a calamity that was utterly unfavorable [*a-kharis*] when his son was killed.

191. There was no counting how many grain-ships and other vessels were destroyed. The generals of the fleet were afraid that the Thessalians might attack them now that they were in a bad situation, so they built a high palisade out of the wreckage. The storm lasted three days. Finally [*telos*] the Magi [*magoi*] made sacrifices [*en-toma*] and cast-spells-upon [*kat-aeidein*] the wind, sacrificing [*thuein*] also to Thetis and the Nereids. Thus they made the wind stop on the fourth day, or perhaps it died down on its own. They sacrificed to Thetis after hearing from the Ionians the story that it was at this place that Peleus had abducted [*harpazein*] her, and that all the headland of Sepias belonged to her and to the other Nereids.

192. So on the fourth day the storm had ceased. On the second day after the storm began, the scouts [*hēmero-skopoi*] stationed on the headlands of Euboea ran down and indicated [*sēmainein*] to the Hellenes everything about the shipwreck. After hearing this they prayed to Poseidon as their savior [*sōtēr*] and poured libations, then hurried to Artemision hoping to find few ships opposing them. So they came a second time to Artemision and made their station there. Ever since then

up to the present they are accustomed [*nomizein* = verb of *nomos*] to call Poseidon their savior [*sōtēr*].

Scroll 9: Plataea

Xerxes retreated to Asia Minor, leaving Mardonios and Artabazos in Boeotia in command of the Persian forces. In 479 the Persians and Hellenes faced off in the vicinity of Plataea.

58. When Mardonios learned that the Hellenes had gone away at night and he saw the place deserted, he summoned Thorax of Larissa and his brothers Eurypylos and Thrasydeios and said, “Sons of Aleuas, what will you say now when you see this place deserted? You their neighbors said the Lacedaemonians do not flee from battle, but are the first men in warfare. But earlier you saw them changing their posts, and now we all see that they ran away last night. When they had to be judged [*diakrinein*] in battle against those who are without falsehood best [*aristoi*] among men, they showed that they are nobodies among all the Hellenic nobodies. Since you had no knowledge of the Persians, I can readily forgive you for praising [*aineîn*] those you did know something about. I am more surprised at Artabazos for dreading the Lacedaemonians and declaring that most cowardly opinion that we must break camp and go to be besieged in the city of the Thebans. The king will hear of it from me. But we will speak of this some other time. For now, they must not be allowed to do this. We must pursue them until we catch them and bring about justice [*dikē*] for all they have done to the Persians.”

59. He said this and led the Persians at a run across the Asopos river, following the tracks of the Hellenes, and supposing them to be fleeing. He went after the Lacedaemonians and Tegeans alone, since because of the hills he did not see the Athenians making their way to the plain. When the remaining commanders of the barbarian companies saw the

Persians setting out to pursue the Hellenes, they all immediately raised their standards [*sēmēia* derived from *sēma*] and pursued as fast as each could, marshaled in no order [*kosmos*] or line. They advanced on the Hellenes in a confused uproar and expected to ravage them.

60. When the cavalry attacked, the Spartan commander Pausanias sent a messenger on horseback to the Athenians saying, “Men of Athens, while a great ordeal [*agōn*] is offered whether Hellas be free or enslaved, we Lacedaemonians and you Athenians are betrayed by our allies who ran away last night. I am resolved that what we must now do is fight in the way that will best [*arista*] defend each other. If the cavalry had first rushed against you, we and the Tegeans, who are with us and did not betray Hellas, would have had to come to your aid. But now, since all the cavalry has attacked us, you are right [*dikaioi*] to come to the defense of the divisions [*moirai*] that are most pressed. If something has happened to make it impossible for you to come help, grant us the favor [*kharis*] of sending us your archers. We know, since you have been by far the most eager [*pro-thūmoi*] in this present war, that you will also comply with this request.”

61. When the Athenians heard this, they started to march out to bring all the help they could, but the Hellenes who had taken the king’s side and were drawn up against them attacked them on their march. They could no longer bring help, since the enemy pressed and harassed them, so the Lacedaemonians and Tegeans were left to fight alone. The Lacedaemonians were 50,000 in number, including the light-armed men, the Tegeans, who never separated from the Lacedaemonians, 3,000. They made-sacrificial-offerings [*sphagiazesthai*], since they were about to engage in battle against Mardonios and the army with him, but the sacrificial-offerings [*sphagia*] were not favorable. Meanwhile many of them fell and many more were wounded, for the Persians had made a barricade of their shields and were constantly shooting an immense number of arrows at them. As the Spartans were pressed and the

sacrifices did not turn out, Pausanias looked towards the sacred-precinct-of-Hera [*Hēraion*] at Plataea and invoked [*epi-kaleîsthai*] the goddess, praying that they in no way be cheated of their hope.

62. While he was still making his invocation [*epi-kaleîsthai*], the Tegeans moved out in front and attacked the barbarians, and as soon as the prayer [*eukhē*] of Pausanias was completed, the sacrificial-offerings [*sphagia*] became favorable to the Lacedaemonians as they made-sacrifice [*thuein*]. When at last this had happened, they too advanced on the Persians, and the Persians threw down their bows to face them. The battle was taking place first around the row shields, and after this collapsed there was violent fighting for a long time right at the sacred-precinct-of-Demeter [*Dēmētrion*]. Finally there was hand-to-hand combat, for the barbarians had grabbed hold of the spears and snapped them off. The Persians were not inferior in courage and strength, but they were without armor and were also ignorant of tactics and unequal to their opponents in skill [*sophiā*]. They jumped forward one at a time or joined together in groups of ten or more or fewer, and fell upon the Spartans only to be killed.

63. Wherever Mardonios happened to be, fighting from a white horse with 1,000 hand-picked troops, the best [*aristoi*] of the Persians, around him, there they pressed the enemy hardest. That was because, as long as Mardonios was alive, they held out in their defense and mowed down many of the Lacedaemonians. But when Mardonios was killed and the force that was marshaled around him, which was the strongest part of the army, also fell, the others fled and gave way before the Lacedaemonians. What caused them the most harm was that their clothing had no armor; they were naked as they were in competition [*agōn*] against armored men.

64. At this point justice [*dikē*] was fulfilled [*epi-teleîn*] in return for the killing of Leonidas by Mardonios according to the oracle [*khrestērion*]

received by the Spartans, and the finest victory we know of was won by Pausanias son of Kleombrotos son of Anaxandrides. The names of his earlier ancestors have been told in the case of Leonidas, since they were the same for both. Mardonios was killed by Arimnestos, a notable [*logimos*] man in Sparta, who long after the Median war with 300 men fought in battle at Stenykleros in time of war against all the Messenians and was killed along with the 300.

65. Back at Plataea, when the Persians were routed by the Lacedaemonians, they fled in disorder [= without *kosmos*] to their camp and to the wooden wall they had built in a portion [*moira*] of Theban territory. For me it is a marvel [*thauma*] that although they fought near the grove [*alsos*] of Demeter, not a single Persian was seen to enter the sacred precinct [*temenos*] or die there, and most of them fell in the periphery of the sacred precinct [*hieron*] in unconsecrated-ground [*bebēlon*]. It is my opinion—if one ought to hold opinions about affairs that are superhuman [*theia*]—that the goddess herself did not let them in because they had burned the temple [*anaktoron*] in Eleusis.

Scroll 9: Protesilaos

After Plataea the Hellenes defeated the enemy fleet at Mykale, driving the Persians from Europe. Herodotus ends his Histories with the following episode:

114. The Hellenes who had set out from Mykale for the Hellespont first came to anchor at Lekton, driven off course by the winds, then reached Abydos and found the bridges broken up which they thought they would find still intact. Since they had come to the Hellespont chiefly because of the bridges, the Peloponnesians with Leotykhides resolved to sail back to Hellas, but the Athenians and their general Xanthippos ²¹

decided to remain there and attack the Chersonesus. So the others sailed away, and the Athenians crossed over from Abydos to the Chersonesus and besieged Sestos.

115. The native Aeolians held the place, and with them were the Persians and a huge mass of the other allies. When they heard that the Hellenes had come to the Hellespont, they came in from the outlying towns [*peri-oikis* plural] and met in Sestos, since its wall was the strongest in the area. Among them came the Persian Oiobazos from the city [*polis*] of Kardia, carrying there with him the cables of the bridges.

116. ^{9.116.1} The despot [*turannos*] of this province [= the Chersonesus] was Artayktes, a representative of [the king] Xerxes. He was a Persian, a formidable and impious man. He had deceived the king at the time of the expedition against Athens by robbing from Elaious the possessions [*khrēmata*] of Protesilaos son of Iphiklos. ^{9.116.2} The tomb [*taphos*] of Protesilaos is at Elaious in the Chersonesus, and there is a sacred precinct [*temenos*] around it. There was a vast amount of possessions [*khrēmata*] there: gold and silver bowls, bronze, fabrics, and other dedicated offerings, all of which Artayktes seized and carried off because the king had given them to him. He deceived Xerxes by saying, ^{9.116.3} “Master, there is here the house [*oikos*] of a Hellene who waged war against your land, but he met with justice [*dikē*] and was killed. Give me his house [*oikos*] so that all may know not to wage war against your land.” This was going to be easy, to persuade Xerxes to give him [= Artayktes] a man’s house [*oikos*] by saying this, since Xerxes had no suspicion of what he [= Artayktes] really thought. When he [= Artayktes] said that Protesilaos waged war against the king’s land, he had in mind [*noein*] that the Persians consider [*nomizein*] all Asia to belong to them and to their successive kings. So the king made him the gift, and he [= Artayktes] carried off the possessions [*khrēmata*] from Elaious to Sestos. As for the sacred precinct [*temenos*], he [= Artayktes] used it for planting and farming. And whenever he would come [from Sestos] to

Elaious for visits, he would even have sex inside the inner sanctum [*aduton*] with women. When the Athenians besieged him in Sestos, he had made no preparations for a siege, not expecting the Hellenes at all, so that they attacked him off his guard.

117. As the siege continued into late autumn, the Athenians began to chafe at being away from home unable to capture the wall of Sestos. They asked the generals to lead them back home, but the generals said they would not do so until the wall was captured or the Athenian state summoned them. So they put up with the present state of affairs.

118. Those inside the wall had now reached such complete misery [*kakon*] that they even boiled and ate the cords of their beds. When even those ran out, the Persians, including Artayktes and Oiobazos, ran away during the night, climbing down the rear of the wall where the enemy were the fewest. When it was day, the people of the Chersonesus signaled [*sēmainein*] from the towers what had happened and opened the gates for the Athenians. Most of them went in pursuit, while some took possession of the city [*polis*].

119. Oiobazos escaped into Thrace, but the Apsinthian Thracians caught him and sacrificed [*thuein*] him to their native god Pleistōros in their own special way, killing those with him in a different way. Artayktes and his followers had set out in flight later, so they were caught a little beyond Aigospotamoi. They defended themselves for a long time until some were killed and the rest taken prisoner. The Hellenes bound them, including Artayktes and his son, and brought them to Sestos.

120. ^{9.120.1} The people of the Chersonesus say that a portent [*teras*] happened to one of the guards while he was roasting salted fish [*tarīkhoi*]: the salted fish [*tarīkhoi*] on the fire began to jump and writhe just like newly-caught fish. ^{9.120.2} A crowd gathered in amazement, but when

Artayktes saw the portent [*teras*] he called out to the man roasting the salted fish [*tarīkhoi*] and said, “Athenian stranger [*xenos*], have no fear of this portent [*teras*]; it has not been sent to you. Instead Protesilaos of Elaious indicates [*sēmainein*] to me that even when salted and dead [*tarīkhos*] ²² he holds power from the gods to punish one who treats him without justice [*a-dikeîn*]. I now wish to impose upon myself a ransom, paying to the god 100 talents in return for the property I took from the sacred precinct [*hieron*], and giving to the Athenians 200 talents for myself and my son, if I survive.” But this promise did not persuade the general Xanthippos. The people of Elaious, seeking-vengeance [*tīmōreîn*] for Protesilaos, asked that he be put to death, and the mind [*noos*] of the general inclined the same way. They led him to the point where Xerxes had bridged the strait, though some say they took him to the tumulus [*kolōnos*] above the city [*polis*] of Madytos, nailed him to a board, and crucified [*ana-kremannunai*] him, stoning his son to death before his eyes.

121. After they did this they sailed away to Hellas carrying many goods, including the cables of the bridges to be dedicated in the sacred precincts [*hiera*]. Nothing more than this happened that year.

122. The grandfather of this Artayktes who was crucified [*ana-kremannunai*] was Artembares, who expounded an argument to the Persians that they adopted and proposed to Cyrus, saying, “Since Zeus grants empire [*hēgemoniā*] to the Persians, and among individuals to you, Cyrus, by deposing Astyages, let us emigrate from the small and rugged land we inhabit and take possession of a better one. Many such lands neighbor ours, and there are many further away, and if we take possession of one of them we will be more wondrous [*thaumastoi*] in more ways. It is reasonable for men who are-rulers [*arkhein*] to do this, and when will there ever be a better time than when we rule [*arkhein*] so many men and all of Asia?” Cyrus listened but did not admire [*thaumazein*] the argument. He told them to do this, but he advised [

par-aineîn] them to prepare to rule [*arkhein*] no longer but to be ruled [*arkhesthai*] instead, for from soft lands tend to come soft men, and the same land cannot produce a wondrous [*thaumastos*] harvest and men who are good [*agathoi*] at warfare. The Persians admitted their error and took leave, defeated by the opinion of Cyrus, and they chose to inhabit [*oikeîn*] an unfertile land and rule [*arkhein*] rather than sow a plain and be slaves to others.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. Kyrnos is modern Corsica. Also Kyrnos is the name of a son of Hēraklēs. The men from the ship were now prisoners of war.

[[back](#)] 2 The verb *enagizein* means ‘to make offerings to a dead hero, to participate in the pollution of’, from *agos* ‘pollution’. See §90 in Nagy 2006, “The Epic Hero,” http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hnc.essay:Nagy.The_Epic_Hero.2005 .

[[back](#)] 3 The verb *ktizein* ‘means establish a place as a city’, and ‘institute a person as a cult hero’.

[[back](#)] 4 Such as Orpheus and Musaeus.

[[back](#)] 5 His name means ‘he who benefits the people’.

[[back](#)] 6 On the meaning of *opāōn* as ‘attendant’ or, more literally, ‘follower’, see Nagy *Classical Inquiries* 2015.05.01, §§1–7: <http://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/meriones-rides-again-an-alternative-model-for-a-heroic-charioteer> .

[[back](#)] 7 Hippias succeeded his father [cf. 1.59–64] as despot [*turannos*] of Athens, until he was driven out and fled to Persia.

[[back](#)] 8 Cf. Herodotus 6.34–38.

[[back](#)] 9 Meaning the Persians, as often in Herodotus.

[[back](#)] 10 Famous tyrannicides who assassinated Hipparkhos, brother of Hippias.

[[back](#)] 11 Brother of Aeschylus. Aeschylus himself fought at Marathon.

[[back](#)] 12 We see here a striking example of the meaning built into verbs like *arāsthai* ‘announce-in-prayer’ and *eukhesthai*, with the same meaning, ‘announce-in-prayer.’ This example helps us understand the context of ἀράταν (*arātān*) at line 3 of the “Brothers Song” of Sappho, as analyzed in §§52–59 of Nagy 2015.09.08, “A poetics of sisterly affect in the Brothers Song and in other songs of Sappho,” http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hinc.essay:NagyG.A_Poetics_of_Sisterly_Affect.2015 .

[[back](#)] 13 Herodotus regularly uses this word *mēdizein* ‘Medize’ in the sense of ‘taking the Persian side’, and he frequently uses ‘Mede’ for ‘Persian’, since the Persians took over the empire of the Medes.

[[back](#)] 14 Meaning the Persians, as often in the subsequent narrative.

[[back](#)] 15 These ominous words spoken by someone who is now an *arkhōn* ‘archon’ at a festival of Sparta after having been *basileus* ‘king’ of Sparta is an allusion, it has been argued, to what had been planned by the Persian invaders of Greece: if they had defeated the Spartans, they would have undone the kingship and would have put all the Peloponnesus in charge of Dēmarātos as dictator, giving him the title ‘archon of the Peloponnesus’. For a summary of this argument, see ch.12§26n56 of

Nagy *Pindar's Homer* (1990), http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_Nagy.Pindars_Homer.1990 .

[[back](#)] 16 At ch.11§40 of *Pindar's Homer* , I analyze the multiple meanings embedded in the word-games at work in this story. A key to understanding the subtext is that the name Astrabakos conveys the idea of a mule, which is an offspring of female horse and a male donkey: the female is of course high-born, like the queen of Sparta, while the male is low-born, like the man who tends donkeys.

[[back](#)] 17 The Achaemenids were the Persian royal family.

[[back](#)] 18 Earth and water were tokens of submission.

[[back](#)] 19 In 430, during the Peloponnesian War, 50 years later.

[[back](#)] 20 Meaning ‘the place of the sepia’. It was here, according to epic tradition, that Peleus and Thetis conceived Achilles.

[[back](#)] 21 Father of Pericles.

[[back](#)] 22 The noun *tarikhos* means ‘preserved by drying’. The description ‘preserved’ in the secular sense applies to a dried or salted fish; ‘preserved’ in the sacred sense applies to a mummified corpse.

Homeric Hymn to Demeter

Translated by Gregory Nagy

I begin to sing of Demeter, the holy goddess with the
beautiful hair.

And her daughter [Persephone] too. The one with the
delicate ankles, whom Hādēs ¹

seized. She was given away by Zeus, the loud-thunderer,
the one who sees far and wide.

Demeter did not take part in this, she of the golden
double-axe, she who glories in the harvest.

5 She [Persephone] was having a good time, along with the
daughters of Okeanos, who wear their waistbands slung
low.

She was picking flowers: roses, crocus, and beautiful
violets.

Up and down the soft meadow. Iris blossoms too she
picked, and hyacinth.

And the narcissus, which was grown as a lure for the
flower-faced girl

by Gaia [Earth]. All according to the plans of Zeus. She
[Gaia] was doing a favor for the one who receives many
guests [Hādēs].

10 It [the narcissus] was a wondrous thing in its splendor. To
look at it gives a sense of holy awe

to the immortal gods as well as mortal humans.

It has a hundred heads growing from the root up.

Its sweet fragrance spread over the wide skies up above.

And the earth below smiled back in all its radiance. So too
the churning mass of the salty sea.

15 She [Persephone] was filled with a sense of wonder, and
she reached out with both hands
to take hold of the pretty plaything. ² And the earth, full
of roads leading every which way, opened up under her.
It happened on the Plain of Nysa. There it was that the
Lord who receives many guests made his lunge.
He was riding on a chariot drawn by immortal horses.
The son of Kronos. The one known by many names.
He seized her against her will, put her on his golden
chariot,
20 And drove away as she wept. She cried with a piercing
voice,
calling upon her father [Zeus], the son of Kronos, the
highest and the best.
But not one of the immortal ones, or of human mortals,
heard her voice. Not even the olive trees which bear their
splendid harvest.
Except for the daughter of Persaios, the one who keeps in
mind the vigor of nature.
25 She heard it from her cave. She is Hekatē, with the
splendid headband.
And the Lord Helios [Sun] heard it too, the magnificent
son of Hyperion.
They heard the daughter calling upon her father, the son
of Kronos.
But he, all by himself, was seated far apart from the gods,
inside a temple, the precinct of many prayers.
He was receiving beautiful sacrificial rites from mortal
humans.
30 She was being taken, against her will, at the behest of
Zeus,

by her father's brother, the one who makes many *sēmata* ,
the one who receives many guests,
the son of Kronos, the one with many names. On the
chariot drawn by immortal horses.

So long as the earth and the star-filled sky
were still within the goddess's [Persephone's] view, as also
the fish-swarming sea [*pontos*], with its strong currents,
35 as also the rays of the sun, she still had hope that she
would yet see
her dear mother and that special group, the immortal
gods.

For that long a time her great *noos* was soothed by hope,
distressed as she was.

The peaks of mountains resounded, as did the depths of
the sea [*pontos*],

with her immortal voice. And the Lady Mother
[Demeter] heard her.

40 And a sharp *akhos* seized her heart. The headband on her
hair

she tore off with her own immortal hands
and threw a dark cloak over her shoulders.

She sped off like a bird, soaring over land and sea,
looking and looking. But no one was willing to tell her
the truth [*etētuma*],

45 not one of the gods, not one of the mortal humans,
not one of the birds, messengers of the truth [*etētuma*].

Thereafter, for nine days did the Lady Demeter
wander all over the earth, holding torches ablaze in her
hands.

Not once did she take of ambrosia and nectar, sweet to
drink,

50 in her grief, nor did she bathe her skin in water.
 But when the tenth bright dawn came upon her,
 Hekatē came to her, holding a light ablaze in her hands.
 She came with a message, and she spoke up, saying to
 her:
 “Lady Demeter, bringer of *hōrai* , giver of splendid gifts,
 55 which one of the gods who dwell in the sky or which
 one of mortal humans
 seized Persephone and brought grief to your *philos thūmos*
 ?
 I heard the sounds, but I did not see with my eyes
 who it was. So I quickly came to tell you everything,
 without error.”
 So spoke Hekatē. But she was not answered
 60 by the daughter [Demeter] of Rhea with the beautiful
 hair. Instead, she [Demeter] joined her [Hekatē] and
 quickly
 set out with her, holding torches ablaze in her hands.
 They came to Hēlios, the seeing-eye of gods and men.
 They stood in front of his chariot-team, and the
 resplendent goddess asked this question:
 “Helios! Show me respect [*aidōs*], god to goddess, if ever
 65 I have pleased your heart and *thūmos* in word or deed.
 It is about the girl born to me, a sweet young seedling,
 renowned for her beauty,
 whose piercing cry I heard resounding through the
 boundless aether,
 as if she were being forced, though I did not see it with
 my eyes.
 I turn to you as one who ranges over all the earth and sea
 [*pontos*]

he has his share, going back to the very beginning, when
the three-way division of inheritance was made. ³

He dwells with those whose king he was destined by lot
to be.” ⁴

So saying, he shouted to his horses, and they responded to
his command

as they swiftly drew the speeding chariot, like long-
winged birds.

90 And she [Demeter] was visited by grief [*akhos*] that was
even more terrifying than before: it makes you think of
the Hound of Hādēs.

In her anger at the one who is known for his dark clouds,
the son of Kronos,

she shunned the company of gods and lofty Olympus.

She went away, visiting the cities of humans, with all
their fertile landholdings,

shading over her appearance, for a long time. And not one
of men,

95 looking at her, could recognize her. Not one of women,
either, who are accustomed to wear their waistbands low-
slung. ⁵

Until, one day, she came to the house of bright-minded
Keleos,

who was at that time ruler of Eleusis, fragrant with
incense. ⁶

She sat down near the road, sad in her *philon* heart,
at the well called Parthenion [the Virgin's Place], where
the people of the *polis* ⁷ used to draw water.

100 She sat in the shade, under the thick growth of an olive
tree,

120 I wish you *kharis* ['I wish you pleasure and happiness
from our relationship, starting now']. I shall tell you. It is
not unseemly,

since you ask, for me to tell you *alēthea* .

Dōsō ² is my name. It was given to me by my honored
mother.

But that was then. I am from Crete, having traveled over
the wide stretches of sea

against my will. Without my consent, by *biē* ,by duress,

125 I was abducted by pirates. After a while,
sailing with their swift ship, they landed at the harbor of
Thorikos. There the ship was boarded by women
of the mainland, many of them. They [the pirates]
started preparing dinner next to the prow of the beached
ship.

But my *thūmos* did not yearn for food, that delight of the
mind.

130 I stole away and set out to travel over the dark earth of
the mainland, fleeing my
arrogant captors. This way, I stopped them
from drawing any benefit from my worth without having
paid the price.

That is how I got here, in the course of all my
wanderings. And I do not know
what this land is and who live here.

135 But I pray to all the gods who abide on Olympus that
you be granted
vigorous husbands and that you be able to bear children,
in accordance with the wishes of your parents. As for me,
young girls, take pity.

To be honest about it, what I want is for you to name for
me a house to go to, the house of someone, man or
woman, who has *phila* children to be taken care of. ¹⁰

I want to work for them,
140 honestly. The kind of work that is cut out for a female
who has outlived others her own age.

I could take some newborn baby in my arms,
and nourish him well. I could watch over his house.
I would make his bed in the inner recesses of well-built
chambers,

the royal bed. And I could see to a woman's tasks."
145 So spoke the goddess. And she was answered straightaway
by the unwed maiden,

Kallidikē, the most beautiful of the daughters of Keleos:
"Old Mother, we humans endure the gifts the gods give
us, even when we are grieving over what has to be. ¹¹

They [the gods] are, after all, far better than we are.
What I now say will be clear advice, and I will name for
you
150 the men who have the great control, divinely given, of
tīmē here:

the men who stand at the forefront of the *dēmos* and who
protect the citadel of the *polis*
with their wise counsel and their straight *dikai* .

And then there are the wives too: of sound-minded
Triptolemos, of Dioklos,
of Polyxenos, of faultless Eumolpos as well,
155 of Dolikhos, and of our splendid father [Keleos].

The wives of all of these manage the palace. ¹²

Of these women, not a single one of them, when they
first look at you,
would deprive you of *tīmē*, the way you look, and turn
you away from the palace.

Rather, they will receive you. For, right now, you look
like the gods.

160 If you wish, wait for us, while we go to the palace of our
father

and tell our mother, Metaneira with the low-slung
waistband,
all these things from beginning to end, in the hope that
she will tell you
to come to our house and not to seek out the houses of
others. ¹³

She has a treasured son, growing up in the well-built
palace.

165 He was born late, after many a prayer for the birth of a
son: a great joy to his parents.

If you nourish him to grow till he reaches the crossing-
point of life, coming of age,

I can predict that you will be the envy of any woman
who lays eyes on you.

That is how much compensation she [Metaneira] would
give you in return for raising him.”

So she [Kallidikē] spoke. And she [Demeter] nodded her
assent. So they,

170 filling their splendid jars with water, carried it off,
looking magnificent.

Swiftly they came to the great palace of their father, and
quickly they told their mother

what they saw and heard. ¹⁴ And she told them

quickly to go and invite her [Demeter] for whatever
wages, no limits,
and they, much as deer or heifers in the *hōrā* of spring
175 prance along the meadow, satiating their dispositions as
they graze on the grass,
so also they, hitching up the folds of their lovely dresses,
dashed along the rutted roadway, their hair flowing
over their shoulders, looking like crocus blossoms.
They found the illustrious goddess sitting near the road,
just the way
180 they had left her. Then they led her to the *phila* palace of
their father.

She was walking behind them, sad in her *philon* heart.
She was wearing a veil on her head, and a long dark robe
[*peplos*]

trailed around the delicate feet of the goddess. ¹⁵

Straightaway they came to the palace of sky-nurtured ¹⁶
Keleos.

185 They went through the hall, heading for the place where
their mistress, their mother,
was sitting near the threshold of a well-built chamber,
holding in her lap her son, a young seedling. And they
ran over
to her side. She [Demeter] in the meantime went over to
the threshold and stood on it, with feet firmly planted,
and her head
reached all the way to the ceiling. And she filled the
whole indoors with a divine light.
190 She [Metaneira] was seized by a sense of *aidōs* , by a holy
wonder, by a blanching fear.

She [Metaneira] yielded to her [Demeter] the chair on
which she was sitting, and she told her to sit down.
But Demeter, the bringer of *hōrai* , the giver of splendid
gifts,

refused to sit down on the splendid chair,
but she stood there silent, with her beautiful eyes
downcast,

195 until Iambē, the one who knows what is worth caring
about [*kednon*] and what is not, set down for her
a well-built stool, on top of which she threw a splendid
fleece. ¹⁷

On this she [Demeter] sat down, holding with her hands
a veil before her face.

For a long time she sat on the stool, without uttering a
sound, in her sadness.

And she made no approach, either by word or by gesture,
to anyone.

200 Unsmiling, not partaking of food or drink,
she sat there, wasting away with yearning for her
daughter with the low-slung waistband,
until Iambē, ¹⁸ the one who knows what is dear and what
is not, started making fun.

Making many jokes, she turned the Holy Lady's
disposition in another direction,

making her smile and laugh and have a merry *thūmos* .

205 Ever since, she [Iambē] has been pleasing her [Demeter]
with the sacred rites.

Then Metaneira offered her [Demeter] a cup, having
filled it with honey-sweet wine.

But she refused, saying that it was divinely ordained that
she not

drink red wine. Then she [Demeter] ordered her
[Metaneira] to mix some barley and water
with delicate pennyroyal, and to give her [Demeter] that
potion to drink.

210 So she [Metaneira] made the *kukeōn* ¹⁹ and offered it to
the goddess, just as she had ordered.

The Lady known far and wide as Dēō ²⁰ accepted it, for
the sake of the *hosia* . ²¹

Then well-girded Metaneira spoke up in their midst:
“Woman, I wish you *kharis* ['I wish you pleasure and
happiness from our relationship, starting now']. I speak
this way because I think you are descended not from base
parents

but from noble ones. You have the look of *aidōs* in your
eyes,

215 and the look of *kharis* , just as if you were descended from
kings, who uphold the *themistes* .

We humans endure the gifts the gods give us, even when
we are grieving over what has to be.

The yoke has been placed on our neck.

But now that you have come here, there will be as many
things that they give to you as they give to me.

Take this little boy of mine and nourish him. He is late-
born, and it was beyond my expectations

220 that the immortals could have given him to me. I prayed
many times to have him.

If you nourish him to grow till he reaches the crossing-
point of life, coming of age,

I can predict that you will be the envy of any woman
who lays eyes on you.

That is how much compensation I [Metaneira] would
give you in return for raising him.”

Then Demeter, with the beautiful garlands in her hair,
addressed her:

225 “Woman, I wish you *kharis* back, and then some. May the
gods give you good things.

With positive intentions, I will take your little boy as you
tell me to.

I will nourish him, and I do not expect that, through the
inadvertence of her nursemaid,

he would perish from a pestilence or from the

Undercutter. ²²

I know an antidote ²³ that is far more powerful than the

Woodcutter; ²⁴

230 I know a genuine remedy for the painful pestilence.”

Having so spoken, she took the child to her fragrant
bosom,

in her immortal hands. And the mother [Metaneira]
rejoiced in her mind.

233 And so it came to pass that the splendid son of bright-
minded Keleos,

234 Dēmophōn, ²⁵ who was born to the one with the
beautiful waist, Metaneira,

235 was nourished in the palace, and he shot up [*anedrame*]
equal [*īsos*] to a superhuman force [*daimōn*],

236 not eating grain, not sucking from the breast. But
Demeter

237 used to anoint him with ambrosia, as if he had been born
of the goddess,

238 and she would breathe down her sweet breath on him as
she held him to her bosom.

She had taken him out of the fire, very angry in her
thūmos ,
 255 and straightaway she spoke to well-girded Metaneira:
 “Ignorant humans! Heedless, unable to recognize in
 advance
 the difference between future good fortune [*aisa*] and
 future bad.
 In your heedlessness, you have made a big mistake, a
 mistake without remedy.
 259 I [= Demeter] swear by the implacable water of the
 Styx, ²⁹the witness of oaths that gods make, as I say this:
 260 immortal and ageless for all days
 261 would I have made your dear [*philos*] little boy, and I
 would have given him honor [*tīmē*] that is unwilting [*a-phthi-tos*]. ³⁰
 262 But now there is no way for him to avoid death and
 doom. ³¹
 263 Still, he will have an honor [*tīmē*] that is unwilting [*a-phthi-tos*], for all time, because on my knees
 264 he had once sat and slept in my arms.
 265 At the right season [*hōrā*], every year,
 266 the sons of the Eleusinians will have a war, a terrible
 battle among each other.
 267 They will do so for all days to come. ³²
 I am Demeter, the holder of *tīmai*. I am the greatest
 boon and joy for immortals and mortals alike.
 270 But come! Let a great temple, with a great altar at its
 base,
 be built by the entire *dēmos* . Make it at the foot of the
 acropolis and its steep walls.

Make it loom over the well of Kallikhoron, ³³ on a
prominent hill.

And I will myself instruct you in the sacred rites so that,
in the future,
you may perform the rituals in the proper way and thus
be pleasing to my *noos* .”

275 So saying, the goddess changed her size ³⁴ and
appearance,
shedding her old age, and she was totally enveloped in
beauty.

And a lovely fragrance wafted from her perfumed robes.
The radiance of her immortal complexion
shone forth from the goddess. Her golden hair streamed
down her shoulder.

280 The well-built palace was filled with light, as if from a
flash of lightning.

She went out of the palace, and straightaway her
[Metaneira’s] knees buckled.

For a long time she [Metaneira] was speechless. She did
not even think of

her treasured little boy, to pick him up from the floor.

But his sisters heard his plaintive wailing,

285 and they quickly ran downstairs from their well-
cushioned bedrooms. One of them
picked up the child in her arms, clasping him to her
bosom.

Another one rekindled the fire. Still another one rushed,
with her delicate feet,
to prop up her mother as she was staggering out of the
fragrant room.

They all bunched around the little boy, washing him as
he gasped and spluttered.

290 They all kept hugging him, but his *thūmos* could not be
comforted.

He was now being held by nursemaids who were far
inferior.

All night they prayed to the illustrious goddess,
trembling with fear. And when the bright dawn came,
they told Keleos, who rules far and wide, exactly what
happened,

295 and what the goddess Demeter, the one with the
beautiful garlands in the hair, instructed them to do.

Then he [Keleos] assembled the masses of the people,
from this end of the public place to the other,
and he gave out the order to build, for Demeter with the
beautiful hair, a splendid temple,

and an altar too, on top of the prominent hill.

And they obeyed straightaway, hearing his voice.

300 They built it as he ordered. And the temple grew bigger
and bigger, taking shape through the dispensation of the
superhuman force [*daimōn*]. ³⁵

When the people had finished their work and paused
from their labor,

they all went home. But golden-haired Demeter
sat down and stayed there [in the temple], shunning the
company of all the blessed ones [the gods].

She was wasting away with yearning for her daughter
with the low-slung waistband.

305 She made that year the most terrible one for mortals, all
over the Earth, the nurturer of many.

It was so terrible, it makes you think of the Hound of
Hādēs. The Earth did not send up
any seed. Demeter, she with the beautiful garlands in her
hair, kept them [the seeds] covered underground.
Many a curved plow was dragged along the fields by
many an ox—all in vain.
Many a bright grain of wheat fell into the earth— all for
naught.

310 At this moment, she [Demeter] could have destroyed the
entire population of *meropes* ³⁶ humans
with harsh hunger, thus depriving of their *tīmē*
the dwellers of the Olympian abodes— [the *tīmē* of]
sacrificial portions of meat for eating or for burning, ³⁷
if Zeus had not noticed with his *noos* , taking note in his
thūmos .

First, he sent Iris, with the golden wings, to summon
315 Demeter with the splendid hair, with a beauty that is
much loved.

That is what he told her to do. And she obeyed Zeus, the
one with the dark clouds, the son of Kronos,
and she ran the space between sky and earth quickly with
her feet. ³⁸

She arrived at the city of Eleusis, fragrant with incense,
and she found in the temple Demeter, the one with the
dark robe.

320 Addressing her, she spoke winged words:
“Demeter! Zeus, the one who has unwilting [*a-phthi-ta*]
knowledge, summons you
to come to that special group, the company of the
immortal gods.

So then, come! May what my words say, which come
from Zeus, not fail to be turned into action that is
completed.”

So she spoke, making an entreaty. But her [Demeter’s]
thūmos was not persuaded.

325 After that, the Father sent out all the other blessed and
immortal gods.

They came one by one,
they kept calling out to her, offering many beautiful gifts,
all sorts of *tīmai* that she could choose for herself if she
joined the company of the immortal gods.

But no one could persuade her in her thinking or in her
intention [*noēma*],

330 angry as she was in her *thūmos* , and she harshly said no
to their words.

She said that she would never go to fragrant Olympus,
that she would never send up the harvest of the earth,
until she saw with her own eyes her daughter, the one
with the beautiful looks.

But when the loud-thunderer, the one who sees far and
wide, heard this,

335 he sent to Erebos [Hādēs] the one with the golden wand,
the Argos-killer [Hermes], ³⁹

so that he may persuade Hādēs, with gentle words,
that he allow holy Persephone to leave the misty realms of
darkness

and be brought up to the light in order to join the
daimones [the gods in Olympus], so that her mother may
see her with her own eyes and then let go of her anger.

340 Hermes did not disobey, but straightaway he headed
down beneath the depths of the earth,

rushing full speed, leaving behind the abode of Olympus.

And he found the Lord inside his palace,
seated on a funeral couch, along with his duly acquired
bedmate,

the one who was much under duress, yearning for her
mother, and suffering from the unbearable things

345 inflicted on her by the will of the blessed ones. ⁴⁰

Going near him [Hādēs] and stopping, the powerful
Argos-killer said to him:

“Hādēs! Dark-haired one! King of the dead!

Zeus the Father orders that I have splendid Persephone
brought back up to light from Erebos back to him and
his company, so that her mother

350 may see her with her own eyes and let go of her wrath
and terrifying *mēnis*

against the immortals. For she [Demeter] is performing a
mighty deed,

to destroy [root *phthi*-] the tribes of earth-born humans,
causing them to be without *menos* ,

by hiding the Seed underground—and she is destroying
[root *phthi*-] the *tīmai*

of the immortal gods. ⁴¹ She has a terrifying anger, and
she refuses

355 to keep company with the gods. Instead, far removed, she
is seated inside

a temple fragrant with incense. She has taken charge of
the rocky citadel of Eleusis.”

So he spoke. Hādēs, King of the Dead, smiled
with his brows, ⁴² and he did not disobey the order of
Zeus the King.

who took reins and whip into his *philai* hands
and shot out of the palace [of Hādēs]. And the horses
sped away eagerly.

380 Swiftly they made their way along the long journey.
 Neither the sea

 nor the water of the rivers nor the grassy valleys
nor the mountain peaks could hold up the onrush of the
immortal horses.

High over the peaks they went, slicing through the vast
air.

He came to a halt at the place where Demeter, with the
beautiful garlands in the hair,

385 was staying, at the forefront of the temple fragrant with
incense. When she [Demeter] saw them,

 she rushed forth like a maenad ⁴⁴ down a wooded
 mountainslope.

 [387-400] ⁴⁵

401 But when the earth starts blossoming with fragrant
 flowers of springtime,

 flowers of every sort, then it is that you must come up
 from the misty realms of darkness,

once again, a great thing of wonder to gods and mortal
humans alike.

But what kind of ruse was used to deceive you by the
powerful one, the one who receives many guests?" ⁴⁶

405 She [Demeter] was answered by Persephone, the most
 beautiful:

 “So then, Mother, I shall tell you everything, without
 error.

When the messenger came to me, the swift Argos-killer,

with the news from my father, the son of Kronos, and
from the other dwellers in the sky,
that I should come from Erebos, so that you may see me
with your own eyes
410 and let go of your wrath and terrifying *mēnis* against the
immortals,
then I sprang up for joy, but he, stealthily,
put into my hand the berry of the pomegranate, that
honey-sweet food,
and he compelled me by *biē* to eat of it.
As for how it was that he [Hādēs] snatched me away,
through the *mētis* of the son of Kronos,
415 my father, and how he took me down beneath the depths
of the earth,
I will tell you and relate in order, as you ask.
We were, all of us, going along the lovely meadow, I and
Leukippē, Phainō, Elektra, Ianthē,
Melitē, Iakhē, Rhodeia, Kallirrhoē,
420 Mēlobosis, Tykhē, and flower-faced Okyrrhoē,
Khrysēis, Ianeira, Akastē, Admētē,
Rhodopē, Ploutō, and lovely Kalypsō,
Styx, Ourania, and lovely Galaxaura.
Also Pallas [Athena], the one who rouses to battle, and
Artemis, who delights in arrows.
425 We were playing and gathering lovely flowers in our
hands,
an assortment of delicate crocus, iris, and hyacinth,
rosebuds and lilies, a wonder to behold,
and the narcissus, which is grown, like the crocus, by the
wide earth. [47](#)

I was joyfully gathering the flowers, and then the earth
 beneath me
 430 gave way, and there it was that he sprang out, the
 powerful lord who receives many guests.
 He took me away under the earth in his golden chariot.
 It was very much against my will. I cried with a piercing
 voice.
 These things, grieving, I tell you, and they are all *alēthea*
 .”
 In this way did the two of them spend the whole day,
 having a like-minded *thūmos* , ⁴⁸
 435 and they gladdened greatly each other's heart and *thūmos*
 ,
 hugging each other, and their *thūmos* ceased having *akhos*
 .
 They received joy from each other, and gave it.
 Then Hekatē approached them, the one with the splendid
 headband.
 And she welcomed back the daughter of holy Demeter
 with many embraces.
 440 And from that day forward, the Lady [Hekatē] became
 her [Persephone's] attendant and substitute queen.
 Then the loud-thundering Zeus, who sees far and wide,
 sent to them a messenger,
 Rhea with the beautiful hair, to bring Demeter, the one
 with the dark robe,
 to join the company of the special group of gods. And he
 promised *tīmai*
 that he would give to her [Demeter], which she could
 receive in the company of the immortal gods.

445 He [Zeus] assented that her daughter, every time the
 season came round,
would spend a third portion of the year in the realms of
 dark mist underneath,
and the other two thirds in the company of her mother
 and the other immortals.
So he spoke, and the goddess [Rhea] did not disobey the
 messages of Zeus.

Swiftly she darted off from the peaks of Olympus
450 and arrived at the Rarian Field, ⁴⁹the life-bringing fertile
spot of land,
in former times, at least. But, at this time, it was no longer
life-bringing, but it stood idle
and completely without green growth. The bright grain
of wheat had stayed hidden underneath,
through the mental power of Demeter, the one with the
beautiful ankles. But, from this point on,
it began straightaway to flourish with long ears of grain
455 as the springtime was increasing its power. On the field,
the fertile furrows
began to be overflow with cut-down ears of grain lying
on the ground, while the rest of what was cut down was
already bound into sheaves.

This happened the moment she [Rhea] arrived from the boundless aether.

They [Demeter and Rhea] were glad to see each other,
and they rejoiced in their *thūmos* .

Then Rhea, the one with the splendid headband,
addressed her [Demeter]:

460 “Come, child, Zeus the loud-thunderer, the one who sees
far and wide, is summoning you

to come to the company of that special group of gods.
 And he promised *tīmai*
 that he would give you, which you could receive in the
 company of the immortal gods.
 He [Zeus] assented that your daughter, every time the
 season comes round,
 would spend a third portion of the year in the realms of
 dark mist underneath,
 465 and the other two thirds in your company and that of the
 other immortals.
 He has assented to all this with the nod of his head. [50](#)
 So come, my child! Obey! Do not be too
 stubborn in your anger at the dark-clouded son of
 Kronos.
 Straightaway make the harvest grow, that life-bringer for
 humans.”
 470 So she spoke, and Demeter, she with the beautiful
 garlands in her hair, did not disobey.
 Straightaway she sent up the harvest from the land with
 its rich clods of earth.
 And all the wide earth with leaves and blossoms
 was laden. Then she went to the kings, administrators of
themistes ,
 and she showed them—to Triptolemos, to Diokles, driver
 of horses,
 475 to powerful Eumolpos and to Keleos, leader of the people
 [*laoi*] —
 she revealed to them the way to perform the sacred rites,
 and she pointed out the
 ritual to all of them [51](#)

the holy ritual, which it is not at all possible to ignore, to
find out about, or to speak
out. The great awe of the gods holds back any speaking
out.

480 Blessed [*olbios*] is he among earthbound mortals who
has seen these things.

But whoever is uninitiated in the rites, whoever takes no
part in them, will never get a share [*aisa*] of those sorts
of things [that the initiated get],
once they die, down below in the dank realms of mist.

But when the resplendent goddess finished all her
instructions,

they [Demeter and Persephone] went to Olympus, to join
the company of the other gods.

485 And there they abide at the side of Zeus, who delights in
the thunderbolt.

Holy they are, and revered. *olbios* is he whom they,
being kind, decide to love among earth-bound mortals.

Straightaway they send to such a man, to reside at his
hearth, in his great palace,

Ploutos [Wealth personified], who gives riches to mortal
humans.

490 But come, you goddesses, who have charge of the *dēmos*
of Eleusis, fragrant with incense.

and of Paros the island and rocky Antron.

Come, O Lady resplendent with gifts, queen Dēō
[Demeter], bringer of *hōrai* ,

both you and your daughter, the most beautiful
Persephone.

Think kindly and grant, in return for this song, a rich
means of livelihood that suits the *thūmos* .

495 And I will keep you in mind throughout the rest of my
song.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. This name designates both the god of the underworld and the underworld itself.

[[back](#)] 2. As we shall now see, the narcissus is the trigger for the “trap door.”

[[back](#)] 3. On the division of the world, to be shared by the three brothers Zeus, Poseidon, and Hādēs, see *Iliad* 15.189–191.

[[back](#)] 4. That is, with the dead.

[[back](#)] 5. Different locales had different traditions about where Demeter was first recognized and where her cult and her Mysteries were first established.

[[back](#)] 6. Eleusis is the locale of the Eleusinian Mysteries; both Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries were eventually appropriated by the *polis* of Athens.

[[back](#)] 7. That is, the *polis* of Eleusis.

[[back](#)] 8. Evidently the oldest sister was speaking on behalf of the others as well.

[[back](#)] 9. The name suggests somebody who is a ‘giver of gifts’.

[[back](#)] 10. The textual transmission is garbled here, and my translation of this line is tentative (the key, I propose, is in the connections with lines 149-150).

[[back](#)] 11. The ‘gifts of the gods’ can be good fortune or bad fortune, making people rejoice or grieve. This theme is relevant to the *ad hoc* name of Demeter at [line 122](#) .

[[back](#)] 12. All this is an exercise in religious hindsight. The temple of “today” is the palace of “yesterday,” the age of heroes. The priest of “today,” descended as he is from an influential aristocratic family, is the king of “yesterday.” At a complex cult-center or “temple” like that of Eleusis, which is run by an accretive hierarchy of hereditary priesthoods, the religious hindsight requires that the accretion of priestly offices in the temple be retrojected as an aggregation of kings in the “palace,” who are also the cult-heroes in the “temple.” Notice that, although Kallidikē promises Demeter a catalogue of the kings, what she says turns out to be a catalogue of queens, who are named in terms of their husbands. The husbands are in the foreground, but the wives in the background are the ones who manage the palace. The kings are all special cult-heroes connected with the worship of Demeter. Triptolemos, the primeval Plowman, is a local hero of Athens. Dioklos is a local hero of Megara (according to Megarean tradition, he was the Megarean ruler of Eleusis who was expelled by the Athenian hero Theseus: Plutarch *Theseus* 10; the Megarean character in Aristophanes *Acharnians* 774 swears by him as a cult-hero). We know less about Polyxenos, but here too we have evidence for his cult in symbiosis with the cult of Demeter; keeping in mind the theme of god-hero antagonism, I note that *poluxenos* ‘he who has many guests’ is a conventional epithet of Hādēs. As for Eumolpos ‘he who sings and dances well’, he is the hero-ancestor of the ultimately dominant priestly family at the cult-center of Eleusis; he represents the most current tradition in Eleusis itself. Dolikhos was a cult-hero connected with the Eleusinian Games (Richardson commentary p. 199).

Keleos seems to be a figure parallel to Eumolpos (cf. Richardson commentary p. 303).

[[back](#)] 13. Note the roles of the father and the mother.

[[back](#)] 14. Again, note the roles of the father and the mother.

[[back](#)] 15. Note the diametrical oppositions between Demeter and the girls, both in movement and in appearance. In the cult of Demeter, such diametrically opposite movements and appearances are suitable for ritual re-enactment, in song and dance, by ensembles of specially-chosen girls and women.

[[back](#)] 16. An epithet appropriate to kings, reflecting a myth-pattern that connects royal sovereignty with dew from the sky.

[[back](#)] 17. We know from other sources that such a stool with a fleece on it was a “prop” for the purification ritual at Eleusis.

[[back](#)] 18. Iambē, as we shall now see, is a personification of the iambic tradition, which reflects a ritual discourse that provokes laughter *and thereby promotes fertility*. This discourse, which makes fun of its targets, is often obscene in nature. The obscenity, it goes without saying, is *ritual* obscenity.

[[back](#)] 19. The name of a ritual potion in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

[[back](#)] 20. Another name for Demeter.

[[back](#)] 21. The *hosia* is whatever can be considered specific to the sphere of humans, not gods, in a ritual. For example, *hosia* is when humans take a drink at a ritual, whereas the god involved does not. From the standpoint of myth, however, when the ritual is founded, the

god has to show the way by doing it first, so that humans will have precedent. In such a case, the god does it “for the sake of *hosia* ” (cf. Richardson commentary p. 225).

[[back](#)] 22. With reference to the cutting of roots: this riddling euphemism designates extracts that serve as ingredients for magic potions.

[[back](#)] 23. Literally, an ‘anti-cutting’.

[[back](#)] 24. Apparently the same threat as the Undercutter.

[[back](#)] 25. Literally, ‘he who shines for the *dēmos* ’.

[[back](#)] 26. Commentary in Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* , pp. 181–182.

[[back](#)] 27. With downturned palms: a ritual gesture, described also in the *Iliad* .

[[back](#)] 28. In other versions, Demeter just leaves the baby in the fire, letting him perish right then and there (cf. Richardson commentary 244).

[[back](#)] 29. Styx (the word *stux* conveys the nervous reaction of recoiling at something that is chillingly ice-cold) is a river in Hādēs, and the gods swear by it when they guarantee the absolute truth of what they are saying.

[[back](#)] 30. Commentary in Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* , p. 184.

[[back](#)] 31. In the present version of the Demeter myth, Metaneira’s mistake thus causes the boy’s eventual death. In other versions, as already mentioned, it causes the boy’s immediate death in the fire.

[[back](#)] 32. This refers to a ritual mock-battle at Eleusis, a quasi-athletic event known as the *Ballētus* , which was officially held on a seasonally-recurring basis to compensate for the death of the baby cult-hero Demophon. This mock-battle seems to have been the ritual kernel of a whole complex of events known as the Eleusinian Games (cf. Richardson commentary p. 246). Parallels: the Nemean and the Isthmian Games, pan-Hellenic athletic events, were held on a seasonally-recurring basis to compensate for the deaths of the baby cult-heroes Archemoros and Melikertes respectively.

[[back](#)] 33. Meaning: ‘the beautiful place of dancing’.

[[back](#)] 34. Gods are larger-than-life-size.

[[back](#)] 35. I see here a veiled reference to the ultimate development of the entire religious complex of Eleusis.

[[back](#)] 36. The meaning of this word is opaque; it probably conveys some mythological theme of anthropogony.

[[back](#)] 37. There were two ways of offering meat to the gods: as portions to be set aside and eaten (e.g. by the priests) or to be burned on the altar. The gods give vegetation to humans, who give their meat-offerings to the gods. If humans get no vegetation in order to sustain their life, the gods cannot get meat-offerings to sustain their *tīmē* .

[[back](#)] 38. Her golden wings are on her heels.

[[back](#)] 39. Hermes was the killer of a monster called Argos, who was himself a Hermetic figure. The form *argos* conveys swiftness and brightness, and the form *Argei-phontēs* may well convey both ‘Argos-killer’ and ‘he who kills with swiftness and brightness’.

[[back](#)] 40. The text of lines 349–350 is garbled, and the translation here is merely an approximation.

[[back](#)] 41. Commentary on lines 351–354 in Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* , pp. 186–187.

[[back](#)] 42. This is conventionally said about a “knowing” smile: Hādēs knows more than he lets on.

[[back](#)] 43. Hādēs is acting furtively (Richardson commentary p. 277).

[[back](#)] 44. Maenads are frenzied devotees of Bacchus = Dionysus.

[[back](#)] 45. These lines are incomplete: the gaps in the text are caused by a tear in the manuscript (the *Hymn to Demeter* is preserved in only one medieval manuscript). The reconstructed context: Persephone also runs to her mother. Demeter finds out that Persephone has eaten of the pomegranate that had been offered her by Hādēs. It is determined that Persephone must therefore stay in Hādēs for one-third of the year, even though she may spend the other two-thirds with her mother.

[[back](#)] 46. Demeter is asking Persephone this question.

[[back](#)] 47. As we know from external sources, both the crocus and the narcissus are sacred to Demeter and Persephone.

[[back](#)] 48. It is a religious principle that Demeter and Persephone, on the occasion of their mother-daughter reunion, are “like-minded.”

[[back](#)] 49. A cult-place associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries and with the myth about the first plowing. Demeter is here, at the time: see [lines 457–458](#) .

[[back](#)] 50. There is a lacuna in the first part of this line.

[[back](#)] 51. Editors tend to skip the next line, which repeats the names of some, but not all, of the recipients of Demeter's revelation of sacred mysteries.

2018-12-12

Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite

Translated by Gregory Nagy

Muse, tell me the things done by golden
Aphrodite,
the one from Cyprus, who arouses sweet desire for
gods
and who subdues the populations of mortal
humans,
and birds as well, who fly in the sky, as well as all
beasts
5 —all those that grow on both dry land and the sea
[*pontos*].
They all know the things done by the one with
the beautiful garlands, the one from Cythera¹
But there are three whose *phrenes* she cannot win
over or deceive.
The first is the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus,
bright-eyed Athena.
For she takes no pleasure in the things done by
golden Aphrodite.
10 What does please her is wars and what is done by
Arēs,
battles and fighting, as well as the preparation of
splendid pieces of craftsmanship.
For she was the first to teach mortal humans to be
craftsmen
in making war-chariots and other things on
wheels, decorated with bronze.
And she it is who teaches maidens, tender of skin,
inside the palaces,

15 the skill of making splendid pieces of
 craftsmanship, putting it
 firmly into each one's mind [*phrēn*].
The second is the renowned Artemis, she of the
 golden shafts: never
has she been subdued in lovemaking [*philotēs*] by
Aphrodite, lover of smiles [to whom smiles are
 phila].
For she takes pleasure in the bow and arrows, and
 the killing of wild beasts in the mountains,
 as well as lyres, groups of singing dancers, and
 high-pitched shouts of celebration.
20 Also shaded groves and the city of *dikaioi* men.
The third one not to take pleasure in the things
done by Aphrodite is that young Maiden full of
 aidōs,
Hestia,² who was the first-born child of Kronos,
 the one with the crooked *mētis*,
as well as the last and youngest,³ through the Will
 [*boulē*] of Zeus, holder of the aegis.
She was the Lady who was wooed by Poseidon
 and Apollo.
25 But she was quite unwilling, and she firmly
 refused.
She had sworn a great oath, and what she said
 became what really happened.
She swore, as she touched the head of her father
 Zeus, the aegis-bearer,⁴
that she would be a virgin for all days to come,
 that illustrious goddess.

And to her Father Zeus gave a beautiful honor, as
a compensating substitute for marriage.

30 She is seated in the middle of the house, getting
the richest portion.⁵

And in all the temples of the gods she has a share
in the *tīmē*.

Among all the mortals, she is the senior goddess.

These are the three [goddesses] that she
[Aphrodite] could not persuade in their *phrenes*.
As for all the rest, there is nothing that has escaped
Aphrodite:

35 none of the blessed gods nor any of mortal
humans.

She even led astray the *noos* of Zeus, the one who
delights in the thunder,
the one who is the very greatest and the one who
has the very greatest *tīmē* as his share.

But even his well-formed *phrenes* are deceived by
her, whenever she wants,
as she mates him with mortal women with the
greatest of ease,

40 unbeknownst to Hera, his sister and wife,
who is the best among all the immortal goddesses
in her great beauty.

She was the most glorious [*kudos*-filled] female to
be born to Kronos, the one with the crooked
mētis,

and to her mother, Rhea. And Zeus, the one
whose resources are inexhaustible [*a-phthi-ta*],
made her his honorable wife, one who knows the
ways of affection.

45 But even upon her [Aphrodite] Zeus put sweet
desire in her *thūmos*
—desire to make love to a mortal man, so that
not even she may go without mortal lovemaking
and get a chance to gloat at all the other gods,
with her sweet laughter, Aphrodite, lover of smiles,
50 boasting that she can make the gods sleep with
mortal women,
who then bear mortal sons to immortal fathers,
and how she can make the goddesses sleep with
mortal men.
And so he [Zeus] put sweet desire in her *thūmos*—
desire for Anchises.
At that time, he [Anchises] was herding cattle at
the steep peaks of Mount Ida, famous for its many
springs.
55 To look at him and the way he was shaped was
like looking at the immortals.
When Aphrodite, lover of smiles, saw him,
she fell in love with him. A terrible desire seized
her in her *phrenes*.
She went to Cyprus, entering her temple fragrant
with incense,
to Paphos.⁶ That is where her sacred precinct is,
and her altar, fragrant with incense.
60 She went in and closed the shining doors.
Then the *Kharites* ['Graces'] bathed her and
anointed her with oil
the kind that gives immortality, glistening on the
complexion of the gods, who last for all time.

Immortal it was, giver of pleasures, and it had the
fragrance of incense.

Then she wrapped all her beautiful clothes around
her skin.

65 She was decked out in gold, Aphrodite, lover of
smiles.

She rushed toward Troy, leaving behind fragrant
Cyprus.

Making her way with the greatest of ease, high up
among the clouds.

She arrived at Mount Ida, famous for its many
springs, nurturing mother of beasts.

She went straight for the herdsmen's homestead,
up over the mountain. Following her came
70 gray wolves and lions with fierce looks, fawning
on her;

bears too, and nimble leopards, who cannot have
their fill of devouring deer,
came along. Seeing them, she was delighted in her
thūmos, inside her *phrenes*,
and she put desire where their hearts were. So they
all

went off in pairs and slept together in shaded
nooks.

75 She in the meantime came to the well-built
shelters

and found him [Anchises] left all alone at the
herdsmen's homestead,
that hero [*hērōs*] Anchises, who had the beauty of
the gods.

All the others [the other herdsmen] went after the
herds, along the grassy pastures,
while he was left all alone at the herdsmen's
homestead,
80 pacing back and forth, playing tunes on his lyre
that pierce the inside.
She stood before him, the daughter of Zeus,
Aphrodite,
looking like an unwed maiden in size of length²
and appearance.
She did not want him to notice [verb of *noos*] her
with his eyes and be frightened of her.
When Anchises saw her he was filled with wonder
as he took note
85 of her appearance and size of length and splendid
clothes.
For she wore a robe that was more resplendent
than the brightness of fire.
She had twisted brooches, and shiny earrings in
the shape of flowers.
Around her tender throat were the most beautiful
necklaces.
It [her robe] was a thing of beauty, golden,
decorated with every sort of design. Like the
moon
90 it glowed all around her tender breasts, a marvel to
behold.
Seized with love, Anchises said to her:
“Hail, my Lady, you who come here to this home,
whichever of the blessed ones you are,
Artemis or Leto or golden Aphrodite

or Themis of noble birth or bright-eyed Athena.
 95 Or perhaps you are one of the *Kharites*, you who
 have come here. They are the ones
 who keep company with all the gods and are
 called immortal.
 Or you are one of those Nymphs who range over
 beautiful groves,
 or one of those Nymphs who inhabit this
 beautiful mountain,
 and the fountainheads of rivers and grassy
 meadows.
 100 For you, on some high peak, in a spot with a view
 going all round,
 I will set up an altar, and I will perform for you
 beautiful sacrifices
 every year as the season [*hōrā*] comes round. And I
 wish that you in turn may have a kindly-disposed
 thūmos towards me.
 Grant that I become a man who is distinguished
 among the Trojans.
 Make the genealogy that comes after me become a
 flourishing one. And make me
 105 live a very long life and see the light of the sun,
 blessed [*olbios*] in the midst of the people. And let
 me arrive at the threshold of old age.”⁸
 Then Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, answered him:
 “Anchises, most glorious of earth-born men!
 I am no goddess. Why do you liken me to the
 female immortals?
 110 No, I am a mortal. The mother that bore me was a
 woman.

My father is Otreus, famed for his name.⁹ Maybe
you have heard of him.
He rules over all of Phrygia, with its strong-walled
fortresses.

But I know your language as well as my own.¹⁰
The nursemaid who brought me up in the palace
was a Trojan.¹¹ Ever since I was a small child,
115 she brought me up, having taken me from my
philē mother.

That is why I know your language as well as my
own.

But then, the one with the golden wand, the
Argos-killer [Hermes], abducted me,
taking me from a festival of song and dance in
honor of Artemis, the one with the golden arrows.
There were many of us nymphs there, maidens
worth many cattle as bride-price.

We were having a good time, and a crowd so
120 large that you couldn't count them was standing
around us in a circle.

Then it was that the one with the golden wand,
the Argos-killer, abducted me.

He carried me over many fields of mortal humans
and over vast stretches of land unclaimed and
unsettled, where wild beasts,
eaters of raw flesh, roam about, in and out of their
shaded lairs.

125 I thought that my feet would never again touch
the earth, grower of grain.

And he [Hermes] said that I, in your bed, the bed
of Anchises, would be called your

lawfully-wedded wife, and that I would give you
 splendid children.
 But once he [Hermes] pointed this out and made
 note of it, straightaway
 he went back, that powerful Argos-killer, to that
 separate group, the immortals.
 130 I in the meantime reached you here, and there is
 an overpowering compulsion that I have in me.
 In the name of Zeus, in the name of your parents,
 I appeal to you as I touch your knees.
 Your parents must be noble, for base ones could
 never have conceived such a one as you.¹²
 Take me, virgin that I am, inexperienced in
 making love [*philotēs*],
 and show me to your father and to your caring
 mother
 135 and to your brothers, those born from the same
 parents.
 I will not be an unseemly in-law for them, but a
 seemly one indeed.
 And send a messenger quickly to the Phrygians,
 trainers of swift horses,
 to tell my father and my mother, however much
 she grieves.
 They will send you plenty of gold, and woven
 clothing as well.
 140 Take these abundant and splendid things as dowry.
 After you have done so, prepare a lovely wedding-
 feast
 that gives *tīmē* to both humans and immortals.”

After she said these things, she put sweet desire in
his *thūmos*,

and Anchises was seized with love. He said these words, calling out to her:

145 “If you are mortal, and if a woman was the mother
who gave birth to you,

and if Otreus is your father, famed for his name, as
you say he is,

and if you have come here because of the
Immortal Conductor [of *psūkhai*],

Hermes, and if you are to be called my wife for all
days to come,

then it is impossible for any god or any mortal
human

150 to hold me back, right here, from joining with
you in making love [*philotēs*],

right now, on the spot—not even if the one who
shoots from afar, Apollo himself,

takes aim from his silver bow and shoots his
arrows that bring misery.

Then, O Lady who looks like the gods, I would
willingly,

once I have been in your bed, go down into the
palace of Hādēs below.”

155 So saying, he took her by the hand. And
Aphrodite, lover of smiles,

went along, with her face turned away and her
eyes downcast,

towards the bed, all nicely made, which had
already been arranged for the lord,¹³

all nicely made with soft covers.¹⁴ And on top lay
skins of
bears and lions, who roar with their deep voices,
160 which he himself had killed on the lofty
mountainsides.
And when they went up into the sturdy bed,
he first took off the jewelry shining on the surface
of her body
the twisted brooches and the shiny earrings in the
shape of flowers.
Then he undid her waistband and her resplendent
garments.
165 He stripped them off and put them on a silver-
studded stool,
Anchises did. And then, by the will of the gods
and by fate [*aisa*],
he lay next to the immortal female, mortal male
that he was. He did not know what he was really
doing.
But when the time comes for herdsmen to drive
back to the fold
their cattle and sturdy sheep, back from the
flowery pastures,
170 then it was that she [Aphrodite] poured sweet
sleep over Anchises,
sweet and pleasurable. She in the meantime put
back on her beautiful clothes, which covered again
the surface of her body.
Now that her skin was again beautifully covered
over, the resplendent goddess
stood by the bed, and the well-built roof-beam

– her head reached that high up.¹⁵ And beauty
 shone forth from her cheeks
 —an immortal beauty, the kind that marks the one
 175 with the beautiful garlands, the goddess from
 Cythera.
 Then she woke him from his sleep and called out
 to him, saying:
 “Rise up, son of Dardanos! Why do you sleep such
 a sleep without awakening?
 See if I look like
 what you noticed [verb of *noos*] when you first
 saw me with your eyes.”
 180 So she spoke, and he, fresh out of his sleep,
 straightaway heeded her word.
 As soon as he saw the neck and the beautiful eyes
 of Aphrodite,
 he was filled with fright and he turned his eyes
 away, in another direction.
 Then he hid his beautiful face with a cloak
 [*khlaina*],
 and, praying to her, addressed her with winged
 words:
 185 “The first time I ever laid eyes on you, goddess,
 I knew you were a god. But you did not speak to
 me accurately.
 Now I appeal to you by touching your knees, in
 the name of Zeus the holder of the aegis,
 don’t let me become disabled [without *menos*],¹⁶
 don’t let me live on like that among humans!
 Please, take pity! I know that no man is full of life,
 able,¹⁷

190 if he sleeps with immortal goddesses.”
He was answered by the daughter of Zeus,
 Aphrodite:
“Anchises, most glorious of mortal humans!
Take heart, and do not be too afraid in your
 phrenes.
You should have no fear of that I would do any
 kind of bad thing to you,
195 or that any of the other blessed ones would. For
 you are *philos* indeed to the gods.
And you will have a *philos* son, who will be king
 among the Trojans.
And following him will be generations after
 generations for all time to come.
His name will be Aineias [Aeneas], since it was an
unspeakable [*ainos*]¹⁸ *akhos* that took hold of me—
 grief that I
 had fallen into the bed of a mortal man.
200 And yet, of all mortal humans, the closest to the
 gods by far
are those who come from your family line,¹⁹ both
 in looks and in constitution.²⁰
Why, there was golden-haired Ganymede, whom
 Zeus the master of *mētis*
abducted on account of his beauty, so that he may
 be together with the immortal ones,
 as wine-pourer for the gods in the palace of
 Zeus,²¹
205 a wonder to behold, given his share of *tīmē* by all
 the immortals,

pouring red nectar from a golden mixing-bowl.

Tros [Ganymede's father] was gripped in his
phrenes by a *penthos* that is beyond forgetting. He
did not know

where the miraculous gust of wind took his *philos*
son, abducting him.

He [Tros] mourned him [Ganymede] without
pause, for all days,

210 and Zeus took pity on him: he gave him a
compensation for his son,
a set of high-stepping horses whom the gods use
for their travels.

These horses he [Zeus] gave him [Tros] as a gift
to keep. And he [Tros] was told all the details of
what happened,

at the behest of Zeus, by the Argos-killer, the
Conductor [of *psūkhai*].

He was told that he [Ganymede] would be
immortal and ageless, just like the gods.

215 And when he [Tros] heard the message of Zeus,
he no longer lamented but was happy within his
phrenes,

and merrily did he ride around, in a chariot drawn
by horses with feet swift as a gust of wind,

In much the same way was Tithonos abducted by
Eos [the Dawn Goddess], she of the golden
pattern-weave.²²

He too belonged to your family line, looking like
the immortal ones.

220 Then she went with a request to the Son of
Kronos [Zeus], him of the dark clouds,

asking that he [Tithonos] become immortal and
live for all days to come.²³

Zeus nodded yes to her and brought to fulfillment
the words of her wish.

Too bad that her thinking was disconnected! The
Lady Eos did not notice [verb of *noos*] in her
phrenes

that she should have asked for adolescence [*hēbē*]
and a stripping away of baneful old age.

225 Well, for a while he [Tithonos] held on to
adolescence [*hēbē*],

enjoying Eos, the one with the gold pattern-
weave,²⁴ the one early-born.

He lived at the streams of the Okeanos, and the
ends of the earth.

But when the first strands of gray hair started
growing

230 from his beautiful head and his noble chin,
then the Lady Eos stopped coming to his bed.

But she nourished him, keeping him in her palace,
with grain and ambrosia. And she gave him
beautiful clothes.

But when hateful old age was pressing hard on
him, with all its might,
and he couldn't move his limbs, much less lift
them up,

235 then in her *thūmos* she thought up this plan, a very
good one indeed:

she put him in her chamber, and she closed the
shining doors over him.

From there his voice pours out—it seems never to
end—and he has no strength at all,
the kind he used to have in his limbs when they
could still bend.

I would not choose that you [Anchises] be that
way, amongst the immortal ones,
240 immortal and living for all days to come.²⁵

If you could only stay the way you are, in looks
and constitution,
staying alive as my lawfully-wedded husband,
then *akhos* would not have to envelop me and my
sturdy *phrenes*.²⁶

But now wretched old age will envelop you,
245 pitilessly, just as it catches up with every man.
It is baneful, it wears you down, and even the gods
shrink back from it.

As for me, I will have a great disgrace [*oneidos*], in
the eyes of the immortal ones,
a disgrace that will last for all days to come,
without end, all on account of you.

My trysts and stratagems [*mētis* pl.] with which I
used to get all
250 the immortal gods mated with mortal women,
used to be feared by them [the gods]. For my
power of *noos* used to subdue all of them.

But now my mouth can never again boast
about this among the immortals. I have gone very
far off the track,
in a wretched and inexcusable way. I have strayed
from my *noos*.

255 I got myself a child beneath my waistband, having
slept with a male mortal.
As for him [the child], the moment he sees the
light of the sun,
Nymphs, living in the mountains and wearing
low-slung waistbands, will raise him
Nymphs that live on this great and fertile
mountain.
They associate neither with mortals nor with
immortals,
260 they live for a long time, and they eat immortal
food.
They put on a beautiful song and dance, even by
the standards of the immortals.
They mate with Seilēnoi²⁷ or with the sharp-
sighted Argos-killer,
making love [*philotēs*] in the recesses of lovely
caves.
When they are born, firs and oaks with lofty
boughs
265 spring out of the earth, that nurturer of men.
Beautiful trees, flourishing on high mountains,
they stand there pointing to the sky, and people
call them the sacred places
of the immortal ones. Mortals may not cut them
down with iron.
But when the fate [*moira*] of death is at hand for
them,
270 these beautiful trees become dry, to start with,
and then their bark wastes away, and then the
branches drop off,

and, at the same time, the *psūkhē* goes out of
them, as it leaves the light of the sun.

These [the Nymphs] will raise my son, keeping
him in their company.

And when adolescence [*hēbē*], full of loveliness,
first takes hold of him, ²⁸

275 the goddesses [the Nymphs] will take him here to
you and show you your child.

As for you, in order that I may tell you in the
proper order everything that I have in my *phrenes*,

I too will come back to you as the fifth
anniversary approaches, bringing you your son.

And the moment you see this young seedling
[Aineias/Aeneas] with your eyes,
you will be happy to look at him. For he will be
very godlike.

280 And straightaway you shall take him to windy
Ilion.

And if any mortal human asks you
what mother got your *philos* son beneath her
waistband,

keep in mind [root *mnē-*] to tell him as I
command you.

Say that he is the offspring of one of the flower-
faced Nymphs

285 who live on this beautiful mountain, shaded over
by forests.

But if you say out loud and boast, with a *thūmos*
bereft of *phrenes*,

that you made love [*philotēs*] to the Lady of
Cythera, the one with the beautiful garlands,

then Zeus in his anger will smite you with a
smoking thunderbolt.
Now then, everything has been said to you. You
take note [verb of *noos*] in your *phrenes*.
290 And refrain from naming me. Avoid the *mēnis* of
the gods.”
So saying, she bolted away towards the windy sky.
I wish you *kharis* [‘I wish you pleasure and
happiness from our relationship, starting now’],
goddess, you who rule over beautifully-colonized
Cyprus.
Having started with you, I will now go on to the
rest of my performance.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. Cyprus and Cythera were both particularly famous for their cults of Aphrodite. This is acknowledged regularly, even on the pan-Hellenic level.

[[back](#)] 2. *Hestia* [Ionic *Histiē*] means ‘hearth, fireplace’.

[[back](#)] 3. A reference to the myth, as we find it in the *Theogony* of Hesiod (495–497), that tells how Kronos swallowed his children, only to disgorge them later. The first-born Hestia was the first to be swallowed and the last to be disgorged. It is a common theme in the myths of many societies that fire is simultaneously very old and very young.

[[back](#)] 4. This gesture reflects the custom of touching a *philon* part of a *philos* person in order to perform a *philon* act corresponding to the *phila* words addressed to that person.

[\[back\]](#) 5. The hearth is the focus of sacrificial offerings.

[\[back\]](#) 6. Paphos is a city on the island of Cyprus.

[\[back\]](#) 7. Ordinarily, gods would be larger-than-life-size.

[\[back\]](#) 8. Anchises may be formulating his request in an “incorrect” order of preference.

[\[back\]](#) 9. The name seems to mean: “he who impels, he who gives impulse.”

[\[back\]](#) 10. The Phrygian tongue would be foreign to Greeks.

[\[back\]](#) 11. From the standpoint of this poem, it seems that Trojans are “Greeks.”

[\[back\]](#) 12. By implication, the disguised Aphrodite is saying that Anchises surely must have some divine ancestry himself. She almost gives herself away here.

[\[back\]](#) 13. The epithet *anax* ‘lord’ is appropriate both to persons of royal ancestry and to cult-heroes.

[\[back\]](#) 14. The word *khlaina* ‘cloak, cover’ seems to be used consistently in contexts where an *ainos* is at work.

[\[back\]](#) 15. The goddess here resumes her divine dimensions.

[\[back\]](#) 16. A euphemism, replacing words that are clearly better left unsaid.

[\[back\]](#) 17. Again, a matter of euphemism.

[\[back\]](#) 18. This is the adjective *ainos* [‘unspeakable, causing nervousness, fear, terror, terrible’], not the noun *ainos* [designates a mode of discourse that contains within it more than one message, and where only one of the messages is true]. What we see here is a “folk etymology”: Aphrodite is deriving the name Aineias [Aeneas] from *ainos*.

[\[back\]](#) 19. This reflects, I think, on the name Ankhisēs, which I take to be a conflation of the epithets *ankhitheos* ‘close to the gods’ and *isotheos* ‘equal to the gods’. Both of these epithets reflect the theme of god-hero antagonism.

[\[back\]](#) 20. In other words, it is in these two respects that Anchises and the other males in his family line come closest to the gods.

[\[back\]](#) 21. So the gods too, like the Greeks, have wine-pourers; as we shall now see, however, what is poured for the gods is not exactly wine.

[\[back\]](#) 22. Alternatively, ‘she of the golden throne’.

[\[back\]](#) 23. Eos botches the wording of her request. As we shall now see, the ruined formula produces ruinous results.

[\[back\]](#) 24. Alternatively, ‘her of the golden throne’.

[\[back\]](#) 25. Aphrodite repeats the botched formula of Eos.

[\[back\]](#) 26. But, as she has already said, Aphrodite *will* have sorrow from this affair.

[\[back\]](#) 27. These are satyr-like beings.

[[back](#)] 28. What seems to be meant is the very first signs that differentiate pre-adolescents from children.

2018-12-12

Homeric Hymn (7) to Dionysus

Translated by Gregory Nagy

¹ About Dionysus son of most glorious Semele ² my mind will connect,
how it was that he made an appearance [*phainesthai*] by the shore of the
barren sea ³ on a prominent headland, looking like a young man ⁴ at the
beginning of adolescence. Beautiful were the locks of hair as they waved
in the breeze surrounding him. [5] They were the color of deep blue.
And a cloak he wore over his strong shoulders, ⁶ color of purple.

Then, all of a sudden, men seen from a ship with fine benches ⁷ —men
who were pirates—came into view, as they were sailing over the wine-
colored [*oinops*] sea [*pontos*]. ⁸ They were Etruscans. And they were
being driven along by a destiny that was bad for them. The moment
they saw him [= Dionysus], ⁹ they gave each other a knowing nod, and
the very next thing, they were ashore, jumping out of the ship. Quickly
they seized him and [10] sat him down inside their ship, happy in their
hearts ¹¹ because they thought that he was the son of a line of kings
nurtured by the sky god. ¹² That is what they thought he was. And they
wanted to tie him up in harsh bondage, ¹³ but the ties of the bonds could
not hold him, and the cords made of willow fell off him, all over the
place, ¹⁴ falling right off his hands and feet. And he just sat there,
smiling, [15] looking on with his deep blue eyes.

Meanwhile the steersman [*kubernētēs*] took note [*noeîn*], ¹⁶ right away,
and he called out to his comrades [*hetairoi*] and said to them: ¹⁷ “What
kind of superhuman force [*daimōn*] has possessed you all! What kind of
god [*theos*] is this that you have seized and tried to tie up, ¹⁸ powerful as
he is? Why, he is too much for the well-built ship to make room for. ¹⁹
You see, he must be either Zeus or Apollo, the one with the silver quiver,
[20] or Poseidon. I tell you, he is not like mortal humans, ²¹ he is not like

[*eikelos*] them at all. Rather, he is like the gods who have their dwellings in Olympus. ²² So come on, we should let him go, leaving him on the dark earth of the mainland. ²³ Let us do it right away. Do not manhandle him. What if he gets angry ²⁴ and stirs up winds that will make hardship, and a huge whirlwind?” [25] That is how he [= the steersman] spoke.

But the leader of the men reviled him [= the steersman], speaking with hateful words [*mūthos*]: ²⁶ “No, [not we but] you are the one who is possessed by some kind of superhuman force [*daimōn*]. Just [do your work and] watch for the wind [to start blowing from behind, and, once it starts blowing], you start hoisting the sail of the ship ²⁷ and hold on to all the ropes. As for this one [= the unrecognized Dionysus], he will be the concern [*melein*] of my men. ²⁸ I expect he will arrive [with us] in Egypt or maybe in Cyprus ²⁹ or maybe even in the land of the Hyperboreans or beyond. Wherever. In the end, [30] he will tell all: he will come around to saying who are his near and dear ones [*philoi*] and what are all the possessions he has ³¹ and he will tell about his siblings. And that is because a superhuman force [*daimōn*] has put him in our pathway.”

³² Having said this, he [= the leader himself] started hoisting the sail of the ship. ³³ Now a wind came and blew right into the middle of the sail, and the ropes that held it at both ends ³⁴ got all stretched to the limit. Then, right away, there appeared [*phainesthai*] to them things that would make anyone marvel.

[35] Wine. That is what happened first of all. It was all alongside the swift black ship. ³⁶ Sweet to drink, it was splashing around [the ship as if it were inside a cup], smelling good, and the fragrance that rose up ³⁷ was something immortalizing [*ambrosiā*]. The sailors were seized with amazement, all of them, at the sight. ³⁸ And then, all of a sudden, next to the top of the sail on both sides, there reached out ³⁹ a vine—here, and

here too—and hanging from it were many [40] clusters of grapes. Around the mast, dark ivy was winding around, ⁴¹ teeming with blossoms. And—a thing of beauty and pleasure [*kharieis*—the berry sprang forth [from the ivy]. ⁴² The benches for rowing now had garlands [*stephanoi*] all over them.

Once they [= the sailors] saw all this, ⁴³ they started shouting at the steersman [*kubernētēs*], urging him ⁴⁴ to sail the ship back to land.

Meanwhile, he [= Dionysus] turned into a lion for them, right there in the ship, [45] looking horrific [*deinos*], at the prow. It roared a mighty roar. Then, in the middle of the ship, ⁴⁶ he [= Dionysus] made a bear, with a shaggy neck. Thus he [= Dionysus] made his signals [*sēmata*] appear [*phainein*]. ⁴⁷ It [= the bear] reared up, raging, while the lion, at the top of the deck, ⁴⁸ glared at them with its horrific looks. The men, terrified, were fleeing toward the stern of the ship, ⁴⁹ crowding around the steersman [*kubernētēs*], the one who had a heart [*thūmos*] that is moderate [*sōphrōn*]. [50] They just stood there, astounded [*ek-plag-entes*].

Then it [= the lion] all of a sudden leapt up ⁵¹ and took hold of the leader of the men, while they were trying to get out, rushing away from the bad destiny that was theirs. ⁵² They all together at the same time leapt out, once they saw what they saw, into the gleaming salt sea. ⁵³ They became dolphins.

As for the steersman [*kubernētēs*] —he [= Dionysus] took pity on him, ⁵⁴ holding him back [from leaping overboard]. He [= Dionysus] caused it to happen that he [= the steersman] became the most blessed [*olbios*] of all men, and he [= Dionysus] spoke for the record this set of words [*mūthos*]: [55] “Have courage, you radiant man, reached by a force that works from far away. You have achieved beauty and pleasure

[*kharizesthai*] for my heart [*thūmos*]. ⁵⁶ I am Dionysus, the one with the great thundering sound. The mother who bore me ⁵⁷ was Semele, daughter of Kadmos, and Zeus made love to her.”

⁵⁸ Hail and take pleasure [*khaire*], [O Dionysus,] child of Semele with the beautiful looks. There is no way ⁵⁹ I could have my mind disconnect from you as I put together the beautiful cosmic order [*kosmein*] of my song.

2019-12-12

Alcman's *Partheneion*

Translated by Gregory Nagy

The *Partheneion* ‘Maidens’ Song’ of Alcman (PMG 1), performed at a grand public festival in Sparta, on a seasonally-recurring basis, by a *khoros* ‘chorus, song-and-dance ensemble’ of local maidens specially selected for the occasion, who take on the roles of the names featured in the song. The two premier roles are Hagesikhora and Agido, who are to be two competing choral leaders. Note the use of the word *khoregos* ‘chorus-leader’ in the song, as it applies to Hagesikhora. The name Hagesikhora means the same thing as *khoregos*.¹

[...fragmentary lines...]²

35 Having devised evil deeds, they³ suffered [*paskhein*] in a way
that cannot be forgotten.

There is such a thing as retribution from the gods.

Blessed [*olbios*] is he who, with a sound disposition,
weaves through the time of day

without punishment that makes him weep. And I sing
40 the radiance of Agido, seeing
her as the sun, which for us

is shown by Agido—she is the eyewitness
to shine [*phainein*] with its sunlight. But for me to praise [*ep-*
ainein] her

or to blame [*mōmēsthai*] her is not allowed by the glorious
[*kleenna*] leader of the chorus [*khoregos* = Hagesikhora]

45 No, she does not allow me. For that one [Hagesikhora]
appears radiantly to be
outstanding, as when someone
sets among grazing cattle a horse,

well-built, a prize-winner, with thundering hooves,
something from out of those dreams that happen underneath a
rock.

50 Don't you see? One is a racehorse
 from Paphlagonia. But the mane
 of the other one, my kinswoman
 Hagesikhora, blossoms on her head
 like imperishable gold.

55 And the silver look of her face—
 what can I tell you openly?
 She is Hagesikhora.

 But whoever is second to Agido in beauty,
let her be a Scythian horse running against a Lydian one.⁶

60 I say this because the Pleiades,
 as we bring the sacred veil for the Dawn Goddess,
are passing through the ambrosial night, rising up over the
horizon

 like Sirius the star, to do battle with us.

 It is true: all the royal purple
65 in the world cannot resist.

 No fancy snake-bracelet,
 made of pure gold, no headdress
 from Lydia, the kind that girls
with tinted eyelids wear to make themselves fetching.

70 No, even the hair of Nanno is not enough.

 Nor goddess-like Areta,
 nor Thylakis and Kleesithera;
you wouldn't say so even if you went to the house of
Ainesimbrotos.

 Even if Astaphis were mine,

75 or Philylla gazed at me,
 Damareta too, and lovely Ianthemis,
 still, it is Hagesikhora who wears me down.
 For she, with her beautiful ankles,
 Hagesikhora, is not there.
 80 She stays at the side of Agido.⁷
 And she gives authority to our festive actions.
 So, from them...⁸
 ...receive! It is through the gods that there is fulfillment
 and reaching the *telos*. As the one who sets up the *khoro*s,⁹
 85 I should speak. I am the one,
 the virgin who has sounded forth to no avail,
 an owl. But it is also I who, most of all, to the Dawn Goddess
 lust to give pleasure. Of our ordeals [*ponoi*]
 she has become the healer.
 90 But it is thanks to Hagesikhora¹⁰ that young girls
 have found their way to a peacefulness that is lovely.
 For the tracehorse...¹¹
 In this way...¹²
 Just as the helmsman must be
 95 heeded on board a ship.
 But she is, more than the Sirens,
 capable of song...¹³
 For they are goddesses. Instead of...¹⁴
 young ones, this group of ten...¹⁵
 100 It makes a sound,...¹⁶...on the banks of the river Xanthos
 ['golden-haired'],
 the swan does. And she, with her lovely golden hair...¹⁷

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. In what follows, note especially the image of a wondrous horse conjured up in the simile describing the beauty of the maiden Hagesikhora, center of attention in the song-and-dance ensemble: “a horse, well-built, a prize-winner, with thundering hooves, from out of those dreams underneath the rock” (lines 47-49).

[[back](#)] 2. The Louvre Papyrus, our source for the *Partheneion*, preserves the first column of its text for this song only in the most fragmentary condition.

[[back](#)] 3. The Hippokoöntidai, a set of male heroes who died on account of deeds of *hubris*.

[[back](#)] 4. Hagesikhora.

[[back](#)] 5. Hagesikhora.

[[back](#)] 6. Scythia and Lydia would be considered two extremes of the known world. The racehorses are so exotic as to be otherworldly. Both kinds of racehorse are so superior that the imagination boggles, in the words of the song, at the very thought of matching them against each other.

[[back](#)] 7. The gaps in the papyrus at this line make the interpretation less than certain.

[[back](#)] 8. Gaps in the papyrus. The idea seems to be: “receive their offerings, O gods!”

[[back](#)] 9. The syntax here is not clear. There may be a shift of speakers here.

[[back](#)] 10. It is possible that the speaker is referring to herself by name here.

[[back](#)] 11. Gaps in the papyrus. The idea seems to be: the chorus-members must follow Hagesikhora as if she were a tracehorse.

[[back](#)] 12. Gaps in the papyrus.

[[back](#)] 13. Gaps in the papyrus. Some assume a missing negative.

[[back](#)] 14. Gaps in the papyrus.

[[back](#)] 15. Gaps in the papyrus. Some interpret: one girl has been taken away, and only ten remain from an original set of eleven.

[[back](#)] 16. Gaps in the papyrus.

[[back](#)] 17. Gaps in the papyrus, and the next and fourth column of the song is completely lost.

Poetry of Sappho

Translated by Gregory Nagy

Sappho 1 ("Prayer to Aphrodite")

1 You with pattern-woven flowers, immortal Aphrodite,
2 child of Zeus, weaver of wiles, I implore you,
3 do not devastate with aches and sorrows,
4 Mistress, my heart!
5 But come here [*tuide*], if ever at any other time
6 hearing my voice from afar,
7 you heeded me, and leaving the palace of your father,
8 golden, you came,
9 having harnessed the chariot; and you were carried along by
 beautiful
10 swift sparrows over the dark earth,
11 swirling with their dense plumage from the sky through the
12 midst of the aether,
13 and straightaway they arrived. But you, O holy one,
14 smiling with your immortal looks,
15 kept asking what is it once again this time [*dē'ute*] that has
 happened to me and for what reason
16 once again this time [*dē'ute*] do I invoke you,
17 and what is it that I want more than anything to happen
18 to my frenzied [*mainolās*] heart [*thūmos*]? "Whom am I once
 again this time [*dē'ute*] to persuade,
19 setting out to bring her to your love? Who is doing you,
20 Sappho, wrong?

21 For if she is fleeing now, soon she will give chase.
 22 If she is not taking gifts, soon she will be giving them.
 23 If she does not love, soon she will love
 24 even against her will.”
 25 Come to me even now, and free me from harsh
 26 anxieties, and however many things
 27 my heart [*thūmos*] yearns to get done, *you* do for me. *You*
 28 become my ally in war.

Sappho 1.3–4

Revised translation

₃ Do not dominate with hurts [*asai*] and pains [*oniai*], ₄ O Queen
 [*potnia*], my heart [*thūmos*].

Sappho Song 5.1–11

₁ O Queen Nereids, unharmed [*ablabēs*] ₂ may my brother, please
 grant it, arrive to me here [*tuide*], ₃ and whatever thing he wants in
 his heart [*thūmos*] to happen, ₄ let that thing be fulfilled [*telesthēn*].
 [5] And however many mistakes he made in the past, undo them all.
₆ Let him become a joy [*kharā*] to those who are near-and-dear
 [*philoī*] to him, ₇ and let him be a pain [*oniā*] to those who are
 enemies [*ekhthroi*]. As for us, ₈ may we have no enemies, not a single
 one. ₉ But may he wish to make his sister [*kassignētā*] [10] worthy of
 more honor [*tīmā*]. ₁₁ The catastrophic [*lugrā*] pain [*oniā*] ... in the
 past, he was feeling sorrow [*akheuōn*]... .

Sappho Song 9

... Don't you have the resources for me to be able, Mother, to celebrate [*teleîn*] at the right season [*ōrā*] the festival [*eortā*], which is a delight [*kharma*] for [us] mortals, creatures of the day that we are?

Sappho 16

¹ Some say a massing of chariots and their drivers, some say of footsoldiers, ² some say of ships, if you think of everything that exists on the surface of this black earth, ³ is the most beautiful thing of them all. But I say it is that one thing ⁴ that anyone passionately loves [*erātai*]. [5] It's really quite easy to make this understandable ⁶ to everyone, this thing. You see, that woman who was by far supreme ⁷ in beauty among all humans, Helen, ⁸ she [...] her best of all husbands, ⁹ him she left behind and sailed to Troy, [10] caring not about her daughter and her dear parents, ¹¹ not caring at all. She was swept along [...] [15] [All this] reminds me right now of Anaktoria. ¹⁶ She is [not] here. ¹⁷ Oh, how I would far rather wish to see her taking a dancing step that arouses passionate love [= *eraton*], ¹⁸ and to see the luminous radiance from the look of her face ¹⁹ than to see those chariots of the Lydians and the footsoldiers in their armor [20] as they fight in battle [...].

Sappho Song 17.1–16

¹ Close by, ..., ² O Queen [*potnia*] Hera, ... your [...] festival [*eortā*], ³ which, vowed-in-prayer [*arāsthai*], the Sons of Atreus did arrange [*poieîn*] ⁴ for you, kings that they were, [5] after first having completed [*ek-teleîn*] great labors [*aethloi*], ⁶ around Troy, and, next [*apseron*], ⁷ after having set forth to come here [*tuide*], since finding the way ⁸ was not possible for them ⁹ until they would approach you (Hera) and Zeus lord of suppliants [*antiaos*] [10] and (Dionysus) the

lovely son of Thyone. ¹¹ And now [*nun de*] we are arranging [*poieîn*] [the festival], ¹² in accordance with the ancient way [...] ¹³ holy [*agna*] and [...] a throng [*okhlos*] ¹⁴ of girls [*parthenoi*] [...] and women [*gunaikes*] [15] on either side ... ¹⁶ the measured sound of ululation [*ololūgā*].

Sappho Song 26.11–12

¹¹ And I—aware of my own self— ¹² I know this.

Sappho 31 (via ‘Longinus’, On sublimity):

1	<i>phainetai moi kēnos īsos theoisin</i>	He appears [<i>phainetai</i>] to me, that one, equal to the gods [<i>īsos theoisin</i>]
2	<i>emmen’ ōnēr ottis enantios toi</i>	the man who, facing you,
3	<i>isdanei kai plāsion ādu phōnei-</i>	is seated and, up close, that sweet voice of yours
4	<i>sās upakouei</i>	he listens to
5	<i>kai gelaisās īmeroen to m’ ē mآن</i>	and how you laugh a laugh that brings

		desire. Why, it just
6	<i>kardian en stēthesin eptoaisēn</i>	makes my heart flutter within my breast,
7	<i>ōs gar es s' idō brokhe' ōs me phōnai-</i>	You see, the moment I look at you, right then, for me
8	<i>s' oud' en et' eikei</i>	to make any sound at all won't work any more.
9	<i>alla kam men glōssa eāge lepton</i>	My tongue has a breakdown and a delicate
10	<i>d' autika khrōi pūr upadedromāken</i>	– all of a sudden – fire rushes under my skin.
11	<i>oppatessi d' oud' en orēmm' epirrom-</i>	With my eyes I see not a thing, and there is a roar
12	<i>beisi d' akouai</i>	my ears make.
13	<i>kad de m' idrōs kakkheetai tromos de</i>	Sweat pours down me and a trembling

14	<i>paīsan agrei khlōrotera de poias</i>	seizes all of me; paler than grass
15	<i>emmi tethnakēn d' oligō 'pideuēs</i>	am I, and a little short of death
16	<i>phainom' em' aut[āi</i>	do I [<i>phainomai</i>] appear to me.

Sappho 44 ("The Wedding of Hector and Andromache")

...

...The herald Idaios came...a swift messenger

[lacuna]

4	... and the rest of Asia ... imperishable glory [<i>kleos aphthiton</i>].
5	Hector and his comrades [<i>sun-(h)etairoti</i>] led her, the one with the glancing looks,
6	from holy Thebe and ... Plakia, they led her, the lovely Andromache
7	in ships over the salty
8	sea. Many golden bracelets and purple
9	robes..., intricately-worked ornaments,
10	countless silver cups and ivory.
11	Thus he spoke. And his dear father quickly leapt up.
12	And the news reached his dear ones throughout the broad city.
13	And the Trojans yoked to smooth-running carriages
14	the mules. And the whole ensemble climbed on,
15	all the women and maidens

And the unmarried men led horses beneath the chariots
 and greatly...charioteers...
 <...>
 [lacuna]
 20 [lacuna]
 21 looking just like the gods [*ikeloi theois*]
 22 ...holy
 23 set forth into Troy...
 24 And the sweet song of the pipe mixed...
 25 And the sound of the cymbals, and then the maidens
 26 sang a sacred song, and all the way to the sky
 27 traveled the wondrous echo ...
 28 And everywhere through the streets...
 29 Mixing bowls and cups...
 30 And myrrh and cassia and frankincense were mingled.
 31 And the older women cried out *elelu*.
 32 Meanwhile all the men sang out a lovely high-pitched song,
 33 calling on Apollo Pāōn, the far-shooter, master of playing
 beautifully on the lyre.
 34 And they sang the song of Hector and Andromache, both
 looking just like the gods [*theoeikeloi*].

Sappho 105a (via Syrianus on Hermogenes, On Kinds of Style):

Just like the sweet apple that blushes on top of a branch,
 the topmost apple on the topmost branch. It has eluded the notice of
 the apple pickers.
 Oh, but no. It's not that they haven't noticed it. They just couldn't
 reach it.

Sappho 105b

Himerius (Orations 1.16) says: ‘Sappho compared the girl to an apple [...] she compared the bridegroom to Achilles, and likened the young man’s deeds to the hero’s.’

Sappho 115 (via Hephaestion, Handbook on Meters):

To what shall I liken you, dear bridegroom, to make the likeness beautiful?

To a tender seedling, I liken you to that most of all.

Sappho “Tithonos Song”

¹ [. . .] gifts of [the Muses], whose contours are adorned with violets, [I tell you] girls [*paides*] ² [. . .] the clear-sounding song-loving lyre. ³ [. . .] skin that was once tender is now [ravaged] by old age [*gēras*], ⁴ [. . .] hair that was once black has turned (gray). [5] The throbbing of my heart is heavy, and my knees cannot carry me ⁶ —(those knees) that were once so nimble for dancing like fawns. ⁷ I cry and cry about those things, over and over again. But what can I do? ⁸ To become ageless [*a-gēra-os*] for someone who is mortal is impossible to achieve. ⁹ Why, even Tithonos once upon a time, they said, was taken by the dawn-goddess [Eos], with her rosy arms [10] —she felt [. . .] passionate love [*eros*] for him, and off she went, carrying him to the ends of the earth, ¹¹ so beautiful [*kalos*] he was and young [*neos*], but, all the same, he was seized ¹² in the fullness of time by gray old age [*gēras*], even though he shared the bed of an immortal female. ¹³ [. . .] ¹⁴ [. . .] [15] But I love delicacy [*(h)abrosunē*] [. . .] this, ¹⁶ and passionate love [*erōs*] for the Sun has won for me its radiance [*tò lampron*] and beauty [*tò kalon*].

Sappho “Brothers Song”

... [5] But you are always saying, in a chattering way [*thrulêîn*], that Kharaxos will come ₆ in a ship full of goods. These things I think Zeus ₇ knows, and so also do all the gods. But you shouldn’t have ₈ these things on your mind. ₉ Instead, send [*pempeîn*] me off and instruct [*kelesthai*] me [10] to implore [*lissesthai*] Queen Hera over and over again [*polla*] ₁₁ that he should come back here [*tuide*] bringing back [*ageîn*] safely ₁₂ his ship, I mean Kharaxos, ₁₃ and that he should find us unharmed. As for everything else, ₁₄ let us leave it to the superhuman powers [*daimones*], [15] since bright skies after great storms ₁₆ can happen quickly. ₁₇ Those mortals, whoever they are, ₁₈ whom the king of Olympus wishes ₁₈ to rescue from their pains [*ponoi*] by sending as a long-awaited helper a superhuman force [*daimôn*] ₁₉ to steer them away from such pains—those mortals are blessed [*makares*] [20] and have great bliss [*olbos*]. ₂₁ We too, if he ever gets to lift his head up high, ₂₂ I mean, Larikhos, and finally mans up, ₂₃ will get past the many cares that weigh heavily on our heart, ₂₄ breaking free from them just as quickly.

Sappho Kypris Song 1–6

₁ How can someone not be hurt [= *asâsthai*, verb of the noun *asâ* ‘hurt’] over and over again, ₂ O Queen Kypris [Aphrodite], whenever one loves [*phileîn*] whatever person ₃ and wishes very much not to let go of the passion? ₄ [What kind of purpose] do you have [5] [in mind], uncaringly rending me apart ₆ in my [desire] as my knees buckle?

Poetry of Sappho

Translated by Julia Dubnoff

Sappho 16

Some say an army of horsemen,
some of footsoldiers, some of ships,
is the fairest thing on the black earth,
but I say it is what one loves.
5 It's very easy to make this clear
to everyone, for Helen,
by far surpassing mortals in beauty,
left the best of all husbands
and sailed to Troy,
10 mindful of neither her child
nor her dear parents, but
with one glimpse she was seduced by
Aphrodite. For easily bent...
and nimbly...[missing text]...
15 has reminded me now
of Anactoria who is not here;
I would much prefer to see the lovely
way she walks and the radiant glance of her face
than the war-chariots of the Lydians or
20 their footsoldiers in arms.

Sapphic Fragments

1

Come now, luxuriant Graces, and beautiful-haired Muses.

2

I tell you
someone will remember us
in the future.

3

Now, I shall sing these songs
Beautifully
for my companions.

4

The moon shone full
And when the maidens stood around the altar...

5

“He is dying, Aphrodite;
luxuriant Adonis is dying.
What should we do?”
“Beat your breasts, young maidens.
And tear your garments
in grief.”

6

O, weep for Adonis!

7

But come, dear companions,
For day is near.

8

The moon is set. And the Pleiades.

It's the middle of the night.
Time [*hōrā*] passes.
But I sleep alone.

9

I love the sensual.
For me this
and love for the sun
has a share in brilliance and beauty

10

I desire
And I crave.

11

You set me on fire.

12

A servant
of wile-weaving
Aphrodite...

13

Eros
Giver of pain...

14

Eros
Coming from heaven
throwing off
his purple cloak.

15

Again love, the limb-loosener, rattles me

bittersweet,
irresistible,
a crawling beast.

16

As a wind in the mountains
assaults an oak,
Love shook my breast.

17

I loved you, Atthis, long ago
even when you seemed to me
a small graceless child.

18

But you hate the very thought of me, Atthis,
And you flutter after Andromeda.

19

Honestly, I wish I were dead.
Weeping many tears, she left me and said,
“Alas, how terribly we suffer, Sappho.
I really leave you against my will.”

And I answered: “Farewell, go and remember me.
You know how we cared for you.

If not, I would remind you
...of our wonderful times.

For by my side you put on
many wreaths of roses
and garlands of flowers
around your soft neck.

And with precious and royal perfume
you anointed yourself.

On soft beds you satisfied your passion.
And there was no dance,
no holy place
from which we were absent.”

20

They say that Leda once found
an egg –
like a hyacinth.

21

“Virginity, virginity
Where will you go when you’ve left me?”

“I’ll never come back to you, bride,
I’ll never come back to you.”

22

Sweet mother, I can’t do my weaving –
Aphrodite has crushed me with desire
for a tender youth.

23

Like a sweet-apple
turning red
high
on the tip
of the topmost branch.
Forgotten by pickers.

Not forgotten—
they couldn't reach it.

24

Like a hyacinth
in the mountains
that shepherds crush underfoot.

Even on the ground
a purple flower.

25

To what shall I compare you, dear bridegroom?
To a slender shoot, I most liken you.

26

[Sappho compared the girl to an apple....she compared the
bridegroom to Achilles, and likened the young man's deeds to the
hero's.]

Himerius (4th cent. A.D.), Or. 1.16

27

Raise high the roofbeams, carpenters!

Hymenaon, Sing the wedding song!

Up with them!

Hymenaon, Sing the wedding song!

A bridegroom taller than Arēs!

Hymenaon, Sing the wedding song!

Taller than a tall man!

Hymenaon, Sing the wedding song!

Superior as the singer of Lesbos –

Hymenaon, Sing the wedding song!

—to poets of other lands.
Hymenaon!

29

Blessed bridegroom,
The marriage is accomplished as you prayed.
You have the maiden you prayed for.

30

I don't know what to do: I am of two minds.

31

For gold is Zeus' child.

32

I have a beautiful daughter
Like a golden flower
My beloved Kleis.
I would not trade her for all Lydia nor lovely...

33

When you lie dead, no one will remember you
For you have no share in the Muses' roses.
No, flitting aimlessly about,
You will wildly roam,
a shade amidst the shadowy dead.

34

Death is an evil.
That's what the gods think.
Or they would die.

35

Because you are dear to me

Marry a younger woman.
I don't dare live with a young man—
I'm older.

Key Passages Relevant to the Poetics of Sappho

Translated by Gregory Nagy

1.

And they passed by the streams of Okeanos and the White Rock
and past the Gates of the Sun and the District of Dreams.

Odyssey xxiv 11–12

2.

...they say that Sappho was the first,
hunting down the proud Phaon,
to throw herself, in her goading desire, from the rock
that shines from afar.
But now, in accordance with your sacred utterance,
lord king, let there be silence
throughout the sacred precinct of the headland of the White
Rock.

Menander F 258K

3.

One more time taking off in the air, down from the White Rock
into the dark waves do I dive, intoxicated with lust.

Anacreon PMG 376

4.

I would be crazy not to give all the herds of the Cyclopes

in return for drinking one cup [of that wine]
and throwing myself from the white rock into the brine,
once I am intoxicated, with eyebrows relaxed.
Whoever is not happy when he drinks is crazy.
Where it is allowed to make this thing stand up erect,
to grab the breast and touch with both hands
the meadow¹ that is made all ready. And there is dancing
and forgetting [root *lēth-*] of bad things.

Euripides *Cyclops* 163–172

5. Related sources (summaries and commentary by G.N.)

According to the account in Book VII of the mythographer Ptolemaios Chennos (ca. A.D. 100; by way of Photius *Bibliotheca* 152–153 Bekker), the first to dive off the heights of Cape Leukas, the most famous localization of the White Rock, was none other than Aphrodite herself, out of love for a dead Adonis. After Adonis died (how it happened is not said), the mourning Aphrodite went off searching for him and finally found him at ‘Cypriote Argos’, in a shrine of Apollo. She consults Apollo, who instructs her to seek relief from her love by jumping off the white rock of Leukas, where Zeus sits whenever he wants relief from his passion for Hera. Then Ptolemaios launches into a veritable catalogue of other figures who followed Aphrodite’s precedent and took a ritual plunge as a cure for love. For example, Queen Artemisia I is reputed to have leapt off the white rock out of love for one Dardanos, succeeding only in getting herself killed. Several others are mentioned who died from the leap, including a certain iambographer Charinos who expired only after being fished out of the water with a broken leg, but not before blurting out his four last iambic trimeters, painfully preserved for us with the compliments of Ptolemaios (and Photius as well). Someone called Makēs was more fortunate: having succeeded in escaping from four love affairs after four corresponding leaps from the

white rock, he earned the epithet Leukopetras ‘the one of the white rock’. We may question the degree of historicity in such accounts. There is, however, a more important concern. In the lengthy and detailed account of Ptolemaios, Sappho is not mentioned at all, let alone Phaon.

From this silence we may infer that the source of this myth about Aphrodite and Adonis is independent of Sappho’s own poetry or of later distortions based on it. Accordingly, the ancient cult practice at Cape Leukas, as described by Strabo (10.2.9 C452), may well contain some intrinsic element that inspired lovers’ leaps, a practice also noted by Strabo (*ibid.*). The second practice seems to be derived from the first, as we might expect from a priestly institution that becomes independent of the social context that had engendered it. Abstracted from their inherited tribal functions, religious institutions have a way of becoming mystical organizations.

Another reason for doubting that Sappho’s poetry had been the inspiration for the lovers’ leaps at Cape Leukas is the attitude of Strabo himself. He specifically disclaims Menander’s version about Sappho’s being the first to take the plunge at Leukas. Instead, he offers a version of ‘those more versed in the ancient lore’, according to which Kephalos son of Deioneus was the very first to have leapt, impelled by love for Pterelas (Strabo 10.2.9 C452). The myth of Kephalos and his dive may be as old as the concept of the White Rock. I say “concept” because the ritual practice of casting victims from a white rock may be an inheritance parallel to the epic tradition about a mythical White Rock on the shores of the Okeanos (as in *Odyssey* 24.11) and the related literary theme of diving from an imaginary White Rock (as in the poetry of Anacreon and Euripides). In other words, it is needless to assume that the ritual preceded the myth or the other way around.

6.

Others say that, in the vicinity of the rocks at Athenian Kolonos, he [Poseidon], falling asleep, had an emission of semen, and a horse *Skuphios* came out, who is also called Skirōnitēs [‘the one of the White Rock’].

Scholia to Lycophron 766

7.

Poseidon *Petraios* [‘of the rocks’] has a cult among the Thessalians ... because he, having fallen asleep at some rock, had an emission of semen; and the earth, receiving the semen, produced the first horse, whom they called *Skuphios*....And they say that there was a festival established in worship of Poseidon *Petraios* at the spot where the first horse leapt forth.

Scholia to Pindar *Pythian* 4.246

8.

But I love luxuriance [(h)abrosunē]...this,
and passionate love [erōs] for the Sun has won for me its radiance
and beauty.²

Sappho F 58.25–26 V

9.

₁ Timon, who set up this sundial for it to measure out [metreîn] ₂
the passing hours [hōrai], now [. . .] ground. ₃ The girl [pais] Astē
[. . .] —I say this to you the passerby—she was left behind by him
for as long a time as ₄ is possible to hope [. . .] that the girl
[parthenos] will continue to read the passing hours [hōrai]. ₅ As for
you, O girl [kourē], you will approach old age at this marker

[*sēma*] as you, ₆ for piles and piles of years to come, will be measuring out [*metreîn*] the beautiful sun.

Posidippus *Epigram* 52

10.

₁ Everything about Nikomakhe, all her pretty things and, come dawn, ₂ as the sound of the weaving shuttle is heard, all of Sappho's love songs [*oaroi*], songs [*oaroi*] sung one after the next, ₃ are all gone, carried away by fate, all too soon [*pro-hōria*], and the poor ₄ girl [*parthenos*] is lamented by the city of the Argives. ₅ She had been raised by the goddess Hera, who cradled her in her arms like a tender seedling. But then, ah, there came the time when all her would-be husbands, ₆ pursuing her, got left behind, with cold beds for them to sleep in.

Posidippus *Epigram* 55

11.

... just as girls [*parthenoi*] who are age-mates [of the bride] love to do sweet-talk [*hupo-kor-izesthai*] in their songs sung in the evening for their companion [*hetaira* = the bride].

Pindar *Pythian* 3.17–19

12.

... that venerable goddess, whom the girls [*kourai*] at my portal, with the help of Pan, celebrate by singing and dancing [*melpesthai*] again and again [*thama*] all night long [*ennukhiyai*] ...

Pindar *Pythian* 3.78–79

13.

Drinking all night and getting very inebriated, he [= Philip] then dismissed all the others [= his own boon companions] and, come [= *pros*] daylight, he went on partying with the ambassadors of the Athenians.

Athenaeus 10.435c

14.

Burn and set on fire her soul [*psūkhē*], her heart [*kardia*], her liver, and her breath with love for Sophia whose mother is Isara. [All] you [powers] must bring [*agein*] Gorgonia, whose mother is Nilogeneia, [to me]. You must bring [*agein*] her [to me], tormenting her body night and day. Compel her to bolt from wherever she is, from whatever household, as she feels the love for Sophia.

Supplementum Magicum I 42.14–17

15.

I adjure you, Euangelos, by Anubis and Hermes and by all the rest of you down below, bring [*agein*] and bind Sarapias whose mother is Helenē, [bringing Sarapias] to this Hērais here whose mother is Thermoutharin, now, now, quick, quick. By way of her soul [*psūkhē*] and her heart [*kardia*], bring [*agein*] this Sarapias herself [to me] ...

Papyri Graecae Magicae II 32.1–11

16.

₁ Dōrikha, your bones have turned into dust a long time ago—and so too the ribbons ₂ of your hair, and so too the shawl, exhaling that perfumed scent of yours, ₃ in which you enveloped once upon

a time the charming Kharaxos, ⁴ skin next to skin, complexion making contact with complexion, as you reached for cups of wine at the coming of the dawn. ⁵ But from Sappho there still do remain and will forever remain her loving ⁶ song's columns of verses that shine forth as they sound out her voice. ⁷ That name of yours has been declared most fortunate, and Naucratis will guard it safely, just as it is, ⁸ so long as there are ships sailing the waters of the Nile, heading out toward the open sea.

Posidippus 122 ed. Austin and Bastianini, quoted in Athenaeus
13.596c

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. Euphemism for female genitalia.

[[back](#)] 2. This translation follows the reading *erōs* (vs. *eros*) *aeliō*.

Pindar's *Pythian* 8

Translation and Notes by Gregory Nagy

This song, composed by Pindar to be sung and danced by an ad hoc local *khoros* in the island-state of Aigina, was commissioned by the family of an aristocrat named Aristomenes, as a celebration of his victory in the wrestling event at the Pythian Games of 446 BCE.

Strophe 1

Hēsukhiā!¹ You whose disposition is kindly to *philoī*, you Daughter of Dikē, you ultimate greatness of every *polis*, you who possess the supreme keys to councils of state and to wars! Receive on behalf of Aristomenes [5] the *tīmē* of the victory at the Pythian Games. For you are the one who understands both how to give pleasure and how to make someone feel that pleasure—with an unerring sense of timing.

Antistrophe 1

But whenever anyone drives harsh anger into the heart, [10] you fiercely confront such men of ill will, and with your power you drown *hubris*. Little did Porphyryon² know that it was you he was provoking. But *kerdos*³ is most *philon* when one takes it as a prize from the house of one who willingly gives it.

Epode 1

[15] He who boasts gets tripped, in the fullness of time, by his own violence [*bia*]. The hundred-headed Typhon did not get away. Nor did the king of the Giants. They were subdued by the thunderbolt and by the arrows of Apollo, who welcomed from Kirrha,⁴ with kindly *noos*, [20] the son of Xenarkes,⁵ crowned with the green of Parnassus,⁶ and with a band of revelers.⁷

Strophe 2

This island, this *polis* of *dikē*,⁸ did not fall away from the Graces [*kharites*], connected as it is to the *kleos*-making achievements [*aretē* pl.] of the Aiakidai.⁹ It has achieved a perfect fame, [25] going back to the very beginnings. It is a subject of song for many, as its nurturing earth sprouts the greatest heroes [*hērōes*] in victory-bringing contests and in violent battles.

Antistrophe 2

And these things stand out, radiant, for men as well.¹⁰ But I have no time to linger in putting up to view [30] the whole story in its full length, with lyre and pleasurable song, for fear that overindulgence [*koros*] may come and cause displeasure. No, let my sacred obligation to you get under way right now, my boy, which is speeding straight ahead in front of my feet, and which is the nearest, of all beautiful things, to the here and now, taking flight by way of my craft.

Epode 2

[35] For you follow, at wrestling matches, in the footsteps of your mother's brothers. You did Theognetos proud, the one in the Olympics. Also Kleitomakhos, whose victory at the Isthmians gave proof to the boldness of his limbs. Making great the house¹¹ of the Meidulidai,¹² you win as a prize the words that once the son of Oikles¹³ said [*ainissesthai*],¹⁴ when he saw [40] the Sons¹⁵ holding their ground at Thebes, by the power of the spear,

Strophe 3

at the time when they, the Epigonoι,¹⁶ had come from Argos, on the second expedition. Thus he¹⁷ spoke about those who fought: [45] “By inherited nature, the noble purpose [*lēma*] shines forth from fathers

[*pateres*]¹⁸ to sons. I can see clearly Alkmaion,¹⁹ wielding the patterned snake on his blazing shield,²⁰ in the forefront of the gates of Kadmos.²¹

Antistrophe 3

But the one who had lost his strength in the earlier happenings²² is now on solid footing, [50] with the announcement of a better bird-omen than before. He is the hero [*hērōs*] Adrastos. At home, though, his fortune will be the opposite. For he alone of the army of Danaoi²³ will have to gather the bones of a son who died,²⁴ while the rest of the warriors come home unharmed, with their good fortune granted from the gods,

Epode 3

[55] home to the public places of Abas,²⁵ with their wide spaces for song and dance.” Thus spoke Amphiaraos. And I also take joy in casting a garland at Alkmaion. And I shower him²⁶ with song because he was a neighbor to me,²⁷ a guardian of my possessions,²⁸ and he came to meet me²⁹ as I was heading towards the Navel of the Earth,³⁰ that lasting subject for song, [60] putting me in touch with his inbred crafts of a seer.

Strophe 4

But you, the one who shoots from afar,³¹ who rules the sacred precinct that receives all, that has good *kleos*, in the valley of the Pytho,³² [65] you granted in that place the greatest of all joys.³³ And in his own homeland, earlier, you had brought about the coveted gift of a pentathlon victory at your festival.³⁴ O lord, I pray to you with a *noos* that is ready and willing:

Antistrophe 4

Look upon me as I fit my voice with whatever tuning you desire, as I travel down each path of song and back up again. [70] Dikē presides

over the band of revelers,³⁵ with their sweet song. I ask for the unstinting regard of the gods, Xenarkes, on the occasion of your good fortune. For if one possesses good things without a lengthy ordeal [*ponos*], many think that he is *sophos*, that he is not one of the ignorant,

Epode 4

[75] the way he arranges his life, they think, with straight-planned stratagems. But that is not ordained to be, in this world of men. It is the superhuman force [*daimōn*] who provides, exalting different men at different times, at other times bringing them down in due proportion. You have your prize that you won at Megara, and the one you got in the sacred recesses of Marathon, and you mastered, in manly feats, the local³⁶ contest [*agōn*] of Hera [80] in three separate victories, Aristomenes!

Strophe 5

Four times did you come slamming down from above, with no kind thoughts, on top of bodies below. For all of them the outcome at the Pythian Games was no pleasurable *nostos*. [85] No sweet laughter was there to make an aura of *kharis* as they came back home to stay at their mothers' side. They lurk in byways, trying to avoid their personal enemies, stung as they are by their bad fortune.

Antistrophe 5

But whoever has as his lot something beautiful in the here and now, in a time of great luxuriance [*habrotēs*], [90] such a man starts soaring, driven by his aspirations, lifted high in the air by his feats of manliness, with his ambition going beyond material wealth. The pleasure that mortals get waxes in a short space of time. And, just as quickly, it falls to the ground, shaken by adverse opinion.

Epode 5

[95] Creatures of a day. What is a someone, what is a no one? Man is the dream of a shade. But when the brightness given by Zeus comes, there is at hand the shining light of men, and the life-force [*aiōn*] gives pleasure. Aigina! *Philē* Mother! Make a (naval) mission [*stolos*]³⁷ of freedom for this *polis* as you bring it back to light and life,³⁸ back to Zeus! May Aiakos the Ruler be there. So also Peleus. And noble Telamon. And especially Achilles.³⁹

Key Passages Relevant to the Poetics of Pindar

Translated by Gregory Nagy

1.

The Lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither says nor conceals: he indicates [*sēmainein*].

Heraclitus 22 B 93 DK

2.

Of all the words of Homer, understand and apply the saying that I now tell you: the best messenger [*angelos*], he said, wins as a prize the greatest *tīmē* for everything. And the Muse too becomes greater by way of the correct message.

Pindar *Pythian* 4.277–279

3.

⁵⁶ Even when he [= Achilles] died, the songs did not leave him, ⁵⁷ but the Maidens of Helicon [= the Muses] stood by his pyre and his funeral mound, ⁵⁸ and, as they stood there, they poured forth a song of lamentation [*thrēnos*] that is famed far and wide. ⁵⁹ And so it was that the immortal gods decided ⁶⁰ to hand over the man, genuine [*esthlos*] as he was even after he had perished [*phthinein*] in death, to the songs of the

goddesses [= the Muses]⁴⁰.⁶¹ And this, even now, wins as a prize the words of song, as the chariot-team of the Muses starts moving on its way⁶² to glorify the memory of Nikokles the boxer.

Pindar *Isthmian* 8.56a–62

4.

You too,⁴¹ Polykrates,⁴² will have a *kleos* that is unwilting [*aphthiton*], in accordance with my song, my *kleos*.

Ibycus SLG 151.47–48

5.

It is said that *kleos* bloomed for Hector near the streams of Skamandros. And near the steep cliffs that rise above the river Heloros, [...] this light shone upon the coming of age of the son of Hagesidamos.

Pindar *Nemean* 9.39–42

6.

I am a *xenos*. Keeping away dark blame [*psogos*] and bringing genuine *kleos* like streams of water, to a man who is *philos*, I will praise [verb *aineîn*] him.

Pindar *Nemean* 7.61–63

7.

Indeed there are many wondrous things. And the words that men tell, myths [*mūthoi*] embellished by varied falsehoods, beyond wording that is *alēthēs*, are deceptive. But *kharis*, which makes everything pleasurable for mortals, brings it about by way of conferring *tīmē*, that even the untrustworthy oftentimes becomes trustworthy.

Pindar *Olympian* 1.28–32

8.

But the *kharis* of the past is asleep, and mortals are unaware [negative of *mnē-*] of whatever does not attain the cresting blossom of the art of songmaking by being wedded to the glory-bringing streams of sung words.

Pindar *Isthmian* 7.16–19

9.

About the other kings they [the Egyptian priests] had no public statement [*apodeixis*] to tell of their deeds, since there was nothing distinguished [literally ‘bright’], except for the last [king].

Herodotus 2.101.1

10.

[The hero Pelops is asking the god Poseidon for the gift of a chariot-team and declaring to the god his desire to risk death in his quest for the hand of Hippodameia:]

Great risk does not take hold of any cowardly mortal. But if it is destined for humans to die, why should anyone sit around in the darkness and boil away his life to a futile old age without a name, having no share in all the beautiful things of the world? I will undertake this ordeal [*āthlos*] at hand.

Pindar *Olympian* 1.81–85

11.

And it [= the name of the lineage of the Aiakidai, especially the name of Achilles] leapt at the Ethiopians, now that Memnon would not be coming back safely [to his troops]. Heavy combat fell upon them [= the

Ethiopians] in the person of Achilles hitting the ground as he stepped down [*kata-bainein*] from his chariot. That was when he killed [Memnon] the son of the luminous dawn-goddess, with the tip of his raging spear.

Pindar *Nemean* 6.48–53

12.

Blessed [*olbios*] is he who has already seen those things when he goes below the earth.

Pindar Fragment 137

12.

Poseidon *Petraios* [‘of the rocks’] has a cult among the Thessalians ... because he, having fallen asleep at some rock, had an emission of semen; and the earth, receiving the semen, produced the first horse, whom they called *Skuphios*. ... And they say that there was a festival established in worship of Poseidon *Petraios* at the spot where the first horse leapt forth.

Scholia for Pindar *Pythian* 4.246

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The word *hēsukhiā*, designating the feeling of serenity that comes with the successful accomplishment of an ordeal, is here divinely personified as a goddess.

[[back](#)] 2. Porphyryon was king of the Giants, mentioned later on as such.

[[back](#)] 3. The word *kerdos* ‘gain’ designates the benefits to be won through the craft (in positive contexts) or the craftiness (in negative contexts) of the poet.

[[back](#)] 4. Kirrha is another name for Delphi, site of the Pythian Games.

[[back](#)] 5. Aristomenes is the son of Xenarkes.

[[back](#)] 6. The “crown” bestowed on victors at the Pythian Games is a wreath of laurel.

[[back](#)] 7. The word *kōmos* ‘band of revelers’ is used in Pindar’s songmaking tradition to refer to the chorus, that is, the singing and dancing ensemble that performs the composition of Pindar.

[[back](#)] 8. The island Aigina, native land of the victor Aristomenes and setting for the performance of Pindar’s *Pythian* 8, counts as a city-state or *polis*. This island-state is described as a ‘*polis* of *dikē*’ on the basis of the myth of Aiakos, the prototypical hero of Aigina who was worshipped as the originator of the human population in Aigina. This hero was considered by all Greeks to be an ultimate exponent of *dikē*. Further details in the next note.

[[back](#)] 9. Aiakidai = ‘descendants of Aiakos’; the hero Aiakos was also considered *by the people of Aigina* to be the ancestor of the human population *in Aigina*. Two of Aiakos’ sons were Telamon and Peleus. Telamon was father of Aias [= Ajax], Peleus was father of Achilles. Thus Aiakos is not only the stylized ancestor of the population of Aigina (by way of being considered the ancestor of the elite of the *polis*, who presumably claimed to represent the whole population): he is also the “real” ancestor of some of the greatest epic heroes of Homeric poetry, which was considered the shared cultural heritage of all Hellenes in Pindar’s era. Pindar’s words seem to be intentionally blurring the

distinction between the two types of ancestry. More on the Aiakidai at the final note to Epode 5.

[[back](#)] 10. Pindar's wording modulates from the world of heroes who had struggled in ordeals and battles of old to the world of latter-day athletes who have achieved victory in the pan-Hellenic Games. I take it that the *men* here are being juxtaposed with the *heroes* just mentioned.

[[back](#)] 11. The word *oikos* 'house' refers to the victor's ancestral lineage or "clan."

[[back](#)] 12. Meidulidai is the name of the victor's ancestral lineage.

[[back](#)] 13. Amphiaraios, one of the Seven Against Thebes, was the son of Oikles. The heroes known as the Seven Against Thebes had failed in their expedition against Thebes. Myth has it that Thebes had Seven Gates, each attacked by one of the Seven Against Thebes and each defended by a corresponding Theban hero.

[[back](#)] 14. The verb *ainissesthai* 'say in a riddling way' is derived from *ainigma* 'riddle, enigma', which is derived from *ainos*. Since Amphiaraios died in the failed expedition of the Seven Against Thebes, what he says here is obviously meant to be understood as if spoken from the grave. There is historical evidence for a hero-cult of Amphiaraios, located at the very spot where myth says that the earth had engulfed him, chariot-team and all, as he was riding away from Thebes after the expedition failed. Worshippers would come to consult Amphiaraios, who was believed to have the power of communicating with them from the dead.

[[back](#)] 15. The Sons are the Sons of the Seven Against Thebes. Whereas the original Seven Against Thebes had failed in their expedition against Thebes, the Sons of the Seven Against Thebes were successful.

[[back](#)] 16. Epigonoi ‘The Descendants’ is another way of referring to the Sons of the Seven Against Thebes.

[[back](#)] 17. Amphiaraos.

[[back](#)] 18. The “fathers” here are *ancestors*, that is, a succession of fathers through time, not a collection of fathers at one time. The word *patro-* ‘ancestor, father’ is found in the first part of the name Patroklos (*Patroklēs*), which means ‘he who has the *kleos* of the ancestors’.

[[back](#)] 19. The hero Alkmaion is the son of Amphiaraos.

[[back](#)] 20. In traditional Greek poetry, the image represented on a shield, in this case a snake, would be called a *sēma*.

[[back](#)] 21. Kadmos was known as the primordial founder of Thebes.

[[back](#)] 22. The original expedition of the Seven Against Thebes.

[[back](#)] 23. In Homeric poetry, Danaoi is the synonym of Akhaioi (Achaeans) and Argeioi (Argives).

[[back](#)] 24. The son of the hero Adrastos was called Aigialeus.

[[back](#)] 25. Abas was a primordial ruler of Argos. So the “public places of Abas” is a reference to Argos.

[[back](#)] 26. It is not clear to us (though we may be sure that it was to Pindar and his audience) whether this is Alkmaion or Amphiaraos.

[[back](#)] 27. To say that the hero was a “neighbor” is a conventional way of saying that a cult-hero showed favor to the one who worshipped him.

[[back](#)] 28. The word *phulax*, pl. *phulakes* ‘guardian(s)’ describes cult-heroes in Hesiod *Works and Days* 253 (and 123).

[[back](#)] 29. He appeared to me. The voice of the poet goes on to say that he “met” the hero on the way to Delphi (*Pythian* 8.56–60): that is, he experienced an epiphany of the hero, which is the inspiration, as it were, of Pindar’s words. The theme of epiphany is relevant to the expression ‘the will of the ancestors [*pateres*] shines through from them, in what is inborn in the nature of their sons’ (43–44). It is also relevant to what the voice of the poet is about to announce at lines 95–97.

[[back](#)] 30. Delphi.

[[back](#)] 31. Apollo.

[[back](#)] 32. Delphi.

[[back](#)] 33. Victory to Aristomenes in the Pythian Games at Delphi.

[[back](#)] 34. The reference here is to a local athletic event at a feast of Apollo in Aigina.

[[back](#)] 35. Again the word *kōmos* ‘band of revelers’.

[[back](#)] 36. Local to Aigina.

[[back](#)] 37. This fleeting reference serves as a nostalgic reminder of the glory days of Aigina, when its navy was still a major power, as in the Sea Battle of Salamis in the Persian War, described by Herodotus 8.40–97; note especially the role of the Aiakidai in 8.64 and 8.83–84.

[[back](#)] 38. I translate *komizein* here as ‘bring back to light and life’ in view of the traditional correlation of this verb with the noun *nostos*.

[[back](#)] 39. Compare Herodotus 8.64: “At sunrise ... there was an earthquake on land and sea, and they resolved to pray to the gods and summon the Aiakidai as allies. When they had so resolved, they did as follows: they prayed to all the gods called Ajax and Telamon to come straight from Salamis, and sent a ship to Aigina for Aiakos and the other Aiakidai [besides Ajax and Telamon].”

[[back](#)] 40. As I argue in *Best of the Achaeans* 176–177, the phraseology here implies that Achilles was destined to have a *kleos* that is *a-phthi-ton* ‘unwilting’, as explicitly formulated at *Iliad* 9.413.

[[back](#)] 41. You as well as the heroes just mentioned in the song.

[[back](#)] 42. Polykrates was Tyrant of Samos, patron of the poet Ibycus.

Agamemnon

By Aeschylus

Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth

Revised by Gregory Crane and Graeme Bird

Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

Upon the roof of the palace of Agamemnon at Argos.

Watchman

¹ I ask the gods for release from these ordeals [*ponoi*] of mine here. I have by now been a watchman here for the length of a whole year, during which time I have been spending my nights here on the palace roof of the sons of Atreus, as I rest on my elbows, like a dog. I have learned to know well the gathering of the night's stars, ⁵ bringers of winter and summer to humankind, those radiant potentates shining in the firmament, and I know when they set and when they rise. Even now I am still watching for the signal [*sumbolon*] of the flame, the gleam of fire bringing news from Troy ¹⁰ and shouts announcing its capture. For thus commands my Queen, woman in passionate heart and man in strength of purpose. And whenever I make here my bed, restless and dank with dew and unvisited by dreams—for instead of sleep fear stands ever by my side, ¹⁵ so that I cannot close my eyelids fast in sleep—and whenever I care to sing or hum (and thus apply an antidote of song to ward off drowsiness), then my tears start forth, as I bewail the fortunes of this house of ours, not ordered for the best as in days gone by. ²⁰ But now may there be a fortunate release from these ordeals [*ponoi*] of mine! May the fire bringing good news flash through the gloom!

Now, right at this moment, the watchman sees a flash of light.

Oh welcome, you flashing light, you who make the darkness of the night as bright as day, you who signal the arranging [*kata-stasis*] of many choruses [*khoroï*] in Argos in thanksgiving for this fortunate event!

25 Iou! Iou! This is the way I signal [*sēmainein*] clearly to Agamemnon's Queen to rise from her bed and, as quickly as possible, to shout out in the halls of the palace a cry of ololu, which says in a proper way [*eu-phēmeîn*]¹ that she welcomes with her cry this flash of light—that is, if the city of Ilion 30 truly is taken, as this signal fire announces in all its shining eminence. And I will join the chorus [*khoros*] in singing and dancing a prelude [*pro-oimion*] of my own; for my lord's lucky roll I shall count to my own score, now that this beacon has thrown me triple six. Ah well, may the master of the house come home and may [35] I clasp his welcome hand in mine! 36 As for all other things I stay silent. A great ox has stepped on my tongue. But the house itself, if it had a voice, would tell it all most clearly: I speak to those who know, and to those who do not know, I am without memory.

He descends by an inner stairway. The chorus of Argive Elders enters.

Chorus

anapests

40 This is now the tenth year since the mighty plaintiff [*anti-dikos*] against Priam, King Menelaos, and with him King Agamemnon, the both of them linked by Zeus in honor [*tīmē*] of throne and scepter, that steady pair of Atreus' sons, launched from this land [of Argos] 45 an armada of a thousand ships, with a mass of Argive warriors coming to their aid. Loud rang the battle-cry that the two of them shouted from the heart [*thūmos*]. Just as eagles scream, 50 in lonely grief for their children, as they circle over their nest, high up above, rowing with the oars of their wings, screaming because they have lost their nestlings—having now wasted all the pain [*ponos*] of watching over their nest. 55 But high up above there is someone who hears—Apollo perhaps or Pan, or Zeus—hearing the shrill wailing scream of the clamorous birds, those sojourners in the air space of these gods. And against the transgressors the god sends a Fury [*Erinys*]² at last, though it was late in coming. 60 This is how [*houtōs*] it was when the sons of Atreus were sent by Zeus,

whose power is over all, Zeus *xenios* [= god of *xenoi* ‘guests and hosts’], against Alexander [= Paris]. Zeus was about to cause, for the sake of a woman with many a husband, a multitude of struggles most wearying, with many a knee buckling in the dust ⁶⁵ and many a spear splintering in the preliminaries [*pro-teleia*] [of close combat]—Zeus was about to cause all this for Danaans [= Achaeans] and Trojans alike. So, things are where they are right now. And it all moves to fulfillment [*teleîsthai*], toward what is destined [*pe-prō-menon*]. Not by setting fires underneath a sacrifice, not by pouring libations on top of it, ⁷⁰ not by tears, can anyone charm away [*para-thelgein*] the implacable feelings of anger coming out of a ritual performed without fire.

But we, incapable of service by reason of our aged frame, discarded from that martial mustering of long ago, wait here at home, ⁷⁵ supporting on our canes a strength like a child’s. For just as the vigor of youth, leaping up within the breast, is like that of old age, since the war-god is not in his place; so extreme age, its leaves ⁸⁰ already withering, goes its way on triple feet, and, no better than a child, wanders, a dream that is dreamed by day.

But, O daughter of Tyndareus, Queen Clytemnestra, ⁸⁵ what has happened? What news do you have? On what intelligence and convinced by what report do you send about your messengers to command sacrifice? For all the gods our city worships, the gods supreme, the gods below, ⁹⁰ the gods of the sky and of the *agora*, have their altars ablaze with offerings. Now here, now there, the flames rise high as the sky, yielding ⁹⁵ to the soft and guileless persuasion of holy ointment, the sacrificial oil itself brought from the inner chambers of the palace. Of all this declare whatever you can and dare reveal, and be a healer of my uneasy heart. ¹⁰⁰ This now at one moment bodes ill, while then again hope, shining with kindly light from the sacrifices, wards off the biting care of the sorrow that gnaws my heart.

strophe 1

I am authorized [*kurios*] to narrate the power [*kratos*] of men to set in motion an expedition. It is a predestined power, belonging to men ¹⁰⁵ who are granted control [*telos*]. This [authority of mine to narrate] is because the life force, still vital within me, is taking its breath from the inspiration of the gods to give me the ability to make people believe, which is the strength of singing and dancing. It is all about the twin-throned power [*kratos*] of the Achaeans, ¹¹⁰ how this single-minded pair, in charge of all the young men of Hellas, was sent off, with spear and with avenging hand holding the spear. They were sent off against the land of the Teukroi, [Troy,] by an onrushing bird omen, and the omen was the king of birds—[two] birds appearing to the [two] kings of the ships. ¹¹⁵ One of them was black all over, while the other one was black, too, but it was white at the other end. They appeared [*phainesthai*] [in an epiphany] near the palace, on the right hand—the hand that holds the spear. They [had come down from the air and] were roosting in a most visible space, for all to see. And they were devouring a rabbit that was bursting with the vitality of offspring ready to be born. ¹²⁰ She was caught in the moment of her very last effort to run away. Sing the song of lament for Linus, for Linus sing it, but let the victory belong to whatever is genuinely good.

antistrophe 1

Then the wise seer [*mantis*] of the army, seeing that the two warlike sons of Atreus were twins in character, recognized the devourers of the rabbit and ¹²⁵ the leaders of the expedition already under way, [that they were the same,] and this is the way [*houtō*] he spoke, speaking the language of omens [*terazein*]: “In due time this expedition, set in motion, will capture the city of Priam as its prey, and, at the ground level of that city’s towered walls, all the plentiful herds of the community ¹³⁰ will be ravaged most violently by fate [*Moirā*]. The only thing to guard against is this: may it not happen that some resentment [*agā*] sent by the gods may cloud over and ruin the mighty bit forged for Troy’s mouth by the army. I say this because she, in her pity, is angry. I mean, holy [*hagnā*] Artemis. She is angry ¹³⁵ at the winged hunting dogs of her father

[Zeus], for they are sacrificing [thuein] a miserable frightened thing, together with her offspring that were ready to be born, before she has brought them forth. She [Artemis] has a loathing for the feast of the eagles."

Sing the song of lament for Linus, for Linus sing it, but let victory belong to whatever is genuinely good.

epode

¹⁴⁰ "Though she [= the goddess Artemis] is full of good intentions [euphrōn], the beautiful [kalā] one, toward the tender cubs of vicious lions, and though she takes delight in the breast-loving young of all wild animals that roam the fields, she now demands that the symbols [sumbola] of these things be brought to fulfillment [krainein], I mean, the epiphanies [phasmata], ¹⁴⁵ which are auspicious in a right-handed kind of way even if they are reprehensible. And I call upon Paean, the healer, praying that she [Artemis] will not stop the sailing of ships, holding them back for a long time ¹⁵⁰ by causing the winds to blow in the opposite direction for the Danaans [Achaeans]. She [Artemis] is urging a sacrifice of another kind, [a sinister one,] the kind that knows no law [nomos], the kind that is unsuited for feasting [dais] [on meat], the kind that naturally creates quarrel after quarrel, resulting in vengeance, and the kind that shows no fear of any man [who is a husband]. I say this because there is something that has stayed behind here at home: it is something terrifying, which keeps coming back again and again. ¹⁵⁵ It is a treacherous keeper of the household. It is an anger [mēnis] that remembers, and it comes with punishment for whatever happened to a child." Such dire things did Kalkhas proclaim, speaking the language of omens. But the omens, signaled by the birds seen during the expedition, came also with big benefits for the palaces of the kings. I connect what is sounded out in these omens with what I say:
Sing the song of lament for Linus, for Linus sing it, but let victory belong to whatever is genuinely good.

strophe 2

160 Zeus, whoever he may be—if by this name it pleases him to be
invoked, by this name I call to him—as I weigh all things in the balance,
I have nothing to compare 165 except “Zeus,” if in truth I must cast
aside this vain burden from my heart.

antistrophe 2

He who once was mighty, swelling with insolence for every fight, 170
he shall not even be named as having ever existed; and he who arose
later, he has met his overthrower and is past and gone. But whoever,
heartily taking thought beforehand, sings a victory song for Zeus, 175
he shall gain wisdom altogether.

strophe 3

Zeus, who sets mortals on the path to understanding, Zeus, who has
established this as a fixed law: “Learning comes by suffering [*pathos*].”
But even as the ordeal [*ponos*], bringing memory of pain, drips over the
mind in sleep, 180 so equilibrium [being *sōphrōn*] comes to men,
whether they want it or not. Violent, it seems to me, is the *kharis* of
daimones enthroned upon their awesome seats.

antistrophe 3

So then the captain of the Achaean ships, the elder of the two— 185
holding no seer at fault, bending to the adverse blasts of fortune, when
the Achaean people, on the shore over against Khalkis 190 in the region
where Aulis’ tides surge to and fro, were very distressed by opposing
winds and failing stores;

strophe 4

and the breezes that blew from the Strymon, bringing harmful leisure,
hunger, and tribulation of spirit in a cruel port, idle wandering of men,
and sparing neither ship 195 nor cable, began, by doubling the season of
their stay, to rub away and wither the flower of Argos; and when the
seer, pointing to Artemis as cause, proclaimed to the chieftains another
remedy, 200 more oppressive even than the bitter storm, so that the sons
of Atreus struck the ground with their canes and did not stifle their tears
—

antistrophe 4

205 then the elder king spoke and said: “It is a hard fate to refuse obedience, and hard, if I must slay my child, the glory of my home, and at the altar-side stain 210 a father’s hand with streams of virgin’s blood. Which of these courses is not filled with evil? How can I become a deserter to my fleet and fail my allies in arms? 215 That they should with all too impassioned a passion crave a sacrifice [*thusia*] to lull the winds—even by way of a virgin’s blood— divine law [*themis*] speaks out against that. For it should all turn out in a good way.”

strophe 5

But when he had donned the yoke of Necessity, with the veering of a mind that has turned around, 220 making a turn that is impious, unholy, unsanctified, from then he changed his intention and began to conceive that deed of uttermost audacity. For wretched delusion [*parakopē*], counselor of ill, primal source of woe, makes man bold. So then he hardened his heart to become the sacrificer [*thutēr*] of his daughter 225 so that he might further a war waged to avenge a woman, and as an offering for the voyaging of a fleet!

antistrophe 5

For her supplications, her cries of “Father,” and her virgin life, 230 the commanders in their eagerness for war cared nothing. Her father, after a prayer, told his ministers to raise her—fallen about her robes, she lay face-down 235 in supplication with all her *thūmos*—to lift her like a young goat, high above the altar; and with a gag upon her lovely mouth to hold back the shouted curse against her house

strophe 6

by the bit’s strong and stifling might. Then, as she shed to earth her saffron robe, she 240 struck each of her sacrificers [*thutēres*] with a glance from her eyes yearning for pity, looking as if in a picture, wishing she could speak; for she had often sung-and-danced [*melpein*] where men met at her father’s hospitable table, 245 and with her virgin voice would lovingly honor her dear father’s prayer for the blessing of a paean at the third libation.

antistrophe 6

What happened next I did not see and do not tell.³ The art of Kalkhas was not unfulfilled. 250 Justice [*dikē*] inclines her scales so that lessons learned may come at the price of suffering [*pathos*]. But the future, that you shall know when it occurs; till then, let it be—it is like weeping before it is time to lament. But it will come, clear as day, together with the light of dawn.

Clytemnestra enters.

255 But as for what shall follow, may the issue be happy, even as she wishes, our sole guardian here, the bulwark of the Apian land, who stands nearest to our lord. I have come, Clytemnestra, in obedience to your royal power [*kratos*], for it is *dikē* to do homage to the consort of a sovereign prince 260 when her lord's throne is tenantless. Now whether the news you have heard is good or ill, and you do make sacrifice with hopes that herald gladness, I wish to hear; yet, if you would keep silence, I make no complaint.

Clytemnestra

As herald of gladness, with the proverb, 265 “May Dawn be born from her mother Night!” You shall hear joyful news surpassing all your hopes: the Argives have taken Priam's town!

Chorus

What have you said? The meaning of your words has escaped me, so incredible they seemed.

Clytemnestra

I said that Troy is in the hands of the Achaeans. Is my meaning clear?

Chorus

270 Joy steals over me, and it challenges my tears.

Clytemnestra

Sure enough, for your eye betrays your loyal heart.

Chorus

What then is the proof? Have you evidence of this?

Clytemnestra

I have, indeed; unless some god has played me false.

Chorus

Do you believe the persuasive visions of dreams?

Clytemnestra

275 I would not heed the fancies of a slumbering brain.

Chorus

But can it be some pleasing rumor that has fed your hopes?

Clytemnestra

Truly you scorn my understanding as if it were a child's.

Chorus

But at what time was the city destroyed?

Clytemnestra

In the night, I say, that has but now given birth to this day here.

Chorus

280 And what messenger could reach here with such speed?

Clytemnestra

Hephaistos, from Ida speeding forth his brilliant blaze. Beacon passed beacon on to us by courier-flame: Ida, to the crag of Hermes in Lemnos; to the mighty blaze upon the island succeeded, third, 285 the summit of Athos sacred to Zeus; and, soaring high aloft so as to leap across the sea, the flame, traveling joyously onward in its strength...

[There is a gap in the text.]

...the pinewood torch, its golden-beamed light, as another sun, passing the message on to the watchtowers of Makistos. 290 He, delaying not nor carelessly overcome by sleep, did not neglect his part as messenger.

Far over Euripos' stream came the beacon-light and signaled [*sēmainein*] to the watchmen on Messapion. They, kindling a heap of 295 withered heather, lit up their answering blaze and sped the message on. The flame, now gathering strength and in no way dimmed, like a radiant moon overleaped the plain of Asopos to Kithairon's ridges, and roused another relay of missive fire. 300 Nor did the warders there disdain the far-flung light, but made a blaze higher than their commands. Across Gorgopis' water shot the light, reached the mount of Aigioplanktos, and urged the ordinance of fire to make no delay. 305 Kindling high with unstinted force a mighty beard of flame, they sped it forward so that, as it blazed, it passed even the headland that looks upon the Saronic gulf; until it swooped down when it reached the lookout, near to our city, upon the peak of Arakhnaion; and 310 next upon this roof of the Atreidai it leapt, this very fire not undescended from the Idaean flame.

Such are the torch-bearers I have arranged—in succession one to the other completing the course; and the victor is he who ran both first and last. 315 This is the kind of proof and token [*sumbolon*] I give you, the message of my lord from Troy to me.

Chorus

Lady, my prayers of thanksgiving to the gods I will offer soon. But as I would like to hear and satisfy my wonder at your tale straight through to the end, so may you tell it yet again.

Clytemnestra

320 This day the Achaeans hold Troy. Within the town there sounds loud, I believe, a clamor of voices that will not blend. Pour vinegar and oil into the same vessel and you will say that, as foes, they keep apart; so the cries of vanquished and victors greet the ear, 325 distinct as their fortunes are diverse. Those, flung upon the corpses of their husbands and their brothers, children upon the bodies of their aged fathers who gave them life, bewail from lips no longer free the death of their most *philoï*, while these— 330 a night of restless labor [*ponos*] after battle sets them down famished to breakfast on such fare as the town affords; not faring

according to rank, but as each man has drawn his lot by chance. 335
And even now they are quartered in the captured Trojan homes,
delivered from the frosts and dew of the naked sky, and like happy men
will sleep all the night without a guard.

Now if they are reverent towards the gods of the town—those of the
conquered land—and towards their shrines, 340 the captors shall not be
made captives in their turn. Only may no mad impulse first assail the
army, overmastered by greed, to pillage what they should not! For to win
the salvation [*sōtēriā*] of *nostos* they need to travel back the other length
of their double course. 345 But even if, without having offended the
gods, our troops should reach home, the grievous suffering of the dead
might still remain awake—if no fresh disaster happens. These are my
woman's words; but may the good prevail clearly for all to see! 350 For,
choosing thus, I have chosen the enjoyment of many a blessing.

Chorus

Lady, you speak as wisely as a balanced [*sōphrōn*] man. And, for my part,
now that I have listened to your certain proofs, I prepare to address due
prayers of thanksgiving to the gods; for a success has been achieved that
is not without *tīmē* in return [*kharis*] for the ordeal [*ponos*].

anapests

355 Hail, sovereign Zeus, and you kindly Night, possessor of the great
kosmoi, you who cast your meshed snare upon the towered walls of Troy,
so that neither old nor young could overleap 360 the huge enslaving net
of all-conquering *atē*. I revere great Zeus of *xenoi*—he who has brought
this to pass. He long kept his bow bent against Alexander 365 until his
bolt would neither fall short of the mark nor, flying beyond the stars, be
launched in vain.

strophe 1

"The stroke of Zeus" they may call it; his hand can be traced there. As he
determines, so he acts. Someone said 370 that the gods do not trouble
themselves to remember mortals who trample underfoot the *kharis* of

inviolable sanctities. But that man was impious!

Now it stands revealed! 375 The penalty for reckless crime is ruin when men breathe a spirit of arrogance above just measure, because their mansions teem with more abundance than is good for them. But let there be such wealth as brings no distress, enough to satisfy 380 a sensible man. For riches do not protect the man who in his insatiability [*koros*] has kicked the mighty altar of *Dikē* into obscurity.

antistrophe 1

385 Perverse Persuasion, the overmastering child of designing *Atē*, drives men on; and every remedy is futile. His evil is not hidden; it shines forth, a baleful gleam. 390 Like base metal beneath the touchstone's rub, when tested he shows the blackness of his grain—for he is like a child who chases a winged bird— 395 and upon his people he brings a taint against which there is no defense. No god listens to his prayers. The man associated with such deeds, him they destroy in his unrighteousness.

And such was Paris, who came 400 to the house of the sons of Atreus and dishonored the hospitality of his host by stealing away a wedded wife.

strophe 2

405 But she, bequeathing to her people the clang of shield and spear and army of fleets, and bringing to Ilion destruction in place of dowry, with light step she passed through the gates—daring a deed undareable. Then loud wailed the spokesmen [*prophētēs* pl.] of the house, crying, 410 “Alas, alas, for the home, the home, and for the princes! Alas for the husband's bed and the impress of her form so dear! He sits apart in the anguish of his grief, silent, dishonored but making no reproach. In his yearning for her who sped beyond the sea, 415 a phantom will seem to be lord of the house. The pleasure [*kharis*] of fair-formed statues is hateful to him; and in the hunger of his eyes all loveliness [*Aphrodite*] is departed.

antistrophe 2

420 Apparitions causing sorrow [*penthos*] come to him in dreams, bringing only vain *kharis*; for vainly, whenever in his imagination a man

sees delights, **425** immediately the vision, slipping through his arms, is gone, winging its flight along the paths of sleep.” Such are the sorrows [*akhos* pl.] at hearth and home, but there are sorrows surpassing these; and at large, in every house of all who went forth together from the land of Hellas, **430** unbearable grief [*penthos* pl.] is seen. Many things pierce the heart. Each knows whom he sent forth. But to the home of each come **435** urns and ashes, not living men.

strophe 3

Arēs barter the bodies of men for gold; he holds his balance in the contest of the spear; and **440** back from Ilion to their loved ones he sends a heavy dust passed through his burning, a dust cried over with plenteous tears, in place of men sending well-made urns with ashes. **445** So they lament, praising now this one: “How skilled in battle!” now that one: “Fallen nobly in the carnage”. “For another’s wife,” some mutter in secret, and **450** grief charged with resentment spreads stealthily against the sons of Atreus, champions in the strife. But there far from home, around the city’s walls, those in their beauty’s bloom have graves in Ilion — **455** the enemy’s soil has covered its conquerors.

antistrophe 3

Dangerous is a people’s voice charged with anger—it acts as a curse of publicly ratified doom. **460** In anxious fear I wait to hear something shrouded still in gloom. The gods are not blind to men with blood upon their hands. In the end the black Spirits of Vengeance [*Erinyes*] bring to obscurity that one who has prospered by renouncing *dikē* and **465** wear down his fortunes by reverse. Once a man is among the unseen, there is no more help for him. Glory in excess is fraught with peril; **470** the lofty peak is struck by Zeus’ thunderbolt. I choose prosperity [*olbos*] unassailed by envy. May I not be a sacker of cities, and may I not myself be despoiled and live to see my own life in another’s power!

epode

475 – Heralded by a beacon of good tidings a swift report has spread throughout the town. Yet whether it is true, or some deception of the gods, who knows?

—Who is so childish or so bereft of sense, **480** once he has let his heart be fired by sudden news of a beacon fire, to despair if the story change? —It is just like a woman's eager nature to yield assent to pleasing news before yet the truth is clear.

485 —Over credulous, a woman's mind has boundaries open to quick encroachment; but quick to perish is *kleos* spread by a woman.

Clytemnestra

We shall soon know about this passing on of flaming lights **490** and beacon signals and fires, whether they perhaps are true [*alēthēs* pl.] or whether, dream-like, this light's glad coming has beguiled our senses. Look! There, I see approaching from the shore a herald crowned with boughs of olive. **495** The thirsty dust, consorting sister of the mud, assures me that neither by pantomime nor by kindling a flame of mountain wood will he signal [*sēmainein*] with smoke of fire. Either in plain words he will bid us to rejoice the more, or else—but I have little love for the report opposite to this! **500** May still further good be added to the good that has appeared!

Chorus

Whoever makes this prayer with other intent toward the *polis*, let him reap himself the fruit of his misguided purpose!

A Herald enters.

Herald

All hail, soil of Argos, land of my fathers! On this happy day in the tenth year I have come to you. **505** Many hopes have shattered, one only have I seen fulfilled; for I never dared to dream that here in this land of Argos I should die and have due portion of burial most *philos* to me. Now blessings on the land, blessings on the light of the sun, and blessed be Zeus, the land's Most High, and the Pythian lord; **510** and may he launch no more his shafts against us. Enough of your hostility did you display by Scamander's banks; but now, in other mood, be our savior [*sōtēr*] and our healer, O lord Apollo. And the gods of the gathering

[*agōn*], I greet them all; him, too, my own patron, 515 Hermes, beloved herald, of heralds all revered; and the cult-heroes [*hērōes*] who sent us forth—I pray that they may receive back in kindness the remnant of the host which has escaped the spear.

Hail, halls of our Kings, beloved roofs, and you august seats, and you *daimones* that face the sun, 520 if ever you did in days gone by, now after long lapse of years, with gladness in your eyes give fine welcome to your King. For bearing light in darkness to you and to all assembled here alike, he has returned—Agamemnon, our King. Oh, greet him well, as is right, 525 since he has uprooted Troy with the mattock of Zeus the Avenger, with which her soil has been uptorn. Demolished are the altars and the shrines of her gods; and the seed of her whole land has been wasted utterly. Upon the neck of Troy he has cast such a yoke. 530 Now he has come home, our King, Atreus' elder son, a fortunate [*eudaimōn*] man, worthy of honor beyond all living men. For neither Paris nor his partner city can boast that the deed [*drāma*] was greater than the suffering [*pathos*]. Convicted for robbery and for theft as well, 535 he has lost the plunder and has razed in utter destruction his father's house and even the land. The sons of Priam have paid a twofold penalty for their errors.

Chorus

Joy to you, Herald from the Achaean host!

Herald

I do rejoice. I will no longer refuse to die, if that pleases the gods.

Chorus

540 Was it yearning for this your fatherland that wore you out?

Herald

Yes, so that my eyes are filled with tears for joy.

Chorus

It was then a pleasing malady from which you suffered.

Herald

How so? Teach me, and I shall master what you say.

Chorus

You were smitten with desire for those who returned your love.

Herald

545 Do you mean that our land longed for the longing host?

Chorus

So longed that often from a darkly brooding spirit I have sighed.

Herald

Where did this gloom of melancholy upon your spirit come from?

Chorus

Long since have I found silence an antidote to harm.

Herald

How so? Did you fear anyone when our princes were gone?

Chorus

550 In such fear that now, in your own words, even death would be a great favor [*kharris*].

Herald

Yes, all's well, well ended. Yet, of what occurred in the long years, one might well say that part fell out happily, and part in turn amiss. But who, unless he is a god, is free from suffering all his days? 555 For were I to recount our hardships and our wretched quarters, the scanty space and the sorry berths—what did we not have to complain of? Then again, ashore, there was still worse to loathe; for we had to lie down close to the enemy's walls, 560 and the drizzling from the sky and the dews from the meadows distilled upon us, working constant destruction to our clothes and filling our hair with vermin.

And if one were to tell of the wintry cold, past all enduring, when Ida's snow slew the birds; 565 or of the heat, when upon his waveless noonday couch, windless the sea [*pontos*] sank to sleep—but why should we bewail all this? Our ordeal [*ponos*] is past; past for the dead so that they will never care even to wake to life again. 570 Why should we count the number of the slain, or why should the living feel pain at their past harsh fortunes? Our misfortunes should, in my opinion, bid us a long farewell. For us, the remnant of the Argive host, the gain has the advantage and the loss does not bear down the scale; 575 so that, as we speed over land and sea, it is fitting that we on this bright day make this boast: “The Argive army, having taken Troy at last, has nailed up these spoils to be a glory for the gods throughout Hellas in their shrines from days of old.” 580 Whoever hears the story of these deeds must extol the city and the leaders of her host; and the *kharis* of Zeus that brought them to accomplishment shall receive its due measure of gratitude. There, you have heard all that I have to say.

Chorus

Your words have proved me wrong. I do not deny it; for the old have ever enough youth to learn aright. 585 But these tidings should have most interest for the household and Clytemnestra, and at the same time enrich me.

Clytemnestra enters.

Clytemnestra

I raised a shout of triumph in my joy long before this, when the first flaming messenger arrived by night, telling that Ilion was captured and overthrown. 590 Then there were some who chided me and said: “Are you so convinced by beacon-fires as to think that Troy has now been sacked? Truly, it is just like a woman to be elated in heart.” By such taunts I was made to seem as if my wits were wandering. Nevertheless I still held on with my sacrifice, and throughout all the quarters of the city, according to their womanly custom, 595 they uttered in a proper

way [*euphēmeîn*] a shout of happy praise while in the shrines of the gods they lulled to rest the fragrant spice-fed flame.

So now why should you rehearse to me the account at length? From the King himself I shall hear the whole tale; **600** but I should hasten to welcome my honored lord best on his return. For what joy is sweeter in a woman's eyes than to unbar the gates for her husband when the god has given him salvation from war? Give this message to my lord: **605** let him come with all speed, his country's fond desire, come to find at home his wife faithful, even as he left her, a watchdog of his house, loyal to him, a foe to those who wish him ill; yes, for the rest, unchanged in every part; **610** in all this length of time never having broken any seal [*sēmantērion*]. Of pleasure from any other man or of scandalous repute I know no more than of dyeing bronze.

She exits.

Herald

A boast like this, loaded full with truth [*alētheia*], does not shame the speech of a noble wife.

Chorus

615 Thus has she spoken for your schooling, but speciously for those that can interpret right. But, Herald, say—I want to hear of Menelaus. Has he, our land's own power [*kratos*], achieved a *nostos* and a way of salvation back home?

Herald

620 It would be impossible to report false news as fair so that those I love should take pleasure for long.

Chorus

Oh if only you could tell tidings true [*alēthēs*] yet good! It is not easy to conceal when true and good are split apart.

Herald

The prince was swept from the sight of the Achaean host, 625 himself, and his ship likewise. I speak no lies.

Chorus

Did he put forth in sight of all from Ilion, or did a storm, distressing all in common, snatch him from the fleet?

Herald

Like master bowman you have hit the mark; a long tale of distress have you told in brief.

Chorus

630 Did the general voice of other voyagers bring news of him as alive or dead?

Herald

None knows to give clear report of this—except only the Sun that fosters life upon the earth.

Chorus

How then do you say 635 the storm rose by the anger of the *daimones* upon the naval host and passed away?

Herald

An auspiciously spoken-of [*euphēmos*] day one should not pollute with a tale of misfortune—the *tīmē* due to the gods keeps them apart. When a messenger with gloomy countenance reports to a people dire disaster of its army's rout— 640 one common wound inflicted on the *polis*, while from many a home many a victim is devoted to death by the two-handled whip beloved of Arēs, destruction [*atē*] double-armed, a gory pair—when, I say, he is packed with woes like this, 645 he should sing the triumph-song of the Avenging Spirits [Erinyes].

But when one comes with glad news of salvation [*sōtēriā*] to a city rejoicing in its happiness—how shall I mix fair with foul in telling of the

storm, not unprovoked by the gods' *mēnis*, that broke upon the Achaeans? 650 For fire and sea, beforehand bitterest of foes, swore alliance and as proof destroyed the unhappy Argive army. In the nighttime arose the mischief from the cruel swells. Beneath blasts from Thrace ship dashed against ship; 655 and they, gored violently by the furious hurricane and rush of pelting rain, were swept out of sight by the whirling gust of an evil shepherd. But when the radiant light of the sun rose we beheld the Aegean flowering with corpses 660 of Achaean men and wreckage of ships. Ourselves, however, and our ship, its hull unshattered, some power, divine not human, preserved by stealth or intercession, laying hand upon its helm; and Fortune the Savior [*sōtēr*] chose to sit aboard our craft 665 so that it should neither take in the swelling surf at anchorage nor drive upon a rock-bound coast. Then, having escaped Hādēs of the sea [*pontos*], in the clear bright day, scarce crediting our fortune, we brooded in anxious thought over our latest *pathos*, 670 our fleet distressed and sorely buffeted. So now, if any of them still draw the breath of life, they speak of us as lost—and why should they not? We think the same of them. But may all turn out for the best! For Menelaus, indeed— 675 first and foremost expect him to return. At least if some beam of the sun investigates and finds [*historeîn*] him alive and well, by the design of Zeus, who has not yet decided utterly to destroy the family, there is some hope that he will come home again. 680 Hearing so much, be assured that you hear the truth [*alēthēs*].

He exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

Who can have given a name so altogether true—was it some power invisible guiding his tongue aright by forecasting of destiny? 685 —who named that bride of the spear and source of strife with the name of Helen? For, true to her name, a Hell she proved to ships, Hell to men, Hell to city, 690 when stepping forth from her luxuriant [*habros*] and costly-curtained bower, she sailed the sea before the breath of earth-born

Zephyros. And after her a goodly host of warrior 695 huntsmen followed on the oars' vanished track in pursuit of a quarry that had beached its boat on Simoeis' leafy banks—in a conflict [*eris*] to end in blood.

antistrophe 1

To Ilion, its purpose fulfilling, 700 the goddess *Mēnis* brought a marriage rightly named a mourning, exacting in later requital for the dishonor done to hospitality and to Zeus, the partaker of the hearth, 705 upon those who with loud voice celebrated the song in honor of the bride, even the bridegroom's kin to whom it fell that day to raise the marriage-hymn. 710 But Priam's city has learned, in her old age, an altered strain, and now, I trust, wails a loud song, full of lamentation, calling Paris "evil-wed"; for she has borne the burden of a life in which everything was destroyed, a life full of lamentation because of 715 the wretched slaughter of her sons.

strophe 2

This is how [*houtōs*]⁴ it was when a man brought back home a lion cub and raised him. He [= the lion cub] was deprived of his mother's milk, yet still desiring the breast. Gentle he was, 720 in the preliminaries [*pro-teleia*] of his life, friendly to children, and a delight to the old. He was often cradled in the arms, like some nursing child, with his 725 bright eye turned toward the hand that held him. He was fawning, forced by the needs of his stomach to fawn. But then, brought to full growth in the course of time, he demonstrated the nature [*ēthos*] he had from his parents. Without being invited to do so, doing it as a compensation [*kharis*] to those who fostered him, 730 he prepared a feast [*dais*], bringing disasters [*atai*], with sheep being slaughtered. And the house was defiled with blood. Those who lived there could not fight back their pain [*algos*], and great was the destruction, with much slaughter. 735 He was something that comes from a god [*theos*]⁵—some kind of a priest [*hiereus*] of disaster [*Atē*], as if he had been nurtured for that purpose, right inside the house.

strophe 3

At first, I would say, there came to Ilion the spirit of unruffled calm, 740
a delicate ornament of wealth, a darter of soft glances from the eye, love's
flower that stings the heart. Then, swerving from her course, she
brought 745 her marriage to a bitter end, sped on to the children of
Priam under escort of Zeus, the warder of host and guest, ruining her
sojourn and her companions, a vengeful Fury [Erinys] to be lamented by
mourning brides.

antistrophe 3

750 A venerable utterance proclaimed of old has been fashioned among
mankind: the prosperity [*olbos*] of man, when it has come to fulfillment
[*telos*], engenders offspring and does not die childless, 755 and from his
good fortune there springs up insatiable misery.

But I hold my own mind and think apart from other men. It is the evil
deed that afterwards begets more iniquity 760 like its own breed; but
when a house has straight *dikē*, the lot of its children is blessed always.

strophe 4

But an old *hubris* tends to give birth, 765 in evil men, sooner or later, at
the fated hour of birth, to a young *hubris* and that irresistible,
unconquerable, unholy *daimōn*, Recklessness, 770 and black spirits of
Derangement [*atē*] upon the household, which resemble their parents.

antistrophe 4

But *dikē* shines in smoke-begrimed dwellings 775 and esteems the
virtuous man. From gilded mansions, where men's hands are foul, she
departs with averted eyes and makes her way to pure homes; she does
not worship the power 780 of wealth stamped counterfeit [*para-sēmos*]
by the praise [*ainos*] of men, and she guides all things to their proper
end.

Enter Agamemnon and Cassandra, in a chariot, with a numerous retinue.

anapests

All hail, my King, sacker of Troy, offspring of Atreus! 785 How shall I
greet you? How shall I do you homage, not overshooting or running

short of the due measure of *kharis*? Many of mortal men put appearance before truth and thereby transgress *dikē*. 790 Every one is ready to heave a sigh over the unfortunate, but no sting of true sorrow reaches the heart; and in seeming sympathy they join in others' joy, forcing their faces into smiles. 795 But whoever is a discerning shepherd of his flock cannot be deceived by men's eyes which, while they feign loyalty of heart, only fawn upon him with watery affection [*philotēs*]. Now in the past, when you marshaled the army in Helen's cause, 800 you were depicted in my eyes—for I will not hide it from you—most ungracefully and as not rightly guiding the helm of your mind in seeking through your sacrifices to bring courage to dying men. 805 But now, from the depth of my heart and with no lack of love...

[*There is a gap in the text.*]

...their ordeal [*ponos*] is joy to those who have won success. In course of time you shall learn by enquiry which ones of the citizens have with *dikē*, and which ones with no true aim, served as guardians of the city.

Agamemnon

810 Argos first, as is *dikē* and proper, I greet, and her local gods who have helped me to my *nostos* and to the justice [*dikē*] I exacted from Priam's city. For listening to no pleadings [*dikē* pl.] by word of mouth, without dissenting voice, they cast into the 815 bloody urn their ballots for the murderous destroying of Ilion; but to the urn of acquittal that no hand filled, Hope alone drew near. The smoke even now is a proper signal [*eu-sēmos*] of the city's fall. The blasts of Destruction [*atē*] still live, and 820 the embers, as they die, breathe forth rich fumes of wealth. For this success we should render to the gods a return in ever-mindful *kharis*, seeing that we have thrown round the city the toils of vengeance, and in a woman's cause it has been laid low by the fierce Argive beast, 825 brood of the horse, a shield-armed folk, that launched its leap when the Pleiades waned. Vaulting over its towered walls, the ravaging lion lapped up his fill of the blood of *turannoi*.

For the gods then I have stretched out this prelude. 830 But, touching your sentiments—which I heard and still bear in memory—I both agree and you have in me an advocate. For few there are among men in whom it is inborn to admire without envy the good fortune of a *philos*. For the venom of malevolence settles upon the heart and 835 doubles the burden of him who suffers from that plague: he is himself weighed down by his own calamity, and groans to see another's prosperity [*olbos*]. From knowledge—for well I know the mirror of companionship—I may call an image of a shade 840 those who feigned exceeding loyalty to me. Only Odysseus, the very man who sailed against his will, once harnessed, proved my zealous yoke-fellow. This I affirm of him whether he is alive or dead.

But, for the rest, in what concerns the *polis* and public worship, 845 we shall appoint public debates in assembly [*agōnes*] and consider. Where all goes well, we must take counsel so that it may long endure; but whenever there is need of healing remedy, we will by kind appliance of cautery or the knife 850 endeavor to avert the mischief of the disease.

And now I will pass to my palace halls and to my household hearth, and first of all pay greeting to the gods. They who sent me forth have brought me home again. May victory, now that it has attended me, remain ever with me constant to the end!

He descends from his chariot. Clytemnestra enters, attended by maidservants carrying purple tapestries.

Clytemnestra

855 Citizens of Argos, you Elders present here, I shall not be ashamed to confess in your presence my fondness for my husband—with time diffidence dies away in humans.

Untaught by others, I can tell of my own weary life 860 all the long while this my lord was beneath Ilion's walls. First and foremost, it is a terrible evil for a wife to sit forlorn at home, severed from her husband, forever hearing malignant rumors manifold, and for one messenger after

another 865 to come bearing tidings of disaster, each worse than the last, and cry them to the household. And as for wounds, had my lord received so many as rumor kept pouring into the house, no net would have been pierced so full of holes as he. Or if he had died as often as reports claimed, 870 then truly he might have had three bodies—a second Geryon—and have boasted of having taken on him a triple cover of earth—ample that above; of that below I speak not—one death for each different shape. Because of such malignant tales as these, 875 many times others have had to loose the high-hung halter from my neck, held in its strong grip. It is for this reason, in fact, that our boy, Orestes, does not stand here beside me, as he should—he in whom are authorized the pledges of my love and yours. Nor should you think this strange. 880 For he is in the protecting care of our well-intentioned ally, Strophios of Phocis, who warned me of trouble on two scores—your own peril beneath Ilion’s walls, and then the chance that the people in clamorous revolt might overturn the Council, as it is natural 885 for men to trample all the more upon the fallen. Truly such an excuse supports no guile.

As for myself, the welling fountains of my tears are utterly dried up—not a drop remains. In nightlong vigils my eyes are sore 890 with weeping for the beacon-lights set for you but always neglected. The faint whirl of the buzzing gnat often woke me from dreams in which I beheld more of your sufferings [*pathos* pl.] than the time of sleep could have compassed.

895 But now, having borne all this, my mind freed from its sorrow [*penthos*], I would hail my lord here as the watchdog of the fold, the savior [*sōtēr*] forestay of the ship, firm-based pillar of the lofty roof, only-begotten son of a father, or land glimpsed by men at sea beyond their hope, 900 dawn most fair to look upon after storm, the gushing stream to thirsty wayfarer—sweet is it to escape all stress of need. Such truly are the greetings of which I deem him worthy. But let envy be far removed, since many were the ills 905 we endured before. And now, I

pray you, *philos*, dismount from your car, but do not set on common earth the foot, my lord, that has trampled upon Ilion.

To her attendants.

Why this loitering, women, to whom I have assigned the task to strew with tapestries the place where he shall go? 910 Quick! With purple let his path be strewn, that *dikē* may usher him into a home he never hoped to see. The rest my unslumbering vigilance shall order duly—if it please the god—even as is ordained.

Agamemnon

Offspring of Leda, guardian of my house, 915 your *ainos* fits well with my absence; for you have drawn it out to ample length. But becoming praise—this prize should rightly proceed from other lips. For the rest, treat me not as if I were a woman, in a luxuriant [*habros*] manner, nor, like some barbarian, 920 grovel before me with widemouthed acclaim; and do not draw down envy upon my path by strewing it with tapestries. It is the gods we must honor thus; but it is not possible for a mortal to tread upon woven fineries without fear. 925 I tell you to revere me not as a god, but as a man. Footmats and woven garments are different things when they are sounded out by the voice of Rumor; to think no folly is the best gift of the gods. Only when man's life comes full circle [*olbios*]; 930 and if I may act in all things as I do now, I have good confidence.

Clytemnestra

Come now, do not speak so contrary to my purpose.

Agamemnon

Purpose! Be assured that I shall not weaken mine.

Clytemnestra

You must in fear have vowed to the gods thus to act.

Agamemnon

With full knowledge I pronounced this my definitive word [*telos*], if

ever man did.

Clytemnestra

935 What do you suppose that Priam would have done, if he had achieved your triumph?

Agamemnon

He would have set foot upon the woven fineries, I certainly believe.

Clytemnestra

Then do not be ashamed of mortal reproach.

Agamemnon

And yet a people's voice is a mighty power.

Clytemnestra

True, yet he who is unenvied is unenviable.

Agamemnon

940 Surely it is not woman's part to long for fighting.

Clytemnestra

True, but it is seemly for the fortunate [*olbioi*] to yield the victory.

Agamemnon

What? Is this the kind of victory in strife that you prize?

Clytemnestra

Oh yield! Yet of your own free will entrust the victory to me.

Agamemnon

Well, if you will have your way, 945 quick, let some one loose my sandals, which, slavelike, serve the treading of my foot! As I walk upon these purple vestments may I not be struck from afar by any glance of the gods' jealous eye. A terrible shame it is for one's foot to mar the resources of the house by wasting wealth and costly woven work.

950 So much for this. Receive this foreign girl into the house with kindness. A god from afar looks graciously upon a gentle master; for no

one freely takes the yoke of slavery. But she, **955** the choicest flower of rich treasure, has followed in my train, my army's gift. Since I have been subdued and must listen to you in this, I will tread upon a purple pathway as I pass to my palace halls.

Clytemnestra

There is the sea—and who shall drain it dry? It produces the oozing stain of abundant purple, equal in value to silver ⁹⁶⁰—an ooze that forever renews itself, with which to dye garments; and the palace, O king, with the help of the gods, is sustainable—with its supply of these [purple garments]. The palace doesn't know what it is to be in poverty of these things. And I would have vowed in my prayers to arrange for the trampling of not one but many garments, if it had been so ordered by the oracles for the palace, ⁹⁶⁵ back when I was planning to arrange a payback for your life [*psūkhē*]. For if the root still lives, leaves come again to the house and spread their over-reaching shade against the scorching dog star Sirius; so, now that you have come to hearth [*hestia*] and home, it signals [*sēmainein*] that warmth has come in wintertime; **970** and again, when Zeus makes wine from the bitter grape, then immediately there is coolness in the house when its rightful lord occupies his halls.

Agamemnon enters the palace.

O Zeus, Zeus, you who bring things to fulfillment [*telos*], fulfill my prayers! May you see to that which you mean to fulfill!

She exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

975 Why does this terror so persistently hover standing before my prophetic heart? Why does my song, unbidden and unfed, chant strains of augury? Why does assuring confidence not sit on my heart's throne **980** and spurn the terror like an uninterpretable dream? But Time has

collected the sands of the shore upon the cables cast thereon 985 when the shipborn army sped forth for Ilion.

antistrophe 1

Of their *nostos* I learn with my own eyes and need no other witness. 990 Yet still my *thūmos* within me, self-taught [*auto-didaktos*], intones the lyreless dirge of the Avenging Spirit [Erinys], and cannot wholly win its customary confidence of hope. 995 Not for nothing is my bosom disquieted as my heart throbs within my justly fearful *phrenes* in eddying tides that warn of some event. But I pray that my expectation may fall out false 1000 and not come to fulfillment.

strophe 2

Truly blooming health does not rest content within its due bounds; for disease ever presses close against it, its neighbor with a common wall. 1005 So human fortune, when holding onward in straight course, strikes upon a hidden reef. And yet, if with a well-measured throw, caution heaves overboard 1010 a portion of the gathered wealth, the whole house, with woe overladen, does not founder nor engulf the hull. Truly the generous gift from Zeus, 1015 rich and derived from yearly furrows, makes an end of the plague of famine.

antistrophe 2

But a man's blood, once it has first fallen by murder to earth 1020 in a dark tide—who by magic spell shall call it back? Even he who possessed the skill to raise from the dead⁵—did not Zeus make an end of him as warning? 1025 And unless one fate ordained of the gods restrains another fate from winning the advantage, my heart would outstrip my tongue and pour forth its fears; 1030 but, as it is, it mutters only in the dark, distressed and hopeless ever to unravel anything in time when my *phrēn* is aflame.

Clytemnestra enters.

Clytemnestra

1035 Get inside, you too, Cassandra; since it is not with *mēnis* that Zeus

has appointed you to share the holy water of a house where you may take your stand, with many another slave, at the altar of the god who guards its wealth. Get down from the car and do not be too proud; 1040 for even Alkmene's son,⁶ men say, once endured to be sold and to eat the bread of slavery. But if such fortune should of necessity fall to the lot of any, there is good cause for gratitude [*kharis*] in having masters of ancient wealth; for they who, beyond their hope, have reaped a rich harvest of possessions, 1045 are cruel to their slaves in every way, even exceeding due measure. You have from us such usage as custom [*nomos*] warrants.

Chorus

To Cassandra.

It is to you she has been speaking and clearly. Since you are in the toils of destiny, perhaps you will obey, if you are so inclined; but perhaps you will not.

Clytemnestra

1050 Well, if her language is not strange and foreign, even as a swallow's, I must speak within her comprehension and move her to comply.

Chorus

Go with her. With things as they now stand, she gives you the best. Do as she bids and leave your seat in the car.

Clytemnestra

1055 I have no time to waste with this woman here outside; for already the victims stand by the central hearth awaiting the sacrifice—a grace [*kharis*] we never expected to be ours. As for you, if you will take any part, make no delay. 1060 But if, failing to understand, you do not catch my meaning, then, instead of speech, make a sign with your barbarian hand.

Chorus

It is an interpreter [*hermēneus*] and a plain one that the stranger seems to need. She bears herself like a wild creature newly captured.

Clytemnestra

No, she is mad and listens to her wild mood, 1065 since she has come here from a newly captured city, and does not know how to tolerate the bit until she has foamed away her fretfulness in blood. No! I will waste no more words upon her to be insulted thus.

She exits.

Chorus

But I will not be angry, since I pity her. 1070 Come, unhappy one, leave the car; yield to necessity and take upon you this novel yoke.

Kassandra

strophe 1

Woe, woe, woe! O Apollo, O Apollo!

Chorus

Wherefore your cry of “woe” in Loxias’⁷ name? 1075 He is not the kind of god that has to do with mourners.

Kassandra

antistrophe 1

Woe, woe, woe! O Apollo, O Apollo!

Chorus

Once more with ill-omened words she cries to the god who should not be present at times of lamentation.

Kassandra

strophe 2

1080 Apollo, Apollo! God of the Ways, my destroyer! For you have destroyed me this second time utterly.

Chorus

I think that she is about to prophesy about her own miseries. The divine gift still abides even in the *phrēn* of one enslaved.

Kassandra

antistrophe 2

1085 Apollo, Apollo! God of the Ways, my destroyer! Ah, what way is this that you have brought me? To what house?

Chorus

To that of Atreus' sons. If you do not perceive this, I'll tell it to you. And you shall not say that it is untrue.

Kassandra

strophe 3

1090 No, no, rather to a god-hating house, a house that knows many a horrible butchery of kin, a slaughter-house of men and a floor swimming with blood.

Chorus

The stranger seems keen-scented as a hound; she is on the trail where she will discover blood.

Kassandra

antistrophe 3

1095 Here is the evidence in which I put my trust! Behold those babies bewailing their own butchery and their roasted flesh eaten by their father!

Chorus

Your *kleos* for reading the future had reached our ears; but we have no need of spokesmen [*prophētēs* pl.] here.

Kassandra

strophe 4

1100 Alas, what can she be planning? What is this fresh woe [*akhos*] she contrives here within, what monstrous, monstrous horror, unbearable to *philoï*, beyond all remedy? And help stands far away!

Chorus

1105 These prophesyings pass my comprehension; but the former I understood—the whole city rings with them.

Kassandra

antistrophe 4

Ah, damned woman, will you do this thing? Your husband, the partner of your bed, when you have cheered him with the bath, will you—how shall I tell the end [*telos*]? 1110 Soon it will be done. Now this hand, now that, she stretches forth!

Chorus

Not yet do I comprehend; for now, after riddles [*ainigma* pl.], I am bewildered by dark oracles.

Kassandra

strophe 5

Ah! Ah! What apparition is this? 1115 Is it a net of death? No, it is a snare that shares his bed, that shares the guilt of murder. Let the fatal group [*stasis*], insatiable [without *koros*] against the family, raise a shout of jubilation over a victim accursed!

Chorus

What Spirit of Vengeance [*Erinyes*] is this that you bid 1120 raise its voice over this house? Your words do not cheer me. Back to my heart surge the drops of my pallid blood, even as when they drip from a mortal wound, ebbing away as life's beams sink low; and Destruction [*atē*] comes speedily.

Kassandra

antistrophe 5

1125 Ah, ah, see there, see there! Keep the bull from his mate! She has caught him in the robe and gores him with the crafty device of her black horn! He falls in a vessel of water! It is of doom wrought by guile in a murderous cauldron that I am telling you.

Chorus

1130 I cannot boast that I am a keen judge of prophecies; but these, I think, spell some evil. But from prophecies what word of good ever comes to mortals? Through terms of evil their wordy arts 1135 bring men to know fear chanted in prophetic strains.

Kassandra

strophe 6

Alas, alas, the sorrow of my ill-starred doom! For it is my own suffering [*pathos*], crowning the cup, that I bewail. Ah, to what end did you bring me here, unhappy as I am? For nothing except to die—and not alone. What else?

Chorus

1140 Frenzied in *phrenes* you are, by some god possessed, and you wail in wild strains your own fate, like that brown bird that never ceases making lament—alas!—and in the misery of her *phrenes* moans Itys, Itys, 1145 throughout all her days abounding in sorrow, the nightingale.⁸

Kassandra

antistrophe 6

Ah, fate of the clear-voiced nightingale! The gods clothed her in a winged form and gave to her a sweet life without tears. But for me waits destruction by the two-edged sword.

Chorus

1150 From where come these vain pangs of prophecy that assail you? And why do you mold to melody these terrors with dismal cries blended with piercing strains? How do you know the bounds of the path of your 1155 ill-boding prophecy?

Kassandra

strophe 7

Ah, the marriage, the marriage of Paris, that destroyed his *philoi*! Ah me, Scamander, my native stream! Upon your banks in bygone days, unhappy maid, was I nurtured with fostering care; 1160 but now by Cocytus and the banks of Acheron,² I think, I soon must chant my prophecies.

Chorus

What words are these you utter, words all too plain? A newborn child hearing them could understand. I am smitten with a deadly pain, while, 1165 by reason of your cruel fortune, you cry aloud your pitiful moans that break my heart to hear.

Kassandra

antistrophe 7

O the ordeals [*ponoi*], the ordeals [*ponoi*] of my city utterly destroyed! Alas, the sacrifices my father offered, the many pasturing cattle slain to save its towers! 1170 Yet they provided no remedy to save the city from suffering even as it has; and I, my *noos* at boiling point, must soon fall to the ground.

Chorus

Your present speech chimes with your former strain. 1175 Surely some malignant spirit, falling upon you with heavy swoop, moves you to chant your piteous woes fraught with death. But the end I am helpless to discover.

Kassandra

And now, no more shall my prophecy peer forth from behind a veil like a newlywed bride; ¹¹⁸⁰ but it appears to be rushing toward me, breathing, blowing, toward the sun's rising, so as to dash against its rays, like a wave. It is something far mightier than this pain of mine here. No more by riddles [*ainigma* plural] will I put knowledge into your thinking [*phrenes*]. And bear me witness, as, running close behind, 1185

I scent the track of crimes done long ago. For from this roof never
departs a *khōros* chanting in unison, but singing not a happy tune; for it
tells not of good. And so, gorged on human blood, so as to be the more
emboldened, a reveling band [*kōmos*] of kindred Furies [*Erinyes*] haunts
the house, 1190 hard to drive away. Lodged within its halls they sing
their hymn, the primal *atē*; and, each in turn, they spurn with loathing
a brother's bed, for they bitterly spurn the one who defiled it.¹⁰ Have I
missed the mark, or, like a true archer, do I strike my quarry? 1195 Or
am I prophet of lies, a door-to-door babbler? Bear witness upon your
oath that I know the deeds of error, ancient in story, of this house.

Chorus

How could an oath, a pledge although given in honor, effect any cure?
Yet I marvel at you that, 1200 though bred beyond the sea [*pontos*], you
speak truth of a foreign *polis*, even as if you had been present there.

Kassandra

The seer Apollo appointed me to this office.

Chorus

Can it be that he, a god, was smitten with desire?

Kassandra

Before now I was ashamed [*aidōs*] to speak of this.

Chorus

1205 In prosperity everyone becomes delicate [*habros*].

Kassandra

Oh, but he wrestled me down, breathing down ardent pleasure [*khāris*]
on me.

Chorus

Did you in due course come to the rite of marriage?

Kassandra

I consented to Loxias but broke my word.

Chorus

1210 Were you already possessed by the art inspired of the god?

Kassandra

Already I prophesied to my countrymen all their sufferings [*pathos* pl.].

Chorus

How came it then that you were unharmed by Loxias' wrath?

Kassandra

Ever since that fault I could persuade no one of anything.

Chorus

And yet to us at least the prophecies you utter seem true enough.

Kassandra

Ah, ah! Oh, oh, the agony! 1215 Once more the dreadful ordeal [*ponos*] of true prophecy whirls and distracts me with its ill-boding onset. Do you see them there—sitting before the house—young creatures like phantoms of dreams? Children, they seem, slaughtered by their own kindred, 1220 their hands full of the meat of their own flesh; they are clear to my sight, holding their vitals and their inward parts—piteous burden!—which their father tasted. For this cause I tell you that a strengthless lion, wallowing in his bed, plots vengeance, 1225 a watchman waiting—ah me!—for my master's coming home—yes, my master, for I must bear the yoke of slavery. The commander of the fleet and the overthrower of Ilion little knows what deeds shall be brought to evil accomplishment by the hateful hound, whose tongue licked his hand, who stretched forth her ears in gladness, 1230 like treacherous *atē*. Such boldness has she—a woman to slay a man. What odious monster shall I fitly call her? An Amphisbaina?¹¹ Or a Scylla, tenanting the rocks, a pest to mariners, 1235 a raging, devil's mother, breathing relentless war against her *philoī*? And how the all-daring woman raised a shout of triumph, as when the battle turns, while she feigned joy at the salvation [*sōtēriā*] of *nostos*! And yet, it is all one, whether or not I am believed.

What does it matter? 1240 What is to come, will come. And soon you yourself, present here, shall with great pity pronounce me all too true [*alēthēs*] a prophetess.

Chorus

Thyestes' banquet on his children's flesh I understood, and I tremble. Terror possesses me as I hear the truth [*alēthēs*], nothing fashioned out of falsehood to resemble truth. 1245 But as for the rest I heard I am thrown off the track.

Kassandra

I say you shall look upon Agamemnon dead.

Chorus

Lull your speech, miserable girl, making it *euphēmos*.^{[12](#)}

Kassandra

Over what I tell no healing god presides.

Chorus

No, if it is to be; but may it not be so!

Kassandra

1250 You do but pray; their business is to slay.

Chorus

What man is he that contrived this woe [*akhos*]?

Kassandra

Surely you must have missed the meaning of my prophecies.

Chorus

I do not understand the scheme of him who is to do the deed.

Kassandra

And yet all too well I understand the Greek language.

Chorus

1255 So, too, do the Pythian oracles; yet they are hard to understand.

Kassandra

Oh, oh! What fire! It comes upon me! Woe, woe! Lykeian Apollo! Ah me, ah me! This two-footed lioness, who mates with a wolf in the absence of the noble lion, 1260 will slay me, miserable as I am. As if brewing a drug, she vows that with her wrath she will mix requital for me too, while she whets her sword against her husband, to take murderous vengeance for bringing me here. Why then do I bear these mockeries of myself, 1265 this wand, these prophetic chaplets on my neck?

Breaking her wand, she throws it and the other insignia of her prophetic office upon the ground, and tramples them underfoot.

You at least I will destroy before I die myself. To destruction with you! And fallen there, thus do I repay you. Enrich with doom some other in my place. Look, Apollo himself is stripping me 1270 of my prophetic garb—he that saw me mocked to bitter scorn, even in this bravery, by friends turned foes, with one accord, in vain!—but, like some wandering vagabond, called “beggar,” “wretch,” “starveling,” I bore it all. 1275 And now the prophet, having undone me, his prophetess, has brought me to this lethal pass. Instead of my father’s altar a block awaits me, where I am to be butchered in a hot and bloody sacrifice. Yet, we shall not die without vengeance [*tīmē*] from the gods; 1280 for there shall come in turn another, our avenger, a scion of the family, to slay his mother and exact requital for his sire; an exile, a wanderer, a stranger from this land, he shall return to put the coping-stone upon these unspeakable derangements [*atai*] of his house. For the gods have sworn a mighty oath 1285 that his slain father’s outstretched corpse shall bring him home. Why then thus raise my voice in pitiful lament? Since first I saw the city of Ilion fare how it has fared, while her captors, by the gods’ sentence, are coming to such an end, 1290 I will go in and meet my fate. I will dare to die. This door I greet as the gates of Death. And I

pray that, dealt a mortal stroke, without a struggle, my life-blood ebbing away in easy death, I may close these eyes.

Chorus

1295 O woman, very pitiful and very *sophē*, long has been your speech. But if, in truth, you have knowledge of your own death, how can you step with calm courage to the altar like an ox, driven by the god?

Kassandra

There is no escape; no, my friends, there is none any more.

Chorus

1300 Yet he that is last has the advantage in respect of time.

Kassandra

The day has come; flight would profit me but little.

Chorus

Well, be assured, you are brave suffering with courageous *phrēn*.

Kassandra

None who is happy is commended thus.

Chorus

Yet surely to die with *kleos* is a grace [*kharis*] for mortals.

Kassandra

1305 Alas for you, my father, and for your noble children!

She starts back in horror.

Chorus

What ails you? What terror turns you back?

Kassandra

Alas, alas!

Chorus

Why do you cry “alas”? Unless perhaps there is some horror in your

phrenes.

Kassandra

This house stinks of blood-dripping slaughter.

Chorus

1310 And what of that? It is just the savor of victims at the hearth.

Kassandra

It is like a breath from the grave.

Chorus

You are not speaking of proud Syrian incense for the house.

Kassandra

Nay, I will go to bewail also within the palace my own and Agamemnon's fate. Enough of life! 1315 Alas, my friends, not with vain terror do I shrink, as a bird that fears a bush. After I am dead, bear witness for me of this—when for me, a woman, another woman shall be slain, and for an ill-wedded man another man shall fall. 1320 I claim this from you as my *xenos* now that I am about to die.

Chorus

Poor woman, I pity you for your death foretold.

Kassandra

I still want to have the chance, just for one moment, to make a speech—or a lament [*thrēnos*] that I perform for my own self. I pray to the sun, as I face its light for the last time, that the enemies may pay a bloody penalty to compensate for my death as well, ¹³²⁵ which is the murder of a slave, an easy defeat. Ah, I cry out about the things that happen to humans! Even when things go well, one can still compare it all to a shadow [*skiā*]; but when things go badly, the dabbing of a wet sponge blots out the drawing. ¹³³⁰ And this I think is far more pitiable than that.

She enters the palace.

Chorus

anapests

It is the nature of all human kind to be unsatisfied with prosperity. From stately halls no one bars it with warning voice that utters the words “Enter no more.” 1335 So the Blessed Ones [*makares*] have granted to our prince to capture Priam’s town; and, divinely-honored, he returns to his home. Yet if he now must pay the penalty for the blood shed by others before him, and by dying for the dead 1340 he is to bring to pass retribution of other deaths, what mortal man, on hearing this, can boast that he was born with an unharmed fate [*daimōn*]?

A shriek is heard from within.

Agamemnon

Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow!

Chorus

Silence! Who is this that cries out, wounded by a mortal blow?

Agamemnon

1345 And once again, alas! I am struck by a second blow.

Chorus

– The deed is done, it seems—to judge by the groans of the King. But come, let us take counsel together if there is perhaps some safe plan of action.

– I tell you my advice: summon the townsfolk to bring rescue here to the palace.

– 1350 To my thinking we must burst in and charge them with the deed while the sword is still dripping in their hands.

– I, too, am for taking part in some such plan, and vote for action of some sort. It is no time to keep on delaying.

– It is plain. Their opening act 1355 is the signal [*sēmeion* pl.] of a plan to set up a tyranny in the *polis*.

– Yes, because we are wasting time, while they, trampling underfoot the

kleos of Delay, allow their hands no slumber.

– I know not what plan I could hit on to propose. It is the doer's part likewise to do the planning.

– 1360 I too am of this mind, for I know no way to bring the dead back to life by mere words.

– What? To prolong our lives shall we thus submit to the rule of those defilers of the house?

– No, it is not to be endured. No, death would be better, 1365 for that would be a milder lot than tyranny.

– And shall we, upon the evidence of mere groans, divine that the man is dead?

– We should be sure of the facts before we indulge our wrath. For surmise differs from assurance.

– 1370 I am supported on all sides to approve this course: that we get clear assurance how it stands with Atreus' son.

The bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra are disclosed, with Clytemnestra standing beside them.

Clytemnestra

Much have I said before to serve my need and I shall feel no shame to contradict it now. For how else could one, devising hate against enemies [*ekhthroi*] 1375 who bear the semblance of *philo*i, fence the snares of ruin too high to be overleaped? This is the *agōn* of an ancient feud, pondered by me of old, and it has come—however long delayed. I stand where I dealt the blow; my purpose is achieved. 1380 Thus have I done the deed—deny it I will not. Round him, as if to catch a haul of fish, I cast an impassable net—fatal wealth of robe—so that he should neither escape nor ward off doom. Twice I struck him, and with two groans 1385 his limbs relaxed. Once he had fallen, I dealt him yet a third stroke as a prayer of gratitude [*kharis*] to the infernal Zeus, the savior [*sōtēr*] of the dead. Fallen thus, he gasped away his *thūmos*, and as he breathed forth quick spurts of blood, 1390 he struck me with dark drops of gory

dew; while I rejoiced no less than the sown earth is gladdened in the sky's refreshing rain at the birthtime of the flower buds.

Since this is so, old men of Argos, rejoice, if you would rejoice; as for me, I glory in the deed. 1395 And had it been a fitting act to pour libations on the corpse, over him this would have been done with *dikē*. With *dikē* and then some! With so many accursed lies has he filled the mixing-bowl in his own house, and now he has come home and himself drained it to the dregs.

Chorus

We are shocked at your tongue, how bold-mouthed you are, 1400 that over your husband you can utter such a boastful speech.

Clytemnestra

You are testing me as if I were a witless woman. But my heart does not quail, and I say to you who know it well—and whether you wish to praise or to blame me, it is all one—here is Agamemnon, 1405 my husband, now a corpse, the work of this right hand, an artisan of *dikē*. So stands the case.

Chorus

strophe 1

Woman, what poisonous herb nourished by the earth have you tasted, what potion drawn from the flowing sea, that you have taken upon yourself this maddened rage and the loud curses voiced by the community [*dēmos*]? 1410 You have cast him off; you have cut him off; and out from the *polis* you shall be cast, a burden of hatred to your people.

Clytemnestra

It's now that you would doom me to exile from the *polis*, to the hatred of my people and the curses of the *dēmos*; though then you had nothing to urge against him that lies here. And yet he, 1415 caring no more than if it had been a beast that perished—though sheep were plenty in his

fleecy folds—he sacrificed his own child, she whom I bore with most *philos* travail, to charm the winds of Thrace. Is it not he whom you should have banished from this land 1420 in requital for his polluting deed? No! When you arraign what I have done, you are a stern judge. Well, I warn you: threaten me thus on the understanding that I am prepared, conditions equal, to let you lord it over me if you shall vanquish me by force. But if a god shall bring the contrary to pass, 1425 you shall learn equilibrium [*sōphroneîn*] though taught the lesson late.

Chorus

antistrophe 1

You are proud of spirit, and your speech is overbearing. Even as your *phrēn* is maddened by your deed of blood, upon your face a stain of blood shows full plain to behold. Bereft of all honor, forsaken of *philoî*, 1430 you shall hereafter atone for stroke with stroke.

Clytemnestra

Listen then to this too, this the righteous sanction on my oath: I swear by *dikē*, exacted for my child, by *atē*, and by the Erinyes, to whom I sacrificed that man, that my expectations do not tread for me the halls of fear, 1435 so long as the fire upon my hearth is kindled by Aegisthus, loyal in *phrenes* to me as in days gone by. For he is no slight shield of confidence to me. Here lies the man who did me wrong, plaything of each Khrysēis at Ilion; 1440 and here she lies, his captive, and augress, and concubine, his oracular faithful whore, yet equally familiar with the seamen's benches. The pair has met no undeserved fate. For he lies thus; while she, who, like a swan, 1445 has sung her last lament in death, lies here, his beloved; but to me she has brought for my bed an added relish of delight.

Chorus

strophe 2

Alas! Ah, that some fate, free from excess of pain, nor yet lingering, 1450 might come full soon and bring to us everlasting and endless sleep,

now that our most gracious guardian has been laid low, who in a woman's cause had much endured and by a woman's hand has lost his life. **1455** O Helen, distorted in *noos*, who did yourself alone push over the brink these many lives [*psūkhai*], these lives exceeding many, beneath the walls of Troy. Now you have bedecked yourself with your final crown, that shall long last in memory, **1460** because of blood not to be washed away. Truly in those days *eris*, an affliction that has subdued our lord, dwelt in the house.

Clytemnestra

anapests

Do not burden yourself with thoughts such as these, nor invoke upon yourself the fate of death. Nor yet turn your wrath upon Helen, **1465** and deem her a slayer of men, as if she alone had pushed over the brink many a Danaan life [*psūkhē*] and had wrought anguish past all cure.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

O *daimōn* who falls upon this house and Tantalus' two descendants, **1470** you who by the hands of women wield a power [*kratos*] matching their temper, a rule bitter to my *psūkhē*! Perched over his body like a hateful raven, in hoarse notes she chants her song of triumph.

Clytemnestra

anapests

1475 Now you have corrected the judgment of your lips in that you conjure up the thrice-gorged fate [*daimōn*] of this family.¹³ For by him the lust for lapping blood is fostered in the mouth; so before **1480** the ancient woe [*akhos*] is healed, there is fresh blood.

Chorus

strophe 3

So you speak words of praise [*ainos*] about a mighty *daimōn*, haunting the house, and heavy in his *mēnis*—alas, alas!—an evil tale of catastrophic

fate insatiable [without *koros*]; 1485 woe, woe, done by the will of Zeus, author of all, worker of all! For what is brought to pass for mortal men save by the will of Zeus? What of this is not wrought by god?

Alas, alas, my King, my King, 1490 how shall I bewail you? How to voice my *phrēn* that is dear [*philē*] to you? To lie in this spider's web, breathing forth your life in an impious death! Alas, to lie on this ignoble bed, struck down in treacherous death wrought 1495 by a weapon of double edge wielded by your own wife's hand!

Clytemnestra

anapests

Do you affirm this deed is mine? Do not imagine that I am Agamemnon's spouse. 1500 A phantom resembling that corpse's wife, the ancient bitter evil spirit of Atreus, that grim banqueter, has offered him in payment, sacrificing a full-grown victim in vengeance for those slain children.

Chorus

antistrophe 3

1505 That you are not responsible [*aitios*] for this murder—who will bear you witness? How could anyone do so? And yet the avenger from his father might well be your accomplice. By force 1510 amid streams of kindred blood black *Arēs* presses on to where he shall grant vengeance for the gore of children served for meat.

Alas, alas, my King, my King, how shall I bewail you? 1515 How to voice my *phrēn* that is dear [*philē*] to you? To lie in this spider's web, breathing forth your life in an impious death! Alas, to lie on this ignoble bed, struck down in treacherous death 1520 wrought by a weapon of double edge wielded by your own wife's hand!

Clytemnestra

anapests

I do not think he met an ignoble death. Did he not himself by treachery bring ruin [*atē*] on his house? 1525 Yet, as he has suffered—worthy prize of worthy deed—for what he did to my sweet flower, shoot sprung from him, the much-bewailed Iphigeneia, let him make no great boasts in the halls of Hādēs, since with death dealt him by the sword he has paid for what he first began.

Chorus

strophe 4

1530 Bereft of any ready expedient of thought, I am bewildered where to turn now that the house is tottering. I fear the beating storm of bloody rain that shakes the house; no longer does it descend in drops.

1535 Yet on other whetstones Destiny [*moira*] is sharpening justice [*dikē*] for another evil deed.

O Earth, Earth, if only you had taken me to yourself before I ever lived to see my lord 1540 occupying a lowly bed of a silver-sided bath! Who shall bury him? Who shall lament him? Will you harden your heart to do this—you who have slain your own husband—to lament for him 1545 and crown your unholy work with a *kharis* without *kharis* to his *psūkhē*, atoning for your monstrous deeds? And who, as with tears he utters praise [*ainos*] over the godlike man's grave, 1550 shall sorrow in truth [*alētheia*] of *phrenes*?

Clytemnestra

anapests

To care for that duty is no concern of yours. By our hands down he fell, down to death, and down below shall we bury him—but not with wailings from his household. 1555 No! Iphigeneia, his daughter, as is due, shall meet her father lovingly at the swift-flowing ford of sorrows [*akhos* pl.], and shall fling her arms around him and kiss him.

Chorus

antistrophe 4

1560 Reproach thus meets reproach in turn—hard is the struggle to decide. The spoiler is despoiled, the slayer pays penalty. Yet, while Zeus remains on his throne, it remains true: “The doer suffers [*paskhein*].” For it is divine law. 1565 Who can cast from out the house the seed of the curse? The family is bound fast in calamity [*atē*].

Clytemnestra

anapests

You have touched with truth [*alētheia*] upon this oracular saying. As for me, however, I am willing to make a sworn compact with the *daimōn* of the Pleisthenidai¹⁴ 1570 that I will be content with what is done, hard to endure though it is. Henceforth he shall leave this house and bring tribulation upon some other family by murder of kin. A small part of the wealth is fully enough for me, if I may but rid these halls 1575 of the frenzy of mutual murder.

Aegisthus enters with armed guards.

Aegisthus

Hail gracious light of the day of retribution! At last the hour has come when I can say that the gods who avenge mortal men look down from on high upon the sorrows [*akhos* pl.] of earth— 1580 now that, to my joy, I behold this man lying here in a robe spun by the Avenging Spirits [*Erinyes*] and making full payment for the deeds contrived in craft by his father’s hand.

For Atreus, lord of this land, this man’s father, challenged in his sovereignty [*kratos*], drove forth from *polis* and from home Thyestes, who—to speak it clearly—was my father 1585 and his own brother. And when he had come back as a suppliant to his hearth, unhappy Thyestes secured such safety for his lot as not himself to suffer death and stain with his blood his native soil. 1590 But Atreus, the godless father of this slain man, with welcome more hearty than kind, on the pretence that he was cheerfully celebrating a happy day by serving meat, served up to

my father a banquet of his own children's flesh. 1595 The toes and fingers he broke off...

[Some lines are missing.]

...sitting apart. And when unknowingly my father had quickly taken servings that he did not recognize, he ate a meal which, as you see, has proved fatal to his family. Now, discovering his unhallowed deed, he uttered a great cry, reeled back, vomiting forth the slaughtered flesh, and invoked 1600 an unbearable curse upon the line of Pelops, kicking the banquet table to aid his curse: "Thus perish all the family of Pleisthenes!" This is the reason that you see this man fallen here. I am he who planned this murder with *dikē*. For together with my hapless father he drove me out, 1605 me his third child, still a baby in swaddling clothes. But grown to manhood, *dikē* has brought me back again. Exile though I was, I laid my hand upon my enemy, compassing every device of cunning to his ruin. 1610 So even death would be sweet to me now that I behold him in the net of *dikē*.

Chorus

Aegisthus, *hubris* amid distress I do not honor. You say that of your own intent you slew this man and did alone plot this pitiful murder. 1615 I tell you in the hour of *dikē* that you yourself—be sure of that—will not escape the people's curses and death by stoning at their hand.

Aegisthus

You speak like that, you who sit at the lower oar when those upon the higher bench control the ship? Old as you are, you shall learn how bitter it is 1620 at your age to be schooled when equilibrium [*sōphroneîn*] is the lesson set before you. Bonds and the pangs of hunger are far the best doctors of the *phrenes* when it comes to instructing the old. Do you have eyes and lack understanding? Do not kick against the goads lest you strike to your own hurt.

Chorus

1625 Woman that you are! Skulking at home and awaiting the return of the men from war, all the while defiling a hero's bed, did you contrive this death against a warrior chief?

Aegisthus

These words of yours likewise shall prove a source of tears. The tongue of Orpheus is quite the opposite of yours. 1630 He led all things by the rapture of his voice; but you, who have stirred our wrath by your silly yelping, shall be led off yourself. You will appear tamer when put down by force.

Chorus

As if you could ever truly be *turannos* here in Argos, you who did contrive this one's death, and 1635 then had not the courage to do this deed of murder with your own hand!

Aegisthus

Because to ensnare him was clearly the woman's part; I was suspect as his enemy of old. However, with his money I shall endeavor to control the citizens; and whoever is unruly, 1640 him I'll yoke with a heavy collar—and he shall be no well-fed trace-horse! No! Loathsome hunger that lives with darkness shall see him turned gentle.

Chorus

Why then, in the baseness of your *psūkhē*, did you not kill him yourself, but leave his slaying to a woman, 1645 a plague to her country and her country's gods? Oh, does Orestes perhaps still behold the light, that, with favoring fortune, he may come home and be the slayer of this pair with victory complete?

Aegisthus

Since you plan to act and speak like that, you shall be taught a lesson soon.

Chorus

1650 On guard, my *philo*i company, the task is close at hand.

Aegisthus

On guard, then! Let every one make ready his sword with hand on hilt.

Chorus

My hand, too, is laid on my sword-hilt, and I do not shrink from death.

Aegisthus

“Death for yourself,” you say. We accept the omen. We welcome fortune’s test.

Clytemnestra

No, most *philos* of men, let us work no further evils. 1655 Even these are many to reap, a wretched harvest. Of woe we have enough; let us have no bloodshed. Old men, go back to your homes, and yield in time to destiny before you come to harm. What we did had to be done. But should this trouble prove enough, we will accept it, 1660 sorely battered as we are by the heavy hand of a *daimōn*. Such is a woman’s counsel, if any care to learn from it.

Aegisthus

But to think that these men should let their wanton tongues thus blossom into speech against me and cast about such insults, putting their fortune [*daimōn*] to the test! To reject balanced [*sōphrōn*] counsel and insult their master!

Chorus

1665 It would not be like men of Argos to cringe before a man as low as you.

Aegisthus

Ha! I will visit you with vengeance yet in days to come.

Chorus

Not if a *daimōn* shall guide Orestes to return home.

Aegisthus

From my own experience I know that exiles feed on hope.

Chorus

Keep on, grow fat while polluting *dikē*, since you can.

Aegisthus

1670 Know that you shall atone to me for your insolent folly.

Chorus

Brag in your bravery like a cock beside his hen.

Clytemnestra

Ignore their idle barking. You and I will be masters of this house and order it aright.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The word *euphēmeîn* means ‘utter in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘be silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] 2. An Erinyes (pl. Erinyes) is a Fury, a supernatural personification of the vengeful anger stored up in those who died.

[[back](#)] 3. Refusal to visualize and verbalize is what *mustērion* requires when outside the sacred context.

[[back](#)] 4. The Greek word *houtōs* translated here as ‘even so’ conventionally introduces an *ainos*.

[[back](#)] 5. Asklepios, son of Apollo and father of the Iliadic physician Makhaon (*Iliad* 2.731, 4.194), in one tradition raised Hippolytus from the dead and was struck by a thunderbolt.

[[back](#)] 6. Hēraklēs once sold himself as a slave to Omphale, queen of Lydia, to purify himself of the murder of Iphitos.

[[back](#)] 7. Apollo's.

[[back](#)] 8. Procne served her husband Tereus the flesh of their son Itys in revenge for Tereus' rape of her sister Philomela. Tereus pursued them, and the gods saved Procne by turning her into a nightingale forever lamenting her dead son Itys (Itylos in the *Odyssey*).

[[back](#)] 9. Rivers of the Underworld.

[[back](#)] 10. Thyestes committed adultery with Aerope, wife of Atreus.

[[back](#)] 11. A serpent that can go forward or backward.

[[back](#)] 12. See previous note on *euphēmos*.

[[back](#)] 13. Referring to the three generations of the family's curse: Tantalus served his son Pelops to the gods and was punished as in *Odyssey* 11.582f.; Pelops' son Atreus; Atreus' son Agamemnon.

[[back](#)] 14. Pleisthenes was an ancestor of Agamemnon.

Libation Bearers

By Aeschylus

Translated by Jim Erdman

Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

At the tomb of Agamemnon. Orestes and Pylades enter.

Orestes

Hermes of the nether world, you who guard the powers [*kratos*] of the ancestors, prove yourself my savior [*sōtēr*] and ally, I entreat you, now that I have come to this land and returned from exile. On this mounded grave I cry out to my father to hearken, 5 to hear me...

[*There is a gap in the text.*]

[Look, I bring] a lock of hair to Inakhos¹ in compensation for his care, and here, a second, in token of my grief [*penthos*]. For I was not present, father, to lament your death, nor did I stretch forth my hand to bear your corpse.

10 What is this I see? What is this throng of women that advances, marked by their sable cloaks? To what calamity should I set this down? Is it some new sorrow that befalls our house? Or am I right to suppose that for my father's sake they bear 15 these libations to appease the powers below? It can only be for this cause: for indeed I think my own sister Electra is approaching, distinguished by her bitter grief [*penthos*]. Oh grant me, Zeus, to avenge my father's death, and may you be my willing ally! 20 Pylades, let us stand apart, that I may know clearly what this band of suppliant women intends.

They exit. Electra enters accompanied by women carrying libations.

Chorus

strophe 1

Sent forth from the palace I have come to convey libations to the sound of sharp blows of my hands. My cheek is marked with bloody gashes 25 where my nails have cut fresh furrows. And yet through all my life [aiōn] my heart is fed with lamentation. Rips are torn by my griefs through the linen web of my garment, torn in the cloth that covers my breast, 30 the cloth of robes struck for the sake of my mirthless misfortunes.

antistrophe 1

For with a hair-raising shriek, the seer [mantis] of dreams for our house, breathing wrath out of sleep, 35 uttered a cry of terror in the untimely [a-(h)ōr-os] part of night from the heart of the palace, a cry that fell heavily on the women's quarter. And those who sort out [krinein] these dreams, bound under pledge, cried out from the god 40 that those beneath the earth cast furious reproaches and rage against their murderers.

strophe 2

Intending to ward off evil with such a graceless grace [kharis], 45 O mother Earth, she sends me forth, godless woman that she is. But I am afraid to utter the words she charged me to speak. For what atonement [lutron] is there for blood fallen to earth? Ah, hearth of utter grief! 50 Ah, house laid low in ruin! Sunless darkness, loathed by men, enshrouds our house due to the death of its master.

antistrophe 2

55 The awe of majesty once unconquered, unvanquished, irresistible in war, that penetrated the ears and phrēn of the people, is now cast off. But there is still fear. And prosperity— 60 this, among mortals, is a god and more than a god. But the balance of dikē keeps watch: swiftly it descends on those in the light; sometimes pain [akhos] waits for those who linger on the frontier of twilight; 65 and others are claimed by strengthless night.

strophe 3

Because of blood drunk up by the fostering earth, the vengeful gore lies clotted and will not dissolve away. Grievous calamity [*atē*] distracts the guilty [*aitios*] man till he is steeped in utter misery.

antistrophe 3

70 But for the violator of a bridal chamber there is no cure. And though all streams flow in one course to cleanse the blood from a polluted hand, they rush in vain.

epode

75 For since the gods laid constraining doom about my *polis* and led me from my father's house to a slave's lot, it is fitting for me to govern my bitter hate, even against my will [*phrenes*], 80 and submit to the wishes of my masters, whether just [*dikaia*] or unjust. But I weep beneath my veil over the senseless fate of my lord, my heart chilled by secret grief [*penthos*].

Electra

⁸⁴ You handmaidens who set our house in order, ⁸⁵ since you are here at this ritual of supplication as my ⁸⁶ attendants, become my partners by giving advice about these things here: ⁸⁷ what should I say while I pour [*kheîn*] these libations [*khoai*] of sorrowful caring? ⁸⁸ How shall I say words that show good thinking [*eu-phrona*], how shall I make a prayer [*kat-eukhesthai*] to my father? ⁸⁹ Shall I say that I bring these offerings from a woman who is near and dear [*philē*] to a dear a man who is near and dear [*philos*], ⁹⁰ from wife to husband—from my own mother? I do not have the assurance for that, nor do I know what I should say as I pour this mixed offering onto my father's tomb. Or shall I speak the words that men are accustomed [*nomos*] to use: "To those who send these honors may he return benefits"—a gift, indeed, to match their evil?

95 Or, in silence and dishonor, even as my father perished, shall I pour them out for the earth to drink and then retrace my steps, like one who carries refuse away from a rite, hurling the vessel from me with averted eyes? 100 In this, *philai*, be my fellow-counselors. For we cherish a

common hatred within our house. Do not hide your counsel in your hearts in fear of anyone. For the portion of fate awaits both the free man and the man enslaved by another's hand. 105 If you have a better course to urge, speak!

Chorus

In reverence for your father's tomb, as if it were an altar, I will speak my thoughts from the heart [*phrēn*], since you command me.

Electra

Speak, even as you revere my father's grave.

Chorus

While you pour, utter benedictions for loyal hearts.

Electra

110 And to what *philo*i should I address them?

Chorus

First to yourself, then to whoever hates Aegisthus.

Electra

Then for myself and for you also shall I make this prayer?

Chorus

That is for you, using your judgment, to consider now for yourself.

Electra

Then whom else should I add to our company [*stasis*]?²

Chorus

115 Remember Orestes, though he is still away from home.

Electra

Well said! You have indeed admonished me thoughtfully [with *phrenes*].

Chorus

For the guilty [*aitioi*] murderers now, mindful of—

Electra

¹¹⁸ What should I say? Instruct me, inexperienced as I am, and lead me in my thinking.

Chorus

¹¹⁹ —Pray that some superhuman force [*daimōn*] or some mortal may come to them [= Clytemnestra and Aegisthus]—

Electra

120 As judge [*dikastēs*] or as bringer of vindication [*dikē*], do you mean?

Chorus

¹²¹ Very simply, just signal that you are acting as one who will kill in repayment for a killing.

Electra

¹²² And is it ritually correct [*eu-sebē*] for me, from the standpoint of the gods?

Chorus

¹²³ —Why not? It is an act of repaying bad things with bad things.

Electra

¹²⁴ Supreme herald [*kērux*] of the realm above and the realm below, O Hermes of the nether world, summon for me ¹²⁵ the superhuman forces [*daimones*] beneath the earth to hear my ¹²⁶ prayers—forces that watch over my father's house, ¹²⁷ and [summon] Earth herself, who gives birth to all things, ¹²⁸ and, having nurtured them, receives from them the flow that they produce. ¹²⁹ And, meanwhile, as I pour [*kheîn*] these liquids of libation [*khernibes*] to the dead, ¹³⁰ I say these things as I call on my father: “Have pity both on me and on *philos* Orestes! How shall we rule our own house? For now we wander like beggars, bartered away by her who bore us, by her who in exchange got as her mate Aegisthus, who was her accomplice in your murder. 135 As for me, I am no better than a slave, Orestes is an outcast from his inheritance, while they in their

insolence revel openly in the winnings of your labors [*ponoi*]. But that Orestes may come home with good fortune I pray to you, father: Oh, hearken to me! 140 And as for myself, grant that I may prove far more circumspect [*sōphrōn*] than my mother and more reverent in deed.

I utter these prayers on our behalf, but I ask that your avenger appear to our foes, father, and that your killers may be killed in just retribution [*dikē*]. 145 So I interrupt my prayer for good to offer them this prayer for evil. But be a bearer of blessings for us to the upper world, with the help of the gods and Earth and *dikē* crowned with victory.”

She pours out the libations.

Such are my prayers, and over them I pour out these libations. 150 It is the proper custom [*nomos*] for you to crown them with lamentations, raising your voices in a chant for the dead.

Chorus

Pour forth your tears, splashing as they fall for our fallen lord, to accompany this protection against evil, this charm for the good 155 against the loathsome pollution. Hear me, oh hear me, my honored lord, out of the darkness of your *phrēn*.

Woe, woe, woe! 160 Oh for a man mighty with the spear to deliver our house, an Arēs, brandishing in the fight the springing Scythian bow and wielding his hilted sword in close combat.

Electra discovers the lock of Orestes' hair.

Electra

My father has by now received the libations, which the earth has drunk. 165 But take your share of this startling utterance [*mūthos*].

Chorus

Speak—but my heart is dancing with fear.

Electra

I see here a lock cut as an offering for the tomb.

Chorus

A man's, or a deep-girdled maiden's?

Electra

170 That is open to conjecture—anyone may guess.

Chorus

How then? Let my age be taught by your youth.

Electra

There is no one who could have cut it but myself.

Chorus

Then they are enemies [*ekhthroi*] who thought it fit to express grief [*penthos*] with a lock of hair.

Electra

And further, in appearance it is very much like...

Chorus

175 Whose lock? This is what I would like to know.

Electra

It is very much like my own in appearance.

Chorus

Then can this be a secret offering from Orestes?

Electra

It is his curling locks that it most resembles.

Chorus

But how did he dare to come here?

Electra

180 He has merely sent this cut lock as a favor [*kharis*] to his father.

Chorus

What you say is no less a cause of tears for me, if he will never again set foot on this land.

Electra

Over my heart, too, there sweeps a surge of bitterness, and I am struck as if a sword had run me through. 185 From my eyes thirsty drops of a stormy flood fall unchecked at the sight of this tress. For how can I expect to find that someone else, some townsman, owns this lock? Nor yet in truth did she clip it from her head, the murderess, 190 my own mother, who has assumed godless *phrenes* regarding her children that ill accords with the name of mother. But as for me, how am I to assent to this outright, that it adorned the head of Orestes, the most *philos* to me of all mortals? No, hope is merely flattering me.

Ah, woe! 195 If only, like a messenger, it had a voice that has *phrenes* in it, so that I would not be tossed by my distracted thoughts. Rather it would plainly bid me to spurn this tress, if it was severed from a hated head. Or if it were a kinsman's, he would share my grief [*penthos*] 200 as an adornment to this tomb and a tribute [*tīmē*] to my father.

But I invoke the gods, who know by what storms we are tossed like seafarers. Yet if I am fated to reach salvation [*sōtēriā*], a great stock may come from a little seed.

205 And look! Another proof! Footprints matching each other—and like my own! Yes, here are the outlines of two sets of feet, his own and some companion's. 210 The heels and the imprints of the tendons agree in proportion with my own tracks. I am in torment, my *phrenes* are in a whirl!

Orestes enters.

Orestes

Give recognition to the gods that your prayers have found fulfillment [*telos*], and pray that success may attend you in the future.

Electra

What? Have I succeeded now by the will of the *daimones*?

Orestes

215 You have come to the sight of what you have long prayed for.

Electra

And do you know whom among mortals I was invoking?

Orestes

I know that you are pining for Orestes.

Electra

Then how have I found an answer to my prayers?

Orestes

Here I am. Search for no other *philos* than me.

Electra

220 But surely, stranger, you are weaving some snare about me?

Orestes

Then I am devising plots against myself.

Electra

No, you wish to mock my distress.

Orestes

Then my own also, if yours.

Electra

Am I then to address you as Orestes in truth?

Orestes

225 No, even though you see him in me, you are slow to learn. Yet at the sight of this tress cut in mourning, and when you were scrutinizing the footprints of my tracks, your thought took wings and you knew you had found me. Put the lock of hair, your own brother's, in the spot it

was cut from, 230 and observe how it matches the hair on your head. And see this piece of weaving, your handiwork, the strokes of the blade and the beasts in the design. Control yourself! Do not stray in your *phrenes* with joy! For I know that our most *philoí* kin are bitter foes to us both.

Electra

235 O most *philon* object of care in your father's house, its hope of the seed of a savior [*sōtēr*] longed for with tears, trust in your prowess and you will win back your father's house. O delightful eyes that have four parts of love for me: for I must call you father; 240 and to you falls the love I should bear my mother, she whom I hate with complete *dikē*; and the love I bore my sister, victim of a pitiless sacrifice; and you were my faithful brother, bringing me your reverence. May Might [*kratos*] and *dikē*, 245 with Zeus, supreme over all, in the third place, lend you their aid!

Orestes

O Zeus, O Zeus, become a sacred observer [*theōros*] of our cause! Behold the orphaned brood of a father eagle that perished in the meshes, in the coils of a fierce viper. They are utterly orphaned, 250 gripped by the famine of hunger: for they are not grown to full strength [*telos*] to bring their father's quarry to the nest. So you see both me and poor Electra here, children bereft of their father, both outcasts alike from our home. 255 If you destroy these nestlings of a father who made sacrifice and gave you great *tīmē*, from what like hand will you receive the homage of rich feasts? Destroy the brood of the eagle and you cannot again send signals [*sēmata*] that mortals will trust; 260 nor, if this royal stock should wither utterly away, will it serve your altars on days when oxen are sacrificed. Oh foster [*komizein*] it, and you may raise our house from low estate to great, though now it seems utterly overthrown.

Chorus

O children, O saviors [*sōtēres*] of your father's hearth, 265 speak not so

loud, children, in case someone should overhear and report all this to our masters merely for the sake of rumor. May I some day see them dead in the ooze of flaming pitch!

Orestes

Surely he will not abandon me, the mighty oracle of Loxias,³ 270 who urged me to brave this peril to the end and loudly proclaims calamities [atai] that chill the warmth of my heart, if I do not take vengeance on those who are guilty [aitioi] of my father's murder. He said that, enraged like a bull by the loss of my possessions, I should kill them in requital just as they killed. 275 And he declared that otherwise I should pay the debt myself with my *philē psūkhē*, after many grievous sufferings. For he spoke revealing to mortals the wrath of malignant powers from underneath the earth, and telling of plagues: 280 leprous ulcers that mount with fierce fangs on the flesh and eat away its primal nature; and how a white down should sprout up on the diseased place. And he spoke of other assaults of the Furies [Erinyes] that are destined to be brought to fulfillment [telos] from paternal blood. 285 For the dark bolt of the infernal powers, who are stirred by kindred victims calling for vengeance, and madness, and groundless terrors out of the night, torment and harass a man, and he sees clearly, though he moves his eyebrows in the dark. 290 And with his body marred by the brazen scourge, he is even chased in exile from his *polis*. And the god declared that to such as these it is not allowed to have a part either in the ceremonial cup or in the cordial libation; his father's *mēnis*, though unseen, bars him from the altar; no one receives him with *tīmē* or lodges with him; 295 and at last, despised by all, bereft of *philoī*, he perishes, turned into a mummy [tarikhos], in a most pitiful fashion, by a death that wastes him utterly away.

Must I not put my trust in oracles such as these? Yet even if I do not trust them, the deed must still be done. For many impulses conspire to one conclusion. 300 Besides the god's command, my keen grief [penthos] for my father, and also the lack of property, and that my

countrymen, who have the greatest *kleos* of mortals, who overthrew Troy with a spirit [*phrēn*] that is renowned, should not be subjected so to a pair of women. 305 For he has a woman's mind [*phrēn*], or if not, it will soon be found out.

Chorus

anapests

You mighty Fates [*moirai*], through the power of Zeus grant fulfillment there where what is just [*dikaion*] now turns. "For a word of hate 310 let a word of hate be said," *dikē* cries out as she exacts the debt, "and for a murderous stroke let a murderous stroke be paid." "Let him suffer [*paskhein*] what he himself has done," says the *mūthos* of three generations.

Orestes

strophe 1

315 O father, unhappy father, by what word or deed of mine can I succeed in sailing from far away to you, where your resting-place holds you, a light to oppose your darkness? 320 Yet a lament that gives *kleos* to the Atreidai who once possessed our house is none the less a joyous service [*kharites*].

Chorus

strophe 2

My child, the fire's ravening jaw 325 does not overwhelm the *phrenes* of one who is dead, but sooner or later he reveals what stirs him. The murdered man has his dirge; the guilty man is revealed. 330 Justified lament for fathers and for parents, when raised loud and strong, makes its search everywhere.

Electra

antistrophe 1

Hear then, O father, our expressions of grief [*penthos*] in the midst of plentiful tears. Look, your two children mourn you 335 in a lament [*thrēnos*] over your tomb. As suppliants and exiles as well they have sought a haven at your burial place. What of these things is good, what free of evil? Is it not hopeless to wrestle against doom [*atē*]?

Chorus

anapests

340 Yet the god, if it so pleases him, may still turn our sounds to more joyfully sounding strains. In place of laments [*thrēnoi*] over a tomb, a song of triumph within the royal halls will welcome back [*komizein*] a reunited *philos*.

Orestes

strophe 3

345 Ah, my father, if only beneath Ilion's walls you had been slain, slashed by some Lycian spearman! Then you would have left a good *kleos* for your children in their halls, and in their maturity you would have made their lives admired by men. 350 And in a land beyond the sea [*pontos*] you would have found a tomb heaped high with earth, no heavy burden for your house to bear—

Chorus

antistrophe 2

—*philos* there below to your *philoι* who nobly fell, 355 a ruler with august *tīmē*, distinguished even beneath the earth, and minister of the mightiest gods who rule as *turannoι* in the nether world. 360 For in your life you were a king of those who have the power to assign the portion of death, and who wield the staff all mortals obey.

Electra

No, not even beneath the walls of Troy, father, would I wish you to have perished [root *phthi-*] and to be entombed beside Scamander's waters 365 among the rest of the host slain by the spear. I wish rather that his murderers had been killed by their own loved ones, just as they killed you, so that someone in a distant land 370 who knew nothing of these present troubles [*ponoi*] should learn of their fatal doom.

Chorus

In this, my child, your wish is better than gold. It surpasses great good fortune, even that of the supremely blessed Hyperboreans, for it is easy to wish. 375 But now the lash of this double scourge comes home: our cause already has its champions beneath the earth, while the hands of our loathsome opponents, though they have the mastery, are unholy. The children have won the day.

Orestes

380 This has pierced the earth and reached your ear⁴ as if it were an arrow. O Zeus, O Zeus, who send doom [*atē*] as punishment, sooner or later, up from below onto the reckless and wicked deeds done by the hands of mortals. 385 And yet it will come to fulfillment [*telos*] for our father's sake.

Chorus

May it be mine to raise a hearty shout in triumph over the man when he is stabbed and over the woman as she perishes! Why should I try to keep hidden what nevertheless hovers before my *phrēn*? 390 Full against the prow of my heart the *thūmos* blows keen in rancorous hate.

Electra

antistrophe 4

And when will mighty Zeus, blossoming on both his father's and mother's side, bring down his hand on them **395** and split their heads open? Let it be a pledge to the land! After injustice I demand *dikē* as my right.

³⁹⁹ Hear, O Earth, and you forces of the earth below [*khthonioi*] who have your own honors [*tīmai*]!

Chorus

400 And it is the customary law [*nomos*] that drops of blood ⁴⁰¹ spilled [*kheîn*] on the ground demand yet more ⁴⁰² blood. The devastation [*loigos*] cries out for the Fury [*Erinys*], ⁴⁰³ which from those who died [*phthimesthai*] before brings one disaster [*atē*] ⁴⁰⁴ after another disaster [*atē*].

Orestes

strophe 6

405 Alas, you sovereign tyrannies of the world below, behold, you potent Curses of the slain, behold the remnants of the line of Atreus in their plight of helplessness, cast out from house and home, bereft of *tīmē*. Which way can we turn, O Zeus?

Chorus

antistrophe 5

410 But again my *philon* heart throbs as I hear this pitiful lament. At once I am devoid of hope and my insides are darkened at the words I hear. **415** But when hope once again lifts and strengthens me, it puts away my grief [*akhos*] and dawns brightly on me.

Electra

antistrophe 6

To what could we more fittingly appeal than to those very griefs [*akhos* pl.] we have endured [*paskhein*] from the woman herself who bore us?

420 She may fawn upon us, but they are past all soothing. For like a wolf with its savage *phrenes*, the *thūmos* we have acquired from our mother is implacable.

Chorus

strophe 7

On my breast I beat a dirge from Aryan lands in just the same fashion as a Cissian wailing woman. 425 With clenched fists, raining blows thick and fast, my outstretched hands could be seen descending from above, from far above, now on this side, now on that, till my battered and wretched head resounded with the strokes.

Electra

strophe 8

430 Away with you, cruel and utterly brazen mother! You dared to give your husband a most cruel burial: unmourned, without lamentation [*penthos*], a king unattended by his people.

Orestes

strophe 9

Ah me, all your deeds are done without *tīmē*. 435 Yet with the help of the *daimones*, and with the help of my own hands, will she not atone for the loss of *tīmē* that she inflicted on my father? Let me only take her life, then let me die!

Chorus

antistrophe 9

Yes, and I would have you know he was brutally mutilated. 440 And even as she buried him in this way, she acted with intent to make the manner of his death a burden on your life past all power to bear. You hear the story of the outrageous loss of *tīmē* inflicted on your father.

Electra

antistrophe 7

My father was murdered just as you say. But all the while I was kept sequestered, 445 deprived of *tīmē*, accounted a worthless thing. Kenneled in my room as if I were a vicious cur, I gave free vent to my streaming tears, which came more readily than laughter, as in my concealment I poured out my lament in plentiful weeping. 450 Hear my tale [*mūthos*] and inscribe it on your *phrenes*.

Chorus

antistrophe 8

Yes, let it sink deep into your ears, with a serene [*hēsukhos*] dance-step of the *phrenes*. So far things are so. But you yourself be eager to resolve what is to follow. 455 You must enter the contest with inflexible wrath.

Orestes

strophe 10

Father, I call on you; side with your *philoi*!

Electra

And I in tears join my voice to his.

Chorus

And let all our company [*stasis*]⁵ blend our voices to echo the prayer. Hear! Come to the light! 460 Side with us against our enemies!

Orestes

antistrophe 10

Arēs will encounter Arēs; *dikē* will encounter *dikē*.

Electra

O you gods, bring the plea to fulfillment with *dikē*!

Chorus

A shudder steals over me as I hear these prayers. Doom has long been waiting, 465 but it will come in answer to those who pray.

strophe 11

Ah, inbred trouble [*ponos*] and bloody stroke of ruin [*atē*] without a tune [*mousa*]! Ah, lamentable and grievous sorrows! 470 Ah, the unstaunched pain!

antistrophe 11

Our house has a cure to heal these woes, a cure not from outside, from the hands of others, but from itself, by fierce, bloody *eris*. 475 This hymn is for the gods beneath the earth.

anapests

O you blessed powers below [*khthonioi*], hear this supplication of ours, and with favorable *phrenes* send forth to these children your aid for victory!

Orestes

O father, who perished by a death unbecoming a king [*turannos*], 480 grant in answer to my prayer the power [*kratos*] over your halls!

Electra

And I too, father, have a like request of you: to escape when I have wrought great destruction on Aegisthus.

Orestes

Yes, for then the customary funeral feasts of men would be established in your honor. But otherwise, at the rich and savory banquet of burnt offerings made to the earth, 485 you will be without a portion of *tīmē*.

Electra

And I will likewise at my wedding offer libations to you out of the

fullness of my inheritance from my father's house, and before all else I will hold this tomb of yours in the highest honor.

Orestes

O Earth, send up my father to watch my battle!

Electra

490 O Persephone, grant us indeed a glorious accession to power
[*kratos*]!

Orestes

Father, remember the bath where you were robbed of life.

Electra

And remember how they devised a strange net to cast about you.

Orestes

You were caught, my father, in fetters forged by no smith's hand.

Electra

And in a fabric shamefully devised.

Orestes

495 Father, are you not roused by taunts such as these?

Electra

Are you not raising that most *philon* head of yours?

Orestes

Either send *dikē* as ally to your *philoī*, or grant us in turn to get a similar power [*kratos*] over them, if indeed after defeat you would in turn win victory.

Electra

500 So listen, father, to this last appeal of mine as you behold these fledglings crouching at your tomb. Have compassion on a song of lament performed by a woman and by a man as well, and let not this seed of Pelops' line be blotted out: for then, in spite of death, you are not

dead. 505 For children are voices of salvation [*sōtēriā*] to a man, though he is dead; like corks, they buoy up the net, saving [*sōzein*] the flaxen cord from out of the deep. Hear! For your own sake we make this lament. By honoring this plea of ours you save [*sōzein*] yourself.

Chorus

510 In truth you have drawn out this plea of yours to your own content in showing honor [*tīmē*] to this unlamented tomb. As for the rest, since your *phrēn* is rightly set on action, put your fortune [*daimōn*] to the test and get to your work at once.

Orestes

It will be so. But it is not off the track to inquire 515 from what motive she came to send her libations, seeking too late to make amends [*tīmē*] for an irremediable experience [*pathos*]. They would be a sorry return [*kharis*] to send to the dead who have no *phrenes*: I cannot guess what they mean. The gifts are too paltry for her offense [*hamartia*]. 520 For though a man may pour out all he has in atonement for one deed of blood, it is wasted effort. So the saying goes. If indeed you know, tell me: I wish to learn.

Chorus

I know, my child, for I was there. It was because she was shaken by dreams and wandering terrors of the night 525 that she sent these offerings, godless woman that she is.

Orestes

And have you learned the nature of the dream so as to tell it properly?

Chorus

She dreamed she gave birth to a serpent: that is her own account.

Orestes

And where does the tale come full circle [*telos*], where is it completed?

Chorus

She laid it to rest as if it were a child, in swaddling clothes.

Orestes

530 What food did it crave, the newborn viper?

Chorus

In her dream she offered it her own breast.

Orestes

Surely her nipple was not unwounded by the loathsome beast?

Chorus

No: it drew in clotted blood with the milk.

Orestes

Truly this vision is not without meaning!

Chorus

535 Then from out of her sleep she raised a shriek and awoke appalled, and many lamps that had been blinded in the darkness flared up in the house to cheer our mistress. Then she sent these libations for the dead in the hope that they might be an effective cure for her distress.

Orestes

540 I pray to this earth and to my father's grave that this dream may come to its fulfillment [*telos*] in me. As I sort it out [*krinein*], it fits at every point. For if the snake left the same place as I; if it was furnished with my swaddling clothes; 545 if it sought to open its mouth to take the breast that nourished me and mixed the *philon* milk with clotted blood while she shrieked for terror at this *pathos*, then surely, as she has nourished an ominous thing of horror, she must die by *bia*. 550 For I, turned serpent, am her killer, as this dream declares.

Chorus

I choose your reading of this portent. Let it be so. As for the rest, give

your *philoī* their parts. Tell some what to do, others what to leave undone.

Orestes

It is a simple tale [*mūthos*]. My sister must go inside, 555 and I say solemnly [*aineîn*] that she must keep concealed this pact with me, so that as by craft they killed a man of *tīmē*, so by craft they may likewise be caught and perish in the very same snare, even as Loxias made the decree [*phēmē*], lord Apollo, the seer [*mantis*] who has never before been false.

560 In the guise of a stranger [*xenos*], one fully equipped, I will come to the outer gate, and with me Pylades, whom you see here, as a guest [*xenos*] and ally of the house. Both of us will speak the speech of Parnassus, imitating [*mimeîsthai*] the voice of a Phocian tongue. 565 And in case none of the keepers of the door will welcome us with a radiant heart on the plea that the house is afflicted with trouble by *daimones*, then we will wait so that anyone passing the house will consider and say: “Why then does Aegisthus have his door shut on his suppliant, 570 if in fact he is at home and knows?”

But if I indeed pass the outermost threshold of the gate and find that man sitting on my father’s throne, or if then coming face to face with me he lifts and casts down his eyes, know well: ⁵⁷⁵ Before he [= Aegisthus] can even say “Who is the stranger [*xenos*] and where is he from?” he will become a corpse. ⁵⁷⁶ That is what I will do to him, skewering him with my swift sword. ⁵⁷⁷ The Fury [*Erinys*] that has no fill of slaughter ⁵⁷⁸ will have unmixed blood to drink as her third and crowning drink!

Now, Electra, you keep strict watch over what happens inside the house, 580 so that our plans may fit together well. And you [the Chorus], I solemnly say [*epaineîn*] to you: best keep a tongue that is *euphēmos*:⁶ be silent when there is need and speak only what the occasion demands. As

for the rest, I call on him to cast his glance this way and direct the contest [*agōn*] of the sword for me.

Orestes, Pylades, and Electra exit.

Chorus

strophe 1

585 Many are the sorrows [*akhos* pl.], dread and appalling, bred of earth, and the embrace of the sea [*pontos*] teems with hateful monsters. Likewise between the sky and the earth lights hung high in the air draw near; 590 and winged things and things that walk the earth can also tell of the stormy wrath of whirlwinds.

antistrophe 1

But who can tell of man's overweening *phrenes*, 595 and of the reckless passions of women hardened of *phrenes*, partners of the woes [*atē* pl.] of mortals? 600 Inordinate passion, having *kratos* over the female, gains a fatal victory over the wedded unions of beasts and men alike.

strophe 2

Let whoever is not flighty in his wits know this, when he has learned 605 of the device of a lit brand contrived by Thestios' heartless daughter:⁷ She destroyed her own child by burning the charred brand of the same age as he, when, coming from his mother's womb, he cried out, 610 and it aged in pace with him through his life to the day decreed by fate.

antistrophe 2

And there is in stories another murderous virgin to be loathed,⁸ 615 who ruined a *philos* at the bidding of his enemies, when, lured by Minos' gift, the Cretan necklace forged of gold, she with her dog's heart 620 despoiled Nisos of his immortal lock as he drew breath in unsuspecting sleep. And Hermes overtook him.

strophe 3

But since I have recalled tales of pitiless ordeals [*ponoi*], it is the right time to tell of a marriage void of love, 625 an abomination to houses,

and the plots devised by a wife's *phrenes* against her warrior lord, against her lord revered with reason by his foes. But I honor the hearths of homes not heated by passion's fires, 630 and in woman a spirit that shrinks from audacious deeds.

antistrophe 3

Indeed the Lemnian evil² holds first place among evils in story: it has long been told with groans as an abominable calamity. Men compare each new horror to Lemnian troubles; 635 and because of a woeful deed abhorred by the gods a race has disappeared, cast out in infamy from among mortals. For no man reveres what is hated by the gods. Is there one of these tales I have gathered that I cite without *dikē*?

strophe 4

But the keen and bitter sword is near the breast 640 and drives home its blow at the bidding of *dikē*. For truly the injustice of him who has unjustly transgressed the sovereign majesty of Zeus 645 lies on the ground trampled under foot.

antistrophe 4

The anvil of *dikē* is planted firm. Destiny fashions her arms and forges her sword quickly, and the famed and deeply brooding Fury [*Erinys*] is bringing the son into our house, 650 to requite at last the pollution of bloodshed long ago.

Orestes and Pylades enter with attendants before the palace.

Orestes

Boy! Boy! Hear my knocking at the outer door! Who is inside? Boy! Boy! I say again, who is at home? 655 Again for the third time I call for some one to come out of the house, if there is welcoming [*philon*] to strangers [*xenoi*] by Aegisthus.

Servant

Yes, yes, I hear. Of what land is the stranger [*xenos*], and whence?

Orestes

Announce me to the masters of the house, for it is in fact to them that I come bearing news. 660 And hurry, since the chariot of night is speeding on with darkness, and it is time [*hōra*] for wayfarers to drop anchor in some house friendly to all guests [*xenoi*]. Tell some one to come forth who has authority [*telos*] over the house, the mistress in charge. 665 But the master would be more fitting, for then no delicacy [*aidōs*] in speaking makes words obscure: man speaks boldly to man and reveals [*sēmainein*] his meaning without reserve.

The Servant withdraws. Clytemnestra appears at the door with a maidservant in attendance.

Clytemnestra

Strangers [*xenoi*], you have only to declare your need, for we have everything that suits this house: 670 warm baths, beds to charm away fatigue [*ponoi*], and the presence of honest [*dikaia*] faces. But if there is another matter requiring graver counsel, that is the concern of men, and we will communicate with them.

Orestes

I am a stranger [*xenos*], a Daulian from Phocis. 675 As I was on my way, carrying my pack on business of my own to Argos, just as I ended my journey here, a man, a stranger to me as I to him, fell in with me, and inquired [*historeîn*] about my destination and told me his. He was Strophios, a Phocian—for as we talked I learned his name—and he said to me, 680 “Stranger, since in any case you are bound for Argos, keep my message in mind with the utmost *dikē* and tell his parents that Orestes is dead, and by no means let it escape you. Whether his *philo*i decide to bring him home or to bury him in the land of his sojourn, a foreigner [*xenos*] utterly forever, 685 convey their wishes back to me. In the meantime a bronze urn contains the ashes of a man rightly lamented.” This much I tell you as I heard it. Whether by any chance I

am speaking to those with whom the question rests and whose concern it is, I do not know. 690 But his parent should know.

Clytemnestra

Oh no! Your story spells our utter undoing. O curse that haunts this house, so hard to wrestle down: how far forward you look! Even what was laid well out of harm's way you bring down with your well-aimed shafts from far off, 695 and you strip me of *philoï*, utterly wretched as I am. And now Orestes: he was indeed prudent in saving [*komizein*] his foot from the mire of destruction, but now you portray as fled what was once the one hope in our house of a cure for its evil revelry [*bakkheia*].

Orestes

700 As for me, I am sure that with hosts [*xenoi*] so prosperous [*eudaimones*] I would rather have been made known and been treated as guest [*xenos*] for favorable news. For where is goodwill greater than from guest [*xenoi*] to host [*xenoi*]? Yet to my mind it would have been irreverent not to fulfill for *philoï* 705 a charge like this when I was bound by promise and hospitality [*xeniā*] pledged to me.

Clytemnestra

But rest assured you will receive no less a reward than you deserve nor be the less welcome [*philos*] to this house: someone else might just as well have brought your message [*angelia*]. 710 But it is the proper occasion [*kairos*] when strangers [*xenoi*] who have been traveling on a long day's journey should have their proper entertainment.

To her attendant.

Conduct him to the rooms where the men are lodged properly as guests [*xenoi*], him and his attendants here and his fellow-traveler, and let them be tended to there as is proper in our house. 715 I give the word [*aineîn*] that you do this as you shall be held to strict account. Meantime I will communicate this matter to the master of the house, and since we have no lack of *philoï* we will confer on this occurrence.

All withdraw except the Chorus.

Chorus

anapests

Ah, *philai* handmaidens of the house, 720 how long will it be before we display the power that lies in our mouths to do Orestes service?

O revered earth, and revered barrow raised high that now lies on the royal corpse of the commander of the fleet, 725 now hear me, now lend me aid! Now is the hour for Persuasion with her guile to join forces with him, and for Hermes of the nether world [*khthonios*], he who works in stealth, to direct this ordeal [*agōn*] of the deadly sword.

Orestes' Nurse enters.

730 Our stranger [*xenos*], I think, is working something no good: for over there I see Orestes' nurse all in tears. Cilissian slave-woman! Where are you going? Why as you set foot in the palace gate have you grief as your unhired companion?

Nurse

My mistress commands me to summon Aegisthus for the strangers in all haste, 735 so that he may come and learn more clearly, from man to man, these tidings that have just arrived. Indeed, before the servants, behind eyes that feigned grief [*penthos*] she hid her laughter over what has occurred fortunately for her. But the utterance [*phēmē*] so plainly delivered by the strangers [*xenoi*] 740 means utter ruin for this house. I expect that when he hears it he will rejoice in his *noos* to know the tale [*mūthos*]. Miserable woman that I am! How the old unbearable troubles of every sort 745 that occurred in this house of Atreus have always made my heart ache within my breast! But never yet have I endured a blow like this. All the other troubles I bore patiently, but my *philos* Orestes, on whom I spent my life [*psūkhē*], 750 whom I received from his mother at birth and nursed, and the many and troublesome tasks, fruitless for all my enduring them, when his loud and urgent cries broke my rest... For

one must nurse that little thing, which doesn't yet have any *phrenes*, as if it were a grazing animal, of course one must, by following its twists and turns that lead toward a *phrēn*. 755 For while it is still a baby in swaddling clothes, it has no speech at all, whether hunger moves it, or thirst perhaps, or the call of need: children's young insides work their own relief. I would be the seer [*mantis*] who anticipates these needs. Yet many a time, I think, having to wash the child's linen because of my own errors, 760 laundress and nurse had the same function [*telos*]. It was I who, with these two handicrafts, received Orestes from his father's hands. And now, wretch that I am, I hear that he is dead. But I am on my way to fetch the man who wrought destruction on our house, 765 and he will be glad enough to hear this news.

Chorus

How does she tell him to come prepared?

Nurse

How prepared? Say it again so that I may catch your meaning better.

Chorus

With his guards or perhaps unattended?

Nurse

She tells him to come with his retinue of spearmen.

Chorus

770 Well, do not give this message to our loathed master, but with all haste and with a joyous heart tell him to come himself, alone, so that he may be told without alarm. For in the mouth of a messenger an oblique message is made straight.

Nurse

What? Are you gladdened by the present news?

Chorus

775 Why not, if Zeus at last may cause our ill wind to change?

Nurse

But how can that be? Orestes, the hope of our house, is gone.

Chorus

Not yet; he would be an inept seer [*mantis*] who would so interpret.

Nurse

What are you saying? Do you know something beyond what has been told?

Chorus

Go, deliver your message! Do what you are asked to do! 780 The gods take care of what they take care of.

Nurse

Well, I will go and do your bidding. With the gods' blessing may everything turn out for the best!

She exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

Now at my supplication, O Zeus, father of the Olympian gods, 785 grant that the fortunes of our house be firmly established, so that those who rightly desire the rule of order may behold it. Every word of mine has been uttered in *dikē*. O Zeus, may you safeguard it!

epode 1

790 O Zeus, set him who is within the palace before his enemies [*ekhthroi*], since, if you exalt him, he will gladly pay you with double and triple recompense.

antistrophe 1

Know that the orphaned colt of a *philos* man 795 is harnessed to the chariot of distress. And by setting bounds to his course may you grant that we see him keep a steady pace through this race and win the goal in the straining stride of a gallop.

strophe 2

800 And you who within the house inhabit the inner chamber that
exults in its wealth, hear me, you gods, who share your *phrenes* with us!
By a new judgment [*dikē*] redeem the blood of deeds done long ago. 805
May aged Murder cease begetting offspring in our house!

epode 2

And you who occupy the mighty, gorgeously built cavern,¹⁰ grant that
the man's house may lift up its eyes again in joy, and that with glad eyes
810 it may behold from under its veil of gloom the radiant light of
freedom.

antistrophe 2

May Maia's son,¹¹ as he with *dikē* should, lend his aid, for no one can
better bring to fulfillment a sea-voyage on a favoring course, 815 when
he is willing to do so. But by his mysterious utterance he brings
darkness over men's eyes by night, and by day he is no more clear at all.

strophe 3

And then at last with a loud voice we shall sing 820 a song of the
deliverance of our house, the song that women raise when the wind has
a fair setting [*stasis*], and not the shrill tune [*nomos*] of those who
mourn: "Things are going well for the *polis*. 825 This grows to profit
[*kerdos*] for me, for me, and calamity [*atē*] holds off from my *philoī*."

epode 3

But may you with good courage, when the part of action comes, cry out
loud the name "Father" when she exclaims "Son," 830 and bring to
completion the ruin [*atē*] that is beyond blame.

antistrophe 3

Raise up the spirit of Perseus¹² within my *phrenes*. And for your *philoī*
below the earth, and for those above, exact a return [*kharis*] for their dire
wrath 835 by working bloody ruin [*atē*] in our house and obliterating
the guilt [*aitiā*] of murder.

Aegisthus enters.

Aegisthus

I have come not unasked but summoned by a messenger. I heard startling news told by some strangers [*xenoi*] 840 who have arrived, tidings far from welcome: the death of Orestes. To lay this too upon our house would be a fearful burden when it is still festering and galled by the wound inflicted by an earlier murder. How can I believe these things are true [*alēthea*]? 845 Or is it merely a panic-stricken report spread by women which leaps up to die away in nothingness? What can you tell me of this to make it clear to my *phrēn*?

Chorus

We heard the tale, it is true. But go inside and inquire of the strangers [*xenoi*]. The certainty of messengers' [*angeloi*] reports 850 is nothing compared with one's own interrogation of the man himself.

Aegisthus

I wish to see the messenger [*angelos*] and put him to the test again—whether he himself was present at the death or merely repeats from vague reports what he has heard. No! Be sure he cannot deceive a *phrēn* that is endowed with eyes.

He exits.

Chorus

anapests

855 O Zeus, O Zeus, what should I say? Where shall I begin this prayer of mine, this appeal to the gods? How in my loyal zeal can I succeed in finding words to match need? Now is the moment 860 when the bloodstained edges of the blades that lay men low are utterly forever to destroy the house of Agamemnon. Or else, kindling a flaming light in the cause of freedom, Orestes will win both the rule over his realm 865 and the wealth [*olbos*] of his fathers. Our god-like Orestes, with no one to assist him, is now to meet with two in such a contest. And may it be to triumph!

A shriek is heard from within.

Aegisthus

Oh! Oh! O woe!

Chorus

870 Ah! Ah! Alas! What is happening? What is being accomplished for our house? Let us stand apart while the matter is being brought to fulfillment [*telos*] so that we may be considered not responsible [*aitioi*] in these ills. For the outcome [*telos*] of the fighting has just now been made formal.

A servant of Aegisthus rushes in.

Servant

875 O woe, oh utter woe! My master is slain! O woe! I cry yet again, for the third time. Aegisthus is no more! Come, with all speed! Unbar and open the women's door! And a strong arm indeed is needed, 880 but not to help him who is already slain: what good is there in that? Help! Help! Am I shouting to the deaf and fruitlessly wasting my voice on people who are asleep? Where has Clytemnestra gone? What is she doing? Her own neck, near the razor's edge, is now ready to fall, in all justice [*dikē*], beneath the stroke.

Clytemnestra hurries in unattended.

Clytemnestra

885 What is this? What cry for help are you raising in our house?

Servant

I tell you the dead are killing the living.¹³

Clytemnestra

Ah! Indeed I have understood the utterance [*epos*], sorting it out from the riddling [*ainigma* pl.]. We are to perish by treachery, just as we committed murder. Someone give me a battle-axe, and quickly!

The Servant rushes out.

890 Let us know if we are victors or vanquished: for we have come even to this point of evil.

The door opens displaying Orestes standing over the corpse of Aegisthus, with Pylades nearby.

Orestes

It is you I seek. This one here has had enough.

Clytemnestra

Oh no! My most *philos*, valiant Aegisthus! You are dead!

Orestes

You love your man? Then you will lie in the same grave, 895 and you will never abandon him in death.

Clytemnestra

Wait, my son! Have respect [*aidōs*], child, for this breast at which many times while sleeping you sucked with toothless gums the nourishing milk.

Orestes

Pylades, what shall I do? Shall I spare my mother out of *aidōs*?

Pylades

900 What then will become in the future of Loxias' oracles [*manteuma* pl.] declared at Delphi, and of our sworn pact? Count all men your enemies rather than the gods.

Orestes

I judge you victor: you give me good advice [*par-ainesis*].

To Clytemnestra.

Come this way! I mean to kill you by his very side. 905 For while he lived, you thought him better than my father. Sleep with him in death,

since you love him but hate the man you were bound to love.

Clytemnestra

It was I who nourished you, and with you I would grow old.

Orestes

What! Murder my father and then make your home with me?

Clytemnestra

910 Fate, my child, must share the blame [*aitiā*] for this.

Orestes

And fate now brings this destiny to pass.

Clytemnestra

Have you no regard for a parent's curse, my son?

Orestes

You brought me to birth and yet you cast me out to misery.

Clytemnestra

No, surely I did not cast you out in sending you to the house of an ally.

Orestes

915 I was sold in disgrace, though I was born of a free father.

Clytemnestra

Then where is the price I got for you?

Orestes

I am ashamed to reproach you with that outright.

Clytemnestra

But do not fail to proclaim the follies of that father of yours as well.

Orestes

Do not accuse him who went through ordeals [*ponoi*] while you sat idle at home.

Clytemnestra

920 It is a grief for women to be deprived of a husband, my child.

Orestes

Yes, but it is the husband's toil that supports them while they sit at home.

Clytemnestra

You seem resolved, my child, to kill your mother.

Orestes

You will kill yourself, not I.

Clytemnestra

Take care: beware the hounds of wrath that avenge a mother.

Orestes

925 And how shall I escape my father's if I leave this undone?

Clytemnestra

I see that though living I mourn in vain before a tomb.

Orestes

Yes, for my father's fate has marked out this destiny for you.

Clytemnestra

Oh no! I myself bore and nourished this serpent!

Orestes

Yes, the terror from your dream was indeed a prophet [*mantis*]. 930 You killed him whom you should not; so suffer [*paskhein*] what should not be.

He forces Clytemnestra inside; Pylades follows.

Chorus

Truly I grieve even for these in their twofold downfall. Yet since long-suffering Orestes has reached the peak of many deeds of blood, we

would rather have it so, that the eye of the house should not be utterly lost.

strophe 1

935 As to Priam and his sons *dikē* came at last in crushing retribution, so to Agamemnon's house came a twofold lion, twofold slaughter. The exile, the suppliant of Delphi, has fulfilled his course to the utmost, **940** justly urged on by counsels from the gods.

Oh raise a shout of triumph over the escape of our master's house from its misery and the wasting of its wealth by two who were unclean, **945** its grievous fortune!

antistrophe 1

And he has come whose part is the crafty vengeance of stealthy attack, and in the battle his hand was guided by her who is a genuine [*etumos*] daughter of Zeus, breathing murderous wrath on her foes. **950** We mortals aim true to the mark when we call her *dikē*.

strophe 2

The commands proclaimed loudly by Loxias, tenant of the mighty cavern shrine of Parnassus, assail **955** with guileless guile the mischief now become inveterate. May the divine prevail: that I not serve *kakoi*! **960** It is right to revere the rule of the sky-dwellers.

Look, the light has come, and I am freed from the cruel curb that restrained our household. House, rise up! You have lain too long prostrate on the ground.

antistrophe 2

965 But soon time that accomplishes all will pass the portals of our house, and then all pollution will be expelled from the hearth by cleansing rites that drive out calamity [*atē*]. The dice of fortune will turn as they fall and lie with faces all lovely to behold, **970** favorably disposed to whoever stays in our house.

The doors open, revealing Orestes and Pylades standing over the bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

Orestes

Behold this pair of royalty [*turannis*], oppressors of the land, who murdered my father and ransacked my house! 975 They were majestic then, when they sat on their thrones, and are *philoi* to each other even now, as one may judge by their suffering [*pathos* pl.], and their oath holds true to their pledges. Together they vowed a league of death against my unhappy father, and together they vowed to die, and they have kept their promise well.

He displays the robe.

980 But now regard again, you who hear this account of ills, the device for binding my unhappy father, with which his hands were manacled, his feet fettered. Spread it out! Stand around in a circle, and display this integument for a man, that the Father may see— 985 not mine, but he who surveys all this, the Sun—that he may see the impious work of my own mother, that he may be my witness in court that I pursued this death, my own mother’s, with justice [*dikē*]. I do not speak of Aegisthus’ death: 990 for he has suffered, as is the custom [*nomos*], the penalty [*dikē*] prescribed for adulterers.

But she who devised this abhorrent deed against her husband, whose children she bore, a burden under her girdle, a burden once *philon*, but now an enemy [*ekhthros*], as it seems: what do you think of her? Had she been born a seasnake or a viper, 995 I think her very touch without her bite would have caused anyone else to rot, if boldness and *phrenes* without *dikē* could do so.

What name shall I give it, however tactful I may be? A trap for a wild beast? Or a shroud for a corpse in his bier, wrapped around his feet? No, rather it is a net: 1000 you might call it a hunting net, or robes to entangle a man’s feet. This would be the kind of thing a highwayman might possess, who deceives strangers [*xenoi*] and earns his living by robbery, and with this cunning snare he might kill many men and warm his own *phrēn* greatly.

1005 May such a woman not live with me in my house! Before that may the gods grant me to perish childless!

Chorus

anapests

Alas! Alas! Sorrowful work! You were done in by a wretched death. Alas! Alas! And also for the survivor suffering [*pathos*] blossoms.

Orestes

1010 Did she do the deed or not? This is my witness, dyed by Aegisthus' sword. This is a stain of blood that helps time to spoil the many tinctures of woven finery.

Now at last I praise [*aineîn*] him. Now at last I am present to lament him, 1015 as I address this web that wrought my father's death. Yet I grieve for the deed and the suffering [*pathos*] and for my whole lineage [*genos*]. My victory is an unenviable pollution.

Chorus

anapests

No mortal being shall pass his life unpunished, free from all suffering to the end. Alas! Alas! 1020 One tribulation comes today, another tomorrow.

Orestes

So that you may know, I do not know how it will reach fulfillment [*telos*]; I think I am a charioteer driving my team far beyond the course. For my ungoverned *phrenes* are whirling me away overmastered, and at my heart fear 1025 is ready to sing and dance to a tune of wrath. But while I am still in control of my *phrenes*, I proclaim like a herald [*kēruux*] to those who hold me *philos*: I hereby declare [*phēmi*] that not without *dikē* did I slay my mother, that father-killing pollution [*miasma*], that thing loathed by the gods.

And for the spells that gave me the courage for this deed 1030 I count Loxias, the *mantis* of Delphi, my chief source. It was he who declared

that, if I did this thing, I would be beyond responsibility [*aitiā*] for evildoing. But if I refrained—I will not name the penalty; for no bowshot could reach such a height of anguish.

And now observe me, how armed with this branch and wreath I go as a suppliant, an outcast for the shedding of kindred blood, 1035 to the temple set square on the navel of the earth, the precinct of Loxias, and to the bright fire that is called imperishable [*aphthiton*].¹⁴ To no other hearth did Loxias bid me turn. 1040 And as to the manner in which this evil deed was done, I charge all men of Argos in time to come to bear me witness. I go forth a wanderer, estranged [*apo-xenos*] from this land, leaving this repute behind, in life or death.

Chorus

And you have done well. Therefore do not yoke your tongue 1045 to an ill-omened speech [*phēmē*],¹⁵ nor let your lips give vent to evil foreboding, since you have freed the whole realm of Argos by lopping off the heads of two serpents with a fortunate stroke.

Orestes

Ah, ah! You slave women, look at them there: like Gorgons, wrapped in sable garments, 1050 entwined with swarming snakes! I can stay no longer.

Chorus

What visions disturb you, most *philos* of sons to your father? Wait, do not be all overcome by fear.

Orestes

To me these are no imagined troubles. For there indeed are the hounds of wrath to avenge my mother.

Chorus

1055 It is that the blood is still fresh on your hands; this is the cause of the disorder that assails your *phrenes*.

Orestes

O lord Apollo, look! Now they come in troops, and from their eyes they drip loathsome blood!

Chorus

There is only one kind of purification [*katharmos*] for you: the touch of Loxias 1060 will set you free from this affliction.

Orestes

You do not see them, but I see them. I am driven out and can stay no longer!

He rushes out.

Chorus

Then may blessings go with you, and may the god watch with favorable *phrenes* over you and guard you with timely fortunes!

anapests

1065 Look! Now again, for the third time, has the tempest of this clan burst on the royal house and come to fulfillment [*telos*]. First, at the beginning, came the cruel woes of children slain for food; 1070 next, the suffering [*pathos*] of a man, a king, when the warlord of the Achaeans perished, murdered in his bath. And now, once again, there has come from somewhere a third, a savior [*sōtēr*], or shall I say a doom? 1075 Oh when will it bring its work to completion, when will the fury of calamity [*atē*], lulled to rest, find an end and cease?

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The river-god of Argos.

[[back](#)] 2. In the metaphorical sense of ‘division’.

[[back](#)] 3. Apollo.

[[back](#)] 4. The ear of Agamemnon.

[[back](#)] 5. In the metaphorical sense of ‘division’.

[[back](#)] 6. The word *euphēmos* means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] 7. Althaia was the daughter of Thestios, king of Aetolia, and the wife of Oineus. When her son Meleagros was a week old, the Fates appeared to her and declared that her son would die when the brand on the hearth was consumed by fire. Althaia took the brand and put it in a chest; but when Meleagros, grown to manhood, slew her brothers, she threw it into the fire and her son died. (See *Iliad* 9.529–99 for a different version of the Meleagros story.)

[[back](#)] 8. Nisos was besieged in his *polis* of Megara by Minos, king of Crete. Nisos’ daughter Scylla, in love with Minos, cut from the head of her father the purple hair on which his life depended, and he was slain by the Cretans.

[[back](#)] 9. The women of Lemnos, jealous of Thracian slave-women, killed their husbands, so that when the Argonauts visited the island they found no men.

[[back](#)] 10. The inner sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi was a narrow cave or vault in which, over a cleft, stood a tripod covered by a slab on which sat the Pythia, priestess of Apollo.

[[back](#)] 11. Hermes.

[[back](#)] 12. Perseus, famous for slaying the Medusa, was the grandson of Akrisios, an earlier Argive king.

[[back](#)] 13. The Greek admits either meaning: ‘the dead are killing the living man’ or ‘the living man is killing the dead’.

[[back](#)] 14. Within the sacred precinct of Delphi there was an ‘eternal flame’.

[[back](#)] 15. See the previous note on *euphēmos*.

2019-12-12

Eumenides

By Aeschylus

Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth

Revised by Cynthia Bannon

Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

Pythia¹

I give highest honor among the gods to Earth, the first seer [*mantis*]; and after her *Themis*, for she was the second to take the office of seer [*manteion*] that belonged to her mother, so goes the tale. Third, 5 with *Themis* willing, and with no compulsion [*biā*], another Titan, child of Earth, Phoebe, took her office here. She then bestowed it as birth-gift upon Phoebus [Apollo], who has a name derived from Phoebe.² When Phoebus left behind the sea and the rocks of Delos 10 and landed on Pallas³ ship-frequented shores, he came to this land and the temples of Parnassus. The children of Hephaistos,⁴ road-builders, who make the wilderness tame, accompanied him and honored him greatly. 15 The people, too, truly celebrated his coming, and Delphos, helmsman and lord of the land. Zeus made Phoebus' *phrēn* inspired with the skill of becoming possessed by the gods [*entheos*] and established him as the fourth seer [*mantis*] on this throne; and Loxias is the declarer [*prophētēs*] of Zeus his father.

20 I begin by invoking these gods. Pallas who stands before the temple also is especially honored in my words, and I worship the Nymphs who live on the hollow Korykian crag, the delight of birds and haunt of *daimones*. Bromios has held the region—I do not forget him— 25 since he, as a god, led the Bacchants in war, and contrived for Pentheus to die as a hare dies. I call on the streams of Pleistos and the power [*kratos*] of Poseidon, and mightiest Zeus who brings prayers to fulfillment [*telos*], and I take my seat as seer [*mantis*] upon my throne. 30 Now grant that I

enjoy the best fortune, far better than I enjoyed on my previous entrances to the temple. And if there are any Hellenes, let them come in turn by lot, as is the custom. I speak as a seer [*mantis*], whichever way the god leads.

She enters the temple and returns in terror.

Horrors, horrible to tell and to see, 35 have sent me back from the house of Loxias, so that I have no strength and I cannot stand straight. I am running on my hands and knees, not with quickness of limb; for a frightened old woman is nothing, or rather she is like a child.

I was going to the inner shrine, decked with wreaths, 40 and then I saw on top of the Omphalos⁵ a man abominable to the gods, in the attitude of a suppliant, his hands dripping gore, holding a sword freshly drawn from a wound, and an olive-branch, from the top of the tree, crowned in a balanced [*sōphrōn*] way 45 with a long strand of shining white wool; this much I can relate clearly.

In front of the man sitting on the throne, an awesome band of women sleeps. Not women, but Gorgons I mean, although I would not compare them to the forms of Gorgons. 50 Once before I saw a picture of Gorgons carrying off the feast of Phineus—but these here, at least as far as I can see, are wingless, black, totally loathsome; they snore with sharp snorts, they drip vile tears from their eyes; 55 their appearance [*kosmos*] is not fit [*dikaios*] to go either to the statues of the gods or to the homes of men. I have never seen this species nor the land that boasts of rearing this breed with impunity and does not grieve its labor [*ponos*] afterwards.

60 Let what is to come now be the concern of the master of the house, powerful Loxias himself. He is a *mantis* of healing, a diviner of portents, and a purifier of homes for others.

She exits. The temple doors open, revealing Apollo standing over Orestes at the omphalos. Nearby the Furies are asleep, and Hermes stands in the background.

Apollo

No, I will not abandon you. I am your guardian all the way to the *telos*,
65 standing near and far away, I will not be kind to your enemies. So
now you see these mad women overcome, these loathsome maidens have
fallen asleep—70 old women, ancient children, with whom no god, no
man, no beast ever consorts. They were born for evil, and since then they
live in evil gloom and in Tartaros under the earth, hateful to men and to
the Olympian gods. All the same, try to get away and do not lose heart.
75 For they will drive you on even as you go across the wide land,
always in places where wanderers walk, beyond the sea [*pontos*] and the
island cities. Do not grow weary brooding on your ordeal [*ponos*], but
when you have come to the *polis* of Pallas, 80 sit yourself down and clasp
in your arms the ancient wooden image of the goddess. And there we
shall find judges for your case and have spellbinding and effective *mūthoi*
to release you from your labors [*ponoi*] completely. For I persuaded you
to kill your mother.

Orestes

85 Lord Apollo, you do not know how to be without *dikē*; and, since
you are capable, also learn not to neglect. For your power to do good is
dependable.

Apollo

Remember, do not let fear conquer your *phrenes*. 90 Hermes, my blood
brother, born of the same father, keep watch and, true to your name, be
his Escort,⁶ shepherding this suppliant of mine; Zeus honors the respect
of those who are outside the protection of laws [*nomoi*], and this respect
brings to mortals a fate that leads to a good outcome.

He exits. Orestes departs escorted by Hermes. The Ghost of Clytemnestra appears.

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

You would sleep! Aha! Yet what need is there of sleepers? **95** Because of you I am dishonored in this way among the other dead; the reproach of those I killed never leaves me while I am among the dead, and I wander in disgrace. I declare to you that I endure much blame [*aitiā*] because of them. **100** And yet, while I suffer [*paskhein*] so cruelly from my most *philoī*, no *daimōn* has *mantis* on my behalf, although I was slaughtered at the hands of a matricide. See these gashes in my heart, and from where they came! For the sleeping *phrēn* is lit up with eyes, **105** but in the daytime it does not see the fate of mortals.

You really have lapped up many of my libations—wineless libations, offerings unmixed with wine for the dead, and I have offered solemn nocturnal banquets upon a hearth of fire at a time [*hōrā*] not shared with any other god. **110** I see all this trampled under foot. He is gone, escaping like a fawn, lightly like that, from the middle of a place surrounded with snares. He rushed out mocking you. Hear me, since I plead for my *psūkhē*. **115** Activate your *phrenes*, goddesses of the underworld! In a dream I, Clytemnestra, am calling you.

Chorus

(*Muttering*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

Mutter, if you will! But the man is gone, fled far away. For his friends are not like mine!

Chorus

120 (*Muttering*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

You are too drowsy and do not pity my suffering [*pathos*]. The murderer of his mother, Orestes, is gone!

Chorus

(*Moaning*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

You moan, you sleep—will you not get up quickly? 125 Are you supposed to be doing anything but working evil?

Chorus

(*Sharp moaning twice*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

Sleep and labor [*ponos*], real conspirators, have sapped the strength of the dreadful dragon.

Chorus

130 Catch him! Catch him! Catch him! Catch him! Take heed!

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

In a dream you are hunting your prey, and are barking like a dog after a scent, never leaving off the pursuit. What are you doing? Get up; do not let *ponos* overcome you, and do not ignore my misery because you have given in to sleep. 135 Sting your heart with reproaches that have *dikē*; for reproach goads those who are *sōphrones*. Send after him a gust of bloody breath, waste him with the vapor, with the fire from your guts—after him!—waste him with a second chase.

The Ghost of Clytemnestra disappears; the Furies awake.

Chorus

— 140 Awake! Wake her up, as I wake you. Still asleep? Get up, shake off sleep, let us see if any part of this beginning is in vain.

strophe 1

—Oh, oh! Alas! We have suffered [*paskhein*], sisters.

—Indeed I have suffered [*paskhein*] much and all in vain. 145 We have suffered [*paskhein*] an experience [*pathos*] hard to heal, oh! unbearable evil. Our prey has escaped from our nets and is gone. I was overcome by sleep and lost my prey.

antistrophe 1

Oh! Child of Zeus, you have become wily, 150 and you, a youth, have ridden down elder female *daimones*, by honoring the suppliant, a godless man and bitter to his parents; though you are a god, you have stolen away a man that killed his mother. Who will say that any of this was done with *dikē*?

strophe 2

155 Reproach comes to me in a dream, like a charioteer with goad grasped in the middle, and strikes me under my *phrenes*, under my vitals.
160 I can feel the cruel, so cruel chill of the people's destroying scourge.

antistrophe 2

They do this sort of thing, the younger gods, who have power far beyond *dikē*. A throne dripping blood, 165 about its foot, about its head, I can see the omphalos defiled with a terrible pollution of blood.

strophe 3

170 Though he is a *mantis*—he urges himself and directs himself—he has defiled his sanctuary with a family pollution [*miasma*]; contrary to the custom [*nomos*] of the gods, he respects the rights of humans and causes the ancient rights to decay.

antistrophe 3

Indeed he brings distress to me, but him he shall not deliver; 175
although he escapes to the places beneath the earth, never will he be free.
A suppliant himself, he will suffer in his life another vengeance on
account of his family.

Apollo enters from the inner sanctuary.

Apollo

Out of my temple at once, I order you. 180 Be gone, quit my sanctuary of the seer's [*mantis*] art, 180 or else you might be struck by a flying, winged, glistening snake shot forth from a golden bow-string, and then you would spit out black foam from your lungs in pain, vomiting the clotted blood you have drawn. 185 It is not proper for you to approach this house. So, go to those places where for punishment [*dikai*] they chop off heads, gouge out eyes, slit throats, and where young men's virility is ruined by destruction of their seed, where there are mutilations and stonings, and where men who are impaled beneath the spine 190 moan long and piteously. Do you hear—the feasts you love makes you detestable to the gods? The whole fashion of your form shows it. It is reasonable for creatures like you to dwell in the den of a blood-drinking lion, 195 but not to rub your filth on everything you touch in this oracular shrine. Be gone, you flock without a shepherd! No god is the beloved shepherd of such a flock.

Chorus

Lord Apollo, hear our reply in turn. You yourself are not just partly

responsible [*aitios*] for these crimes, 200 but you alone have done it all and so you are totally to blame [*aitios*].

Apollo

What do you mean? Spin out your story a little longer.

Chorus

Through your oracle, you directed the stranger to kill his mother.

Apollo

Through my oracle, I directed him to exact vengeance for his father.
What of it?

Chorus

And then you agreed to take the fresh blood on yourself.

Apollo

205 Yes, I ordered him to turn for expiation to this house.

Chorus

And then do you truly revile us who accompanied him?

Apollo

You are not fit to approach this house.

Chorus

But it's our duty—

Apollo

What is the *tīmē* here? Boast of your fine reward!

Chorus

210 We drive matricides from their homes.

Apollo

What about a wife who kills her husband?

Chorus

That would not be murder of relative by blood.

Apollo

Indeed you damage the *tīmē* that is due to the social contracts of Hera, who brings *telos*, and of Zeus. You slight them. 215 Aphrodite, too, is cast aside, bereft of *tīmē* because of your argument, Aphrodite who is the source of all things that are most *phila* to mortal men. For marriage between man and woman is ordained by fate and is better protected by *dikē* than an oath. If you release those who kill each other 220 and neither exact a penalty nor punish them with wrath, then I claim that you are without *dikē* in hunting down Orestes. For I know that you are very concerned about some murders, but you are more serene [*hēsukhoi*] even to those who openly commit others. But the goddess Pallas will handle the judgment [*dikai*] of these cases.

Chorus

225 I will never, never let that man go!

Apollo

Pursue him then and get more trouble [*ponos*] for yourself.

Chorus

Do not cut short my *tīmai* with your argument.

Apollo

I would not have anything to do with your *tīmai*.

Chorus

All the same you are said to be very important at the throne of Zeus. 230

But as for me—since a mother’s blood leads me, I will pursue justice [*dikai*] against this man and even now I am on his track.

They exit.

Apollo

And I will aid the suppliant and rescue him! For the *mēnis* of the suppliant would be awesome to mortals and gods, if I intentionally abandoned him.

He enters the sanctuary. The scene changes to Athens, before the temple of Athena. Hermes enters with Orestes, who embraces the image of the goddess.

Orestes

235 Queen Athena, at Loxias’ command I have come. Receive an accursed wretch kindly. I am not a suppliant for purification, my hand is not unclean, but my guilt’s edge has already been blunted and worn away at other temples and among men. 240 I have traveled on land and sea alike, and I have kept [*sōzein*] the commands of Loxias’ oracle: now I approach your house and wooden statue, goddess. Here will I keep watch and await the *telos* of *dikē*.

The Furies enter.

Chorus

Aha! This is a clear sign of the man. 245 Follow the clues of the voiceless informant. For as a hound tracks a wounded fawn, so we track him by the drops of blood. My lungs are heaving from many tiring struggles; I have visited every corner of the earth, 250 and I have come over the sea [*pontos*] in wingless flight, pursuing him, no slower than a ship. And now, he cowers here somewhere. The smell of human blood greets me.

Look! Look again! 255 Look everywhere, so that the matricide will not escape our notice and leave his debt unpaid!

Yes, here he is again with a defense; he has wrapped his arms around the wooden statue of the immortal goddess, 260 and he wants to be tried for his deeds.

But it is not possible; a mother's blood upon the earth is hard to requite—alas, the quick liquid has been poured on the ground and is gone.

In return you must allow me to suck the blood red gore 265 from your live limbs. I would feed on you—a gruesome drink!
I will lance you alive and drag you down under the earth so that you repay your mother's murder with equal anguish.

You will see if any other mortal commits an offense 270 that dishonors a god or a *xenos* or his *philo*i parents—each has a worthy claim to *dikē*.

For Hādēs is a mighty judge of mortals under the earth, 275 and he observes everything with his recording *phrēn*.

Orestes

Schooled in misery, I know many purification rituals, and I know when it is *dikē* to speak and similarly when to be silent; and in this case, I have been ordered to speak by a *sophos* teacher. 280 For the blood slumbers and fades from my hand—the pollution [*miasma*] of matricide is washed away; while the blood was still fresh, it was driven away at the hearth of the god Phoebus by expiatory sacrifices of swine. It would be a long story to tell from the beginning, 285 how many people I visited with no harm from the meeting. As time grows old, it purifies all things alike.

So now with a pure mouth, in a manner that is *euphēmos*,⁷ I invoke Athena, lady of the land, to come to my aid. Without the spear, she will

win 290 me, my land, and the good faith of the Argive people, as faithful allies in *dikē* and for all time. Whether in the Libyan regions of the world or near the waters of Triton, her native stream, whether she is in action or at rest, aiding those who are *philoī* to her, 295 or whether, like a bold marshal, she is surveying the Phlegraeon plain,⁸ 295 oh, let her come—she hears even from far away because she is a goddess—and may she be my deliverer from these troubles!

Chorus

No, be sure, not Apollo nor Athena's strength 300 would save you from perishing abandoned, you who do not know joy in your *phrenes*—you will be sucked dry of blood by *daimones*, a shadow.

You do not answer—you scorn my words, you who are a victim fattened and dedicated to me? 305 You will be a living feast for me, even though you will not be slain at an altar; now you will hear my hymn, a spell for you.

anapests

Come now, let us also join in the *khoros*, since it seems good to make our hateful song [*mousa*] known 310 and to show how our group [*stasis*] distributes positions among men. We believe that we give straight *dikē*. No *mēnis* from us will stealthily come over a man who shows his hands are clean, 315 and he will go through life unharmed; but whoever commits an offense, as this man has, and hides his blood-stained hands, we are reliable witnesses against him, and we are avengers of bloodshed, 320 coming to the aid of the dead as we appear in the fullness of time [*telos*].

strophe 1

O mother Night, hear me, mother who gave birth to me, so that I would work retribution for the blind and the seeing. For Leto's son has

deprived me of *tīmē* 325 by snatching away this cowering wretch, who is a suitable expiation for his mother's blood.

I sing this song over the sacrificial victim, a frenzied, wild, song, 330 injurious to the *phrēn*, the hymn of the Furies [*Erinyes*], a spell to bind the *phrenes*, a song not tuned to the lyre, a song that withers mortals.

antistrophe 1

Relentless destiny spun out our fate 335 so that we continuously have the duty to pursue mortals who are saddled with fruitless kin-murders, to pursue them until they go under the earth, and even when they die, 340 they are not really free.

I sing this song over the sacrificial victim, a frenzied, wild, song, injurious to the *phrēn*, the hymn of the Furies [*Erinyes*], a spell to bind the *phrenes*, a song not tuned to the lyre, 345 a song that withers mortals.

strophe 2

These duties were granted to us at birth, and it was also granted that the deathless gods hold back their hands from us, and none of them 350 shares a table with us as a companion at a feast; and I have neither lot nor portion of their pure white ceremonial robes...

For we undertake to ruin any house, 355 where domestic violence [*Arēs*] kills someone *philos*. So speeding after this man, we weaken him, even though he is strong, because of the fresh blood.

antistrophe 2

360 And we are eager to take these cares away from others, and to establish immunity from the gods for our concerns, so that no trial will

even begin; 365 for Zeus has banished us, a blood-dripping, hateful race, from his council.

strophe 3

And men's reputations, which are proud and lofty under the sky, waste away and dwindle beneath the earth, in deprivation of *tīmē*, 370 when we, the black-robed Furies [*Erinyes*], attack and dance our hostile dance.

For surely I make a great leap from above and bring down the heavy-falling force of my foot; 375 my limbs trip even swift runners—unendurable *atē*.

antistrophe 3

But when he falls because of his heedless outrage, he does not know it; for pollution hovers over a man in this kind of darkness, and mournful rumor 380 announces that a murky mist envelops his house.

strophe 4

For it waits. We are skilled in plotting, powerful in bringing things to pass [*telos*], and we remember evil deeds—we are awesome and hard for mortals to appease. 385 Though we pursue our appointed office, we are disenfranchised, without *tīmē*, and we stand apart from the gods in sunless light—we make the road rugged and steep for the seeing and the blind alike.

antistrophe 4

What mortal does not stand in awe of these things 390 and tremble, when he hears the law enacted by destiny, the law ordained by the gods for perfect fulfillment [*telos*]? My prerogative is ancient, I do not meet

with dishonor, 395 although I have a post under the earth and in sunless gloom.

Athena enters wearing the aegis.

Athena

I heard a voice calling from afar, from the Scamander, where I was taking possession of the land, which the leaders and chiefs of the Achaeans assigned to me, 400 a great portion of their spear-won spoil, to be all mine forever, a choice gift to Theseus' sons.² From there I have come, driving my tireless foot, without wings, with the folds of the aegis rustling. 405 I yoked this chariot to lively colts. I am not afraid to see a strange group in my land, but it is a wonder to my eyes! Who in the world are you? I address you all together—both you, *xenos*, sitting at my image, 410 and you, who are like no race of humans, nor like any that was ever seen by the gods among the goddesses, or that resembles mortal forms. But it is not right [*dikaios*] for neighbors to speak ill of a blameless man, and divine law [*themis*] stands aloof.

Chorus

415 Daughter of Zeus, you will hear it all in brief. We are the eternal children of Night. We are called Curses at home beneath the earth.

Athena

I know your family and your name.

Chorus

You will soon learn my *tīmai*.

Athena

420 I would understand, if someone would tell the story clearly.

Chorus

We drive murderers from their homes.

Athena

And where is the end of exile for a killer?

Chorus

Where happiness is not a custom [*nomos*].

Athena

Would you drive this man with your shrieks into such exile?

Chorus

425 Yes, for he thought he was worthy to be his mother's murderer.

Athena

Were there other compulsions, or did he fear someone else's wrath?

Chorus

Where is there a spur so keen that it drives a man to kill his mother?

Athena

Two parties are present, but only half the argument.

Chorus

But he would not accept our oath, nor would he be willing to give one.

Athena

430 You prefer to have a reputation for *dikē* rather than to have *dikē* itself.

Chorus

How so? Explain. For you are not lacking in *sophiā*.

Athena

I maintain that deeds without *dikē* do not win with oaths.

Chorus

Well then, put him to the test, and sort out [*krinein*] a straight judgment [*dikē*].

Athena

Then would you turn over the decision [*telos*] of responsibility [*aitiā*] to me?

Chorus

435 Why not? We honor you because you are worthy yourself and of worthy parentage.

Athena

What do you want to say to this, *xenos*, for your part? After you name your country, your family and your fortunes, then defend yourself against this charge, if in fact you trust in *dikē* 440 and if you sit guarding this statue near my hearth, as a sacred suppliant, like Ixion.¹⁰ To all this give me a plain answer.

Orestes

Lady Athena, first of all I will relieve you of the anxiety that your last words suggested. 445 I am not a suppliant in need of purification, nor is there pollution on my hands as I sit near your statue. I will give you hard evidence of this. It is the custom [*nomos*] for a man who is polluted by bloodguilt to be speechless until he is sprinkled with blood 450 from the slaughter of a newborn victim, from a sacrifice that expiates a man's blood. Long since at other temples we have performed these expiatory rites both by victims and by flowing streams.

Therefore, I declare that this trouble is out of the way. As to my family, you shall soon learn how it is. 455 I am an Argive; my father—you

rightly inquire [*historeîn*] about him—was Agamemnon, the commander of the naval forces; along with him, you made Troy, the *polis* of Ilion, into no *polis*. He did not die nobly, after he came home; but my mother with her black *phrenes* killed him 460 after she covered him with an intricately woven net, which bears witness to his murder in the bath. And when I came back home—after being an exile previously—I slew the woman who gave birth to me—I will not deny it—as the price for the murder of my *philos* father. 465 Together with me Loxias shares in being guilty [*aitios*] for this deed, because he goaded my heart by telling me that I would suffer if I did not hurt those who are responsible [*aitioi*] for his death. You sort out [*krinein*] whether I acted with *dikē* or not; in any case, however I fare with you, I solemnly approve [*aineîn*] it.

Athena

470 The case is too great, if any mortal thinks that he will pass judgment [*dikē*] on it; no, it is not right even for me to set the penalties [*dikai*] for murder that is followed by quick *mēnis*, especially since you had already performed the necessary rites, and when you came to my temple you were a pure and harmless suppliant; 475 so I respect you, since you do not bring offence to my city. Yet these women have a duty that is not to be dismissed lightly; and if they do not win this case, the venom of their *phrenes* will fall upon the ground, an intolerable, perpetual plague.

480 These are the choices: either to let them stay or to drive them away—both are disastrous and impossible. But since this case has been brought here, I will select homicide judges who will be bound by oath, and I will establish this tribunal for all time. 485 Summon your witnesses, collect your arguments, and the sworn evidence to support your case [*dikē*]. I will come back, after I sort out [*krinein*] the best of my townsmen, and then they will decide this case on the basis of truth, after they take an oath that they will give a verdict with *phrenes* of *dikē*.

She exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

490 Now this will mean the destruction of the new laws, if the *dikē* and harm of this matricide wins the case. Immediately all mortals will become accustomed to license because of this deed; **495** and in the future, many parents will endure the suffering [*pathos*] of real wounds and death at the hands of their children.

antistrophe 1

For the wrath of the Furies **500** who keep watch upon mortals will not follow deeds, but I will let loose death in every form. One person shall learn his own fortune or release from pain from another person, as he anticipates his neighbor's evil fate; **505** and some poor wretch will advise uncertain cures in vain.

strophe 2

Do not let anyone who is struck by misfortune make an appeal **510** and cry aloud, “*dikē!*” “Thrones of the Furies [Erinyes]!” Some father, perhaps, or mother in new *pathos* will lament piteously, **515** since the house of *dikē* is now falling.

antistrophe 2

There is a time when fear is good and must sit as a guardian of the *phrenes*. **520** It is profitable to achieve equilibrium [*sōphroneîn*] through suffering. But who, if he did not educate his heart in fear, either *polis* or mortal man, **525** would still honor *dikē* in the same way?

strophe 3

Do not approve [*aineîn*] a lawless life nor a life of tyrannical repression. The god grants power [*kratos*] to all in the middle rank, 530 but he treats other matters in different ways. I measure my words: *hubris* is truly the child of impiety, 535 but prosperity [*olbos*] arises from the health of *phrenes*, prosperity that is prayed-for and *philos* to all.

antistrophe 3

I command you to respect the altar of *dikē* forever, and do not spurn it, 540 do not tread on it with your godless foot because you are motivated by profit; for punishment will come upon you. The appointed cycle [*telos*] remains. 545 Therefore, let a man prefer respect for his parents, as is good, and show respect to the *xenoi* of his house.

strophe 4

550 Whoever is *dikaios* willingly and without compulsion, he will not be without prosperity [*olbos*]; utter destruction will never befall him. But I say that the man who boldly transgresses *dikē* and who does all sorts of evil things, 555 in time, he will surely trim his sails, when ordeals [*ponos*] break over him and the boom is splintered.

antistrophe 4

He will call on those who do not hear, when he is struggling in the midst of the whirling waters. 560 The *daimōn* laughs at a hot-headed man, after it has seen him boasting that this would never happen to him, now when he is powerless to relieve his distress and unable to surmount the cresting wave; shipwrecking the prosperity of his earlier life on the reef of *dikē*, 565 and he perishes unwept, unseen.

Athena enters in procession with a Herald and the jury of the Areopagus.

Athena

Herald, give the signal and restrain the crowd. Let the piercing Tyrrhenian trumpet, filled with human breath, send forth its loud blare to the crowd! 570 For while this council-hall is filling, it is good to be silent, it is good for the whole *polis* to learn my ordinances for time everlasting, and for these plaintiffs, too, so that *dikē* will be well-served.

Apollo enters.

Chorus

Lord Apollo, take charge of your business. 575 Explain how you are involved in this affair.

Apollo

I have come both to bear witness—for this man was a suppliant according to custom [*nomos*], and a guest of my sanctuary, and I am his purifier from bloodshed—and I come in person to be his advocate. I have the responsibility [*aitiā*] 580 for the murder of his mother.

To Athena.

Bring the case before the court, and, as best you can, accomplish *dikē*.

Athena

To the Furies.

It is for you to make the speech [*mūthos*—I am only bringing the case [*dikē*] before the council; for the prosecutor gives an account first and correctly explains the case from the beginning.

Chorus

585 We are many, but we shall speak briefly.

To Orestes.

Answer in turn, pitting word against word. Tell first if you murdered your mother.

Orestes

I killed her. There is no denial of this.

Chorus

This is already one of the three falls that win the match.

Orestes

590 You boast over a man who is not down yet.

Chorus

You still must tell how you committed the murder.

Orestes

I will answer: I wounded her neck with a drawn sword in my hand.

Chorus

By whom were you persuaded and whose advice did you follow?

Orestes

I followed the commands of this god here; he is my witness.

Chorus

595 The *mēnis* directed you to kill your mother?

Orestes

Yes; up till now I have never blamed my fortune.

Chorus

But if the jury's vote condemns you, you will change your tune soon enough.

Orestes

I have good confidence. My father will send defenders from his grave.

Chorus

Rely on the dead now, after you have killed your mother!

Orestes

600 I do, for she was twice afflicted with pollution [*miasma*].

Chorus

How so? Explain this to the judges.

Orestes

She murdered her husband, and she killed my father.

Chorus

So, that is why you are alive, and she is free in her death.

Orestes

But why did you not drive her into exile, while she still lived?

Chorus

605 The man she killed was not related to her by blood.

Orestes

Then am I my mother's kin by blood?

Chorus

How could she have nurtured you, murderer, within her skirts? Do you reject a most *philon* blood-tie with your mother?

Orestes

Please, Apollo, give your testimony now. Explain on my behalf, 610

whether I killed her with *dikē*. For we do not deny that I did the deed as is. But decide whether or not the bloodshed was, in your thinking [*phrēn*], just [*dikaion*], so that I can make a supporting statement.

Apollo

I will speak with *dikē* before you, Athena's great tribunal. 615 Since I am a *mantis*, I will not lie. I have never yet, on my throne of the *mantis*, said anything about a man or woman or *polis*, that Zeus, the father of the Olympians, did not command me to say.

I instruct you to understand how strong this *dikē* is, 620 but also to obey the will of my father; for an oath is not more powerful than Zeus.

Chorus

Zeus—as you say—granted you this oracular command, to tell this Orestes to avenge his father's murder, but not to respect his mother's *tīmai* at all?

Apollo

625 It is not at all the same thing—to kill a noble-born man who is invested with a god-given scepter, and to kill him this way, by a woman's hand, not in a rush of bow shots, as if he were killed by an Amazon, but as you will hear, Pallas, and the judges 630 who are empanelled to decide this case by vote.

She gladly received him home after the expedition, after he had succeeded for the most part; then, when he was going into the bath, as he stepped onto the edge, she draped a cloak around the bath 635 and trammelled him in the tangle of an embellished robe, and cut him down.

Thus the man's fate is told to you, a man who was in every way worthy of respect, who was a commander of the fleet. I have described her as

such a woman, to whet the indignation of the people who are appointed to decide this case [*dikē*].

Chorus

640 Zeus gives preferred honor to a father's death, according to your argument; yet he himself bound his aged father, Kronos. How is it that your argument does not contradict these facts?

Turning to the judges.

I give this evidence on my own behalf for you to hear.

Apollo

Monsters, totally loathsome, hated by the gods! 645 Zeus could undo the shackles, there is a remedy for bondage, and many means of release. But after the dust has absorbed a dead man's blood, there is no resurrection [*anastasis*]. My father created no magic spells for that, 650 although he arranges everything else, and turning it all upside down with his power, does not cost him a breath.

Chorus

See how you advocate acquittal for him! After he has poured out his mother's blood on the ground, should he then live in his father's house in Argos? 655 Which of the city's altars shall he use? What brotherhood will allow him to use its ritual washing water?

Apollo

I will explain this, too, and notice how precisely I speak. The mother of her so-called child is not the parent, but she only nurtures the newly sown embryo. 660 The male who mounts is the one who generates the child, whereas she, like a host [*xenē*] for a guest [*xenos*], provides salvation [*sōzein*] for the seedling, ¹¹ so that divine power does not harm it. And I will offer you a sure proof of this argument: a father can exist

without a mother. A witness is here at hand, the child of Olympian Zeus, 665 who was not nurtured in the darkness of a womb, and she is such a seedling as no goddess could produce.

For my part, Pallas, in other matters and as I am able, I will make your city and your people great; I have sent this man as suppliant to your sanctuary 670 so that he will be a pledge for all time, and so that you might win him as an ally, goddess, and those that come after him, and so that later generations of Athenians would remain contented with these pledges.

Athena

Shall I now command these jurors to cast a vote of *dikē* according to their understanding of the case? 675 Has enough been said?

Chorus

All our arrows have already been shot. But I am waiting to hear how the trial is decided.

Athena

What else would you do?

To Apollo and Orestes.

As for you, how can I arrange things so that I will not be blamed?

Apollo

You have heard what you have heard; 680 and as you cast your ballots, keep the oath sacred in your hearts, *xenoi*.

Athena

Comply with my decree now, people of Attica, as you judge [*krinein*] the first trial [*dikai*] for bloodshed. In the future this council of jurors

will always exist for the people of Aegeus. **685** And this Hill of Arēs [Areopagus], which was the position and the camp of the Amazons when they came here because of a grudge against Theseus, and they invaded with their army, and built a newly-founded rival *polis* with high towers, and dedicated their city to Arēs; the name of this rock comes from that event; **690** it is called the Hill of Arēs. The townsmen's reverence for this hill—and fear, her kinsman—will prevent them from acting unjustly both day and night alike, so long as my citizens do not revise their laws [*nomoi*] by adding evil to them; if you pollute clear water with filth, **695** you will never find a drink.

⁶⁹⁶ Neither anarchy nor tyranny ⁶⁹⁷ —I advise the citizens of my city not to hold either of these things in honor as they go on managing their affairs, ⁶⁹⁸ but I also advise them not to drive fear out of the city altogether. ⁶⁹⁹ For who among mortal men, if he fears nothing, behaves with justice [*dikē*]? ⁷⁰⁰ If you [Athenians], acting with justice [*dikē*], would treat reverence [*sebas*] for the divine as a thing to be feared, ⁷⁰¹ then there would be for you a protection that brings salvation [*sōtērios*] for your land and for your city [*polis*] ⁷⁰²—that is what you would have, the kind of protection that no other human could have anywhere else, ⁷⁰³ either among the Scythians or in the territories of Pelops. ⁷⁰⁴ I establish this lawcourt, which is untouched by desire for profit [*kerdos*]. ⁷⁰⁵ It is fully deserving of reverence and is quick to anger. Watching over those who sleep, ⁷⁰⁶ it is a wakeful guardian of the land. Yes, this is what I establish.

⁷⁰⁷ I have given to you at some length this set of instructions [*par-ainesis*] ⁷⁰⁸ to be heeded for all time by you as the citizens of my city. So now you must stand up, ⁷⁰⁹ take a ballot, and make a decision [*diagnōsis*] about the case [*dikē*], ⁷¹⁰ showing respect for your oath. The word has been spoken.

Chorus

And listen! I advise you not to deprive us of *tīmē* in any way, since our presence can oppress your land.

Apollo

I command you to stand in awe of oracles, mine and Zeus', and not to let them be unfulfilled.

Chorus

715 Although it is not your duty, you give approval to deeds of bloodshed. You as *mantis* will speak the words of a *mantis* but no longer keep them unpolluted.

Apollo

Then was my father mistaken in his decisions about Ixion's supplication in the first case of bloodshed?

Chorus

You do argue! But if I do not get *dikē*, 720 I will visit this land as a burdensome guest.

Apollo

But you have no *tīmē* among either the younger or the elder deities alike. I will win.

Chorus

You did this same sort of thing in the house of Pheres, when you persuaded the Fates to make mortal men unwilting [*aphthitōi*].¹²

Apollo

725 Is it not right [*dikaion*] to benefit a man who honors you, especially when he is in need?

Chorus

You made the old balance of power wilt when you beguiled the ancient goddesses with wine.

Apollo

Since you do not have the fullness [*telos*] of *dikē*, 730 you are spitting out venom that is not hard for your enemies to bear.

Chorus

Although you, a youth, ride roughshod over me, an elder female, I am still waiting to hear the decision of the case [*dikē*], since I have not decided whether to be angry at this *polis*.

Athena

It is my duty to decide [*krinein*] the last judgment [*dikē*], 735 and I cast my vote for Orestes. For there was no mother who gave me birth. In every way I approve [*aineîn*] what is male, with all my *thūmos*. I am very much on the father's side. Therefore, I will not award greater *tīmē* to the death of a woman 740 who killed her husband, the guardian of the house. Orestes wins, even if he is judged [*krinein*] by an equal vote. Toss the ballots out of the urns, as quickly as possible, you jurors who have been assigned this office [*telos*].

The ballots are counted.

Orestes

O Phoebus Apollo! How will the trial [*agōn*] be decided [*krinein*]?

Chorus

745 O Night, our dark Mother, are you watching this?

Orestes

Now I will meet my end by hanging—or I will see the light.

Chorus

We will either perish or maintain our *tīmai* in the future.

Apollo

Correctly count by fives the ballots that are cast out of the urns, *xenoi*, and feel the fear that keeps you from violating *dikē* in the division of the votes. 750 Great suffering comes from a lack of attention, and a single ballot has often set straight a house.

The results are shown to Athena.

Athena

This man is acquitted on the charge [*dikē*] of bloodshed, for the number of casts is equal.

Orestes

Pallas, you have saved [*sōzein*] my house! 755 You have restored me to my home [*oikos*] when I was deprived of my fatherland. The Hellenes will say, “A man of Argos has an abode [*oikeîn*] again on the property of his ancestors, by the grace of Pallas and of Loxias and of that third god, the one who brings everything to fulfillment, 760 the *sōtēr*”—the one who respected my ancestral destiny, and saved [*sōzein*] me, when he saw who was defending my mother’s interests.

I will return to my home now, after I swear an oath to this land and to your people for the future and for all time to come, 765 that no captain of my land will ever come here and bring a well-equipped spear against them. For when we ourselves are in our graves, if anyone transgresses our oaths, we will enforce them by inflicting extraordinary failures on the transgressors, 770 by giving them heartless marches and ill-omened ocean voyages, so that pain [*ponos*] will make them feel regret. But while the men of the future stay on the straight course, they will always give *tīmē* to the city of Pallas with their allied spear, and we will remain more well disposed to them.

775 And so farewell—you and the people who live in your *polis*. May you have power, inescapable for your enemies in the fight, and salvation [*sōtēriā*] and victory with the spear!

Orestes and Apollo exit.

Chorus

strophe 1

Younger gods, you have ridden down the ancient laws [*nomoi*] and snatched them from my hands! 780 And I, wretched, deeply angry, and without *tīmē* in this land, alas, I will let venom fly from my heart, venom that brings sorrow [*penthos*] in return for *penthos*, drops of venom that the land cannot endure. 785 A blight will come from the venom that destroys leaves and destroys children, a blight that speeds over the plain and casts pollution on the land to destroy mortals. O *dikē*, *dikē*! I groan. What shall I do? I am the laughing-stock of the citizens. 790 I have suffered [*paskhein*] unbearably. Ah, unfortunate daughters of Night, you have the sorrow [*penthos*] of a great blight on your *tīmē*!

Athena

⁷⁹⁴ You [Erinyes] must be persuaded by me not to bear the decision with heavy grief. ⁷⁹⁵ For you are not defeated; the trial [*dikē*] resulted in an equal vote, ⁷⁹⁶ that is truly [*alēthōs*] how it came out, and so you are not deprived of your honor [*tīmē*], ⁷⁹⁷ since there were clear pieces of testimony from Zeus. ⁷⁹⁸ And the one who spoke the oracle himself, he [= Apollo] was also the same one who came to give evidence himself, ⁷⁹⁹ with the result that Orestes could not suffer harm, even though he did [*drân*] these things that he did. ⁸⁰⁰ But here you are, vomiting your heavy anger [*kotos*] on this land. ⁸⁰¹ Do reconsider. Do not get passionately angry. Do not cause deprivation of fruit [*a-karpiā*], ⁸⁰² making the land sterile by releasing toxic drops dripping from superhuman powers

[*daimones*], ⁸⁰³ drops becoming savage piercing pains that eat away the seeds. ⁸⁰⁴ For I do promise you, in all justness [*dikē*], ⁸⁰⁵ that you will have sanctuaries and sacred hollows in this land of justice [*dikē*], ⁸⁰⁶ where you will sit on bright thrones at places of fire-sacrifice, ⁸⁰⁷ that is what you will have, earning honor [*tīmē*] from the citizens here.

Chorus

antistrophe 1

Younger gods, you have ridden down the ancient *nomoi* and have snatched them from my hands! 810 And I wretched, deeply angry, and without *tīmē* in this land, alas, I will let venom fly from my heart, venom that brings *penthos* in return for *penthos*, drops of venom that the land cannot endure. 815 A blight will come from the venom that destroys leaves and destroys children, a blight that speeds over the plain and casts pollution on the land to destroy mortals. O *dikē*, *dikē*! I groan. What shall I do? I am the laughing-stock of the citizens. 820 I have suffered [*paskhein*] unbearably. Ah, unfortunate daughters of Night, you have the *penthos* of a great blight on your *tīmē*!

Athena

⁸²⁴ You are not without honor [*tīmē*], so do not be moved by your excessive feeling [*thūmos*], ⁸²⁵ O goddesses, by making the land cursed in the worst way for mortals. ⁸²⁶ I also rely on Zeus—what need is there to say that?—⁸²⁷ and I alone of the gods know where the keys are to the house ⁸²⁸ where his thunderbolt is kept safe, under a seal [*sphragis*]. ⁸²⁹ But there is no need for it. So be obedient to me in the best possible way, ⁸³⁰ and do not hurl words against the land from a tongue uttering threats that cannot be fulfilled, ⁸³¹ threatening that all things bearing fruit [*karpos*] will not prosper. ⁸³² Put to sleep the bitter power [*menos*] of your dark flow, ⁸³³ since you will receive an honor [*tīmē*] that is revered

[*semnē*], and you will share your dwelling [*sun-oikeîn*] with me. ⁸³⁴ You will have the first-fruits of this plentiful land, ⁸³⁵ and fire-sacrifices before childbirth—as also before matrimonial initiation [*telos*] ⁸³⁶ —that is what you will have. And, once you have these things, you will keep on transmitting forever these words of mine here, giving your approval [*ep-aineîn*].

Chorus

strophe 2

That I should suffer [*paskhein*] this, alas! That I, who have ancient *phrenes*, should live beneath the earth, alas, bereft of *tīmē* and unclean!
840 I am breathing *menos* and all possible rage. Oh, alas, earth! What is coming over me, what anguish steals into my heart! Hear my heart [*thūmos*], mother night, **845** for the deceptions of the gods are hard to fight, and they have nearly deprived me of my ancient *tīmai*.

Athena

I will indulge your anger since you are older, and in that respect you are surely more *sophē* than I; **850** yet Zeus has also granted me good *phrenes*. But as for you, if you go to a foreign land, you will come to love this land—I forewarn you. For as time flows on, the years will be full of *tīmē* for these citizens. And you [= the Erinyes], if you have a place of honor [*tīmē*] ⁸⁵⁵ at the house of Erekhtheus, you will be honored by the processions of men and women and you will have more honor than you would ever have from other mortals. So do not place on my land whetstones that hone my peoples' desire for bloodshed, harmful to the insides ⁸⁶⁰ of young men, making them lose their minds with passionate feelings caused not by wine; and do not turn my people into fighting-cocks, making reckless internecine war [*Arēs*] for them, so that they kill each other. If there is war [*Arēs*], let it be with outsiders, and let it keep on happening, ⁸⁶⁵ since war brings a terrific passion for genuine glory

[*kleos*]; but I say there will be no bird-fights in my dwelling place [*oikos*]. I make it possible for you to choose to do [*drân*] good and to be treated [*paskhein*] well and with genuine honor [*tīmē*] to share in this land that is most dear [*philē*] to the gods.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

870 That I should suffer [*paskhein*] this, alas! That I, who have ancient *phrenes*, should live beneath the earth, alas, bereft of *tīmē* and unclean! I am breathing *menos* and all possible rage. Oh, alas, earth! 875 What is coming over me, what anguish steals into my heart! Hear my heart, mother night, for the deceptions of the gods are hard to fight, 880 and they have nearly deprived me of my ancient *tīmai*.

Athena

No, I will grow tired of telling you about these benefits—you'll never be able to say that you, an ancient goddess, went away deprived of your *tīmē* because of me, a younger goddess, and by the mortal inhabitants of this *polis*, and that you were bereft of *xeniā* in this land. 885 But if you give holy reverence to Persuasion and the honey of my speech is sweet, then you will surely remain here. But if you do not want to stay, it would be contrary to *dikē* for you to inflict *mēnis* or rage or harm on the people in this city. 890 For it is possible for you to have a share of the land with *dikē* and with full *tīmē*.

Chorus

Lady Athena, tell me what place will I have?

Athena

Your place will be free from pain and misery—please accept it.

Chorus

Say that I have accepted it, what honor awaits me?

Athena

895 No house will flourish without you.

Chorus

Will you let me be so strong?

Athena

Yes, for we give straight fortune to people who honor us.

Chorus

And will you give me a pledge for all time?

Athena

My word is as good as the accomplishment [*telos*] of my deed.

Chorus

900 You seem to enchant me, and I am not angry anymore.

Athena

Then stay in the land and you will gain *philo*.

Chorus

So, what kind of hymn [*humnos*] are you telling me to sing for this land?

Athena

Sing the kinds of songs that are not about evil victory, ⁹⁰⁴ but songs of the land and of the currents of the sea, [*pontos*] ⁹⁰⁵ and of the sky; and sing that the gusts of wind ⁹⁰⁶ will come with good sunlight and blow over this land, ⁹⁰⁷ and that the fruit of the earth and the offspring of the animals of the field ⁹⁰⁸ will flourish abundantly for my citizens and will

not wear out in the course of time, ⁹⁰⁹ and that there will be the salvation [*sōtēriā*] of human seed. ⁹¹⁰ May you be ready to promote the fertility of those who worship well [*eu-sebeîn*]; ⁹¹¹ for I cherish, like a gardener, ⁹¹² the progeny [*genos*] of these people here, who are so just [*dikaioi*]⁹¹³—and who must be protected from sorrow [*penthos*]. ⁹¹³ Such things are for you to do. As for me, when it comes to deeds of war, ⁹¹⁴ ordeals [*agōnes*] that bring distinction, I will not stand for it if ⁹¹⁵ this citadel [*polis*], this victorious city [*astu*], is not honored [*tīmân*] among mortals.

Chorus

strophe 1

I will accept a common abode [*oikos*] with Pallas, and I will not deprive of *tīmē* a *polis* which is a fortress of the gods for omnipotent Zeus and Arēs, a city which has glory **920** in defending the altars of the Hellenic *daimones*. I pray for the city and give a favorable prophecy, that the joyous light of the sun **925** will cause profitable fortunes to rise rushing from the earth.

Athena

anapests

I act with favorable *phrenes* toward my citizens, when I settle here these great *daimones* who are hard to appease. **930** For their duty is to manage everything among mortals. Yet a man who has not found them grievous does not know where the strokes of fortune come from in life. For the errors of earlier generations **935** drag him to these divinities; silent ruin and hateful wrath level him to the dust, even as he boasts.

Chorus

antistrophe 1

May no hurtful wind destroy the trees—I declare my reciprocity [*kharis*]⁹⁴⁰—and may no burning heat steal the buds from plants, **940** nor exceed its limit; may no fruitless, everlasting plague draw near; may the earth

nurture the thriving flocks that bear double births in season; 945 and may the rich produce of the earth always pay the Hermes-found gift¹³ of the *daimones*.

Athena

anapests

Do you hear, guard of my *polis*, the things she will accomplish? 950 For the Lady Erinys is very powerful, both with the deathless gods and with those below the earth, and with mankind, in getting things done clearly and with proper fulfillment [*telos*]; she causes songs for some people, 955 but for others a life dimmed by tears.

Chorus

strophe 2

I forbid manslaughter and fates that are unseasonal [*a-(h)ōr-os*]; I grant to maidens 960 a life of lawful marriage with your husbands; you, divine Fates [*moirai*], our sisters by the same mother, *daimones* who distribute in a straight way, take part in every house, 965 at every time, and enforce the presence of *dikē*, you most honored of gods everywhere!

Athena

anapests

I rejoice that you are bringing these things to fulfillment for my land with favorable *phrenes*; 970 I love the eyes of Persuasion, who guided my tongue and mouth against the fierce refusal of these deities. But Zeus of the assembly [*agora*] has prevailed. 975 Our rivalry [*eris*] in doing good always wins.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

I pray that discord [*stasis*], that insatiable evil, may never rage in this *polis*, 980 and that the dust which drinks the black blood of citizens may never seize greedily upon disasters [*atai*] of vengeance in the *polis*—disasters in which blood is shed in requital for blood. May the citizens

share joy instead, **985** in a disposition [*dianoia*] of mutual esteem, and may they hate with one *phrēn*; for this cures many ills for mortals.

Athena

anapests

Do they have the *phrenes* to follow the path of good speech? **990** Out of these terrible appearances I see great profit coming to these citizens; for, if you always give great *tīmē*, with good *phrenes*, to the good goddesses, and guide your land and city down the straight path of *dikē* in every way, **995** you surely will shine.

Chorus

strophe 3

Rejoice, rejoice in the wealth allotted to you by fate. Rejoice, people of the city, as you sit near to Zeus; you are the *philoī* of the *philē* maiden, **1000** you who learn balance [*sōphrosunē*] in the fullness of time. The father stands in awe of you, since you are under the wings of Pallas.

Athena

anapests

You, too, rejoice; but I must go ahead to give you a presentation [*apodeixis*] of your dwellings **1005** in the sacred [*hieros*] light of these escorts. Go, speed beneath the earth with these solemn offerings and keep *atē* away from the land, but send what is profitable for the victory of the *polis*. **1010** Lead on, you who live in the *polis*, children of Kranaos;¹⁴ lead these females who have come from abroad to share in my abode [*oikos*] here. Let the citizens have a good disposition [*dianoia*] in good deeds.

Chorus

antistrophe 3

Rejoice, rejoice I say again, **1015** all you in the *polis*, both *daimones* and mortals who live in the *polis* of Pallas; if you respect well my taking up

an abode [*oikos*] in the city, 1020 you will not blame the chances of your life.

Athena

I approve [*aineîn*] the words [*mūthoi*] of your vows, and I will escort you by the light of gleaming torches to the places below and beneath the earth, with the attendant women who with *dikē* guard my wooden statue. 1025 For the eye of the whole land of Theseus will come forth, an ensemble of *kleos*, comprised of children, women, and a band of female elders.

Give them *tīmē* by wearing robes dyed crimson, and let the torches' light lead the march, 1030 so that the company of our land, with good *phrenes*, will manifest itself for the rest of time in fortune that brings prosperity to men.

Chorus Of The Processional Escort

strophe 1

Go to your home with good *phrenes* under a good escort, mighty lovers of *tīmē*, childless children of Night— 1035 be *euphēmoi*,¹⁵ all you who dwell in this land!

antistrophe 1

Under the primeval caverns you win much reverence in *tīmai* and sacrifices—be *euphēmoi*, the whole country in unison!

strophe 2

1040 Be propitious and show straight *phrenes* to the land; come here, venerable goddesses, and delight in the flame-fed torch along the road—cry *ololu* in joyous song and dance!

antistrophe 2

The treaties between foreigners who settle here and Pallas' citizens will last for all time. 1045 Zeus who sees all and Fate have come down to lend support—cry *ololu* in joyous song!

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The chief priestess of Apollo at Delphi was known in the fifth century as the Pythia.

[[back](#)] 2. Phoibos/Phoibē (Phoebus/Phoebe) means ‘radiant like the sun’.

[[back](#)] 3. Pallas is a cult-title of Athena throughout this play.

[[back](#)] 4. The Athenians. Hephaistos and Earth herself were the parents of the hero Erikhthonios, in some versions identified with Erekhtheus, ancestor of the Athenians. –GN

[[back](#)] 5. The name Omphalos ‘navel’ was given by the Delphians to a stone in the inmost sanctuary of Apollo, which they regarded as marking the exact center of the earth.

[[back](#)] 6. Hermes is the guide of the living on their journeys, and the conductor of the *psūkhai* of the dead on their journey to the Underworld.

[[back](#)] 7. The word *euphēmos* means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] 8. Where the Olympian gods battled the Giants.

[[back](#)] 9. What Athena says here confirms Athenian political claims: early in the sixth century, the Athenians had taken possession of Sigeion, near ancient Troy. Sigeion had earlier been possessed by the city of Mytilene (on Lesbos). The Athenian possession is equated here with Athena’s possession.

[[back](#)] 10. Ixion, king of the Lapiths, murdered the father of his bride, and was given purification by Zeus after having been denied by the other gods. Cf. 718.

[[back](#)] 11. The word *ernos* ‘seedling’ here is found also in the lamentation of Thetis over the mortality of her son Achilles in *Iliad* 18.58: ‘and he shot up like a seedling’. See Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* p.182.

[[back](#)] 12. To atone for the murder of the dragon at Delphi, Apollo was compelled by Zeus to serve as a slave in the house of Admetus, son of Pheres. When it was time for Admetus to die, Apollo, in gratitude for his kindness, plied the Fates with wine (line 728) and secured their consent that Admetus should be released from death on condition that some one voluntarily die in his place. In Euripides’ *Alcestis*, his parents refused, so his wife Alcestis chose to die for him.

[[back](#)] 13. Hermes is the god of lucky finds. The Athenians have precious metals in mind, especially silver.

[[back](#)] 14. Kranaos was a mythical founder of the ‘rocky city’ (*kranaos* ‘rocky’), a favorite name of Athens.

[[back](#)] 15. See the previous note on *euphēmos*.

Oedipus at Colonus

By Sophocles

Translated by R. C. Jebb

Revised by Roger Ceragioli

Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

Oedipus

Child of a blind old man, Antigone, to what region have we come, or to what *polis* of men? Who will entertain the wandering Oedipus today with scanty gifts? 5 Little do I crave, and obtain still less than that little, and with that I am content. For patience is the lesson of suffering [*pathos*], and of the long years upon me, and lastly of a noble mind. My child, if you see any resting-place, 10 either on profane ground or by groves of the gods, stop me and set me down, so that we may inquire where we are. We have come to learn as strangers [*xenoi*] from the townsmen, and to bring to fulfillment [*telos*] whatever we hear.

Antigone

Father, toil-worn Oedipus, the towers that 15 ring the *polis*, to judge by sight, are far off; and this place is sacred [*hieros*], to judge from its appearance: laurel, olive, and vine grow thick-set; and a feathered crowd of nightingales makes music within. So sit here on this unshaped stone; 20 you have traveled a long way for an old man.

Oedipus

Seat me, then, and watch over the blind.

Antigone

If time can teach, I need not learn that.

Oedipus

Can you tell me, now, where we have arrived?

Antigone

Athens I know, but not this place.

Oedipus

25 Yes, so much every traveler told us.

Antigone

Well, shall I go and learn what the spot is called?

Oedipus

Yes, child, if indeed it is inhabited [*oikeîn*].

Antigone

It surely is inhabited [*oikeîn*]. But I think there is no need—I see a man nearby.

Oedipus

30 Setting off and coming toward us?

Antigone

He is at our side already. Speak whatever seems timely to you, for the man is here.

A Xenos enters, a man of Colonus.

Oedipus

Xenos, hearing from this maiden, who has sight both for herself and for me, 35 that you have arrived as a scout of good fortune for the solving of our doubts...

Xenos

Now, before you inquire [*historeîn*] of me at length, leave this seat. You occupy ground which it is unholy to tread upon.

Oedipus

And what is this ground? To which of the gods is it sacred?

Xenos

Ground inviolable, on which no one may dwell [*oikeîn*]. The dread 40 goddesses hold it, the daughters of Earth and Darkness.

Oedipus

Who are they? Whose awe-inspiring name might I hear and invoke in prayer?

Xenos

The all-seeing Eumenides the people here would call them: but other names please elsewhere.

Oedipus

Then graciously may they receive their suppliant! 45 Never again will I depart from my seat in this land.

Xenos

What does this mean?

Oedipus

The watchword of my fate.

Xenos

I dare not remove you without warrant from the *polis*, until I report what I am doing.

Oedipus

⁴⁹ I implore you by the gods, stranger [*xenos*], do not deprive me of honor [*a-tīmân*], ⁵⁰ wanderer that I am, and do point out to me the things I ask you to tell me.

Xenos

⁵¹ Indicate [*sēmainein*] to me, and it will be clear that you will not be without honor [*a-tīmos*] from me.

Oedipus

⁵² What, then, is the place [*khōros*] that I [we] have entered?

Xenos

⁵³ All that I myself know, you will hear and learn. ⁵⁴ This whole place [*khōros*] is sacred [*hieros*]; it is possessed ⁵⁵ by the revered [*semnos*] Poseidon, and inside it is the fire-bringing god, ⁵⁶ the Titan Prometheus. As for the place [*topos*] where you have set foot, ⁵⁷ it is called the Bronze-Step Threshold of this land here. ⁵⁸ It is the Protection of Athens. And the neighboring fields ⁵⁹ claim as their own this person here, Colonus [*Kolōnos*],¹ who is the rider of chariots [*hippotēs*], ⁶⁰ as their ancient ruler; and all the population bear the name of ⁶¹ this person here [= Colonus] as their shared [*koinon*] possession. ⁶² Such, you see, stranger [*xenos*], are these things, which are what they are not because what we say ⁶³ gives them honor [*tīmān*], but rather because we live in communion [*sun-ousiā*] with them.

Oedipus

⁶⁴ Are there indeed dwellers in this region?

Xenos

⁶⁵ Yes indeed, the namesakes of this god here [Colonus].²

Oedipus

Have they a king? Or does speaking [in assembly] rest with the masses?

Xenos

These parts are ruled by the king in the city.

Oedipus

And who is he that is sovereign in counsel and in might?

Xenos

Theseus he is called, son of Aegeus who was before him.

Oedipus

⁷⁰ Could a messenger go to him from among you?

Xenos

With what aim? To speak, or to prepare his coming?

Oedipus

So that by a small service he [Theseus] may find a great gain.

Xenos

And what help can come from one who cannot see?

Oedipus

In all that I speak there will be vision.

Xenos

75 Take care now, *xenos*, that you come to no harm; for you are noble, if I may judge by your looks, leaving your fortune [*daimōn*] aside. Stay here, where I found you, until I go and tell these things to the people of this district [*dēmos*]*—not in the city.* 80 They will decide for you whether you should stay or go back.

The Xenos exits.

Oedipus

My child, has the *xenos* left us?

Antigone

He is gone, and so you can speak what you wish, father, fully serene [*hēsukhos*], knowing that I alone am near.

Oedipus

Ladies of dread aspect, since your seat is 85 the first in this land at which I have bent my knee, show yourselves not ungracious to Phoebus or to myself; who, when he proclaimed that doom of many woes, spoke to me of this rest after long years: on reaching my goal in a land where I should find a seat of the awe-inspiring Goddesses 90 and a shelter for *xenoi*, there I should profitably close my weary life, through my having fixed my abode [*oikos*] there, for those who received me, but ruin [*atē*] for those who sent me forth, who drove me away. And he went on to

warn me that signs [*sēmeia*] of these things would come, 95 in earthquake, or in thunder, or in the lightning of Zeus. Now I perceive that in this journey some trusty omen from you has surely led me to this grove; never otherwise could I have met with you, first of all, in my wanderings—I, in my sobriety, with you who touch no wine, 100 —or taken this august [*semnon*] seat not shaped by men. Then, goddesses, according to the word of Apollo, give me at last some way to accomplish and close my course—unless, perhaps, I seem too lowly, 105 enslaved as I am evermore to woes the sorest on the earth. Hear, sweet daughters of primeval Darkness! Hear, you that are called the city of great Athena, Athens, given most *tīmē* of all cities! Pity this poor phantom of the man Oedipus! 110 For in truth it is the former living body no more.

Antigone

Hush! Here come some aged men to spy out your resting-place.

Oedipus

I will be mute. But hide me in the grove, apart from the road, till I learn 115 how these men will speak. For in learning is the safeguard of our course.

They exit. The Chorus of elders of Colonus enters.

Chorus

strophe 1

Look! Who was he, then? Where is he staying? Where has he rushed from this place, 120 man most insatiable [without *koros*] among all who live? Scan the ground, look well, press the search everywhere. A wanderer that old man must have been, 125 a wanderer, not a dweller in the land; otherwise he never would have advanced into this untrodden grove of the maidens with whom none may strive. 130 Their name we tremble to speak, we pass them by with eyes turned away, mouthing the words, without sound or word, with a *phrēn* that is *euphēmos*.³ But now it is said that one has come who reveres them not at all; 135 and him I

cannot yet discern, though I look round all the sacred space [*temenos*],
nor do I know where to find his lodging.

Oedipus steps forward with Antigone.

Oedipus

Behold the man you seek! For in sound is my sight, as the saying goes.

Chorus

140 Oh! Oh! Fearful he is to see, and fearful to hear!

Oedipus

Do not regard me, I beg you, as a lawless man.

Chorus

Zeus defend us! who may this old man be?

Oedipus

Not so wholly of the best fate 145 that you would pronounce him
happy [*eudaimōn*], guardians of this land! It's plain; otherwise I would
not be creeping, as you see, by the eyes of others, and buoying my
strength upon the weakness [of my daughter].

Chorus

antistrophe 1

Alas! were you sightless even from birth? 150 Evil have been your days,
and many, it appears. But at least if I can help it, you shall not add this
curse to your lot. You go too far—too far! 155 That your rash steps may
intrude on the field of this voiceless, grassy glade, where the waters of
the mixing bowl blend their stream with the flow of honeyed offerings,
beware, unhappiest of *xenoi*. 160 Do not go on! Withdraw! Let a wide
space part us. Do you hear, toil-worn wanderer? If you have anything to
say in converse with us, 165 leave forbidden ground, and speak where it
is custom [*nomos*] for all; but, till then, refrain.

Oedipus

170 Daughter, to what counsel shall we incline?

Antigone

My father, we must behave just as the townspeople do, listening and giving way where it is necessary.

Oedipus

Then give me your hand.

Antigone

I lay it in yours.

Oedipus

Xenoi, let me not suffer a violation of *dikē* 175 when I have trusted in you, and have passed from my refuge!

Chorus

strophe 2

Never, old man, never will any one remove you from your resting-place here against your will.

Oedipus moves forward.

Oedipus

Further, then?

Chorus

Come still further.

Oedipus

Further?

Chorus

180 Lead him onward, maiden, for you hear us and obey.

Antigone

Come, follow this way with your dark steps, father, as I lead you.

Chorus

A *xenos* in a foreign land, 185 poor man, bear to detest what the *polis* holds steadfastly as not *philon*, and to reverence what she holds as *philon*!

Oedipus

Lead me, then, child, to a spot where I may speak and listen within piety's domain, 190 and let us not wage war with necessity.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

There! Do not incline your steps beyond that ledge of bedrock.

Oedipus

This far?

Chorus

Enough, I say.

Oedipus

195 Shall I sit down?

Chorus

Yes, move sideways and crouch low on the edge of the rock.

Antigone

200 Father, this is my task: in serenity [*hēsukhiā*]...

Oedipus

Ah me! ah me!

Antigone

...to fit step to step, and lean your aged frame upon my *philos* arm.

Oedipus

Woe for the disaster [*atē*] of a *phrēn* gone bad!

Antigone seats him on the rock.

Chorus

Ah, poor man, since now you are at ease, speak! What is your lineage among mortals? With what name are you led on your path of labors [*ponoi*]? 205 What fatherland can you tell us of?

Oedipus

Xenoi, I am without *polis*, but do not...

Chorus

What is this that you forbid, old man?

Oedipus

210 Do not, do not ask me who I am! Seek nor probe no further!

Chorus

What does this mean?

Oedipus

Horrid the birth...

Chorus

Speak!

Oedipus

My child—ah me!—what shall I say?

Chorus

215 What is your lineage, *xenos* ; speak! And who is your father?

Oedipus

Woe is me! What will I experience [*paskhein*], my child?

Antigone

Speak, for you are driven to the verge.

Oedipus

Then speak I will. I have no way to hide it.

Chorus

You two make a long delay. Come, hasten!

Oedipus

220 Do you know of a son of Laios?

Chorus

Oh!

Oedipus

...and of the family of the Labdakidai?

Chorus

O Zeus!

Oedipus

...and of the pitiful Oedipus?

Chorus

You are he?

Oedipus

Have no fear of any words that I speak...

Chorus

Ah, no, no!

Oedipus

Unhappy that I am!

Chorus

Oh, oh!

Oedipus

225 Daughter, what is about to befall?

Chorus

Out with you! Forth from the land!

Oedipus

And your promise—to what fulfillment will you bring it?

Chorus

No man is visited by the punishment of fate if he requites deeds which were first experienced [*paskhein*] by him. 230 Deceit on the one part matches deceits on the other, and gives labor [*ponos*] instead of reward [*kharis*]. And you—back with you! Out from your seat! 235 Away from my land with all speed, that you may not fasten some heavier burden on my *polis*!

Antigone

Xenoi whose *phrenes* have respect [*aidōs*], since you have not allowed my aged father—knowing, as you do, 240 the rumor of his unintended deeds—pity at least my poor self, I implore you, who supplicate you for my father alone. I beg you with eyes that can still look 245 on your own, like one sprung from your own blood, that this sufferer may find respect [*aidōs*]. On you, as on a god, we depend in our misery. But come, grant the favor [*kharis*] for which we hardly dare hope! 250 I implore you by everything that you hold *philos* at home: by child, by wife, or treasure, or god! Look well and you will not find the mortal who, if a god should lead him on, could escape.

Chorus

Feel sure, daughter of Oedipus, that we pity you and him alike 255 for your misfortune; but dreading the punishment of the gods, we could not say anything beyond what we have now said to you.

Oedipus

What help comes, then, of repute or fair fame, if it ends in idle breath; 260 seeing that Athens, as men say, is god-fearing beyond all, and alone has the power to save [*sōzein*] the outraged *xenos*, and alone the power to help him? And where are these things for me, when, after making me rise up from this rocky seat, you then drive me from the land, afraid of my name alone? 265 Not, surely, afraid of my person or of my acts; since

my acts, at least, have been in suffering [*paskhein*] rather than doing—if I must mention the tale of my mother and my father, because of which you fear me. That know I full well. 270 And yet how was I innately evil [*kakos*]? I, who was merely requiting a wrong that I suffered [*paskhein*], so that, had I been acting with knowledge, even then I could not be accounted *kakos*. But, as it was, all unknowing I went where I went—while they who made me suffer [*paskhein*] knowingly sought my ruin. 275 Therefore, *xenoi*, I beseech you by the gods: just as you made me leave my seat, so save [*sōzein*] me, and do not, while you render *tīmē* to the gods, consider those gods to be fools. But rather consider that they look on the god-fearing man 280 and on the godless, and that never yet has an impious man found escape. With the help of those gods, do not becloud the good fortune [*eudaimoniā*] of Athens by paying service to unholy deeds. As you have received the suppliant under your pledge, 285 rescue me and guard me to the end; nor treat me without *tīmē* when you look on this face unlovely to behold, for I have come to you as one holy [*hieros*] and pious, bearing comfort for this people. But when the master is come, 290 whoever is your leader, then you will hear and know all; meanwhile show yourselves in no way *kakos*.

Chorus

The thoughts you urge, old man, must inspire awe; they have been set forth in grave words. 295 But I am content that the rulers of our country should judge in this case.

Oedipus

And where, *xenoi*, is the lord of this realm?

Chorus

He is at the city of his fathers in our land. The messenger who sent us here has gone to fetch him.

Oedipus

Do you think that he will have any regard or care for the blind man, 300

so as to come here himself?

Chorus

Yes, surely, as soon as he learns of your name.

Oedipus

Who is there to bring him that utterance [*epos*]?

Chorus

The way is long, and many stories [*epea*] from travelers often wander about. When he hears them, he will soon be with us, never fear. 305 For your name, old man, has been loudly heralded through all lands, so that even if he is taking his ease, and slow to move, when he hears of you he will swiftly arrive.

Oedipus

Well, may he come with good fortune both for his own *polis* and for me! What noble man [*esthlos*] is not his own *philos*?

Antigone

310 O Zeus! What shall I say? What shall I think, my father?

Oedipus

What is it, Antigone, my child?

Antigone

I see a woman coming towards us, mounted on a colt of Etna; she wears a Thessalian bonnet to screen her face from the sun. 315 What shall I say? Is it she, or is it not? Does my judgment err? Yes—no—I cannot tell—ah me! It is no other, yes! She greets me with bright glances 320 as she draws near, and makes a signal [*sēmainein*]. Here is Ismene, clearly, and no other before me.

Oedipus

What's that you say, my child?

Antigone

That I see your daughter, my sister. By her voice right away you can know her.

Ismene enters.

Ismene

Father and sister, names most sweet to me! How hard it was to find you!
325 And how hard now to look upon you for my tears!

Oedipus

My child, have you come?

Ismene

Father, your fate is sad to see!

Oedipus

Are you with us, my child?

Ismene

Not without toil, indeed, for myself.

Oedipus

Touch me, my daughter!

Ismene

I give a hand to each at once.

Oedipus

330 Ah my children, my sisters!

Ismene

Alas, twice-wretched life!

Oedipus

Her life and mine?

Ismene

And mine, wretched me, makes a third.

Oedipus

Child, why have you come?

Ismene

Through concern for you, father.

Oedipus

Through longing to see me?

Ismene

Yes, and to bring you news by my own mouth, with the only faithful servant that I had.

Oedipus

335 And where are the young men, your brothers, in our ordeal [*ponos*]?

Ismene

They are where they are; their circumstances now are terrible.

Oedipus

True image of the customs [*nomoi*] of Egypt that they show in their spirit and their life! For there the men sit weaving in the house, 340 but the wives go forth to win the daily bread. And in your case, my daughters, those to whom these labors [*ponoi*] belonged keep the house at home like maidens, while you two, in their place, bear your poor father's labors [*ponoi*]. 345 The one, from the time when her youth was past and she came into her strength, has always been this old man's guide in weary wanderings, often roaming, hungry and barefoot, through the wild woods, often battered by rains and scorching sun. 350 And the comforts of home, poor girl, she holds in the second place, so long as her father should have her care. And you, my child, in former days came forth, bringing your father, unknown to the Kadmeians, all the *mantis*-delivered words that had been given concerning Oedipus. 355 You became a faithful guardian on my behalf, when I was being driven from the land. Now, in turn, what report [*mūthos*] have you brought your father, Ismene? On what mission have you set forth from home?

For you do not come empty-handed, I know well, 360 or without some cause of fear for me.

Ismene

The sufferings [*pathos*] that I bore [*paskhein*], father, in seeking where you dwelt, I will pass by; I would not renew the pain in the recital. 365 But the evils that now beset your ill-fated sons—it is of these that I have come to indicate [*sēmainein*]. At first it was their decision that the throne should be left to Creon, and the city spared pollution, when they thought calmly about the ancient blight on our family, 370 and how it has clung to your unfortunate house. But now, moved by some god and by an erring *phrēn*, an evil strife [*eris*] has seized them—thrice-deluded!—to grasp at rule and the power of a *turannos*. And the younger son has stripped the elder, Polyneikes, of the throne, 375 and has driven him from his fatherland. But he, as the widespread rumor says among us, has gone to the valley of Argos as an exile, and is taking to himself a novel kinship, and warriors for his *philoι*, intending that he shall soon get hold of the Kadmeian land with *tīmē*, 380 or mount to the sky. These are not empty words, my father, but terrible deeds; and where the gods will have pity on your ordeal [*ponoi*], I cannot tell.

Oedipus

385 What, had you come to hope that the gods would ever have concern enough for me to give me salvation [*sōtēriā*]?

Ismene

Yes, that is my hope, father, from the present words of the *mantis*.

Oedipus

What are they? What has been prophesied, my child?

Ismene

That you will be desired some day, in life and death, by the men of that land, 390 for their safety's sake.

Oedipus

And who could profit from such a one as I?

Ismene

Their power, it is said, proves to be in your hands.

Oedipus

When I no longer exist, then I am a man?

Ismene

Yes, for the gods now raise you up; but before they worked your ruin.

Oedipus

395 It is a paltry thing to lift age, when youth was ruined.

Ismene

Well, know at least that Creon will come to you on this account—and soon, not late.

Oedipus

With what purpose, daughter? Interpret that to me.

Ismene

To plant you near the Kadmeian land, so that they may have you in their power, 400 while you may not set foot within their borders.

Oedipus

And what kind of profit [*ōphelēsis*]⁴ will I be for them while I rest beyond their gates?

Ismene

Your tomb contains a curse for them, if it should suffer misfortune.

Oedipus

I need no god to help my wits so far.

Ismene

For this reason, therefore, they wish to get you as their neighbor; 405

but in a place where you would not have power [*kratos*] over yourself.

Oedipus

Will they really cover me in Theban dust?

Ismene

No, the guilt of related blood debars you, father.

Oedipus

Then never will they become my masters.

Ismene

Some day then this will be a grief for the Kadmeians.

Oedipus

410 In what conjunction of events, my child?

Ismene

Under the power of your anger, when they stand at your tomb.

Oedipus

And who has told you this, my child?

Ismene

Sacred envoys [*theōroi*], from the Delphian hearth.

Oedipus

And has Phoebus indeed spoken this concerning me?

Ismene

415 So say the men who have come back to Thebes.

Oedipus

Has either of my sons heard this?

Ismene

Yes, both have heard it, and know it well.

Oedipus

And then those worst of sons, aware of this, preferred the tyranny to the wish of recalling me?

Ismene

420 It grieves me to hear this, but I must bear it.

Oedipus

Then may the gods not quench their fated strife [*eris*], and may it fall to me to decide this war on which they are now setting their hands, raising spear against spear! 425 For then neither would he who now holds the scepter and the throne survive, nor would the exile ever return; seeing that when I, their father, was being thrust without *tīmē* from my country, they did not stop or defend me. No, they saw me sent forth homeless, 430 and heard the crier proclaim my sentence of exile. Perhaps you will say that that was my own wish then, and that the *polis* fittingly granted me that gift. Not so! For on that first day, when my *thūmos* seethed, 435 and my sweetest wish was for death—indeed, death by stoning—no one was found to help me in that desire. But after a time, when all my anguish was now softened, and when I began to feel that my *thūmos* had been excessive in punishing those past errors, 440 then it was that the *polis* set about to drive me by force from the land, after all that time. And my sons, when they had the strength to bring help—sons to their own father—they would not do it. For lack of one little word [*epos*] from them, I was left to wander, an outcast and a beggar evermore. 445 Instead, it is from these, maidens as they are, insofar as nature enables them, that I obtain my daily food, and a shelter in the land, and the aid of family. Their brothers have bartered their father for the throne, the scepter of power, and the tyranny of the realm. 450 No, never will they win Oedipus for an ally, nor will good ever come to them from this reign at Thebes; that I know, when I hear this maiden's *mantis*-delivered words and reflect on the old prophecies stored in my own mind, which Phoebus has fulfilled for me at last. 455 Therefore let them send Creon to seek me—or whoever else is mighty in Thebes. For

if you, *xenoi*, with the help of the dread goddesses who reign in your district [*dēmos*], are willing to defend me, you will obtain a great savior [*sōtēr*] for this *polis*, **460** and trouble [*ponoi*] for my enemies.

Chorus

You are worthy of compassion, Oedipus, both you and these maidens. And since to this plea you append your power to be *sōtēr* of our land, I wish to advise you for your advantage.

Oedipus

465 Most *philoï*, be my patrons [*proxenoi*], and I will bring everything to fulfillment [*telos*].

Chorus

Then make atonement to these *daimones*, to whom you have come first, and on whose ground you have trespassed.

Oedipus

With what rites? Instruct me, *xenoi*.

Chorus

First, from an ever-flowing **470** spring bring holy [*hierai*] drink-offerings, borne in ritually pure hands.

Oedipus

And when I have gotten this unmixed draught?

Chorus

There are bowls, the work of a skilled craftsman; crown their edges and the handles at either side.

Oedipus

With olive branches, or woolen cloths, or in what way?

Chorus

475 Take the freshly-shorn wool of an ewe-lamb.

Oedipus

Good; and then to what last rite [*telos*] shall I proceed?

Chorus

Pour the drink-offerings, with your face to the dawn.

Oedipus

Shall I pour them with these vessels of which you speak?

Chorus

Yes, in three streams; but the last vessel...

Oedipus

480 With what shall I fill this, before I set it down? Teach me this also.

Chorus

With water and honey; but add no wine.

Oedipus

And when the ground under the dark shade has drunk these?

Chorus

Three times lay on it nine branches of olive with both your hands, and meanwhile make this prayer.

Oedipus

485 I wish to hear this prayer; it is the most important part.

Chorus

We call them Eumenides, so that with well-wishing *menos* they may receive the suppliant as his saviors [*sōtēres*]. Let this be your prayer, or of whoever prays for you. Speak inaudibly, and do not lift up your voice; then retire, without looking behind. 490 If you should do this, I would be bold enough to come to your aid; but otherwise, *xenos*, I would fear for you.

Oedipus

Daughters, do you hear these *xenoi* who dwell nearby?

Antigone

We have listened. Tell us what to do.

Oedipus

495 I cannot make the trip; for I am disabled by lack of strength and lack of sight, twin evils. But let one of you two go and do these things. For I think that one *psūkhē* suffices to pay this debt for ten thousand, if it comes with good will. 500 Act, then, with speed. But don't abandon me, for my body wouldn't have the strength to move, without help or a guiding hand.

Ismene

Then I will go to perform the rite; but where I am to find the place—this I wish to learn.

Chorus

505 On the further side of this grove, *xenē*. And if you have need of anything, there is a guardian of the place. He will direct you.

Ismene

Off to my task. But you, Antigone, watch our father here. In the case of parents, if we have labor [*ponos*], we must not keep a memory of it.

Ismene exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

510 Terrible it is, *xenos*, to arouse the old woe that has for so long been laid to rest: and yet I yearn to hear...

Oedipus

What now?

Chorus

...of that grief-filled anguish, cureless, with which you have wrestled.

Oedipus

515 By your hospitality [*xeniā*], do not uncover the shame that I have suffered [*paskhein*]!

Chorus

Seeing that the tale is wide-spread and in no way weakens, I wish, friend, to hear it aright.

Oedipus

Ah me!

Chorus

Grant the favor, I beg!

Oedipus

Alas, alas!

Chorus

antistrophe 1

520 Grant my wish, as I have granted yours to the full.

Oedipus

I have suffered the greatest evils, *xenoi*—suffered it through unintended deeds—may the god know it! No part was of my own choice.

Chorus

But in what way?

Oedipus

525 In an evil marriage, the *polis* bound me, all unknowing, to disaster [*atē*].

Chorus

Is it true, as I hear, that you made your mother the partner of your bed, to its infamy?

Oedipus

Ah me! These words, *xenoi*, are like death to my ears. And those two maidens of mine...

Chorus

530 What will you say?

Oedipus

...two daughters—two curses [*atē*]...

Chorus

O Zeus!

Oedipus

...of me begotten, sprang from the travail of the womb that bore me too.

Chorus

strophe 2

These, then, are at once your daughters, and...

Oedipus

535...sisters, indeed, of their father.

Chorus

Oh!

Oedipus

Indeed, woes untold sweep back upon my soul!

Chorus

You have suffered [*paskhein*]...

Oedipus

I have suffered [*paskhein*] woes grievous to bear.

Chorus

You have done...

Oedipus

I have not done it!

Chorus

How?

Oedipus

540 A gift was given to me—O, wretched that I am, if only I had never won from the *polis* that gift for my services!

Chorus

antistrophe 2

Cursed man! What of this? Did you commit the murder...

Oedipus

What now? What would you learn?

Chorus

...of your father?

Oedipus

Oh! oh! a second stab—wound on wound!

Chorus

545 You killed...

Oedipus

I killed—yet have I a plea...

Chorus

What can you plead?

Oedipus

...a plea of *dikē*.

Chorus

What?

Oedipus

I will tell you: I slew without *noos* and perished utterly. Pure before the law [*nomos*], without knowledge of my act, I have come to this pass!

Chorus

Look, there comes our lord, Theseus, son of Aegeus, 550 at the sound of your voice, to do that for which he was summoned.

Theseus enters.

Theseus

Through hearing from many in the past about the bloody marring of your sight, I recognized it was you, son of Laios; and now on coming here, through sight I am more fully certain. 555 For your clothing and that heart-rending face alike assure me that it is you. And in all compassion I ask you, ill-fated Oedipus, with what petition to the *polis* and to me have you taken your place here, you and the poor maiden at your side. Declare it. Dire indeed must be the fortune which you tell, 560 for me to stand aloof from it; since I know that I myself also was reared in exile, just as you, and that in foreign lands I wrestled with perils to my life, like no other man. 565 Never, then, would I turn aside from a *xenos*, such as you are now, or refuse to help in his salvation [*sōtēriā*]. For I know well that I am a man, and that my portion of tomorrow is no greater than yours.

Oedipus

Theseus, in a few words your nobleness has come to such a point 570 that I need not feel shame [*aidōs*] in making a brief speech. You have said who I am, from what father I am sprung, and from what land I have come; and so nothing else remains for me but to speak my wish, and the tale is told.

Theseus

575 Then inform me of this very thing, so that I may learn it.

Oedipus

⁵⁷⁶ I [= Oedipus] come to donate this wretched body of mine ⁵⁷⁷ as a gift to you [= Theseus]—a gift that seems not to be important when you look at it. But it has ⁵⁷⁸ benefits coming out from it that have more power than any form of beauty.

Theseus

And what gain do you claim to have brought?

Oedipus

580 Hereafter you may learn it—but not yet.

Theseus

At what time, then, will the benefit become clear?

Oedipus

When I am dead, and you have given me burial.

Theseus

You crave life's last service; but for all between you have no memory, or no care.

Oedipus

585 Indeed, for by that service I gather in all the rest.

Theseus

This favor [*kharis*] you crave from me is brief indeed.

Oedipus

Yet take care; the struggle here is no light one. No, indeed.

Theseus

Do you mean in respect to your sons, or to me?

Oedipus

They will compel you to convey me there [to Thebes].

Theseus

590 But if you are willing, then exile is not becoming.

Oedipus

No, when I was willing, they refused.

Theseus

Foolish man, anger [*thūmos*] amidst woes is not suitable.

Oedipus

When you have heard my story, admonish; till then, forbear.

Theseus

Speak. I must not pronounce without knowledge.

Oedipus

595 I have suffered [*paskhein*], Theseus, terrible woes upon woes.

Theseus

Will you speak of the ancient trouble of your family?

Oedipus

No, indeed; that is gossiped throughout Hellas.

Theseus

How, then, do you suffer beyond other men?

Oedipus

The circumstance is this: from my country I have been driven by my own sons; 600 and I may not return, since I am guilty of a father's blood.

Theseus

Why would they have you brought back, if you must dwell [*oikeîn*] apart?

Oedipus

The word of the god will compel them.

Theseus

What suffering [*pathos*] do they fear from the oracles?

Oedipus

605 That they must be struck down in this land.

Theseus

And how should bitterness come between them and me?

Oedipus

Most *philos* son of Aegeus, to the gods alone old age and death never come, but everything else sinks into chaos from time which overpowers all. 610 Earth's strength wilts [verb *phthi-*], and so too the strength of the body; trust dies, distrust is born; and the same spirit is never steadfast among *philoï*, or between *polis* and *polis*. For some now, for others tomorrow sweet feelings turn to bitter, and then once more to being *philos*. 615 And if now the sun shines brightly between Thebes and you, yet time in his course gives birth to days and nights untold, in which from a small cause they will 620 scatter with the spear today's pledges of concord. ⁶²¹ [There in my tomb under the Earth,] where my sleeping and hidden corpse, ⁶²² cold as it is, will at some moment in the future drink their hot blood, if Zeus is still Zeus, and Phoebus, the son of Zeus, speaks clear. But, since I would not break silence concerning utterances [*epea*] that must not be disturbed, allow me to cease where I began. 625 Only keep your own pledge good, and never will you say that in vain you welcomed Oedipus to be a dweller [*oikētēr*] in this land—if indeed the gods do not deceive me.

Chorus

Lord, from the first this man has shown a 630 will to give *telos* to these utterances [*epea*], or similar ones, for our land.

Theseus

Who, then, would reject the goodwill [*eumeneia*] of such a one? To whom, first, the hearth of a spear-*xenos* is always available on our side,

by reciprocal right; then too he has come as a suppliant to our *daimones*,
635 paying no small recompense to this land and to me. In reverence for
these claims, I will never spurn his *kharis*, and I will establish an abode
[*oikos*] for him as a citizen in the land. And if it is the pleasure of the
xenos to remain here, I will command you to 640 protect him; or, if it
pleases him, to come with me. This way or that, Oedipus, you may
choose [*krinein*]; your desire will be mine.

Oedipus

O Zeus, may you be good to men such as these!

Theseus

What is your wish, then? Will you come to my house?

Oedipus

Yes, I would, if it were divinely ordained [*themis*]. But this is the place...

Theseus

645 What will you do here? Speak, for I will not hinder you.

Oedipus

...where I will have power [*kratos*] over those who cast me out.

Theseus

The promised gift of your presence would be great.

Oedipus

It shall be, if you keep your pledge with me.

Theseus

Have courage concerning me; never will I betray you.

Oedipus

650 I will not bind you with an oath as if a base man.

Theseus

Well, you would win nothing more than by my word.

Oedipus

What will you do, then?

Theseus

What is it that you fear?

Oedipus

Men will come...

Theseus

But these men here will see to that.

Oedipus

Beware that if you leave me...

Theseus

Don't instruct me in my duties.

Oedipus

655 Fear constrains me...

Theseus

My heart feels no fear.

Oedipus

You don't know the threats...

Theseus

I know that none will lead you from here against my will. Often threats have blustered in men's *thūmos* with words [*epea*] loud and vain; but when the *noos* comes to itself once more, 660 the threats have vanished. For those men, too, perhaps—yes, even if in boldness they have spoken dreadful things of bringing you back, the voyage here will prove long and hard to sail. Now I advise [*par-aïneîn*] you, apart from any decision of mine, to be of a good courage, 665 if indeed Phoebus has been your escort here. Even if I am not present, still my name, I know, will shield you from suffering [*paskhein*] harm.

Theseus exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

This place [*khōrā*] here, having good power from horses [*eu-hippos*], O stranger [*xenos*], is the most potent inhabitation on earth—that is where you have just arrived. ⁶⁷⁰ It is Colonus [*Kolōnos*], shining white [*argēs*]. Here the nightingale, a constant visitor, trills her clear note under the trees of green glades, dwelling in the midst of the wine-colored ivy ⁶⁷⁵ and the god's inviolate foliage, rich in berries and fruit, unvisited by sun, unvexed by the wind of any storm. Here the Bacchic reveler Dionysus ever walks the ground, ⁶⁸⁰ companion of the nymphs that nursed him.

antistrophe 1

And, feeding on heavenly dew, the narcissus blooms day by day with its fair clusters, over and over again; it is the ancient garland [*stephanōma*] of the two Great Goddesses. ⁶⁸⁵ And the crocus blooms with a golden gleam. Nor do the ever-flowing springs diminish, from which the waters of Cephissus wander off, and each day this river, swift in making things fertile, ⁶⁹⁰ moves with its pure current over the broad plains of Earth with her swelling breasts. Nor have the singing and dancing choruses [*khoroi*] of the Muses shunned this place, nor Aphrodite of the golden rein.

strophe 2

⁶⁹⁵ And there is a thing such as I have not heard of on Asian ground, nor as ever yet originating in the great Dorian island of Pelops: it is a plant unconquered, self-renewing, causing terror for enemies armed with spears. ⁷⁰⁰ It greatly flourishes in this land—the gray-leaved olive, nurturer of children. No young man may harm it by the ravages of his hand, nor may anyone who lives with old age. For the sleepless circular eye ⁷⁰⁵ of Zeus Morios [guard of the sacred olive trees] watches over it, and so too does gray-eyed Athena.

antistrophe 2

And I have another word of praise [*ainos*] to say for this city, our mother [*mātro-polis*], and it is a most potent word: ⁷¹⁰ [I praise] the gift of the great superhuman force [*daimōn*]. It is the greatest thing worthy of praise. It has the good power of horses [*eu-hippon*], the good power of colts [*eu-pōlon*], the good power of the sea [*eu-thalasson*]. I say this because you, son of Kronos, lord Poseidon, have set the city on the throne of these words of praise ⁷¹⁵ by inventing, first of all on our own roadways, the bit that cures the rage of horses. Meanwhile the oar, well shaped for rowing on the sea, is gliding past the land as it leaps [*thrōiskein*] to keep time with the singing and dancing of the hundred-footed Nereids.

Antigone

720 Land that gets praise [*ep-ainos*] above all lands, now it is your task to make those bright praises seen in deeds!

Oedipus

What strange new thing has befallen, my daughter?

Antigone

Creon there draws near us, and not without followers, father.

Oedipus

Ah, most *philo*i old men, now give me 725 the final proof of my safety [*sōtēriā*]!

Chorus

Courage! It will be yours. For even if I am aged, this country's strength has not grown old.

Creon enters with attendants.

Creon

Gentlemen, noble dwellers [*oikētores*] in this land, I see from your eyes that a sudden fear has troubled you at my coming; 730 but do not shrink back from me, and let no bad utterance [*epos*] escape you. I am

here with no thought of force; I am old, and I know that the *polis* to which I have come is mighty, if any in Hellas has might. 735 No, I have been sent, aged as I am, to plead with this man to return with me to the land of Kadmos. I am not one man's envoy, but have a mandate from all our people; since it belonged to me, by tie of family, beyond all other Thebans to show grief [*penthos*] over his woes. 740 Unhappy Oedipus, hear us, and come back to your home [*oikos*]! With *dikē* you are summoned by all the Kadmeians, and most of all by me, just as I—unless I am the most *kakos* of all men born—feel most sorrow for your woes, old man, 745 when I see you, unhappy as you are, a *xenos* and a wanderer evermore, roaming in beggary, with one handmaid for your support. Ah me, I had not thought that she could fall to such a depth of misery as that to which she has fallen— 750 this poor girl!—as she tends forever your dark life amid poverty; in ripe youth, but unwed: a prize for the first passerby to seize. Is it not a cruel reproach—alas!—that I have cast at you, and me, and all our family? 755 But indeed an open shame cannot be hidden. Oedipus, in the name of your ancestral gods, listen to me! Hide it, and consent to return to the city and the house of your ancestors, after bidding a kind farewell to this *polis*. For she is worthy; yet your own city has a right [*dikē*] to claim your reverence, 760 since it was she that nurtured you long ago.

Oedipus

You who will dare anything, who from any just [*dikaios*] plea would derive a crafty trick, why do you make this attempt on me, and seek once more to snare me in your trap where I would feel most grief? 765 Long ago, when I labored under the sickness of my self-made evils, and I yearned to be cast out of the land, you refused to grant the favor [*kharis*]. But when my fierce anger had spent its force, and seclusion in the house was sweet to me, 770 it was then that you thrust me from the house and cast me from the land. And this common tie of family that you mention—that was not at all *philon* to you then. Now, in turn, when you see that I have a welcome with good *noos* from this *polis* and all her

nation, you try to pluck me away, wrapping your cruel thoughts in soft words. 775 And yet what pleasure do you find in this, in treating me as *philos* against my will? As if a man should refuse you a gift, bring you no aid, when you continually begged for it; but after your *thūmos* was sated with your desires, he should grant it then, when the favor [*kharis*] could bring no gratitude [*kharis*] 780 —would you not find your delight in this empty? Yet such is the nature of your own offers to me: noble [*esthla*] in appearance, but in substance ignoble [*kaka*]. And I will declare it to these men too, to show you up as *kakos*. You have come to get me, 785 not to bring me to my home [*oikos*], but to plant me near your borders, so that your *polis* might escape uninjured by evils from this land. That fate is not for you, but this one: the brooding of my vengeful spirit on your land forever; and for my sons, this heirloom: 790 just so much soil in my realm in which to die. Do I not have more *phrenes* than you in the fortunes of Thebes? Yes, far wiser, by as much as the sources of my knowledge are truer: Phoebus I mean, and his father, Zeus himself. But you have come here with fraud on your lips, yes, 795 and with a tongue keener than the edge of a sword; yet by their use you may well reap more sorrow than salvation [*sōtēriā*]. Still, since I know that I cannot persuade you of this, go! Allow us to live on here; for even in this plight our life would not be bad if we should be content with it.

Creon

800 Which of us, do you think, suffers most in this exchange—I by your action, or you by your own?

Oedipus

For me, it is enough if your pleading fails both with me and with these men nearby.

Creon

Unhappy man, will you let everyone see that even in your years you have gained no *phrenes*? 805 Must you live on to disgrace your old age?

Oedipus

You have a clever tongue, but I know no just [*dikaios*] man who can produce from every side a pretty speech.

Creon

Words may be many, and yet not to the point.

Oedipus

As if yours, indeed, were few, but on the mark.

Creon

810 They cannot be, not for one whose *noos* is such as yours.

Oedipus

Begone! I will say it for these men too. And do not besiege me with a jealous watch where I am destined to remain.

Creon

I call these men, and not you, to witness the tenor of your words to your *philoí*. And if I ever catch you...

Oedipus

815 And who could catch me against the will of these allies?

Creon

I promise you, soon you'll smart without that.

Oedipus

Where is the deed which backs that threatening word?

Creon

One of your two daughters I have myself just seized and sent away. The other I will drag off forthwith.

Oedipus

820 Oh no!

Creon

You'll soon find more to weep about.

Oedipus

You have my child?

Creon

And I will have this one in no long time.

Oedipus

Oh! *Xenoi*, what will you do? Will you betray me? Will you not drive the godless man from this land?

Chorus

Depart, stranger! Quick! 825 Your present deed is not just [*dikaios*], nor the deed which you have done.

Creon

To his attendants.

It's time for you to drag this girl off against her will, if she will not go freely.

Antigone

Wretched that I am! Where can I flee? Where find help from gods or men?

Chorus

What are you doing, *xenos*?

Creon

830 I will not touch this man, but her who is mine.

Oedipus

Lords of the land!

Chorus

Xenos, you are acting without *dikē*.

Creon

With *dikē*.

Chorus

How?

Creon

I take my own.

He lays his hand on Antigone.

Oedipus

strophe

Oh, *polis*!

Chorus

What are you doing, *xenos*? Release her! 835 Your strength and ours will soon come to the test.

Creon

Stand back!

Chorus

Not while this is your purpose.

Creon

There will be war with the *polis* [of Thebes] for you, if you harm me.

Oedipus

Did I not say so?

Chorus

Unhand the girl at once!

Creon

840 Don't make commands where you are not the master.

Chorus

Let go, I tell you!

Creon

To his guards, who seize Antigone.

And I tell you: be off!

Chorus

Help, men of Colonus, bring help! The *polis*, our *polis*, is attacked by force! Come to our aid!

Antigone

I am being dragged away in misery. *Xenoi, xenoi* !

Oedipus

845 My child, where are you?

Antigone

I am led off by force.

Oedipus

Give me your hand, my child!

Antigone

I am helpless.

Creon

Away with you!

Oedipus

I am wretched, wretched!

The guards exit with Antigone.

Creon

So those two staffs will never again support your path. 850 But since you wish to overcome your country and your *philoi*, whose will I, though *turannos* as well, am here discharging, then I wish you victory. For in time, I am sure, you will come to recognize all this, that now too as in time past, it is you who have done yourself no good, by indulging your anger despite your *philoi*. 855 This has always been your ruin.

Chorus

Stop there, *xenos*!

Creon

Hands off, I say!

Chorus

I will not let go, unless you give back the maidens.

Creon

Then you'll soon give the *polis* a more valuable prize, for I'll lay hands on more than those two girls.

Chorus

860 What! What do you intend?

Creon

This man here will be my captive.

Chorus

A valiant threat!

Creon

It will be done immediately.

Chorus

Indeed, unless the ruler of this realm prevents you.

Oedipus

Voice of shamelessness! Will you really lay hands on me?

Creon

Be silent, I say!

Oedipus

865 No! May the *daimones* of this place grant me to utter this further curse! Most *kakos* of men, when these eyes were dark, you wrenched from me the helpless one who was my eyesight and made off with her

by force. Therefore to you and to your race may the Sun, the god who sees all things, 870 grant in time an old age such as mine!

Creon

Do you see this, people of the land?

Oedipus

They see both you and me. They know in their *phrenes* that I have suffered [*paskhein*] in deeds, and my defense is mere words.

Creon

I will not check my *thūmos*. Though I am alone 875 and slow with age, I'll take this man by force.

Oedipus

antistrophe

Ah, my wretchedness!

Chorus

What arrogance you have come with, *xenos*, if you think you will achieve this!

Creon

I will.

Chorus

Then I think this *polis* no longer exists.

Creon

880 For men who are *dikaioi*, the weak vanquishes the strong.

Oedipus

Do you hear his words?

Chorus

Yes, but he will not bring them to *telos*.

Creon

Zeus knows perhaps, but you do not.

Chorus

This is *hubris*!

Creon

Hubris which you must bear.

Chorus

Hear people, hear rulers of the land! Come quickly, come! 885 These men are on their way to cross our borders!

Theseus enters.

Theseus

What is this shout? What is the trouble? What fear has moved you to stop my sacrifice at the altar to the sea-god, the lord of this district of yours, Colonus? Speak, so that I may know the situation; for that is why I have sped 890 here more swiftly than was pleasant.

Oedipus

Most *philos* of men! I know your voice. Terrible are the things I have just suffered [*paskhein*] at the hands of this man here.

Theseus

What things are these? And who has pained you? Speak!

Oedipus

Creon, whom you see here, 895 has torn from me my children—my only two.

Theseus

What's that you say?

Oedipus

You have heard what wrongs I have suffered [*paskhein*].

Theseus

Hurry, one of you attendants, to the altars there, and order the people to leave the sacrifice **900** and race on foot and by horse full speed, to the region where the two highways meet, so that the maidens may not pass, and I not become a mockery to this *xenos* as one worsted by force.

Quick, I say, away with you!

As for this man, if my **905** anger went as far as he deserves, I would not let him go uninjured from my hand. But now, just such law [*nomos*] as he himself has brought will be the rule for his correction.

You will never leave this land **910** until you bring those maidens and produce them in my sight. For your action is a disgrace to me, and to your own ancestors, and to your country. You have come to a *polis* that practices *dikē* and sanctions nothing without law, **915** yet you have spurned her lawful authorities and made this violent assault. You are taking captives at will and subjugating them by force, as if you believed that my *polis* was void of men, or manned by slaves, and that I counted for nothing. Yet it was not Thebes that trained you to be *kakos*. Thebes is not accustomed to rearing men without *dikē*, **920** nor would she praise [*ep-aineîn*] you, if she learned that you are despoiling me, and despoiling the gods, when by force you drive off their unfortunate suppliants. If my foot were upon your land, never would I drag off or lead away someone **925** without permission from the ruler of the land, whoever he might be—no, even if my claim had the most *dikē* of all. I would know how a *xenos* ought to live among citizens. But you are disgracing a *polis* that does not deserve it: your own, **930** and your years, despite their fullness, bring you an old age barren of *noos*. Now, I have said before, and I say it once again: let the maidens be brought here speedily, unless you wish to be an unwilling transferred occupant, by force, of an abode [*oikos*] in this country. **935** These are the words of my lips; my *noos* is in accord.

Chorus

Do you see your plight, *xenos*? You are judged *dikaios* by where you are from, but your deeds are found to be evil [*kaka*].

Creon

It is not because I thought this *polis* void of men, son of Aegeus, or of counsel, as you say, 940 that I have done this deed; but because I judged that its people could never be so zealous for my relatives as to support them against my will. And I knew that this people would not receive a parricide and a polluted man, 945 a man whose unholy marriage—a marriage with children—had been found out. Such wisdom, I knew, was immemorial on the Areopagus, which does not allow such wanderers to dwell within this *polis*. Trusting in that, I sought to take this prize. 950 And I would not have done so, had he not been calling down bitter curses on me and on my lineage. As I suffered [*paskhein*] wrong in this way, I judged that I had a right to this requital. For *thūmos* knows no old age, until death comes; 955 the dead alone feel no galling pain. In response to this, you will do what pleases you; for, though my case is *dikaios*, the lack of aid makes me weak. Yet in the face of your actions, despite my age, I will endeavor to pay you back.

Oedipus

960 Arrogance without respect [*aidōs*], where do you think this *hubris* falls—on my old age, or on your own? Bloodshed, incest, misery—all this your tongue has launched against me, and all this I have borne in my wretchedness by no choice of mine. 965 For this was *philon* to the gods, who felt *mēnis*, perhaps, with my family from of old. Taking me alone, you could not find a reproach for any crime, in retribution for which I was driven to commit these errors against myself and against my kin. Tell me now: if, by the voice of an oracle, some divine doom was coming on my father, 970 that he should die by a son's hand, how could you justly reproach me with this, when I was then unborn, when no father had yet begotten me, no mother's womb conceived me? But if, having been born to misery—as I was born—I came to blows with my

father and slew him, ignorant of what 975 I was doing and to whom, how could you reasonably blame the unwitting deed? And my mother—wretch, do you feel no shame in forcing me to speak of her marriage, when she was your sister, and when it was such as I will now tell? 980 For I will not be silent, when you have gone so far in impious speech.

Yes, she was my mother, yes—alas, for my miseries! I did not know it, nor did she, and to her shame she bore children to the son whom she had borne. 985 But one thing, at least, I know: that you willingly revile her and me, but I did not willingly marry her, and I do not willingly speak now. No, I will not be called *kakos* on account of this marriage, nor in the slaying of my father, which you charge me with again and again in bitter insult. 990 Answer just one thing of those about which I inquire [*historeîn*]. If, here and now, someone should come up and try to murder you—you, the *dikaios* one—would you ask if the murderer was your father, or would you revenge yourself on him immediately? 995 I think that if your life is *philon* to you, you would requite the one who is guilty [*aitios*], and not look around for a justification. Such then were the evils into which I came, led by the gods; and to them, I think, my father's *psūkhē*, could it come back to life, would not contradict me.

1000 But you are not *dikaios*; you are one who considers it a fine thing to make every sort of utterance [*epos*], both those which are sanctioned and those which are forbidden—such are your taunts against me in the presence of these men. And to you it seems a fine thing to flatter the renowned Theseus, and Athens, saying how well-established an abode [*oikos*] it is. 1005 Yet while giving such generous praise [*ep-ainos*], you forget that if any land knows how to worship the gods with *tīmai*, this land excels in that. It is from her that you had planned to steal me, a suppliant and an old man, and tried to seize me, having already carried off my daughters. 1010 Therefore I now call on the goddesses here, I supplicate them, I beseech them with prayers, to bring me help and to fight on my behalf, that you may learn well what kind of men this *polis* is guarded by.

Chorus

The *xenos* is a good man, lord. 1015 His fate has been accursed, but it is worthy of our aid.

Theseus

Enough of words. The doers of the deed are in flight, while we, those who suffer [*paskhein*], stand still.

Creon

What order, then, do you have for a powerless man?

Theseus

Guide the way on the path to them while I escort you, 1020 in order that if you are keeping the maidens whom we seek in these lands, you yourself may reveal them to me. But if your men are fleeing with the spoils in their grasp, we may spare our trouble; the chase is for others, from whom they will never escape out of this land to thank their gods. 1025 Come, lead the way! And know that the captor has been captured; fate has seized you as you hunted. Gains got by guile without *dikē* are not saved [*sōzein*]. And you will have no ally in your purpose; for I well know that it is not without accomplice or resource that you have come to such 1030 *hubris*, from the daring mood which has inspired you here. There was someone you were trusting in when you did these deeds. This I must consider, and I must not make this *polis* weaker than one man.

Does your *noos* pick up on any of these things? 1035 Or do these words seem as empty as the warnings given when you were laying your plans?

Creon

Say what you wish while you are here; I will not object. But at home I too will know how to act.

Theseus

Make your threats, then, but go forward. As for you, Oedipus, stay here

in peace with my pledge that, unless I die beforehand, 1040 I will not cease until I put you in possession of your children.

Oedipus

May you have recompense [*kharis*], Theseus, for your nobleness and for your observance of *dikē* in caring for me!

Theseus exits with attendants and Creon.

Chorus

strophe 1

Oh, to be where the enemy, turned to fight, 1045 will soon join in Arēs' clash of bronze, by the shores of Apollo, perhaps, or by that torch-lit beach 1050 where the Great Goddesses maintain awe-inspiring rites [*telos* pl.] for mortals on whose lips the ministering Eumolpidai⁵ have laid the golden seal of silence. There, I think, the war-rousing 1055 Theseus and the two maiden sisters will soon meet within our borders, amid the war-cry of resisting men!

antistrophe 1

Or perhaps they will soon draw near to the pastures on the west of Oea's snowy rock, 1060 fleeing on young horses or in chariots racing full speed. He will be caught! 1065 Terrible is the neighboring Arēs, terrible the might of the followers of Theseus. Yes, the steel of every bridle flashes, 1070 and against their opponents our whole cavalry charges forward, who give *tīmē* to Athena, Our Lady of the Horses, and to the earth-girdling god of the sea [*pontos*], the *philos* son of Rhea.

strophe 2

Is the battle now or yet to be? 1075 For somehow my mind presages to me that soon I will meet the maidens who have suffered fearfully, who have found fearful suffering [*pathos* pl.] at the hands of a kinsman.

Today Zeus will bring something to *telos*. 1080 I am a *mantis* who predicts noble struggles [*esthloi agōnes*]. Oh, to be a dove with the

strength and swiftness of a whirlwind, that I might reach an airy cloud,
and hang my gaze above the *agōnes*!

antistrophe 2

1085 Hear, all-ruling lord of the sky, all-seeing Zeus! Grant to the
guardians of this land to achieve with triumphant might the capture that
gives the prize into their hands! And may your daughter too bring it to
telos, dread Pallas Athena! **1090** And Apollo, the hunter, and his sister,
who follows the spotted, swift-footed deer—I wish that they would
come, a double help **1095** to this land and to its people.

Wanderer *xenos*, you will not say your watcher was a false *mantis*, for I
see your daughters once again drawing near.

Oedipus

Where? Where? What's that? What do you mean?

Antigone and Ismene enter with Theseus and his attendants.

Antigone

Father, father, **1100** I wish some god would grant that your eyes might
see this most noble [*aristos*] man, who has brought us here to you!

Oedipus

My child, are you really here?

Antigone

Yes, for these strong arms have saved [*sōzein*] us—Theseus and his most
*philo*i followers.

Oedipus

Come here, my children, to your father! **1105** Grant me your embrace—
restored beyond all hope!

Antigone

We shall grant your wish, for we crave the favor [*kharis*] we bestow.

Oedipus

Where, then, where are you?

Antigone

Here we are, approaching you together.

Oedipus

Most *phila* offspring!

Antigone

Everything is *philon* to its parent.

Oedipus

Supports of a man—

Antigone

Ill-fated as he is ill-fated.

Oedipus

1110 I hold my dear ones, my most dear [*phila*] possessions. Now, if I should die, I would not be wholly wretched, since you have come to me. Press close to me on either side, children, cling to your father, and rest from your wandering, so desolate, so grievous! 1115 And tell me what has happened as briefly as you can, since brief speech suffices for young maidens.

Antigone

Here is the one who saves us [*sōzein*]: you should hear the story from him, father, and the deed will be brief for you and me.

Oedipus

Xenos, do not be amazed at my persistence, if I prolong my words to my children, 1120 found again beyond my hope. I well know that my present joy in them has come to me from you, and you alone, for you—and not any other mortal—have saved [*sōzein*] them. May the gods grant to you my wish, 1125 both to you yourself and to this land; for among you, above all mankind, I have found the fear of god, the spirit of

decency, and lips that tell no lie. I know these things, and I repay them with these words; for what I have, I have through you, and no one else. 1130 Stretch out to me your right hand, lord, that I may touch it; and if it is *themis*, let me kiss [verb of *philos*] your cheek. But what am I saying? Wretched as I have become, how could I consent to touch a man in whom no stain of evils has made its abode [*oikos*]? 1135 I will not touch you—nor will I allow it, if you do consent. They alone, who know them, can share these burdens. Receive my greeting where you stand, and in the future too give me your care, with all *dikē*, as you have given it up to this hour.

Theseus

I feel no amazement, if you have had a lengthy conversation 1140 from joy in these children, or if your first concern has been for their words rather than for me. Indeed, there is nothing to vex me in that. Not with words so much as deeds would I add luster to my life. You have this proof: 1145 I have cheated you in none of my sworn promises, old man. Here am I, with the maidens living, uninjured by those threats. As to how the *agōn* was won, what need have I vainly to boast of what you will learn from these two when you are together? 1150 But there is a matter that has just presented itself to me, as I came here. Give me your counsel regarding it; for, though it is small, it is food for wonder. And mortal man must consider nothing beneath his concern.

Oedipus

1155 What is it, son of Aegeus? Tell me; I myself know nothing of what you inquire.

Theseus

They say a man—not from your *polis*, yet of your family—has somehow thrown himself down, as a suppliant, at our altar of Poseidon, where I was sacrificing when I first set out here.

Oedipus

1160 What land does he come from? What does he desire by his

supplication?

Theseus

I know one thing only: they tell me he asks you for a chance to deliver a brief speech [*mūthos*], a thing of no great burden.

Oedipus

On what topic? That suppliant state is of no small account.

Theseus

He asks, they say, no more than that he may confer with you, 1165 and return unharmed from his journey here.

Oedipus

Who can he be that implores the god in this way?

Theseus

Consider whether there is anyone in your family at Argos, who might desire this favor from you.

Oedipus

Most *philos*, say no more!

Theseus

What is wrong?

Oedipus

1170 Don't ask me for...

Theseus

For what? Speak!

Oedipus

From hearing these things I know who the suppliant is.

Theseus

And who can he be, that I should have an objection to him?

Oedipus

My son, lord, a hated son whose words would vex my ear like the words of no man besides.

Theseus

1175 What? Can you not listen, without doing what you do not wish to do? Why does it pain you to hear him?

Oedipus

Lord, that voice has become most hateful to his father. Do not constrain me to yield in this.

Theseus

But consider whether his suppliant state constrains you; 1180 what if you have a duty of respect for the god?

Antigone

Father, listen to me, though I am young who will advise [*paraineîn*]. Allow this man here to give favor [*kharis*] to his own *phrēn* and to the god as he wishes, and for your daughters' sake allow our brother to come. 1185 He will not tear you by force from your resolve—never fear—with such words as will not be for your good. What harm can there be in listening to words? Deeds wickedly devised, as you know, are betrayed by speech. You sired him, 1190 so, even if he wrongs you with the most impious of wrongs, father, it is not right [*themis*] for you to wrong him in return. Let him come! Other men too have *kakoi* offspring and a sharp *thūmos*, but they hear advice and are charmed from their mood by the gentle spells of *philoî*. 1195 Look to the past, away from the present; consider all the pains that you have suffered [*paskhein*] through your father and mother. If you consider those things, I know well that you will perceive that the coming to *telos* of an evil *thūmos* is evil. Your reasons to reflect on this are not trivial, 1200 bereft of your unseeing eyes. Yield to us! It is not a fine thing for those seeking just things

[*dikaia*] to keep asking; nor is it good that a man should experience [*paskhein*] good treatment, and thereafter not know how to requite it.

Oedipus

My child, by your pleading you overcome me; but your pleasure here is my grief. 1205 Still, let it be as is *philon* to you. Only, if that man is to come here, *xenos*, let no one ever become master over my *psūkhē*.

Theseus

Once only do I need hear such words, and no more, old man. I do not want to boast, 1210 but you may feel sure that you are saved [adj. of *sōtēr*], if indeed one of the gods is meanwhile saving [*sōzein*] me.

Theseus exits.

Chorus

strophe

Whoever craves the longer length of life, not content to desire a moderate span, him I will judge with no uncertainty: he clings to folly. 1215 For the long years lay in deposit many things nearer to pain than joy; but as for your delights, you will find them nowhere, when someone's life has fallen beyond the fitting period. 1220 The Helper comes at last to all alike, when the fate of Hadēs is suddenly revealed, without marriage-song, or lyre, or *khoroi*: Death at the coming to *telos*.

antistrophe

1225 Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best; but when a man has seen the light of day, this is next best by far, that with utmost speed he should go back from where he came. For when he has seen youth go by, with its easy letting-go of *phrenes*, 1230 what hard affliction is foreign to him, what ordeals [*kamatoi*] does he not know? Killings, strife [*stasis* pl.], *eris*, battles, 1235 and envy. Last of all falls to his lot old age, blamed, drained of power [*kratos*], unsociable, without *philoι*, wherein dwells [*oikeîn*] every misery among miseries.

epode

In such years is this poor man here, not I alone. 1240 Like some cape that fronts the north which is lashed on every side by the waves of winter, so he also is fiercely lashed evermore by the dread disasters [*atai*] that break on him like the surf, some from the region of the setting sun, 1245 some from that of its rising, some in the realm of its noon-time rays, some from the gloom-wrapped hills of the North.

Antigone

Look, the *xenos*, it seems, is coming here to us. 1250 Yes, without attendants, father, with tears streaming from his eyes.

Oedipus

Who is he?

Antigone

The very man who was in our thoughts from the first. Polyneikes has come to us.

Polyneikes enters.

Polyneikes

Ah me, what should I do? Should I weep first 1255 for my own woes, sisters, or for those of my father here, in his old age? I have found him in a foreign [*xenē*] land, here with you two as an exile, clad in such garments as these. Their filth, a thing contrary to *philoī*, has resided with the old man for long, 1260 wasting his flesh; while above the sightless eyes the unkempt hair flutters in the breeze; and matching with these things, it seems, is the food that he carries, sustenance for his poor stomach.

Wretch that I am! I learn all this too late. 1265 And I bear witness that I have proved the most *kakos* of men in all that concerns care for you; from my own lips hear what I am. But seeing that Zeus himself in all his actions has *Aidōs* beside him to share his throne, may she come to your aid too, father. For the errors committed can be healed, 1270 but can never be made worse.

Why are you silent? Speak, father. Don't turn away from me. Don't you have any answer at all for me? Will you dismiss me without a word, without *tīmē*, and not tell me why you have *mēnis*? 1275 Seed of this man, my sisters, you at least must try to move our father's implacable, inexorable silence, so that he may not send me away like this, without *tīmē* and with no word [*epos*] in return, when I am the suppliant of the god.

Antigone

1280 Tell him yourself, unhappy man, what you have come to seek. When words flow, you know, they may give joy, or incite anger or pity, and so they may give a voice to the mute.

Polyneikes

Then I will speak boldly, for you give me excellent guidance, 1285 first claiming the help of the god himself, from whose altar the king of this land raised me to come to you, with a guaranty to speak and hear, and go my way unharmed. And I wish these pledges, *xenoi*, to be kept with me by you, and by my sisters here, and by my father. 1290 But now I want to tell you, father, why I came. I have been driven as an exile from my fatherland, because, as eldest-born, I thought it right to sit on your sovereign throne. 1295 Therefore Eteokles, though the younger, thrust me from the land, when he had neither defeated me by an argument of law, nor made a trial of might and deed. He brought over the *polis* by persuasion. The cause [*aitiā*] of this, I claim, is most of all the curse [Erinyes] on your house; 1300 I also hear this from soothsayers. For when I came to Dorian Argos, I made Adrastus my father-in-law. And I bound to me by oath all men of the Apian land who are foremost in their renown for war, 1305 so that with their aid I might collect the seven armies of spearmen against Thebes, and die in the cause of *dikē*, or drive the doers of this wrong from the land. All right then, why have I come to you now? Bearing prayers of supplication, father, in person to you, 1310 my own prayers and those of my allies, who now with seven armies behind their seven spears have set their blockade around the plain

of Thebes. One such is swift-speared Amphiaraos, a matchless warrior, and a matchless diviner; 1315 then comes the son of Oineus, Aetolian Tydeus; Eteoklos is third, of Argive birth; the fourth, Hippomedon, is sent by Talaos, his father; while Kapanews, the fifth, boasts that he will burn Thebes to the ground with fire; and sixth, Arcadian Parthenopaios rushes to the war. 1320 He is named for that virgin⁶ of long ago from whose marriage in later time he was born, the trusty son of Atalanta. Last come I, your son—or if not yours, then the offspring of an evil fate, but yours at least in name— 1325 leading the fearless army of Argos to Thebes. It is we who implore you, father, every one of us, by your daughters here and by your *psūkhē*, begging you to forgo your fierce *mēnis* against me, as I go forth to punish my brother, 1330 who has expelled me and robbed me of my fatherland. For if anything trustworthy comes from oracles, they said that whomever you join in alliance will have victorious power [*kratos*]. Then, by the streams of water and gods of our race, I ask you to listen and to yield. 1335 I am a beggar and a *xenos*, as you are yourself; by paying court to others both you and I have an abode [*oikos*], obtaining by lot the same fate [*daimōn*]. But he is *turannos* at home—wretched me!—and in his luxuriance [*habrosunē*] laughs at you and me alike. 1340 But if you join as ally to my *phrēn*, with little trouble [*ponos*] or time I will scatter his strength to the winds, so that I will bring you home and set you in your own house, and set me in mine, when I have cast him out by force. If you are with me, then I can make this boast; but without you 1345 I cannot even be saved [*sōzein*].

Chorus

For the sake of him who has sent this man, Oedipus, speak what seems good to you, before you send him away.

Oedipus

Guardians of this land, if it were not Theseus who had sent him here to me, thinking it right [*dikaion*] that he should hear my response, 1350 then never would he have heard my prophetic voice [*omphē*]. But now

he will be graced with it, before he goes, and hear from me such words as never will gladden his life. 1355 Most *kakos* of men, when you had the scepter and the throne, which now your brother has in Thebes, you drove me, your own father, into exile; and by depriving me of the *polis* you caused me to wear this clothing at whose sight you weep, now that you have come to the same state of misery as I. 1360 The time for tears is past. I must bear this burden as long as I live, and keep you before my mind as a murderer. For it is you that have made me subject to this anguish; it is you that have thrust me out, and because of you I wander, begging my daily bread from strangers. 1365 And had these daughters not been born to me to be my comfort, in truth I would be dead, for lack of help from you. But now these girls save [*sōzein*] me; they are my nurses; they are men, not women, in sharing my ordeal [*ponos*]. But you are from another and are no sons of mine. 1370 Therefore the *daimōn* looks upon you—not yet as he soon will look, if indeed those armies of yours are moving against Thebes. There is no way in which you can ever overthrow that *polis*. Before that you will fall, tainted by the pollution [*miasma*] of bloodshed, and so too your brother. 1375 Such curses as my heart before now sent up against you both, I now invoke to fight for me, in order that you may think it fit to revere your parents and not to treat utterly without *tīmē* your father, because he who begot such sons is blind. It was not my daughters here who did this. 1380 This supplication of yours, and this throne of yours, will lie in the power [*kratos*] of my curses, if indeed *dikē*, revealed long ago, sits beside Zeus, to share his throne through sanction of primordial laws [*nomoi*]. But off to perdition with you, abhorred by me and unfathered! 1385 Take these curses which I call down on you, most *kakos* of the *kakoi*: may you never have power [*kratos*] over your native land, and may you never have a *nostos* to the valley of Argos; I pray that you die by a related hand, and slay him by whom you have been driven out. This is my prayer. 1390 And I call on the hateful darkness of Tartaros that your father shares, to take you into another abode [*oikos*]; and I call on the she-*daimones* of this place, and I call on Arēs, who has set dreadful hatred in you both.

Go with these words in your ear; **1395** go and announce to all the Kadmeians, and to your own faithful allies, that Oedipus has distributed such portions to his sons.

Chorus

Polyneikes, in your past travels I take no joy. Now go back with speed.

Polyneikes

Alas, for my journey and my failed attempt! Alas, for my companions!

1400 Such is the *telos* of the road on which we set out from Argos—wretched me!—such an end, that I cannot even mention it to any of my companions or turn them back, but must go in silence to meet this fate.

1405 But you, daughters of this man and my sisters, since you hear these hard curses of a father, do not—if this father's curses are to reach a *telos* and you find some way of *nostos* to Thebes—do not, I beg you by the gods, leave me without *tīmē*, **1410** but give me burial and due funeral rites. So the praise [*ep-ainos*] which you now win from this man here for your ordeals [*ponoi*] will be increased by another praise no less, through your care for me.

Antigone

Polyneikes, I beseech you, hear me in one thing!

Polyneikes

1415 What is it, most *philē* Antigone? Speak!

Antigone

Turn your force back to Argos as quickly as may be, and do not destroy both yourself and your *polis*.

Polyneikes

No, it is not possible. For how could I lead the same force again, when once I had shrunk back?

Antigone

1420 But why, my brother, must your *thūmos* rise again? What gain will

come to you from destroying your native land?

Polyneikes

It is shameful to be in exile, and to be mocked in this way by my brother, when I am eldest-born.

Antigone

Do you see to what sure fulfillment the words of this man who speaks like a *mantis* are leading, 1425 who declares mutual death for you two?

Polyneikes

Yes, for he wishes it. But I must not yield.

Antigone

Ah, wretched me! But who will dare follow you, when he hears what prophecies this man has uttered?

Polyneikes

1430 I will not report ill-tidings; a good leader should tell the better news, and not the worse.

Antigone

Is this then your fixed decision, my brother?

Polyneikes

Yes, and do not detain me. This path now will be my destiny, ill-fated and evil, because of my father here and his Furies [Erinyes]. But as for you two, 1435 may Zeus grant you good things, if you bring these things to *telos* for me when I am dead, since in life you will see me no more. Now release me, and farewell; for never again will you behold me living.

Antigone

Ah, wretched that I am!

Polyneikes

Do not mourn for me.

Antigone

And who would not mourn you, brother, when you are hurrying off
1440 to a death foreseen?

Polyneikes

If it is fated, then I must die.

Antigone

No, no, listen to my prayer!

Polyneikes

Do not plead for what must not be.

Antigone

Then I, indeed, am utterly wretched, if I must lose you!

Polyneikes

It rests with the *daimōn*, this way or that. But as for you two, 1445 I pray
to the gods that you may never meet with evil; for in all men's eyes you
do not deserve to suffer.

Polyneikes exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

Behold, new ills of heavy fate have newly come from the blind *xenos*,
1450 unless, perhaps, fate is finding its goal. I cannot say that a purpose
of the *daimones* is ever vain. Time sees all things forever, and raises up
some things, 1455 then on the next day raises others back up again. The
sky resounds! Zeus!

Thunder

Oedipus

Children, children! If there is any man still here, send him forth to bring
back Theseus, most noble [*aristos*] in all respects.

Antigone

And what, father, is the purpose of your summons?

Oedipus

1460 This winged thunder of Zeus will soon lead me to Hadēs. So send someone with speed.

Thunder.

Chorus

antistrophe 1

Listen! With a louder noise this one crashes down unspeakably, 1465 hurled by Zeus! The hair of my head stands up for fear, my *thūmos* is dismayed; for again the lightning flashes in the sky. What *telos* does it release? 1470 I fear it, for never does it fly forth in vain, or without misfortune. O great Sky! O Zeus!

Oedipus

Children, the appointed coming to the *telos* of life has reached this man; he can turn from it no more.

Antigone

How do you know? By what means do you understand this?

Oedipus

1475 I know it well. But let some one go, I pray you, as quickly as he can, and bring back the lord of this land.

Thunder.

Chorus

strophe 2

Look! Look! Once again the piercing din is around us! 1480 Be merciful, *daimōn*, be merciful, if you are bringing anything of gloom for the land which is our mother! May I find you well disposed, and may I

not, because I have cared for a man accursed, somehow obtain a
profitless return [*kharis*]! 1485 Lord Zeus, to you I cry!

Oedipus

Is the man near? Will he find me still in possession of my *psūkhē*,
children, and master of my *phrenes*?

Antigone

And what is the pledge that you would like to have firm in your *phrēn*?

Oedipus

In return for his benefits, 1490 I would grant him the coming to *telos* of
the favor [*kharis*] that I promised.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

Hurry, my son, come to us! If you chance to be in the glade sacrificing
an ox to the sea-god Poseidon, 1495 then come! For the *xenos* thinks
you worthy, you and your *polis* and your *philoι*, to receive thanks [*kharis*]
with *dikē* in return for benefits experienced [*paskhein*]. Hasten quickly,
lord!

Theseus enters.

Theseus

1500 What din is this that once more rings forth from you all, from my
people as clearly as from our *xenos*? Can a thunderbolt from Zeus be the
cause, or rushing hail in its fierce onset? When the god sends such a
storm, foreboding of every sort may find a place.

Oedipus

1505 Lord, you have appeared at my desire, and to you some god
granted noble [*esthlē*] fortune at this coming.

Theseus

And what new thing has now occurred, son of Laios?

Oedipus

My life hangs in the balance; and I wish to die without cheating you and this *polis* of what I solemnly declared [*sun-aineîn*].

Theseus

1510 And what is the proof of your fate that you depend on?

Oedipus

The gods themselves are heralds [*kēru*x pl.] in announcing the news to me, nor do they cheat me of any of the appointed signs [*sēmata*].

Theseus

What makes these things clear? Tell me, old man.

Oedipus

The thunder, crash after crash; the lightning, flash after flash, 1515
hurled from the unconquered hand.

Theseus

I am persuaded, for in much I find you a prophet whose voice is not false. Then say what must be done.

Oedipus

I will expound myself, son of Aegeus, the treasures which will be laid up for this *polis*, such as age can never hurt. 1520 Immediately, with no hand to guide me, I will be leader to the place where I must die. But as to that place, never reveal it to another man, neither where it is hidden, nor in what region it lies, so that it may be an eternal defense for you, better than many shields, better than the spear of neighbors which brings relief. 1525 But as for mysteries which speech may not profane, you will learn them yourself when you come to that place alone, since I cannot declare them either to any of these people, or even to my own children, though I love them. 1530 Save [*sōzein*] them always to yourself, and when you reach the end [*telos*] of living, indicate [*sēmainein*] them to your eldest son alone, and let him reveal them to his successor in turn forever. In this way you will inhabit [*oikeîn*] this *polis*

unscathed by the men born of the Dragon's teeth. Countless cities
commit *hubris*, 1535 even though their neighbor commits no wrong.
For the gods are slow to punish, yet they are sure, when men scorn
holiness and turn to frenzy. Do not desire to experience [*paskhein*] this,
son of Aegeus! But you know such things as these without my teaching.
1540 Let us now set forth to that place the divine summons urges me
and hesitate no longer.

Children, follow me. For now in turn it is I that shine forth wondrously
as a leader for you, as you were your father's. Onward. Do not touch me,
but 1545 allow me unaided to find the holy [*hieros*] tomb where it is my
fate [*moira*] to be secreted away in this land. This way, here, come this
way! Hermes the Conductor and the goddess of the dead lead me in this
direction. Light of day, no light to me, once you were mine, 1550 but
now my body feels you for the last time! For now go to hide the coming
to *telos* of my life in the house of Hadēs. But you, most *philos* of *xenoi*,
may you yourself have a good fortune [*daimōn*], and this land, and your
followers. In your prosperity, 1555 remember me in my death, and be
fortunate evermore.

He exits, followed by his daughters, Theseus, and attendants.

Chorus

strophe

If it is *themis* for me with prayer to adore the Unseen Goddess
[Persephone], and you, Lord of the Dead, then hear me, Aidoneus,
Aidoneus [Hadēs]! 1560 Grant that without labor [*ponos*], without a fate
arousing heavy grief [*akhos*], the *xenos* may pass to the all-concealing
fields of the dead below, and to the Stygian house. 1565 Many were the
sorrows that came to him without cause, but a *daimōn* that is just
[*dikaios*] will lift him up again.

antistrophe

Goddesses of the nether world [Furies], and unconquered beast
[Cerberus], 1570 whose lair lies in the gates of many *xenoi*, you

untamable Watcher of Hadēs, snarling from the cavern’s jaws, as rumor has always told! Hear me, Death, son of Earth and Tartaros! 1575 May that Watcher leave a clear path for the *xenos* on his way to the nether fields of the dead! To you I call, giver of the eternal sleep.

A Messenger enters.

Messenger

Citizens, my news might be summed up most briefly thus: Oedipus is dead.

1580 But the *mūthos* of the happening cannot be told in brief words, as the deeds done there were not brief.

Chorus

Is he gone, the unfortunate man?

Messenger

You may be sure that he has obtained his eternal life.

Chorus

1585 How? By a fate divine and without labor [*ponos*], the poor man?

Messenger

¹⁵⁸⁶ This [= the death of Oedipus] has already happened, and it was something that was outstandingly wondrous. ¹⁵⁸⁷ As for how he started to depart from this world, you yourself know that full well, since you were here: ¹⁵⁸⁸ he did not have any of his dear ones [*philoī*] as guide, ¹⁵⁸⁹ but rather he himself was leading the way for us all. ¹⁵⁹⁰ Then, when he arrived at the Threshold for Descending, ¹⁵⁹¹ with its bronze foundations rooted in the earth deep below ¹⁵⁹² he stopped still at one place where paths were leading in many directions, ¹⁵⁹³ near the Hollow Crater,⁷ which was where Theseus ¹⁵⁹⁴ and Peirithoos⁸ had made their faithful covenant lasting forever—it is marked there. ¹⁵⁹⁵ Midway he [= Oedipus] stood there between that place [= the Hollow Crater] and the Thorikios Petros,⁹ ¹⁵⁹⁶ between the Hollow Pear Tree and the Stone Tomb [*lāinos*

taphos]. ¹⁵⁹⁷ Next, he sat down and loosened his filthy clothing. ¹⁵⁹⁸ And then he called out to his daughters, ordering them to bring from flowing streams ¹⁵⁹⁹ water for ritual washing [*loutra*] and for libations [*khoai*]¹⁰—to bring him the water from wherever [*pothen*] they brought it. ¹⁶⁰⁰ And the two daughters went to the place of Demeter, the one who has the beautiful greenness [*khloē*]. ¹⁶⁰¹ The place was a Hill, and they went to it. ¹⁶⁰² In a short time they brought back what their father had ordered them to bring, and then they gave him ritual washing [*loutra*] ¹⁶⁰³ and dressed him, as is the custom [*nomos*]. ¹⁶⁰⁴ But when all his desire was fulfilled, ¹⁶⁰⁵ and nothing that he required was still undone, ¹⁶⁰⁶ then Zeus, He of the Earth Below [*khthonios*], made a thunderclap, and the maidens shuddered as they heard. They fell weeping at their father's knees, and did not cease from beating their breast, and from wailing loud. **1610** When he heard their sudden bitter cry, he put his arms around them and said: “My children, on this day your father no longer exists. Now I have perished utterly, and no longer will you bear the burden of tending me, **1615** which was no light one, I well know, my children. Yet just one word [*epos*] turns all those toils to nothing: you have been treated as *philai* by no one more than by this man; and now you will have me with you no longer, through all your days to come.” **1620** In this way, clinging close to one another, the father and his daughters sobbed and wept. But when they came to the end [*telos*] of their crying, and the sound of wailing went forth no more, there was a silence; suddenly a voice called aloud to him, so that everyone **1625** felt the hair on their heads stand up from the sudden terror. The god called him again and again: “Oedipus! You, over there, Oedipus! Why do you delay our going? Too long you have been lingering.” And when he perceived that he was called by the god, **1630** he asked that lord Theseus should come to him; and when he did, he said: “*philos*, give me the sworn pledge of your right hand for my children; and you, my daughters, for him. Give your solemn word [*kat-aineîn*] never to betray them by your own free will, but always to bring to a *telos* whatever is in

your *phrenes* for their benefit.” 1635 And he, as a man of noble spirit,
 without lamentation swore to give his solemn word [*kat-aineîn*] to his
xenos. When Theseus had done this, 1638 then, right away, Oedipus 1639
 felt for his children with blind hands, and said: 1640 “Children, you must
 endure in a noble way in your hearts [*phrenes*] 1641 and depart from these
 places [*topoi*]; and, as for things forbidden by divine law [*themis*], do not
 1642 consider it just [*dikaion*] to look upon those things, or to hear things
 you must not hear. 1643 So go away, go, as fast as you can—except for the
 one who is authorized, 1644 Theseus, who must be present and must learn
 the things that are being done [*drân*].”¹¹ 1645 Such things he spoke, and
 we listened, 1646 each and every one of us. With streaming tears we
 mourned as we accompanied the maidens 1647 and went off. But after we
 had departed, 1648 in a short time, we turned around and looked back and
 saw 1649 that the man was nowhere present any more 1650 and that our
 king [= Theseus] was alone, screening his eyes 1651 by holding his hand
 in front of his head, as if some terrifying 1652 thing to fear had appeared
 before him, something unbearable to look at. 1653 And then, after a short
 time, 1654 we saw him adore the Earth 1655 and also the Olympus that
 belongs to the gods, using the same wording for both. 1656 But by what
 fate Oedipus perished, no one 1657 among mortals can indicate, except the
 head of Theseus alone. 1658 You see, what happened to him [= Oedipus]
 was not that the god’s fiery 1659 thunderbolt did him in, nor was he done
 in by anything that comes from the sea [*pontos*], 1660 by some stirring of
 a gust of wind [*thuella*], coming for him in the fullness of time. 1661 No,
 it was either some escort sent by the gods, or else it was that thing from
 the nether world, 1662 that thing that has good intentions [*noos*], that
 gaping unlit foundation of the earth. 1663 You see, the man did not need
 lamentations, and there were no diseases 1664 that gave him any pain at
 the moment when he was escorted away. No, if there was ever any
 mortal 1665 who was wondrous [*thaumastos*], it was he. And if in anyone’s

eyes I seem to speak without *phrenes*, I would not try to win their belief if they think me lacking in *phrenes*.

Chorus

Where are his daughters and the escort of their *philoi*?

Messenger

Not far away; the sounds of mourning indicate [*sēmainein*] plainly that they are approaching.

Antigone, Ismene, and attendants enter.

Antigone

strophe 1

1670 Ah me, ah me! Now, indeed, is it for us to bewail in full the curse on our blood—ill-fated sisters as we are—deriving from our father! In former time we bore the long ordeal [*ponos*] without pause, 1675 and now at the last we bring to tell a sight and experience [*pathos*] that baffle reason.

Chorus

What is it?

Antigone

It is possible to conjecture, *philoi*.

Chorus

He is gone?

Antigone

Precisely in the way you could most wish for: indeed, neither Arēs took him, nor the sea [*pontos*], 1680 but instead he was snatched away to the fields which no one may see, carried along by some swift, strange doom. Wretched me! For us a night like death has descended on our eyes; 1685 how shall we find our hard livelihood, roaming to some far land, or on the waves of the sea [*pontos*]?

Ismene

I do not know. If only murderous Hadēs would join me in death to my aged father! 1690 Wretched me! I cannot live the life that must be mine.

Chorus

Best of daughters, you both must bear the will of the gods. Do not be inflamed with too much grief; 1695 what you have encountered is not to be blamed.

Antigone

antistrophe 1

There is longing even for woes. What was in no way *philon* was *philon*, so long as I held him in my embrace. 1700 Father, *philos*, clothed in the darkness of the underworld forever! Never in your absence will you not be *philos* to me and to my sister here.

Chorus

He fared...

Antigone

He fared as he desired.

Chorus

1705 In what way?

Antigone

He died on the foreign [*xenē*] ground that he desired; he has his well-shaded bed beneath the ground for ever; and he did not leave behind unwept sorrow [*penthos*]. With these weeping eyes, father, I lament you; 1710 nor do I know how in my wretchedness I must still my grief [*akhos*] for you that is so immense. Alas! You wanted to die in a foreign [*xenē*] land, but you died without me near.

Ismene

Wretched me! What fate 1715 awaits you and me, *philē*, orphaned as we

are of our father?

Chorus

1720 Cease from your grief [*akhos*], *philai*, since he has discharged his *telos* in a way that is blessed [*olbios*]. No one is beyond the reach of evil.

Antigone

strophe 2

Philē, let us hasten back.

Ismene

1725 To do what deed?

Antigone

A longing fills my soul...

Ismene

For what?

Antigone

To see the netherworld home.

Ismene

Of whom?

Antigone

Wretched me! Of our father.

Ismene

And how can this be *themis*? Surely you understand?

Antigone

1730 Why this rebuke?

Ismene

And surely you know this, too...

Antigone

What more would you tell me?

Ismene

That he perished without a tomb, apart from everyone.

Antigone

Lead me there, and then kill me, too.

Ismene

Unhappy me! Abandoned and helpless, 1735 where am I now to live my wretched life [*aiōn*]?

Chorus

antistrophe 2

Philai, do not be afraid.

Antigone

But where shall I flee?

Chorus

Already a refuge has been found...

Antigone

What do you mean?

Chorus

1740...that no harm befall you.

Antigone

I feel...

Chorus

What are you thinking?

Antigone

How we are to go home, I cannot tell.

Chorus

Do not seek to go.

Antigone

Trouble surrounds us.

Chorus

And previously it bore heavily.

Antigone

1745 Then it was desperate, but now even crueler.

Chorus

Vast, then, is the sea of your troubles.

Antigone

Alas, alas! Zeus, where shall we turn? 1750 To what last hope does the *daimōn* now drive us?

Theseus enters.

Theseus

Cease your lament, children! Where the grace [*kharis*] of the nether night is stored up, there is no room for public sorrow [*penthos*]; *nemesis* would follow.

Antigone

Son of Aegeus, we supplicate you!

Theseus

1755 To obtain what desire, my children?

Antigone

We want look with our own eyes upon our father's tomb.

Theseus

It is not *themis* to go there.

Antigone

What do you mean, lord, ruler of Athens?

Theseus

1760 Children, he told me that no one should draw near that place, or approach with prayer the holy [*hiera*] tomb in which he sleeps. He said that, so long as I saw to this, I would always keep the country free from pain. 1765 The *daimōn* heard me say these things, as did the all-seeing Oath of Zeus.

Antigone

If this is his *noos*, we must be content with it. 1770 Send us to ancient Thebes, in case we may somehow stop the bloodshed that threatens our brothers.

Theseus

I will do both this and whatever other favorable service I can, for you 1775 and for the newly-departed under the earth, according to reciprocity [*kharis*]. I am bound to spare no pains.

Chorus

Cease; raise up the lamentation no further. These things are established firm.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. So the ‘district’ or *dēmos* of Colonus is named after the hero-charioteer named Colonus; conversely, the cult hero is named after the landmark that distinguishes this district, which is a *kolōnos* or ‘tumulus’ of a hero. See Nagy *Sign of the hero* (2001) n34 for a medieval Irish parallel: the singing of an incantation to the gravestone of the hero Fergus, long dead, becomes the equivalent of singing this incantation to the hero himself, who is thus temporarily brought back to life.

[[back](#)] 2. At climactic moments in the veneration of cult heroes, they can be called *theoi* ‘gods’. See Nagy *Sign of the hero* (2001) 17.

[[back](#)] 3. The word *euphēmos* means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a

non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] 4. Words like this derive from sacred epithets describing cult heroes as benefactors of communities living near the grounds where they the heroes are buried. GN

[[back](#)] 5. The priests in charge of the rites of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis.

[[back](#)] 6. Parthenopaios means ‘having the looks of the maiden [*parthenos*]’.

[[back](#)] 7. The Greek word *krātēr* means ‘mixing-bowl’ and, by extension, ‘crater’.

[[back](#)] 8. Theseus and Perithoös journeyed together to the Underworld, but only Theseus was able to return.

[[back](#)] 9. Meaning ‘Leaping Rock’; *Thorikios* is apparently derived from *thoros* ‘leaping; semen’.

[[back](#)] 10. The epithet *eukhloos* ‘of the tender plants’ is related to *khloē* ‘growth of tender plants’, which is related to the epithet of Demeter, *Khloē* = Chloe. This epithet is also a name, as in the ancient erotic novel *Daphnis and Chloe*.

[[back](#)] 11. The verb *drân* means ‘do’ or ‘perform ritual, sacrifice’.

Oedipus Tyrannus

By Sophocles

Translated by R. C. Jebb

Revised by Alex Sens

Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

*Before the palace of Oedipus in Thebes. Suppliants are seated at the altars.
Oedipus enters.*

Oedipus

My children, latest-born wards of old Kadmos, why do you sit before me thus with wreathed branches of suppliants, while the city reeks with incense, 5 rings with prayers for health and cries of woe? I did not think it right, my children, to hear these things from the mouths of others, and have come here myself, Oedipus, with *kleos* among all people. Tell me, venerable old man—since it is proper that you 10 speak for these—in what mood you sit here, one of fear or of desire? Be sure that I will gladly give you all my help. I would be hard-hearted indeed if I did not pity such suppliants as these.

Priest of Zeus

¹⁴ Oedipus, ruler of my land, ¹⁵ you see the ages of those who are seated
¹⁶ at your altars: some, nestlings that cannot yet get very far ¹⁷ by flying,
they don't have the strength, while others are weighted down with age.
¹⁸ The priest of Zeus, that is who I am, while these others are from the
ranks of young men, ¹⁹ specially selected. The rest of the people, wearing
garlands, ²⁰ are seated at the place of assembly [*agorai*], at the twin
buildings of Athena, ²¹ temples, where Ismenos gives prophetic answers
with his fiery ashes. ²² This is all because the city [*polis*], as you yourself
see, is very much ²³ afflicted with a seastorm now, and it cannot lift its
head ²⁴ any longer out of the depths of the murderous churning of the
sea. ²⁵ Something that makes things wilt [*phthinein*] has descended on the

buds containing the fruit [*karpos*] of the land. ²⁶ Yes, making things wilt [*phthinein*], it has also descended on the herds of cattle grazing in the pastures. And on whatever is produced ²⁷ from women, which has become lifeless. And the flaming god ²⁸ has swooped down. He is a most hateful plague, afflicting the city [*polis*]; because of him the house of Kadmos is emptied, while black ³⁰ Hādēs is enriched with sobs and laments [*gōoi*]. ³¹ It is not because we rank you [= Oedipus] equal [*isos*] to the gods ³² that I and these children are suppliants at your hearth, ³³ but because we think of you as the first among men in life's shared fortunes, ³⁴ judging [*krinein*] you that way, and first also in dealings with superhuman forces [*daimones*]. ³⁵ You freed us when you came to the city of the Cadmeans [= Thebans], ³⁶ ridding us of the tribute we had to keep on giving to the harsh female singer of songs, ³⁷ and though you knew no more than anyone else, ³⁸ nor had you been taught, but rather by the assistance of a god [*theos*], ³⁹ it is said and it is thought that you resurrected [*orthoûn* 'make straight'] our life. ⁴⁰ Now, as we all address your most powerful head, the head of Oedipus, as we touch it, ⁴¹ we, your suppliants, implore you as we turn to you ⁴² to find some protection [*alkē*] for us, whether from one of the gods ⁴³ you hear some prophetic wording [*phēmē*], or learn of it perhaps from some man. ⁴⁴ I say this because those who are experienced, ⁴⁵ thanks to the advice they give, can make—I see it—even accidental things have the power of life. ⁴⁶ Come, best [*aristos*] among mortals, resurrect [*an-orthoûn* 'make straight'] our city [*polis*]! ⁴⁷ Come! And do be careful, since now this land here ⁴⁸ calls you a savior [*sōtēr*], thanks to your willingness to help in the past. ⁴⁹ And, concerning your rule [*arkhē*], do not let it happen that our memory of it will be ⁵⁰ that we were first set up straight [*es orthon*] and then let down, falling again. ⁵¹ So give us safety and resurrect [*an-orthoûn* 'make straight'] this city [*polis*]! ⁵² With a favorable omen of birds was the past good fortune ⁵³ provided by you for us, and so become now the same person, equal [*isos*] to who you were, ⁵⁴ since, if in fact

you are to rule this land just as you have power over it now, ⁵⁵ it is better to have power over men than over a wasteland. ⁵⁶ Neither tower nor ship is anything, ⁵⁷ if it is empty and no men dwell [*sun-oikeîn*] inside.

Oedipus

⁵⁸ My piteous children, I know—they are not unknown to me— ⁵⁹ the desires you have as you come to me. You see, I know well that ⁶⁰ you are all sick, and that, sick as you are, when it comes to me, ⁶¹ there is not a single one of you who is as sick as I am. ⁶² You see, your pain [*algos*] goes into each one of you ⁶³ alone, all by yourself, and into no other person, but my ⁶⁴ soul [*psūkhē*] mourns for the city [*polis*], for myself, and for you—it does it all together. ⁶⁵ So you are not awakening me from sleep; ⁶⁶ no, I want you to know that I have by now wept many tears, ⁶⁷ gone many ways in the wanderings of my thinking. ⁶⁸ After giving it some good thought, I came up with one and only one remedy [*iasis*], ⁶⁹ and I acted on it. You see, the son of Menoikeus, ⁷⁰ Creon, my wife's brother, was sent to the Pythian place, ⁷¹ sent by me to the dwellings of Phoebus [Apollo], so that he could find out what ⁷² I should do [*drân*] or say to save this city [*polis*] here. ⁷³ And now, when the lapse of days is reckoned, ⁷⁴ it bothers me what he might be doing, because it is beyond my expectation, ⁷⁵ how much longer he is gone past the fitting length of time. ⁷⁶ But when he does arrive, I will be worthless [*kakos*] ⁷⁷ if I do not do [*drân*] all the things indicated by the god.

Priest

You have spoken opportunely, since at this time these people here indicate [*sēmainein*] that Creon is drawing near.

Oedipus

⁸⁰ Lord Apollo, may he come to us in the brightness of saving [*sōtēr*] fortune, even as his face is bright!

Priest

He seems to bring comfort, since otherwise he would not be coming thickly crowned with berry-laden bay.

Oedipus

We will soon know: he is in range of hearing.

To Creon.

85 Lord, my relation, child of Menoikeus, what news have you brought us from the god?

Creon

Good news. I tell you that even troubles hard to bear will end in perfect peace if they find the right issue.

Oedipus

But what kind of answer [*epos*] was there? So far your words make me
90 neither bold nor fearful.

Creon

⁹¹ If you want to hear in the presence of these people here, ⁹² I am ready to speak: otherwise we can go inside.

Oedipus

⁹³ Speak to all. I say this because the load I am carrying for the sake of these people here, ⁹⁴ that sorrow [*penthos*], is more than the load I carry for my own soul [*psūkhē*].

Creon

95 I should tell you what I heard from the god: ⁹⁶ we have been given clear orders by Phoebus [Apollo] the lord ⁹⁷ to take the pollution [*miasma*] that he said has been nurtured in the land, ⁹⁸ in this one, and to expel it, not continuing to nurture it till it cannot be healed.

Oedipus

⁹⁹ To expel it [= the pollution] by using what kind of purification [*katharmos*]? What is the kind of misfortune that has happened?

Creon

100 To expel it [= the pollution] by expelling the man, or by paying back bloodshed with bloodshed. ¹⁰¹ That is the solution, since it is the blood that brings the tempest to our city [*polis*].

Oedipus

¹⁰² And who is the man whose fate [*tukhē*] he [= Apollo] thus reveals?

Creon

¹⁰³ We once had, my king, Laios as the leader ¹⁰⁴ of this land here before you started being the director [= *euthunein* ‘direct’ literally means ‘make straight’] of this city [*polis*] here.

Oedipus

105 I know it well—by hearsay, for I never saw him.

Creon

¹⁰⁶ The man is dead, and now the god gives clear orders ¹⁰⁷ to take vengeance against those, whoever they are, who caused his death with their own hands.

Oedipus

¹⁰⁸ Where on earth are they? Where will this thing be found, ¹⁰⁹ this dim trail of an ancient guilt [*aitiā*]?

Creon

110 In this land, the god said. What is sought after can be caught; only that which is not watched escapes.

Oedipus

Was it in the house, or in the field, or on foreign soil that Laios met his bloody end?

Creon

He left our land, as he said, as an emissary [*theōros*] to Delphi. 115 And once he had set forth, he never again returned.

Oedipus

And was there none to tell? Was there no traveling companion who saw the deed, from whom tidings might have been gained and used?

Creon

All perished, save one who fled in fear, and could tell with assurance only one thing of all that he saw.

Oedipus

120 And what was that? One thing might hold the clue to many, if we could only get a small beginning for hope.

Creon

He said that robbers fell upon them, not in one man's might, but with a force of many.

Oedipus

How then, unless some intrigue had been worked with bribes 125 from here in Thebes, would the robber have been so bold?

Creon

Such things were surmised. But once Laios was slain no avenger arose amid our evils.

Oedipus

But when tyranny had fallen in this way, what evil prevented a full search?

Creon

130 The riddling Sphinx had led us to let things that were obscure go, and to investigate what was at our feet.

Oedipus

I will start afresh, and once more cast light on these things. Worthily has

Phoebus Apollo—and worthily have you—bestowed this care on the cause of the dead. And so, as is *dikē*, you will find me leagued with you 135 in seeking vengeance for this land, and for the god as well. I will dispel this taint not on behalf of far-off *philoi*, but on my own behalf. For whoever slew Laios 140 might wish to take vengeance on me also with a hand as fierce. Therefore by avenging Laios I serve myself. Come, my children, as quickly as possible rise from the altar-steps, and lift these suppliant boughs. Let someone summon here Kadmos' people, warning them that I will leave nothing untried. 145 With the god's help our good fortune—or our fall—will stand revealed.

Priest

My children, let us rise. What we came to seek, this man promises of his own accord. And may Phoebus, who sent these oracles, 150 come to us as savior [*sōtēr*] and deliverer from the pestilence.

The Chorus of Theban elders enters.

Chorus

strophe 1

O sweetly-speaking message of Zeus, in what spirit have you come to glorious Thebes from golden Pytho? I am on the rack, terror shakes my *phrēn*, O Delian healer to whom wild cries rise, 155 in holy fear of you, wondering what thing you will work for me, perchance unknown before, perchance renewed with the revolving seasons [*hōrai*]. Tell me, immortal Voice, child of golden Hope.

antistrophe 1

First I call on you, daughter of Zeus, immortal Athena, 160 and on your sister, Artemis, guardian of our earth, who sits on her throne of good *kleos* above the circle of our *agorā*, and on far-shooting Apollo: O shine forth for me, my three-fold help against death! 165 If ever before you drove a fiery pest from our borders to stop disasters [*atai*] rushing upon our *polis*, come now also!

strophe 2

Alas, countless are the sorrows I bear! 170 A plague is on all our people, and thought can find no weapon for defense. The fruits of the glorious earth do not grow; by no birth of offspring do women surmount the labors [*kamatoi*] in which they shriek. 175 You can see life after life speed away, like a bird on the wing, swifter than irresistible fire, to the shore of the western god.

antistrophe 2

With such deaths past numbering, the *polis* perishes. 180 Unpitied, her children lie on the ground, spreading pestilence, with no one to mourn them. Meanwhile young wives and gray-haired mothers raise a wail at the steps of the altars, some here, some there, 185 and groan in supplication for their terrible pains [*ponoi*]. The prayers to the Healer ring clear, and with them the voice of lamentation. For which things, golden daughter of Zeus, send us the bright face of comfort.

strophe 3

190 Grant that the fierce god of death, who now, without the bronze of shields, yet amidst cries as though of battle, wraps me in the flames of his onset, may turn his back in speedy flight from our land, borne by a favorable wind to the great chamber of Amphitrite, 195 or to the Thracian waves, those waters where no *xenoi* find haven. For if night leaves anything undone, it comes to fulfillment [*telos*] by day. You who wield the 200 powers [*kratos* pl.] of fiery lightning, Zeus our father, slay him beneath your thunderbolt.

antistrophe 3

Lykeian Lord, would that the shafts from your bent bow's string of woven gold might 205 go forth in their might, our champions in the face of the foe, and the flashing fires of Artemis too, with which she darts through the Lycian hills. I call him whose locks are bound with gold, 210 who is named with the name of this land, ruddy Dionysus to

whom Bacchants cry, to draw near with the blaze of his shining torch,
215 our ally against the god without *tīmē* among the gods.

Oedipus

You pray. And in answer to your prayer, if you will give a loyal reception to my words [*epea*], and minister to your own disease, you may hope to find succor and relief from woes. These words I will speak publicly, as one who was a stranger [*xenos*] to the report, 220 a stranger to the deed. I would not go far on the trail if I were tracing it alone, without a clue [*sumbolon*]. But as it is—since it was only after the event that I was counted a Theban among Thebans—to you, Kadmeians all, I do thus proclaim:

Whoever of you knows 225 by whom Laios son of Labdakos was slain, I bid him to indicate [*sēmainein*] all to me. And if he is afraid, I order him to remove the danger of the charge from his path by denouncing himself; he will suffer no other punishment, but will only leave this land, unhurt. 230 If anyone knows the assassin to be an alien, from another land, let him not keep silent. I will make him profit [*kerdos*], and my gratitude [*kharis*] shall rest with him besides. But if he keeps silent, if anyone, through fear, seeks to screen himself or a *philos* from my pronouncement [*epos*], 235 then hear what I shall do. I charge you that no resident of this land, of which I hold the royal power [*kratos*], receive or address that murderer, whoever he is, or make him a partner in prayer or sacrifice, 240 or give him a share of the lustral rite. Ban him from your houses, all of you, knowing that this is the pollution [*miasma*], as the oracle of the Pythian god has recently shown to me. In this way 245 I am an ally to the *daimōn* and to the dead man. And I pray solemnly that the slayer, whoever he is, whether he has gotten away alone or with partners, may wear out his unblest life evilly as he is evil [*kakos*]. And for myself I pray that if he should, 250 with my knowledge, become a resident of my house, I may suffer [*paskhein*] the same things which I have just called down on others. I order you to make all these words

come to fulfillment [*telos*], for my sake, for the sake of the god, and for the sake of our land, thus blasted with barrenness by angry heaven.

Even if the matter had not been urged upon us by a god, 255 it still would not have been fit that you should leave the guilt thus unpunished, when one so noble—and he your king—had perished. You should have searched it out. But now, since I hold the powers which he once held, 260 possessing his bed and the wife who bore his children, and since, had his hope of offspring [*genos*] not been unsuccessful, children born of one mother would have tied us with a common bond—as it was, fate swooped upon his head—I will uphold this cause, as though it were that of my own father, 265 and will leave no stone unturned in my search for the one who shed the blood, for the honor of the son of Labdakos—and son of Polydoros and of Kadmos before him and of Agenor of old.

And for those who do not obey me, I pray that the gods 270 send them neither harvest of the earth nor fruit of the womb, but that they perish by the present fate, or by one still worse. But to all you other Kadmeians who are satisfied by these things, may *dikē*, our ally, 275 and all the gods be gracious always.

Chorus

As you have put me under oath, on my oath, my lord, I will speak. I am not the slayer, nor can I reveal him. As for the investigation, it was for Phoebus, who enjoined it, to tell us who wrought the deed.

Oedipus

280 Justly [*dikaia*] said. But no man on earth can force the gods to do what they do not want.

Chorus

I would like to say what seems to me the next best course.

Oedipus

And if there is a third course, do not hesitate to reveal it.

Chorus

I know that our lord Teiresias is the seer most like our 285 lord Apollo; from him, my lord, an investigator might learn most clearly about these affairs.

Oedipus

Not even this have I left uncared for. On Creon's suggestion, I sent a man to bring him. And I've been wondering for some time why he is not here.

Chorus

290 Indeed—his skill apart—the words [*epea*] are but faint and old.

Oedipus

What sort are they? I am investigating every tale.

Chorus

He was said to have been killed by some wayfarers.

Oedipus

I too have heard that. But no one sees the one who did it.

Chorus

If he knows what fear is, he will not hesitate to come forward when he 295 hears your curses, so dire are they.

Oedipus

When a man does not shrink from a deed, neither is he scared by a word.

Chorus

But there is no one to convict him. For here they bring at last the godlike seer [*mantis*], the only man in whom what is true [*alēthēs*] lives.

Teiresias enters, led by a boy.

Oedipus

300 Teiresias, whose soul grasps all things, that which may be told and

that which is unspeakable, the secrets of heaven and the affairs of the earth—you feel with your *phrēn*, though you cannot see, what a huge plague haunts our *polis*. From which, great prophet, we find you to be our protector and only savior [*sōtēr*]. 305 Now, Phoebus—if indeed you have not heard the reports—has sent answer to our question that the only way to rid ourselves of this pest that afflicts us is to discover the slayers of Laios, and then to slay or banish them from our land. 310 Do not, then, begrudge us the voice of the birds or any other path of the knowledge of the seer [*mantis*], but save yourself and your *polis*, save me, save all that is damaged by the defilement [*miasma*] of the dead. We are in your hands, and man’s noblest labor [*ponos*] is to help others 315 to the best of his means and powers.

Teiresias

Alas, how terrible it is to have *phrenes* when it does not benefit those who have it. I knew this well, but let it slip from mind; otherwise I would not have come here.

Oedipus

What now? How disheartened you have come!

Teiresias

320 Let me go home. For you will bear your own burden to the end, and I will bear mine, if you consent.

Oedipus

Your words are strange and unkindly to the *polis* which nurtured you, since you withhold this response.

Teiresias

I see that you, for your part, speak what is off the mark [*kairos*]. 325 Therefore do not speak, so I will not suffer [*paskhein*] the same.

Oedipus

For the love of the gods, don’t turn away, if you have *phrenes*; we all implore you on our knees as suppliants.

Teiresias

All of you lack *phrenes*. Never will I reveal my evils—not to call them yours.

Oedipus

330 What are you saying? Do you know the secret and refuse to tell it? Will you betray and destroy the *polis*?

Teiresias

I will grieve neither myself nor you. Why do you ask these things in vain? You will not learn the answers from me.

Oedipus

You would anger a stone! Most *kakos* of the *kakoi*, will you not speak out? 335 Can nothing touch you? Will you never come to an end [*telos*]?

Teiresias

You find fault with my anger, but you do not perceive your own that lives with you; no, you blame me.

Oedipus

Who would not be angry hearing such words [*epea*], 340 with which you now are slighting the *polis*?

Teiresias

Though future will come of itself, though I shroud it in silence.

Oedipus

Since it must come anyway, it is right that you tell it to me.

Teiresias

I will speak no further; rage, if you wish, with the fiercest wrath your *thūmos* knows.

Oedipus

345 In my anger I will not spare to speak all my thoughts. Know that you seem to me to have helped in plotting the deed, and to have done it,

short of performing the actual murder with your own hands; if you had eye-sight, I would have said that you had done even this by yourself.

Teiresias

350 True [*alēthēs*]? I order you to abide by your own decree, and from this day forth not to speak to these men or to me, since you are the accursed defiler of this land.

Oedipus

So brazen with your blustering taunt? 355 Where do you think to escape to?

Teiresias

I have escaped. There is strength in my truth [*alēthēs*].

Oedipus

Who taught you this? Not your skill, at any rate.

Teiresias

You yourself. For you spurred me on to speak against my will.

Oedipus

What did you say? Speak again, so I may learn it better.

Teiresias

360 Did you not understand before, or are you talking to test me?

Oedipus

I cannot say I understood fully. Tell me again.

Teiresias

I say that you are the killer of the man whose slayer you seek.

Oedipus

Now you will regret that you have said such dire words twice.

Teiresias

365 Should I tell you more, that you might get more angry?

Oedipus

Say as much as you want; it will be said in vain.

Teiresias

I say that you have been living in unguessed shame with your most *philos*, and do not see to what woe you have come.

Oedipus

Do think that you will always be able to speak like this without smarting for it?

Teiresias

If indeed there is any strength in truth [*alēthēs*].

Oedipus

370 There is, except for you. You do not have that strength, since you are maimed in your ears, in your *noos*, and in your eyes.

Teiresias

And you are a poor wretch to utter taunts that every man here will soon hurl at you.

Oedipus

Night, endless night has you in her keeping, so that you can never hurt me 375 nor any man that sees the light of the sun.

Teiresias

No, it is not your fate to fall at my hands, since Apollo, to whom this matter is a concern, is sufficient.

Oedipus

Are these Creon's devices, or your own?

Teiresias

Creon is no trouble for you; you are your own.

Oedipus

380 O wealth, and tyranny, and skill surpassing skill in life's keen

rivalries, how great is the envy in your keeping, if, for the sake of this power which the *polis* has entrusted to me, a gift unsought, 385 Creon the trustworthy, Creon my old *philos*, has crept upon me by stealth, yearning to overthrow me, and has suborned such a scheming juggler as this, a tricky quack, who has eyes only for gain [*kerdos*], but is blind in his art!

390 Come, tell me, where have you proved yourself a seer [*mantis*]? Why, when the watchful dog who wove dark song was here, did you say nothing to free the people? Yet the riddle [*ainigma*] was not for the first comer to read: there was need for the help of a *mantis*, 395 and you were discovered not to have this art, either from birds, or as known from some god. But rather I, Oedipus the ignorant, stopped her, having attained the answer through my wit alone, untaught by birds. It is I whom you are trying to oust, thinking that 400 you will have great influence in Creon's court. But I think that you and the one who plotted these things will rue your zeal to purge the land; if you did not seem to be an old man, you would have learned at the cost of your suffering [*pathos*] what sort of *phrenes* you have.

Chorus

To our way of thinking, these words, both his and yours, Oedipus, 405 have been said in anger. We have no need of this, but rather we must seek how we shall best discharge the *mantis*-delivered words of the god.

Teiresias

Though you are *turannos*, the right of reply must be deemed the same for both; over that I have power [*kratos*]. 410 For I do not live as your slave, but as Loxias'. I will not stand enrolled under Creon for my patron. And I tell you, since you have taunted my blindness, that though you have sight, you do not see what evil you are in, nor where you dwell, nor with whom. 415 Do you know who your parents are? You have been an unwitting enemy to your own people, both in the Underworld and on the earth above. And the double lash of your mother's and your

father's curse will one day drive you from this land in dreadful haste, with darkness upon those eyes of yours which now can see. 420 What place will be harbor to your cries, what part of all Kithairon will not ring with them soon, when you have learned the meaning of the nuptials in which, within that house, you found a fatal haven, after a voyage so fair? And you have not guessed a throng of other evils, 425 which will bring you level with you true self and with your own children. Therefore heap your scorn upon Creon and upon my message; no man will ever be crushed more miserably than you.

Oedipus

Are these taunts to be endured from him? 430 Be gone, to your ruin, be gone this instant! Will you not turn your back and leave this house?

Teiresias

I would not have come if you had not called me.

Oedipus

I did not know you would speak foolishly, for otherwise it would have been a long time before I summoned you to my home.

Teiresias

435 I was born like this—as you think, a fool, but in the opinion of the parents who bore you, quite in control of the *phrenes*.

Oedipus

What parents? Wait. What man is my sire?

Teiresias

This day will reveal your birth and bring your ruin.

Oedipus

What riddles [*ainigma* pl.], what dark words you always say.

Teiresias

440 Are you not the best at unraveling mysteries?

Oedipus

Reproach me in what you will find me to be great.

Teiresias

Yet it was just that fortune that undid you.

Oedipus

But if it saved [*sōzein*] this *polis*, I care not.

Teiresias

I take my leave. You, boy, lead me.

Oedipus

445 Yes, let him take you; here you are a hindrance, a source of trouble.
When you have gone, you will vex me no more.

Teiresias

I will go when I have performed the errand for which I came, fearless to your frown; you can never destroy me. I tell you that the man whom you have been seeking this long while, 450 uttering threats and proclaiming a search into the murder of Laios, is here, apparently an emigrant stranger [*xenos*], but soon to be found a native of Thebes, unhappy about his fortune. A blind man, though now he sees, 455 a beggar, though now rich, he will make his way to a foreign land, feeling the ground before him with his staff. And he will be discovered to be at once brother and father of the children with whom he consorts; son and husband of the woman who bore him; 460 heir to his father's bed, shedder of his father's blood. So go in and evaluate this, and if you find that I am wrong, say then that I have no *phrenes* in the art of the *mantis*.

They exit.

Chorus

strophe 1

Who is he who the divine voice from the Delphian rock has said 465
wrought with blood-red hands horrors that no tongue can tell? It is time

[*hōra*] that he ply in flight a foot stronger than the feet of storm-swift steeds. 470 The son of Zeus is springing upon him with fiery lightning, and with him come the dread unerring Fates.

antistrophe 1

Recently the message has flashed forth from snowy Parnassus 475 to make all search for the unknown man. He wanders under cover of the wild wood, among caves and rocks, fierce as a bull, wretched and forlorn on his joyless path, still seeking to separate himself from the words of the *mantis* revealed at the central shrine of the earth. 480 But that doom ever lives, ever flits around him.

strophe 2

The wise augur moves me, neither approving nor denying, with dread, with dread indeed. 485 I am at a loss what to say. I am fluttered with expectations, seeing neither the present nor the future clearly. Never in past days or in these have I heard how the house of Labdakos 490 or the son of Polybos had any quarrel with one another that I could bring as proof 495 in assailing the public reputation of Oedipus, seeking to avenge the line of Labdakos for the undiscovered murder.

antistrophe 2

Zeus and Apollo indeed are perceptive [*sunetoi*] and know the affairs of the earth. 500 But there is no true test [*alēthēs krisis*] of whether a mortal *mantis* attains more knowledge than I do, though man may surpass man in wisdom [*sophiā*]. 505 But until I see the word made good, I will never assent when men blame Oedipus. Before all eyes the winged maiden came against him once upon a time, and he was seen to be *sophos*, 510 and bore the test in welcome service to the *polis*. Never, therefore, will he be judged guilty of evil by my *phrenes*.

Creon enters.

Creon

Fellow-citizens, having learned that Oedipus the *turannos* accuses me

and makes terrible utterances [*epea*] against me, I have come, indignant.
515 If he thinks that in the present troubles he has suffered [*paskhein*]
from me, by word or by deed, anything harmful, in truth I desire not my
full term of years, when I must bear such blame as this. The wrong of
this rumor 520 touches me not in one point alone, but has the largest
scope, if I am to be called a *kakos* in the *polis*, *kakos* by you and by my
philoî.

Chorus

But perhaps this taunt came under the stress of anger, rather from the
purpose of his *phrenes*.

Creon

525 Was it said that my counsels had brought the *mantis* to utter his
falsehoods?

Chorus

Such things were said—I don't know with what meaning.

Creon

And was this charge laid against me with steady eyes and steady *phrēn*?

Chorus

530 I don't know. I see not what my masters do. But here comes our lord
from the house.

Oedipus enters.

Oedipus

You, how did you get here? Are you so boldfaced that you have come to
my house, you who are manifestly the murderer of its master, 535 the
palpable thief of my tyranny? Come, tell me, in the name of the gods,
was it cowardice or folly which you saw in me and which led you to plot
this thing? Did you think that I would not notice this deed of yours
creeping upon me by stealth, or that if I became aware of it I would not

ward it off? 540 Is your attempt not foolish, to seek the tyranny without followers or *philoî*—a prize which followers and property must win?

Creon

Mark me now: hear a fair reply in answer to your words, and then judge for yourself on the basis of knowledge.

Oedipus

545 You are apt in speech, but I am poor at learning from you, since I have found you a malignant foe.

Creon

Now hear first how I will explain this very thing.

Oedipus

One thing—that you are not evil [*kakos*—don't bother to explain to me.

Creon

If you think that stubbornness 550 without *noos* is a good gift, you do not have your *phrenes* straight.

Oedipus

If you think you can wrong a kinsman and escape the *dikē*, then you do not have *phrenes*.

Creon

Justly said, I grant you; but tell me what the wrong is that you say you are suffering [*paskhein*] at my hands.

Oedipus

555 Did you, or did you not, advise me to send for that revered *mantis*?

Creon

Even now I am of the same mind.

Oedipus

How long is it, then, since Laios...

Creon

Did what? My *noos* fails me.

Oedipus

560 Was swept out of sight by deadly violence.

Creon

The count of years would run far into the past.

Oedipus

Did this *mantis* possess this skill in those days?

Creon

He was *sophos* as now, and held in equal *tīmē*.

Oedipus

Did he make mention of me at that time?

Creon

565 Never, certainly, when I was within hearing.

Oedipus

Did you never investigate the murder?

Creon

Due search we held, of course; we learned nothing.

Oedipus

And how was it that this *sophos* man did not tell this story then.

Creon

I do not know; where I lack *phrenes* it is my custom to be silent.

Oedipus

570 This much, at least, you know, and could declare with insight enough.

Creon

What is that? If I know it, I will not deny.

Oedipus

That, if he had not conferred with you, he would never have named me as Laios' slayer.

Creon

If he says this, you know best; but I deem it just [*dikaia*] 575 to learn from you as much as you have from me now.

Oedipus

Learn your fill. I will never be convicted as a murderer.

Creon

Say, then – have you married my sister?

Oedipus

That inquiry [*historia*] allows no denial.

Creon

And you rule the land as she does, with equal sway?

Oedipus

580 She obtains from me all that she wishes.

Creon

And do I not rank as a third peer of you two?

Oedipus

It's just there that you are seen to be an evil [*kakos*] *philos*.

Creon

Not so, if you would reason with your heart as I do with mine. Weigh this first: whether you think that anyone would 585 choose to rule amid terrors rather than in unruffled peace, granted that he is to have the same powers [*kratos* pl.]. Now I, for one, have by nature no yearning to be *turannos* rather than to do the deeds of a *turannos*, and neither does any man I know who understands how to have moderation [*sōphrosunē*]. 590

For now I attain everything from you without fear, but, if I were ruler myself, I would have to do much even against my own pleasure.

How then could tyranny be sweeter for me to have than painless rule and influence? Not yet am I so misguided **595** that I desire anything besides the good which brings gain [*kerdos*]. Now every man has a greeting for me; now all that have a request of you crave to speak with me, since therein lies all their hope of success. Why then should I resign these things and take those others? **600** No *noos* will become *kakos* while it has good *phrenes*. No, I am no lover of such policy, and if another put it into action, I could never bear to go along with him. And, in proof of this, first go to Pytho, and ask whether I brought a true report of the oracle. **605** Then next, if you have found that I have planned anything in concert with the soothsayer, take and slay me, by the sentence not of one mouth, but of two—of my own no less than yours. But do not assume me guilty [*aitios*] on unproved surmise. It is not just to judge the bad good at random, **610** nor the good bad. I count it a like thing for a man to cast off a true *philos* as to cast away the life in his own bosom, which he most loves. You will surely learn about these affairs in time, since time alone reveals a *dikaios* man. **615** But you can discern a bad man even in one day alone.

Chorus

He has spoken well, my lord, for one who is taking care not to fall; those who are quick in *phrenes* are not sure.

Oedipus

When the stealthy plotter is moving on me quickly, I, too, must be quick in my counterplot. **620** If I await him at leisure [*hēsukhiā*], his ends will have been gained, and mine lost.

Creon

What do you want then? To banish me from the land?

Oedipus

Hardly. I desire your death, not your exile, so that I might show what a thing is envy.

Creon

625 Are you resolved not to yield or believe?

Oedipus

[Oedipus' response is missing.]

Creon

I see you are not in possession of *phrenes*.

Oedipus

Sane, at least, in my own interest.

Creon

But you should be so in mine also.

Oedipus

You are *kakos*.

Creon

But if you understand nothing?

Oedipus

Still I must rule.

Creon

Not if you rule badly.

Oedipus

O *polis, polis*!

Creon

630 The *polis* is mine too, not yours alone.

Chorus

Cease, lords. Just in time I see Iocasta coming from the house, with

whose help you should resolve your present feud.

Locasta enters.

Locasta

Misguided men, why have you raised 635 such foolish strife [*stasis*] of tongues? Are you not ashamed, while the land is so sick, to stir up ills of your own? Come, go into the house—and you, Creon, go to yours—and stop making so much of a petty grief.

Creon

Kinswoman, Oedipus your husband 640 wants to do one of two terrible evils to me, either to thrust me from the land of my fathers or to arrest and slay me.

Oedipus

Yes indeed, for I have caught him, lady, working evil against my person with his evil craft.

Creon

May I get no benefit, 645 but perish accursed, if I have done any of the things of which you charge me.

Locasta

In the name of the gods, believe it, Oedipus; first have respect [*aidōs*] for this oath of the gods, then for me, and for these men who stand before you.

Chorus

Consent, have *phrenes*, listen, my lord. I beg you.

Oedipus

650 What would you have me grant you?

Chorus

Respect him who was in the past not inept [*nēpios*], and who now is strong in his oath.

Oedipus

Do you understand what you crave?

Chorus

I do.

Oedipus

655 Tell me what you mean.

Chorus

That you should never use an unproved rumor to cast a dishonoring charge on the *philos* who has bound himself with a curse.

Oedipus

Then be very sure that when you seek this you are seeking death or exile from this land.

Chorus

660 No, by the god foremost among all the gods, by the Sun! Without gods, without *philo*i, may I die the worst possible death, if I have this thought in my *phrenes*! 665 But my unhappy soul is worn by the withering of the land, as well as by the thought that our old woes should be crowned by new ones arising from the two of you.

Oedipus

Then let him go, though I am surely doomed to death, 670 or to be thrust without *tīmē* from the land by force. Your words, not his, move me to compassion.

Chorus

You are truly sullen in yielding, as you are vehement in the excesses of your *thūmos*. But such natures are 675 justly most difficult for themselves to bear.

Oedipus

Then will you not be gone and leave me in peace?

Creon

I will go on my way. I have found you undiscerning, but in the view of these men I am just.

Creon exits.

Chorus

Woman, why do you hesitate to take this man into the house?

Iocasta

680 I will, when I have learned what has happened.

Chorus

Blind suspicion arose, bred of talk, and injustice inflicts wounds.

Iocasta

On both sides?

Chorus

Yes.

Iocasta

And what was the story?

Chorus

685 It is enough, I think, enough, when our land is already vexed, that the matter should rest where it ceased.

Oedipus

Do you see to what you have come, though noble [*agathos*] in intention, in seeking to relax and blunt my zeal?

Chorus

Lord, I have said it more than once: 690 be sure that I would be shown to be a madman, bankrupt in sane counsel [*phrenes*], if ever I forsake you, who gave a true course to my *philē* country when it was 695 distraught with pains [*ponoi*], and who now are likely to prove our prospering guide.

Iocasta

In the name of the gods, tell me, lord, the reason that you have conceived this steadfast *mēnis*.

Oedipus

700 That I will do, for I respect you, wife, above these men. Creon is the cause, and the plots he has laid against me.

Iocasta

Come, tell me how the quarrel began.

Oedipus

He says that I am the murderer of Laios.

Iocasta

On his own knowledge or on hearsay from another?

Oedipus

705 He has made a rascal *mantis* his mouth-piece; as for himself, he keeps his lips wholly pure.

Iocasta

Then absolve yourself of the things about which you are speaking. Listen to me, and take comfort in learning that nothing of mortal birth is a partaker in the art of the *mantis*. 710 I will give you a pithy indication [*sēmeia*] of this: An oracle came to Laios once—I will not say from Phoebus himself, but from his ministers—saying that he would suffer his fate at the hands of the child to be born to him and me. 715 And he—as the rumor goes—was murdered one day by strange [*xenoi*] robbers at a place where the three highways meet. The child's birth was not yet three days past, when Laios pinned his ankles together and had it thrown, by others' hands, on a remote mountain. 720 So, in that case, Apollo did not bring it to pass that the child should become the slayer of his father, or that Laios should suffer [*paskhein*] that which he feared: death at the hands of his child; thus the messages of the seer's art had

foretold. Pay them no regard. Whatever necessary event 725 the god seeks, he himself will easily bring to light.

Oedipus

What restlessness of *psūkhē*, wife, what tumult has come upon my *phrenes* since I heard you speak!

Iocasta

What anxiety has startled you, that you say this?

Oedipus

I thought that I heard this from you: that Laios 730 was slain where the three roads meet.

Iocasta

Yes, that was the report, and it has not yet ceased.

Oedipus

And where is the place where this event [*pathos*] occurred?

Iocasta

The land is called Phocis; the branching forks lead to the same spot from Delphi and from Daulia.

Oedipus

735 And how much time has passed since these events took place?

Iocasta

The news was announced to the *polis* shortly before you were first seen in power over this land.

Oedipus

O Zeus, what have you decreed to do to me?

Iocasta

Why, Oedipus, does this matter weigh upon your heart?

Oedipus

740 Don't ask me yet. Tell me rather what stature Laios had, and how ripe his manhood was.

Iocasta

He was tall—the silver just lightly strewn among his hair—and his form was not greatly unlike your own.

Oedipus

Unhappy that I am! I think that I have 745 laid myself under a terrible curse without realizing it.

Iocasta

How do you mean? I tremble when I look at you, my lord.

Oedipus

I have dread fears that the *mantis* can see. But you will reveal the matter better if you tell me one thing more.

Iocasta

Indeed, though I tremble, I will hear and answer all that you ask.

Oedipus

750 Did he go with a small force, or like a chieftain, with many armed followers?

Iocasta

Five they were in all—a herald [*kērux*] among them—and there was one carriage which bore Laios.

Oedipus

755 Alas! It's all clear now! Who gave you these tidings, lady?

Iocasta

A servant, the only survivor who returned home.

Oedipus

Is he perchance in the house now?

Iocasta

No. Soon after he returned and found you holding power [*kratos* pl.] in Laios' stead, 760 he pleaded with me, with hand laid on mine, to send him to the fields, to the pastures of the flocks, that he might be far from the sight of this city. And I sent him; he was worthy, for a slave, to win even a larger favor [*kharis*] than that.

Oedipus

765 Then may he return to us without delay!

Iocasta

That is easy. But why do you enjoin this?

Oedipus

I fear, lady, that my words have been rash, and therefore I wish to behold him.

Iocasta

He will come. But I think that 770 I too have a claim to learn what lies heavy on your heart, my lord.

Oedipus

It will not be kept from you, now that my foreboding have advanced so far. To whom more than to you would I speak in suffering such a fortune as this? My father was Polybos of Corinth, 775 my mother the Dorian Merope. I was considered the greatest man among the townspeople there, until a chance befell me, worthy of wonder, though not worthy of my own haste regarding it. At a banquet, a man drunk with wine 780 cast it at me that I was not the true son of my father. And I, vexed, restrained myself for that day as best as I could, but on the next went to my mother and father and questioned them. They were angry at the one who had let this taunt fly. 785 So I had comfort about them, but the matter rankled in my heart, for such a rumor still spread widely. I went to Delphi without my parents' knowledge, and Phoebus sent me forth without giving me the *tīmē* of the knowledge for which I had

come, 790 but in his response set forth other things, full of sorrow and terror and woe: that I was fated to defile my mother's bed, that I would reveal to men a brood which they could not endure to behold, and that I would slay the father that sired me. When I heard this, I turned in flight from the land of Corinth, 795 from then on thinking of it only by its position under the stars, to some spot where I should never see fulfillment [*telos*] of the infamies foretold in my evil doom. And on my way I came to the land in which you say that this *turannos* perished. 800 Now, wife, I will tell you the truth [*alēthēs*]. When on my journey I was near those three roads, there I met a herald [*kērux*], and a man in a carriage drawn by colts, as you have described. The leader and the old man 805 himself tried to thrust me by force from the path. Then, in anger, I struck the one pushing me aside, the driver, and when the old man saw this, he watched for the moment I was passing, and from his carriage, brought his double goad full down on my head. 810 Yet he was paid back with interest: with one swift blow from the staff in this hand he rolled right out of the carriage onto his back. I slew every one of them. But if this *xenos* had any tie of kinship to Laios, 815 who is now more wretched than this man before you? What mortal could be proved more hateful to heaven? No *xenos*, no citizen, is allowed to receive him at home, it is unlawful for anyone to accost him, and all must push him from their homes. And this—this curse— 820 was laid on me by no other mouth than my own. And I pollute the bed of the slain man with my hands by which he perished. Am I now *kakos*? Oh, am I not utterly unclean, seeing that I must be banished, and in banishment neither see my own people, 825 nor set foot in my own land, or else be joined in wedlock to my mother, and slay my father Polybos, who sired and reared me. Then would he not speak correctly about Oedipus, who judged these things to be sent down by some cruel *daimōn*? 830 Forbid, forbid, you pure and awe-inspiring gods, that I should ever see that day! No, may I be swept away from all men, before I see myself visited with that brand of doom.

Chorus

To us, lord, these things are fraught with fear. Yet have hope, until at least you have gained full knowledge **835** from the one who saw the deed.

Oedipus

I have, in truth, this much hope alone: I await the man summoned from the pastures.

Iocasta

And what do you want from him when he appears?

Oedipus

I will tell you. If his story is found **840** to tally with yours, I will stand clear of suffering [*pathos*].

Iocasta

And what special note did you hear from me?

Oedipus

You said that he spoke of Laios as slain by robbers. If he still speaks of several as before, I was not the slayer: **845** a solitary man could not be considered the same as that band. But if he names one lonely wayfarer, then beyond doubt this deed is leaning in my direction.

Iocasta

Be assured that thus the story [*epos*] was first told. He cannot revoke that, **850** for the *polis* heard it, not I alone. But even if he should diverge somewhat from his former story, never, lord, can he show that the murder of Laios is justly [*dikaia*] square with the prophecy, for Loxias plainly said that he was to die at the hand of my child. **855** How was it then that that poor innocent never slew him, but perished first? So henceforth, as far as the words of a *mantis* are concerned, I would not look to my right hand or my left.

Oedipus

You judge well. But nevertheless send someone to fetch the peasant, 860
and neglect not this matter.

Iocasta

I will send without delay. But let us go into the house: nothing will I do
save what is *philon* to you.

They go into the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

May fate [*moira*] still find me winning the praise of reverent purity in all
words and 865 deeds sanctioned by those laws [*nomoi*] of range sublime,
called into life through the high clear sky, whose father is Olympus
alone. The mortal nature of men did not beget them, 870 nor shall
oblivion ever lay them to sleep: the god is mighty in them, and he grows
not old.

antistrophe 1

Hubris breeds the *turannos*. *Hubris*, once vainly stuffed with wealth 875
that is not proper or good for it, when it has scaled the topmost
ramparts, is hurled to a dire doom, where no use of the feet serves to
good advantage. But I pray that the god never 880 quell such rivalry as
benefits the *polis*. The god I will ever hold for our protector.

strophe 2

But if any man walks haughtily in deed or word, 885 with no fear of
dikē, no reverence for the images of *daimones*, may an evil fate seize him
for his ill-starred pride, if he will not get his profit [*kerdos*] with *dikē*,
890 or avoid unholy deeds, but seeks to lay profaning hands on things
untouchable. Where such things occur, what mortal shall boast any
more that he can ward off the arrow of the gods from his *psūkhē*? 895 If
such deeds are held in *tīmē*, why should I be part of the *khōros*?

No longer will I go reverently to the earth's central and inviolate shrine,
no more to Abae's temple or to Olympia, 900 if these oracles do not fit
the outcome, so that all mortals shall point at them with their fingers.
905 No, wielder of power—if thus you are rightly called—Zeus, Lord of
all, may it not escape you and your deathless power! The old prophecies
concerning Laios are fading; already men annul them, and nowhere is
Apollo glorified with *tīmai*; 910 the worship of the gods is perishing.

Locasta enters.

Locasta

Lords of the land, the thought has come to me to visit the shrines of the
daimones, with this wreathed branch and these gifts of incense in my
hands. For Oedipus excites his *thūmos* excessively with all sorts of griefs,
915 and does not judge the new things from the old, like a man of *noos*,
but is under the control of the speaker, if he speaks of frightful things.
Since I can do no good by counsel, to you, Lykeian Apollo—for you are
nearest— 920 I have come as a suppliant with these symbols of prayer,
that you may find us some riddance from uncleanness. For now we are
all afraid looking upon him, like those who see the pilot [*kubernētēs*] of
their ship stricken with panic.

A messenger enters.

Messenger

Can you tell me, *xenoi*, where 925 the palace of the *turannos* Oedipus is?
Or better still, tell me where he himself is, if you know.

Chorus

This is his dwelling, and he himself, *xenos*, is within. This woman here is
the mother of his children.

Messenger

Then may she be ever fortunate [*olbia*] in a prosperous [*olbios*] home,

930 since she is his spouse in ritual fullness [*telos*].

Iocasta

May you be likewise, *xenos*; your fair greeting deserves this. But say what you have come to seek or to indicate [*sēmainein*].

Messenger

Good tidings, woman, for your house and your husband.

Iocasta

935 What are they? From whom have you come?

Messenger

From Corinth, and at the message I will give now you will doubtless rejoice, yet haply grieve.

Iocasta

What is it? Why has it this double potency?

Messenger

The people will make him *turannos* of the 940 Isthmian land, as it was said there.

Iocasta

How then? Is the aged Polybos no longer in power [*kratos*]?

Messenger

No. For death holds him in the tomb.

Iocasta

What do you mean? Is Polybos dead, old man?

Messenger

If I am not speaking the truth [*alēthēs*], I am content to die.

Iocasta

945 Handmaid, away with all speed, and tell this to your master! O you *mantis*-delivered words of the gods, where do you stand now? It is this

man that Oedipus long feared he would slay. And now this man has died in the course of destiny, not by his hand.

Oedipus enters.

Oedipus

950 Iocasta, most *philē* wife, why have you summoned me forth from these doors?

Iocasta

Hear this man, and judge, as you listen, to what the awe-inspiring *mantis*-delivered words have come.

Oedipus

Who is he and what news does he have for me?

Iocasta

955 He comes from Corinth to tell you that your father Polybos lives no longer, but has perished.

Oedipus

How, *xenos*? You be the one who indicates [*sēmainein*] it.

Messenger

If I must first make these tidings plain, know indeed that he is dead and gone.

Oedipus

960 By treachery, or from illness?

Messenger

A light tilt of the scale brings the aged to their rest.

Oedipus

Ah, he died, it seems, of sickness?

Messenger

Yes, and of the long years that he had lived.

Oedipus

Alas, alas! Why indeed, my wife, should one look to the 965 hearth of the Pythian *mantis*, or to the birds that scream above our heads, who declared that I was doomed to slay my sire? But he is dead, and lies beneath the earth, and here I am, not having put my hand to any spear—unless, perhaps, he was killed by longing for me; 970 thus I would be the cause of his death. But the oracles as they stand Polybos has swept with him to his rest in Hādēs. They are worth nothing.

Iocasta

Did I not long ago foretell this to you?

Oedipus

You did, but I was mislead by my fear.

Iocasta

975 Now no longer keep any of those things in your *thūmos*.

Oedipus

But surely I must fear my mother's bed.

Iocasta

What should a mortal man fear, for whom the decrees of Fortune are supreme, and who has clear foresight of nothing? It is best to live at random, as one may. 980 But fear not that you will wed your mother. Many men before now have so fared in dreams. But he to whom these things are as though nothing bears his life most easily.

Oedipus

All these words of yours would have been well said, 985 were my mother not alive. But as it is, since she lives, I must necessarily fear, though you speak well.

Iocasta

Your father's death is a great sign for us to take cheer.

Oedipus

Great, I know. But my fear is of her who lives.

Messenger

And who is the woman about whom you fear?

Oedipus

990 Merope, old man, the consort of Polybos.

Messenger

And what is it in her that moves your fear?

Oedipus

A heaven-sent *mantis*-delivered word of dread import, *xenos*.

Messenger

Lawful, or unlawful, for another to know?

Oedipus

Lawful, surely. Loxias once said that I was 995 doomed to marry my own mother, and to shed with my own hands my father's blood. For which reasons I long shirked my home in Corinth—with a happy outcome, to be sure, but still it is sweet to see the face of one's parents.

Messenger

1000 Was it really for fear of this that you became an exile from that *polis*?

Oedipus

And because I did not wish, old man, to be the murderer of my father.

Messenger

Why did I not release you from this fear right away, lord? After all, I have come here with a *noos* that is favorable to you.

Oedipus

And you would get a worthy return [*kharis*] from me.

Messenger

1005 Why, that is the biggest reason for my coming, so that I would do well because of your coming back home.

Oedipus

But I would never go back to them, from whose seed I originate.

Messenger

My child, it is in a good way that you are unaware of what you are doing.

Oedipus

How do you mean, old man. I ask you by the gods, inform me!

Messenger

1010 If it is on account of these that you shun going home.

Oedipus

Fearing that the message of Phoebus may have a clear outcome.

Messenger

Is it that you fear contracting a pollution [*miasma*] from those whose seed gave you birth?

Oedipus

That's it, old man! That is what gives me eternal fear.

Messenger

Do you know, then, that your fears are wholly vain?

Oedipus

1015 How so, if I was born of those parents?

Messenger

Because you had no family tie in common with Polybos .

Oedipus

What are you saying? Was Polybos not my sire?

Messenger

Just as much, and no more, than he who speaks to you.

Oedipus

And how can my sire be level with him who is as though nothing to me?

Messenger

1020 No, he fathered you not at all, any more than I.

Oedipus

How, then, did he call me his son?

Messenger

Long ago he received you as a gift from my hands.

Oedipus

And yet he loved me so dearly, who came from another's hand?

Messenger

His former childlessness won him over.

Oedipus

1025 And had you bought me or found me by chance, when you gave me to him?

Messenger

I found you in Kithairon's winding glens.

Oedipus

And why were you roaming those regions?

Messenger

I was in charge of mountain flocks.

Oedipus

You were a shepherd, a vagrant hireling?

Messenger

1030 But your savior [*sōtēr*], my son, in that time.

Oedipus

And what was my pain when you took me in your arms?

Messenger

The ankles of your feet might bear witness.

Oedipus

Ah me, why do you speak of that old woe?

Messenger

I freed you when you had your ankles pinned together.

Oedipus

1035 It was a dread brand of shame that I took from my cradle.

Messenger

So much that from that fortune you were called by that name which you still bear.

Oedipus

Oh, in the name of the gods, was the deed my mother's or father's?
Speak!

Messenger

I know not. He who gave you to me knows better of that than I.

Oedipus

What, you got me from another? You did not light on me yourself?

Messenger

1040 No. Another shepherd gave you to me.

Oedipus

Who was he? Can you tell clearly?

Messenger

I think he was said to be one of the household of Laios.

Oedipus

The *turannos* who ruled this country long ago?

Messenger

The same. The man was a herdsman in his service.

Oedipus

1045 Is he still alive, that I might see him?

Messenger

You natives of this country should know best.

Oedipus

Is there any of you here present that knows the herdsman of whom he speaks, having seen him either in the pastures or here in town? Indicate [*sēmainein*]
1050 The time [*kairos*] has come for these things to be revealed at long last.

Chorus

I think he speaks of no other than the peasant you already wanted to see.
But Iocasta herself might best tell you that.

Oedipus

Wife, do you know in your *noos* the one whom we summoned lately?
1055 Is it of him that this man speaks?

Iocasta

Why ask of whom he spoke? Regard it not—waste not a thought on what he said—it would be vain.

Oedipus

It must not happen, with such clues [*sēmeia*] in my grasp, that I should fail to bring my origin [*genos*] to light.

Iocasta

1060 For the gods' sake, if you have any care for your own life, forgo this search! My anguish is enough.

Oedipus

Be of good courage. Even if I should be found the son of a servile mother—a slave by three descents—you will not be proved base [*kakē*].

Iocasta

Hear me, I implore you: do not do this.

Oedipus

1065 I will not hear of not discovering the whole truth.

Iocasta

Yet I wish you well; I counsel you for the best.

Oedipus

These best counsels, then, vex my patience.

Iocasta

Ill-fated man, may you never know who you are!

Oedipus

Go, some one, fetch me the herdsman. 1070 Leave this woman to glory in her wealthy ancestry [*genos*].

Iocasta

Alas, alas, miserable man—that word alone can I say to you—and no other word ever again!

She rushes from the palace.

Chorus

Why has this woman gone, Oedipus, rushing off in wild grief? I fear
1075 a storm of evils will soon break forth from this silence.

Oedipus

Break forth what will! Be my seed ever so lowly, I crave to learn it. That woman perhaps—for she is proud with more than a woman's pride—feels ashamed of my lowly birth [*genos*]. But I, who hold myself son of Fortune 1080 that gives good, will not be left without *tīmē*. She is the mother from whom I spring, and the months, my kinsmen, have marked me sometimes lowly, sometimes great. Such being my heritage, never more can I prove 1085 false to it, and not search out the secret of my birth [*genos*].

Chorus

strophe

If I am a *mantis* or wise of heart, 1090 Kithairon, you will not fail—by heaven, you will not—to know at tomorrow's full moon that Oedipus honors you as native to him, as his nurse, and his mother, and that you are celebrated in our *khoros*, 1095 because you are well-pleasing to our *turannos*. O Phoebus, to whom we cry, may these things find favor in your sight!

antistrophe

Who was it, my son, who of the race whose years are many, that bore you in wedlock with 1100 Pan, the mountain-roaming father? Or was it a bride of Loxias that bore you? For *philai* to him are all the upland pastures. 1105 Or perhaps it was Kyllene's lord, the god of the Bacchants, dweller on the hill-tops, that received you, a new-born joy, from one of the Nymphs of Helikon, with whom he most often sports.

Oedipus

1110 Elders, if it is right for me, who have never met the man, to guess, I think I see the herdsman of whom we have been long in quest. In his venerable old age he tallies with this man's years, and moreover I recognize those who bring him, I think, as servants of mine. 1115 But

perhaps you have an advantage in knowledge over me, if you have seen the herdsman before.

Chorus

Yes, I know him, be sure. He was in the service of Laios—trustworthy as any shepherd.

The herdsman is brought in.

Oedipus

I ask you first, Corinthian *xenos*, if this is the man you mean.

Messenger

1120 He is, the one you are looking at.

Oedipus

You, old man—look this way and answer all that I ask—were you once in the service of Laios?

Servant [*therapōn*]

I was—not a bought slave, but reared in his house.

Oedipus

Employed in what labor, or what way of life?

Servant

1125 For the better part of my life I tended the flocks.

Oedipus

And what regions did you most frequently haunt?

Servant

Sometimes Kithairon, sometimes the neighboring ground.

Oedipus

Are you aware of ever having seen this man in these parts?

Servant

Doing what? What man do you mean?

Oedipus

1130 This man here. Have you ever met him before?

Servant

Not so that I could speak at once from memory.

Messenger

And no wonder, master. But I will bring clear recollection to his ignorance. I am sure he knows well of the time we spent together in the region of Kithairon 1135 for six-month periods, from spring to Arktouros, he with two flocks, and I with one. And then for the winter I used to drive my flock to my own fold, and he took his to the fold of Laios. 1140 Did any of this happen as I tell it, or did it not?

Servant

You speak the truth [*alēthēs*], though it was long ago.

Messenger

Come, tell me now: do you remember having given me a boy in those days, to be reared as my own foster-son?

Servant

What now? Why do you inquire [*historeîn*] about this?

Messenger

1145 This man, my friend, is he who then was young.

Servant

Plague seize you. Be silent once and for all.

Oedipus

Rebuke him not, old man. Your words need rebuking more than his.

Servant

And in what way, most noble master, do I offend?

Oedipus

1150 In not telling of the boy of whom he inquires [*historeîn*].

Servant

He speaks without knowledge, but labors [*poneîn*] in vain.

Oedipus

You will not speak as a favor [*kharis*], but you will in pain.

Servant

No, in the name of the gods, do not mistreat an old man.

Oedipus

Ho, some one – tie his hands behind him this instant!

Servant

1155 Alas, why? What do you want to learn?

Oedipus

Did you give this man the child about whom he inquires [*historeîn*]?

Servant

I did. Would that I had perished that day!

Oedipus

Well, you will come to that, unless you say whatever has *dikē* in it.

Servant

But if I speak I will be destroyed all the more.

Oedipus

1160 This man is bent, I think, on more delays.

Servant

No, no! I said before that I gave it to him.

Oedipus

Where did you get it from? From your own house, or from another?

Servant

It was not my own; I received it from another.

Oedipus

From whom of the citizens here? From what home?

Servant

1165 For the love of the gods, master, inquire [*historeîn*] no more!

Oedipus

You are lost if I have to question you again.

Servant

It was a child, then, of the house of Laios.

Oedipus

A slave? Or one of his own family [*genos*]?

Servant

Alas! I am on the dreaded brink of speech.

Oedipus

1170 And I of hearing; I must hear nevertheless.

Servant

You must know then, that it was said to be his own child. But your wife within could say best how these matters lie.

Oedipus

How? Did she give it to you?

Servant

Yes, my lord.

Oedipus

For what purpose?

Servant

That I should do away with it.

Oedipus

1175 Her own child, the wretched woman?

Servant

Yes, from fear of the evil prophecies.

Oedipus

What were they?

Servant

The tale ran that he would slay his father.

Oedipus

Why, then, did you give him to this old man?

Servant

Out of pity, master, thinking that he would carry him to another land, from where he himself came. But he saved [*sōzein*] him for the direst woes. 1180 For if you are what this man says, be certain that you were born ill-fated.

Oedipus

Oh, oh! All brought to pass, all true. Light, may I now look on you for the last time—I who have been found to be accursed in birth, 1185 accursed in wedlock, accursed in the shedding of blood.

He rushes into the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

Alas, generations of mortals, how mere a shadow I count your life! Where, where is the mortal who 1190 attains a happiness [*eudaimoniā*] which is more than apparent and doomed to fall away to nothing? The example [*paradeigma*] of your fortune [*daimōn*] warns me—yours, unhappy Oedipus—to call no 1195 earthly creature blessed.

antistrophe 1

For he, O Zeus, shot his shaft with peerless skill, and won the prize of an entirely happy prosperity [*eudaimōn olbos*], having slain the maiden with

crooked talons who sang darkly. 1200 He arose for our land like a tower against death. And from that time, Oedipus, you have been called our king, and have been given *tīmē* supremely, holding sway in great Thebes.

strophe 2

But now whose story is more grievous in men's ears? 1205 Who is a more wretched slave to troubles [*ponoi*] and fierce calamities [*atai*], with all his life reversed? Alas, renowned Oedipus! The same bounteous harbor was sufficient for you, both as child and as father, to make your nuptial couch in. Oh, how can the soil 1210 in which your father sowed, unhappy man, have endured you in silence for so long?

antistrophe 2

Time the all-seeing has found you out against your will, and he judges the monstrous marriage in which 1215 parent and child have long been one. Alas, child of Laios, would that I had never seen you! I wail as one who pours a dirge from his lips. 1220 It was you who gave me new life, to speak directly, and through you darkness has fallen upon my eyes.

A second messenger enters, from the palace.

Second Messenger

You who receive most *tīmē* in this land, what deeds you will hear, what deeds you will behold, what burden of suffering [*penthos*] will be yours, 1225 if, true to your *genos*, you still care for the house of Labdakos. For I think that neither the Istros nor the Phasis could wash this house clean, so many are the evils that it shrouds, or will soon bring to light, wrought not unwittingly, but on purpose. 1230 And those griefs smart the most which are seen to be of our own choice.

Chorus

The troubles which we knew before are far from being easy to bear. Besides them, what do you have to announce?

Second Messenger

This is the shortest tale to tell and hear: 1235 our divine Iocasta is dead.

Chorus

Alas, wretched woman! From what cause [*aitiā*]?

Second Messenger

By her own hand. The worst pain of that which has happened is not for you, since you do not behold the events. Nevertheless, so far as my memory serves, **1240** you will learn that unhappy woman's suffering [*pathos*].

When, frantic, she passed within the vestibule, she rushed straight towards her marriage couch, clutching her hair with the fingers of both hands. Once within the chamber, **1245** she dashed the doors together behind her, then called on the name of Laios, long since a corpse, mindful of that son, born long ago, by whose hand the father was slain, leaving the mother to breed accursed offspring with his own. And she bewailed the wedlock in which, wretched woman, she had given birth to a twofold brood, **1250** husband by husband, children by her child. And how she perished is more than I know. For with a shriek Oedipus burst in, and did not allow us to watch her woe until the end; on him, as he rushed around, our eyes were set. **1255** To and fro he went, asking us to give him a sword, asking where he could find the wife who was no wife, but a mother whose womb had born both him and his children. And in his frenzy a *daimōn* was his guide, for it was none of us mortals who were near. **1260** With a dread cry, as though some one beckoned him on, he sprang at the double doors, forced the bending bolts from the sockets, and rushed into the room. There we beheld the woman hanging by the neck in a twisted noose of swinging cords. **1265** And when he saw her, with a dread deep cry he released the halter by which she hung. And when, on the ground, ¹²⁶⁷ that wretched person was lying there, terrifying were the things to be seen from that point onward. ¹²⁶⁸ For he [= Oedipus] tore from her clothing those gold-worked ¹²⁶⁹ brooches of hers, with which she had ornamented herself, ¹²⁷⁰ and, holding them high with raised hand, he struck his own eyeballs, ¹²⁷¹ uttering words like these: that they should not see him ¹²⁷² either experience such things as

he was experiencing [*paskhein*] or doing [*drân*] such things—¹²⁷³ but, from now on, in total darkness, those persons whom he ought never¹²⁷⁴ to have seen, they could see them now, and, as for those persons whom he needed to know, they would fail to know them now.¹²⁷⁵ Uttering such incantations, many times and not just one time¹²⁷⁶ did he strike with raised hand the spaces where the eyes open and close. And, at each blow the bloody¹²⁷⁷ eyeballs made wet his bearded cheeks, and did not send forth¹²⁷⁸ sluggish drops of gore, but all at once¹²⁷⁹ a dark shower of blood poured down, like hail.¹²⁸⁰ These evil happenings have burst forth, coming out of the two of them together, not from only one of them.¹²⁸¹ No, they were mixed together, for both the man and the woman, these evil happenings.¹²⁸² Their old prosperity [*olbos*] was once¹²⁸³ true blessedness [*olbos*], and justly [*dikaiōs*] so. But now on this day here¹²⁸⁴ there is the groaning of lamentation, there is aberration [*atē*], there is death, there is shame; of all the evil things¹²⁸⁵ that can be named, all of them, not one is missing.

Chorus

And does the sufferer have any respite from evil now?

Second Messenger

He cries for some one to unbar the gates and show to all the Kadmeians his father's slayer, his mother's—the words must not pass my lips—**1290** in order to banish himself from the land and not to remain in the palace under the curse that he himself pronounced. And yet he lacks strength, and one to guide his steps, for the anguish is more than he can bear. He will soon show this to you: look, the bars of the gates are withdrawn,
1295 and soon you will behold a sight which even he who abhors it must pity.

Oedipus enters, dripping with gore.

Chorus

O dread suffering [*pathos*] for men to see, O most dreadful of all that I have set my eyes on! Unhappy one, what madness has come upon you?

1300 What *daimōn*, with a leap of more than mortal range, has made your ill-fated destiny his prey? Alas, alas, you hapless man! I cannot even look on you, though there is much I desire to ask, much I desire to learn, 1305 much that draws my wistful gaze; with such a shuddering do you fill me!

Oedipus

Woe is me! Alas, alas, wretched that I am! Where, where am I carried in my misery? 1310 How is my voice swept abroad on the wings of the air? Oh, *daimōn*, how far you have sprung!

Chorus

To a dread place, dire in men's ears, dire in their sight.

Oedipus

Oh horror of darkness that enfolds me, unspeakable visitant, 1315 resistless, sped by a wind too fair! Oh me! and once again, Oh me! How my soul is pierced by the stab of these goads and by the memory of evils!

Chorus

No wonder that amidst these woes 1320 you endure sorrow [*penthos*] and bear double evils.

Oedipus

Ah, *philos*, you still are steadfast in your care for me, you still have patience to tend the blind man! Ah me! 1325 Your presence is not hidden from me—no, blind though I am, nevertheless I know your voice full well.

Chorus

You who have done [*drân*] such terrible things, how could you bring yourself ¹³²⁸ to extinguish [*marainein*] your eyesight? Who among the superhuman powers [*daimones*] urged you on?

Oedipus

It was Apollo, dear ones [*philoî*], Apollo ¹³³⁰ who brought to fulfillment

[*teleîn*] these evil, evil experiences [*pathos* plural] of mine. ^{1331–1334} But no one with his own hand did the striking. I myself, did that, wretch that I am! Why was I to see, **1335** when eyesight showed me nothing sweet?

Chorus

These things were just as you say.

Oedipus

What, *philoï*, can I behold any more, what can I love, what greeting can touch my ear with joy? Hurry, *philoï*, **1340** lead me from this place, lead me away, the utterly lost, **1345** the thrice-accursed, the mortal most hated by heaven!

Chorus

Wretched alike for your misfortune and for your *noos* of it, would that I had never known you!

Oedipus

Perish the man, whoever he was, that freed me in the past years from the cruel shackle on my feet—a deed bringing no gratitude [*kharis*]! Had I died then, **1355** I would not have been so sore a grief [*akhos*] to my *philoï* and to my own self.

Chorus

I too would have it thus.

Oedipus

In this way I would not have come to shed my father's blood, or been known among men as the spouse of the woman from whom I was born. **1360** Now I am forsaken by the gods, son of a defiled mother, successor to the bed of the man who gave me my own wretched being; **1365** if there is a woe surpassing woe, it has become Oedipus' lot.

Chorus

I know not how I can say that you have counseled well; you would have been better dead than living and blind.

Oedipus

Don't tell me that things have not been best done in this way; **1370** give me counsel no more. If I had sight, I know not with what eyes I could even have looked on my father, when I came to the house of Hādēs, or on my miserable mother, since against both I have committed such crimes as hanging myself could not punish. **1375** But do you think that the sight of children, born as mine were, was lovely for me to look upon? No, no, never lovely to my eyes! No, neither was this city with its towering walls, nor the sacred statues of the *daimones*, since I, thrice wretched that I am— **1380** I, noblest of the sons of Thebes—have doomed myself to know these no more, by my own command that all should reject the impious one, the one whom the gods have revealed as unholy, a member of Laios' own family [*genos*]! After baring such a stain upon myself, **1385** was I to look with steady eyes on these people? Not in the least! Were there a way to choke the fount of hearing, I would not have hesitated to make a fast prison of this wretched frame, so that I should have known neither sight nor sound. **1390** It is sweet that our thought should dwell beyond the sphere of evils. Alas, Kithairon, why did you provide a shelter for me? When I was given to you, why did you not slay me straightaway, that I might never reveal to men whence I am born? Ah, Polybos, ah, Corinth, and you that was called the ancient house of my father, **1395** how fair-seeming was I your nursling, and what evils were festering underneath! Now I am found *kakos*, and born from evils [*kaka*]. You three roads, and you secret glen, you, thicket, and narrow way where three paths met— **1400** you who drank my father's blood from my own hands—do you remember, perhaps, what deeds I have performed in your sight, and then what fresh deeds I went on to do when I came here? O marriage ritual [*telos*], you gave me birth, and when you had brought me forth, **1405** you again bore children to your child, you created an incestuous kinship of fathers, brothers, sons, brides, wives, and mothers – all the foulest deeds that are wrought among men! But it is improper to name what it is improper to do— **1410** hurry, for the love of the gods, hide me somewhere beyond the land, or slay me, or

cast me into the sea, where you will never behold me any longer!
Approach—deign to lay your hands on a wretched man—listen and fear
not: my woes can rest **1415** on no other mortal.

Chorus

But here is Creon in good time to plan and perform that which you
request. He alone is left to guard the land in your place.

Oedipus

Ah me, what word [*epos*] will I speak to him? **1420** What claim to
credence can be shown on my part? For in the past I have proved to be
wholly *kakos* to him.

Creon enters.

Creon

I have not come to mock or reproach you with any past evils.

To the Attendants.

But you, if you no longer respect the children of men, **1425** revere at
least the all-nurturing flame of our lord the Sun, and do not show so
openly such a pollution as this, one which neither earth, nor holy rain,
nor the light can welcome. Take him into the house as quickly as you
can: it best accords with reverence that **1430** relations alone, members of
the family, should see and hear these woes.

Oedipus

By the gods—since you have done a gentle violence to my prediction,
coming as a most noble [*aristos*] man to me, a man most *kakos*—grant
me a favor: I will speak for your own good, not mine.

Creon

1435 And what do you wish so eagerly to get from me?

Oedipus

Cast me out of this land with all speed, to a place where no mortal shall
be found to greet me.

Creon

This I could have done, to be sure, except I craved first to learn from the god all my duty.

Oedipus

1440 But his behest has been set forth in full: to let me perish, the parricide, unholy one that I am.

Creon

Thus it was said. But since we have come to such a pass, it is better to learn clearly what should be done.

Oedipus

Will you, then, seek a response on behalf of such a wretch as I?

Creon

1445 Yes, for even you yourself will now surely put faith in the god.

Oedipus

Yes. And on you I lay this charge, to you I make this entreaty: give to the woman within such burial as you wish—you will properly render the last rites to your own. But never let this city of my father be condemned

1450 to have me dwelling within, as long as I live. No, allow me to live in the hills, where Kithairon, famed as mine, sits, which my mother and father, while they lived, fixed as my appointed tomb, so that I may die according to the decree of those who sought to slay me. 1455 And yet I know this much, that neither sickness nor anything else can destroy me; for I would never have been saved [*sōzein*] from death, except in order to suffer some terrible evil. Let my fate [*moira*] go where it will. Regarding my children, Creon, I beg you to take no care of my sons: 1460 they are men, so they will never lack the means to live wherever they may be. My two girls, poor hapless ones—who never knew my table spread separately, or lacked their father's presence, but always had a share of all that reached my hands— 1465 I implore you to take care of them. And, if you can, allow me to touch them with my hands, and to indulge my

grief for these woes. Grant it, lord, grant it, noble in birth. Ah, if I could but once touch them with my hands, I would think that I had them
1470 just as when I had sight.

Antigone and Ismene are led in.

What's this? By the gods, can it be my loved ones that I hear sobbing?
Can Creon have taken pity on me and sent my children, my darlings?
1475 Am I right?

Creon

You are. I have brought this about, for I knew the joy which you have long had from them—the joy you now have.

Oedipus

Bless you, and for this errand may a *daimōn* prove a kinder guardian to you than it has to me. 1480 My children, where are you? Come, here, here to the hands of the one whose mother was your own, the hands that have made your father's once bright eyes to be such orbs as these – he who, seeing nothing, inquiring [*historeîn*] not at all, 1485 became your father by her from whom he was born! For you also do I weep, though I cannot see you, when I think of the bitter life that men will make you live in days to come. To what company of the citizens will you go, to what festival, 1490 from which you will not return home in tears, instead of participating [being a *theōros*] in the festivities? But when you reach a ripe age for marriage, who shall he be, who shall be the man, my daughters, to hazard taking upon himself the reproaches 1495 that will certainly be baneful to my offspring and yours? What misery is lacking? Your father killed his own father, and begot you from the same place he himself was born! 1500 Such are the taunts that will be cast at you. And who then will you wed? The man does not live—no, it cannot be, my children, but you will wither in barren maidenhood. Son of Menoikeus, hear me: since you are the only father left to them—we, their parents, are both gone— 1505 do not allow them to wander poor and unwed, for they are your own relations, and do not abase them to

the level of my woes. But pity them, seeing them deprived of everything at such an age, except for you. 1510 Promise, noble man, and touch them with your hand. To you, children, I would have given much advice [*parainesis*], if your *phrenes* were mature. But now pray that you may live where occasion allows, and that the life which is your lot may be happier than your father's.

Creon

1515 Your grief has had a sufficient scope; pass into the house.

Oedipus

I must obey, though I do it in no way gladly.

Creon

Yes, for all things are good at the right time.

Oedipus

Do you know on what terms I will go?

Creon

You will tell me, and then I will know when I have heard them.

Oedipus

See that you send me to dwell outside this land.

Creon

You ask for what the god must give.

Oedipus

But to the gods I have become most hateful.

Creon

Then you will quickly get your wish.

Oedipus

So you consent?

Creon

It is not my way to say idly what I do not mean.

Oedipus

1520 Then it is time to lead me away.

Creon

Come, then, but let your children go.

Oedipus

No, do not take them from me!

Creon

Do not wish to be master in all things: the mastery which you did attain has not followed you through life.

They all exit into the palace.

Chorus

Inhabitants of our native Thebes, behold, this is Oedipus, 1525 who knew the riddles [*ainigma* pl.] of great renown [*kleos*], and was a most mighty man. What citizen did not gaze on his fortune with envy? See into what a stormy sea of troubles he has come! Therefore, while our eyes wait to see the day of *telos*, we must call no mortal blessed [*olbios*] until 1530 he has crossed life's border without having suffered [*paskhein*] any pain.

2020-07-17

Hippolytus

By Euripides

Translated by E. P. Coleridge

Revised by Mary Jane Rein

Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

Before the royal palace at Trozen. A statue of Aphrodite stands on one side; a statue of Artemis on the other. The goddess Aphrodite appears alone.

Aphrodite

Powerful among mortals am I and not without reputation, I am called the goddess Kypris even in heaven. And those who dwell within the limits of the *pontos* and the bounds of Atlas 5 and who behold the light of the sun, whoever of those respects my power, to them I pay special honor; but I bring to ruin whoever has little regard for my greatness. For this feeling exists by nature even among the gods: they find pleasure when they are given *tīmē* by humans. I will soon prove the truth [*alētheia*] of my words [*mūthoi*]. 10 For the son of Theseus and an Amazon, Hippolytus, who was raised by Pittheus, alone among the citizens of Trozen, says that I am the most *kakē* of the *daimones*. He scorns the nuptial bed and takes no notice of marriage, 15 but to Artemis, the sister of Phoebus and daughter of Zeus, he gives *tīmē* and believes that she is the greatest of the *daimones*. Through the green wood he always joins with his virgin goddess and clears wild animals from the land with the help of his swift hounds, since he has come upon company which is beyond mortal. 20 But I don't begrudge him these things just now, since what concern are they to me? However, for the errors he has committed against me I will have vengeance on Hippolytus on this very day, and since I accomplished many things some time ago I don't need to go to much effort [*ponos*]. 24 When he [= Hippolytus] went, once upon a time, from the palace of Pittheus [in Trozen] 25 [to the territory of Athens] for the vision and rituals [*telos* plural] of the

revered Mysteries [*mustērion* plural], ²⁶ to the land of Pandion [= to Athens], then it was that the noble wife of the father [of Hippolytus] ²⁷ saw him, yes, Phaedra saw him, and she was possessed in her heart ²⁸ by a passionate love [*erōs*] that was terrifying—all because of the plans I planned. ²⁹ And before she [= Phaedra] came to this land of Trozen, ³⁰ she established—on a side of the Rock of Pallas [= Athena], from where one could see a view ³¹ of this land [of Trozen] here, [she established]—a shrine [*nāos*] of Kypris [= Aphrodite], ³² since she loved [*erân*] a love [*erōs*], a passionate love, a love alien to the population [*ek-dēmos*]. In compensation for [*epi*] Hippolytus ³³—she gave that name, which will last for all time to come—that is why, she said, the goddess has been installed there: “Our Lady of Horses Unbridled [*hippo-luto-*].” But now Theseus has left the Kekropian land, **35** fleeing the pollution for the blood of the sons of Pallas, and he has sailed here with his wife since he consented to a yearlong exile abroad. Here she mourns and is struck by pangs of passion and, wretched, she perishes in silence, **40** and none of her servants shares the knowledge of her affliction. But her secret passion ought not to end up in this way, for I will point out the matter to Theseus and everything will become clear. And this young man, who is hostile to me, his own father will kill with the curse which Poseidon, **45** the lord of the sea [*pontos*], granted as a prize to Theseus, that he might pray three times to the god and not pray in vain; but Phaedra shall perish, although with good *kleos*, since I shall not give *tīmē* to her misery before I take such *dikē* against my enemies **50** as to have satisfaction. But now I see Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, on his way here straight from the labors of the hunt; I will get out of the way. A great reveling band [*kōmos*] of his attendants are following behind **55** and singing joyously with him, and they give *tīmē* to the goddess Artemis with hymns. He does not know that the gates of Hādēs are standing open, and that he is looking on his final daylight.

Aphrodite vanishes. Hippolytus and his hunting attendants enter, singing. They move to the altar of Artemis.

Hippolytus

Come here, come singing to the heavenly daughter of Zeus, 60 Artemis, whose concern we are.

Hippolytus and Attendants

Lady, most revered lady, daughter of Zeus, welcome, Artemis, welcome, 65 daughter of Leto and Zeus, you who are the most beautiful by far among the virgins, and in mighty heaven you dwell in the richly-gilded palace of Zeus. 70 Welcome most beautiful, most beautiful throughout Olympus!

Hippolytus

⁷³ For you this plaited garland [*stephanos*] culled from an unspoiled ⁷⁴ meadow [*leimōn*], O my lady [= Artemis], do I [= Hippolytus] bring, arranging [*kosmeîn*] it properly. ⁷⁵ It is from a place where it is not fit for the shepherd to pasture his flocks, ⁷⁶ nor has iron yet come there, but it is unspoiled, ⁷⁷ this meadow [*leimōn*], and the bee in springtime goes through and through. ⁷⁸ The goddess named Modesty [*Aidōs*] tends this place with pure river water, ⁷⁹ and those who do not have to be taught but by their own nature [*phusis*] ⁸⁰ are endowed with moderation [*sōphrosunē*] always in all things, ⁸¹ they are allowed by divine sanction to pick flowers there, but it is not sanctioned [*themis*] for those who are bad. So, my lady near and dear [*philē*], for your golden locks of hair ⁸³ accept this headband from my properly worshipful hand. ⁸⁴ For I alone among mortals have this privilege [*geras*]: ⁸⁵ I keep company with you and I exchange words with you, ⁸⁶ hearing your voice though not looking you in the eye. ⁸⁷ That is the same way I should go round the turning post, heading toward the end [*telos*] of life just as I began it.

Attendant [*therapōn*]

Lord, since we ought to call upon the gods as our lords, would you accept some well-meant advice from me?

Hippolytus

90 Surely, for otherwise I should not appear to be *sophos*.

Attendant

Do you know the law [*nomos*] which is established among mortals?

Hippolytus

I don't know; but what are you getting at?

Attendant

The law is to hate what is proud and not *philon* to all.

Hippolytus

And rightly, too, for is not the proud among mortals oppressive?

Attendant

95 But there is a certain grace [*kharis*] in courtesy?

Hippolytus

Very much, and also profit with little cost.

Attendant

Do you think the same holds among the gods as well?

Hippolytus

I suppose so, since we mortals draw our laws [*nomoi*] from the gods.

Attendant

Why then do you neglect to address a proud *daimōn*?

Hippolytus

100 Whom do you mean? Watch that your tongue doesn't trip.

Attendant

Kypris herself, who is stationed above your gates.

Hippolytus

I greet her from afar, since I am pure.

Attendant

Yet she is a holy goddess far renowned [*epi-sēmos*] on earth.

Hippolytus

No god who is miraculous by night pleases me.

Attendant

105 My son, we ought to avail ourselves of the *tīmai* which *daimones* confer.

Hippolytus

Each, among gods and humans alike, has his own concern.

Attendant

I wish you happiness [*eudaimonia*] and as much *noos* as you need.

Hippolytus

Go in, attendants, and within the house prepare food, since after the hunt 110 a full table is always a delight. You ought also to rub down the horses, so that I may yoke them to the chariot and give them proper exercise when I have had my fill, and to your goddess Kypris I bid a long farewell.

Hippolytus goes into the palace, followed by all the attendants except the leader, who prays before the statue of Aphrodite.

Attendant

Since we ought not to imitate the young, 115 with sober mind and as is fitting for a slave to speak, I will offer up my prayer to your image, mistress Kypris. You should have forgiveness for all, even for one who in the eager spirit of youth utters vain words against you; pretend that you don't hear him, 120 since the gods must be more *sophoi* than mortals.

He goes into the palace. The chorus of Trozenian women enter.

Chorus

strophe 1

^{121–124} There is a rock that is said to drip fresh water from the stream of Okeanos, sending forth from the crags above a steady flow for us to scoop up in our jars. ¹²⁵ It was there that my friend [*philē*] was washing ¹²⁶ purple robes ¹²⁷ in the flowing stream, ¹²⁸ washing them, and then, on the face of a rock warmed ¹²⁹ by the kindly sunlight did she throw them. From there ¹³⁰ the rumor first came to me about the lady of the house,

antistrophe 1

^{131–134} how she is wasting away on her sickbed, keeping herself indoors, and a thin veil shadows her blond head. **135** This is the third day, I hear, that her lips have not touched food, and she keeps her body pure from the grain of Demeter, **140** eager to hide her sorrow [*penthos*] and to put into the cheerless harbor of death.

strophe 2

Dear Phaedra, are you possessed either by Pan or Hekatē, or do you wander because of the devoted Korybantes or the mountain mother? **145** Have you committed an error offending Artemis of Diktyнна, with her wild beasts, and are wasting for neglect of her unoffered sacrifices? For she ranges through the sea, as well as over the islands of the sea, **150** upon the watery eddies of the brine.

antistrophe 2

Or your husband, the well-born ruler of the sons of Erekhtheus, does someone in the palace cherish him in a union hidden from your bed? **155** Or has someone sailing from Crete reached the harbor most welcome to sailors, bringing a report to the queen, and in distress over her sufferings [*pathos* pl.] **160** her *psūkhē* is tied down to her bed?

epode

¹⁶¹ Often, in women's badly modulated [*dus-tropos*] ¹⁶² tuning [*harmonia*], ¹⁶³ a bad and wretched sort of helplessness [*amēkhaniā*] dwells, ¹⁶⁴ arising both from the pains of labor and from lack of sensibility [*aphrosunē*]. ¹⁶⁵ Right through my womb I once felt a rush of this ¹⁶⁶ burst of wind [*aurā*] here, and, calling upon the one who helps in the labor of childbirth, the one who is the sky-dweller, ¹⁶⁷ the one who

has power over the arrows, I shouted out her name, ¹⁶⁸ Artemis, and she, very much sought after, always ¹⁶⁹ comes to me, if the gods are willing. ¹⁷⁰ But look, the aged Nurse before the palace doors ¹⁷¹ is bringing this one [Phaedra] from the palace, ¹⁷² and on her [= Phaedra's] brow a gloomy cloud gathers. ¹⁷³ To know what on earth is happening—my soul [psūkhē] passionately desires [erāsthai] to know this. ¹⁷⁴ Why has she become completely undone? ¹⁷⁵ Why has the complexion of the queen turned so strangely pale?

The Nurse and Phaedra enter from the palace.

Nurse

The woes and the hateful illnesses of mortals! What shall I do? What not do? Here is your sunlight, here the bright air. Now outside of the palace **180** is your sickbed, for your every word was to come here, but soon enough you will be eager for your bedroom again, since, taking pleasure in nothing, you will quickly become helpless. Whatever is present does not please you, but that which is absent you think more dear. **185** It is better to be ill than to care for the ill, for one is a single trouble, but to the other is attached both heartsickness and labor [ponos] with one's hands. The whole of human life is full of pain, **190** and there is no rest from trouble [ponoi]. But if there is anything more *philon* than life, darkness hides it in the clouds in its embrace, and we show ourselves to be wretchedly in love with that thing which glistens on the earth, **195** because of inexperience of any other life, and the things which lie below the earth are unrevealed. On tales [mūthoi] we vainly drift.

Phaedra

Lift my body, keep my head up. ¹⁹⁹ The fastenings [sun-desma] of my dear [phila] limbs [melea] have come apart [le-lū-tai]. ²⁰⁰ Hold on to my shapely arms, attendants. ²⁰¹ My hair all done up on top of my head is a heavy load to bear. ²⁰² Take out my hair pinnings, let the curls of my hair cascade over my shoulders.

Nurse

Be brave, child, do not toss your body so harshly; ²⁰⁵ you will bear your sickness more easily in peace [*hēsukhiā*] and with noble will. It is necessary for mortals to suffer.

Phaedra

²⁰⁸ I only wish I could, from a dewy spring, ²⁰⁹ scoop up a drink of pure water, ²¹⁰ and, lying down beneath the poplars in a grassy ²¹¹ meadow [*leimōn*], I could find relief.

Nurse

My child, what are you saying? Will you not say such things in public, casting out words borne on madness?

Phaedra

²¹⁵ Take me to the mountains—I will go to the woods, ²¹⁶ to the pine trees, where the beast-killing ²¹⁷ hounds track their prey, ²¹⁸ getting closer and closer to the dappled deer. ²¹⁹ I swear by the gods, I have a passionate desire [*erâsthai*] to give a hunter's shout to the hounds, ²²⁰ and, with my blond hair and all, to throw ²²¹ a Thessalian javelin, holding the barbed ²²² dart in my hand.

Nurse

²²³ Why on earth, my child, are you sick at heart about these things? ²²⁴ Why is the hunt your concern [*meletē*]? ²²⁵ And why do you feel a passionate desire [*erâsthai*] for streams flowing from craggy heights ²²⁶ when nearby, next to these towers, there is a moist ²²⁷ hillside with a fountain? You could get your drink from here.

Phaedra

²²⁸ My lady Artemis! You who preside over the lagoon by the sea! ²²⁹ You are where the place is for exercising, and it thunders with horses' hooves! ²³⁰ Oh, if only I could be there, on your grounds, ²³¹ masterfully driving Venetian horses!

Nurse

²³² Why in your madness have you hurled out of your mouth this wording here? ²³³ One moment you were going up the mountain to hunt ²³⁴ – you were getting all set, in your longing [*pothos*], to do that, and then, the next moment, you were heading for the beach ²³⁵ sheltered from the splashing waves, in your passionate desire [*erâsthai*] for the horses. ²³⁶ These things are worth a lot of consultation with seers: ²³⁷ which one of the gods is steering you off course ²³⁸ and deflects your thinking [*phrenes*], child?

Phaedra

Wretched me, what have I done? **240** Where have I strayed from good sense? I have gone mad and fallen by derangement [*atē*] from a *daimōn*. Woe is me! Nurse, cover my head again; I feel shame [*aidōs*] for what I have said. **245** Hide me! Tears fall from my eyes, and for shame my face is turned away. Although it is painful to come to one's senses, to be mad is evil; dying in ignorance rules.

Nurse

250 I cover you, but when will death cover my body? Long life teaches me much, that mortals ought to pledge themselves to moderate ties of *philia*, **255** and not that which goes to the core of the *psūkhē*, easy to be loosed from one's *phrenes*, either to be pushed away or drawn tight, since for one *psūkhē* to grieve for two is a heavy burden, **260** just as I feel pain for her. To pursue a strict course in life, men say, causes disappointment more than pleasure and is more at odds with health. Therefore I recommend “Nothing in excess” more than “Too much.” **265** And wise people [*sophoi*] will agree with me.

Chorus

Old woman, faithful nurse of our queen, we see the sorry plight of Phaedra, but her distress is a thing without a clue [*sēma*] to us; **270** we would like to learn and hear of it from you.

Nurse

I don't know, although I question her, for she does not want to say.

Chorus

Not even what the source of these sorrows are?

Nurse

The answer is the same, since she is silent on all things.

Chorus

How weak and wasted her body is.

Nurse

275 Why not? It is the third day she has gone without food.

Chorus

Is it because of some derangement [*atē*], or is she trying to die?

Nurse

I don't know, but surely fasting will lead to the end of her life.

Chorus

It is remarkable that this satisfies her husband.

Nurse

She hides her sorrow from him and says that she is not ill.

Chorus

280 Can he not judge from seeing her face?

Nurse

He happens to be away from this country now.

Chorus

Why not press her, in an effort to learn her disease and the straying of her *phrenes*?

Nurse

I have tried everything and accomplished nothing. 285 Yet not even now

will I relax my zeal, so that if you stay, you too will witness how devoted I am by nature to an unhappy mistress. Come, *philē* child, let us both forget our former words, and you be more mild, 290 smoothing your sullen brow and your current of thought, and I, if in some way I have not understood you, will change my way and will find some better course. If you are sick with ills that cannot be named, there are women here to set your sickness straight. 295 But if your trouble can be made known to males, speak, so that it can be told to doctors. Come then, why so silent? You ought not to remain quiet, child, but scold me, if I say something amiss, or agree if these things are spoken well. 300 One word, one look this way. Ah me! Women, we toil at these labors [*ponos*] in vain, we are as far away as ever, for she was not softened by my arguments before, and now she is not persuaded either. Be more stubborn than the sea, 305 but know that if you die you are a traitor to your sons, for they will not have a share of their father's estate. By the horse-riding Amazon queen, who bore a son to be master to yours, a bastard, though he believes himself to be noble, you know him well: Hippolytus.

Phaedra

Oh! Oh!

Nurse

310 Does this touch you?

Phaedra

You destroy me, Nurse. By the gods, I beg you not to mention this man's name again.

Nurse

There now. You are yourself, but although sensible, you still do not wish to help your children and save your life.

Phaedra

315 I love my children, but I am tossed by another storm of fate.

Nurse

Child, are your hands pure of bloodshed?

Phaedra

My hands are pure, it is my *phrenes* that are polluted.

Nurse

Through a wrong done by some enemy [*ekhthros*]?

Phaedra

One who is *philos* destroys me, one unwilling as myself.

Nurse

320 Has Theseus wronged you somehow?

Phaedra

Never may I be seen doing him harm.

Nurse

Then what strange thing is it that drives you to your death?

Phaedra

Leave me alone to make my mistakes, since my error is not against you.

Nurse

Never willingly. But if I fail, it will be at your door.

Phaedra

325 What are you doing? Are you trying force in clasping my hand?

Nurse

Yes, and also your knees, nor will I loose my hold.

Phaedra

Alas, for you these things would also be evil, if you should learn them.

Nurse

What is a greater evil for me than failing to win you?

Phaedra

You would perish. But this matter brings me *tīmē*.

Nurse

330 Even so you conceal it, though what I beg to know is something good.

Phaedra

I do, since out of disgraceful things I am devising noble [*esthla*].

Nurse

By speaking of it, then you would appear with even more *tīmē*.

Phaedra

Go away, by the gods, and let go of my hand.

Nurse

I will not, since the gift which is mine you deny.

Phaedra

335 I will give it, since I feel respect [*aidōs*] for your reverent hand.

Nurse

From now on I will be quiet, and instead it will be for you to speak.

Phaedra

O, wretched mother, what a love was yours!

Nurse

Her love for the bull,² child, is that what you mean?

Phaedra

And you, my wretched sister, wife of Dionysus!³

Nurse

340 Child, what troubles you? Why do you speak ill of your family?

Phaedra

I am third to suffer, and in the same way I am also undone.

Nurse

I am amazed by you, where will this history lead?

Phaedra

Since long ago we are unfortunate, it is not new.

Nurse

I have learned nothing more of what I want to hear.

Phaedra

345 Ah, would that you could say what I have to tell!

Nurse

I am no prophet to judge for sure what is unclear.

Phaedra

What is it they mean when they talk of people being in love?

Nurse

At once the sweetest and bitterest thing, my child.

Phaedra

I will only find the latter half.

Nurse

350 What are you saying, my child? Are you in love with some man?

Phaedra

The Amazon's son, whoever he may be.

Nurse

Hippolytus, you mean?

Phaedra

It was you, not I, that said his name.

Nurse

Ah me! What are you saying, my child? You destroy me. Women, this is

unbearable, I cannot bear to live. 355 Hateful is the day, hateful the light I see. I give up this body, I will cast it off, and in dying I will cease from living. Farewell, I am no longer. Although unwilling, those who are balanced [*sōphrones*] have passions for evils. Kypris is no goddess, 360 but something far greater than a god, for she has been the ruin of this woman, and of me, and of this whole house.

Chorus

O, did you take note, did you hear our queen [*turannos*] crying out her unhappy and unheard-of suffering? Would that I might perish, *philē*, 365 before I reach your state of mind! O horrible woe for these miseries, and woe for the troubles [*ponoi*] on which mortals feed! You are destroyed, now that you have brought your evils to light. What awaits you during the hours of this day? 370 Some strange event will come to pass in this house. There is no longer any clue [*sēma*] where your fortunes from Kypris will set, unhappy daughter of Crete.

Phaedra

Women of Trozen, who dwell here in the extreme front of Pelops' land, 375 often before now in the long hours of the night I used to wonder why the life of mortals is spoiled. And it seems to me that it is not by the mind's nature that they do wrong, for there are many who have good sense. We must view it in this light: 380 we understand and we can discern what is right, but we don't always accomplish it, some from sloth, others from preferring pleasure of some kind or other to duty. There are many pleasures in life, long talks and leisure, a base enjoyment, 385 and *aidōs*, of which there are two kinds: one not evil, the other a curse to families. But if the proper time for each were clearly known, then these two would not have the same letters. So then, since I have made up my mind on these points, I am not about to change it because of some drug, 390 to reach a contrary point of view. And I will tell you, too, the way my judgment went. When love wounded me, I considered how I might bear it best. So from that day on, I began to hide in silence what I suffered. 395 For there is no trusting the tongue, or the alien

thoughts of men who know how to admonish yet have countless miseries of their own. Next I strove to bear my folly nobly in an effort to master it by self-control [*sōphroneîn*]. 400 Finally when I failed by these means to subdue Kypris, it seemed best to die, and none could speak against my plan. For just as I would not have my good acts escape notice, so I would not have many to witness the disgraceful ones. 405 I knew the deed and the malady were of poor *kleos*, and in addition to these things I knew that I was a woman, an object of hate to all. Curses on the wife, whoever was the first to shame her marriage bed with other men. It was from noble families 410 that all this evil began to spread among women. For when shameful things appear right to those who are noble [*esthloi*], then surely it seems good to the *kakoi* as well. I hate those women who are moderate [*sōphrones*] when they talk, while in secret they carry on reckless deeds. 415 How then, lady Kypris, my mistress, do these women look their husbands in the face without fearing that the night, their accomplice, or the walls of the house may find a voice? It is this thing which causes me to die, *philai*, 420 so that I may never be found to disgrace my husband nor the children I bore. But let them grow up, free to speak and act, and let them dwell in glorious Athens, with good *kleos* from their mother. It would enslave a man, even one who was stouthearted, 425 if he should learn the evils of his mother or father. This alone they say can stand to compete in life: a good and just mind, in whomever these are found. For time reveals the *kakoi* among men, just as a mirror set before a young maid; 430 among these may I never be seen.

Chorus

Ah, how good equilibrium [*sōphron*] is, wherever it is found, which bears as fruit noble repute among mortals.

Nurse

Mistress, your misfortune, just now told, struck me at first with dreadful fear, 435 but now I consider that I was rash; among mortals second thoughts are somehow more *sophoi*. What you have suffered is not

unusual nor unreasonable; the passion of Kypris has struck you. You are in love, what wonder? So are many more. **440** Do you then because of love destroy your *psūkhē*? There is little gain then for those who are in love and those yet to love, if they must die. For Kypris in her might is more than men can bear; peacefully she seeks those who are yielding, **445** but when she finds someone arrogant and proud, she takes him and insults him unbelievably. Her path is in the sky and on the ocean's surges; from her all nature springs. She is the one who sows the seeds of love and grants desire, **450** to which all of us on earth owe our being. Those who have writings of old, or who are themselves inspired by the Muses, know how Zeus once was in love with Semele, **455** and they know how once the beautiful, shining goddess of Dawn stole Kephalos to heaven because of love; and yet in heaven they still dwell and so do not avoid the god of love; they are content, I imagine, to yield to their misfortune. But you, why not yield? It ought to have been on special terms **460** that your father begat you, or with different gods for masters, if you will not content yourself with these laws. How many sensible people do you think, when they see their marriage-bed sullied, pretend they do not see? How many fathers, when their sons have gone astray, **465** assist them in love? Among the *sophoi*, unattractive things go unnoticed. Mortals should not excessively perfect their lives, for not even the roof with which a house is covered would you complete precisely. **470** Now since you have fallen into such a plight, how can you best escape it? If you have more good than misery, being human, you should be doing fairly well. Cease, *philē* child, from your evil thoughts. Cease having *hubris*, for it is nothing else but *hubris*, **475** your wish to be better than the *daimones*. Face your love, this is the god's will. Though you are ailing, somehow turn your ill to good. There are charms and spells which soothe, some cure for your disease will be found, **480** but men would surely seek it out for a long time unless we women find the means.

Chorus

Phaedra, although she speaks more aptly in your present misfortune, still

I praise [*aineîn*] you; yet this praise [*ainos*] may sound more harsh to you
485 and more painful than her advice.

Phaedra

This is what destroys well-run cities and the homes of men, words too well put; we should not speak to please the ear but to find what leads to good *kleos*.

Nurse

490 Why do you make solemn speeches? It is not well-worded phrases that you need, but a man. Immediately he must learn and he should be frankly told. If you were not in such a crisis, or were in balance [*sōphrōn*], 495 never for the sake of the bed and its pleasures would I have urged you on this course; but now there is a great *agōn* to save your life, so this is not blameworthy.

Phaedra

What you propose evokes awe! Keep quiet and never utter those disgraceful words again.

Nurse

500 Disgraceful, maybe, but better for you than fine words. Better this deed, if it will save your life, than a mere name, which you take pride in and die for.

Phaedra

Oh, I beseech you by the gods! You speak well, but what you say is disgraceful. Go no further, since through my desire I am made ready in my *psūkhē*, 505 and if you should use specious words for these disgraceful matters, I will give way to the very thing I am trying to escape.

Nurse

If this is how it seems to you, it is best not to have erred; but as it is, hear me, for that is second best. I have in the house charms to soothe your love; 510 I only just now thought of it. These will cure you of your

malady, on no disgraceful terms and with your *phrenes* unhurt, if you will not be cowardly [*kakē*]. But from the one desired it is necessary to take some token, either a lock of hair or piece of clothing, 515 and from the two to unite them as one pleasure [*kharis*].

Phaedra

Is your drug a salve or a potion?

Nurse

I cannot tell; be content, my child, to profit by it and ask no questions.

Phaedra

I am afraid that you will prove too *sophē* for me.

Nurse

You would be afraid of anything. But what scares you?

Phaedra

520 That you may indicate something to Theseus' son.

Nurse

Leave it to me child, I will set everything aright.

Lady Kypris, my mistress, you alone be my accomplice. For the rest of my purpose it will be enough to speak to my *philoī* inside.

The Nurse goes into the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

525 Love, Love, who drips desire upon the eyes, and brings sweet grace [*kharis*] into the *psūkhē* against whom he camps, never appear to me with evil, nor come without measure. 530 Neither fire nor meteor hurls a mightier bolt than Aphrodite's shaft shot by the hands of Love, the child of Zeus.

antistrophe 1

535 In vain by the banks of Alpheus, in vain within the Pythian shrines
of Phoebus, does Hellas heap up slaughtered steers, while we neglect to
worship Love, the *turannos* of men, 540 who holds the key to
Aphrodite's sweetest chamber, but when he comes, he lays waste to
mortals and casts them through all sorts of misfortune.

strophe 2

545 There was that maiden in Oikhalia, a filly unwed, a husbandless
virgin still, whom, unyoking from Eurytos' house 550 like some
running Naiad or Bacchant, amidst blood and smoke and murderous
marital vows, Kypris gave as bride to Hēraklēs, the son of Alkmene.⁴
What a wretched wedding hymn!

antistrophe 2

555 O sacred walls of Thebes, O mouth of the fountain of Dirke, you
could testify what course Kypris follows. 560 For in an engulfing
lightning-bolt she lay the mother of twice-born Dionysus to rest in
murderous death, though she was still a bride. The dread goddess
inspires all things, flying about like a bee.

Phaedra stands listening at the door of the palace.

Phaedra

565 Be quiet, women, I am undone.

Chorus

What is it, Phaedra, that scares you within the house?

Phaedra

Hold still, let me hear what they are saying inside.

Chorus

I am quiet. This is surely the prelude to evil.

Phaedra

570 Oh my! How awful are my sufferings [*pathos*]!

Chorus

What cry do you make? What are you shouting? Say what frightens you, woman, overwhelming your *phrenes*.

Phaedra

575 I am destroyed. Stand here at the door and listen to the noise spreading through the house.

Chorus

You are by the door, it is for you to note the talk conveyed within the house. 580 Then tell me, tell me what evil has arisen.

Phaedra

It is the son of the horse-loving Amazon, Hippolytus, uttering terrible, evil words on my servant.

Chorus

585 I hear the cry, but I cannot tell clearly; it is through the door that the sound reached you.

Phaedra

Yes, yes, he plainly calls her a matchmaker of evil, 590 and says that she betrays her master's bed.

Chorus

Woe is me for these evils! You are betrayed, *philē*. What counsel will I give you? Your secrets have been revealed, you are utterly destroyed. 595 Alas, betrayed by a *philos*!

Phaedra

She has destroyed me in speaking of my misfortune; it was meant kindly, since she was trying to cure my illness, but it was not right.

Chorus

What now? What will you do, having suffered [*paskhein*] this state of helplessness [*amēkhania*]?

Phaedra

I know but one way: to die as soon as possible, 600 this is the only cure for my present woes.

Hippolytus bursts out of the palace, followed closely by the nurse.

Hippolytus

O mother earth and sun's expanse! What words unfit for speech I have heard!

Nurse

Be quiet, child, before someone hears your shouting.

Hippolytus

I cannot hear such awful words and keep quiet.

Nurse

605 I implore you by your strong right arm.

Hippolytus

Let go of my hand and don't touch my clothes!

Nurse

By your knees I beg you, don't destroy me utterly.

Hippolytus

Why, if, as you say, you have said nothing wrong?

Nurse

This tale [*mūthos*], child, was not for everyone to hear.

Hippolytus

610 Surely fair words are fairer when told to many.

Nurse

You would not dishonor your oath.

Hippolytus

My tongue did swear an oath, but not my *phrenes*.

Nurse

Child, what will you do? Destroy your *philoi*?

Hippolytus

No one without *dikē* is *philos* to me.

Nurse

615 Forgive, child; to err is human nature.

Hippolytus

Zeus, why did you set women to dwell in the light of the sun to be a false evil to the human race? If you wished to multiply the mortal race [*genos*], you need not accomplish it by means of women, 620 but instead in your temples mortals should lay down bronze or silver or a sum of gold to buy their sons, each man in proportion to his wealth, and so in independence they would live at home, free from women. 625 It is clear from the following how great an evil a woman is: the very father who begot and nurtured her then pays a dowry and settles her elsewhere to be rid of the trouble. 630 Then the husband who takes the plant of doom [*atē*] into his house happily lavishes a fine display on his sorry idol and struggles to keep her in dresses, poor fellow, squandering his house's wealth [*olbos*]. 635 It is easiest for him to have a cipher as a wife, except that a simple woman set up in a house is no benefit. 640 But it is the *sophē* woman I hate, for I would not have in my house a woman who knew more than she need, since Kypris breeds more mischief-making in *sophai* women, while the resourceless [*amēkhanos*] woman is kept from folly by her shallow intelligence. 645 It ought to be that servants have no access to women; wild beasts should live with them, who bite, not talk, so that they could not speak to anyone, nor be answered back by them. But as it is, evil women [*kakai*] plot evils within the house, 650 and their servants broadcast it outside. So you, *kakē*, have come to invite me to my father's untouchable bed. I will wash away your words in running streams, dashing the water in my ears. How could I be so *kakos*, 655 when just hearing of it I feel myself polluted? Rest assured, woman, that

it is my piety alone which saves you. For if I had not been taken unawares by oaths before the gods, I would not have been able to keep myself from telling all to my father. Now I will keep away from the house while Theseus is abroad, 660 and I will keep my tongue quiet. But when my father returns I will watch how you face him, both you and your mistress. May you perish! I can never satisfy my hatred for women, 665 even though some say that I always speak of it, for somehow they are always *kakai*. Either let someone prove them balanced [*sōphrones*], or let me still trample on them forever.

Hippolytus exits.

Phaedra

Oh, the cruel, unhappy fate of women! 670 What craft, what argument have we to untie the knot of a word, when we have slipped? I have met with *dikē*. O earth and light of day, how can I escape fate? How will I conceal my misfortunes, *philai*? 675 What god will appear to help me, what mortal will take my part or help me in unrighteousness? The present *pathos* moves across my life, and there is no escape. I am the most wretched of all women.

Chorus

680 Alas, it is done, your servant's schemes have gone awry, mistress, and it bodes poorly.

Phaedra

Worst in all ways, destroyer of your *philo*i, what you have done to me! May Zeus, my ancestor, strike you with his bolt and uproot you utterly! 685 Didn't I tell you, foreseeing your intent [*phrenes*], to keep quiet on the very matter which is now bringing me the name of *kakē*? But you would not be still, and thus I will not be buried with good *kleos*. Now I need to plan anew. In the keenness of his fury, 690 he will tell his father of my error and the aged Pittheus of my misfortune, and fill the whole land with stories to my great disgrace. May you perish, and whoever else is eager to do service for unwilling *philo*i in ways not good!

Nurse

695 Mistress, you may blame my bad works, for sorrow's sting
overpowers your judgment. Yet I can answer you in the face of this, if
you will accept what I have to say. I raised you and have good *noos* for
you, but in seeking to find a cure for your illness I found what I did not
want. 700 Had I succeeded, I would have been considered *sophē*; for the
credit we get for *phrenes* is measured by our success.

Phaedra

Are these things just [*dikaia*] or sufficient—to wound me and then come
to terms in words?

Nurse

We dwell on this too long. I did not show moderation [*sōphrosunē*], 705
but it is still possible to be saved [*sōzein*] from your troubles, my child.

Phaedra

Be *euphēmos*!⁵ Even before you did not advise me well, and your
attempted scheme was evil. Now get out of my way and see to your
own affairs. I will take care of myself well enough.

The nurse goes into the palace.

710 But you, noble daughters of Trozen, promise me what I ask: hide in
silence what you have heard today.

Chorus

I swear, by holy Artemis, never to bring your woes to the light of day.

Phaedra

715 You have spoken well. But I, with all my thought, have only one
remedy for my misfortune, so that I can give a life of *kleos* to my
children and find myself some help as matters stand. I will never bring
shame on my Cretan home, 720 nor will I, to save one poor *psūkhē*, face
Theseus after my disgrace.

Chorus

What irreparable evil are you planning?

Phaedra

To die—but in what way I must still consider.

Chorus

Don't speak ill-omened words.

Phaedra

You also advise me well. **725** Today I will gladden Kypriis, my destroyer, by giving up my *psūkhē*, and so I will be vanquished by bitter love. But in dying I will be a misery to someone else, **730** that he may learn not to exult at my misfortunes; when he comes to share my suffering, he will learn to be moderate [*sōphrōn*].

Phaedra enters the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

⁷³² Oh if only I could be down under the steep heights in deep cavernous spaces, ⁷³³ where I could become a winged bird ⁷³⁴ —a god would make me into that, and I would become one of a whole flock of birds in flight, yes, a god would make me that. ⁷³⁵ And if only I could then lift off in flight and fly away, soaring over the waves of the sea [*pontos*] ⁷³⁶ marked by the Adriatic ⁷³⁷ headland, and then over the waters of the river Eridanos ⁷³⁸ where into the purple swirl comes ⁷³⁹ a cascade from unhappy ⁷⁴⁰ girls in their grief for Phaethon⁶—a cascade of tears that pour down ⁷⁴¹ their amber radiance.

antistrophe 1

⁷⁴² Then to the apple-bearing headland of the Hesperides ⁷⁴³ would I finally arrive, to the land of those singers of songs ⁷⁴⁴ where the ruler of the sea [*pontos*], with its seething purple stretches of water, ⁷⁴⁵ no longer gives a path for sailors to proceed any further, ⁷⁴⁶ and there I would find

the revered limit ⁷⁴⁷ of the sky, which Atlas holds, ⁷⁴⁸ and there the immortalizing [*ambrosiai*] spring waters flow ⁷⁴⁹ right next to the place where Zeus goes to lie down, ⁷⁵⁰ and where she who gives blessedness [*olbos*] makes things grow. She is the most fertile one. ⁷⁵¹ She is the Earth, the one who makes the good blessing of superhuman powers [*eudaimoniā*] keep growing for the gods.

strophe 2

White-winged Cretan boat, which brought my queen through the roaring ocean waves **755** from her prosperous [*olbios*] home, to have the joy of a most *kakos* marriage; surely evil omens from either port were with that ship both from Crete, when she winged her way to glorious Athens, **760** and when the crew made fast its twisted cable ends upon the beach of Mounikhos, and stepped out onto the land.

antistrophe 2

So it was that her *phrenes* were crushed **765** by the cruel affliction of unholy passion sent by Aphrodite, and overwhelmed by bitter grief; **770** she will tie a noose around her white neck from the rafters of her bridal chamber, since she feels *aidōs* for her hateful fate [*daimōn*], and choosing instead the report of good reputation, **775** she strives in this way to rid her *phrenes* of passion's sting.

Within the palace.

Nurse

O, help! Come quick, help, whoever is near the palace—our mistress has hanged herself, Theseus' wife!

Chorus

Alas, the deed is done. The royal woman is no more, she is hung in a dangling noose.

Nurse

780 Why don't you hurry? Someone bring a two-edged knife to cut this from her neck.

Chorus

Philai, what shall we do? Do you think we should go into the house and loose the queen from the tight-drawn noose? Why should we? Aren't there young menservants here? 785 It is not safe in life to do too much.

Nurse

Lay out the sorry corpse, straighten the limbs; this was surely a bitter way to keep my master's house.

Chorus

She is dead, poor lady, so it seems. Already they are laying out her corpse.

Theseus and his retinue have entered unnoticed.

Theseus

790 Women, can you tell me what the uproar in the palace means, since a mournful sound from the servants reached my hearing? None of my household thought it worthwhile to open the palace gates in welcome to receive me, though I have just come from being a witness [*theōros*] to what the oracle said. Nothing has suddenly happened to old Pittheus? 795 He is well advanced in years, yet I would still be mournful should he leave this house.

Chorus

It is not the fate of the old which concerns you; it is the young whose death will bring you pain.

Theseus

Oh no! I am not robbed of the life of one of my children?

Chorus

800 They live; but cruelest of all for you, their mother is dead.

Theseus

What, my wife dead? By what fate?

Chorus

She fastened a strangling noose around her neck.

Theseus

Was she chilled by grief or some misfortune?

Chorus

I know only this, Theseus, for I have just arrived at your house 805 to express grief [*penthos*] over your misfortunes.

Theseus

Oh, why have I crowned my head with woven garlands when my being witness [*theōros*] to the oracle has meant such misfortune? Unbar the doors of the gates, servants, unloose their fastenings, so that I can see the bitter sight of my wife 810 whose death is death to me.

The doors of the palace open, revealing the corpse.

Chorus

Oh, how wretched are the woes that you suffered [*paskhein*]? What you have done is enough to overthrow this family. Ah, the daring of it! Dying violently and by unnatural means, 815 the desperate effort of your own poor hand. Who cast this shadow over your life, poor woman?

Theseus

Oh, I am full of pain. I have suffered [*paskhein*] the greatest of my miseries. Fate, how heavily you have settled on me and my house, 820 inflicting from some avenging god a nameless stain. It is the destruction of my life, making it unlivable. I see such a wide sea of troubles that I can never swim to shore again, nor get through the tide of my misfortune. 825 With what words will I come to address the fate of your deep suffering, poor wife? You are like a bird vanished from my hand, so swiftly did you leap from me to Hādēs. 830 Alas, this is surely a bitter, bitter sight. It must be a fate sent by the *daimones* for the errors of an ancestor, which I bring on myself from some far source.

Chorus

These sufferings [*pathos* pl.] do not come to you alone, lord; 835 you have lost a cherished wife just like many others.

Theseus

Below the earth, below the darkness, in the shadow of death, I long to make my home, now that I am robbed of your most *philē* company. You have destroyed me more than yourself. 840 Where did it come from, the fatal stroke that reached your heart? Who will say what happened, or does the palace merely shelter a useless crowd of my servants? Your death is such grief to me, 845 such is the pain that I now see in my house, intolerable beyond words. I am ruined, my house is desolate, and my children orphaned. You have left us, left us, *philē*, best [*aristē*] of all women 850 who behold the light of the sun and the starry moon.

Chorus

Poor man, so great is the misfortune of your house. My eyes are wet with streams of tears to see your fate. 855 But the grief on top of this one has long been making me shudder.

Theseus

Look, what is this? There is some tablet here hanging from her *philē* wrist. Does it have something new to signal [*sēmainein*] for me? Surely she has written a message bidding me to care for our marriage and children. 860 Take heart, poor wife, no woman will come into the bed or house of Theseus as a wife. Seeing the stamp of my dead wife's golden seal warms my heart; untwisting the seal 865 I will see what the tablet has to say.

Chorus

Alas, here is yet another evil in the succession which the god sends. Seeing what has happened, my life is no longer livable, 870 for I declare that the house of my *turannoi* is ruined; it no longer exists. O *daimōn*, if it be at all possible, I pray that you not overthrow the household! Hear

me as I beseech you! For like a seer I see a bird-omen coming from something evil.

Theseus

O horror! Misfortune upon misfortune, 875 and still they come, too deep for words, too heavy to bear.

Chorus

What is it? Speak, if I may share in it.

Theseus

This letter cries out, it cries out insufferable things. Where can I flee this burden of woes? I am gone, destroyed. Such a song I have seen in this writing, 880 giving voice to horror.

Chorus

Your words reveal evils yet to come.

Theseus

I can no longer keep this accursed tale within the gateway of my lips, though it is cruel. Listen, *polis* of Trozen: 885 Hippolytus has dared to enter my bed by force, and so to treat without *tīmē* the august eye of Zeus. Therefore, Poseidon my father, of the three prayers which you once promised to me, answer one of them against my son: do not let him escape this day, 890 if in fact these prayers were truly offered.

Chorus

My lord, by the gods, I beg you to take back your words, for in future you will know your error. Believe me.

Theseus

It cannot be. Furthermore I will banish him from this land, so that he will be struck down by one of these two fates: 895 either Poseidon, out of respect for my prayer, will cast his dead body into the house of Hādēs; or, exiled from this land, wandering as a stranger, upon some foreign land he will live out his sorry life.

Chorus

Here comes your son Hippolytus now, just in time; **900** dismiss your evil anger, and consider what is best for your house.

Hippolytus enters.

Hippolytus

I have come with haste, father, since I heard your cry. I don't know the reason for your call, but I would like to hear of it.

905 Ah! What is this? Your wife is dead. How strange this is. I only just left her, it was but a moment ago that she looked upon the light. How did she come to suffer [*paskhein*] this? In what way did she die? **910** Father, I want to learn of this from you. Do you still remain quiet? Silence does no good in a time of evils. **915** It is not just [*dikaion*] to conceal your misfortunes from your *philo*i, and even more than *philo*i, father.

Theseus

Humans, many are the errors you commit in vain. Why teach your countless crafts, why scheme and seek to find a way for everything, while one thing you don't know nor have you made your own: **920** a way to teach those without *noos* to have *phrenes*.

Hippolytus

You speak of a very master in his craft, a man who can force to think well people who don't think at all. But this is not the time to speak in subtleties, father; I fear your tongue runs wild because of your misery.

Theseus

925 There ought to be some token for people to test their *philo*i, a touchstone of their *phrenes*, for the ascertaining [*diagnōsis*] of which *philos* is true [*alēthēs*] and which is not; and everyone should have two voices, a just [*dikaios*] one in addition to whatever he should happen to have, **930** so that the honest voice could refute its opposite, and then we would not be deceived.

Hippolytus

Surely some *philos* who slanders me now holds your attention, so I am now accused, although guiltless. I am amazed, for your words astound me; 935 surely you are out of your *phrenes*.

Theseus

Oh, the *phrēn* of mortals, to what lengths it will go! What limit will its bold assurance have? If it goes on growing as man's life advances, and if each successor outdoes his predecessor in villainy, 940 then it will be necessary for the gods to add another sphere to the world, which will have room for the *kakoi* and not *dikaioi*. Look at this man, my own son, who has disgraced my bed 945 and is clearly proven to be most *kakos* by my dead wife. Since I am already polluted by you, look your father in the face. Are you the man who joins with the gods, as though superior? You are moderate [*sōphrōn*] and uncontaminated by evil? 950 I would not believe your claims and be guilty then of attributing ignorance to the gods. Go and boast now, advertise your *psūkhē*-less foods,⁷ and with Orpheus as your leader enjoy Bacchic revels in honor of those elusive writings. Now you are caught. 955 I warn everyone to avoid such men; they hunt with fine words and all the while are scheming villainy. She is dead; do you think that this will save you? By this you are condemned most of all, most *kakos*. 960 What oaths, what words are better than this letter, that might acquit you? You will say that she hated you, and that the bastard is by nature at odds with the freeborn. You would say then that she was a bad bargainer with her life, 965 if to satisfy her hate for you she lost what was most *phila* to her. And might you say that stupidity is not found in men but exists by nature in women? Yet young men in their prime are no more secure than women when Kypris stirs their *phrenes*, 970 but their male sex comes as a benefit to them. Yet why now do I struggle with words when the corpse that lies here is the surest witness? Begone from this land at once, and never set foot again in god-built Athens, 975 nor anywhere in the boundaries of my rule. If I submit to you, having suffered your outrage, then Sinis, the robber of

the Isthmus, will no longer bear witness that I killed him but say that my boasts are idle; nor will the Skironian rocks,⁸ which fringe the sea, 980 say what a burden I was to *kakoi*.

Chorus

I don't think that I can call any mortal fortunate, for the first has turned and now is last.

Hippolytus

Father, your *menos* and the intensity of your *phrenes* are terrible. Although your arguments are well put, if one lays them bare, your charge is no good. I have little skill in speaking before a crowd; I am more *sophos* with my own contemporaries and small groups. But this is fate: those whom the *sophoi* dislike are more skilled in addressing a crowd. 990 Yet it is necessary in the present circumstance to break my silence. First I will speak of the point which you used at first to undermine me so that I might not respond. You see this sunlight and earth? There is no man here, 995 though you may now say otherwise, who is more moderate [*sōphrōn*] than I. First, I know how to reverence the gods, and to adopt as *philoï* those who do not attempt injustices, and who have *aidōs* of suggesting anything base or of returning kindness with disgrace. 1000 To mock my *philoï*, father, is not my way either: I am the same behind their backs as to their face. The crime in which you think to have caught me I am up to this moment untouched by, for my body is still pure of sexual love. I know nothing of its practice except what I have heard or seen in pictures. 1005 I am not even eager to look at these since my *psūkhē* is virginal. My moderation [*sōphrosunē*] may not persuade you; well then, it is necessary for you to show how I was corrupted. Was Phaedra the most beautiful woman? 1010 Or did I hope to have your house by taking your wife in marriage and so have your possessions? I would surely then have been a fool and out of my *phrenes*. Then will you say that being *turannos* is sweet to men who are balanced [*sōphrones*]? I say not, 1015 since monarchy is only pleasing to those whose *phrenes* are impure. I would rather be first at all the games

[*agōnes*] in Hellas, but second in the *polis*, and in this way to enjoy always good fortune among my most noble [*aristoi*] *philoi*. There it is possible to be happy, and the absence of danger 1020 gives a more powerful pleasure [*kharis*] than tyranny. There is one more thing I have not said, but the rest you have heard. If there were a witness to my worth, or if I were contesting Phaedra still alive, you would see who is evil by reviewing the facts. 1025 But as it is, I swear by Zeus, the god of oaths, and by the ground on which we stand, that I never touched your wife, nor would I wish to, nor would I conceive the thought. May I die without *kleos* and nameless, 1030 and let neither sea [*pontos*] nor land receive my flesh when I am dead, if I am a *kakos* man. I don't know if she destroyed herself through fear, but more than this it is not lawful [*themis*] for me to say. She remained in balance [*sōphrōn*], although she was not balanced [*sōphrōn*] by nature; 1035 I am in balance [*sōphrosunē*], but I have not used it well.

Chorus

The oath you speak by the gods sufficiently refutes the charge; it is a strong pledge.

Theseus

Does he think he is some sorcerer or enchanter, to think he can first treat his father without *tīmē*, 1040 and then by his cool talk master my *psūkhē*?

Hippolytus

These same things amaze me in you too, father. For if you were my son and I your father, I would have killed you and not punished you with banishment, if you saw fit to lay hands on my wife.

Theseus

1045 Your remark is worthy of you. No, you will not die in this way that you pronounce for yourself, for a swift death is an easy end for wretchedness. Exiled from your fatherland, you will live out your miserable life wandering in a foreign land.

Hippolytus

1050 Oh, what will you do? Banish me without even waiting for the evidence of time on my behalf?

Theseus

Indeed, beyond the pontos, beyond the bounds of Atlas, if I could, so much do I despise the sight of you.

Hippolytus

1055 What! Banish me untried, without even testing my oath, the pledge I offer, the voice of seers?

Theseus

This letter here, though it bears no seers' signs, denounces your pledges; as for birds that fly over head, I bid them a long farewell.

Hippolytus

1060 Oh gods, why don't I unlock my lips, since I am ruined by you though I still reverence you? No, I won't, since not even then would I persuade those whom I must, and in vain I would break the oath I swore.

Theseus

Your righteousness is more than I can bear. 1065 Get out of this land as soon as possible.

Hippolytus

Where, in my misery, can I turn? What house can I enter as guest [*xenos*], exiled on such a grave charge?

Theseus

Whoever enjoys receiving as guests [*xenoi*] corrupters of wives and partners in evil.

Hippolytus

1070 This wounds my heart and brings me close to tears, that I should appear so *kakos* and you believe me so.

Theseus

Your cries and forethought should have come before you dared to bring *hubris* to your father's wife.

Hippolytus

Oh house! Would that you could find a voice 1075 to testify for me, if I were a *kakos* man.

Theseus

Wisely you run to a voiceless witness; this deed here is voiceless too, but it clearly proves your guilt.

Hippolytus

If only I could stand outside myself and look; then I would weep to see the evil I suffer [*paskhein*].

Theseus

1080 It is your character to honor yourself far more than your parents, as it would be right [*dikaios*] for you to do.

Hippolytus

Unhappy mother! Bitter birth! Let none of my *philoï* suffer to be born a bastard.

Theseus

Why don't you drag him away, servants? 1085 Didn't you hear me proclaim his exile long ago?

Hippolytus

Whoever lays a hand on me will regret it. If this is what your *thūmos* desires, force me from this land yourself.

Theseus

I will, if you don't obey my words. I feel no pity come over me for your exile.

Hippolytus

1090 It is fixed then, so it seems. I am wretched, for although I know well these things here, I know no way to indicate them.

Most *philē daimōn* of all to me, daughter of Leto, partner and comrade in the chase, I am exiled from glorious Athens. Farewell, *polis*, and land of Erekhtheus; 1095 farewell, Trozen, you hold the many happinesses [*eudaimoniai*] of youth. Looking at you for the last time I bid farewell. Come, young men, companions of my country, greet me kindly and escort me from this land. 1100 Never will you behold another man so moderate [*sōphrōn*] as I am, even if I seem otherwise to my father.

Hippolytus exits with many followers. Theseus enters the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

When I consider how much the gods care for human beings, my grief is lessened, 1105 yet, though I cherish a hidden hope for some understanding, I fall short of it when I look at the fortunes and deeds of mortals. For change succeeds change, 1110 and man's life is variable and ever shifting.

antistrophe 1

May fate grant me this prayer from the gods: good fortune followed by prosperity [*olbos*], and a *thūmos* free from pain. 1115 And let me not hold opinions which are too strict nor counterfeit [*para-sēmos*], but lightly changing my ways day by day, let me have good fortune throughout my life.

strophe 2

1120 My *phrenes* are no longer clear, I see things which I never expected, since the bright star of Hellenic Athens 1125 I now see driven to a foreign land because of his father's anger, O sands of the city's shores, O mountain oaks where he used to hunt with his fleet hounds 1130 together with the goddess Diktyнна.

antistrophe 2

No longer will he mount behind his yoke of Venetian steeds, filling the course around Limna with the sound of trained horses' hooves. 1135 And the sleepless music below the strings of the lyre will cease in his father's palace, and the resting places of Artemis will go without garlands throughout the deep green meadow. And by your exile the rivalry for your bridal bed among the unwed girls is lost.

epode

Meanwhile, with tears at your unhappy fate, I will live out my own sad destiny. Poor mother, 1145 who gave you life in vain, I rage at the gods. Linked Graces [*Kharites*], why do you send him from his homeland 1150 innocent of this ruinous damage [*atē*]? Look, I see an attendant of Hippolytus with a troubled expression hastening towards the palace.

A messenger enters.

Messenger

Women, where can I find the king of this land, Theseus? If you know, indicate [*sēmainein*] to me. 1155 Is he inside the palace?

Chorus

Here he is coming out of the palace now.

Theseus enters.

Messenger

Theseus, the news I bring is a matter of concern for you, and for the citizens who dwell in Athens and within the bounds of the land of Trozen.

Theseus

1160 What is it? Has some new calamity overtaken these two neighboring cities?

Messenger

Hippolytus is no more, to speak just a word [*epos*]; although he still sees the light of day, he is in a slender balance.

Theseus

At whose hands? Did some man come to blows with him, 1165 whose wife he disgraced by force, just as his father's?

Messenger

It was his own chariot that killed him, and the curses that you uttered against him, when you prayed to your father Poseidon, lord of the *pontos*, to kill your son.

Theseus

O gods! Poseidon, you are truly my father, 1170 since you heard my curse! How did he perish? Tell me how the hammer of *dikē* fell on him for his crime against me.

Messenger

Hard by the wave-beaten shore we were combing out the horse's manes, and we were weeping, 1175 for a messenger had come to say that Hippolytus was harshly exiled by you and would never set foot on this land again. Then Hippolytus himself came to us on the beach with the same tearful song, and with him was a countless throng of *philoi*, who followed after. 1180 In time he stopped his lament and spoke: "Why do I grieve over this when my father's words must be obeyed? Servants, harness my horses to the chariot, for this *polis* is no longer mine." 1185 Thereupon each one of us hastened, and faster than you could say, the horses were readied and standing by our master's side. Then he caught up the reins from the chariot rail while fitting his feet into place. 1190 But first with outspread hands he called on the gods: "Zeus, let me live no longer if I am *kakos*, and let my father learn how he treats me without *tīmē* once I am dead, if not when I still see the light." By now he had taken up the whip and goaded the horses, 1195 while we attendants, near the reins, kept up with him along the road that leads straight to Argos and Epidaurus. Just as we were coming to a lonely spot, a strip of sand beyond the borders of this country, 1200 sloping right to the Saronic gulf, there came a rumbling sound from the earth,

like the thunder of Zeus, and a deep roar issued forth that was horrible to hear; the horses raised their heads up to heaven and pricked their ears, and among us there was wild fear to know the source of the sound.

1205 Then, as we gazed toward the wave-beaten shore, we saw a tremendous wave reaching to heaven, so that from our view the cliffs of Skiron vanished, for it hid the Isthmus and the rocks of Asklepios. 1210

The wave swelled and frothed with a crest of foam, and from the raging sea it made its way to shore where the four-horse chariot was. And in the moment that the mighty wave broke, it issued forth a wild bull,

1215 whose bellowing filled the whole land with frightful echoes, a sight too awful, as it seemed to us who witnessed it. A terrible panic seized the horses at once, but our master, who was quite used to the horses' ways, 1220 pulled back as a sailor pulls on an oar, leaning back on the reins with all of his weight; but the horses biting into the forged bits with their jaws wildly bore him on, regardless of their master's guiding hand or rein or jointed car. Whenever he would take the reins and steer for softer ground, the bull would appear in front to turn him back again, making his horses mad with terror, 1230 but if in their frantic rage they ran toward the rocks, the bull would draw near the chariot rail, keeping up with them, until, suddenly dashing the wheel against a stone, he overturned and wrecked the car. Then there was confusion everywhere, 1235 wheel naves and axle pins were thrown into the air, while poor Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, was dragged along, bound by a stubborn knot, his own head dashed against the rocks, his flesh torn while he cried out terribly: 1240 "Horses reared in my own stables, stop; don't wipe me out! Father, your pitiless curse! Is there anyone who will save a most noble [*aristos*] man?" Many of us wanted to help, but we were left behind. At last he got himself free 1245 and fell from the knot of the reins, I don't know how, and there was still a faint breath of life in him; but the horses disappeared, and that portentous bull, over the rocky ground, I can't say where. I am just a slave in your house, lord, 1250 and yet I will never be able to believe that your son is *kakos*, not even if the whole race [*genos*] of women should

hang themselves, or if someone should fill with writing every pine tree grown on Mount Ida. I know that Hippolytus is noble [*esthlos*].

Chorus

1255 Alas, a misfortune of new evils is accomplished; there is no escape from fate and necessity.

Theseus

In my hatred for the man who suffered [*paskhein*] these things, at first I was glad at your words, but now because of respect [*aidōs*] for the gods and for him, since he is my son, 1260 I feel neither joy nor sorrow at his woes.

Messenger

What then? Do we bring him here? What should we do to please your *phrēn*? Consider this, if you will take my advice: don't be harsh to your son in his sorry state.

Theseus

1265 Bring him here, so that I can see him with my own eyes and condemn him with words and with this misfortune from the *daimones*, since he has denied that he abused my wife.

The messenger exits.

Chorus

Kypris, you guide the unyielding *phrenes* of gods and mortals, together with Love, 1270 who on painted wing embraces his victims in swift flight. He flies over the land and over the resounding salty sea [*pontos*], on golden wings, 1275 maddening the hearts and beguiling the senses of all whom he attacks: mountain-bred cubs, creatures of the sea, and whomever else the earth nourishes under the light of the sun, including men. 1280 Kypris, you alone have this royal *tīmē*, to rule them all together.

Artemis herself appears.

Artemis

Noble son of Aegeus, I bid you listen; 1285 it is I, Artemis, the daughter of Leto, who speaks. Theseus, why, poor man, do you rejoice over this news, when you have killed your own son impiously, believing in the false tales [*mūthoi*] of your wife though they were unproven? Clear now is your ruin [*atē*] from this. 1290 Why do you not hide your body in disgrace in the blackness below the earth, or trading this life for wings take off and fly away from your misery? Among *agathoi* men 1295 you now have no share in life. Listen, Theseus, to the state of your misfortune. Although it can do no good, still I wish to pain you, for I came with this intent: to show you your son's just *phrenes* so that he might die with good *kleos*, 1300 and also the mad passion and, in some sense, the nobleness of your wife. For she was cruelly stung with a passion for your son by that goddess who is most hostile to those who take pleasure in virginity. Though she tried to conquer her passion by resolution, 1305 nevertheless she fell, thanks to the schemes of her nurse, who against her will revealed [*sēmainein*] her malady to your son under oath. But he would have none of her advice, as was right [*dikaios*], and not even when you abused him did he take back his oath, for he was pious. 1310 But Phaedra, in fear of being found out, wrote that deceitful note and destroyed your son by guile, though you believed her.

Theseus

Oh no!

Artemis

Does my story [*mūthos*] hurt you? Be quiet a little longer; hear what follows so that you can lament even more. 1315 Do you know those three prayers from your father which have certain result? You have now used one of them pitifully on your own son instead of against some enemy. Your father of the sea [*pontos*] meant kindly, but he granted what was necessary, since he had promised. 1320 Now you have shown yourself to be *kakos* both to him and me, since you would not wait for

proof or the utterances of seers; you did not make inquiries nor did you take time for consideration, but with undue haste you cast curses against your son and killed him.

Theseus

1325 Goddess, let me die.

Artemis

You have done an awful thing, yet it is still possible for you to have forgiveness even for this. For it was Kypris who willed these things to be, in order to satisfy her own *thūmos*. This is law amongst the gods: none is allowed to oppose the will of another, 1330 but we stand ever aloof. Know well that if I did not fear Zeus, I would never have come to the disgrace of allowing the man most *philos* to me of all mortals to die. 1335 As for your mistake, in the first place your ignorance absolves you of its being evil, but also that your wife, when she died, was lavish in her use of arguments to persuade your *phrenes*. On you especially these misfortunes burst, but they are grievous to me as well. The gods take no pleasure when the righteous die, 1340 but the *kakoi* we destroy utterly, their children and their homes.

Chorus

Look, here he comes now, poor thing, his youthful skin and fair head shamefully abused. Oh, the pain [*ponos*] of the household, 1345 what twofold sorrow [*penthos*] has fallen on your halls from the gods!

Hippolytus enters, carried by his attendants.

Hippolytus

Oh, I am wretched, I have been undone by the unjust [*a-dikos*] curses of my unjust [*a-dikos*] father. 1350 I am thoroughly destroyed. Pains shoot through my head, and there is a throbbing against my brain. Enough, let me give up my body. 1355 Pitiful horses, nourished by my own hand, you are my ruin and my death. By the gods, servants, handle my wounded flesh gently. 1360 Who is standing on my right side? Support

me carefully and lead me steadily, with a evil *daimōn* and cursed by my mistaken father. Zeus, do you see these things? I am your reverent worshipper, 1365 the man who surpasses everyone in moderation [*sōphrosunē*]; now I am on my way to Hādēs, and my life is completely lost; in vain did I struggle to respect men piously. 1370 Oh, oh, the pain is on me, let me go, wretched as I am, and let death come to me. Kill me at last and end my sufferings. 1375 I want a two-edged sword to cut with and to lay down my life. Wretched curse of my father! The crimes of bloody kinsmen, 1380 ancestors of old, now come forth without delay and are upon me. But why, since I am not guilty [*aitios*] of any evil? 1385 How will I give up my life without suffering [*pathos*]? I wish dark Hādēs, lord of the night, would lay me in my misery to rest.

Artemis

Poor boy, you are yoked to such misfortune! 1390 The nobility of your *phrenes* has destroyed you.

Hippolytus

O, the divine scent! Even in my misery I sense you and feel relief; she is here, in this very place, my goddess Artemis.

Artemis

She is, poor boy, the goddess most *philē* to you.

Hippolytus

1395 You see me, my mistress, in my suffering?

Artemis

I see you, but it is not *themis* for me to shed a tear.

Hippolytus

There is none to lead the hunt or serve you.

Artemis

None now, yet even in death I love you still.

Hippolytus

There is none to groom your horses nor be the guardian of your image.

Artemis

1400 It was Kypris who devised this evil.

Hippolytus

Ah! Now I know the *daimōn* who has destroyed me.

Artemis

She was jealous of her slighted *tīmē* and angered by your *sōphrosunē*.

Hippolytus

One, I see, has destroyed three.

Artemis

Yes, your father, you, and third, your father's wife.

Hippolytus

1405 Then I mourn the bad luck of my father also.

Artemis

He was deceived by the plotting of the *daimōn*.

Hippolytus

O father, the misery of your misfortune!

Theseus

I am ruined, son, life holds no pleasure [*kharis*] for me.

Hippolytus

I mourn for you, in your mistake, more than for myself.

Theseus

1410 If I could I would die in your place, my son.

Hippolytus

The gifts from your father Poseidon are bitter.

Theseus

I wish my lips had never spoken those words.

Hippolytus

But why? You would have killed me anyway, so enraged were you then.

Theseus

Because of the gods I was mistaken in my resolve.

Hippolytus

1415 Would that the race [*genos*] of mortals were a curse to the
daimones.

Artemis

Enough! Even when you are under the dark of the earth, the wrath of the goddess Kypris will not, despite her zeal, fall on you unavenged. I give you this as recompense [*kharis*] for your noble and righteous *phrēn*.

1420 By my own hand and with these unerring arrows I will take vengeance against whichever mortal is most *philos* to her. ¹⁴²³ To you, poor sufferer, in compensation for these bad things that have happened to you here, ¹⁴²⁴ the greatest honors [*tīmai*] in the city [*polis*] of Trozen ¹⁴²⁵ I will give to you: unwed girls before they get married ¹⁴²⁶ will cut off their hair for you, and throughout the length of time [*aiōn*] ¹⁴²⁷ you will harvest the very great sorrows [*penthos* plural] of their tears. ¹⁴²⁸ And for all time there will be a thought that comes along with the songmaking directed at you by virgin girls, ¹⁴²⁹ and it will be a troubled thought. The story and the names will not fall aside unremembered ¹⁴³⁰ – the story of the passionate love [*erōs*] of Phaedra for you. No, it will never be passed over in silence. You, son of old Aegeus, take your son in your arms and embrace him, since you have destroyed him against your will. Human beings are bound to commit wrongs when the gods put it in their way. 1435 And Hippolytus, I warn you not to hate your father, for in this death you meet your own fate. Now farewell, since it is not

themis for me to look on the dying and to pollute my eyes with the last gasps of death; already I see that you are full of this evil.

Artemis vanishes.

Hippolytus

1440 Farewell, blessed [*olbia*] virgin, go now! How easily you leave behind our long association! As you wish, I let go of the quarrel with my father, for even before I used to obey your wishes. Already the darkness is settling on my eyes. 1445 Take me, father, and make straight my body.

Theseus

O my son, what are you doing to me, ill-fated as I am?

Hippolytus

I am lost, even now I see the gates of death.

Theseus

Do you leave me behind with stained hands?

Hippolytus

No, no, I free you of my murder.

Theseus

1450 What are you saying? You release me from your bloodshed?

Hippolytus

Artemis, mistress of the bow, I call as my witness.

Theseus

Most *philos*, how noble you show yourself to be to your father.

Hippolytus

Farewell to you, a long farewell, father.

Theseus

Alas for your reverent and noble *phrēn*!

Hippolytus

1455 Pray that your lawful sons are such men.

Theseus

Don't leave me, son, be strong.

Hippolytus

I have no more strength. I am gone, father; cover my face quickly with my robe.

Theseus

Glorious Athens, land of Athena, 1460 what a man you have lost! Often I will recall your evils, Kypris.

Chorus

This shared *akhos* has come unexpectedly on all our citizens. There will be a great shower of tears, 1465 for reports worthy of *penthos* about great men have a strong hold upon us.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The metaphor is that women are like a stringed instrument, in need of tuning [*harmonia*] or balance.

[[back](#)] 2. Phaedra's mother was Pasiphae, wife of King Minos of Crete and mother of the Minotaur, a creature half-man and half-bull.

[[back](#)] 3. Phaedra's sister was Ariadne, who ran away with Theseus after helping him kill the Minotaur in the labyrinth. When Theseus abandoned her on Naxos, she was rescued by Dionysus. In another version, she was already the wife of Dionysus, and Artemis killed her for running away with Theseus.

[[back](#)] 4. To win Iole, daughter of Eurytos, Hēraklēs destroyed her city and killed her family.

[[back](#)] 5. The word *euphēmos* means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] 6. Phaethon was the son of Helios, the sun. He lost control of his father’s chariot, so Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt.

[[back](#)] 7. Devotees of Orpheus practiced vegetarianism.

[[back](#)] 8. Skiron used to hurl his victims off the cliffs that received his name after he was killed by Theseus.

2017-12-18

Bacchae

By Euripides

Translated by T. A. Buckley

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Dionysus

I am Dionysus, the child of Zeus, and I have come to this land of the Thebans, where Kadmos' daughter Semele once bore me, delivered by a lightning-blast. Having assumed a mortal form in place of my divine one, 5 I am here at the fountains of Dirke and the water of Ismenos. Here near the palace I see the tomb of my thunder-stricken mother and the remains of her abode, smoldering with the still living flame of Zeus' fire, Hera's everlasting *hubris* against my mother. 10 I praise Kadmos, who has made this place hallowed, the shrine of his daughter, which now I have covered all around with the cluster-bearing grapevine.

I have left the rich lands of the Lydians and Phrygians, the sunny plains of the Persians, and 15 the walls of Bactria, passing over the harsh land of the Medes, and fertile Arabia, and all of Asia which lies along the coast of the sea, its beautifully-towered cities replete with a mixture of Hellenes and barbarians. 20 In Hellenic territory I have come here to Thebes first, having already established my *khoroï* and mysteries in those other lands so that I might be a *daimōn* manifest among mortals, and have raised my cry here, fitting a fawn-skin to my body and 25 taking a thyrsos in my hand, a dart of ivy. For my mother's sisters—the very ones for whom it was least becoming—claimed that I was not the child of Zeus, but that Semele had conceived a child from a mortal father and then blamed her sexual misconduct on Zeus, 30 Kadmos' plot, for which reason they claim that Zeus killed her, because she had told a false tale about her marriage. Therefore have I driven them from the house with frenzy, and they dwell in the mountains, out of their *phrenes* ; and I have

given them the compulsion to wear the outfit of my mysteries. All the female offspring of the house of Kadmos, 35 as many as are women, I have made to leave the house with madness, and they, mingled with the sons of Kadmos, sit on roofless rocks beneath green pines. It is necessary that this *polis* learn, even though it should not wish to, 40 that it is not an initiate into my Bacchic rites, and that I plead the case of my mother, Semele, in making myself manifest to mortals as a *daimōn*, whom she bore to Zeus.

Kadmos then gave his office and his tyranny to Pentheus, his daughter's son, 45 who fights against the gods in my person and drives me away from treaties, never making mention of me in his prayers. For which reasons I will show him and all the Thebans that I am a god. And when I have arranged the situation here to my satisfaction I will move on to another land, 50 revealing myself. But if ever the *polis* of Thebes should in anger seek to drive the Bacchae down from the mountains with arms, I, leading on my Maenads, will join battle with them. For these reasons I have assumed a mortal form, altering my shape into the nature of a man. 55 My sacred band, you women who have left Tmolos, the bulwark of Lydia, whom I have brought from among the barbarians as assistants and companions for myself, raise up your kettle-drums, the native instruments of the *polis* of the Phrygians, the invention of mother Rhea and myself, 60 and going about the palace of Pentheus beat them, so that Kadmos' *polis* might see. I myself will go off to the folds of Kithairon, where the Bacchae are, and will join in their *khoroi*.

Dionysus vanishes. The Chorus of the Bacchae enters.

Chorus

65 Having passed through sacred [*hieros*] Tmolos, coming from the land of Asia, I celebrate in honor of Bromios, a sweet labor [*ponos*] and an ordeal [*kamatos*] easily borne, crying "Evohe" for Bacchus. Who is in the way? Who is in the way? Who? Let him get out of the way indoors, and let everyone keep his mouth pure, 70 being *euphēmos*. For

now I will celebrate Dionysus with hymns, at all times according to proper custom.

strophe 1

Blessed is he who keeps his life pure, with a good *daimōn* and knowing the rites of the gods, and who has his *psūkhē* initiated into the Bacchic revelry, dancing in inspired frenzy 75 over the mountains with holy purifications, and who, revering the mysteries of great mother Kybele, brandishing the *thyrsos* , 80 garlanded with ivy, serves as attendant [*therapōn*] to Dionysus. Go, Bacchae, go, Bacchae, bringing home the god Bromios, himself child of a god, 85 from the Phrygian mountains to the broad public spaces, suitable for *khoroi* , in Hellas; Bromios,

antistrophe 1

whom once his mother bore, 90 casting him from her stomach as she was struck by Zeus' thunder while in the compulsions of birth pains, leaving life from the stroke of a thunderbolt. Immediately Zeus, Kronos' son, 95 received him in a chamber fitted for birth, and having covered him in his thigh shut him up with golden clasps out of Hera's sight. He bore forth 100 the bull-horned god when the Fates [*moirai*] had brought him to *telos* , and he garlanded him with crowns of snakes, for which reason Maenads cloak their wild prey over their locks.

strophe 2

105 Oh Thebes, nurse of Semele, crown yourself with ivy, flourish with the verdant yew which bears beautiful fruit, and consecrate yourself with twigs of oak 110 or fir. Adorn your garments of spotted fawn-skin with fleeces of white sheep, and consecrate the *thyrsos* [*narthēx* pl.], marks of *hubris* . Immediately all the earth will join in the *khoroi* — 115 he becomes Bromios whoever leads the sacred band of women—to the mountain, to the mountain, where the female crowd awaits, having been goaded away from their weaving by Dionysus.

antistrophe 2

120 Oh secret chamber of the Kouretes and you divine Cretan caves, parents of Zeus, where the Korybantes with their triple helmets 125

invented this circle, covered with stretched hide, and mixing it in their excited Bacchic dances with the sweet-voiced breath of Phrygian pipes, they handed it over to Rhea, an instrument resounding with the revel songs of the Bacchae. 130 Nearby, raving Satyrs went through the rites of the mother goddess. And they added the *khoroï* of the biennial festivals, in which Dionysus rejoices.

epode

135 Sweet [*hēdus*] he is in the mountains, when, ¹³⁶ after running in the sacred band [*thiasos*] ¹³⁷⁻¹³⁸ he drops to the ground, wearing the sacred [*hieron*] garment of fawn-skin, hunting ¹³⁹ the blood of the goat killed, tracking the beauty and the pleasure [*kharis*] of raw flesh devoured, ¹⁴⁰ rushing to the Phrygian, the Lydian mountains, ¹⁴¹ and the chorus leader [*ex-arkhos*] is Bromios [= Dionysus the Thunderer]. Cry “ *Euhoi!* ” ¹⁴² The plain flows with milk, it flows with wine, ¹⁴³ it flows with the nectar of bees. ¹⁴⁴ Like the smoke of Syrian incense, ¹⁴⁵ the Bacchic one [*Bakkheus*], raising high ¹⁴⁶ the fiery flame from the pine torch, ¹⁴⁷ bursts forth from the stalk [*narthēx*], ¹⁴⁸ arousing the stragglers with his running and with his dance-steps [*khoroï*], ¹⁴⁹ agitating them with his cries [*iakhai*], ¹⁵⁰ tossing his luxuriant [*trupheros*] locks into the upper air. ¹⁵¹ And amidst cries of “ *Euhoi!* ” his voice thunders words like this: ¹⁵² “Come on [and join the chorus], Bacchants [*bakkhai*], ¹⁵³ come on [and join it], Bacchants, ¹⁵⁴ surrounded by the luxuriant beauty of Mount Tmolos, watered by streams flowing with gold. ¹⁵⁵ You all must sing and dance [*melpein*] Dionysus, ¹⁵⁶ in tune with the thundering beat of kettle-drums, ¹⁵⁷⁻¹⁵⁸ glorifying with cries of ‘ *Euhoi!* ’ the god of the cry ‘ *Euhoi!* ’ ¹⁵⁹ with Phrygian shouts and clamor, ¹⁶⁰ when with its sweet song the pipe, ¹⁶¹⁻¹⁶³ sacred [*hieros*] it is, thunders its pulsating sacred [*hiera*] tunes ¹⁶⁴ for those who wander off to the mountain, to the mountain!” ¹⁶⁵ And she, taking sweet pleasure [*hēdesthai*], ¹⁶⁶⁻¹⁶⁹ like a

foal next to its grazing mother, rouses her swift-stepping legs to take one leap after the next, she the Bacchant [*bakkhē*].

Teiresias enters.

Teiresias

170 Who is at the gates? Call from the house Kadmos, son of Agenor, who left the *polis* of Sidon and fortified this city of the Thebans with towers. Let someone go and announce that Teiresias is looking for him. He knows why I have come and 175 what agreement I, an old man, have made with him, older yet: to twine the *thyrsoi* , to wear fawn-skins, and to crown our heads with ivy shoots.

Kadmos enters.

Kadmos

Most *philos* , from inside the house I heard and recognized your wise [*sophē*] voice—the voice of a *sophos* man— 180 and have come with this equipment of the god. To the best of our abilities we must extol him, the child of my daughter. Where is it necessary to take the *khoros* , where must we put our feet and 185 shake our grey heads? Lead me, an old man, Teiresias, yourself old. For you are *sophos* . And so I would not tire night or day striking the ground with the *thyrsos* . Gladly I have forgotten that we are old.

Teiresias

Then you and I are experiencing [*paskhein*] the same thing, 190 for I too feel young and will try to join the *khoros* .

Kadmos

Then we will go to the mountain in a chariot.

Teiresias

But in this way the god would not have equal *tīmē* .

Kadmos

I, an old man, will lead you like a pupil, though you are an old man.

Teiresias

The god will lead us there without ordeal.

Kadmos

195 Are we the only ones in the polis who will join the *khōros* in Dionysus' honor?

Teiresias

We alone are sensible, all the others foolish.

Kadmos

Delay is long. Take hold of my hand.

Teiresias

Here, take hold, and join your hand with mine.

Kadmos

Having been born mortal, I do not scorn the gods.

Teiresias

200 In the eyes of the *daimones* we mortals do not act with wisdom [*sophiā*]. Our ancestral traditions, which we have held throughout our lives, no argument will overturn, not even if something *sophon* should be discovered by the depths of our *phrenes* . Will anyone say that I, who am about to join the *khōros* with my head covered in ivy, 205 do not respect old age? For the god has made no distinction as to whether it is right for men young or old to join the *khōros* , but wishes to have *tīmai* and be extolled equally by all, setting no one apart.

Kadmos

210 Since you do not see the light of the sun here, Teiresias, I will be for you a spokesman [*prophētēs*] about what is happening. Pentheus, child of Ekhion, to whom I have given control [*kratos*] of this land, is

coming here to the house now in all haste. How he quivers with excitement! What new matter will he tell us?

Pentheus enters.

Pentheus

215 I was away from this land when I heard of the new evils throughout this *polis*, that our women have left our homes in contrived Bacchic rites, and rush about in the shadowy mountains, honoring with *khoroi* this new *daimōn* 220 Dionysus, whoever he is. I hear that mixing-bowls stand full in the midst of their assemblies, and that each woman, flying to secrecy in different directions, yields to the embraces of men, on the pretext that they are Maenads worshipping. 225 They consider Aphrodite of greater priority than Dionysus.

Servants keep as many of them as I have caught in the public buildings with their hands chained. I will hunt from the mountains all that are missing, Ino and Agaue, who bore me to Ekhion, and 230 Autonoe, the mother of Aktaion. And having bound them in iron fetters, I will soon make them stop this criminal Bacchic activity. They say that a certain stranger [*xenos*] has come, a sorcerer from the Lydian land, with the locks of his tawny hair smelling sweetly, 235 having in his eyes the wine-dark graces [*kharites*] of Aphrodite. He stays with the young girls during the evenings and nights, alluring them with joyful mysteries. If I catch him within this house, 240 by cutting his head from his body I will stop him from beating his *thyrsos* and shaking his hair.

That's the man who claims that Dionysus is a god; that's the man who claims that Dionysus was once stitched into the thigh of Zeus, Dionysus, who was in reality burnt along with his mother by the flame of lightning, 245 because she had falsely claimed to have married Zeus. Is this not worthy of a terrible death by hanging, that he, whoever this *xenos* is, commits such acts of *hubris*?

But here is another wonder: I see the seer Teiresias clothed in dappled fawn-skins 250 along with my mother's father—a great absurdity—

raging about with a *thyrsos* [*narthēx*]. I want to deny that I see your old age devoid of sense. Won't you cast away the ivy? 255 Will you not, father of my mother, free your hand of the *thyrsos* ? You urged these things, Teiresias. Do you wish, introducing this new *daimōn* to humans, to examine birds and receive rewards of sacrifices? If your hoary old age did not protect you, you would sit in the midst of the Bacchantes 260 for introducing wicked rites. For where women have the delight of the grape at a feast, I say that none of their rites is healthy any longer.

Chorus

Oh, what impiety! *xenos* , don't you reverence the gods and Kadmos who sowed the earth-born crop? 265 Do you, the child of Ekhion, disgrace your ancestry [*genos*]?

Teiresias

Whenever a *sophos* man takes a good occasion for his speech, it is not a great task to speak well. You have a fluent tongue as though you are sensible, but there is no sense in your words. 270 A bold and powerful man, one capable of speaking well, becomes a *kakos* citizen if he lacks sense. Nor can I express how great this new god, whom you scorn, will be throughout Hellas. Two things, young man, 275 have supremacy among humans: The goddess Demeter—she is the earth, but call her whatever name you wish—nourishes mortals with dry food. But he who came then, the offspring of Semele, invented a rival, the wet drink of the grape, and introduced it to mortals. 280 It releases wretched mortals from their pains, whenever they are filled with the stream of the vine, and gives them sleep, a means of forgetting their daily woes. There is no other cure for pains [*ponoi*]. He, himself a god, is poured out in offerings to the gods, 285 so that through him men have their good things.

And do you laugh at him, because he was sewn up in Zeus' thigh? I will teach you that this is well: when Zeus snatched him from the fire of lightning, and led the child as a god to Olympus, 290 Hera wished to

banish him from the sky. Zeus devised a counter-plan in a manner worthy of a god. Having broken a part of the air that surrounds the earth, he gave this to Hera as a pledge, protecting the real Dionysus from her quarreling. 295 Mortals say that in time he was nourished in the thigh of Zeus; because a god was hostage to the goddess Hera, by changing his name they composed the story. But this *daimōn* is a prophet, for Bacchic revelry and madness have in them much prophetic skill. 300 Whenever the god enters a body in full force, he makes the maddened tell the future. He also possesses some of the fate [*moira*] of Arēs. For terror sometimes strikes an army under arms and in its ranks before it even touches a spear— 305 this too is a frenzy from Dionysus. You will see him also on the rocks of Delphi, bounding with torches through the highland between the two peaks, leaping and shaking the Bacchic branch, mighty throughout Hellas. But believe me, Pentheus. 310 Do not dare to claim that might has power [*kratos*] among humans, nor think that you have any *phrenes* at all, even if you believe so: your mind is sick. Receive the god into your land, pour libations to him, celebrate the Bacchic rites, and garland your head.

Dionysus will not compel 315 the women to be moderate [*sōphrones*] in regard to Kypris [Aphrodite], but it is right to look for this attribute in their natures. She who is naturally *sōphrōn* will not be corrupted in Bacchic revelry. Do you see? You rejoice whenever many people are at your gates, 320 and the *polis* extols the name of Pentheus. He too, I think, delights in receiving *tīmē*. Kadmos, whom you mock, and I will crown our heads with ivy and dance, a hoary yoke-team—still we must join the *khoros*. 325 I will not be persuaded by your words to fight with the god. You are mad in a most grievous way, and you will not be cured by drugs, though your illness is surely due to drugs.

Chorus

Old man, you do not shame Phoebus with your words; by giving *tīmē* to Dionysus, a great god, you are balanced [*sōphrōn*].

Kadmos

330 Child, Teiresias has given you good recommendations. Dwell with us, not apart from the laws. Now you flit about and are not being clear in your thinking. Even if, as you say, he is not a god, call him one: tell a glorious falsehood, 335 so that Semele might seem to have given birth to a god, and our family [*genos*] might have *tīmē* .

You see the wretched fate of Aktaion [Actaeon], who was torn apart in the meadows by the blood-thirsty hounds he had raised, 340 having boasted that he was better at hunting than Artemis. May you not suffer [*paskhein*] this! Come, let me crown your head with ivy; give *tīmē* to the god along with us.

Pentheus

Do not lay a hand on me! Go off and be a Bacchant, but don't wipe your foolishness off on me. I will prosecute the case [*dikē*] of this 345 teacher of your folly. Let someone go as quickly as possible to the seat where he watches the flights of birds and overturn it with levers, completely confounding everything; 350 release his garlands to the winds and storms. In this way I will especially grieve his heart. And some of you hunt throughout the city for this effeminate *xenos* , who introduces a new disease to the women and pollutes our beds. 355 If you catch him, bring him here bound, so that he might suffer as punishment a death by stoning, thus having seen a bitter Bacchic revelry in Thebes.

Teiresias

O wretched man, how little you know what you are saying! You are mad now, and even before you were out of your *phrenes* . Let us go, Kadmos, and 360 let us beg the god, on behalf of this man, though he is savage, and on behalf of the *polis* , to inflict no new evil. But follow me with the ivy-clad staff, and try to support my body, and I will attempt to support yours; 365 it would be shameful for two old men to fall. Still, let come what may, we must serve Dionysus, the son of Zeus. But Pentheus will bring *penthos* to your house, Kadmos; this I say not on the basis of

my prophetic art, but rather from my judgment of the situation. For a foolish man says foolish things.

Teiresias and Kadmos exit.

Chorus

strophe 1

370 Holiness, lady of the gods, Holiness, who bear your golden wings across the face of the earth, do you hear this from Pentheus? Do you hear this unholy 375 hubris against Bromios, the child of Semele, the first *daimōn* at well-garlanded banquets [*euphrosunai*]? He holds this office, to introduce people into the sacred company of *khoroï* , 380 to laugh to the accompaniment of the pipes, and to bring an end to cares, whenever the delight of the grape comes forth in the feasts of the gods, and in ivy-bearing banquets 385 the goblet surrounds men with sleep.

antistrophe 1

Misfortune is the end result [*telos*] of unbridled mouths and lawless folly. The life of serenity [*hēsukhiā*] 390 and sense remains unshaken and supports households. Though they dwell far off in the heavens, the gods see mortal affairs. 395 It is not wisdom [*sophiā*] to be overly *sophos* , and to think things unbecoming mortal men. Life is short, and in it he who pursues great things does not achieve that which is present. In my opinion, these are the ways of mad and 400 ill-counseling men.

strophe 2

Would that I could go to Cyprus, the island of Aphrodite, where the Loves dwell, who charm 405 mortals' hearts, and to Paphos, fertilized without rain by the streams of a foreign river flowing with a hundred mouths. Lead me, Bromios, *daimōn* of joy who leads the Bacchae, 410 to Pieria, beautiful seat of the Muses, the holy slope of Olympus. 415 There are the Graces [*kharites*], there is desire, there it is divinely ordained [*themis*] for the Bacchae to celebrate their rites.

antistrophe 2

The *daimōn* , the son of Zeus, rejoices in banquets, and Peace, 420 which brings prosperity, goddess who nourishes youths, is *philē* to him. He gives an equal delight from wine, banishing grief, to the wealthy [*olbios*] and to the less fortunate. He hates whoever does not care about this: 425 to live day and *philai* nights in blessedness and to keep his wise *phrēn* and intellect away from over-curious men. 430 What the common multitude thinks and practices, that I would accept.

An attendant enters.

Attendant [*therapōn*]

Pentheus, we have come here, having caught the prey 435 for which you sent us, nor has our work been in vain. This beast was docile to us and did not withdraw in flight, but yielded willingly. He did not turn pale or change the wine-bright complexion of his cheek, but laughed and allowed us to bind him and lead him away. 440 He remained still, making my work easy, and I in shame said, “ *xenos* , I do not willingly lead you away, but I am under Pentheus’ orders.” The Bacchae whom you shut up, carrying them off and binding them in chains in the public prison, 445 have gone off, freed from their bonds, and are gamboling in the meadows, calling to the god Bromios. The chains fell off their feet by themselves, and keys opened the doors without the aid of a human hand. This man has come to Thebes full of many wonders. 450 You must take care of the rest.

Pentheus

Release his hands. Caught in these nets he is not quick enough to escape me. But your body is not ill-formed, *xenos* , for relations with women, the reason you have come to Thebes; 455 your hair is long—for you are no wrestler—cascading along your cheek, full of desire; you have white skin, carefully made up, for by avoiding the sun’s rays and remaining in the shade you hunt after Aphrodite with your beauty. 460 First tell me what is your ancestry [*genos*]?

Dionysus

I can tell you this easily, without boasting. I suppose you are familiar with flowery Tmolos.

Pentheus

I know of it; it surrounds the city of Sardis.

Dionysus

I am from there, and Lydia is my fatherland

Pentheus

465 Why do you bring these rites to Hellas?

Dionysus

Dionysus, the child of Zeus, persuaded us.

Pentheus

Is there a Zeus who begets new gods there?

Dionysus

No, but Zeus who married Semele here.

Pentheus

Did he bring you under his spell at night, or in your sight?

Dionysus

470 Seeing me just as I saw him, he gave me sacred rites.

Pentheus

What form do your rites have?

Dionysus

They cannot be told to mortals uninitiated in Bacchic revelry.

Pentheus

How do they benefit those who participate?

Dionysus

It is not right [*themis*] for you to hear, but they are worth knowing.

Pentheus

475 You have coined this story well, so that I desire to hear.

Dionysus

The rites are hostile to whoever practices impiety.

Pentheus

Are you saying that you saw clearly what the god was like?

Dionysus

He was whatever sort he wanted to be; I did not order this.

Pentheus

You contrived this well also, though speaking mere nonsense.

Dionysus

480 One will seem to be foolish if he speaks wise things [*sopha*] to a senseless man.

Pentheus

Did you come here first with this *daimōn* ?

Dionysus

All the barbarians celebrate these rites.

Pentheus

Certainly, for their *phrenes* are far worse than the Hellenes'.

Dionysus

Better in this at any rate; but their laws are different.

Pentheus

485 Do you perform the sacred rites [*hiera*] by night or by day?

Dionysus

Mostly by night; darkness conveys awe.

Pentheus

This is treacherous towards women, and unsound.

Dionysus

Even during the day you can find what is shameful.

Pentheus

You must pay the penalty [*dikē*] for your evil devices.

Dionysus

490 And you for your ignorance and impiety toward the god.

Pentheus

How bold and practiced in speaking the Bacchant is!

Dionysus

Tell me what I must suffer [*paskhein*]. What terrible thing will you do to me?

Pentheus

First I will cut off your luxuriant [*habros*] hair.

Dionysus

My hair is sacred [*hieros*]. I am growing it for the god.

Pentheus

495 Next give me this *thyrsos* from your hands.

Dionysus

Take it from me yourself. I bear it as the emblem of Dionysus.

Pentheus

We will keep you in prison.

Dionysus

The *daimōn* himself will release me, whenever I want.

Pentheus

When you call him, that is, standing among the Bacchae.

Dionysus

500 Even now he sees, from close up, what I suffer [*paskhein*].

Pentheus

Where is he? He is not visible to my eyes.

Dionysus

Near me, but you, being impious, do not see him.

Pentheus

Seize him, he insults me and Thebes!

Dionysus

I warn you not to bind me, since I am balanced [*sōphrōn*] and you are not.

Pentheus

505 And I, more powerful than you, bid them to bind you.

Dionysus

You do not know how you live, or what you are doing, or who you are.

Pentheus

I am Pentheus, son of Ekhion and Agaue.

Dionysus

You are well suited to be miserable in your name.

Pentheus

Go!

To the attendants.

Shut him up near the horse stable, 510 so that he may see only darkness.

To Dionysus.

Join the *khōros* there. These women whom you have led here as accomplices to your evils we will either sell or, stopping them from making this noise and beating leather skins, make slaves for our looms.

Dionysus

515 I will go, since I need not suffer [*paskhein*] that which is not necessary. But Dionysus, who you claim does not exist, will pursue you for this *hubris* . For in treating us without *dikē* you are leading him into chains.

Dionysus is led away by the attendants. Pentheus exits into the palace.

Chorus

strophe

Daughter of Akhelōios, 520 venerable Dirke, happy virgin, you once received the child of Zeus in your streams, when Zeus his father snatched him up from the immortal fire and saved him in his thigh, 525 crying out: “Go, Dithyrambus, enter this my masculine womb. I will make you illustrious, Dionysus, in Thebes, so that they will call you by this name.” 530 But you, blessed Dirke, reject me, though I revel on your banks in garland-bearing companies of women. Why do you refuse me, why do you flee me? I swear by the cluster-bearing 535 grace [*kharis*] of Dionysus’ vine that you will have a care for Bromios.

antistrophe

What rage, what rage does the earth-born race [*genos*] show, and Pentheus, 540 descended of old from a serpent, sired by earth-born Ekhion, a fierce monster, not a mortal man, like a bloody giant to fight against the gods! 545 He will soon bind me, the handmaid of Bromios, in chains, and he already holds my fellow-reveler within the house, hidden away in a dark prison. 550 Do you see this, Dionysus, son of Zeus: your spokesmen [*prophētēs* pl.] in the dangers of restraint? Come, lord, down from Olympus, brandishing your golden *thyrsos* , 555 and check the *hubris* of this murderous man.

Where on Nysa, which nourishes wild beast, or on Korykian height, do you lead with your *thyrsos* the bands of revelers? 560 Perhaps in the thickly wooded chambers of Olympus, where Orpheus once led together trees by playing songs on his lyre. 565 Blessed Pieria, the Joyful

one reveres you and will come to set you singing and dancing in *choroi* of revelry; having crossed the swiftly-flowing Axion he will bring the
570 whirling Maenads, leaving father Lydia, giver of prosperity [*olbos*] and happiness [*eudaimoniā*] to mortals, who they say fertilizes the land of beautiful horses with its 575 fairest streams.

Dionysus enters.

Dionysus

Io! Hear my voice, hear it, Io Bacchae, Io Bacchae.

Chorus

Who is here, who? From what quarter did the voice of the Joyful one summon me?

Dionysus

580 Io! Io! I say again; it is I, the child of Zeus and Semele.

Chorus

Io! Io! My master, my master! Come then to our band, Bromios.

Dionysus

585 Shake this place, sovereign Spirit of Earthquake!

Chorus

—Oh! Oh! Soon the palace of Pentheus will be shaken in ruin!

—Bacchus is in the halls! Revere him!

— 590 We revere him!

—Did you see these stone lintels on the pillars falling apart? Bromios shouts in victory inside the palace!

Dionysus

Light the fiery lamp of lightning! 595 Burn, burn Pentheus' household!

Chorus

Oh! Oh! Do you not see the fire, do you not perceive, about the sacred [*hieron*] tomb of Semele, the flame that Zeus' thunderbolt left? 600

Throw to the ground your trembling bodies, Maenads, cast them down,
for our lord, Zeus' offspring, is approaching the palace, turning
everything upside down.

Dionysus

Barbarian women, 605 have you fallen on the ground so stricken with
fear? You have, so it seems, felt Dionysus shaking the house of Pentheus.
But get up, and, take courage, putting a stop to your trembling.

Chorus

Oh greatest light for us in our joyful revelry, how happy I am to see you,
I who was alone and desolate before.

Dionysus

610 Did you despair when I was sent to fall into Pentheus' dark
dungeon?

Chorus

Of course. What guardian did I have, if you were to suffer a disaster? But
how were you freed from the impious man?

Dionysus

I saved myself easily, without trouble.

Chorus

615 Did he not tie your hands in binding knots?

Dionysus

In this too I mocked him, since thinking that he was chaining me he
neither touched nor handled me, but fed on hopes. He found a bull by
the stable where he shut me up, and threw shackles around its legs and
hooves, 620 breathing out *thūmos* , dripping sweat from his body, biting
his lips. And I, present nearby, sat serenely [*hēsukhos*] and looked on.
Meanwhile, Bacchus came; he shook the house and set fire to his
mother's tomb. When Pentheus saw this, 625 he ran here and there,
thinking that the house was burning, and ordered the slaves to bring
water; every servant was at work, toiling in vain.

Then he let this labor drop and, on the grounds that I had escaped, snatching a dark sword he rushed into the house. Then Bromios, so it seems to me—I can only give my opinion— 630 created a phantom in the courtyard. Pentheus rushed at it, stabbing at the shining air, as though slaughtering me. Besides this, Bacchus inflicted other damage on him. He knocked his house to the ground, and everything shattered into pieces, while Pentheus saw how bitter for him were the chains meant for me. 635 Letting slip the sword, he is exhausted from his cut and thrust. For he, a mortal man, dared to fight with a god.

Now I have left the house and come to you serenely [*hēsukhos*], with no thought of Pentheus. But I think—I hear the tramping of feet in the house—he will soon come out to the front of the house. 640 What will he say now? I will suffer him easily, even if he comes boasting greatly. A *sophos* man must practice good temper that is moderate [*sōphrōn*].

Pentheus enters.

Pentheus

I have suffered [*paskhein*] a terrible disaster: the stranger, who was recently imprisoned, has escaped me. Ah! 645 Here is the man. What is this? How do you appear in front of the house, having come out?

Dionysus

Stop. Calm down your anger.

Pentheus

How have you escaped your chains and come outside?

Dionysus

Did I not say—or did you not hear—that someone would deliver me?

Pentheus

650 Who? You are always introducing strange explanations.

Dionysus

He who produces the grape vine for mortals.

Pentheus

[Pentheus' response is missing.]

Dionysus

His glory lies in your scorn.

Pentheus

Close up all the towers.

Dionysus

Why? Do gods not pass even over walls?

Pentheus

655 You are very *sophos* , at least in all save what you should be *sophos* in.

Dionysus

I was born *sophos* in all that I should be.

A messenger enters.

Listen first to the words of this man, who has come from the mountain to bring you some message. We will wait; we won't flee.

Messenger

660 Pentheus, ruler of this land of Thebes, I have come from Kithairon, where the bright flakes of white snow never melt.

Pentheus

What important news do you bring?

Messenger

Having seen the holy Bacchants, who 665 goaded to madness have darted from this land with their fair feet, I have come to tell you and the *polis* , lord, that they are doing awesome and unbelievable things. I wish to hear whether I should tell you freely the situation there or whether I should repress my report, 670 for I fear, lord, the quickness of your *phrenes* , your keen temper and your overly royal disposition.

Pentheus

Speak, since you will have full immunity from me. It is not right to be angry with the just [*dikaios*]. The more you tell me terrible things about the Bacchants, **675** the more I will punish this one here who taught the women these tricks.

Messenger

⁶⁷⁷ I was just driving the herd up the slope, ⁶⁷⁸ a herd of cattle, driving them uphill from further downhill, at the time when the sun ⁶⁷⁹ sends forth its rays, warming the earth. ⁶⁸⁰ And I see three companies [*thiasoi*] of women's choruses [*khoroi*], ⁶⁸¹ one of which Autonoe was leading, the second, ⁶⁸² your mother Agaue, and the third chorus [*khoros*], Ino. ⁶⁸³ All were sleeping, their bodies relaxed, ⁶⁸⁴ some resting their backs on the leaves of fir trees, ⁶⁸⁵ while others were laying their heads on oak leaves strewn on the ground, ⁶⁸⁶ lying here and there in a moderate way [*sōphronōs*] and not, as you say, ⁶⁸⁷ filled with wine in a scene of wine-cups and tunes played on the pipe, ⁶⁸⁸ and not at all hunting to find Kypris [= Aphrodite] while roaming through the woods on their own.

⁶⁸⁹ Then your mother raised the cry of *ololu* as she was ⁶⁹⁰ standing in the midst of the Bacchants. She was signaling them to rouse their bodies and awaken from sleep ⁶⁹¹ as soon as she heard the lowing of the horned cattle. ⁶⁹² So they threw potent sleep from their eyes ⁶⁹³ and sprang upright—a marvel [*thauma*] of proper arrangement [*eukosmiā*] to behold ⁶⁹⁴ —young, old, and still unmarried virgins. ⁶⁹⁵ First they let their hair loose over their shoulders, ⁶⁹⁶ and then they re-arranged their fawn-skins, which already had ⁶⁹⁷ the fastenings of their knots come loose. ⁶⁹⁸ So they girded these spotted hides with serpents that licked their cheeks, ⁶⁹⁹ and some women were cradling in their arms a gazelle—or the cubs of wolves— ⁷⁰⁰ and, holding these wild things, they gave them white milk ⁷⁰¹ —I mean, those women who had recently given birth and had their breasts still swollen, ⁷⁰² having left behind at home their own babies. And they placed on their heads ivy ⁷⁰³ as garlands, and oak, and

flowering yew. ⁷⁰⁴ One took her wand [*thursos*] and struck it against a rock, ⁷⁰⁵ and out of it a dewy stream of water sprang forth. ⁷⁰⁶ Another let her wand [*narthēx*] strike the ground of the earth, ⁷⁰⁷ and there the god sent forth a stream of wine. ⁷⁰⁸ All who had a desire [*pothos*] for the white drink ⁷⁰⁹ patted the earth with the tips of their fingers ⁷¹⁰ and obtained jets of milk. And from the wands stuffed with ivy, ⁷¹¹ from those wands [*thursoi*] sweet streams of honey were dripping. ⁷¹² So, if you [= Pentheus] had been present, then the god whom you now blame — ⁷¹³ you would have approached him with prayers, yes, if you had seen these things.

⁷¹⁴ And we herdsmen and shepherds came together [*sun-ēlthomen*] ⁷¹⁵ so that we could give each other a competition [*eris*] of words that we had in common, ⁷¹⁶ concerning what kinds of terrifying things they do [*drân*], yes, terrifying and worthy of wonder [*thauma*]. Someone, a wanderer about the city and practiced in speaking, said to us all: “You who inhabit the holy plains of the mountains, shall we hunt **720** Pentheus’ mother Agaue out from the Bacchic revelry and put the king under obligation [*kharis*] to us?” We agreed to the idea, and lay down in ambush, hiding ourselves in the foliage of bushes. They, at the appointed hour, began to wave the *thyrsos* in their revelries, calling on **725** Iacchus with united voice, the son of Zeus, Bromios. The whole mountain reveled along with them and even the beasts, and nothing was unmoved by their running. Agaue happened to be leaping near me, and I sprang forth to snatch her, **730** abandoning the thicket where I had hidden my body. But she cried out: “My fleet hounds, we are hunted by these men; follow me! Follow armed with your *thyrsoi* in your hands!”

We fled and escaped **735** being torn apart by the Bacchants, but they, unarmed, sprang on the heifers browsing the grass. You could have seen one rending asunder a fatted lowing calf, while others tore apart cows. **740** You could have seen ribs or cloven hooves tossed all about; caught in the trees they dripped, dabbled in gore. Bulls who formerly with *hubris*

showed their fury with their horns had their bodies cut to the ground,
745 dragged down by the countless hands of young girls. The garment
of flesh was torn apart faster than you could blink your royal eyes. And
aloft like birds in their course, they proceeded along the level plains,
which produce the 750 bountiful Theban crops by the streams of the
Asopos. Falling like attacking soldiers upon Hysiai and Erythrai, towns
situated below Kithairon, they set everything in disorder. They snatched
children from their homes. 755 At the same time, whatever they put on
their shoulders, whether bronze or iron, was not held on by bonds, but
did not fall to the ground. They carried fire on their locks, but it did not
burn them. Some people in rage took up arms, being plundered by the
Bacchants, 760 the sight of which was terrible to behold, lord. For the
men's pointed spears drew no blood, but the women, hurling the *thyrsos*
from their hands, kept wounding them and turned them to flight—
women did this to men, not without the help of some god! 765 They
returned to whence they had come, to the very fountains which the god
had sent forth for them, and washed off the blood, and snakes cleaned
the drops from the women's cheeks with their tongues.

770 Receive then this *daimōn* , whoever he is, into this *polis* , master. For
he is great in other respects, and they say that he even gives to mortals
the grape that brings relief from cares. Without wine there is no longer
Kypris or any other delightful thing for humans.

Chorus

775 I fear to speak freely to the *turannos* , but I will speak nevertheless.
Dionysus is inferior to none of the gods.

Pentheus

Already like fire does this *hubris* of the Bacchae blaze up, a great source
of reproach for the Hellenes. 780 But we must not hesitate. Go to the
gates of Electra, bid all the shield-bearers and riders of swift horses to
assemble, as well as all who brandish the light shield and pluck
bowstrings with their hands, so that we can make an assault against the

Bacchae. 785 For it is all too much if we suffer [*paskhein*] what we are suffering [*paskhein*] at the hands of women.

Dionysus

Pentheus, though you hear my words you obey not at all. I say that it is not right for me to suffer [*paskhein*] at your hands and for you to raise arms against me the god; you must be serene [*hēsukhos*] instead. 790 Bromios will not allow you to remove the Bacchae from the joyful mountains.

Pentheus

Do not instruct me, but be content in your escape from prison. Or shall I bring punishment upon you again?

Dionysus

As a mortal I would sacrifice to the god rather 795 than kick against the goads in anger.

Pentheus

I will sacrifice, slaughtering the women as they deserve, in the glens of Kithairon.

Dionysus

You will all flee. And it will be a source of shame that you turn your bronze shield in flight from the *thyrsoi* of the Bacchae.

Pentheus

800 This *xenos* with whom we are wrestling is impossible and will be quiet neither suffering [*paskhein*] nor acting.

Dionysus

Friend, you can still settle this situation satisfactorily.

Pentheus

Doing what? By being a slave to my servants?

Dionysus

Without arms I will bring the women here.

Pentheus

805 Alas! You are contriving this as a trick against me.

Dionysus

What sort of trick is it if I wish to save you?

Pentheus

You have conspired in common, so that you may have your revelry forever.

Dionysus

I certainly did, with the god, that is.

Pentheus

Bring me my armor. And you keep quiet.

Dionysus

810 Wait! Do you wish to see the women sitting in the mountains?

Pentheus

Certainly. I'd pay an enormous amount of gold to see them.

Dionysus

Why do you want this so badly?

Pentheus

I would be sorry to see them in their drunkenness.

Dionysus

815 But would you see gladly what is grievous to you?

Pentheus

To be sure, sitting quietly under the pines.

Dionysus

But they will track you down, even if you go in secret.

Pentheus

You are right; I will go openly.

Dionysus

Shall I guide you? Will you attempt the journey?

Pentheus

820 Lead me as quickly as possible. I grudge you the time.

Dionysus

Put clothes of eastern linen on your body then.

Pentheus

What is this? Shall I then, instead of a man, be reckoned among the women?

Dionysus

So that they don't kill you if you appear there as a man.

Pentheus

Again you speak correctly; how *sophos* you have been all along.

Dionysus

825 Dionysus gave me this education.

Pentheus

How can these things which you advise me so well be done?

Dionysus

I will go inside and dress you.

Pentheus

In what clothing? Female? But shame [*aidōs*] holds me back.

Dionysus

Are you no longer eager to view the Maenads?

Pentheus

830 What attire do you bid me to put on my body?

Dionysus

I will spread out your hair at length on your head.

Pentheus

What is the second part of my outfit?

Dionysus

A robe down to your feet. And you will wear a headband.

Pentheus

And what else will you add to this for me?

Dionysus

835 A *thyrsos* in your hand, and dappled fawn-skin.

Pentheus

I could not possibly put on a woman's dress.

Dionysus

But you will shed blood if you join battle with the Bacchae.

Pentheus

True. We must go first and spy.

Dionysus

This is more *sophos* than hunting trouble with trouble.

Pentheus

840 How will I go through the city without being seen by the Thebans?

Dionysus

We will go on deserted roads. I will lead you.

Pentheus

Anything is better than to be mocked by the Bacchae. Let us two go into the house, and I will consider what seems best.

Dionysus

We can do what we like. I am at your service for anything.

Pentheus

845 I will go in. For I will either go bearing arms, or I will obey your guidance.

He exits.

Dionysus

Women, the man is caught in our net. He will reach the Bacchae, where he will pay the penalty [*dikē*] with his death. Dionysus, now it is your task. You are not far off. 850 Let us punish him: first drive him out of his *phrenes* , send upon him a dizzying madness, since if he is of sound *phrenes* he will not consent to wear women's clothing, but he will put it on in insanity. I want him to be a source of laughter to the Thebans, led through the city in 855 women's guise after making such terrible threats in the past. ⁸⁵⁷ I am going now. The costume [*kosmos*] that he will take with him to the house of Hādēs ⁸⁵⁸ when he goes off to that place, slaughtered by the two hands of his own mother ⁸⁵⁹ —that costume will I attach to Pentheus. And he will come to know the son of Zeus, ⁸⁶⁰ Dionysus, the one who is by his own nature a god in the end [*telos*], ⁸⁶¹ the one who is most terrifying [*deinos*], but, for humans, also most gentle [*ēpios*].

Chorus

strophe

⁸⁶² Shall I ever, in choruses that last all night long, ⁸⁶³ set in motion my gleaming white ⁸⁶⁴ foot in a Bacchic revel as I thrust my throat ⁸⁶⁵ toward the upper air wet with dew, yes, thrusting it forward ⁸⁶⁶ —just like a fawn playfully ⁸⁶⁷ skipping around in the green delights of a meadow ⁸⁶⁸ after she has escaped from the terrifying ⁸⁶⁹ hunt. Now she is out of reach, ⁸⁷⁰ having leapt beyond their hunting nets, ⁸⁷¹ even while the hunter keeps shouting ⁸⁷² his hunting cry to his hounds, urging them to run faster and faster. ⁸⁷³ But the fawn, like a gust of wind with the vigor of her swift running, is now bounding past the meadow ⁸⁷⁴ that has the river next to

it, and she can take sweet delight ⁸⁷⁵ in the absence of mortal men ⁸⁷⁶ amidst the tender shoots growing in the forest with its shady leaves. What is wisdom [*sophon*]? Or what finer prize do the gods give to mortals than to hold one's hand **880** in victory over the head of one's enemies? ⁸⁸¹ Whatever is beautiful [*kalon*] is near and dear [*philon*] forever.

antistrophe

Divine strength is roused with difficulty, but is trustworthy nevertheless. It chastises those mortals **885** who give *tīmē* to folly and those who in their insanity do not extol the gods. The gods cunningly conceal the slow foot of time and hunt out the impious. **890** One must not think or practice anything greater than the laws. It costs little to reckon that whatever involves a *daimōn* has power, **895** and that whatever has long been lawful is eternally and naturally so. What is wisdom [*sophon*]? Or what finer prize do the gods give to mortals than to hold one's hand **900** in victory over the head of one's enemies? ⁹⁰¹ Whatever is beautiful [*kalon*] is near and dear [*philon*] forever. Fortunate [*eudaimōn*] is he who has fled a storm on the sea and reached harbor. *Eudaimōn* too is he who has overcome his toils. **905** Different people surpass others in various ways, be it in wealth [*olbos*] or in power. Mortals have innumerable hopes, and some come to *telos* in prosperity [*olbos*], while others fail. **910** I deem him blessed whose life is *eudaimōn* day by day.

Dionysus

⁹¹² You there! Yes, I'm talking to you, to the one who is so eager to see the things that should not be seen ⁹¹³ and who rushes to accomplish things that cannot be rushed. It is you that I am talking to, Pentheus. ⁹¹⁴ Come out from inside the palace. Let me have a good look at you ⁹¹⁵ wearing the costume of a woman who is a maenad [*mainas*], a Bacchant [*bakkhē*], ⁹¹⁶ ready to spy on your mother and her company.

Pentheus emerges.

⁹¹⁷ The way you are shaped, you look just like one of the daughters of

Kadmos.

Pentheus

⁹¹⁸ What is this? I think I see two suns, ⁹¹⁹ and not one seven-gated city [*polisma*] of Thebes but two. ⁹²⁰ And, as you are leading me, you look like a bull ⁹²¹ and horns seem to have sprouted on your head. ⁹²² Were you ever before a beast? You have certainly now become a bull.

Dionysus

⁹²³ The god accompanies us, though formerly he was not of good intentions [*eu-menēs*]. ⁹²⁴ He has a truce with us, and now you see what you should be seeing.

Pentheus

925 So what do I appear [*phainesthai*] to be? Do I not have the dancing pose [*stasis*] of Ino ⁹²⁶ or of Agaue my mother?

Dionysus

⁹²⁷ Looking at you I think I see them right now. ⁹²⁸ Oh, but watch out: this lock of hair [*plokamos*] here is out of place. It stands out, ⁹²⁹ not the way I had secured it, to be held down by the headband [*mitra*].

Pentheus

930 While I was inside, I was shaking it [= the lock of hair] forward and backward, ⁹³¹ and, in a Bacchic state of mind [*bakkhiazōn*], I displaced it, moving it out of place.

Dionysus

⁹³² Then I, whose concern it is to care [*therapeuein*] for you, will ⁹³³ arrange it [= the lock hair] all over again. Come on, hold your head straight.

Pentheus

⁹³⁴ You see it [= the lock of hair]? There it is! You arrange [*kosmein*] it for me. I can see I am really depending on you.

Dionysus

935 And your waistband has come loose. And those things are not in the right order, ⁹³⁶ I mean, the pleats of your robe [*peplos*], the way they extend down around your ankles.

Pentheus

⁹³⁷ That's the way I see it from my angle as well. At least, that is the way it is down around my right foot, ⁹³⁸ but, on this other side, the robe [*peplos*] does extend in a straight line down around the calf.

Dionysus

⁹³⁷ I really do think you will consider me the foremost among those who are near and dear [*philoi*] to you ⁹⁴⁰ when, contrary to your expectations, you see that Bacchants [*bakchai*] are moderate [= *sōphrones*].

Pentheus

⁹⁴¹ So which one will it be? I mean, shall I hold the wand [*thursos*] with my right hand ⁹⁴² or with this other one here? Which is the way I will look more like a Bacchant [*bakkhē*]?

Dionysus

⁹⁴³ You must hold it in your right hand and, at the same time, with your right foot ⁹⁴⁴ you must make an upward motion. I approve [*aineîn*] of the way you have shifted in your thinking [*phrenes*].

Pentheus

945 Could I not carry on my shoulders the ridges of Mount Kithairon, ⁹⁴⁶ Bacchants and all?

Dionysus

⁹⁴⁷ You could if you wanted to. Your earlier thoughts [*phrenes*] ⁹⁴⁸ were not sound, but now they are the way they should be.

Pentheus

⁹⁴⁹ Shall we bring levers, or shall I use my hands for lifting, ⁹⁵⁰ throwing a shoulder or arm under the mountains as I raise them up?

Dionysus

⁹⁵¹ But you must not destroy the dwelling places of the Nymphs ⁹⁵² and the places where Pan stays, playing on his pipe.

Pentheus

⁹⁵³ You said it well. It is not by force that my victory over ⁹⁵⁴ the women should happen. I will hide my body under the shelter of the fir trees.

Dionysus

955 You will hide yourself by hiding as you should be hidden, ⁹⁵⁶ coming as a crafty spy on the maenads [*mainades*].

Pentheus

⁹⁵⁷ You know, I have this vision of them: there they are in the bushes, like birds in their most beloved [*phila*] hiding places, held in the tight grip of making love.

Dionysus

⁹⁵⁹ Yes, and are you not like a guardian who has been sent out to counter exactly this kind of thing? ⁹⁶⁰ Perhaps you will catch them, unless they beat you to it and you yourself get caught.

Pentheus

⁹⁶¹ Bring me there, let us go there, passing right through the middle of Thebes on our way. ⁹⁶² I am the only one of those [*Thebans*] who dares to do this.

Dionysus

⁹⁶³ You alone [*monos*] enter the struggle for the sake of this city [*polis*], you alone [*monos*]. ⁹⁶⁴ And so the ordeals [*agōnes*] that must happen are awaiting you. ⁹⁶⁵ Follow me. I am your guide, giving salvation [*sōtērios*

]. ⁹⁶⁶ But then, on the way back, someone else will lead you down from up there.

Pentheus

Yes, it will be my mother.

Dionysus

⁹⁶⁷ And you will be a distinctive sign [*epi-sēmon*] to all.

Pentheus

I am going with that objective in mind.

Dionysus

⁹⁶⁸ You will return here being carried—

Pentheus

You are talking about my desire for luxury [*habrotēs*]

Dionysus

⁹⁶⁹ —in the arms of your mother.

Pentheus

Yes indeed, in such luxury [*truphē*].

Dionysus

⁹⁷⁰ I am reaching for things I deserve.

Pentheus

I am undertaking worthy deeds.

Dionysus

⁹⁷¹ A man of terror [*deinos*] you are, a man of terror [*deinos*], and you are going after experiences [*pathos* plural] that are things of terror [*deina*]. ⁹⁷² The result will be that you will find a glory [*kleos*] reaching all the way up to the sky. ⁹⁷³ Hold out your hands, Agaue, and you too, her sisters, ⁹⁷⁴ daughters of Kadmos. The young man is being led by me ⁹⁷⁵ to this great ordeal [*agōn*] here. ⁹⁷⁶ And the one who will win the

victory—that will be I myself. Bromios [= Dionysus the Thunderer] and I myself will be the victors. What signals [*sēmainein*] it are other things that are yet to happen.

Dionysus and Pentheus exit.

Chorus

strophe

Go to the mountain, go, fleet hounds of Madness, where the daughters of Kadmos hold their company, and goad them 980 against the mad spy on the Maenads, the one dressed in women's garb. His mother first will see him from a smooth rock or crag, as he lies in ambush, and she will cry out to the Maenads: 985 "Who is this seeker of the mountain-going Kadmeians who has come to the mountain, to the mountain, Bacchae? Who bore him? For he was not born from a woman's blood, but is the offspring of some lioness 990 or of Libyan Gorgons." Let manifest *dikē* go forth, let it go with sword in hand, slay with a blow through the throat this 995 godless, lawless, unjust, earth-born offspring of Ekhion.

antistrophe

He with wicked plan and unjust disposition regarding your rites, Bacchus, and those of your mother, comes with raving heart 1000 and mad disposition to overcome by force [*biā*] what is invincible. The balance [*sōphrosunē*] for his purposes is death, that accepts no excuses when the affairs of the gods are concerned. To act like a mortal—this is a life that is free from pain. 1005 I do not envy the *sophon*, but rejoice in seeking it. But other things are great and manifest. Oh, that life might flow towards the good, cultivating pure and pious things day and night, giving *tīmē* to the gods, 1010 banishing customs outside of *dikē*. Let manifest *dikē* go forth, let it go with sword in hand, slay with a blow through the throat this 1015 godless, lawless, unjust, earth-born offspring of Ekhion.

Reveal yourself as a bull or many-headed serpent or raging lion in appearance. **1020** Go, Bacchus, with smiling face throw a deadly noose around the neck of this hunter of the Bacchae as he falls beneath the flock of Maenads.

A Messenger enters.

Messenger

House once fortunate in Hellas, **1025** house of the Sidonian old man who once sowed in the ground the earth-born harvest of the serpent Ophis, how I groan for you, though I am but a slave. But still the masters' affairs are of concern to good servants.

Chorus

What's the matter? Do you bring some news from the Bacchae?

Messenger

1030 Pentheus, the child of Ekhion, is dead.

Chorus

Lord Bacchus, truly you appear to be a great god.

Messenger

What do you mean? Why have you said this? Do you rejoice at the misfortunes of my masters, woman?

Chorus

I, a *xenē*, rejoice in barbarian strains; **1035** no longer do I cower in fear of chains.

Messenger

Do you think Thebes so devoid of men?

Chorus

Bacchus, Bacchus, not Thebes, holds power [*kratos*] over me.

Messenger

You may be forgiven, 1040 but it is not good to rejoice at troubles once they have actually taken place, women.

Chorus

Speak. Tell me what kind of death he died, the man without *dikē* , who contrived things without *dikē* .

Messenger

When we left the settlements of the Theban land and crossed the streams of Asopos, 1045 we began to ascend the heights of Kithairon, Pentheus and I— for I was following my master—and the *xenos* , who was the conductor of our mission. First we sat in a grassy vale, 1050 keeping our feet and voice quiet, so that we might see them without being seen. There was a little valley surrounded by precipices, wet with water, shaded by pine trees, where the Maenads were sitting, their hands busy with delightful labors [*ponoi*]. Some of them were 1055 again crowning the wilted *thyrsos* , making it leafy with ivy, while some, like colts freed from the dappled yoke, were singing a Bacchic tune to one another. Pentheus, that unhappy man, said, not seeing the crowd of women: “ *xenos* , 1060 from where we are standing I cannot see these false Maenads. But on the banks of the ravine, ascending a lofty pine, I might view properly the shameful acts of the Maenads.” And then I saw the *xenos* perform a marvel. Seizing hold of the lofty top-most branch of a pine tree, 1065 he drew it down, down, down to the black ground. It was bent just as a bow or a curved wheel, when it is marked out by a compass, describes a circular course; in this way the *xenos* drew the mountain bough and bent it to the earth, doing what no mortal could. 1070 He sat Pentheus down on the pine branch, and released it gently from his hands, taking care not to shake him off. The pine stood firmly upright into the sky, with my master seated on its back. 1075 He was seen by the Maenads more than he saw them. He was just becoming visible sitting on the tree up above, and the *xenos* was no longer anywhere to be seen, when a voice, Dionysus, I guess, cried out from the

air: “Young women, 1080 I bring the one who has made you and me and my rites a laughing-stock. Punish him!” And as he said this a light of holy fire was placed between heaven and earth.

The air became quiet and the woody glen 1085 kept its leaves silent, nor would you have heard the sounds of animals. The women, not having heard the sound clearly, stood upright and looked all around. He repeated his order, and when the daughters of Kadmos recognized the clear command of Bacchus, 1090 they—mother Agaue, her sisters, and all other Bacchae—began to move rapidly, no slower than doves, running eagerly with their feet. They leapt through the torrent-streaming valley and mountain cliffs, frantic with the inspiration of the god. 1095 When they saw my master sitting in the pine, first they climbed a rock towering opposite the tree and began to hurl at him large rocks violently thrown. At the same time he was fired upon by branches of fir, and other women hurled their *thyrsoi* through the air 1100 at Pentheus, a sad target indeed. But they did not reach him, for the wretched man, completely confounded, sat at a height too great for their eagerness. Finally they shattered, as though with a thunder-bolt, some oak branches and began to tear up the roots of the tree with these ironless levers. 1105 When they did not succeed in their toils, Agaue said: “Come, standing round in a circle, seize each a branch, Maenads, so that we may catch this inaccessible beast, and so that he does not make public the secret *khoroï* of the god.” They applied countless hands 1110 to the pine and dragged it up from the earth. Pentheus falls crashing to the ground from his lofty seat, wailing greatly; for he knew he was near doom.

His own mother, as priestess, began the slaughter, 1115 and fell upon him. He threw the miter from his head so that wretched Agaue might recognize and not kill him. Touching her cheek, he said: “It is I, mother, your son Pentheus, whom you bore in the house of Ekhion. 1120 Pity me, mother! Do not kill me, your child, for my errors!”

But she, foaming at the mouth and rolling her eyes all about, with her

phrenes not as they should be, was under the control of Bacchus, and he did not convince her. 1125 Seizing his left arm at the elbow and propping her foot against the unfortunate man's side, she tore out his shoulder, not by her own strength, but with the god providing assistance to her hands. Ino began to work on the other side, 1130 tearing his flesh, while Autonoe and the rest of the crowd pressed on. All were making noise together, and he groaned to the extent that he had life left in him, while they shouted in victory. One of them started to carry an arm, another a leg, boots and all. His ribs were stripped bare 1135 by their tearings. The whole band, hands bloodied, started playing a game of catch with Pentheus' flesh.

His body lies scattered in pieces, parts of him in the rugged rocks, others caught in the deep foliage of the woods; the search for them is not easy. 1140 The miserable head, which his mother happened to take in her hands, she fixed on the end of a *thyrsos* and carries through the midst of Kithairon like that of a wild lion, leaving behind her sisters among the Maenads' *khoroi*. She comes inside these walls, preening herself on the ill-fated prey 1145, calling upon Bacchus, her fellow hunter, her accomplice in the chase, the victor, in whose service she wins a triumph of tears.

And as for me, I will depart out of the way of this disaster before Agaue reaches the house. 1150 Balance [*sōphroneîn*] and reverence for the affairs of the gods is best. I think this is the most *sophon* possession for mortals' use.

Chorus

Let us honor Bacchus with the *khoroi*, let us cry out what has happened. 1155 Pentheus, descendant of the serpent, who assumed female garb and beautiful *thyrsos* [*narthēx*]—certain death—and a bull was the leader of his calamity. 1160 Kadmeian Bacchae, you have accomplished a glorious victory, but one that brings woe and tears. It is a fine *agōn* to cover one's dripping hands with the blood of one's own son. 1165 But I see

Pentheus' mother Agaue coming home, her eyes contorted; receive the triumphal procession [*kōmos*] of the god of joy!

Agaue rushes in, carrying the head of Pentheus.

Agaue

Asian Bacchae . . .

Chorus

Why do you urge me?

Agaue

We bring home from the mountain a 1170 freshly cut tendril, our blessed prey.

Chorus

I see it and will accept you as a fellow member of the procession [*kōmos*].

Agaue

I caught this young wild lion cub without snares, 1175 as you can see.

Chorus

From what wilderness?

Agaue

Kithairon . . .

Chorus

Kithairon?

Agaue

. . . slew him.

Chorus

Who is she who struck him?

Agaue

The prize is mine first. 1180 I am called blessed Agaue by the

worshippers.

Chorus

Who else?

Agaue

Kadmos' other . . .

Chorus

Kadmos' what?

Agaue

Kadmos' other offspring lay hold of this beast after me. This is a lucky catch!

Chorus

[The chorus' response is missing.]

Agaue

Share in the feast then.

Chorus

What? I share in the feast, wretched woman?

Agaue

1185 The bull is young; he has just recently grown a downy cheek under the crest of his hair.

Chorus

Yes, his hair looks like a wild beast's.

Agaue

Bacchus, a *sophos* huntsman, 1190 wisely set the Maenads against this beast.

Chorus

Our lord is hunter.

Agaue

Do you approve of this?

Chorus

I do.

Agaue

Soon the Kadmeians . . .

Chorus

1195 And your son Pentheus, too . . .

Agaue

. . . will praise his mother who has caught this lion-like catch.

Chorus

Extraordinary.

Agaue

And extraordinarily caught.

Chorus

Are you proud?

Agaue

I am delighted, for I have performed great, great, conspicuous deeds on this hunt.

Chorus

1200 Now show the citizens, wretched woman, the prize which you have brought in victory.

Agaue

You who dwell in this fair-towered city of the Theban land, come to see this catch which we the daughters of Kadmos hunted down, 1205 not with thonged Thessalian javelins, or with nets, but with the white-armed edges of our hands. Should huntsmen boast when they use in vain the work of spear-makers? We caught and 1210 tore apart the limbs of

this beast with our very own hands. Where is my old father? Let him approach. Where is my son Pentheus? Let him raise a ladder against the house so that he can ascend and affix to the triglyphs this 1215 lion's head which I have captured and brought back.

Enter Kadmos and his servants, carrying the remains of Pentheus' body.

Kadmos

Follow me, carrying the miserable burden of Pentheus, follow me, attendants, before the house. There I am bringing this body of his, exhausted from countless searches, for I discovered it torn apart in the folds of Kithairon. 1220 I picked up nothing in the same place, and it was lying in the woods where discovery was difficult. I heard of my daughters' bold deeds when I had already come within the walls of the city on my return from the Bacchae with old Teiresias. 1225 I turned back to the mountain and now bring back the child who was killed by the Maenads. I saw Autonoe, who once bore Aktaion to Aristaios, and Ino with her, both in the thickets, still mad, wretched creatures. 1230 But someone told me that Agaue was coming here with Bacchic foot, and this was correct, for I see her—not a happy [*eudaimōn*] sight!

Agaue

Father, you may boast a great boast, that you have sired daughters the best by far of all mortals. 1235 I mean all of them, but myself in particular, who have left my shuttle at the loom and gone on to bigger things: to catch wild animals with my two hands. I carry the trophy of these noble feats [*aristeiā*] in my arms, as you see, 1240 so that it may hang from your house. And you, father, receive it in your hands. Preening yourself in my catch, summon your *philoī* to a feast. For you are blessed, blessed indeed, now that I have performed these deeds.

Kadmos

Oh, *penthos* beyond measuring, one which I cannot stand to see, 1245 since you have committed murder with miserable hands! Having cast down a fine sacrificial victim to the *daimones*, you invite Thebes and me

to a banquet. Alas, first for your woes, then for my own! With *dikē*, yet too severely, lord Bromios has destroyed us, 1250 though he is a member of our own family.

Agaue

How morose and sullen in its countenance is man's old age. I hope that my son is a good hunter, taking after his mother, when he goes after wild beasts together with the young men of Thebes. 1255 But all he can do is fight with the gods. You must admonish him, father. Who will call him here to my sight, so that he may see how happy [*eudaimōn*] I am?

Kadmos

Alas, alas! When you realize what you have done you will suffer a 1260 terrible pain. But if you remain time and again in the state you are in now, though hardly fortunate you will not imagine that you have encountered disaster.

Agaue

But what of these matters is not good, or what is painful?

Kadmos

First cast your eye to the sky.

Agaue

1265 Well, why did you tell me to look at it?

Kadmos

Is it still the same, or does it appear to have changed?

Agaue

It is brighter than before and more translucent.

Kadmos

Is your *psūkhē* still quivering?

Agaue

I don't understand your utterance [*epos*], for I have become somehow

1270 sobered, changing from my former *phrenes* .

Kadmos

Can you hear and respond clearly?

Agaue

How I forget what I said before, father!

Kadmos

To whose house did you come in marriage?

Agaue

You gave me, as they say, to Ekhion, one of the Spartoi.

Kadmos

1275 What son did you bear to your husband in the house?

Agaue

Pentheus, from my union with his father.

Kadmos

Whose head do you hold in your hands?

Agaue

A lion's, as they who hunted him down said.

Kadmos

Examine it correctly then; it takes but little effort to see.

Agaue

1280 Alas! What do I see? What is this that I carry in my hands?

Kadmos

Look at it and learn more clearly.

Agaue

I see the greatest pain, wretched that I am.

Kadmos

Does it look at all like a lion?

Agaue

No, but I, wretched, hold the head of Pentheus.

Kadmos

1285 Mourned by me before you recognized him.

Agaue

Who killed him? How did he come into my hands?

Kadmos

Miserable truth [*alētheia*], how inopportunistly you arrive!

Agaue

Tell me. My heart leaps awaiting what is to come.

Kadmos

You and your sisters killed him.

Agaue

1290 Where did he die? Was it here at home, or in what place?

Kadmos

Where formerly dogs divided Aktaion among themselves.

Agaue

And why did this miserable man go to Kithairon?

Kadmos

He went to mock the god and your revelry.

Agaue

But in what way did we go there?

Kadmos

1295 You were mad, and the whole city was frantic with Bacchus.

Agaue

Dionysus destroyed us—now I understand.

Kadmos

He was wronged with *hubris* : you did not consider him a god.

Agaue

And where is the most *philon* body of my child, father?

Kadmos

I have tracked it with difficulty and brought it back.

Agaue

1300 Are its joints laid properly together?

Kadmos

[Kadmos' response is missing from our text.]

Agaue

What part had Pentheus in my folly?

Kadmos

He, just like you, did not revere the god, who therefore joined all in one ruin, both you and this one here, and thus destroyed the house and me.

1305 I did not beget male children, and I see this offspring of your womb, wretched woman, most miserably and disgracefully slain. He was the hope of our line— you, child, who supported the house, son of my daughter, 1310 an object of fearful reverence for the *polis* . Seeing you, no one wished to treat the old man with *hubris* , for you would have taken fitting *dikē* . But now I, great Kadmos, who sowed and reaped a most beautiful crop, the Theban people, will be banished from the house without *tīmē* . 1315 Most *philos* of men—though you are dead I still count you among my most *philoī* —child, no longer will you address and embrace me, your mother's father, touching my chin with your hand and 1320 saying: "Who treats you without *dikē* and *tīmē* , old man? Who vexes and troubles your heart? Tell me, father, so that I can punish

the one who does you wrong.” But now I am miserable, while you are wretched, your mother pitiful, and your relatives wretched. 1325 If anyone scorns the *daimones* , let him look to the death of this man and acknowledge them.

Chorus

I grieve for you, Kadmos. Your daughter’s child has the *dikē* he deserved, but it is grievous to you.

Agave

Father, you see how much my situation has turned around.

[The next 50 lines are missing, in which Dionysus returns to Thebes triumphant.]

Dionysus To Kadmos.

1330 Changing your form, you will become a dragon, and your wife Harmonia, Arēs’ daughter, whom you, though mortal, took in marriage, will be turned into a beast, and will receive in exchange the form of a serpent. And as the oracle of Zeus says, you will drive along with your wife a pair of heifers, ruling over barbarians. 1335 You will sack many cities with a force of countless numbers. And when they plunder the oracle of Apollo, they will have a miserable *nostos* , but Arēs will protect you and Harmonia and will settle your life in the land of the blessed.

1340 So say I, Dionysus, born not from a mortal father, but from Zeus. If you had known how to be balanced [*sōphrōn*] when you did not wish to, you would have acquired Zeus’ offspring as an ally, and would now be fortunate [*eudaimōn*].

Kadmos

Dionysus, we beseech you, we have acted without *dikē* .

Dionysus

1345 You have learned it too late; you did not know it when you should have.

Kadmos

Now we know, but you go too far against us.

Dionysus

I, a god by birth, was insulted by your *hubris* .

Kadmos

Gods should not resemble mortals in their anger.

Dionysus

My father Zeus decreed this long ago.

Agaue

1350 Alas! A miserable exile has been decreed for us, old man.

Dionysus

Why then do you delay what must necessarily be?

Kadmos

Child, what a terrible misery has befallen us—you, your brothers and sisters, and wretched me. I shall go as an aged immigrant to the barbarians. 1355 Still, it is foretold that I shall bring into Hellas a motley barbarian army. I, leading their spears, endowed with the fierce nature of a serpent, will lead my wife Harmonia, daughter of Arēs, against the altars and tombs of Hellas. 1360 I will neither rest from my evils in my misery, nor will I sail over the downward-flowing Acheron and be at peace [*hēsukhos*].

Agaue

O father, I will go into exile deprived of you.

Kadmos

Why do you embrace me with your hands, child, 1365 like a white swan does its exhausted parent?

Agaue

Where can I turn, banished from my fatherland?

Agaue

Farewell, home! Farewell, *polis* of my forefathers! In misfortune I leave you, an exile from my bedchamber.

Kadmos

1370 Go now, child, to the land of Aristaios.

Agaue

I bemoan you, father.

Kadmos

And I you, child, and I weep for your sisters.

Agaue

Terribly indeed has 1375 lord Dionysus brought this suffering to your home.

Dionysus

I suffered [*paskhein*] terrible things at your hands, and my name was without honor in Thebes.

Agaue

Farewell, my father.

Kadmos

Farewell, 1380 unhappy daughter. With difficulty indeed would you reach this “faring well”!

Agaue

Lead me, escorts, where I may take comfort in my pitiful sisters as companions to my exile. May I go where accursed Kithairon may not see me, 1385 nor I see Kithairon with my eyes, nor where a memorial of a Bacchic *thyrsos* has been dedicated; let these concern other Bacchae.

Chorus

Many are the forms of things of the *daimones* , and the gods bring many things to pass unexpectedly. 1390 What is expected does not come to

telos , and a god finds a way for the unexpected. So too has this affair turned out.

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The Apology of Socrates

By Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

Adapted by Miriam Carlisle, Thomas E. Jenkins, Gregory Nagy, and Soo-Young Kim

Socrates

[17a] How you have felt, O men of Athens, at hearing the speeches of my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that their persuasive words almost made me forget who I was—such was the effect of them; and yet they have hardly spoken a word of truth [*alēthēs*]. But many as their falsehoods were, there was one of them which quite amazed me—I mean when they told you to be upon your guard, and not to let yourselves be deceived [17b] by the force of my eloquence. They ought to have been ashamed of saying this, because they were sure to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and displayed my deficiency; they certainly did appear to be most shameless in saying this, unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth [*alēthēs*]; for then I do indeed admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have hardly uttered a word, or not more than a word, of truth [*alēthēs*]; but you shall hear from me the whole truth [*alēthēs*]: not, however, delivered after their manner, in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases.

No indeed! [17c] but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am certain that this is right, and that at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator—let no one expect this of me. And I must beg of you to grant me one favor, which is this—if you hear me using the same words in my defense which I have been in the habit of using, and which most of you may have heard in the *agora*, and at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, [17d] I would ask you not to be surprised at this, and not to interrupt me. For I am more than

seventy years of age, and this is the first time that I have ever appeared in a court of law, and I am quite a stranger to the ways of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, [18a] and after the fashion of his country—that I think is not an unfair request. Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the justice [*dikē*] of my cause, and give heed to that: let the jury decide with their virtue [*aretē*] and the speaker speak truly [*alēthēs*].

And first, it's only right [full of *dikē*] that I reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go to the later ones. [18b] For I have had many accusers, who accused me of old, and their false [non-*alēthēs*] charges have continued during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are these, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods [non-*alēthēs*], telling of one Socrates, a wise [*sophos*] man, who speculated about the sky above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. [18c] These are the accusers whom I dread; for they are the circulators of this rumor, and their hearers are too apt to fancy that speculators of this sort do not believe in the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they made them in days when you were impressible—in childhood, or perhaps in youth—and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And, hardest of all, [18d] their names I do not know and cannot tell; unless in the chance of a comic poet. But the main body of these slanderers who from envy and malice have wrought upon you—and there are some of them who are convinced themselves, and impart their convictions to others—all these, I say, are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defense, and examine when there is no one who answers. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds—

one recent, [18e] the other ancient; and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I will make my defense, and I will endeavor [19a] in the short time which is allowed to do away with this evil opinion of me which you have held for such a long time; and I hope I may succeed, if this be well for you and me, and that my words may find favor with you. But I know that to accomplish this is not easy—I quite see the nature of the task. Let the event be as the god wills: in obedience to the law [*nomos*] I make my defense.

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what the accusation is [19b] which has given rise to this slander of me, and which has encouraged Meletus to proceed against me. What do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit. “Socrates does nothing that is just [*dikē*]; he is a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in the sky, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; [19c] and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.” That is the nature of the accusation, and that is what you have seen yourselves in the comedy of Aristophanes; who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he can walk in the air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little—not that I mean to say anything disparaging of [literally: show no *tīmē* toward] anyone who is wise [*sophos*] about natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could lay that to my charge. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with these studies. [19d] Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbors whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon matters of this sort. ... You hear their answer. And from what they say of this you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; [19e] that is no more true [*alēthēs*] than the other. Although, if a man is able to teach, I honor him for being paid. There is Gorgias of Leontini, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens [of the *polis*], by whom they might be taught for nothing, [20a] and come to them, whom they not only pay, but are thankful [full of *kharis*] if they may be allowed to pay them. There is actually a Parian wise man [*sophos*] residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way: I met a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Kallias the son of Hipponikos, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: “Kallias,” I said, “if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in [20b] finding someone to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses or a farmer probably who would improve and perfect [lit: make them more *agathoi*] them in their own proper virtue and excellence [*aretē*]; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there anyone who understands human and political virtue [*aretē*]? You must have thought about this as you have sons; is there anyone?” “There is,” he said. “Who is he?” said I, “and of what country? and what does he charge?” “Evenus the Parian,” he replied; “he is the man, and his charge is five coins.” Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he truly [*alēthēs*] [20c] has this knack, and teaches at such a modest charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

I dare say, Athenians, that someone among you will reply, “Why is this, Socrates, and what is the origin of these accusations of you: for there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All this great fame and talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, [20d] why this is, as we should be sorry to judge hastily of you.” Now I regard this as a fair [*dikaios*] challenge, and I will endeavor to explain to you the origin of my ‘name’ and of this evil

fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth [*alēthēs*]. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom [*sophiā*] which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom [*sophiā*], I reply, such wisdom [*sophiā*] as is attainable by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise [*sophos*]; [20e] whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom [*sophiā*], which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit, and will tell you about my wisdom [*sophiā*]*—whether I have any, and of what sort—and that witness shall be the god of Delphi. You must have known Chaerephon; [21a] he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle [*manteuesthai*] to tell him whether—as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt—he asked the oracle to tell him whether there was anyone wiser [more *sophos*] than I, and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser [more *sophos*.] Chaerephon is dead himself, but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of this story.*

[21b] Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, “What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of this riddle [*ainigma*]? For I know that I have no wisdom [*sophiā*], small or great. What can he mean when he says that I am the wisest [most *sophos*] of men? And yet he is a god and cannot lie; that would be against his nature [= *themis* does not allow it].” After a long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man more *sophos* than myself, [21c]

then I might go to the god with a refutation of the oracle [*manteion*] in my hand. I should say to him, “Here is a man who is more *sophos* than I am; but you said that I was the most *sophos*.” Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of being wise [*sophos*] and observed to him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really *sophos*, although he was thought *sophos* by many, and more *sophos* still by himself; and I went and tried to explain to him that he thought himself *sophos*, but was not really *sophos*; [21d] and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good [*agathos*], I am better off than he is—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to be slightly more *sophos* than him. Then I went to another, who had still higher philosophical pretensions [dealing with *sophiā*], [21e] and my conclusion was exactly the same. I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

After this I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me—the word of the god, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. [22a] And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear!—for I must tell you the truth [*alēthēs*]—the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that some inferior men were really wiser and better. I must perform for you the tale of my wandering [*planē*], just as if I had been laboring [*poneîn*] to achieve labors [*ponoi*] that I endured for this purpose: that the [god’s] oracular wording [*manteiā*] should become impossible to refute. When I left the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic, [22b] and all sorts.

And there, I said to myself, you will be detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them—thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to speak the true [*alēthēs*], but still I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. That showed me in an instant that not by wisdom [*sophiā*] [22c] do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners [*theo-mantis* plural] or soothsayers who also say many fine [*kala*] things, but do not understand the meaning of them. And the poets appeared to me to be much in the same case [literally have the same *pathos*, experience]; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the most *sophos* of men in other things in which they were not *sophos*. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans, [22d] for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine [*kala*] things; and in this I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were more *sophos* than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error [*hamartia*] as the poets; because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their *sophiā*— [22e] therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and the oracle that I was better off as I was.

[23a] This investigation has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many

calumnies, and I am called *sophos*, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the *sophiā* which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that the god only is *sophos*; and in this oracle he means to say that the *sophiā* of men is little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, [23b] he is only using my name as an illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the most *sophos*, who, like Socrates, knows that his *sophiā* is in truth [*alēthēs*] worth nothing. And so I go my way, obedient to the god, and make inquisition into the *sophiā* of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be *sophos*; and if he is not *sophos*, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and this occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, [23c] but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing—young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me [= do a *mimēsis* of me], and examine others themselves; there are plenty of persons, as they soon enough discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing: and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: [23d] they say that Socrates is someone who is most polluted, he corrupts young men—and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practice or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretense of knowledge has been detected—which is the truth: [23e] and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are all in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a

quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen; [24a] Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of this mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, O men of Athens, is the truth [*alēthēs*]; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet I know that this plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth [*alēthēs*]?—this is the occasion and reason of their slander of me, [24b] as you will find out either in this or in any future inquiry.

I have said enough in my defense against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class, who are headed by Meletus, that good [*agathos*] and patriotic man, as he calls himself. And now I will try to defend myself against them: these new accusers must also have their affidavit read. What do they say? Something of this sort: that Socrates commits wrong [*a-dika*] deeds, and corrupts the young men, [24c] and he does not believe in the gods that the state [*polis*] believes in, but believes in other things having to do with *daimones* of his own. That is the sort of charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I do no justice [*dikē*], but corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus does no justice [*dikē*], and the evil is that he makes a joke of a serious matter, and is too ready at bringing other men to trial [*agōn*] from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavor to prove.

Come here, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. [24d] You think a great deal about the improvement of youth [= how youth can be made more *agathos*]?

Meletus

Yes, I do.

Socrates

Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is. Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

Meletus

The laws [*nomoi*].

Socrates

[24e] But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws [*nomoi*].

Meletus

The judges, Socrates, who are present in court.

Socrates

What do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Meletus

Certainly they are.

Socrates

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

Meletus

All of them.

Socrates

By the goddess Hera, that is good news! There are plenty of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience—do they improve them?

Meletus

[25a] Yes, they do.

Socrates

And the councilors?

Meletus

Yes, the councilors improve them.

Socrates

But perhaps the members of the citizen assembly corrupt them—or do they too improve them?

Meletus

They improve them.

Socrates

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

Meletus

That is what I strongly affirm.

Socrates

I am very unfortunate if that is true. But suppose I ask you a question: Would you say that this also holds true in the case of horses? [25b] Does one man do them harm and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite of this true? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many—the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others

who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or any other animals? Yes, certainly; whether you and Anytus say yes or no, that is no matter. Happy [with good *daimōn*] indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. [25c] And you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about matters spoken of in this very indictment.

And now, Meletus, I must ask you another question: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; for that is a question which may be easily answered. Do not the good [*agathoi*] do their neighbors good [*agathon*], and the bad do them evil?

Meletus

Certainly.

Socrates

[25d] And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend; the law [*nomos*] requires you to answer—does anyone like to be injured?

Meletus

Certainly not.

Socrates

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Meletus

Intentionally, I say.

Socrates

But you have just admitted that the good [*agathoi*] do their neighbors good [*agathon*], and the evil do them evil. [25e] Now is that a truth which your superior wisdom [greater *sophiā*] has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him, and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too—that is what you are saying, and of that you will never persuade me or any other human being. But either I do not corrupt them, [26a] or I corrupt them unintentionally, so that on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law [*nomos*] has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally—no doubt I should; whereas you hated to converse with me or teach me, but you indicted me in this court, where the law [*nomos*] demands not instruction, but punishment.

I have shown, Athenians, as I was saying, [26b] that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state [*polis*] acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies [*daimones*] in their stead. These are the lessons which corrupt the youth, as you say.

Meletus

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Socrates

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! [26c] for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach others to acknowledge

some gods, and therefore do believe in gods and am not an entire atheist—this you do not lay to my charge; but only that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes—the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean to say that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

Meletus

I mean the latter—that you are a complete atheist.

Socrates

[26d] That is an extraordinary statement, Meletus. Why do you say that? Do you mean that I do not believe in the divinity of the sun or moon, which is the common creed of all men?

Meletus

I assure you, judges, that he does not believe in them; for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

Socrates

Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras; and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them ignorant to such a degree as not to know that those doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras of Klazomenai, who is full of them. And these are the doctrines which the youth are said to learn of Socrates, when there are not infrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre (price of admission one drachma at the most); [26e] and they might cheaply purchase them, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father such eccentricities. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

Meletus

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

Socrates

You are a liar, Meletus, not believed even by yourself. For I cannot help

thinking, O men of Athens, that Meletus is full of insolence [*hubris*] and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. [27a] Has he not compounded a riddle [*ainigma*], thinking to try me? He said to himself: “I shall see whether this *sophos* Socrates will discover my ingenious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them.” For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them—but this surely is an exercise in playfulness.

I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. [27b] And I must remind you that you are not to interrupt me if I speak in my accustomed manner.

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? ... I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in reed-playing, and not in reed-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please answer the next question: [27c] Can a man believe in things having to do with *daimones*, and not in the *daimones* themselves?

Meletus

He cannot.

Socrates

I am glad that I have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court; nevertheless you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in things related to *daimones*—things new or old, no matter—at any rate, I believe in things related to *daimones*, as you say and swear in the

affidavit. But if I believe in things related to *daimones*, I must believe in *daimones* or gods themselves—is not that true? Yes, that is true, for I may assume that your silence gives assent to that. Now what are *daimones*? [27d] Don't we think that they are either gods or the children of gods?

Meletus

Yes, that is true.

Socrates

But this is just the ingenious riddle [*ainigma*] of which I was speaking: the *daimones* are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in *daimones*. For if the *daimones* are the illegitimate children of gods, whether by the Nymphs or by any other mothers, as is thought, that, as all men will allow, necessarily implies the existence of their parents. [27e] You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been devised by you as a way to charge me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real [*alēthēs*] of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same man can believe in things having to do with *daimones* and gods, and yet not believe that there are *daimones* themselves [28a] and gods and heroes [*hērōes*].

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus. Any elaborate defense is unnecessary; but as I was saying before, I certainly have many enemies, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed; of that I am certain—not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good [*agathos*] men, and will probably be the death of many more; [28b] there is no danger of my being the last of them.

Perhaps someone might say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of pursuing such a goal in life, which is likely to cause you to die right now? To him I would reply—and I would be replying justly [*dikaiōs*]: You, my good man, are not saying it well, if you think it is necessary for a man to calculate the risks of living or dying; there is little use in doing that. Rather, he should only consider whether in doing anything he is doing things that are just [*dikaia*] or unjust [*adika*], acting the part of a good [*agathos*] man or of a bad [*kakos*] one. Worthless men, 128c according to your view, would be the demigods [*hēmi-theoi*] who fulfilled their lives by dying at Troy, especially the son of Thetis [= Achilles], who so despised the danger of risk, preferring it to waiting for disgrace. His mother, goddess that she was, had said to him, when he was showing his eagerness to slay Hector, something like this, I think: My child, if you avenge the slaying of your comrade [*hetairos*] Patroklos and kill Hector, you will die yourself. “Right away your fate [*potmos*]”—she says—“is ready for you after Hector”. And he [= Achilles], hearing this, utterly despised danger and death, 128d and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live like a worthless [*kakos*] man, and not to avenge his friend. “Right away may I die next,” he says, “and impose justice [*dikē*] on the one who committed injustice [*adikeîn*], rather than stay behind here by the curved ships, a laughing stock and a heavy load for Earth to bear.” Do you think that he had any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man’s place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying [*alēthēs*].

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, [28e] if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, the god orders me to fulfill the philosopher’s mission of searching into myself and other men, [29a] I were to desert

my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly [with *dikē*] be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle [*manteion*] because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was *sophos* when I was not *sophos*. For this fear of death is indeed the pretence of *sophiā*, and not real *sophiā*, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil [*kakos*], may not be the greatest good [*agathos*].

[29b] Is there not here conceit of knowledge, which is a disgraceful sort of ignorance? And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself more *sophos* than other men—that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether god or man, is evil [*kakos*] and dishonorable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil.

[29c] And therefore if you let me go now, and reject the counsels of Anytus, who said that if I were not put to death I ought not to have been prosecuted, and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words—if you say to me, “Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and will let you off, but upon one condition, that are to inquire and speculate in this way any more, [29d] and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die;”—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: “Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey the god rather than you,” and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: “O my friend, why do you who are a citizen of the great and mighty and *sophos polis* of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and [29e] honor [*tīmē*] and reputation, and so little about *sophiā* and truth [*alēthēs*] and the greatest improvement of the soul [*psūkhē*], which you never regard or heed at all?

Are you not ashamed of this?" And if the person with whom I am arguing says: "Yes, but I do care;" I do not depart or let him go at once; I interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue [*aretē*], but only says that he has, [30a] I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And this I should say to everyone whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien [*xenos*], but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren.

For this is the command of the god, as I would have you know; and I believe that to this day no greater good [*agathos*] has ever happened in the state than my service to the god. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, [30b] not to take thought for your persons and your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul [*psūkhē*]. I tell you that virtue [*aretē*] is not given by money, but that from virtue [*aretē*] come money and every other good [*agathon*] of man, public [= in the *dēmos*] as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, my influence is ruinous indeed. But if anyone says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; [30c] but whatever you do, know that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

Men of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an agreement between us that you should hear me out. And I think that what I am going to say will do you good: for I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I beg that you will not do this. I would have you know that, if you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Meletus and Anytus will not injure me: they cannot; for it is not in the nature of things [*themis*] [30d] that a bad man should injure a better than himself. I do not deny that he may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights [literally: rob his *tīmē*]; and he may imagine, and others may

imagine, that he is doing him a great injury: but in that I do not agree with him; for the evil of doing as Anytus is doing—of unjustly [without *dikē*] taking away another man's life—is greater far. And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the god, or lightly reject his boon by condemning me.

[30e] For if you kill me you will not easily find another like me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by the god; and the state is like a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which the god has given the state and [31a] all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. And as you will not easily find another like me, I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel irritated at being suddenly awakened when you are caught napping; and you may think that if you were to strike me dead, as Anytus advises, which you easily might, then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless the god in his care of you gives you another gadfly.

And that I am given to you by the god is proved by this: [31b] that if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns, or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually, like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue [*aretē*]; this I say, would not be like human nature. And had I gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in that: but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say [31c] that I have ever exacted or sought pay of anyone; they have no witness of that. And I have a witness of the truth [*alēthēs*] of what I say; my poverty is a sufficient witness.

Someone may wonder why I go about in private, giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come

forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you the reason [*aitiā*] for this. You have often heard me speak [31d] of something related to the gods and to the *daimones*, a voice, which comes to me, and is the thing that Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This thing I have had ever since I was a child: it is a voice which comes to me and always forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands me to do anything, and this is what stands in the way of being engaged in matters of the state. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in these matters, I would have perished long ago and done no good either to you [31e] or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth [*alēthēs*]: for the truth is that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly struggling against the commission of unrighteousness and wrong in the state, will save [*sōzein*] his life; [32a] he who will really fight for the right, if he would be safe [*sōzein*] even for a little while, must have a private life and not a public one [= one concerned with the *dēmos*].

I can give you as proofs of this, not words only, but deeds, which you value more [give more *tīmē* to] than words. Let me tell you a passage of my own life, which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that if I had not yielded I should have died at once. I will tell you a story—tasteless, perhaps, and commonplace, but nevertheless true [*alēthēs*]. [32b] The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of councilor; the tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginousai; and you proposed to try them all together, which was illegal [against the *nomos*], as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytaneis who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and have me taken away, and you called and shouted, [32c] I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law [*nomos*]

and justice [*dikē*] with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death.

This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon of Salamis, as they wanted to execute him. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; [32d] and then I showed, not in words only, but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my only fear was the fear of doing an unrighteous [non-*dikaios*] or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. [32e] And to this many will witness.

Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had led a public life, supposing that like a good [*agathos*] man I had always supported the right and had made justice [*dikē*], as I ought, the first thing? [33a] No, indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples or to any other. For the truth is that I have no regular disciples: but if anyone likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he may freely come. Nor do I converse with those who pay only, [33b] and not with those who do not pay; but anyone, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, that cannot be my responsibility [*aitiā*], as I never taught him anything. And if anyone says that he has ever learned

or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, I should like you to know that he is speaking an untruth [non-*alēthēs*].

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing with you? [33c] I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth [*alēthēs*] about this: they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom [*sophiā*]; there is amusement in this. And this is a duty which the god has imposed upon me, as I am assured by oracles [*manteia*], visions, and in every sort of way in which the will of divine power was ever signified to anyone. This is true [*alēthēs*], O Athenians; or, if not true, would be soon refuted. [33d] For if I am really corrupting the youth, and have corrupted some of them already, those of them who have grown up and have become sensible that I gave them bad [*kakos*] advice in the days of their youth should come forward as accusers and take their revenge [= exact *tīmē*]; and if they do not like to come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other kinsmen, should say what evil their families suffered at my hands. Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito, who is of the same age [33e] and of the same deme with myself; and there is Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of Sphettos, who is the father of Aeschines—he is present; and also there is Antiphon of Cephissus, who is the father of Epigenes; and there are the brothers of several who have associated with me.

There is Nicostratus the son of Theodotides, and the brother of Theodotus (now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodokos, who had a brother Theages; [34a] and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato is present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus, whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, any of whom Meletus should have produced as witnesses in the course of his speech; and let him still produce them, if he has forgotten—I will make way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the

sort that he can produce. Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the destroyer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; [34b] not the corrupted youth only—there might have been a motive for that—but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice [*dikaios*], and because they know that I am speaking the truth [*alēthēs*], and that Meletus is lying.

Well, Athenians, this and the like of this is nearly all the defense that I have to offer. Yet a word more. [34c] Perhaps there may be someone who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself, on a similar or even a less serious occasion [*agōn*], had recourse to prayers and supplications with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, which was a moving spectacle, together with a posse of his relations and friends; whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. Perhaps this may come into his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at this. [34d] Now if there be such a person among you, which I am far from affirming, I may fairly reply to him: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not of wood or stone, as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons. O Athenians, three in number, one of whom is growing up, and the two others are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? [34e] Not from any self-will or disregard of you [= not showing *tīmē*]. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But my reason simply is that I feel such conduct to be discreditable to myself, and you, and the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, whether deserved or not, ought not to debase himself.

[35a] At any rate, the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be

superior in wisdom [*sophiā*] and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that they were a dishonor to the state, [35b] and that any stranger coming in would say of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honor [*tīmē*] and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who are of reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are more inclined to condemn, not the man who is quiet, but the man who gets up a doleful scene, and makes the city ridiculous.

But, setting aside the question of dishonor, [35c] there seems to be something wrong in petitioning a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is, not to make a present of justice [*dikaios*], but to give judgment [*krinein*]; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws [*nomos*], and not according to his own good pleasure; and neither he nor we should get into the habit of perjuring ourselves—there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonorable [without *dikē*] and impious and wrong, [35d] especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty, I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and convict myself, in my own defense, of not believing in them. But that is not the case; for I do believe that there are gods, and in a far higher sense than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to the god I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best [*aristos*] for you and me.

Socrates' Proposal for his Sentence¹

[35e] There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, [36a] at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say that I have escaped Meletus. And I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, [36b] he would not have had a fifth part of the votes, as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae, as is evident.

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is that which I ought to pay or to endure [*paskhein*]? What shall be done to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care about—wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. [36c] Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to follow in this way and be saved [*sōzein*], I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to everyone of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to such a one?

[36d] Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward; and the good should be of a kind suitable to him. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no more fitting reward than maintenance in the Prytaneion,² O men of Athens, a reward which he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots were drawn by two

horses or by many. [36e] For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness [with good *daimōn*], and I give you the reality. And if I am to estimate the penalty justly [*dikaiōs*], [37a] I say that maintenance in the Prytaneion is the just return.

Perhaps you may think that I am braving you in saying this, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But that is not the case. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged anyone, although I cannot convince you of that—for we have had a short conversation only; but if there were a law [*nomos*] at Athens, such as there is in other cities, [37b] that a capital cause should not be decided in one day, then I believe that I should have convinced you; but now the time is too short. I cannot in a moment refute great slanders; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil [*kakos*], or propose any penalty. Why should I? Because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good [*agathos*] or an evil [*kakos*], why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment?

[37c] And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year—of the Eleven? Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and I cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by the love of life if I were to consider that when you, who are my own citizens, [37d] cannot endure my discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you would want to have done with them, others are likely to endure me. No, indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, living in ever-changing exile, and always being driven out! For I am quite sure that into whatever place I go, as here so also there, the young men will come to

me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their desire: [37e] and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

Someone will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that this would be a disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, [38a] you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue [*aretē*], and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the life which is unexamined is not worth living—that you are still less likely to believe. And yet what I say is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Moreover, I am not accustomed to think that I deserve any punishment [*kakos*]. [38b] Had I money I might have proposed to give you what I had, and have been none the worse. But you see that I have none, and can only ask you to proportion the fine to my means. However, I think that I could afford a coin, and therefore I propose that penalty; Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, my friends here, bid me say thirty coins, and they will be the sureties. Well then, say thirty coins, let that be the penalty; for that they will be ample security to you.

(The jury votes to condemn Socrates to death.)

Socrates' Comments on his Sentence

[38c] Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for [= from the cause of, *aitiā*] the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city [*polis*], who will say that you killed Socrates, a *sophos* man; for they will call me wise even although I am not *sophos* when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have

been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. [38d] I am speaking now only to those of you who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: You think that I was convicted through deficiency of words—I mean, that if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone, nothing unsaid, I might have gained an acquittal. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words—certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to address you, weeping and wailing and lamenting, [38e] and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I say, are unworthy of me. But I thought that I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger: nor do I now repent of the manner of my defense, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought any man to use every way of escaping death. For often in battle there is no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, [39a] he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; [39b] for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, and they, too, go their ways condemned by the truth [*alēthēs*] to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong [*non-dikē*]; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated, and I think that they are well.

[39c] And now, O men who have condemned me, I want to prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and that is the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you

wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; [39d] accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more severe with you, and you will be more offended at them. For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable; the easiest and noblest [*kalos*] way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter [*manteuesthai*] before my departure, to the judges who have condemned me.

[39e] Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about this thing which has happened, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then awhile, for we may as well talk [*diamuthologeîn* = speak through *mūthos*] with one another while there is time. [40a] You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which has happened to me. O my judges—for you I may truly call judges—I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. In the past, the oracular [*mantikē*] art of the superhuman thing [*to daimonion*] within me was in the habit of opposing me, each and every time, even about minor things, if I was going to do anything not correctly [*orthōs*]. But now that these things, as you can see, have happened to me—things that anyone would consider, by general consensus, to be the worst possible things to happen to someone—^{140b} the signal [*to sēmeion*] of the god [*theos*] has not opposed me, either as I was leaving my house and going out in the morning, or when I was coming up to this place of judgment, or as I was speaking. No, it has not opposed me about anything I was going to say, though on other occasions when I was speaking, it [= the signal] has often stopped me, even when I was in the middle of saying something. But now in nothing I either said or did concerning this matter has it opposed me. So, what do I take to be the explanation of this? I will tell

you. Perhaps this is a proof that what has happened to me is something good [*agathon*], ^{140c} and it cannot be that we are thinking straight [*orthōs*] if we think that death is something bad [*kakon*]. This is a great proof to me of what I am saying, since the signal [*to sēmeion*] that I am used to would surely have opposed me if I had been heading toward something not good [*agathon*].

Let us think about it this way: there is plenty of reason to hope that death is something good [*agathon*]. I say this because death is one of two things: either it is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness for the person who has died, or, according to the sayings [*legomena*], there is some kind of a change [*meta-bolē*] that happens—a relocation [*met-oikēsis*] for the soul [*psūkhē*] from this place [*topos*] to another place [*topos*]. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, ^{140d} but a sleep like the sleep of someone who sees nothing even in a dream, death will be a wondrous gain [*kerdos*]. For if a person were to select the night in which he slept without seeing anything even in a dream, and if he were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life in a better and more pleasant way than this one, I think that any person—I will not say a private individual [*idiōtēs*], but even the great king— ^{140e} will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is a gain [*kerdos*]; for the sum total of time is then only a single night. But if death is the journey [*apo-dēmiā*] to another place [*topos*], and, if the sayings [*legomena*] are true [*alēthē*], that all the dead are over there [*ekeî*], then what good [*agathon*], O jurors, [*dikastai*], can be greater than this? ^{141a} If, when someone arrives in the world of Hādēs, he is freed from those who call themselves jurors [*dikastai*] here, and finds the true [*alētheîs*] judges [*dikastai*] who are said to give judgment [*dikazein*] over there [*ekeî*]—Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aiaikos and Triptolemos, and other demigods [*hēmi-theoi*] who were righteous [*dikaioi*] in their own life—

that would not be a bad journey [*apo-dēmiā*], now would it? To make contact with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer—who of you would not welcome such a great opportunity? Why, if these things are true [*alēthē*], let me die again and again. 141b I, too, would have a wondrous activity [*diatribē*] there, once I make contact with Palamedes, and with Ajax the son of Telamon, and with other ancient men who have suffered death through an unjust [*a-dikos*] judgment [*krisis*]. And there will be no small pleasure, I think, in comparing my own experiences [*pathos* plural] with theirs. Further—and this is the greatest thing of all—I will be able to continue questioning those who are over there [*ekeî*], just as I question those who are over here [*entautha*], and investigating who among them is wise [*sophos*] and who among them thinks he is wise [*sophos*] but is not. Who would not welcome the great opportunity, O jurors [*dikastai*], of being able to question the leader of the great Trojan expedition; 141c or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or one could mention countless other men—and women too! What unmitigated happiness [*eudaimoniā*] would there be in having dialogues [*dialegesthai*] with them over there [*ekeî*] and just being in their company and asking them questions! And I say it absolutely: those who are over there [*ekeî*] do not put someone to death for this; certainly not. I say that because those who are over there [*ekeî*] are happier [*eu-daimonesteroi*] than those who are over here [*entautha*]. And they are already immortal [*athanatoi*] for the rest of time, if in fact the sayings [*legomena*] are true [*alēthē*].

But even you, O jurors [*dikastai*], should have good hopes when you face death, and you should have in mind [*dia-noeîsthai*] this one thing as true [*alēthes*]: 141d that nothing bad [*kakon*] can happen to a good [*agathos*] person, either in life or when he comes to its completion [*teleutân*]. The events involving this person are not neglected by the gods [*theoi*]. Nor is it by chance that the events involving me have happened. Rather, this one thing is clear to me, that to be already dead and to be in a state where I am already released from events involving me was better

for me. And it is for this reason that the signal [*sēmeion*] in no way diverted me from my path. Further, it is for this reason that I am not at all angry with those who accused me or with those who condemned me. Granted, it was not with this in mind that they accused me and condemned me, since they thought they were doing me harm, 141e and for this they deserve to be blamed. In any case, I ask them for only one thing. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you men to punish them [= my sons] and give them pain, as I have given you pain—if they seem to care about material things or the like, instead of striving for merit [*aretē*]. Or, if they seem to be something but are not at all that thing—then go ahead and insult them, as I am now insulting you, for not caring about things they ought to care about, and for thinking they are something when they are really worth nothing. And if 142a you do this, then the things I have experienced because of what you have done to me will be just [*dikaia*]¹—and the same goes for my sons.

But let me interrupt. You see, the hour [*hōrā*] of departure has already arrived. So, now, we all go our ways—I to die, and you to live. And the question is, which one of us on either side is going toward something that is better? It is not clear, except to the god.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. The jury casts a vote, and finds Socrates guilty. According to Athenian law, votes of conviction and votes of punishment were separate matters, with argument after each phase. Socrates' opponents pressed for the death penalty—they presumed that Socrates, after his conviction, would offer a more lenient (and acceptable) counterproposal, such as a fine or exile. Socrates' famous response (below) stuns his opponents and the jury.

[[back](#)] 2. The Prytaneion was a public building used to feed and maintain famous citizens / athletes.

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Phaedo

By Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

Adapted by Gregory Nagy, Miriam Carlisle, and Soo-Young Kim

Persons of the Dialogue

Phaedo, who is the narrator of the dialogue to Echecrates of Phlius

Socrates

Apollodorus

Simmias

Cebes

Crito

Attendant of the Prison

Scene

The Prison of Socrates.

Place of the Narration: Phlius.

Echecrates

[57a] Were you yourself, Phaedo, in the prison with Socrates on the day when he drank the poison [*pharmakon*]?

Phaedo.

I myself was there, Echecrates.

Echecrates

So, what were the things the man said before his death? And how did he reach the fulfillment [*teleutân*] of his life? I would be very glad to hear

about it. For neither does any one of us Phliasians nowadays visit Athens, and it has been a long time since any guest from there [= Athens] [57b] has visited here [= Phleious], who would be able to report to us clearly about these things – except for the detail that he took poison [*pharmakon*] and died. As for the other related matters, no one had anything to indicate

Phaedo

[58a] So then you have not been informed about the trial [*dikē*] and about how it went?

Echecrates

Well, someone did tell us about those things, but we were wondering why, after the trial [*dikē*] had already taken place some time earlier, he was put to death not right then and there, it seems, but much later. So, why did it happen that way, Phaedo?

Phaedo

It was a matter of chance [*tukhē*], Echecrates, that things happened that way for him. The reason was that the stern of the ship that the Athenians send to Delos happened to be garlanded [*stephein*] on the day before the trial [*dikē*].

Echecrates

What is this ship?

Phaedo

This is the ship in which, as the Athenians say, Theseus went to Crete when he took with him those famous two-times-seven young people. [58b] He saved [*sōzein*] them and he too was saved [*sōzein*]. And they were said to have vowed to Apollo at the time, that if they were saved [*sōzein*] they would make an annual sacred journey [*theōriā*] to Delos. And even now, ever since that time, year after year, they send the ship to

the god. So, every time they begin the sacred journey [*theōriā*], they have a custom [*nomos*] at this time of the year to purify [*kathareuein*] the city and to refrain from publicly executing anybody before the ship goes to Delos and then comes back from there. And sometimes this takes a long time, whenever the winds [58c] happen to detain them. And the beginning of the sacred journey [*theōriā*] is when the priest of Apollo garlands [*stephein*] the stern of the ship. This happened, as I say, on the day before the trial [*dikē*]. And this was the reason why Socrates spent a long time in prison between the time of his trial [*dikē*] and the time of his death.

Echecrates

What was the manner of his death, Phaedo? What was said or done? And which of his friends had he with him? Or were they not allowed by the authorities to be present? And did he die alone?

Phaedo

[58d] No; there were several of his friends with him.

Echecrates

If you have nothing to do, I wish that you would tell me what passed, as exactly as you can.

Phaedo

I have nothing to do, and will try to gratify your wish. For to me, too, there is no greater pleasure than to have Socrates brought back into my memory [*memnēsthai*], whether I speak myself or hear another speak of him.

Echecrates

You will have listeners who are of the same mind with you, and I hope that you will be as exact as you can.

Phaedo

[58e] I remember the strange feeling which came over me at being with him. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him, Echebrates; his mien and his language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death that to me he appeared blessed [*eudaimōn*]. I thought that in going to the other world he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be well off, [59a] if any man ever was, when he arrived there, and therefore I did not pity him as might seem natural at such a time. But neither could I feel the pleasure which I usually felt in philosophical discourse (for philosophy was the theme of which we spoke). I was pleased, and I was also pained, because I knew that he was soon to die, and this strange mixture of feeling was shared by us all; we were laughing and weeping by turns, especially the excitable Apollodorus— [59b] you know the sort of man?

Echebrates

Yes.

Phaedo

He was quite overcome; and I myself and all of us were greatly moved.

Echebrates

Who were present?

Phaedo

Of native Athenians who were present, there were, besides the Apollodorus I just mentioned, Critobulus and his father Crito; Hermogenes; Epigenes; Aeschines; and Antisthenes; also present was Ctesippus of the deme of Paiania; Menexenus; and some other native Athenians. As for Plato, I think he was not feeling up to it [= he was feeling weak, *a-stheneîn*].

Echecrates

[59c] Were there any strangers?

Phaedo

Yes, there were; Simmias the Theban, and Cebes, and Phaedondes; Euclid and Terpison, who came from Megara.

Echecrates

And was Aristippus there, and Cleombrotus?

Phaedo

No, they were said to be in Aegina.

Echecrates

Anyone else?

Phaedo

I think that these were about all.

Echecrates

And what was the discourse of which you spoke?

Phaedo

I will begin at the beginning, and endeavor to repeat the entire conversation. [59d] On previous days, the usual way that I [Phaedo] and the others visited Socrates was by congregating in the morning at the place where trials are held and where his own trial had taken place. That was because this place was near the prison. So, every day, we used to wait until the entrance to the prison was opened, having conversations with each other while waiting, since the prison usually did not open all that early. And, once it opened, we used to go in and visit with Socrates, usually spending the whole day with him. On the last day, we met earlier than usual. That was because we had found out on the previous

day, [59e] as we were leaving the prison in the evening, that the [sacred] ship had arrived from Delos. So, we agreed to meet very early at the usual place. We went to the prison, and the guard who used to let us in came up to us and told us to wait and not to go further until he called us. “That is because the Board of Eleven,” he said, “are now with Socrates, and they are taking off his chains. They are giving him the order that he is to end it all on this very day.” Not too long after that, the guard came back and told us that we may come in. When we entered, [60a] we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xanthippe—you know her, right?—was sitting next to him and holding his child. When Xanthippe saw us, she said some ritualized words [*an-eu-phēmēin*], the kind that women are accustomed to say, and the wording went something like this: “Socrates, now is the last time when your dear ones will be talking to you and you to them.” Socrates glanced at Crito and said to him: “Crito, will someone please take her home?” Then a few of Crito’s people led her away; she was crying [60b] and hitting herself. And when she was gone, Socrates, sitting up on the couch, began to bend and rub his leg, saying, as he rubbed: “How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they never come to a man together, and yet he who pursues either of them is generally compelled to take the other. They are two, and yet they grow together out of one head or stem; [60c] and I cannot help thinking that if Aesop had noticed them, he would have made a fable [*mūthos*] about the god trying to reconcile their strife, and when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows, as I find in my own case pleasure comes following after the pain in my leg, which was caused by the chain.”

Upon this Cebes said, “I am very glad indeed, Socrates, that you mentioned the name of Aesop. [60d] For that reminds me of a question which has been asked by others, and was asked of me only the day before yesterday by Evenus the poet, and as he will be sure to ask again, you may as well tell me what I should say to him, if you would like him to

have an answer. He wanted to know why you who never before composed a line of poetry, now that you are in prison are putting Aesop into verse, and also composing a hymn in honor of Apollo.”

“Tell him, Cebes,” he replied, “that I had no idea of rivaling him or his poems; [60e] which is the truth, for I knew that I could not do that. But I wanted to see whether I could engage with the holiness of certain dreams. In the course of my life I have often had the same recurrent dream, which appeared in different forms in different versions of my envisaging the dream, but which always said the same thing: “Socrates,” it said, “go and practice the craft of the Muses [*mousikē*] and keep on working at it.” Previously, I had imagined that this was only intended to urge [61a] and encourage me to keep on doing what has always been the pursuit of my life, in the same way that competitors in a footrace are called on by the spectators to run when they are already running. So, I thought that the dream was calling on me to keep on doing what I was already doing, which is, to practice philosophy as the craft of the Muses [*mousikē*], since philosophy is the greatest form of this craft and since I practiced philosophy. But now that the trial [*dikē*] has taken place and the festival of the god [Apollo] has been causing the postponement of my execution, I got the idea that I should do something different, just in case the dream was ordering me to practice the craft of the Muses [*mousikē*] in the popular [*dēmōdēs*] sense of the word—so I got the idea that I should not disobey it [= the dream] and that I should go ahead and practice this craft. I was thinking that it would be a safer thing not to depart [this world] before performing a sacred rite by making poetry [*poiēmata*] and thus [61b] obeying the dream. So, the first thing I did was to make a poem [*poieîn*] in honor of the god who is the recipient of the current festival, and then, after [*meta*] having finished with the god, here is what I [= Socrates] did: keeping in mind that a poet must, if he is really going to be a poet, make [*poieîn*] myths [*mūthoi*] and not just words [*logoi*] in general, and that I was no expert in the discourse of myth [*mūtho-logikos*], I took some myths [*mūthoi*] of Aesop that I knew

and had on hand, and I made poetry [*poieîn*] out of the first few of these that I happened upon. Tell Evenus this, and bid him be of good cheer; that I would have him come after me if he be a wise man, and not tarry; [61c] and that today I am likely to be going, for the Athenians say that I must.”

Simmias said, “What a message for such a man! Having been a frequent companion of his, I should say that, as far as I know him, he will never take your advice unless he is obliged.”

“Why,” said Socrates, “—is not Evenus a philosopher?”

“I think that he is,” said Simmias.

“Then he, or any man who has the spirit of philosophy, will be willing to die, though he will not take his own life, for that is held not to be right.”

[61d] Here he changed his position, and put his legs off the couch on to the ground, and during the rest of the conversation he remained sitting.

“Why do you say,” inquired Cebes, “that a man ought not to take his own life, but that the philosopher will be ready to follow the dying?”

Socrates replied: “And have you, Cebes and Simmias, who are acquainted with Philolaus, never heard him speak of this?”

“I never understood him, Socrates.”

“My words, too, are only an echo; but I am very willing to say what I have heard: and indeed, [61e] as I am going to another place, I ought to be thinking and talking [= telling the *mūthos*] of the nature of the journey which I am about to take. What can I do better in the interval between this and the setting of the sun?”

“Then tell me, Socrates, why is suicide held not to be right? as I have certainly heard Philolaus affirm when he was staying with us at Thebes: and there are others who say the same, [62a] although none of them has ever made me understand him.”

“But do your best,” replied Socrates, “and the day may come when you will understand. I suppose that you wonder why, as most things which are evil may be accidentally good, this is to be the only exception (for may not death, too, be better than life in some cases?), and why, when a man is better dead, he is not permitted to be his own benefactor, but must wait for the hand of another.”

“By Zeus! Yes, indeed,” said Cebes, laughing, and speaking in his native Doric.

“I admit the appearance of inconsistency,” replied Socrates, [62b] “but there may not be any real inconsistency after all in this. There is a doctrine uttered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door of his prison and run away; this doctrine appears to be a great one, which I do not quite understand. Yet I, too, believe that the gods are our guardians, and that we are a possession of theirs. Do you not agree?”

“Yes, I agree to that,” said Cebes.

[62c] “And if one of your own possessions, an ox or an ass, for example took the liberty of putting himself out of the way when you had not indicated [*sēmainein*] your wish that he should die, would you not be angry with him, and would you not punish him if you could?”

“Certainly,” replied Cebes.

“Then there may be reason in saying that a man should wait, and not take his own life until the god summons him, as he is now summoning

me.”

“Yes, Socrates,” said Cebes, “there is surely reason in that. And yet how can you reconcile this seemingly true belief that the god is our guardian and we his possessions, [62d] with that willingness to die which we were attributing to the philosopher? That the wisest of men should be willing to leave this service in which they are ruled by the gods who are the best of rulers is not reasonable, for surely no wise man thinks that when set at liberty he can take better care of himself than the gods take of him. A fool may perhaps think this—he may argue that he had better run away from his master, [62e] not considering that his duty is to remain to the end, and not to run away from the good, and that there is no sense in his running away. But the wise man will want to be ever with him who is better than himself. Now this, Socrates, is the reverse of what was just now said; for upon this view the wise man should sorrow and the fool rejoice at passing out of life.”

[63a] The earnestness of Cebes seemed to please Socrates. “Here,” said he, turning to us, “is a man who is always inquiring, and is not to be convinced all in a moment, nor by every argument.”

“And in this case,” added Simmias, “his objection does appear to me to have some force. For what can be the meaning of a truly wise man wanting to flee and lightly leave a master who is better than himself? And I rather imagine that Cebes is referring to you; he thinks that you are too ready to leave us, and too ready to leave the gods who, as you acknowledge, are our good rulers.”

[63b] “Yes,” replied Socrates; “there is reason in that. And this indictment you think that I ought to answer as if I were in court?”

“That is what we should like,” said Simmias.

“Then I must try to make a better impression upon you than I did when defending myself before the jury. For I am quite ready to acknowledge, Simmias and Cebes, that I ought to be grieved at death, [63c] if I were not persuaded that I am going to other gods who are wise and good (of this I am as certain as I can be of anything of the sort) and to men departed (though I am not so certain of this), who are better than those whom I leave behind; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hope that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and, as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil.”

“But do you mean to take away your thoughts with you, Socrates?” said Simmias. “Will you not communicate them to us? [63d] For the benefit is one in which we too may hope to share. Moreover, if you succeed in convincing us, that will be an answer to the charge against yourself.”

“I will do my best,” replied Socrates. “But you must first let me hear what Crito wants; he was going to say something to me.”

“Only this, Socrates,” replied Crito: “the attendant who is to give you the poison has been telling me that you are not to talk much, and he wants me to let you know this; for that by talking heat is increased, and this interferes with the action of the poison; [63e] those who excite themselves are sometimes obliged to drink the poison two or three times.”

“Then,” said Socrates, “let him mind his business and be prepared to give the poison two or three times, if necessary; that is all.”

“I was almost certain that you would say that,” replied Crito; “but I was obliged to satisfy him.”

“Never mind him,” he said. “And now I will make answer to you, O my judges, and show that he who has lived as a true philosopher has reason

to be of good cheer when he is about to die, [64a] and that after death he may hope to receive the greatest good in the other world. And how this may be, Simmias and Cebes, I will endeavor to explain. For I deem that the true disciple of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that he is ever pursuing death and dying; and if this is true, why, having had the desire of death all his life long, should he regret the arrival of that which he has been always pursuing and desiring?”

Simmias laughed and said, [64b] “Though not in a laughing humor, I swear that I cannot help laughing when I think what the wicked world will say when they hear this. They will say that this is very true, and our people at home will agree with them in saying that the life which philosophers desire is truly death, and that they have found them out to be deserving of the death which they desire.”

“And they are right, Simmias, in saying this, with the exception of the words ‘They have found them out’; for they have not found out what is the nature of this death which the true philosopher desires, or how he deserves or desires death. [64c] But let us leave them and have a word with ourselves: do we believe that there is such a thing as death?”

“To be sure,” replied Simmias.

“And is this anything but the separation of *psūkhē* and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation; when the *psūkhē* exists in itself, and is parted from the body and the body is parted from the *psūkhē*—that is death?”

“Exactly: that and nothing else,” he replied.

“And what do you say of another question, my friend, about which I should like to have your opinion, [64d] and the answer to which will probably throw light on our present inquiry: do you think that the

philosopher ought to care about the pleasures—if they are to be called pleasures—of eating and drinking?”

“Certainly not,” answered Simmias. ”

“And what do you say of the pleasures of love—should he care about them?”

“By no means.”

“And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body – for example, the acquisition of costly raiment, or sandals, or other adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise [64e] anything more than nature needs? What do you say?”

I should say the true philosopher would despise them.”

“Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the *psūkhē* and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to be rid of the body and turn to the *psūkhē*.”

That is true.”

“In matters of this sort philosophers, above all other men, may be observed in every sort of way [65a] to dis sever the *psūkhē* from the body.”

That is true.”

“Whereas, Simmias, the rest of the world are of opinion that a life which has no bodily pleasures and no part in them is not worth having; but that he who thinks nothing of bodily pleasures is almost as though he were dead.”

“That is quite true.”

“What again shall we say of the actual acquisition of knowledge?—is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper? [65b] I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not, as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? And yet, if even they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses?—for you will allow that they are the best of them?”

“Certainly,” he replied.

“Then when,” he [= Socrates] said, “does the *psūkhē* attain truth? For in attempting to consider anything in company with the body it is obviously deceived.”

[65c] “Yes, that is true.”

“Then must not existence be revealed to it in thought, if at all?”

“Yes.”

“And thought is best when the mind is gathered into itself and none of these things trouble it—neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure—when it has as little as possible to do with the body, and has no bodily sense or feeling, but is aspiring after being?”

“That is true.”

[65d] “And in this the philosopher dishonors the body; his *psūkhē* runs away from the body and desires to be alone and by itself?

“That is true.”

“Well, but there is another thing, Simmias: is there or is there not an absolute justice?”

“Assuredly there is.”

“And an absolute beauty and absolute good? ”

“Of course.”

“But did you ever behold any of them with your eyes?”

“Certainly not.”

“Or did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense? (and I speak not of these alone, but of absolute greatness, and health, and strength, [65e] and of the essence or true nature of everything). Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs? Or rather, is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of that which he considers?”

“Certainly.”

“And he attains to the knowledge of them in their highest purity who goes to each of them with the mind alone, not allowing when in the act of thought the intrusion or introduction of sight or any other sense in the company of reason, [66a] but with the very light of the mind in its clearness penetrates into the very fight of truth in each; he has got rid, as far as he can, of eyes and ears and of the whole body, which he conceives of only as a disturbing element, hindering the *psūkhē* from the acquisition of knowledge when in company with it – is not this the sort of man who, if ever man did, is likely to attain the knowledge of existence?”

“There is admirable truth in that, Socrates,” replied Simmias.

[66b] “And when they consider all this, must not true philosophers make a reflection, of which they will speak to one another in such words as these: ‘We have found,’ they will say, ‘a path of speculation which seems to bring us and the argument to the conclusion that while we are in the body, and while the *psūkhē* is mingled with this mass of evil, our desire will not be satisfied, and our desire is of the truth. For the body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food; [66c] and also is liable to diseases which overtake and impede us in the search after truth: and by filling us so full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies, and idols, and every sort of folly, prevents our ever having, as people say, so much as a thought. For whence come wars, and fighting, and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? For wars are occasioned by the love of money, [66d] and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and in consequence of all these things the time which ought to be given to philosophy is lost. Moreover, if there is time and an inclination toward philosophy, yet the body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation, and hinders us from seeing the truth: and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body, [66e] and the *psūkhē* in itself must behold all things in themselves: then I suppose that we shall attain that which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers, and that is wisdom, not while we live, but after death, as the argument indicates [*sēmainein*]; for if while in company with the body the *psūkhē* cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things seems to follow—either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, [67a] the *psūkhē* will be in itself alone and without the body. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when the god himself is pleased to release us. And then the foolishness

of the body will be cleared away and we shall be pure and hold converse with other pure *psūkhai*, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere; and this is surely the light of truth. [67b] For no impure thing is allowed to approach the pure.’ These are the sort of words, Simmias, which the true lovers of wisdom cannot help saying to one another, and thinking. You will agree with me in that?”

“Certainly, Socrates.”

“But if this is true, O my friend, then there is great hope that, going whither I go, I shall there be satisfied with that which has been the chief concern of you and me in our lives. And now that the hour of departure is appointed to me, [67c] this is the hope with which I depart, and not I only, but every man who believes that he has his mind purified.”

“Certainly,” replied Simmias.

“And what is purification but the separation of the *psūkhē* from the body, as I was saying before; the habit of the *psūkhē* gathering and collecting itself into itself, out of all the courses of the body; the dwelling in its own place alone, [67d] as in another life, so also in this, as far as it can; the release of the *psūkhē* from the chains of the body?”

“Very true,” he said.

“And what is that which is termed death, but this very separation and release of the *psūkhē* from the body?”

“To be sure,” he said.

“And the true philosophers, and they only, study and are eager to release the *psūkhē*. Is not the separation and release of the *psūkhē* from the body their especial study?”

“That is true.”

“And as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, [67e] and yet feeling regret when death comes.”

“Certainly.”

“Then, Simmias, as the true philosophers are ever studying death, to them, of all men, death is the least terrible. Look at the matter in this way: how inconsistent of them to have been always enemies of the body, and wanting to have the *psūkhē* alone, and when this is granted to them, to be trembling and regretting; instead of rejoicing at their departing to that place where, when they arrive, they hope to gain that which in life they loved [68a] (and this was wisdom), and at the same time to be rid of the company of their enemy. Many a man has been willing to go to the world beyond in the hope of seeing there an earthly love, or wife, or son, and conversing with them. And will he who is a true lover of wisdom, and is persuaded in like manner [68b] that only in that other world over there can he worthily enjoy it, still be regretful at death? Will he not depart with joy? Surely he will, my friend, if he be a true philosopher. For he will have a firm conviction that there only, and nowhere else, he can find wisdom in its purity. And if this be true, he would be very absurd, as I was saying, if he were to fear death.”

“He would, indeed,” replied Simmias.

“And when you see a man who is feeling regretful at the approach of death, is not his reluctance a sufficient proof that he is not a lover of wisdom, but a lover of the body, [68c] and probably at the same time a lover of either money or power, or both?”

“That is very true,” he replied.

“There is a virtue, Simmias, which is named courage. Is not that a special attribute of the philosopher?”

“Certainly.”

“Again, there is temperance. Is not the calm, and control, and disdain of the passions which even the many call temperance, a quality belonging only to those who despise the body and live in philosophy?”

[68d] “That is not to be denied.”

“For the courage and temperance of other men, if you will consider them, are really a contradiction.”

“How is that, Socrates?”

“Well,” he said, “you are aware that death is regarded by men in general as a great evil.”

“That is true,” he said.

“And do not courageous men endure death because they are afraid of yet greater evils?”

“That is true.”

“Then all but the philosophers are courageous only from fear, and because they are afraid; and yet that a man should be courageous from fear, and because he is a coward, is surely a strange thing.”

[68e] “Very true.”

“And are not the temperate exactly in the same case? They are temperate because they are intemperate—which may seem to be a contradiction,

but is nevertheless the sort of thing which happens with this foolish temperance. For there are pleasures which they must have, and are afraid of losing; and therefore they abstain from one class of pleasures because they are overcome by another: and whereas intemperance is defined as ‘being under the dominion of pleasure,’ [69a] they overcome only because they are overcome by pleasure. And that is what I mean by saying that they are temperate through intemperance.”

“That appears to be true.”

“Yet the exchange of one fear or pleasure or pain for another fear or pleasure or pain, which are measured like coins, the greater with the less, is not the exchange of virtue. O my dear Simmias, is there not one true coin for which all things ought to exchange, [69b] and that is wisdom? And only in exchange for this, and in company with this, is anything truly bought or sold, whether courage or temperance or justice. And is not all true virtue the companion of wisdom, no matter what fears or pleasures or other similar goods or evils may or may not attend it? But the virtue which is made up of these goods, when they are severed from wisdom and exchanged with one another, is a shadow of virtue only, nor is there any freedom or health or truth in it; but in the true exchange there is a purging away of all these things, [69c] and temperance, and justice, and courage, and wisdom itself are a purgation of them. And perhaps even those who established for us the mysteries [*teletai*] were not unworthy but had a real meaning when they said long ago in a riddling way [*ainittesthai* = verb of *ainigma*] that he who arrives without initiation [*amuētos*] and without ritual induction [*ateleptos*, from verb of *telos*] into the realm of Hādēs will lie in mud, but that he who arrives to that place [*ekeise*] after purification [= verb of *katharsis*] and induction [verb of *telos*] will dwell [*oikein*] with the gods. As those who are involved in the mysteries [*teletai*] say, ‘Many are the carriers of the Bacchic wand [*narthēx*], [69d] but few are the *bakkhoi* [= the true worshippers of Bacchus].’ And these [true worshippers] are, in my opinion, none other

than those who have practiced philosophy [*philosophēin*] correctly. In the number of whom I have been seeking, according to my ability, to find a place during my whole life; whether I have sought in a right way or not, and whether I have succeeded or not, I shall truly know in a little while, if the god will, when I myself arrive in the other world: that is my belief. And now, Simmias and Cebes, I have answered those who charge me with not grieving or feeling regretful at parting from you and my masters in this world; and I am right in having no regrets, [69e] for I believe that I shall find other masters and friends who are as good in the world beyond. But all men cannot believe this, and I shall be glad if my words have any more success with you than with the jurymen of the Athenians.”

Cebes answered: “I agree, Socrates, in the greater part of what you say. [70a] But in what relates to the *psūkhē*, men are apt to be incredulous; they fear that when it leaves the body its place may be nowhere, and that on the very day of death it may be destroyed and perish—immediately on its release from the body, issuing forth like smoke or air and vanishing away into nothingness. For if it could only hold together and be itself after it was released from the evils of the body, [70b] there would be good reason to hope, Socrates, that what you say is true. But much persuasion [*paramuthia* = diversion by way of *mūthos*] and many arguments are required in order to prove that when the man is dead the *psūkhē* yet exists, and has any force of intelligence.”

“True, Cebes,” said Socrates; “and shall I suggest that we talk [*diamuthologeîn* = speak through *mūthos*] a little of the probabilities of these things?”

“I am sure,” said Cebes, “that I should greatly like to know your opinion about them.”

“I reckon,” said Socrates, “that no one who heard me now, [70c] not even if he were one of my old enemies, the comic poets, could accuse

me of idle talking about matters in which I have no concern. Let us, then, if you please, proceed with the inquiry.

“Whether the *psūkhai* of men after death are or are not in the world of Hādēs, is a question which may be argued in this manner: the ancient doctrine of which I have been speaking affirms that they go from this into the other world, and return hither, and are born from the dead. Now if this be true, and the living come from the dead, then our *psūkhai* must be in the other world, [70d] for if not, how could they be born again? And this would be conclusive, if there were any real evidence that the living are only born from the dead; but if there is no evidence of this, then other arguments will have to be adduced.”

“That is very true,” replied Cebes.

“Then let us consider this question, not in relation to man only, but in relation to animals generally, and to plants, and to everything of which there is generation, and the proof will be easier. [70e] Are not all things which have opposites generated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil, just and unjust—and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. And I want to show that this holds universally of all opposites; I mean to say, for example, that anything which becomes greater must become greater after being less.”

“True.”

“And that which becomes less [71a] must have been once greater and then become less.”

“Yes.”

“And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the swifter from the slower.”

“Very true.”

“And the worse is from the better, and the more just is from the more unjust.”

“Of course.”

“And is this true of all opposites? And are we convinced that all of them are generated out of opposites?”

“Yes.”

“And in this universal opposition of all things, are there not also two intermediate processes which are ever going on, [71b] from one to the other, and back again; where there is a greater and a less there is also an intermediate process of increase and diminution, and that which grows is said to wax, and that which decays to wane?”

“Yes,” he said.

“And there are many other processes, such as division and composition, cooling and heating, which equally involve a passage into and out of one another. And this holds of all opposites, even though not always expressed in words—they are generated out of one another, and there is a passing or process from one to the other of them?”

[71c] “Very true,” he replied.

“Well, and is there not an opposite of life, as sleep is the opposite of waking?”

“True,” he said.

“And what is that?”

“Death,” he answered.

“And these, then, are generated, if they are opposites, the one from the other, and have there their two intermediate processes also?”

“Of course.”

“Now,” said Socrates, “I will analyze one of the two pairs of opposites which I have mentioned to you, and also its intermediate processes, and you shall analyze the other to me. The state of sleep is opposed to the state of waking, and out of sleeping waking is generated, and out of waking, sleeping, [71d] and the process of generation is in the one case falling asleep, and in the other waking up. Are you agreed about that?”

“Quite agreed.”

“Then suppose,” he [= Socrates] said, “that you analyze life and death to me in the same manner. Is not death opposed to life?”

“Yes.”

“And they are generated one from the other?”

“Yes.”

“What is generated from life?”

“Death,” he said.

“And what from death?”

“I can only say in answer—life.”

“Then the living, whether things or persons, Cebes, are generated from the dead?”

[71e] “That is clear,” he replied.

“Then the inference is, that our *psūkhai* are in the world below?”

“That is true.”

“And one of the two processes or generations is visible—for surely the act of dying is visible?”

“Surely,” he [= Cebes] said.

“And may not the other be inferred as the complement of nature, who is not to be supposed to go on one leg only? And if not, a corresponding process of generation in death must also be assigned to it?”

“Certainly,” he replied.

“And what is that process?”

“Revival.”

“And revival, if there be such a thing, [72a] is the birth of the dead into the world of the living?”

“Quite true.”

“Then there is a new way in which we arrive at the inference that the living come from the dead, just as the dead come from the living; and if this is true, then the *psūkhai* of the dead must be in some place out of which they come again. And this, as I think, has been satisfactorily proved.”

“Yes, Socrates,” he said, “all this seems to flow necessarily out of our previous admissions.”

“And that these admissions are not unfair, Cebes,” he said, “may be shown, as I think, in this way. [72b] If generation were in a straight line only, and there were no compensation or circle in nature, no turn or return into one another, then you know that all things would at last have the same form and pass into the same state, and there would be no more generation of them.”

“What do you mean?” he said.

“A simple thing enough, which I will illustrate by the case of sleep,” he replied. “You know that if there were no compensation of sleeping and waking, [72c] the story of the sleeping Endymion would in the end have no meaning, because all other things would be asleep, too, and he would not be thought of. Or if there were composition only, and no division of substances, then the chaos of Anaxagoras would come again. And in like manner, my dear Cebes, if all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, and did not come to life again, all would at last die, [72d] and nothing would be alive—how could this be otherwise? For if the living spring from any others who are not the dead, and they die, must not all things at last be swallowed up in death?”

“There is no escape from that, Socrates,” said Cebes; “and I think that what you say is entirely true.”

“Yes,” he said, “Cebes, I entirely think so, too; and we are not walking in a vain imagination; but I am confident in the belief that there truly is such a thing as living again, and that the living spring from the dead, and that the *psūkhai* of the dead are in existence, and that the good *psūkhai* have a better portion than the [72e] evil.”

Cebes added: “Your favorite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we learned that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible [73a] unless our *psūkhē* was in some place before existing in the human form; here, then, is another argument for the immortality of the *psūkhē*.”

“But tell me, Cebes,” said Simmias, interposing, “what proofs are given of this doctrine of recollection? I am not very sure at this moment that I remember them.”

“One excellent proof,” said Cebes, “is afforded by questions. If you put a question to a person in a right way, he will give a true answer of himself; but how could he do this unless there were knowledge and right reason already in him? And this is most clearly shown when he is taken [73b] to a diagram or to anything of that sort.”

“But if,” said Socrates, “you are still incredulous, Simmias, I would ask you whether you may not agree with me when you look at the matter in another way; I mean, if you are still incredulous as to whether knowledge is recollection.”

“Incredulous, I am not,” said Simmias; “but I want to have this doctrine of recollection brought to my own recollection, and, from what Cebes has said, I am beginning to recollect and be convinced; but I should still like to hear what more you have to say.”

[73c] “This is what I would say,” he replied: “We should agree, if I am not mistaken, that what a man recollects he must have known at some previous time.”

“Very true.”

“And what is the nature of this recollection? And, in asking this, I mean to ask whether, when a person has already seen or heard or in any way

perceived anything, and he knows not only that, but something else of which he has not the same, but another knowledge, we may not fairly say that [73d] he recollects that which comes into his mind. Are we agreed about that?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean what I may illustrate by the following instance: The knowledge of a lyre is not the same as the knowledge of a man?”

“True.”

“And yet what is the feeling of lovers when they recognize a lyre, or a garment, or anything else which the beloved has been in the habit of using? Do not they, from knowing the lyre, form in the mind’s eye an image of the youth to whom the lyre belongs? And this is recollection: and in the same way anyone who sees Simmias may remember Cebes; and there are endless other things of the same nature.”

“Yes, indeed, there are—endless,” replied Simmias. [73e] “And this sort of thing,” he said, “is recollection, and is most commonly a process of recovering that which has been forgotten through time and inattention.”

“Very true,” he said.

“Well; and may you not also from seeing the picture of a horse or a lyre remember a man? And from the picture of Simmias, you may be led to remember Cebes?”

“True.”

“Or you may also be led to the recollection of Simmias himself?”

[74a] “True,” he said.”

“And in all these cases, the recollection may be derived from things either like or unlike?”

“That is true.”

“And when the recollection is derived from like things, then there is sure to be another question, which is, whether the likeness of that which is recollected is in any way defective or not.”

“Very true,” he said.

“And shall we proceed a step further, and affirm that there is such a thing as equality, not of wood with wood, or of stone with stone, but that, over and above this, there is equality in the abstract? Shall we affirm this?”

[74b] “Affirm, yes, and swear to it,” replied Simmias, “with all the confidence in life.”

“And do we know the nature of this abstract essence?”

“To be sure,” he said.

“And whence did we obtain this knowledge? Did we not see equalities of material things, such as pieces of wood and stones, and gather from them the idea of an equality which is different from them?—you will admit that? Or look at the matter again in this way: Do not the same pieces of wood or stone appear at one time equal, and at another time unequal?”

“That is certain.”

“But are real equals ever unequal? Or is the idea of equality ever inequality?”

[74c] “That surely was never yet known, Socrates.”

“Then these (so-called) equals are not the same with the idea of equality?”

“I should say, clearly not, Socrates.”

“And yet from these equals, although differing from the idea of equality, you conceived and attained that idea?”

“Very true,” he said.

“Which might be like, or might be unlike them?”

“Yes.”

“But that makes no difference; whenever from seeing one thing [74d] you conceived another, whether like or unlike, there must surely have been an act of recollection?”

“Very true.”

“But what would you say of equal portions of wood and stone, or other material equals? And what is the impression produced by them? Are they equals in the same sense as absolute equality? Or do they fall short of this in a measure?”

“Yes,” he said, “in a very great measure, too.”

“And must we not allow that when I or anyone look at any object, and perceive that the object aims at being some other thing, but falls short of, [74e] and cannot attain to it – he who makes this observation must have had previous knowledge of that to which, as he says, the other, although similar, was inferior?”

“Certainly.”

“And has not this been our case in the matter of equals and of absolute equality?”

“Precisely.”

“Then we must have known absolute equality [75a] previously to the time when we first saw the material equals, and reflected that all these apparent equals aim at this absolute equality, but fall short of it?”

“That is true. And we recognize also that this absolute equality has only been known, and can only be known, through the medium of sight or touch, or of some other sense. And this I would affirm of all such conceptions.”

“Yes, Socrates, as far as the argument is concerned, one of them is the same as the other.”

“And from the senses, then, is derived the knowledge that [75b] all sensible things aim at an idea of equality of which they fall short—is not that true?”

“Yes.”

“Then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality, or we could not have referred to that the equals which are derived from the senses – for to that they all aspire, and of that they fall short?”

“That, Socrates, is certainly to be inferred from the previous statements.”

“And did we not see and hear and acquire our other senses as soon as we were born?”

[75c] “Certainly.”

“Then we must have acquired the knowledge of the ideal equal at some time previous to this?”

“Yes.”

“That is to say, before we were born, I suppose?”

“True.”

“And if we acquired this knowledge before we were born, and were born having it, then we also knew before we were born and at the instant of birth not only equal or the greater or the less, but all other ideas; for we are not speaking only of equality absolute, but of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness, [75d] and all which we stamp with the name of essence in the dialectical process, when we ask and answer questions. Of all this we may certainly affirm that we acquired the knowledge before birth?”

“That is true.”

“But if, after having acquired, we have not forgotten that which we acquired, then we must always have been born with knowledge, and shall always continue to know as long as life lasts—for knowing is the acquiring and retaining knowledge and not forgetting. Is not forgetting, Simmias, just the losing of knowledge?”

“Quite true, Socrates.”

[75e] “But if the knowledge which we acquired before birth was lost by us at birth, and afterwards by the use of the senses we recovered that which we previously knew, will not that which we call learning be a process of recovering our knowledge, and may not this be rightly termed recollection by us?”

“Very true.”

“For this is clear, [76a] that when we perceived something, either by the help of sight or hearing, or some other sense, there was no difficulty in receiving from this a conception of some other thing like or unlike which had been forgotten and which was associated with this; and therefore, as I was saying, one of two alternatives follows: either we had this knowledge at birth, and continued to know through life; or, after birth, those who are said to learn only remember, and learning is recollection only.”

“Yes, that is quite true, Socrates.”

“And which alternative, Simmias, do you prefer? [76b] Had we the knowledge at our birth, or did we remember afterwards the things which we knew previously to our birth?”

“I cannot decide at the moment.”

“At any rate you can decide whether he who has knowledge ought or ought not to be able to give a reason for what he knows.”

“Certainly, he ought.”

“But do you think that every man is able to give a reason about these very matters of which we are speaking?”

“I wish that they could, Socrates, but I greatly fear that tomorrow at this time there will be no one able to give a reason worth having.”

[76c] “Then you are not of the opinion, Simmias, that all men know these things?”

“Certainly not.”

“Then they are in process of recollecting that which they learned before.”

“Certainly.”

“But when did our *psūkhai* acquire this knowledge? Not since we were born as men?”

“Certainly not.”

“And therefore previously?”

“Yes.”

“Then, Simmias, our *psūkhai* must have existed before they were in the form of man—without bodies, and must have had intelligence.”

“Unless indeed you suppose, Socrates, that these notions were given us at the moment of birth; [76d] for this is the only time that remains.”

“Yes, my friend, but when did we lose them? For they are not in us when we are born—that is admitted. Did we lose them at the moment of receiving them, or at some other time?”

“No, Socrates, I perceive that I was unconsciously talking nonsense.”

“Then may we not say, Simmias, that if, as we are always repeating, there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and essence in general, and to this, [76e] which is now discovered to be a previous condition of our being, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them—assuming this to have a prior existence, then our *psūkhai* must have had a prior existence, but if not, there would be no force in the argument? There can be no doubt that if these absolute ideas existed before we were born,

then our *psūkhai* must have existed before we were born, and if not the ideas, then not the *psūkhai*.”

“Yes, Socrates; I am convinced that there is precisely the same necessity for the existence of the *psūkhē* before birth, [77a] and of the essence of which you are speaking: and the argument arrives at a result which happily agrees with my own notion. For there is nothing which to my mind is so evident as that beauty, goodness, and other notions of which you were just now speaking have a most real and absolute existence; and I am satisfied with the proof.”

“Well, but is Cebes equally satisfied? For I must convince him too.”

“I think,” said Simmias, “that Cebes is satisfied: although he is the most incredulous of mortals, yet I believe that he is convinced [77b] of the existence of the *psūkhē* before birth. But that after death the *psūkhē* will continue to exist is not yet proven even to my own satisfaction. I cannot get rid of the feeling of the many to which Cebes was referring—the feeling that when the man dies the *psūkhē* may be scattered, and that this may be the end of it. For admitting that it may be generated and created in some other place, and may have existed before entering the human body, why after having entered in and gone out again may it not itself be destroyed and come to an end?”

[77c] “Very true, Simmias,” said Cebes; “that our *psūkhē* existed before we were born was the first half of the argument, and this appears to have been proven; that the *psūkhē* will exist after death as well as before birth is the other half of which the proof is still wanting, and has to be supplied.”

“But that proof, Simmias and Cebes, has been already given,” said Socrates, “if you put the two arguments together—I mean this and the former one, in which we admitted that everything living is born of the dead. For if the *psūkhē* existed before birth, [77d] and in coming to life

and being born can be born only from death and dying, must it not after death continue to exist, since it has to be born again? Surely the proof which you desire has been already furnished. Still I suspect that you and Simmias would be glad to probe the argument further; like children, you are haunted with a fear that when the *psūkhē* leaves the body, the wind may really blow it away and scatter it; [77e] especially if a man should happen to die in stormy weather and not when the sky is calm.”

Cebes answered with a smile: “Then, Socrates you must argue us out of our fears—and yet, strictly speaking, they are not our fears, but there is a child within us to whom death is a sort of hobgoblin; him too we must persuade not to be afraid when he is alone with him in the dark.”

Socrates said, “Let the voice of the charmer be applied daily until you have charmed him away.”

[78a] “And where shall we find a good charmer of our fears, Socrates, when you are gone?”

“Hellas,” he replied, “is a large place, Cebes, and has many good men, and there are barbarous races not a few: seek for him among them all, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of using your money. And you must not forget to seek for him among yourselves too; for he is nowhere more likely to be found.”

“The search,” replied Cebes, “shall certainly be made. And now, if you please, let us return to the point of the argument at which we digressed.”

[78b] “By all means,” replied Socrates; “what else should I please?”

“Very good,” he said.

“Must we not, said Socrates, “ask ourselves some question of this sort? What is that which, as we imagine, is liable to be scattered away, and

about which we fear? and what again is that about which we have no fear? And then we may proceed to inquire whether that which suffers dispersion is or is not of the nature of *psūkhē*—our hopes and fears as to our own *psūkhai* will turn upon that.”

“That is true,” he said.

“Now the compound [78c] or composite may be supposed to be naturally capable of being dissolved in like manner as of being compounded; but that which is uncompounded, and that only, must be, if anything is, indissoluble.”

“Yes; that is what I should imagine,” said Cebes.

“And the uncompounded may be assumed to be the same and unchanging, where the compound is always changing and never the same?”

“That I also think,” he said.

“Then now let us return to the previous discussion. [78d] Is that idea or essence, which in the dialectical process we define as essence of true existence—whether essence of equality, beauty, or anything else: are these essences, I say, liable at times to some degree of change? or are they each of them always what they are, having the same simple, self-existent and unchanging forms, and not admitting of variation at all, or in any way, or at any time?”

“They must be always the same, Socrates,” replied Cebes.

[78e] “And what would you say of the many beautiful—whether men or horses or garments or any other things which may be called equal or beautiful—are they all unchanging and the same always, or quite the

reverse? May they not rather be described as almost always changing and hardly ever the same either with themselves or with one another?”

“The latter,” replied Simmias; “they are always in a state of change.”

[79a] “And these you can touch and see and perceive with the senses, but the unchanging things you can only perceive with the mind – they are invisible and are not seen?”

“That is very true,” he said.

“Well, then,” he added, “let us suppose that there are two sorts of existences, one seen, the other unseen.”

“Let us suppose them.”

“The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging. That may be also supposed. [79b] And, further, is not one part of us body, and the rest of us *psūkhē*?”

“To be sure.”

“And to which class may we say that the body is more alike and akin?”

“Clearly to the seen: no one can doubt that.”

“And is the *psūkhē* seen or not seen?”

“Not by man, Socrates.”

“And by ‘seen’ and ‘not seen’ is meant by us that which is or is not visible to the eye of man?”

“Yes, to the eye of man.”

“And what do we say of the *psūkhē*? is that seen or not seen?”

“Not seen.”

“Unseen then?”

“Yes.”

“Then the *psūkhē* is more like to the unseen, and the body to the seen?”

[79c] “That is most certain, Socrates.”

“And were we not saying long ago that the *psūkhē* when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses)—were we not saying that the *psūkhē* too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round it, and it is like a drunkard when under their influence?”

“Very true.”

“But when returning into itself it reflects; [79d] then it passes into the realm of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are its kindred, and with them it ever lives, when it is by itself and is not let or hindered; then it ceases from its erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the *psūkhē* is called wisdom?”

“That is well and truly said, Socrates,” he replied.

“And to which class is the *psūkhē* more nearly alike and akin, [79e] as far as may be inferred from this argument, as well as from the preceding one?”

“I think, Socrates, that, in the opinion of everyone who follows the argument, the *psūkhē* will be infinitely more like the unchangeable—even the most stupid person will not deny that.”

“And the body is more like the changing?”

“Yes.”

“Yet once more consider the matter in this light: When the *psūkhē* [80a] and the body are united, then nature orders the *psūkhē* to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve. Now which of these two functions is akin to the divine? and which to the mortal? Does not the divine appear to you to be that which naturally orders and rules, and the mortal that which is subject and servant?”

“True.”

“And which does the *psūkhē* resemble?”

“The *psūkhē* resembles the divine and the body the mortal—there can be no doubt of that, Socrates.”

“Then reflect, Cebes: is not the conclusion of the whole matter this?— [80b] that the *psūkhē* is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable. Can this, my dear Cebes, be denied?”

“No, indeed.”

“But if this is true, then is not the body liable to speedy dissolution?”

“And is not the *psūkhē* almost or altogether indissoluble?”

[80c] “Certainly.”

“And do you further observe, that after a man is dead, the body, which is the visible part of man, and has a visible framework, which is called a corpse, and which would naturally be dissolved and decomposed and dissipated, is not dissolved or decomposed at once, but may remain for a good while, if the constitution be sound at the time of death, and in season [*hōrā*]? For the body when shrunk and embalmed, as is the custom in Egypt, may remain almost entire through infinite ages; and even in decay, [80d] still there are some portions, such as the bones and ligaments, which are practically indestructible. You allow that?”

“Yes.”

“And are we to suppose that the *psūkhē*, which is invisible, in passing to the true Hādēs, which like it is invisible, and pure, and noble, and on its way to the good and wise god, whither, if the god will, my *psūkhē* is also soon to go—that the *psūkhē*, I repeat, if this be its nature and origin, is blown away and perishes immediately on quitting the body as the many say? [80e] That can never be, dear Simmias and Cebes. The truth rather is that the *psūkhē* which is pure at departing draws after it no bodily taint, having never voluntarily had connection with the body, which it is ever avoiding, itself gathered into itself (for such abstraction has been the study of its life). And what does this mean but that it has been a true disciple of philosophy [81a] and has practiced how to die easily? And is not philosophy the practice of death?”

“Certainly.”

“That *psūkhē*, I say, itself invisible, departs to the invisible world to the divine and immortal and rational: thither arriving, it lives in bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions

and all other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the gods. Is not this true, Cebes?”

“Yes,” said Cebes, “beyond a doubt.”

“But the *psūkhē* [81b] which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of its departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until it is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste and use for the purposes of his lusts—the *psūkhē*, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy – do you suppose that such a *psūkhē* as this [81c] will depart pure and unalloyed?”

“That is impossible,” he replied.

“It is engrossed by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have been made natural to it.”

“Very true.”

“And this, my friend, may be conceived to be that heavy, weighty, earthy element of sight by which such a *psūkhē* is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, because it is afraid of the invisible and of the world below— [81d] prowling about tombs and sepulchres, in the neighborhood of which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of *psūkhai* which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight and therefore visible.”

“That is very likely, Socrates.”

“Yes, that is very likely, Cebes; and these must be the *psūkhai*, not of the good, but of the evil, who are compelled to wander about such places in

payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; [81e] and they continue to wander until the desire which haunts them is satisfied and they are imprisoned in another body. And they may be supposed to be fixed in the same natures which they had in their former life.”

“What natures do you mean, Socrates?”

“I mean to say that men who have followed after gluttony, and wantonness, and drunkenness, and have had no thought of avoiding them, would pass into asses and animals of that sort. [82a] What do you think?”

“I think that exceedingly probable.”

“And those who have chosen the portion of injustice, and tyranny, and violence, will pass into wolves, or into hawks and kites; whither else can we suppose them to go?”

“Yes,” said Cebes; “that is doubtless the place of natures such as theirs.”

“And there is no difficulty,” he said, “in assigning to all of them places answering to their several natures and propensities?”

“There is not,” he said.

“Even among them some are happier than others; and the happiest both in themselves and their place of abode are those who have practiced the civil and social virtues which are called temperance and justice, [82b] and are acquired by habit and attention without philosophy and mind.”

“Why are they the happiest?”

“Because they may be expected to pass into some gentle, social nature which is like their own, such as that of bees or ants, or even back again

into the form of man, and just and moderate men spring from them.”

“That is not impossible.”

“But he who is a philosopher or lover of learning, and is entirely pure at departing, [82c] is alone permitted to reach the gods. And this is the reason, Simmias and Cebes, why the true votaries of philosophy abstain from all fleshly lusts, and endure and refuse to give themselves up to them—not because they fear poverty or the ruin of their families, like the lovers of money, and the world in general; nor like the lovers of power and honor, because they dread the dishonor or disgrace of evil deeds.”

“No, Socrates, that would not become them,” said Cebes.

“No, indeed,” he replied; [82d] “and therefore they who have a care of their *psūkhai*, and do not merely live in the fashions of the body, say farewell to all this; they will not walk in the ways of the blind: and when philosophy offers them purification and release from evil, they feel that they ought not to resist its influence, and to it they incline, and whither it leads they follow it.”

“What do you mean, Socrates?”

“I will tell you,” he said. “The lovers of knowledge are conscious that their *psūkhai*, when philosophy receives them, [82e] are simply fastened and glued to their bodies: the *psūkhē* is only able to view existence through the bars of a prison, and not in its own nature; it is wallowing in the mire of all ignorance; and philosophy, seeing the terrible nature of its confinement, and that the captive through desire is led [83a] to conspire in its own captivity (for the lovers of knowledge are aware that this was the original state of the *psūkhē*, and that when it was in this state philosophy received and gently counseled [*paramutheísthai* = divert by way of *mūthos*] it, and wanted to release it, pointing out to it that the eye is full of deceit, and also the ear and other senses, and persuading it

to retire from them in all but the necessary use of them and to be gathered up and collected into itself, and to trust only to [83b] itself and its own intuitions of absolute existence, and mistrust that which comes to it through others and is subject to vicissitude) – philosophy shows it that this is visible and tangible, but that what it sees in its own nature is intellectual and invisible. And the *psūkhē* of the true philosopher thinks that it ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as it is able; reflecting that when a man has great joys or sorrows or fears or desires he suffers from them, not the sort of evil which might be anticipated—as, for example, the loss of his health or property, [83c] which he has sacrificed to his lusts—but he has suffered an evil greater far, which is the greatest and worst of all evils, and one of which he never thinks.”

“And what is that, Socrates?” said Cebes.

“Why, this: when the feeling of pleasure or pain in the *psūkhē* is most intense, all of us naturally suppose that the object of this intense feeling is then plainest and truest: but this is not the case.”

[83d] “Very true.”

“And this is the state in which the *psūkhē* is most enthralled by the body.”

“How is that?”

“Why, because each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the *psūkhē* to the body, and engrosses it and makes it believe that thing to be true which the body affirms to be true; and from agreeing with the body and having the same delights it is obliged to have the same habits and ways, and is not likely ever to be pure at its departure to the world below, but is always saturated with the body; so that it soon

sinks into another body [83e] and there germinates and grows, and has therefore no part in the communion of the divine and pure and simple.”

“That is most true, Socrates,” answered Cebes.

“And this, Cebes, is the reason why the true lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave; and not for the reason which the world gives.”

[84a] “Certainly not.”

“Certainly not! For not in that way does the *psūkhē* of a philosopher reason; it will not ask philosophy to release it in order that when released it may deliver itself up again to the thralldom of pleasures and pains, doing a work only to be undone again, weaving instead of unweaving its Penelope's web. But it will make itself a calm of passion and follow Reason, and dwell in it, beholding the true and divine (which is not matter of opinion), and thence derive nourishment. [84b] Thus it seeks to live while it lives, and after death it hopes to go to its own kindred and to be freed from human ills. Never fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a *psūkhē* which has been thus nurtured and has had these pursuits, will at its departure from the body be scattered and blown away by the winds and be nowhere and nothing.”

When Socrates had done speaking, for a considerable time there was silence; [84c] he himself and most of us appeared to be meditating on what had been said; only Cebes and Simmias spoke a few words to one another. And Socrates observing this asked them what they thought of the argument, and whether there was anything wanting.

“For,” said he, “much is still open to suspicion and attack, if anyone were disposed to sift the matter thoroughly. If you are talking of something else I would rather not interrupt you, but if you are still doubtful about the argument [84d] do not hesitate to say exactly what you think, and

let us have anything better which you can suggest; and if I am likely to be of any use, allow me to help you.”

Simmias said, “I must confess, Socrates, that doubts did arise in our minds, and each of us was urging and inciting the other to put the question which he wanted to have answered and which neither of us liked to ask, fearing that our importunity might be troublesome under present circumstances.”

When he heard Socrates laughed in a measured way and said: [84e] “Well, well, Simmias, so I guess I am not very likely to persuade other people that I do not regard my present situation as a misfortune, if I am unable to persuade even you, and if you keep worrying whether I am at all more troubled now than I was in my earlier phase of life—and whether I am inferior to swans [*kuknoi*] in my prophetic [*mantikē*] capacity. It seems that swans, when they get the feeling that they must die, even though they were singing throughout their earlier phase of life, [85a] will now sing more and better than ever, rejoicing in the thought that they are about to go away to the god whose attendants [*therapōn* plural] they are. But humans, because of their fear of death, tell lies about the swans [*kuknoi*], claiming that swans are lamenting [*thrēneîn*] their own death when they sing their hearts out in sorrow. So, humans are not taking into account the fact that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or experiences some other such pain—not even the nightingale herself or the swallow or the hoopoe. All these birds are said to be singing in their sorrow because they have something to lament. But I do not believe that these birds sing because of some sorrow—and I do not believe it about the swans [*kuknoi*], either. [85b] Rather, as I believe, it is because swans are sacred to Apollo and have a prophetic [*mantikē*] capacity and foresee the good things that will happen in the house of Hādēs—that is why they sing and rejoice in that [last] day of theirs more than they ever did in the previous time of their life. And I, too, think of myself as the consecrated [*hieros*] agent of the same god, and a fellow

temple-servant [*homo-doulos*] with the swans [*kuknoi*], and, thinking that I have received from my master [*despotēs*] a prophetic [*mantikē*] capacity that is not inferior to theirs, I would not part from life in a less happy state of mind [*thūmos*] than the swans. And it is for this reason that you must speak and ask whatever questions you want, so long as the Athenian people's Board of Eleven allows it."

"Well, Socrates," said Simmias, [85c] "then I will tell you my difficulty, and Cebes will tell you his. For I dare say that you, Socrates, feel, as I do, how very hard or almost impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life. And yet I should deem him a coward who did not prove what is said about them to the uttermost, or whose heart failed him before he had examined them on every side. For he should persevere until he has attained one of two things: either he should discover or learn the truth about them; or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human notions, [85d] and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life—not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of the god which will more surely and safely carry him. And now, as you bid me, I will venture to question you, as I should not like to reproach myself hereafter with not having said at the time what I think. For when I consider the matter either alone or with Cebes, the argument does certainly appear to me, Socrates, to be not sufficient."

[85e] Socrates answered: "I dare say, my friend, that you may be right, but I should like to know in what respect the argument is not sufficient."

"In this respect," replied Simmias: "might not a person use the same argument about tuning [*harmonia*] and the lyre—might he not say that tuning [*harmonia*] is a thing invisible, incorporeal, fair, divine, [86a] abiding in the lyre which is tuned, but that the lyre and the strings are matter and material, composite, earthy, and akin to mortality? And when someone breaks the lyre, or cuts and rends the strings, then he who takes this view would argue as you do, and on the same analogy, that the

tuning [*harmonia*] survives and has not perished; for you cannot imagine, as we would say, that the lyre without the strings, and the broken strings themselves, remain, and yet that the tuning [*harmonia*], [86b] which is of godly and immortal nature and kindred, has perished – and perished too before the mortal. The tuning [*harmonia*], he would say, certainly exists somewhere, and the wood and strings will decay before that decays. For I suspect, Socrates, that the notion of the *psūkhē* which we are all of us inclined to entertain, would also be yours, and that you too would conceive the body to be strung up, and held together, by the elements of hot and cold, wet and dry, and the like, [86c] and that the *psūkhē* is the tuning [*harmonia*] or due proportionate admixture of them. And, if this is true, the inference clearly is that when the strings of the body are unduly loosened or overstrained through disorder or other injury, then the *psūkhē*, though most divine, like other tunings [*harmoniai*] of music or of the works of art, of course perishes at once, although the material remains of the body may last for a considerable time, [86d] until they are either decayed or burnt. Now if anyone maintained that the *psūkhē*, being the tuning [*harmonia*] of the elements of the body, first perishes in that which is called death, how shall we answer him?”

Socrates looked round at us as his manner was, and said, with a smile: “Simmias has reason on his side; and why does not some one of you who is abler than myself answer him? For there is force in his attack upon me. [86e] But perhaps, before we answer him, we had better also hear what Cebes has to say against the argument—this will give us time for reflection, and when both of them have spoken, we may either assent to them if their words appear to be in consonance with the truth, or if not, we may take up the other side, and argue with them. Please to tell me then, Cebes,” he said, “what was the difficulty which troubled you?”

Cebes said, “I will tell you. My feeling is that the argument is still in the same position, and open to the same objections which were urged

before; [87a] for I am ready to admit that the existence of the *psūkhē* before entering into the bodily form has been very ingeniously, and, as I may be allowed to say, quite sufficiently proven; but the existence of the *psūkhē* after death is still, in my judgment, unproven. Now my objection is not the same as that of Simmias; for I am not disposed to deny that the *psūkhē* is stronger and more lasting than the body, being of opinion that in all such respects the *psūkhē* very far excels the body. Well, then, says the argument to me, why do you remain unconvinced? When you see that the weaker is still in existence after the man is dead, [87b] will you not admit that the more lasting must also be saved [*sōzein*] during the same period of time? Now I, like Simmias, must employ a figure; and I shall ask you to consider whether the figure is to the point. The parallel which I will suppose is that of an old weaver, who dies, and after his death somebody says: he is not dead, he must have been saved [= *sōzein*]; and he appeals to the coat which he himself wove and wore, and which is still whole and undecayed. And then he proceeds to ask of someone who is incredulous, [87c] whether a man lasts longer, or the coat which is in use and wear; and when he is answered that a man lasts far longer, thinks that he has thus certainly demonstrated the survival of the man, who is the more lasting, because the less lasting remains. But that, Simmias, as I would beg you to observe, is not the truth; everyone sees that he who talks thus is talking nonsense. For the truth is that this weaver, having worn and woven many such coats, [87d] though he outlived several of them, was himself outlived by the last; but this is surely very far from proving that a man is slighter and weaker than a coat. Now the relation of the body to the *psūkhē* may be expressed in a similar figure; for you may say with reason that the *psūkhē* is lasting, and the body weak and short-lived in comparison. And every *psūkhē* may be said to wear out many bodies, especially in the course of a long life. For if while the man is alive the body deliquesces and decays, [87e] and yet the *psūkhē* always weaves its garment anew and repairs the waste, then of course, when the *psūkhē* perishes, it must have on its last garment, and this only will survive it; but then again when the *psūkhē* is dead the body

will at last show its native weakness, and soon pass into decay. And therefore this is an argument on which I would rather not rely [88a] as proving that the *psūkhē* exists after death. For suppose that we grant even more than you affirm as within the range of possibility, and besides acknowledging that the *psūkhē* existed before birth admit also that after death the *psūkhē* of some are existing still, and will exist, and will be born and die again and again, and that there is a natural strength in the *psūkhē* which will hold out and be born many times—for all this, we may be still inclined to think that it will weary in the labors of successive births, and may at last succumb in one of its deaths and utterly perish; [88b] and this death and dissolution of the body which brings destruction to the *psūkhē* may be unknown to any of us, for no one of us can have had any experience of it: and if this be true, then I say that he who is confident in death has but a foolish confidence, unless he is able to prove that the *psūkhē* is altogether immortal and imperishable. But if he is not able to prove this, he who is about to die will always have reason to fear that when the body is disunited, the *psūkhē* also may utterly perish.”

All of us, as we afterwards remarked to one another, [88c] had an unpleasant feeling at hearing them say this. When we had been so firmly convinced before, now to have our faith shaken seemed to introduce a confusion and uncertainty, not only into the previous argument, but into any future one; either we were not good judges, or there were no real grounds of belief.

Echecrates

I swear by the gods, Phaedo, I myself now feel totally the same way as you people felt back then. I mean, as I am now listening to you saying the kinds of things you are saying, this is the thought that comes to me: [88d] “What argument [*logos*] can we ever trust again? For what could be more trustworthy than the argument [*logos*] of Socrates, which has now fallen into the status of untrustworthiness?” You see, the argument

[*logos*] that the soul [*psūkhē*] is some kind of a tuning [*harmonia*] has always been wonderfully attractive to me, and, when this argument was put into words, it was as if it connected me in my thinking with the fact that these things had been figured out earlier by me as well. And now I am in need of finding some other argument [*logos*], starting all the way back from the beginning—some argument that will make me believe that, when someone dies, the soul [*psūkhē*] does not die along with that someone. Tell me, for Zeus' sake, tell me! How did Socrates follow up on the argument [*logos*] [of Simmias and Cebes]? [88e] Did he too get visibly upset, the same way you say that you all got upset? Or was he not upset and instead responded calmly to the cry for help and ran to the rescue [*boētheîn*] of the argument [*logos*]? And did he respond and run to the rescue [*boētheîn*] in a way that was sufficient or defective? Go through for us everything that happened, as accurately as you can.

Phaedo

I tell you, Echecrates: as often as I have admired Socrates, I have never been so awed by him as I was when I was there at that moment. [89a] The fact that he had something to say in response was perhaps nothing all that unusual, but the thing that really astounded me was, first, how gently and pleasantly and respectfully he received the argument [*logos*] of the young men [Simmias and Cebes], and, second, how acutely he sensed that we all had suffered injury from the arguments [*logoi*] [of Simmias and Cebes], and then, how well he healed us of our sufferings. It was as if he were calling out to us, fleeing and defeated as we were, urging us to follow him and to take another good look at our argument [*logos*].

Echecrates

And how did he do that?

Phaedo

I will tell you. You see, I happened to be seated close to him, at his right

hand. I was sitting on a kind of stool, 189b while he was lying on a couch that was quite a bit higher than where I was. So then he stroked my head and fondled the locks of hair along my neck—he had this way of playing with my hair whenever he had a chance. And then he said: “Tomorrow, Phaedo, you will perhaps be cutting off these beautiful locks of yours?”

“Yes, Socrates,” I replied, “I guess I will.”

He shot back: “No you will not, if you listen to me.”

“So, what will I do?” I said.

He replied: “Not tomorrow but today I will cut off my own hair and you too will cut off these locks of yours—if our argument [*logos*] comes to an end [*teleutân*] for us and we cannot bring it back to life again [*anabiōsasthai*]. [89c] Moreover, if I were you and the argument [*logos*] eluded me, I would make an oath and bind myself to it, as the men of Argos had done once upon a time, that I would not wear my hair long until I win in renewed battle against the argument [*logos*] of Simmias and Cebes.”

“Yes,” I said, “but even Hēraklēs is said not to be a match for two opponents.”

“Then summon me,” he said, “as your Iolaos, so long as there is still sunlight before the sun sets.”

“Then I summon you,” I said, “not as Hēraklēs summons Iolaos: rather, I summon you the same way as Iolaos summons Hēraklēs.”

“That will be all the same,” he said. “But first let us take care that we avoid a danger.”

“And what is that?” I said.

[89d] “The danger of becoming misologists,” he replied, “which is one of the very worst things that can happen to us. For as there are misanthropists or haters of men, there are also misologists or haters of ideas, and both spring from the same cause, which is ignorance of the world. Misanthropy arises from the too great confidence of inexperience; you trust a man and think him altogether true and good and faithful, and then in a little while he turns out to be false and knavish; and then another and another, and when this has happened several times to a man, especially within the circle of his most trusted friends, as he deems them, [89e] and he has often quarreled with them, he at last hates all men, and believes that no one has any good in him at all. I dare say that you must have observed this.”

“Yes,” I said.

“And is not this discreditable? The reason is that a man, having to deal with other men, has no knowledge of them; for if he had knowledge he would have known the true state of the case, that few are the good and few the evil, [90a] and that the great majority are in the interval between them.”

“How do you mean?” I said.

“I mean,” he replied, “as you might say of the very large and very small, that nothing is more uncommon than a very large or a very small man; and this applies generally to all extremes, whether of great and small, or swift and slow, or fair and foul, or black and white: and whether the instances you select be men or dogs or anything else, few are the extremes, but many are in the mean between them. Did you never observe this?”

“Yes,” I said, “I have.”

“And do you not imagine,” [90b] he said, “that if there were a competition [*agōn*] of evil, the first in evil would be found to be very few?”

“Yes, that is very likely,” I said.

“Yes, that is very likely,” he replied; “not that in this respect arguments are like men—there I was led on by you to say more than I had intended; but the point of comparison was that when a simple man who has no skill in dialectics believes an argument to be true which he afterwards imagines to be false, whether really false or not, and then another and another, he has no longer any faith left, [90c] and great disputers, as you know, come to think, at last that they have grown to be the wisest of mankind; for they alone perceive the utter unsoundness and instability of all arguments, or, indeed, of all things, which, like the currents in the Euripus, are going up and down in never-ceasing ebb and flow.”

“That is quite true,” I said.

“Yes, Phaedo,” he replied, “and very melancholy too, if there be such a thing as truth or certainty or power of knowing at all, [90d] that a man should have lighted upon some argument or other which at first seemed true and then turned out to be false, and instead of blaming himself and his own want of wit, because he is annoyed, should at last be too glad to transfer the blame from himself to arguments in general; and forever afterwards should hate and revile them, and lose the truth and knowledge of existence.”

“Yes, indeed,” I said, “that is very melancholy.”

“Let us, then, in the first place,” he said, [90e] “be careful of admitting into our *psūkhai* the notion that there is no truth or health or soundness in any arguments at all; but let us rather say that there is as yet no health in us, and that we must quit ourselves like men and do our best to gain

health— you and all other men with a view to the whole of your future life, [91a] and I myself with a view to death. For at this moment I am sensible that I have not the temper of a philosopher; like the vulgar, I am only a partisan. For the partisan, when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions. And the difference between him and me at the present moment is only this—that whereas he seeks to convince his hearers that what he says is true, I am rather seeking to convince myself; to convince my hearers is a secondary matter with me. [91b] And do but see how much I gain by this. For if what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth, but if there be nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I shall save my friends from lamentations, and my ignorance will not last, and therefore no harm will be done. This is the state of mind, Simmias and Cebes, in which I approach the argument. [91c] And I would ask you to be thinking of the truth and not of Socrates: agree with me, if I seem to you to be speaking the truth; or if not, withstand me might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and, like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die.

“And now let us proceed,” he said. “And first of all let me be sure that I have in my mind what you were saying. Simmias, if I remember rightly, has fears and misgivings whether the *psūkhē*, being in the form of tuning [*harmonia*], although a fairer and diviner thing than the body, [91d] may not perish first. On the other hand, Cebes appeared to grant that the *psūkhē* was more lasting than the body, but he said that no one could know whether the *psūkhē*, after having worn out many bodies, might not perish itself and leave its last body behind it; and that this is death, which is the destruction not of the body but of the *psūkhē*, for in the body the work of destruction is ever going on. Are not these, Simmias and Cebes, the points which we have to consider?”

[91e] They both agreed to this statement of them.

He proceeded: “And did you deny the force of the whole preceding argument, or of a part only?”

“Of a part only,” they replied.

“And what did you think,” he said, “of that part of the argument in which we said that knowledge was recollection only, and inferred from this that the *psūkhē* must have previously existed somewhere else [92a] before it was enclosed in the body?”

Cebes said that he had been wonderfully impressed by that part of the argument, and that his conviction remained unshaken. Simmias agreed, and added that he himself could hardly imagine the possibility of his ever thinking differently about that.

“But,” rejoined Socrates, “you will have to think differently, my Theban friend, if you still maintain that tuning [*harmonia*] is a compound, and that the *psūkhē* is a tuning [*harmonia*] which is made out of strings set in the frame of the body; [92b] for you will surely never allow yourself to say that a tuning [*harmonia*] is prior to the elements which compose the tuning [*harmonia*].”

“No, Socrates, that is impossible.”

“But do you not see that you are saying this when you say that the *psūkhē* existed before it took the form and body of man, and was made up of elements which as yet had no existence? For tuning [*harmonia*] is not a sort of thing like the *psūkhē*, as you suppose; but first the lyre, and the strings, and the sounds [92c] exist in a state of being out of tune, and then tuning [*harmonia*] is made last of all, and perishes first. And how can such a notion of the *psūkhē* as this agree with the other?”

“Not at all,” replied Simmias.

“And yet,” he said, “there surely ought to be tuning [*harmonia*] when tuning [*harmonia*] is the theme of discourse.”

“There ought,” replied Simmias.

“But there is no tuning [*harmonia*],” he said, “in the two propositions that knowledge is recollection, and that the *psūkhē* is a tuning [*harmonia*]. Which of them, then, will you retain?”

“I think,” he replied, “that I have a much stronger faith, Socrates, in the first of the two, which has been fully demonstrated to me, than in the latter, which has not been demonstrated at all, [92d] but rests only on probable and plausible grounds; and I know too well that these arguments from probabilities are impostors, and unless great caution is observed in the use of them they are apt to be deceptive— in geometry, and in other things too. But the doctrine of knowledge and recollection has been proven to me on trustworthy grounds; and the proof was that the *psūkhē* must have existed before it came into the body, because to it belongs the essence of which the very name implies existence. [92e] Having, as I am convinced, rightly accepted this conclusion, and on sufficient grounds, I must, as I suppose, cease to argue or allow others to argue that the *psūkhē* is a tuning [*harmonia*].”

“Let me put the matter, Simmias,” he said, “in another point of view: do you imagine that a tuning [*harmonia*] or any other composition can be in a state other than [93a] that of the elements out of which it is compounded?”

“Certainly not.”

“Or do or suffer anything other than they do or suffer?”

He agreed.

“Then a tuning [*harmonia*] does not lead the parts or elements which make up the tuning [*harmonia*], but only follows them.”

He assented.

“For tuning [*harmonia*] cannot possibly have any motion, or sound, or other quality which is opposed to the parts.”

“That would be impossible,” he replied. “And does not every tuning [*harmonia*] depend upon the manner in which the elements are harmonized?”

“I do not understand you,” he said.

“I mean to say that a tuning [*harmonia*] admits of degrees, and is more of a tuning [*harmonia*], [93b] and more completely a tuning [*harmonia*], when more completely harmonized, if that be possible; and less of a tuning [*harmonia*], and less completely a tuning [*harmonia*], when less harmonized.”

“True.”

“But does the *psūkhē* admit of degrees, such that one *psūkhē* in the very least degree more or less, or more or less completely, a *psūkhē* than another?”

“Not in the least.”

“Yet surely one *psūkhē* is said to have intelligence and virtue, and to be good, and another *psūkhē* is said to have folly and vice, and to be an evil *psūkhē*: and this is said truly?”

[93c] “Yes, truly.”

“But what will those who maintain the *psūkhē* to be a tuning [*harmonia*] say of this presence of virtue and vice in the *psūkhē*? Will they say that there is another state of being in tune [*harmonia*], and another state of being out of tune, and that the virtuous *psūkhē* is tuned, and itself being a tuning [*harmonia*] has another tuning [*harmonia*] within it, and that the vicious *psūkhē* is untuned and has no tuning [*harmonia*] within it?”

“I cannot say,” replied Simmias; “but I suppose that something of that kind would be asserted by those who take this view.”

“And the admission is already made [93d] that no *psūkhē* is more a *psūkhē* than another; and this is equivalent to admitting that tuning [*harmonia*] is not more or less tuning [*harmonia*], or more or less completely a tuning [*harmonia*].?”

“Quite true. And that which is not more or less a tuning [*harmonia*] is not more or less harmonized?”

“True.”

“And that which is not more or less harmonized cannot have more or less of tuning [*harmonia*], but only an equal tuning [*harmonia*].?”

“Yes, an equal tuning [*harmonia*].”

“Then one *psūkhē* not being more or less absolutely a *psūkhē* than another, [93e] is not more or less harmonized?”

“Exactly.”

“And therefore has neither more nor less of tuning [*harmonia*] or of being out of tune? She has not. And having neither more nor less of tuning [*harmonia*] or of being out of tune, one *psūkhē* has no more vice

or virtue than another, if vice be the state of being out of tune and virtue the state of being in tune [*harmonia*]?”

“Not at all more.”

“Or speaking more correctly, Simmias, the *psūkhē*, if it is a tuning [*harmonia*], [94a] will never have any vice; because a tuning [*harmonia*], being absolutely a tuning [*harmonia*], has no part in that which is out of tune?”

“No.”

“And therefore a *psūkhē* which is absolutely a *psūkhē* has no vice?”

“How can it have, consistently with the preceding argument?”

“Then, according to this, if the *psūkhai* of all animals are equally and absolutely *psūkhai*, they will be equally good?”

“I agree with you, Socrates,” he said.

[94b] “And can all this be true, think you,” he said, “and are all these consequences admissible—which nevertheless seem to follow from the assumption that the *psūkhē* is a tuning [*harmonia*]?”

“Certainly not,” he said.

“Once more,” he said, “what ruling principle is there of human things other than the *psūkhē*, and especially the wise *psūkhē*? Do you know of any?”

“Indeed, I do not.”

“And is the *psūkhē* in agreement with the affections of the body? or is it at variance with them? For example, when the body is hot and thirsty, does not the *psūkhē* incline us against drinking? and when the body is hungry, against eating? And this is only one instance [94c] out of ten thousand of the opposition of the *psūkhē* to the things of the body.”

“Very true.”

“But we have already acknowledged that the *psūkhē*, being a tuning [*harmonia*], can never utter a note at variance with the tensions and relaxations and vibrations and other affections of the strings out of which it is composed; it can only follow, it cannot lead them?”

“Yes,” he said, “we acknowledged that, certainly.”

“And yet do we not now discover the *psūkhē* to be doing the exact opposite—leading the elements of which it is believed to be composed; [94d] almost always opposing and coercing them in all sorts of ways throughout life, sometimes more violently with the pains of medicine and gymnastic; then again more gently; threatening and also reprimanding the desires, passions, fears, as if talking to a thing which is not itself, as Homer in the *Odyssey* represents Odysseus doing in the words, ‘He beat his breast, and reproached his heart with this utterance [*mūthos*]: “Endure, my heart; far worse have thou endured!”’ [94e] Do you think that Homer could have composed this under the idea that the *psūkhē* is a tuning [*harmonia*] capable of being led by the affections of the body, and not rather of a nature which leads and masters them; and itself a far diviner thing than any tuning [*harmonia*]?”

“Yes, Socrates, I quite agree to that.”

“Then, my friend, we can never be right in saying that the *psūkhē* is a tuning [*harmonia*], for that would clearly [95a] contradict the divine

Homer as well as ourselves.”

“True,” he said.

“Thus much,” said Socrates, “of Harmonia, your Theban goddess, Cebes, who has not been ungracious to us, I think; but what shall I say to the Theban Kadmos, and how shall I propitiate him?”

“I think that you will discover a way of propitiating him,” said Cebes; “I am sure that you have answered the argument about tuning [*harmonia*] in a manner that I could never have expected. For when Simmias mentioned his objection, I quite imagined that no answer could be given to him, [95b] and therefore I was surprised at finding that his argument could not sustain the first onset of yours; and not impossibly the other, whom you call Kadmos, may share a similar fate.”

“Nay, my good friend,” said Socrates, “let us not boast, lest some evil eye should put to flight the word which I am about to speak. That, however, may be left in the hands of those above, while I draw near in Homeric fashion, and try the mettle of your words. Briefly, the sum of your objection is as follows: you want to have proven to you that the *psūkhē* is imperishable [95c] and immortal, and you think that the philosopher who is confident in death has but a vain and foolish confidence, if he thinks that he will fare better than one who has led another sort of life, in the world below, unless he can prove this; and you say that the demonstration of the strength and divinity of the *psūkhē*, and of its existence prior to our becoming men, does not necessarily imply its immortality. Granting that the *psūkhē* is long-lived, and has known and done much in a former state, still it is not on that account immortal; [95d] and its entrance into the human form may be a sort of disease which is the beginning of dissolution, and may at last, after the toils of life are over, end in that which is called death. And whether the *psūkhē* enters into the body once only or many times, that, as you would say, makes no difference in the fears of individuals. For any man, who is not

devoid of natural feeling, has reason to fear, if he has no knowledge or proof of the *psūkhē*'s immortality. [95e] That is what I suppose you to say, Cebes, which I designedly repeat, in order that nothing may escape us, and that you may, if you wish, add or subtract anything."

"But," said Cebes, "as far as I can see at present, I have nothing to add or subtract; you have expressed my meaning."

Socrates paused awhile, and seemed to be absorbed in reflection. At length he said, "This is a very serious inquiry which you are raising, Cebes, involving the whole question of generation and corruption, [96a] about which I will, if you like, give you my own experience; and you can apply this, if you think that anything which I say will avail towards the solution of your difficulty."

"I should very much like," said Cebes, "to hear what you have to say."

"Then I will tell you," said Socrates. "When I was young, Cebes, I had a prodigious desire to know that department of philosophy which is called Natural Science; this appeared to me to have lofty aims, as being the science which has to do with the causes of things, and which teaches why a thing is, and is created and destroyed; [96b] and I was always agitating myself with the consideration of such questions as these: Is the growth of animals the result of some decay which the hot and cold principle contracts, as some have said? Is the blood the element with which we think, or the air, or the fire? or perhaps nothing of this sort – but the brain may be the originating power of the perceptions of hearing and sight and smell, and memory and opinion may come from them, and science may be based on memory and opinion when no longer in motion, but at rest. And then I went on to examine the decay of them, [96c] and then to the things of the sky above and the earth below, and at last I concluded that I was wholly incapable of these inquiries, as I will satisfactorily prove to you. For I was fascinated by them to such a degree that my eyes grew blind to things that I had

seemed to myself, and also to others, to know quite well; and I forgot what I had before thought to be self-evident, that the growth of man is the result of eating and drinking; [96d] for when by the digestion of food flesh is added to flesh and bone to bone, and whenever there is an aggregation of congenial elements, the lesser bulk becomes larger and the small man greater. Was not that a reasonable notion?"

"Yes," said Cebes, "I think so."

"Well; but let me tell you something more. There was a time when I thought that I understood the meaning of greater and less pretty well; and when I saw a great man standing by a little one I fancied that one was taller than the other by a head; [96e] or one horse would appear to be greater than another horse: and still more clearly did I seem to perceive that ten is two more than eight, and that two cubits are more than one, because two is twice one."

"And what is now your notion of such matters?" said Cebes.

"I should be far enough from imagining," he replied, "that I knew the cause of any of them, indeed I should, for I cannot satisfy myself that when one is added to one, the one to which the addition is made becomes two, [97a] or that the two units added together make two by reason of the addition. For I cannot understand how, when separated from the other, each of them was one and not two, and now, when they are brought together, the mere juxtaposition of them can be the cause of their becoming two: nor can I understand how the division of one is the way to make two; for then a different cause [97b] would produce the same effect—as in the former instance the addition and juxtaposition of one to one was the cause of two, in this the separation and subtraction of one from the other would be the cause. Nor am I any longer satisfied that I understand the reason why one or anything else either is generated or destroyed or is at all, but I have in my mind some confused notion of another method, and can never admit this.

“Then I heard someone who had a book of Anaxagoras, as he said, [97c] out of which he read that mind was the disposer and cause of all, and I was quite delighted at the notion of this, which appeared admirable, and I said to myself: If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if anyone desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or suffering or doing was best for that thing, [97d] and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, for that the same science comprised both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired, and I imagined that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round; [97e] and then he would further explain the cause and the necessity of this, and would teach me the nature of the best and show that this was best; and if he said that the earth was in the center, he would explain that this position was the best, and I should be satisfied if this were shown to me, [98a] and not want any other sort of cause. And I thought that I would then go and ask him about the sun and moon and stars, and that he would explain to me their comparative swiftness, and their returnings and various states, and how their several affections, active and passive, were all for the best. For I could not imagine that when he spoke of mind as the disposer of them, he would give any other account of their being as they are, except that this was best; [98b] and I thought when he had explained to me in detail the cause of each and the cause of all, he would go on to explain to me what was best for each and what was best for all. I had hopes which I would not have sold for much, and I seized the books and read them as fast as I could in my eagerness to know the better and the worse.

“What hopes I had formed, and how grievously was I disappointed! As I proceeded, I found my philosopher altogether forsaking mind [98c] or any other principle of order, but having recourse to air, and ether, and water, and other eccentricities. I might compare him to a person who began by maintaining generally that mind is the cause of the actions of

Socrates, but who, when he endeavored to explain the causes of my several actions in detail, went on to show that I sit here because my body is made up of bones and muscles; and the bones, as he would say, are hard and have ligaments which divide them, [98d] and the muscles are elastic, and they cover the bones, which have also a covering or environment of flesh and skin which contains them; and as the bones are lifted at their joints by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs, and this is why I am sitting here in a curved posture: that is what he would say, and he would have a similar explanation of my talking to you, which he would attribute to sound, and air, and hearing, and he would assign ten thousand other causes of the same sort, [98e] forgetting to mention the true cause, which is that the Athenians have thought fit to condemn me, and accordingly I have thought it better and more right to remain here and undergo my sentence; [99a] for I am inclined to think that these muscles and bones of mine would have gone off to Megara or Boeotia—by the dog of Egypt they would, if they had been guided only by their own idea of what was best, and if I had not chosen as the better and nobler part, instead of playing truant and running away, to undergo any punishment which the State inflicts. There is surely a strange confusion of causes and conditions in all this. It may be said, indeed, that without bones and muscles and the other parts of the body I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, [99b] and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking. I wonder that they cannot distinguish the cause from the condition, which the many, feeling about in the dark, are always mistaking and misnaming. And thus one man makes a vortex all round and steadies the earth by the sky; another gives the air as a support to the earth, which is a sort of broad trough. [99c] Any power which in disposing them as they are disposes them for the best never enters into their minds, nor do they imagine that there is the power of a *daimōn* in that; they rather expect to find another Atlas of the world who is stronger and more everlasting and more containing than the good is, and are clearly of opinion that the obligatory and

containing power of the good is as nothing; and yet this is the principle which I would want to learn if anyone would teach me. But as I have failed either to discover myself or to learn of anyone else, [99d] the nature of the best, I will exhibit to you, if you like, what I have found to be the second best mode of inquiring into the cause.”

“I should very much like to hear that,” he replied.

Socrates proceeded: “I thought that as I had failed in the contemplation of true existence, I ought to be careful that I did not lose the eye of my *psūkhē*; as people may injure their bodily eye by observing and gazing on the sun during an eclipse, unless they take the precaution of only looking at the image reflected in the water, [99e] or in some similar medium. That occurred to me, and I was afraid that my *psūkhē* might be blinded altogether if I looked at things with my eyes or tried by the help of the senses to apprehend them. And I thought that I had better have recourse to ideas, and seek in them the truth of existence. I dare say that the simile [100a] is not perfect—for I am very far from admitting that he who contemplates existence through the medium of ideas sees them only as an image, any more than he who sees them in their working and effects. However, this was the method which I adopted: I first assumed some principle which I judged to be the strongest, and then I affirmed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, whether relating to the cause or to anything else; and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue. But I should like to explain my meaning clearly, as I do not think that you understand me.”

“No, indeed,” replied Cebes, “not very well.”

[100b] “There is nothing new,” he said, “in what I am about to tell you; but only what I have been always and everywhere repeating in the previous discussion and on other occasions: I want to show you the nature of that cause which has occupied my thoughts, and I shall have to go back to those familiar words which are in the mouth of everyone, and

first of all assume that there is an absolute beauty and goodness and greatness, and the like; grant me this, and I hope to be able to show you the nature of the cause, and to prove [100c] the immortality of the *psūkhē*.”

Cebes said, “You may proceed at once with the proof, as I readily grant you this.”

“Well,” he said, “then I should like to know whether you agree with me in the next step; for I cannot help thinking that if there be anything beautiful other than absolute beauty, that can only be beautiful in as far as it partakes of absolute beauty—and this I should say of everything. Do you agree in this notion of the cause?”

“Yes,” he said, “I agree.”

He proceeded: “I know nothing and can understand nothing of any other of those wise causes which are alleged; and if a person says to me that the bloom of color, [100d] or form, or anything else of that sort is a source of beauty, I leave all that, which is only confusing to me, and simply and singly, and perhaps foolishly, hold and am assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful. That appears to me to be the only safe answer that I can give, either to myself or to any other, and to that I cling, [100e] in the persuasion that I shall never be overthrown, and that I may safely answer to myself or any other that by beauty beautiful things become beautiful. Do you not agree to that?”

“Yes, I agree.”

“And that by greatness only great things become great and greater, and by smallness the less becomes less.”

“True.”

“Then if a person remarks that A is taller by a head than B, and B less by a head than A, [101a] you would refuse to admit this, and would stoutly contend that what you mean is only that the greater is greater by, and by reason of, greatness, and the less is less only by, or by reason of, smallness; and thus you would avoid the danger of saying that [101b] the greater is greater and the less by the measure of the head, which is the same in both, and would also avoid the monstrous absurdity of supposing that the greater man is greater by reason of the head, which is small. Would you not be afraid of that?”

“Indeed, I should,” said Cebes, laughing.

“In like manner would you be afraid to say that ten exceeded eight by, and by reason of, two, but would say by, and by reason of, number? Or that two cubits exceeded one cubit not by a half, but by magnitude? For there is the same danger in both cases.”

“Very true,” he said.

“Again, would you not be cautious of affirming that the addition of one to one, [101c] or the division of one, is the cause of two? And you would loudly asseverate that you know of no way in which anything comes into existence except by participation in its own proper essence, and consequently, as far as you know, the only cause of two is the participation in duality; that is the way to make two, and the participation in one is the way to make one. You would say: I will let alone puzzles of division and addition—wiser heads than mine may answer them; inexperienced as I am, and ready to start, [101d] as the proverb says, at my own shadow, I cannot afford to give up the sure ground of a principle. And if anyone assails you there, you would not mind him, or answer him until you had seen whether the consequences which follow agree with one another or not, and when you are further

required to give an explanation of this principle, you would go on to assume a higher principle, and the best of the higher ones, [101e] until you found a resting-place; but you would not refuse the principle and the consequences in your reasoning like the Eristics—at least if you wanted to discover real existence. Not that this confusion signifies to them who never care or think about the matter at all, for they have the wit to be well pleased with themselves, however great may be the turmoil of their ideas. [102a] But you, if you are a philosopher, will, I believe, do as I say.”

“What you say is most true,” said Simmias and Cebes, both speaking at once.

Echecrates

Yes, Phaedo; and I don't wonder at their assenting. Anyone who has the least sense will acknowledge the wonderful clearness of Socrates' reasoning.

Phaedo

Certainly, Echecrates; and that was the feeling of the whole company at the time.

Echecrates

Yes, and equally of ourselves, who were not of the company, and are now listening to your recital. But what followed?

Phaedo

After all this was admitted, and they had agreed [102b] about the existence of ideas and the participation in them of the other things which derive their names from them, Socrates, if I remember rightly, said,

“This is your way of speaking; and yet when you say that Simmias is greater than Socrates and less than Phaedo, do you not predicate of

Simmiās both greatness and smallness?”

“Yes, I do.”

“But still you allow that Simmiās does not really exceed Socrates, as the words may seem to imply, because he is Simmiās, [102c] but by reason of the size which he has; just as Simmiās does not exceed Socrates because he is Simmiās, any more than because Socrates is Socrates, but because he has smallness when compared with the greatness of Simmiās?”

“True.”

“And if Phaēdo exceeds him in size, that is not because Phaēdo is Phaēdo, but because Phaēdo has greatness relatively to Simmiās, who is comparatively smaller?”

“That is true.”

“And therefore Simmiās is said to be great, and is also said to be small, because he is in a mean between them, [102d] exceeding the smallness of the one by his greatness, and allowing the greatness of the other to exceed his smallness.” Then he [= Socrates] smiled and said, “It seems just now that I am speaking as an author of some piece of writing [*sungraphikōs ereîn*]. Still, what I am saying does hold, I think.”

Simmiās assented to this.

“The reason why I say this is that I want you to agree with me in thinking, not only that absolute greatness will never be great and also small, but that greatness in us or in the concrete will never admit the small or admit of being exceeded: instead of this, one of two things will happen—either the greater will fly or retire [102e] before the opposite, which is the less, or at the advance of the less will cease to exist; but will

not, if allowing or admitting smallness, be changed by that; even as I, having received and admitted smallness when compared with Simmias, remain just as I was, and am the same small person. And as the idea of greatness cannot condescend ever to be or become small, in like manner the smallness in us cannot be or become great; nor can any other opposite which remains the same ever be or become its own opposite, [103a] but either passes away or perishes in the change.”

“That,” replied Cebes, “is quite my notion.”

One of the company, though I do not exactly remember which of them, on hearing this, said, “I swear by the gods, is not this the direct contrary of what was admitted before—that out of the greater came the less and out of the less the greater, and that opposites are simply generated from opposites; whereas now this seems to be utterly denied.”

Socrates inclined his head to the speaker and listened. [103b] “I like your courage,” he said, “in reminding us of this. But you do not observe that there is a difference in the two cases. For then we were speaking of opposites in the concrete, and now of the essential opposite which, as is affirmed, neither in us nor in nature can ever be at variance with itself: then, my friend, we were speaking of things in which opposites are inherent and which are called after them, but now about the opposites which are inherent in them and which give their name to them; these essential opposites will never, as we maintain, [103c] admit of generation into or out of one another.”

At the same time, turning to Cebes, he said, “Were you at all disconcerted, Cebes, at our friend’s objection?”

“That was not my feeling,” said Cebes; “and yet I cannot deny that I am apt to be disconcerted.”

“Then we are agreed after all,” said Socrates, “that the opposite will never in any case be opposed to itself?”

“To that we are quite agreed,” he replied.

“Yet once more let me ask you to consider the question from another point of view, and see whether you agree with me: There is a thing which you term heat, and another thing which you term cold?”

“Certainly.”

But are they the same as fire and snow?”

[103d] “Most assuredly not.”

“Heat is not the same as fire, nor is cold the same as snow?”

“No.”

“And yet you will surely admit that when snow, as before said, is under the influence of heat, they will not remain snow and heat; but at the advance of the heat the snow will either retire or perish?”

“Very true,” he replied.

“And the fire too at the advance of the cold will either retire or perish; and when the fire is under the influence of the cold, [103e] they will not remain, as before, fire and cold.”

“That is true,” he said.

“And in some cases the name of the idea is not confined to the idea; but anything else which, not being the idea, exists only in the form of the

idea, may also lay claim to it. I will try to make this clearer by an example: the odd number is always called by the name of odd?”

“Very true.”

“But is this the only thing which is called odd? Are there not other things which have their own name, [104a] and yet are called odd, because, although not the same as oddness, they are never without oddness?—that is what I mean to ask—whether numbers such as the number three are not of the class of odd. And there are many other examples: would you not say, for example, that three may be called by its proper name, and also be called odd, which is not the same with three? and this may be said not only of three but also of five, and every alternate number—each of them without being oddness is odd, [104b] and in the same way two and four, and the whole series of alternate numbers, has every number even, without being evenness. Do you admit that?”

“Yes,” he said, “how can I deny that?”

“Then now mark the point at which I am aiming: not only do essential opposites exclude one another, but also concrete things, which, although not in themselves opposed, contain opposites; these, I say, also reject the idea which is opposed to that which is contained in them, [104c] and at the advance of that they either perish or withdraw. There is the number three for example; will not that endure annihilation or anything sooner than be converted into an even number, remaining three?”

“Very true,” said Cebes.

“And yet,” he said, “the number two is certainly not opposed to the number three?”

“It is not.”

“Then not only do opposite ideas repel the advance of one another, but also there are other things which repel the approach of opposites.”

“That is quite true,” he said.

“Suppose,” he said, “that we endeavor, if possible, to determine what these are.”

“By all means.”

[104d] “Are they not, Cebes, such as compel the things of which they have possession, not only to take their own form, but also the form of some opposite?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, as I was just now saying, and have no need to repeat to you, that those things which are possessed by the number three must not only be three in number, but must also be odd.”

“Quite true. And on this oddness, of which the number three has the impress, the opposite idea will never intrude?”

“No.”

“And this impress was given by the odd principle?”

“Yes.”

“And to the odd is opposed the even?”

[104e] “True.”

“Then the idea of the even number will never arrive at three?”

“No.”

“Then three has no part in the even?”

“None.”

“Then the triad or number three is uneven?”

“Very true.”

“To return then to my distinction of natures which are not opposites, and yet do not admit opposites: as, in this instance, three, although not opposed to the even, does not any the more admit of the even, but always brings the opposite into play on the other side; [105a] or as two does not receive the odd, or fire the cold—from these examples (and there are many more of them) perhaps you may be able to arrive at the general conclusion that not only opposites will not receive opposites, but also that nothing which brings the opposite will admit the opposite of that which it brings in that to which it is brought. And here let me recapitulate—for there is no harm in repetition. The number five will not admit the nature of the even, any more than ten, which is the double of five, will admit the nature of the odd—the double, though not strictly opposed to the odd, rejects the odd altogether. [105b] Nor again will parts in the ratio of 3:2, nor any fraction in which there is a half, nor again in which there is a third, admit the notion of the whole, although they are not opposed to the whole. You will agree to that?”

“Yes,” he said, “I entirely agree and go along with you in that.”

“And now,” he [= Socrates] said, “I think that I may begin again; and to the question which I am about to ask I will beg you to give not the old safe answer, but another, of which I will offer you an example; and I hope that you will find in what has been just said another foundation which is as safe. I mean that if anyone asks you ‘what that is, the

inherence of which makes the body hot,' you will reply not heat [105c] (this is what I call the safe and stupid answer), but fire, a far better answer, which we are now in a condition to give. Or if anyone asks you 'why a body is diseased,' you will not say from disease, but from fever; and instead of saying that oddness is the cause of odd numbers, you will say that the monad is the cause of them: and so of things in general, as I dare say that you will understand sufficiently without my adducing any further examples."

"Yes," he said, "I quite understand you."

"Tell me, then, what is that the inherence of which will render the body alive?"

"The *psūkhē*," he replied."

[105d] "And is this always the case?"

"Yes," he said, "of course."

"Then whatever the *psūkhē* possesses, to that it comes bearing life?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And is there any opposite to life?"

"There is," he said.

"And what is that?"

"Death."

"Then the *psūkhē*, as has been acknowledged, will never receive the opposite of what it brings."

“Absolutely,” said Cebes.

“And now,” he [= Socrates] said, “what did we call that principle which repels the even?”

“The odd.”

“And that principle which repels the musical, or the just?”

[105e] “The unmusical,” he said, “and the unjust.”

“And what do we call the principle which does not admit of death?”

“The immortal,” he said.

“And does the *psūkhē* admit of death?”

“No.”

“Then the *psūkhē* is immortal?”

“Yes,” he said.

“And may we say that this is proven?”

“Yes, abundantly proven, Socrates”, he replied.

“And supposing that the odd were imperishable, [106a] must not three be imperishable?”

“Of course.”

“And if that which is cold were imperishable, when the warm principle came attacking the snow, must not the snow have retreated and stayed

safe and sound [= adjective from *sōzein*] and unmelted—for it could never have perished, nor could it have remained and admitted the heat?”

“True,” he said.

“Again, if the uncooling or warm principle were imperishable, the fire when assailed by cold would not have perished or have been extinguished, but would have gone away unaffected?”

“Certainly,” he said.

[106b] “And the same may be said of the immortal: if the immortal is also imperishable, the *psūkhē* when attacked by death cannot perish; for the preceding argument shows that the *psūkhē* will not admit of death, or ever be dead, any more than three or the odd number will admit of the even, or fire or the heat in the fire, of the cold. Yet a person may say: ‘But although the odd will not become even at the approach of the even, why may not the odd perish [106c] and the even take the place of the odd?’ Now to him who makes this objection, we cannot answer that the odd principle is imperishable; for this has not been acknowledged, but if this had been acknowledged, there would have been no difficulty in contending that at the approach of the even the odd principle and the number three took up their departure; and the same argument would have held good of fire and heat and any other thing.”

“Very true.”

“And the same may be said of the immortal: if the immortal is also imperishable, then the *psūkhē* will be imperishable as well as immortal; [106d] but if not, some other proof of its imperishability will have to be given.”

“No other proof is needed,” he said, “for if the immortal, being eternal, is liable to perish, then nothing is imperishable.”

“Yes,” replied Socrates, “all men will agree that the god, and the essential form of life, and the immortal in general, will never perish.”

“Yes, all men,” he said—“that is true; and what is more, gods, if I am not mistaken, as well as men.”

“Seeing then that the immortal is indestructible, [106e] must not the *psūkhē*, if it is immortal, be also imperishable?”

“Most certainly.”

“Then when death attacks a man, the mortal portion of him may be supposed to die, but the immortal goes out of the way of death and is preserved safe and sound?”

“True.”

“Then, Cebes, [107a] beyond question the *psūkhē* is immortal and imperishable, and our *psūkhai* will truly exist in another world!”

“I am convinced, Socrates,” said Cebes, “and have nothing more to object; but if my friend Simmias, or anyone else, has any further objection, he had better speak out, and not keep silence, since I do not know how there can ever be a more fitting time to which he can defer the discussion, if there is anything which he wants to say or have said.”

“But I have nothing more to say,” replied Simmias; “nor do I see any room for uncertainty, except that which arises necessarily out of the greatness of the subject [107b] and the feebleness of man, and which I cannot help feeling.”

“Yes, Simmias,” replied Socrates, “that is well said: and more than that, first principles, even if they appear certain, should be carefully considered; and when they are satisfactorily ascertained, then, with a sort

of hesitating confidence in human reason, you may, I think, follow the course of the argument; and if this is clear, there will be no need for any further inquiry.”

“That,” he said, “is true.”

“But then, O my friends,” he said, [107c] “if the *psūkhē* is really immortal, what care should be taken of it, not only in respect of the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity! And the danger of neglecting it from this point of view does indeed appear to be awful. If death had only been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their *psūkhai*. But now, as the *psūkhē* plainly appears to be immortal, there is [107d] no release or salvation [*sōtēriā*] from evil except the attainment of the highest virtue and wisdom. For the *psūkhē* when on its progress to the world below takes nothing with it but nurture and education; which are indeed said greatly to benefit or greatly to injure the departed, at the very beginning of its pilgrimage in the other world.

“For after death, as they say, the *daimōn* that is within each individual, to whom he [= the *daimōn*] belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together for judgment, whence they go into the world below, [107e] following the guide who is appointed to conduct them from this world to the other: and when they have there received their due and remained their time, another guide brings them back again after many revolutions of ages. Now this journey to the other world is not, as Aeschylus says in the *Telephus*, [108a] a single and straight path—no guide would be wanted for that, and no one could miss a single path; but there are many partings of the road, and windings, as I must infer from the rites and sacrifices which are offered to the gods below in places where three ways meet on earth. The wise and orderly *psūkhē* is conscious of its situation and follows in the path;

but the *psūkhē* which desires the body, and which, as I was relating before, has long been fluttering about the lifeless frame and the world of sight, [108b] is after many struggles and many sufferings hardly and with violence carried away by its attendant *daimōn*, and when it arrives at the place where the other *psūkhai* are gathered, if it be impure and have done impure deeds, or been concerned in foul murders or other crimes which are the brothers of these, and the works of brothers in crime—from that *psūkhē* everyone flees and turns away; no one will be its companion, no one its guide, [108c] but alone it wanders in extremity of evil until certain times are fulfilled, and when they are fulfilled, it is borne irresistibly to its own fitting habitation; as every pure and just *psūkhē* which has passed through life in the company and under the guidance of the gods has also its own proper home.

“Now the earth has divers wonderful regions, and is indeed in nature and extent very unlike the notions of geographers, as I believe on the authority of one who shall be nameless.”

[108d] “What do you mean, Socrates?” said Simmias. “I have myself heard many descriptions of the earth, but I do not know in what you are putting your faith, and I should like to know.”

“Well, Simmias,” replied Socrates, “the recital of a tale does not, I think, require the art of Glaukos; and I know not that the art of Glaukos could prove the truth of my tale, which I myself should never be able to prove, and even if I could, I fear, Simmias, that my life would come to an end before the argument was completed. I may describe to you, however, [108e] the form and regions of the earth according to my conception of them.”

“That,” said Simmias, “will be enough.”

“Well, then,” he said, “my conviction is that the earth is a round body in the center of the sky, and therefore has no need of air [109a] or any similar force as a support, but is kept there and hindered from falling or inclining any way by the equability of the surrounding sky and by its own equipoise. For that which, being in equipoise, is in the center of that which is equably diffused, will not incline any way in any degree, but will always remain in the same state and not deviate. And this is my first notion.”

“Which is surely a correct one,” said Simmias.

“Also I believe that the earth is very vast, and that we who dwell in the region extending from the river Phasis to the Pillars of Hēraklēs, [109b] along the borders of the sea, are just like ants or frogs about a marsh, and inhabit a small portion only, and that many others dwell in many like places. For I should say that in all parts of the earth there are hollows of various forms and sizes, into which the water and the mist and the air collect; and that the true earth is pure and in the pure sky, in which also are the stars— [109c] that is the sky which is commonly spoken of as the ether, of which this is but the sediment collecting in the hollows of the earth. But we who live in these hollows are deceived into the notion that we are dwelling above on the surface of the earth; which is just as if a creature who was at the bottom of the sea were to fancy that he was on the surface of the water, and that the sea was the sky through which he saw the sun and the other stars – he having never come to the surface by reason of his feebleness and sluggishness, [109d] and having never lifted up his head and seen, nor ever heard from one who had seen, this region which is so much purer and fairer than his own. Now this is exactly our case: for we are dwelling in a hollow of the earth, and fancy that we are on the surface; and the air we call the sky, and in this we imagine that the stars move. [109e] But this is also owing to our feebleness and sluggishness, which prevent our reaching the surface of the air: for if any man could arrive at the exterior limit, or take the wings of a bird and fly upward, like a fish who puts his head out and sees this world, he would

see a world beyond; and, if the nature of man could sustain the sight, he would acknowledge that this was the place of the true sky [110a] and the true light and the true stars. For this earth, and the stones, and the entire region which surrounds us, are spoilt and corroded, like the things in the sea which are corroded by the brine; for in the sea too there is hardly any noble or perfect growth, but clefts only, and sand, and an endless slough of mud: and even the shore is not to be compared to the fairer sights of this world. And greater far is the superiority of the other. [110b] Now of that upper earth which is under the sky, I can tell you a charming tale [*mūthos*], Simmias, which is well worth hearing.”

“And we, Socrates,” replied Simmias, “shall be charmed to listen to the tale [*mūthos*].”

“The tale, my friend,” he said, “is as follows: In the first place, the earth, when looked at from above, is like one of those balls which have leather coverings in twelve pieces, and is of divers colors, of which the colors which painters use on earth are only a sample. [110c] But there the whole earth is made up of them, and they are brighter far and clearer than ours; there is a purple of wonderful luster, also the radiance of gold, and the white which is in the earth is whiter than any chalk or snow. Of these and other colors the earth is made up, and they are more in number and fairer than the eye of man has ever seen; and the very hollows (of which I was speaking) filled with air and water [110d] are seen like light flashing amid the other colors, and have a color of their own, which gives a sort of unity to the variety of earth. And in this fair region everything that grows—trees, and flowers, and fruits—is in a like degree fairer than any here; and there are hills, and stones in them in a like degree smoother, and more transparent, and fairer in color than our highly valued emeralds and sardonyx and [110e] jaspers, and other gems, which are but minute fragments of them: for there all the stones are like our precious stones, and fairer still. The reason of this is that they are pure, and not, like our precious stones, infected or corroded by the corrupt briny elements which coagulate among us, and which breed

foulness and disease both in earth and stones, as well as in animals and plants. They are the jewels of the upper earth, which also shines with gold and [111a] silver and the like, and they are visible to sight and large and abundant and found in every region of the earth, and blessed is he who sees them. And upon the earth are animals and men, some in a middle region, others dwelling about the air as we dwell about the sea; others in islands which the air flows round, near the continent: and in a word, [111b] the air is used by them as the water and the sea are by us, and the ether is to them what the air is to us. Moreover, the temperament of their seasons [*hōrai*] is such that they have no disease, and live much longer than we do, and have sight and hearing and smell, and all the other senses, in far greater perfection, in the same degree that air is purer than water or the ether than air. Also they have temples and sacred places in which the gods really dwell, and they hear their voices and receive their oracular responses [*manteia*], and are conscious of them and hold converse with them, [111c] and they see the sun, moon, and stars as they really are, and their other blessedness is of a piece with this.

“Such is the nature of the whole earth, and of the things which are around the earth; and there are divers regions in the hollows on the face of the globe everywhere, some of them deeper and also wider than that which we inhabit, [111d] others deeper and with a narrower opening than ours, and some are shallower and wider; all have numerous perforations, and passages broad and narrow in the interior of the earth, connecting them with one another; and there flows into and out of them, as into basins, a vast tide of water, and huge subterranean streams of perennial rivers, and springs hot and cold, and a great fire, and great rivers of fire, and streams of liquid mud, [111e] thin or thick (like the rivers of mud in Sicily, and the lava-streams which follow them), and the regions about which they happen to flow are filled up with them. And there is a sort of swing in the interior of the earth which moves all this up and down. Now the swing is in this wise: There is a chasm which is the vastest of them all, [112a] and pierces right through the whole

earth; this is that which Homer describes in the words, ‘Far off, where is the inmost depth beneath the earth’; and which he in other places, and many other poets, have called Tartaros. And the swing is caused by the streams flowing into and out of this chasm, and they each have the nature of the soil through which they flow. And the reason why the streams are always flowing in and out [112b] is that the watery element has no bed or bottom, and is surging and swinging up and down, and the surrounding wind and air do the same; they follow the water up and down, hither and thither, over the earth—just as in respiring the air is always in process of inhalation and exhalation; and the wind swinging with the water in and out produces fearful and irresistible blasts: [112c] when the waters retire with a rush into the lower parts of the earth, as they are called, they flow through the earth into those regions, and fill them up as with the alternate motion of a pump, and then when they leave those regions and rush back hither, they again fill the hollows here, and when these are filled, flow through subterranean channels and find their way to their several places, forming seas, and lakes, and rivers, and springs. Thence they again enter the earth, [112d] some of them making a long circuit into many lands, others going to few places and those not distant, and again fall into Tartaros, some at a point a good deal lower than that at which they rose, and others not much lower, but all in some degree lower than the point of issue. And some burst forth again on the opposite side, and some on the same side, and some wind round the earth with one or many folds, like the coils of a serpent, and descend as far as they can, but always return and fall into the lake. [112e] The rivers on either side can descend only to the center and no further, for to the rivers on both sides the opposite side is a precipice.

“Now these rivers are many, and mighty, and diverse, and there are four principal ones, of which the greatest and outermost is that called Okeanos, which flows round the earth in a circle; and in the opposite direction flows Acheron, which passes [113a] under the earth through desert places, into the Acherusian Lake: this is the lake to the shores of which the *psūkhai* of the many go when they are dead, and after waiting

an appointed time, which is to some a longer and to some a shorter time, they are sent back again to be born as animals. The third river rises between the two, and near the place of rising pours into a vast region of fire, and forms a lake larger than the Mediterranean Sea, boiling with water and mud; [113b] and proceeding muddy and turbid, and winding about the earth, comes, among other places, to the extremities of the Acherusian Lake, but mingles not with the waters of the lake, and after making many coils about the earth plunges into Tartaros at a deeper level. This is that Pyriphlegethon, as the stream is called, which throws up jets of fire in all sorts of places. The fourth river goes out on the opposite side, and falls first of all into a wild and savage region, which is all of a dark-blue color, like lapis lazuli; [113c] and this is that river which is called the Stygian River, and falls into and forms the Lake Styx, and after falling into the lake and receiving strange powers in the waters, passes under the earth, winding round in the opposite direction to Pyriphlegethon, and meeting in the Acherusian Lake from the opposite side. And the water of this river too mingles with no other, but flows round in a circle and falls into Tartaros over against Pyriphlegethon, and the name of this river, as the poet says, is Cocytus.

[113d] “Such is the name of the other world; and when the dead arrive at the place to which the [*daimōn*] of each severally conveys them, first of all they have sentence passed upon them, as they have lived well and piously or not. And those who appear to have lived neither well nor ill, go to the river Acheron, and mount such conveyances as they can get, and are carried in them to the lake, and there they dwell and are purified of their evil deeds, and suffer the penalty of the wrongs which they have done to others, and are absolved, [113e] and receive the rewards of their good deeds according to their deserts. But those who appear to be incurable by reason of the greatness of their crimes – who have committed many and terrible deeds of sacrilege, murders foul and violent, or the like – such are hurled into Tartaros, which is their suitable destiny, and they never come out. Those again who have committed crimes, which, although great, are not unpardonable—who in a moment

of anger, for example, have done violence to a father or mother, [114a] and have repented for the remainder of their lives, or who have taken the life of another under like extenuating circumstances—these are plunged into Tartaros, the pains of which they are compelled to undergo for a year, but at the end of the year the wave casts them forth—mere homicides by way of Cocytus, parricides and matricides by Pyriphlegethon—and they are borne to the Lake of Acheron, and there they lift up their voices and call upon the victims whom they have slain or wronged, [114b] to have pity on them, and to receive them, and to let them come out of the river into the lake. And if they prevail, then they come forth and cease from their troubles; but if not, they are carried back again into Tartaros and from thence into the rivers unceasingly, until they obtain mercy from those whom they have wronged: for that is the sentence inflicted upon them by their judges. Those also who are remarkable for having led holy lives are released from this earthly prison, [114c] and go to their pure home which is above, and dwell in the purer earth; and those who have duly purified themselves with philosophy live henceforth altogether without the body, in mansions fairer far than these, which may not be described, and of which the time would fail me to tell.

“Wherefore, Simmias, seeing all these things, what ought not we to do in order to obtain virtue and wisdom in this life? Fair is the prize [*āthlon*], and the hope great.

[114d] “I do not mean to affirm that the description which I have given of the *psūkhē* and its mansions is exactly true—a man of sense ought hardly to say that. But I do say that, inasmuch as the *psūkhē* is shown to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason I am lengthening out the tale [*mūthos*]. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his *psūkhē*, [114e] who has cast away the pleasures and

ornaments of the body as alien to him, and rather hurtful in their effects, and has followed after the pleasures of knowledge in this life; who has adorned the *psūkhē* in its own proper jewels, which are temperance, and justice, and [115a] courage, and nobility, and truth—in these arrayed it is ready to go on its journey to the world below, when its time comes. You, Simmias and Cebes, and all other men, will depart at some time or other. Me already, as the tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison; and I think that it is time [*hōrā*] that I repair to the bath, in order that the women may not have the trouble of washing my body after I am dead.”

When he had done speaking, Crito said, [115b] “And have you any commands for us, Socrates—anything to say about your children, or any other matter in which we can serve you?”

“Nothing particular,” he said, “only, as I have always told you, I would have you look to yourselves; that is a service which you may always be doing to me and mine as well as to yourselves. And you need not make professions; for if you take no thought for yourselves, and walk not according to the precepts which I have given you, [115c] not now for the first time, the warmth of your professions will be of no avail.”

“We will do our best,” said Crito. “But in what way would you have us bury you?”

“In any way that you like; only you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not walk away from you.” Then he turned to us, and added with a smile: “I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body— [115d] and he asks, how shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavor to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed—these words of mine, with which I comforted [*paramutheísthai* = divert by way of *mūthos*] you and myself,

have had, I perceive, no effect upon Crito. And therefore I want you to be surety for me now, as he was surety for me at the trial: but let the promise be of another sort; for he was my surety to the judges that I would remain, but you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; [115e] and then he will suffer less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him; for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the *psūkhē* with evil. Be of good cheer, then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, [116a] and do with that as is usual, and as you think best.”

When he had spoken these words, he arose and went into the bath chamber with Crito, who bade us wait; and we waited, talking and thinking of the subject of discourse, and also of the greatness of our sorrow; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath [116b] his children were brought to him—he had two young sons and an elder one; and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; and he then dismissed them and returned to us.

Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out, he sat down with us again after his bath, but not much was said. Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, [116c] entered and stood by him, saying: “To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are the guilty cause. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must

needs be; you know my errand.” [116d] Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said, “I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid.” Then, turning to us, he said, “How charming the man is: since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good as could be to me, and now see how generously he sorrows for me. But we must do as he says, Crito; let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared: if not, let the attendant prepare some.”

[116e] “Yet,” said Crito, “the sun is still upon the hilltops, and many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him, he has eaten and drunk, and indulged in sensual delights; do not hasten then, there is still time.”

Socrates said, “Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in doing thus, for they think that they will gain by the delay; but I am right in not doing thus, [117a] for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later; I should be sparing and saving a life which is already gone: I could only laugh at myself for this. Go, and do as I say.”

Crito, when he heard this, signaled with a nod to the boy servant who was standing nearby, and the servant went in, remaining for some time, and then came out with the man who was going to administer the poison [*pharmakon*]. He was carrying a cup that contained it, ground into the drink. When Socrates saw the man he said: “You, my good man, since you are experienced in these matters, should tell me what needs to be done.” The man answered: “You need to drink it, that’s all. Then walk around until you feel a heaviness [117b] in your legs. Then lie down. This way, the poison will do its thing.” While the man was saying this, he handed the cup to Socrates. And Socrates took it in a cheerful way, not flinching or getting pale or grimacing. Then looking

at the man from beneath his brows, like a bull—that was the way he used to look at people—he said: “What do you say about my pouring a libation out of this cup to someone? Is it allowed or not?” The man answered: “What we grind is measured out, Socrates, as the right dose for drinking.”

“I understand,” he said. [117c] “but surely it is allowed and even proper to pray to the gods so that my transfer of dwelling [*met-oikēsis*] from this world [*enthende*] to that world [*ekeîse*] should be fortunate. So, that is what I too am now praying for. Let it be this way.” And, while he was saying this, he took the cup to his lips and, quite readily and cheerfully, he drank down the whole dose. Up to this point, most of us had been able to control fairly well our urge to let our tears flow; but now when we saw him drinking the poison, and then saw him finish the drink, we could no longer hold back, and, in my case, quite against my own will, my own tears were now pouring out in a flood. So, I covered my face and had a good cry. You see, I was not crying for him, [117d] but at the thought of my own bad fortune in having lost such a comrade [*hetairos*]. Crito, even before me, found himself unable to hold back his tears: so he got up and moved away. And Apollodorus, who had been weeping all along, now started to cry in a loud voice, expressing his frustration. So, he made everyone else break down and cry—except for Socrates himself. And he said: “What are you all doing? I am so surprised at you. I had sent away the women mainly because I did not want them [117e] to lose control in this way. You see, I have heard that a man should come to his end [*teleutân*] in a way that calls for measured speaking [*euphēmeîn*]. So, you must have composure [*hēsukhiā*], and you must endure.”

When we heard that, we were ashamed, and held back our tears. He meanwhile was walking around until, as he said, his legs began to get heavy, and then he lay on his back—that is what the man had told him to do. Then that same man who had given him the poison [*pharmakon*] took hold of him, now and then checking on his feet and legs; and after

a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel it; and he said that he couldn't; and then he pressed his shins, [118a] and so on, moving further up, thus demonstrating for us that he was cold and stiff. Then he [= Socrates] took hold of his own feet and legs, saying that when the poison reaches his heart, then he will be gone. He was beginning to get cold around the abdomen. Then he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said—this was the last thing he uttered— “Crito, I owe the sacrifice of a rooster to Asklepios; will you pay that debt and not neglect to do so?”

“I will make it so,” said Crito, “and, tell me, is there anything else?” When Crito asked this question, no answer came back anymore from Socrates. In a short while, he stirred. Then the man uncovered his face. His eyes were set in a dead stare. Seeing this, Crito closed his mouth and his eyes.

Such was the end [*teleutē*], Echebrates, of our comrade [*hetairos*]. And we may say about him that he was in his time the best [*aristos*] of all men we ever encountered—and the most intelligent [*phronimos*] and most just [*dikaios*].

Plato: Further Selections

Translation by Gregory Nagy

Plato *Ion* 535b–c

{Socrates is speaking:} Hold it right there. Tell me this, Ion—respond to what I ask without concealment. When you say well the epic verses and induce a feeling of bedazzlement [*ekplēxis*] for the spectators [*theōmenoi*]—as you sing of Odysseus leaping onto the threshold and revealing himself to the suitors and pouring out the arrows at his feet, or of Achilles rushing at Hector, or something connected to the pitiful things about Andromache or Hecuba or Priam—are you then in your right mind, or outside yourself? Does your mind [*psūkhē*], possessed by the god [*enthousiazein*], suppose that you are in the midst of the actions you describe in Ithaca or Troy, or wherever the epic verses have it?

Plato *Ion* 535e

As I look down at them from the platform on high, I see them, each and every time, crying or looking terrified, filled with a sense of wonder at what is being retold.

Plato *Republic* 9.571c–d

I am talking, I [= Socrates] said, about those [desires and pleasures] that are awakened when one part of the soul [*psūkhē*] sleeps—I mean the part that is rational [*logistikón*] and domesticated [*hēmeron*] and in control [*arkhon*] of the other part, which is beast-like [*thēriōdes*] and savage [*agrion*]. Then, [when the rational part is asleep,] this other part, which is glutted with grain [*sīta*] or intoxicants [*methē*], starts bolting [*skirtāi*] and seeks to push aside sleep and to satiate its own ways of behaving [*ēthos* plural]. When it is like this, it dares to do everything, released as it

is from all sense of shame [*aiskhunē*] and thinking [*phronēsis*]. It does not at all recoil from attempting to [571d] lay hands on his own mother in order to have sex with her—or to lay hands on any other human or god or beast—and to commit whatever polluting [*miasma*-making] murder, or to eat whatever food. In a word, there is nothing in the realm of consciousness [*noos*, pronounced as *nous* in Plato's time] and shame that it will not do.

Plato *Republic* 10.621b–c

And so, Glaukon, myth [*mūthos*] was saved [*e-sō-thē*, from *sōzein*], and it could save [*sōzein*] us in turn, if we trust it.

2016-12-19

Selections from Aristotle

Translated by Lynn Sawlivich

Revised by Gregory Nagy

1. *Poetics* 1448b4–19 (Mimesis)

Two causes seem to give rise to poetry as a whole, and these are natural. Mimesis [*mimēsis*] is innate in human beings from childhood, and they differ from the other animals in that the human is the most mimetic [*mimētikos*] and begins its education through mimesis. All human beings take pleasure in mimesis, and there happens to be proof of this in practice: we take pleasure in looking upon the most exact images of the very things we find grievous to look at, such as shapes of the most despised beasts or corpses. The reason for this is that understanding is very pleasurable not only for philosophers, but equally for all people—although they take part in this only superficially. Therefore they enjoy seeing images, because while viewing they perceive and infer what each thing is, along the lines of “this is that.” But if you happen not to have seen the thing already, the thing of mimesis [*mimēma*] causes pleasure not in that way but by its workmanship or color or some such cause.

2. *Poetics* 1449b24–28 (Catharsis)

Tragedy, then, is the re-enactment [*mimēsis*] of a serious and complete action. It has magnitude, with language embellished individually for each of its forms and in each of its parts. It is done by performers [*drōntes*] and not by way of narrative, bringing about through pity [*eleos*] and fear [*phobos*] the purification [*katharsis*] of such emotions [*pathēmata*].

3. *Poetics* 1451a36–b11 (Poetry and History)

It is clear from what has been said that the task of the poet is not to tell what happened, but to tell the sort of thing that would happen and what is possible according to likelihood or necessity. The historian and the poet differ not by whether they use meter or not—it would be possible to turn the works of Herodotus into meter and it would no less be history, with or without meter. The difference is that the historian tells what happened, while the poet tells the sort of thing that would happen. Therefore poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry speaks more of generalities [“things with respect to the whole”], while history speaks of particulars [“things each one at a time”]. The general deals with what sort of man happens by likelihood or necessity to say or do what sort of thing—this is what poetry aims at, adding names later. The particular deals with what Alcibiades did or what happened [*paskhein*] to him.

4. *Poetics* 1453a17–22 (Subject Matter)

At first the poets used to go through whatever plots [*mūthoi*] they chanced upon, but now the finest tragedies are composed about a few dynasties, such as the ones about Alkmaion, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephos, and all the others to whom it happened that they suffered [*paskhein*] or did [*poieîn*] terrible things.

5. *Politics* 1342a8–15 (Catharsis)

We see from sacred songs that whenever those who are in a state of *enthousiasmos* [= being *entheos* ‘possessed’ = ‘having a *theos* (god) inside’] use songs that stir up the *psūkhē*, they are put into a condition as if they had undergone a medical treatment and *katharsis*. People liable to pity or fear must experience the same thing—and other generally emotional [*pathētikoi*] people, as much as is appropriate for each. All of them attain some *katharsis* and are pleasantly relieved.

6. *Rhetoric* 1371a31–b10 (Mimesis)

Both understanding and wonder are, for the most part, pleasurable. In wonder there is the desire to understand... . Since both understanding and wonder are pleasurable, it is necessary that a work of mimesis also be pleasurable, like painting, sculpture, poetry, and everything that is well represented [*mimēisthai*], even if the thing represented [*mimēisthai*] is not in itself pleasurable. For it is not there that the pleasure lies, but in the inference “this is that.” What happens as a result is that we understand something.

2016-08-02

Pausanias

Translated by Gregory Nagy

The sacrificing of an animal and the pouring of its blood into a pit is precisely the way to activate the consciousness of the hero in hero-cult. It is also the way to make up for the death of a hero in hero-cult. We know this from the rituals of hero cult as documented by sources like the ancient scholar Pausanias, who flourished in the second century of our era—over half a millennium after the time of Herodotus. Consider Pausanias' description of initiation into the mysteries of the hero-cult of Trophonios. The oracle of the cult-hero Trophonios is mentioned already in Herodotus (paragraph 46 p. 16), who reports that Croesus had consulted the oracle of Trophonios, as well as the oracle of the cult-hero Amphiaraos. Here are the words of Pausanias [9.39.5ff] :

[9.39.5] At the oracle [*manteïon*], here are the kinds of things that happen. When a man decides to **descend** [*kat-ienai*] to the place of Trophōnios, first of all he undergoes a regimen for a set number of days in a **dwelling** [*oikēma*], and the dwelling [*oikēma*] is sacred to Good Superhuman Force [*Agathos Daimōn*] and to Good Fortune [*Agathē Tukhē*]. In undergoing the regimen there, he goes through various procedures of purification, avoiding hot baths; the water for bathing is the river Hercyna. He has unlimited access to meat from the sacrifices, for **he who descends** [*kat-ienai*] makes sacrifices to Trophōnios himself and to the children of Trophōnios; also to Apollo and to Kronos, to Zeus with the epithet King [*Basileus*], to Hera Charioteer [*Hēniokhos* = the one who holds the reins of the chariot], and to Demeter whom they name with the epithet Europa, saying that she was the wetnurse of Trophōnios. [9.35.6] At each of the sacrifices a seer [*mantis*] is present, who inspects the entrails of the sacrificial victim, and after an inspection makes prophecies to **him who descends** [*kat-ienai*], saying whether Trophōnios will be of good intentions [*eu-menēs*] and will be welcoming

when he **receives** [verb *dekhesthai*] him. The entrails of the other victims do not make clear all that much the **thinking** [*gnōmē*] of Trophōnios. But the night when each person **descends** [*kat-ienai*], on that night they sacrifice a ram over a pit [*bothros*], invoking Agamedes.¹ Even if the previous sacrifices have appeared propitious, no account is taken of them unless the entrails of this ram mean **the same thing**. If all the sacrifices are in agreement with each other, then each person **descends** [*kat-ienai*], **having good hopes** [*eu-elpis*].

And each person **descends** [*kat-ienai*] in this way: [9.39.7] First of all, in the night, they take him to the river Hercyna. Having taken him, they anoint him with olive oil and wash him. They [who do the anointing and the washing] are two boys chosen from among the citizens, about thirteen years old, and they are named Hermae. These are the ones who are washing **the one who descends** [*kata-bainein*] and who are attending to whatever is needed, in their function as attendant boys. Afterwards he is led by the priests, not immediately to the oracle [*manteion*], but to fountains of water. These fountains are very near each other. [9.39.8] Here it is necessary for him to drink water, called the water of Forgetting [*Lēthē*], so that there may be for him a forgetting [*lēthē*] of all thoughts that he was thinking [*phrontizein*] up to this point. Right after this, it is necessary for him to drink the other water, the water of Memory [*Mnēmosunē*]. From this he remembers [*mnēmoneuei*] the things seen by him as **the one who descended** [*kata-bainein*]. Having viewed the statue [*agalma*] which they say was made by Daedalus—about this there is no revelation made by the priests except to those who are about to go to Trophōnios—having seen this statue [*agalma*] and having worshipped it and having prayed, he proceeds to the oracle [*manteion*], wearing a linen khiton and cinching the khiton with ribbons and wearing **the boots of the native locale** [*epikhōriai krēpides*].

[9.39.9] The oracle [*manteíon*] is beyond the grove [*alsos*], on the mountain. There is a foundation, of white stone, in a circle. The perimeter of the foundation is in the proportion of a very small threshing floor. Its height is just short of two cubits. On the foundation, there are rods standing there. They are of bronze, like the cross-bars holding them together. And through them has been made a double door. Inside the perimeter is a chasm [*khasma*] in the earth, not naturally formed, but artificially constructed as a work of masonry, according to the most exact specifications.

[9.39.10] The form [*skhēma*] of this **constructed dwelling** [*oikodomēma*] is like that of a bread-oven [*kribanos*]. One might estimate its breadth across the middle to be about four cubits. And the depth of the **constructed dwelling** [*oikodomēma*] could be estimated to extend to not more than eight cubits. There has been made by them no constructed **descent** [*kata-basis*] to the bottom level. But when a man comes to Trophōnios, they bring him a ladder—a narrow and light one. There is, for the one who has descended [*kata-bainein*], a hole between the bottom level and the constructed dwelling [*oikodomēma*]. Its breadth appeared to be two spans, and its height one span. [9.39.11] So, **the one who descends** [*kat-ienai*] is now lying down in the direction of the bottom level, holding barley-cakes kneaded in honey [*māzai memagmenai meliti*], and he pushes forward with his feet, forward into the hole; he himself pushes forward, eager for his knees to get into the hole. Then, after the knees, the rest of his body is suddenly drawn in, rushing forward, just as the biggest and most rapid river will catch a man in its torrents and carry him under. After this, for those who are now inside the inner sanctum [*aduton*], there is no single or same way [*tropos*] for them to learn the things of the future. One person will see them, another person will hear them.

To return and go back for those who descended [*kata-bainein*] is through the same mouth, with feet first, pushing forward. [9.39.12]

They say that no one of **those who descended** [*kata-bainein*] has ever been killed, except for one of the bodyguards of Demetrius. They say that this person did not perform any of the customary rituals in the sacred space [*hieron*], and that he **descended** [*kata-bainein*] not in order to consult [*khresomenos*] the god but in hopes of stealing gold and silver from the inner sanctum [*aduton*].² It is said that the corpse of this person appeared [*ana-phainesthai*] **in another place**, and was not expelled at the sacred mouth. With reference to this man many other things are said. What has been said by me is what is most worthy of being taken into account.

[9.39.13] **The one who has ascended** [*ana-bainein*] from Trophōnios is received once again by the priests, who seat him upon what is called the Throne [*thronos*] of Memory [*Mnēmosunē*], which is situated not far from the inner sanctum [*aduton*]. Having seated him, they ask him all he has seen and found out. After learning the answers, they then turn him over to his relatives or friends. These take him to **the dwelling** [*oikēma*] where he had earlier passed through his regimen in the presence of Fortune [*Tukhē*] and Superhuman Force [*Daimōn*], the Good [*agathoi*] ones. They [= relatives or friends] **take him back** [verb *komizein*] to this place by lifting him and carrying him off, while he is still possessed [*katokhos*] by terror and still unconscious both of himself and of those who are near him. Afterwards, his mind [*phronēsis*] will again be working not at all less well than before, in all respects, and even laughter **will come back** [*ep-an-ienai*] to him.

[9.39.14] What I write is not hearsay; I myself have consulted [*khresamenos*] Trophōnios and have seen others doing so. And it is a necessity for **those who have descended** [*kat-ienai*] into the sacred space of Trophōnios to dedicate writings on a tablet that record all the things that each person has heard or seen.

Now backtrack and read Pausanias' description of the myth of Trophonios (9.37.5):

[The hero Erginos] married a young wife, and had children, Trophonios and Agamedes. Trophonios is said to have been a son of Apollo, not of Erginos. This I am inclined to believe, as does everyone who has gone to Trophonios to inquire of his oracle. They say that these, when they grew up, proved clever at building sanctuaries for the gods and palaces for men. For they built the temple for Apollo at Delphi and the treasury for Hyrieus. One of the stones in it they made so that they could take it away from the outside. So they kept on removing something from the treasury. Hyrieus was puzzled when he saw keys and seals untampered with, while the treasure kept on getting less. So he set over the vessels, in which were his silver and gold, snares or other devices, to catch any who should enter and try to steal the treasure. Agamedes entered and was caught in the trap, but Trophonios cut off his head, so that when day came his brother would not be tortured and inform on him that he was connected to the crime. The earth opened up and swallowed Trophonios at the point in the grove at Lebadeia where is what is called the pit [*bothros*] of Agamedes, and next to it is a stele.³

Pausanias 2.27.3-4

Inside the enclosure [*peribolos*] are slabs [*stēlai*]. There used to be many more of these in ancient times, but in my time there were only six surviving. On these slabs are inscriptions recording the names of men and women who were healed by Asklepios, including details about the kinds of illness experienced by each one of them—and about how each one of them was healed. And they are all written in the Dorian dialect. [2.27.4] Standing apart from these slabs is one particularly ancient one, which says that Hippolytus dedicated to the god [*theos*] twenty horses. What the inscription on this slab says is in conformity with what is said by the people of Aricia: according to them, after Hippolytus died as a

result of the curses [*ārai*] hurled at him by Theseus, Asklepios resurrected [*an-histanai*] him. And, after he [= Hippolytus] came back to life [*authis biōnai*], he decided not to grant forgiveness to his father [= Theseus]. Instead, showing contempt for the father's entreaties, he [= Hippolytus] went to Italy to dwell among the people of Aricia. He became king there, and he established a sacred space [*temenos*] for Artemis, where to this day, even in my time, there are athletic contests [*āthla*] featuring one-on-one combat [*monomakhia*], and the winner is considered to be consecrated [*hierasthai*] to the goddess [= Artemis].

Pausanias 2.31.4

Near the theater is a shrine [*nāos*] of Artemis of the Wolves [*Lukeia*], which was made for her by Hippolytus. With regard to the epithet 'of the Wolves', I received no information from the local guides [*ex-hēgētai*]. It seemed to me at the time that it might have to do with wolves that had been devastating the territory of the Trozenians and that had been killed by Hippolytus. Or the epithet 'of the Wolves' might have applied to Artemis among the Amazons, since Hippolytus was related to them on his mother's side. Or again there might be some other explanation that I do not know.

Pausanias 2.32.1–2

[2.32.1] Hippolytus son of Theseus has a most prominent sacred space [*temenos*] set aside for him [in Trozen]. And there is a shrine [*nāos*] inside this space, with an archaic statue [inside it]. They say that Diomedes made these things and, on top of that, that he was the first person to make sacrifice [*thuein*] to Hippolytus. The people of Trozen have a priest of Hippolytus, and this priest is consecrated [*hierousthai*] as a priest for the entire duration of his life. There are sacrifices [*thusiai*] that take place at a yearly festival, and among the ritual actions that the people do [*drân*], I describe this event that takes place [at the festival]:

each and every virgin girl [*parthenos*] in the community cuts off a lock of her hair [*plokamos*] for him [= Hippolytus] before she gets married, and, having cut it off, each girl ceremonially carries the lock to the shrine [*nāos*] and deposits it there as a dedicatory offering. The people [of Trozen] wish that he [= Hippolytus] had not died when he was dragged by the horses drawing his chariot, and they do not show his tomb [*taphos*], even though they know where it is. As for the constellation in the heavens that is called the Charioteer [*hēniokhos*], they [= the people of Trozen] have a customary way of thinking [*nomizein*] that this one [*houtos* = the Charioteer] is that one [*ekeinos*], Hippolytus, who has this [*hautē*] honor [*tīmē*] from the gods. [2.32.2] Inside this [*houtos*] enclosure [*peribolos*] is also the shrine [*nāos*] of Apollo the Epibatērios [‘the one who steps on’—either on the platform of a chariot or on board a ship], established by Diomedes as a votive offering because he had escaped the seastorm inflicted on the Hellenes while they were trying to get back home safely after Ilion [= Troy].

Pausanias 2.32.3–4

[2.32.3] Along the other part of the enclosure [*peribolos*] is a racecourse [*stadion*] that is named after Hippolytus. And there is also a shrine [*nāos*] situated on a slope overlooking it [= the racecourse], and this shrine is sacred to Aphrodite *kataskopiā*, ‘the one who is looking down from on high’. She is called that because it was from this place, when Hippolytus was once upon a time exercising naked, that Phaedra took just one look at him, looking down from where she was, and right away she became afflicted with passionate love [*erân*]. It was also at this same place where the myrtle tree was, I mean, the one I wrote about earlier [= 1.22.2]—the one with leaves that had holes pricked into them. It happened when Phaedra, at a total loss about what to do, and not finding any remedy that could alleviate her passionate love [*erōs*], mutilated the leaves of the myrtle bush. [2.32.4] And there is also a tomb [*taphos*] of Phaedra there,

and it is not far away from the memorial marker [*mnēma*] of Hippolytus. That marker in turn has been built not far away from the myrtle bush.

Pausanias 6.20.2–6

[6.20.2] Within the periphery of [Mount] Kronion, on the north, between the treasures [*thēsauroi*] and the mountain [*oros*, = Mount Kronion], is a sanctuary [*hieron*] of Eileithuia, and in it Sosipolis [‘savior of the *polis*’], a local [*epi-khōrios*] superhuman force [*daimōn*] of Elis, receives honors [*tīmai*]. Now they give to Eileithuia the surname Olympian [*Olumpiā*], and choose a priestess for the goddess every year. As for the senior priestess who cares for [*therapeuein*] Sosipolis, she lives a pure ritual life [*hagisteuei*], in accordance with the customary laws of Elis, bringing to the god [*theos*] water for washing, and she deposits for him barley cakes [*mazai*] kneaded with honey [*meli*]. [6.20.3] In the front part of the temple [*nāos*], for it is built in two parts, is an altar [*bōmos*] of Eileithuia and an entrance for humans [*anthrōpoi*]; in the inner part, Sosipolis receives honors [*tīmai*], and no one may enter it except the woman who cares for [*therapeuein*] the god [*theos*], and she must wrap her head and face in a white fabric [*huphos*]. Girls [*parthenoi*] and women [*gunaikes*] wait in the sanctuary of Eileithuia, singing a hymn [*humnos*]; they burn all manner of incense to him [=Sosipolis], but it is not the custom to pour libations of wine. An oath is taken in the name of Sosipolis on the most important occasions. [6.20.4] The story is that when the Arcadians had invaded the land of Elis, and the Eleians were set in array against them, a woman came to the Eleian generals, holding a baby to her breast, who said that she was the mother of the child but that she gave him, because of dreams, to fight for the Eleians. The Eleian officers believed that the woman was to be trusted, and placed the child before the army naked. [6.20.5] When the Arcadians attacked, the child turned at once into a snake [*drakōn*]. Thrown into disorder at the sight, the Arcadians turned and fled, and were attacked by the Eleians, who won a very famous victory, and so call the god Sosipolis

['savior of the *polis*']. On the spot where after the battle the snake [*drakōn*] seemed to them to go into the ground, they made the sanctuary [*hieron*]. Along with him, the Eleians established the custom [*nomizein*] of worshipping [*sebesthai*] Eileithuia also, because this goddess [*theos*] produced her son for humans [*anthrōpoi*]. [6.20.6] The tomb of the Arcadians who were killed in the battle is on the hill across the Kladeos to the west. Near to the sanctuary of Eileithuia are the remains of the sanctuary of Aphrodite, the celestial one [*Ourania*], and there too they sacrifice upon the altars.

Pausanias 8.44.4

There is a path leading uphill from Asea [in Arcadia] to the mountain called the North Mountain [*Boreion*], and on top of that mountain there are traces of a sacred space; it is said that Odysseus had made this sacred space in honor of Athena the Savior [*sōteira*] and in honor of Poseidon, in return for his having arrived back home safely from Ilion [= Troy].

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. Agamedes was the brother of Trophonios. In the corresponding myth, Agamedes died when the two brothers were buried alive, while Trophonios escaped; later, Trophonios experiences the mystical process of "engulfment": Pausanias 9.37.5ff, quoted below.

[[back](#)] 2. Note that Pausanias considers the hero in the afterlife to be a *theos* 'god'.

[[back](#)] 3. Notice the focal point of the myth and the ritual: it is a pit [*bothros*]. This pit marks the spot where the hero Trophonios was engulfed by the earth. It also marks the spot where the hero-worshipper sheds the blood of the ram that is sacrificed to the hero. The pouring of blood into a pit is a primary form of libation. Libation is in general the

ritual pouring of a liquid, be it blood, wine, water, or whatever mixture. The blood establishes mental communion with the consciousness of the dead hero. In ancient Greek hero cults, it was believed that the blood of a sacrificed animal activates the consciousness of the dead hero. In other contexts, the ritually correct pouring of libations in general can activate that consciousness.

2016-08-22

Theognis of Megara

Translated by Gregory Nagy

- 2 Lord Apollo, son of Leto and Zeus, I will always have you
on my mind as I begin and as I end my song.
You will be my song in the beginning, in the end, and in the
middle.
- 4 Hear my prayer and grant me the things that are noble [*esthla*].
Lord Phoebus Apollo! When the goddess, Lady Leto, gave birth
to you
6 at the wheel-shaped lake, you O most beautiful of the immortal
gods,
as she held on to the Palm Tree with her supple hands,
8 then it was that all Delos, indescribably and eternally, was filled
with an aroma of immortality; and the Earth smiled in all her
enormity,
10 while the deep *pontos* of the gray Sea rejoiced.
Artemis, killer of beasts, daughter of Zeus! For you Agamemnon
12 established a sacred precinct at the time when he set sail for Troy
with his swift ships.
Hear my prayer! Ward off the spirits of destruction!
14 For you this is a small thing to do, goddess. For me it is a big
thing.
15 Muses and Graces [*Kharites*], daughters of Zeus! You were the
ones
16 who once came to the wedding of Kadmos, and you sang this
beautiful *epos*:
17 “What is beautiful [*kalon*] is near and dear [*philon*], what is not
beautiful [*kalon*] is not near and dear [*philon*].”

18 That is the *epos* that came through their immortal mouths.
 Kyrnos, let a seal be placed by me as I practice my *sophiā*
 20 upon these *epea*; that way they will never be stolen without
 detection,
 and no one will substitute something inferior for the good
 [*esthlon*] that is there.
 22 And everyone will say: “These are the *epea* of Theognis
 of Megara. His name is known among all men.”
 24 But I am not yet able to please all the citizens.
 Which is not surprising, son of Polypaos! Not even Zeus
 26 can please everyone either by making rain or by withdrawing
 rain.
 But I, having good intentions toward you, will give you the kind
 of advice
 28 that I myself, Kyrnos, learned from the *agathoi* when I was still a
 boy.
 Be aware! Do not drag the things of *tīmē* or *aretē* or wealth
 30 in the direction of deeds that are base and shameful or without
dikē.
 39 Kyrnos, this city [*polis*] is pregnant, and I fear that it will give
 birth to a man
 40 who will be a straightener [*euthuntēr*] of our base *hubris*.
 41 The citizens [*astoi*] here [in the city] are still moderate
 [*sōphrones*], but the leaders [*hēgemones*]
 42 have veered so far as to fall into debasement [*kakotēs*].
 43 Men who are noble [*agathoi*], Kyrnos, have never yet ruined
 any city [*polis*],
 44 but when people who are base [*kakoi*] decide to behave with
hubris,

- 45 and when they ruin the community [*dēmos*] and render
judgments [*dikai*] in favor of the unjust [= persons or things
without *dikē*],
- 46 for the sake of private gain [*kerdos* plural], and for the sake of
absolute power [*kratos*],
- 47 do not expect that city [*polis*] to be peaceful for long,
48 not even if it is now in a state of great serenity [*hēsukhiā*],
49 once the base [*kakoi*] decide on these things,
50 namely, private gains [*kerdos* plural] entailing public damage.
51 From these things result acts of discord [*stasis* plural], killings
[*phonoī*] within local groups of men,
- 52 and one-man rulers [*mounarkhoi*]. May this city [*polis*] never
decide to accept these things!
- My *thūmos*! Keep turning and showing a new side of your
versatile nature in each encounter with every *philos*.
- 214 Keep mixing your temperament to match that of each *philos*.
Have the temperament of a complex octopus,
216 who always looks like whatever rock he has just clung to.
Now be like this; then, at another time, become someone else in
your coloring.
- 218 It is true to say that *sophiā* is better than being *atropos*.¹
I gave you wings with which over the boundless sea [*pontos*]
238 you will fly, soaring, and over all the earth,
with ease. You will be there at all banquets,
240 on the lips of many,
and young men will sing of you to the accompaniment of clear-
sounding pipes,
242 delightful young men, in good arrangement [*kosmos*], beautifully
and clearly.

And when you go under, down to the recesses of dark Earth
244 to the mournful halls of Hādēs,
you will never, not even in death, lose *kleos*, but you will be on
the minds of men,
246 having a name that is unwilting [*aphthiton*] forever,
Kyrnos, as you go about the land of the Hellenes and over their
islands too,
248 crossing the unharvested fish-swarming sea [*pontos*];
and this time you will not be sitting on horseback, but you will be
propelled
250 by the splendid gifts of the violet-garlanded Muses.
You will be a song for everyone who has song on his mind, both
for those who are now and for those who will be,
252 so long as there will be Earth and Sun.
But I do not even get a little respect from you,
254 and you deceive me with your words as if I were some small boy.
May Zeus grant me repayment of the *philoī* who love me,
338 and that I may have more power than my personal enemies
[*ekhthroi*].
Thus would I have the reputation of a god among men,
340 if my destined death overtakes me when I have exacted
repayment.
O Zeus, Olympian, bring my timely prayer to its ultimate
fulfillment!
342 Grant that I have something good happen in place of misfortunes.
But may I die if I find no respite from cares brought on by
misfortunes.
344 And may I give harm in return for harm.
For this is the way it was destined, and yet I see no repayment on
the horizon,

346 no repayment of the men who robbed me of my possessions by
 force [*biē*].
 But I am a dog and I cross the stream
 348 with its wintry torrent. I am about to exact repayment for
 everything.
 May I drink their black blood! And may a noble [*esthlos*] *daimōn*
 look on at all of this,
 350 who may bring these things to their ultimate fulfillment, in
 accordance with my *noos*.
 I fear, son of Polypaos, that *hubris* will destroy this *polis*
 542 —the same *hubris* that destroyed the Centaurs, eaters of raw flesh.
 I must render this *dikē*, Kyrnos, along the straight line of a
 carpenter's rule and square,
 544 and I must give to both sides their equitable share,
 with the help of seers, portents, and burning sacrifice,
 546 so that I may not incur shameful blame for veering.
 My *philoī* betray me. A personal enemy [*ekhthros*] would have
 been no problem, since I could steer clear of him,
 576 much as a helmsman [*kubernētēs*] steers clear of the reefs in the
 sea.
 Ah, wretched Poverty! Why do you weigh upon my shoulders
 650 and debase both my body and my *noos*?
 Forcibly and against my will, you teach me many base and
 shameful things,
 652 though I am one among men who understands what things are
esthla and beautiful.
 If I had the wealth, Simonides, that I used to have,
 668 I would not be distressed as I am now at being together with the
agathoi.

But now my possessions have passed me by, even though I was
 aware, and I am speechless
 670 because of my lack of wealth, though I am aware of one single
 thing much better than many other things:
 that we are now being carried along, with white sails lowered,
 672 beyond the *pontos* of Melos, through the dark night,
 and they refuse to bail, and the sea washes over
 674 both sides of the ship. It is a difficult thing for anyone
 to be saved, what with the things they are doing. They have
 deposed the *kubernētēs*,
 676 the noble [*esthlos*] one, who was standing guard, with expertise.
 They seize wealth by force [*biē*], and order [*kosmos*] has been
 destroyed.
 678 There is no longer an equitable division of possessions, aimed at
 the collective interest,
 but the carriers of merchandise rule, and the *kakoi* are on top of
 the *agathoi*.
 Let these things be allusive utterances [*ainigma* pl.] hidden by me
 for the *agathoi*.
 682 One could be aware of even future misfortune, if one is *sophos*.
 A man who consults the Oracle must be more straight, Kyrnos,
 being on his guard,
 806 than a carpenter's pin and rule and square
 —a man to whom the priestess of the god at Delphi
 808 makes a response, revealing a sacred utterance from the opulent
 shrine.
 You will not find any remedy left if you add anything,
 810 nor will you escape from veering, in the eyes of the gods, if you
 take anything away.
 Everything here has gone to the ravens and perdition. And not

- 834 one of the immortal and blessed gods is responsible to us for this,
Kyrnos,
but the violence [*biē*] of men and their baneful desire for gain
[*kerdea*] and their *hubris*
- 836 have plummeted them from much good [*agatha*] into debasement
[*kakotēs*].
- Often has this *polis*, because of the *kakotēs* of its leaders,
- 856 run aground like a veering ship.
- ¹⁰⁸¹ Kyrnos, this city [*polis*] is pregnant, and I fear that it will give
birth to a man
- 1082 who will be a *hubristēs* [= perpetrator of *hubris*], a leader [*hēgemōn*]
of dire discord [*stasis*].
- ^{1082a} The citizens [*astoi*] here [in the city] are moderate [*sōphrones*],
but the leaders [*hēgemones*]
- ^{1082b} have veered so far as to fall into debasement [*kakotēs*].
- hubris* has destroyed the Magnesians and Kolophon
- 1104 and Smyrna; and it will completely destroy all of you, too,
Kyrnos!
- 1123 Do not remind me of my misfortunes! The kinds of things that
happened to Odysseus have happened to me too.
- 1124 He came back, emerging from the great palace of Hādēs,
and then killed the suitors with a pitiless heart [*thūmos*].
- 1126 while thinking good thoughts about his duly wedded wife
Penelope,
- 1127 who all along waited for him and stood by their dear son
- 1128 while he [= Odysseus] was experiencing dangers on land and in
the gaping chasms of the sea.
- I heard, son of Polypaos, the sound of a bird making its resonant
call,

1198 the bird that comes as a messenger of plowing for men,
plowing in season. And it roused my somber heart,
1200 for other men now possess my flowery fields,
and my mules no longer pull my curved plow
1202 all because of that other sea-voyage that is on one's mind.
I am Aithōn by birth, and I have an abode [*oikos*] in well-walled
Thebes,
1210 since I have been exiled from my native land.
The Corpse of the Sea is now calling me home.
1230 It is dead, but it calls with a mouth that is alive.

Appendix to Theognis

1. And another person is taught by the Olympian Muses their gifts,
thus understanding the nature of delightful *sophiā*
And yet another person is made a seer by lord Apollo the
efficacious,
and he is aware of a bad thing, even when it comes to a man
from afar.

Solon F 13.51–54

2. In matters of great importance, it is difficult to please all.

Solon F 7

3. I wrote down the laws for *kakos* and *agathos* alike,
fitting a straight *dikē* for each.

Solon F 36.18–20

4. But in an oligarchy, where many men are competing for *aretē* in
public life, intense personal hatreds are bound to break out. For
each of them wants to be on top and to have his proposals win

the day, and so they end up having great hatreds against each other. From which arises strife [*stasis* pl.] from which in turn arises killing [*phonos*], from which in turn it all comes down to tyranny [*monarkhia*]*—*and in this there is proof for how superior is monarchy!

Herodotus 3.82.3

5. And we, men of overweening violence [*biē*], settled Kolophon, we leaders of baneful *hubris*.

Mimnermus F 9.3–4

6. But the *noos* of the leaders of the community [*dēmos*] is without *dikē*.

What awaits them is the suffering of many pains because of a great *hubris*.

For they do not understand how to check insatiability [*koros*], nor can they make

kosmos for their existing merriment in the serenity [*hēsukhiā*] of the banquet.

They are wealthy, swayed by deeds without *dikē*,
and not caring at all about sacred or public property,
they steal from one another by forcible seizure,
and they do not heed the holy institutions of *dikē*,
who silently observes the present and the past,
and who will in the future come to exact complete retribution.

Solon F 4.7–16

7. It is difficult to hold down someone who has risen too far up, once it has happened, but now is the time for someone to take all precautions with his *noos*.

Solon F9.5–6

8. And along the road of the Prytaneion is the hero-precinct of Ino, and around it is an enclosure made of stones, and there are olive-trees on top of it. And the people of Megara are the only ones of the Greeks who say that the corpse of Ino was washed ashore on a beach in their territory, and that Klēsō and Tauropolis found it and gave it a funeral—they were the daughters of Klēsōn son of Lelex; they also say that Ino was called Leukothea [White Goddess] in their country first, and that they have a yearly sacrifice to her.

Pausanias 1.42.7

Notes

[[back](#)] 1. That is, ‘having no versatility, having no power to turn’; cf. Odysseus at *Od.* i 1 as *polutropos* ‘having much versatility, having many ways to turn’.

2017-12-18

The Sign of the hero: A Prologue to the *Hērōikos* of Philostratus

By Gregory Nagy¹

The traditional practice of worshipping heroes, commonly known as “hero cult,” is a basic historical fact of ancient Greek civilization, and the evidence for it goes back all the way to the “Geometric” period of the first millennium BCE.² Paradoxically, references to this practice are not obvious—at first sight—in the prime media of archaic and classical Greek literature that deal most directly with heroes. Current research on the traditions underlying the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides has demonstrated the pervasive influence of hero cults in shaping the media of epic and {15|16} drama, but the fact remains that most references to the actual cults of heroes are only implicit in these forms of archaic and classical Greek literature.³ It is the historians of the classical period who give us the earliest explicit references to hero cults, and the most prominent example is the narrative of Herodotus about the cult of Protesilaos at Elaious (*Histories* 7.33, 9.116–120).⁴ And yet, even in the medium of classical Greek historiography, the actual meaning of such a hero cult remains something of a mystery. That mystery, as we shall see, is intentional. In fact, mysticism is a fundamental aspect of ancient Greek hero cults, and the mystery of cult heroes like Protesilaos can be considered a tradition in its own right.⁵

In the narrative of Herodotus, the dead hero Protesilaos ‘gives a sign’, *sēmainei*, to the living (9.120.2). What this sign ‘means’ (the same Greek word *sēmainei* can mean simply ‘he / she / it means’—whence the English borrowing *semantics*) is made explicit by the narrative. Through a ‘power’ (*dunamis*) given to Protesilaos by the gods, the hero can uphold justice by punishing the unjust—just as surely as he can give a mystical sign, as {16|17} narrated immediately beforehand: an Athenian is

roasting *tarikhoi* ‘preserved fish’, and the dead fish suddenly come back to life (9.120.1). So also Protesilaos is now being called a *tarikhos*: even though he is dead, and thus a *tarikhos*, he still has the power to intervene in the world of the living (9.120.2). By implication, Protesilaos has mystically come back to life, just like the preserved fish.

Here is the context of the Herodotus’ narrative. Athenian forces have just captured the Chersonesus from the Persians, reclaiming for the native Greek population this region of the Hellespont—and taking as prisoner its Persian administrator. He is condemned to death for having violated the hero cult of Protesilaos at Elaious in the Chersonesus. As the Persian man is about to be executed, a *teras* ‘portent’ intervenes. The preserved fish that are being roasted by one of the Athenian captors for an everyday meal are suddenly resurrected, to the amazement of all. The non-Greek captive is now quoted as saying to the Athenian man:

*xeine Athēnaie, mēden phobeo to teras touto, ou gar soi pephēne,
all’ emoi **sēmainei** ho en Elaiousi Prōtesileōs hoti kai tethneōs kai
tarikhos eōn dunamin pros theōn ekhei ton adikeonta timesthai*

Athenian stranger, do not be frightened of this portent [*teras*]. For it was manifested not for you. Rather, Protesilaos—the one who abides in Elaious—is **making a sign** [*sēmainei*] to me that, even though he is dead—and a *tarikhos*—he has the power [*dunamis*] from the gods to exact retribution from the one who commits wrongdoing.

(Herodotus 9.120.2)

Elsewhere, Herodotus uses the same word *tarikhos* to mean ‘mummy’, in explicit reference to mystic rituals of mummification in Egypt (2.85–2.89). In considering the most expensive and sacred form of these rituals, Herodotus says ostentatiously that he does not wish to reveal the name

connected to this form (2.86.2). His opaque language here corresponds to other contexts where he expresses a reluctance to reveal the secrets of mysteries (as at 2.61, 2.86, 2.132, 2.170, 2.171).⁶ In this context, it appears that {17|18} the mystery centers on the figure of Osiris, whose resurrection from the dead depends on the secret rites of mummification.⁷

The mystification surrounding the Egyptian prototype of resurrection, Osiris, is extended to the Greek hero Protesilaos by the narrative of Herodotus. The mystery inherent in the hero's own cult is signaled by the double meaning of the word *tarikhos*—either the everyday Greek sense of 'preserved fish' or the hieratic Egyptian sense of 'mummy':

What the two meanings seem to have in common is the idea of 'preservation'. In an everyday sense, rotting is negated by 'preservation' through the drying or salting of fish; in a hieratic sense, rotting *and death itself* are negated by 'preservation' through mummification, which is from the standpoint of Egyptian religion the ritual phase of the mystical process of immortalization.⁸

Ironically, when the dead Protesilaos 'gives a sign', *sēmainei*, to the living, the Greek hero's 'meaning' seems at first sight to depend on whether the word *tarikhos* is to be understood in the everyday Greek sense of 'preserved fish' or in the hieratic non-Greek sense of 'mummy' (Herodotus 9.120.2). But there is a third sense, both hieratic and Greek, and it depends on the meaning of the word *sēmainei*:

In the image of a dead fish that mystically comes back to life, we see a convergence of the everyday and the hieratic senses of 'preservation'. This image [in the story of Herodotus], where Protesilaos *sēmainei* 'indicates' (9.120.2) the power that he has

from the gods to exact retribution from the wrongdoer, amounts to a *sēma* or sign of the revenant, the spirit that returns from the dead. The hero Protesilaos himself is represented as giving the *sēma*, the ‘sign’ of his power as a revenant [from the heroic past].⁹ {18|19}

The mystical sense of *sēma* ‘sign, signal; tomb [of a hero]’ is a tradition in its own right, well attested already in Homeric poetry,¹⁰ and this traditional sense extends from the noun *sēma* to the verb *sēmainein* ‘give a sign, signal; indicate’ as used by Herodotus to indicate the meaning conveyed by his own medium, the *Histories* (especially 1.5.3).¹¹ Within the overall narrative framework of the ‘inquiry’ or *historia* of Herodotus, the historian says what he ‘means’ at the very beginning of his *Histories* when he speaks authoritatively about divine retribution, using the word *sēmainein* to signal his meaning (1.5.3), and this ‘meaning’ is finally authorized at the very end of his *Histories* when the hero Protesilaos expresses his own meaning, signaled again by the word *sēmainein* (9.120.2).¹² Now it is the resurrected hero, not just the historian, who speaks authoritatively about divine retribution, and the semantics of *sēmainein* connect the heroic world of Protesilaos, the first warrior to die in the Trojan War (*Iliad* 2.695–710), with the historical world of Herodotus and beyond. {19|20}

But the hero’s meaning is opaque. The non-Greek speaker can claim that the meaning of Protesilaos is intended for him, not for the Athenian, let alone the native Greeks of the Chersonesus who worship Protesilaos as their local hero. Who, then, is the intended receiver, the *destinataire*, of the meaning of Protesilaos? The historian does not say, and in this regard his meaning, too, is opaque:

When Herodotus ‘indicates’, *sēmainei*, he is indirectly narrating the actions of the gods by directly narrating the

actions of men. And the most powerful ‘indication’ is the *sēma* of the hero, whose message is also his medium, the tomb. The double meaning of *sēma* as both ‘tomb’ and ‘indication, sign’ is itself a monument to the ideology inherent in the ancient Greek institution of hero cults—an ideology that appropriated the very concept of meaning to the tomb of the hero.¹³

The opaqueness of cult heroes like Protesilaos is a tradition in its own right, grounded in the mysteries (*mustēria*) of local initiation rituals.¹⁴ In general, opaque signification is a vital aspect of the traditional essence of hero cults. [...] {20|21}

When Herodotus narrates the *teras* ‘portent’ about the *tarikhoi* ‘preserved fish’ that come back to life while they are being roasted for an everyday meal, the narrative is identified as a local tradition originating with the native Greeks of the Chersonesus, the site of Protesilaos’ hero cult: *kai teōi...legetai hupo Khersonēsiteōn...tarikhous optōnti teras genesthai toionde* ‘and it is said by the people of the Chersonesus that the following portent [*teras*] happened to a person who was roasting *tarikhoi*’ (Herodotus 9.120.1). Similarly in Philostratus, the narrative about the same portent is described as an ancestral tradition linked to the same site, specifically, the sacred space of Protesilaos at Elaious: *to de ge hieron en hōi, kata tous pateras* ‘the sacred space in which, in the time of the ancestors ...’ (*Heroikos* 9.5). In Philostratus, however, there is no direct application of the word *tarikhos* to Protesilaos himself: *to...hieron...eph’ hōi kai to tarikhos anabiōnai phasi* ‘the sacred space...in which they say that even the *tarikhos* came back to life [*anabiōnai*]’ (*Heroikos* 9.5). I take it that *tarikhos* here applies to the preserved fish directly: even [*kai*] they came back to life from the dead. The word *tarikhos* applies to Protesilaos only indirectly: the idea that he too came back to life from the dead is merely implicit. In the narrative of Herodotus, by contrast, the initial mention of the roasting of *tarikhoi* (9.120.1) is followed up at a later

moment with a direct application of the word to Protesilaos himself, when the Persian captive is quoted as interpreting the portent:

*ho de Artauktēs hōs eide to teras, kalesas ton optōnta tous
tarikhous ephē, xeine Athēnaie, mēden phobeo to teras touto, ou
gar soi pephēne, all emoi sēmainei ho en Elaious Prōtesileōs hoti
kai tethneōs kai tarikhos eōn dunamin pros theōn ekhei ton
adikeonta timesthai*

But when Artauktes saw the portent [*teras*], he called out to the one who was roasting the preserved fish [*tarikhoi*], saying: “Athenian stranger, do not be frightened of this portent [*teras*]. For it was manifested not for you. Rather, Protesilaos—the one who abides in Elaious—is making a {21|22} sign [*sēmainei*] to me that, *even though he is dead—and a tarikhos—he has the power* [*dunamis*] from the gods to exact retribution from the one who commits wrongdoing.”

(Herodotus 9.120.2)

Throughout the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, there is a sharp contrast being made between the special understanding of the initiated—in this case, he happens to be a local Greek *ampelourgos* ‘vineyard-worker’ in the hero’s sacred space—and the everyday understanding of the uninitiated—in this case, he happens to be a non-local non-Greek, from Phoenicia. This special understanding is conveyed by words that have a special meaning for the initiated but an everyday meaning for the uninitiated. The process of initiation allows the new initiate—hereafter I will refer to him as the ‘initiant’—to transcend the everyday meaning of words like *tarikhos* and to achieve a special understanding of their sacral meaning.

The details of such an initiatory process are vividly illustrated by Pausanias (middle of the second century CE), who describes the

experience of ‘consulting’ the cult hero Trophonios in Lebadeia (9.39.5–14); at the end of his description, Pausanias admits that he himself had personally experienced this initiation by having once ‘consulted’ the hero (*khērēsamenos*: 9.39.14). The actual ‘consultation’ involves a series of ordeals signaled by concepts that seem obviously everyday at first sight but turn out to convey special meanings that are sacred, linked with the mysteries of hero cult.

In what follows, I offer my own translation of this crucial passage from Pausanias, attempting to approximate the ritual language as closely as possible, including the numerous repetitions and periphrases, and I highlight with underlines those words that seem to convey a special sacred meaning for the initiated while all along maintaining an everyday meaning for the uninitiated:

[9.39.5] When a man decides to *descend* to the place of Trophonios, first of all he undergoes a régime for an set number of days in a *building* [*oikēma*], and the *building* [*oikēma*] is sacred to the Good *Daimōn* and to Good *Tukhē* [Fortune]. In undergoing the régime there, he goes through various procedures of purification, avoiding hot baths; the water for bathing is the river Hercyna. He has unlimited access to meat from the sacrifices, for *he who descends* sacrifices to {22|23} Trophonios himself and to the children of Trophonios; also to Apollo and to Kronos, to Zeus with the epithet King [*Basileus*], to Hera Charioteer [*Hēniokhos* = the one who holds the reins of the chariot], and to Demeter whom they name with the epithet Europa and say was the wetnurse of Trophonios.

[9.39.6] At each of the sacrifices a seer [*mantis*] is present, who inspects the entrails of the sacrificial victim, and after an inspection prophesies to *him who descends*, saying whether

Trophonios will be kind [*eumenēs*] and welcoming when he receives [verb *dekhomai*] him. The entrails of the other victims do not make clear all that much the *thinking* [*gnōmē*] of Trophonios. But the night when each person *descends*, on that night they sacrifice a ram over a pit [*bothros*], invoking Agamedes.¹⁵ Even if the previous sacrifices have appeared propitious, no account is taken of them unless the entrails of this ram mean *the same thing*. If all the sacrifices are in agreement with each other, then each person *descends*, *having good hopes* [*euelpis*]. And each person *descends* in this way:

[9.39.7] First of all, in the night, they take him to the river Hercyna. Having taken him, they anoint him with olive oil and wash him. Those who do this are two boys of the citizens, about thirteen years old, who are named Hermae.¹⁶ These are the ones who are washing *the one who descends* and who attend to whatever is needed in their function as attendant boys. Afterwards he is led by the priests, not immediately to the oracle, but to fountains of water. These fountains are very near each other.

[9.39.8] Here it is necessary for him to drink water, called the water of Forgetting [*Lēthē*], so that there may be for him a forgetting [*lēthē*] of all thoughts that he was thinking up to this point. Right after this, it is necessary for him to drink another water, the water of Memory [*Mnēmosunē*]. From this he remembers [*mnēmoneuei*] the things seen by *the one who descended*. Having viewed the statue [*agalma*] which they say was made by Daedalus—it is not revealed by the {23|24} priests except to those who are about to go to Trophonios)—having seen this statue [*agalma*] and having worshipped it and having prayed, he proceeds to the oracle, wearing a linen

chiton and girding the chiton with ribbons and *wearing the boots of the native locale*.¹⁷

[9.39.9] The oracle is beyond the grove, on the mountain. There is a foundation, of white stone, in a circle. The perimeter of the foundation is in the proportion of a very small *threshing floor*. Its height is just short of two cubits. On the foundation stand rods. They are of bronze, like the bars holding them together. And through them has been made a double door. Inside the perimeter is a chasm [*khasma*] in the earth, not naturally formed, but artificially constructed as a work of masonry, according to the most exact specifications.

[9.39.10] The form [*skhēma*] of this *built structure* [*oikodomēma*] is like that of a *bread-oven* [*kribanos*]. Its breadth across the middle one might estimate to be about four cubits. And the depth of the *built structure* [*oikodomēma*] could be estimated to extend to not more than eight cubits. There has been made by them no constructed *descent* [*katabasis*] to the bottom level. But when a man comes to Trophonios, they bring him a ladder—a narrow and light one. For *the one who has descended* there is a hole between the bottom level and the *built structure* [*oikodomēma*]. Its breadth appeared to be two spans, and its height one span.

[9.39.11] So, then, *the one who descends* is lying down in the direction of the bottom level, holding barley-cakes [*mazai*] kneaded with honey, and he pushes forward with his feet, forward into the hole; he himself pushes forward, eager for his knees to get into the hole. Then, after the knees, the rest of his body is suddenly drawn in, rushing forward, just as the biggest and most rapid river will catch a man in its torrents and carry him under. After this, for those who are now in the

inner sanctum [*aduton*], there is no single or same way [*tropos*] for them to learn the things of the future. One person will see them, another person will hear them. To return and go back for *those who descended* is through the same mouth, with feet first, pushing forward. {24|25}

[9.39.12] They say that no one of *those who descended* has ever been killed, except for one of the bodyguards of Demetrius. They say that this person did not perform any of the customary rituals in the sacred space, and that he *descended* not in order to consult [*khresomenos*] the god¹⁸ but in hopes of stealing gold and silver from the inner sanctum [*aduton*]. It is said that the corpse of this person appeared [*anaphēnai*] in *another place*, and was not expelled at the sacred mouth. With reference to this man many other things are said. What has been said by me is what is most worthy of being taken into account.

[9.39.13] *The one who has ascended* from Trophonios is received once again by the priests, who seat him upon what is called the Throne [*thronos*] of Memory [*Mnēmosunē*], which is situated not far from the inner sanctum [*aduton*]. Having seated him, they ask him all he has seen and found out. After learning the answers, they then turn him over to his relatives or friends. These take him to the *building* [*oikēma*] where he had earlier gone through his régime in the presence of *Tukhē* and *daimōn*, the good ones. They *take him back* [verb *komizein*] to this place by lifting him and carrying him off, while he is still possessed [*katokhos*] by terror and unconscious both of himself and of those who are near him. Afterwards, his mind will again be working just as well as before in all respects, and even laughter *will come back* to him.

[9.39.14] What I write is not hearsay; I myself have consulted [*khrēsamenos*] Trophonios and have seen others doing so. It is a necessity for *those who have descended* into the sacred space of Trophonios to dedicate writings on a tablet that record all the things that each person has heard or seen.

(Pausanias 9.39.5–14)

So also in the hero cult of Protesilaos at Elaious in the Chersonesus, the mystery of the hero is for the initiate to know and for {25|26} the initiand to find out. In reading the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, even the reader can assume the role of the initiand.

At the beginning of the *Heroikos*, the reader learns that Protesilaos experienced not one but two resurrections in the heroic past. The first time, the hero came back to life at Phthia in Thessaly after his death at Troy, all because of his love for his bride Laodameia (*anabiōiē*, *Heroikos* 2.9). Then he died a second time—and again it was because he loved his bride—only to come back to life a second time thereafter (*anabiōnai*, 2.10). Just exactly how he came back for the second time, however, is not revealed even to the initiate, who says to the initiand that Protesilaos chooses not to tell that particular ‘sacred secret’, that particular *aporrhēton* (2.11).¹⁹ That was then, in the heroic past. Now, however, in the everyday present, the living hero continues to come back again and again, as a sacred epiphany or apparition, much like other heroes of the heroic past who likewise ‘appear in epiphanies’ or ‘show up’, *phainontai* (2.11). So speaks the initiate, and the initiand admits that he has a hard time believing all this: ‘I do not believe’, he says (*apistō*, 3.1). In other words, the initiand is not yet an initiate. Still, he wants to be a ‘believer’ (*pisteuōn*, 2.12). The initiate responds by proceeding to tell the initiand all about the epiphanies of Protesilaos, describing the cult hero’s interventions into the world of the everyday. Where is Protesilaos most likely to be sighted? The initiate reveals an array of places where the

hero may ‘show up’, as it were: sometimes he is in the {26|27} Chersonesus, sometimes in Phthia, sometimes in Troy—a most notable of locations for frequent sightings of heroes who died in the Trojan War—and sometimes he is back in Hades (11.7). It is in Hades that he continues to have sex with his beloved bride Laodameia (11.8).

As the narrative of the hero’s epiphanies proceeds, a gentle breeze carries the sweet aroma of flowers in bloom, and the initiand is feeling refreshed (3.2–5). He remarks that the plantlife literally ‘breathes out’, *anapneî*, a sweetness of its own (3.3). It is the right season, the exact time, the perfect moment: it is the *hōrā* (3.2, 3.5). One can begin to sense the hero’s sacred presence. Through a sort of hieratic metonymy, the breath of the hero himself animates the atmosphere, and Protesilaos is now revealing, *apophainōn*, the scent of the blossoms at their sweetest (11.3).²⁰ The hero’s presence smells sweeter than myrtles in autumn (10.2).²¹ The perfect moment or *hōrā*, in all its {27|28} natural beauty, becomes the ultimate epiphany of the cult hero.²²

The secrets of the cult hero Protesilaos are clearly visible to the initiate: since these are things that are *theia* ‘divine’ and *megala* ‘larger than life’, they will not escape the notice of those who are ‘cultivated’, *khariantes* (3.2). For the uninitiated, however, these same secrets are veiled in language that expresses what seems quite ordinary and everyday on the surface. About the cult hero Protesilaos, the initiate starts by saying to the uninitiated: ‘He lives [*zēi*] here, and we work the land [*geōrgoumen*] together’ (2.8). What image in life could be more straightforward, more everyday, than life itself? When the initiand follows up by asking whether Protesilaos ‘lives’ in the sense that he is ‘resurrected’ (*anabebiōkōs*), the initiate replies: ‘He himself does not speak about his own experiences [*pathos* plural]’ (2.9). This absolutizing declaration is then followed by a series of qualifications: contradicting what he has just said, the initiate now goes on to say that the hero Protesilaos does indeed speak about his own death at Troy, about his first

resurrection, {28|29} and about his second death—though he does not speak about his second resurrection (2.9–11).

A vital question remains: how can a cult hero like Protesilaos actually communicate with those who are initiated into his mysteries? According to the traditional mentality of hero cults, the answer is simple: whenever they come back to life, cult heroes are endowed with a superhuman consciousness. This consciousness of the hero, activated by hero cult, performs the basic function of ensuring the seasonality of nature, and it manifests itself in such specific functions as the healing of humans or animals or plants: in *Heroikos* 4.10, for example, Protesilaos is described as the *iatros* ‘healer’ of sheep, beehives, trees.²³

For this superhuman consciousness to be activated, the cult hero must be *consulted*, as we saw in Pausanias’ description of his own consulting of Trophonios at the oracle of that hero. Similarly in the case of Philostratus’ *Heroikos*, we see that a cult hero like Protesilaos has to be actively consulted by his worshippers: from the very beginning, in fact, the intent of the chief character, the worker in the vineyard of Protesilaos, is to make this cult hero his own personal ‘advisor’, *xumboulos* (Ionic for *sumboulos*; 4.7).²⁴ Whenever the ritual of consultation would fail, the worshipper says that he could know for sure, since the cult hero would be silent, *esiōpa* (4.8).²⁵ By contrast, the success of the consultation is manifested whenever the cult hero speaks.

Such consulting of oracular cult heroes concerns not only the fundamentals of nature as defined metonymically by these heroes. It concerns also the fundamental nature of the heroes {29|30} themselves. Their heroic essence has two aspects, one of which is defined by epic narrative traditions, while the other is defined by hero cult. In the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, these two aspects of the hero are treated holistically as integral parts of a single concept. Thus the process of consulting oracular heroes leads to the initiate’s knowledge about their

epic aspects, not only their ritual aspects as oracles. As the initiate declares, cult heroes have their own knowledge of epic narrative because they are endowed with *mantikē sophia* ‘the skill of a seer [*mantis*]’, and there is an ‘oracular’ principle, *khreśmōdes*, operating within them (7.3–4). That is why a hero like Protesilaos ‘sees all the way through’, *di-horâi*, the poems of Homer (7.5), knowing things that go beyond his own experiences when he, Protesilaos, had lived in the past of heroes (7.5–6); the hero even knows things about which Homer himself did not sing (7.5).

In sum, the *Heroikos* of Philostratus provides a model of poetic inspiration that centers on the superhuman consciousness of the oracular hero, which has a totalizing control of epic narrative. As we shall now see, this model is not an innovation but an archaism, stemming from oral poetic traditions that predate even the Homeric traditions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Confronted with the idea that an oracular cult hero possesses total mastery of epic narrative, our first impression is that this idea cannot be reconciled with what we find in Homeric poetry. According to the poetics of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it is of course the Muses who ‘inspire’ epic narrative. At first glance, then, these goddesses of memory seem to be the sole source for the superhuman consciousness that informs the content of Homeric poetry and gives it the authority to tell about the gods and heroes of heroic times. This authority, however, is actually shared with the heroes who are quoted by Homeric performance, as a closer look at the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reveals clearly.

In his book about the “quotations” of heroes in Homeric poetry, Richard Martin has demonstrated that the “voice” of the poet becomes traditionally identified with the “voices” of the heroes quoted by the poetic performance:

My central conclusion is that the *Iliad* takes shape as a poetic composition in precisely the same “speaking culture” {30|31} that we see foregrounded in the stylized words of the poem’s heroic speakers, especially those speeches designated as *mūthos*, a word I redefine as “authoritative speech act.” The poet and the hero are both “performers” in a traditional medium. The genre of *mūthos* composing requires that its practitioners improve on previous performances and surpass them, by artfully manipulating traditional material in new combinations. In other words, within the speeches of the poem, we see that it is traditional to be spontaneous: no hero ever merely repeats; each recomposes the traditional text he performs, be it a boast, threat, command, or story, in order to project his individual personality in the most convincing manner. I suggest that the “voice” of the poet is the product of the same traditional performance technique.²⁶

Recent ethnographic work on oral poetic performance traditions has provided typological parallels in support of Martin’s demonstration. In the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* epic singing tradition of the poets of al-Bakâtûsh in contemporary Egypt, for example, Dwight Reynolds has sought—and found—an analogy for Martin’s model of the interchangeable “voice” of poet and hero in epic performance:

[T]he social reality of the al-Bakâtûsh poets involves a distinctly negative position for the epic singer within the greater social hierarchy; in marked contrast to the poet’s marginalized status in village society, however, are the moments of centrality, power, and “voice” he achieves in epic performance. This disjunctive persona has produced not only a fascinating process of deep self-identification with the epic tradition on the part of the poets, but has clearly, over generations, shaped and indeed constituted many aspects of

the content of the epic itself—an epic tradition, as I have termed it, of heroic poets and poetic heroes.²⁷

There is also a plethora of ethnographic work that documents the widespread mentality of heroic “possession,” where the {31|32} consciousness of the poet is “possessed” by the consciousness of the hero as soon as the poet, in performance, starts “quoting” the hero.²⁸ As one ethnographer puts it, there can be “a transition from a story *about* a spirit, to one told *to* a spirit, to one told *by* a spirit.”²⁹

All this is not to say that the *Heroikos* of Philostratus has preserved for us a direct continuation of living oral epic traditions where heroes are being “quoted” through the supernatural consciousness of the heroes themselves. I have little doubt that the oral traditions of composition-in-performance, as still reflected in the hexameter poetry of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and of the “Epic Cycle” in general, had been dead for well over half a millennium by the time Philostratus composed his *Heroikos*. Still, it is essential to stress that the traditions of hero cults were evidently still alive in the era of Philostratus. Moreover, the archaic mentality of seeking communion with the consciousness of cult heroes was likewise still alive. Even though the Homeric poems and the “Epic Cycle” were now literary rather than oral traditions, they still preserved, as traditions per se, a vital link with the rituals of hero cult. The *Heroikos* bridges the chasm between the mythical world of epic heroes and the ritual world of cult heroes. In this {32|33} masterpiece of the Second Sophistic, a continuum is still felt to exist between these two diverging worlds. The spirit of this age is captured by this formulation of the would-be initiate Phoenician in the *Heroikos* (6.3): ‘I dreamed I was reading aloud (*anaginōskein*) the epic verses (*epos* plural) of Homer’.

As in the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, we can see in other literatures as well the stylized efforts of literati to maintain a continuum between myths and rituals associated with heroes. A notable example comes from

an anecdote, dated to the 9th century CE,³⁰ concerning the rediscovery of a supposedly lost book, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ("The Cattle Raid of Cooley"), which is a collection of "epic" narratives about Ireland's greatest heroes.³¹ This anecdote is in effect a "charter myth,"³² explaining the *raison d'être* of the *Táin*.³³ In terms of the myth, this book of narratives, the *Táin*, is equivalent to an integral epic performance. The myth narrates how this book was once lost and how the assembled poets of Ireland 'could not recall it in its entirety,' since they knew only 'fragments' [*bloga*].³⁴ In a quest to find the lost integral book, the poet Muirgen happens to travel past the tomb of Fergus mac Roich, one of the chief heroes featured in the narrative of the *Táin*. It is nighttime. Muirgen sits down at the gravestone of the tomb, and he sings an incantation to this gravestone 'as though it were Fergus {33|34} himself.'³⁵ Responding to the incantation, Fergus himself appears in all his heroic glory, and he 'recited him [= to Muirgen] the whole *Táin*, how everything had happened, from start to finish.'³⁶ As in the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, we see that the superhuman consciousness of the hero can take over or even possess the narration of epic.

In sum, the *Heroikos* of Philostratus makes it clear that heroes cannot be defined exclusively in terms of their epic dimensions, though this aspect becomes vitally important in the history of ideas about heroism, especially in view of the ultimate cultural {34|35} prestige surrounding the prime medium that conveys these ideas, Homeric poetry. For Philostratus, the prestige of Homer and the Homeric hero is a given. In his *Heroikos*, however, he goes further, far further, by reconnecting that epic prestige with the sacred charisma possessed by the cult hero.

Selections from Philostratus Hērōikos

from *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* ³⁷

Translated by Gregory Nagy, based on translations by Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K.

Hērōikos 2.6–3.6

|2.6 {Phoenician:} “So, Ampelourgos, do you live a reflective way of life?”

{Ampelourgos:} “Yes, together with the beautiful [*kalos*] Protesilaos.”

^{2.7} {Phoenician:} “What do you have in common with Protesilaos, if you mean the man from Thessaly?”

{Ampelourgos:} “I do mean that man, the husband of Laodameia. And I say it that way because he delights in hearing himself described this way.”

^{2.8} {Phoenician:} “So, then, what is he doing here?”

{Ampelourgos:} “He lives [*zēi*] here, and we work the land [*geōrgoumen*] together.”

^{2.9} {Phoenician:} “Has he come back to life [*anabiōnai*], or what?”

{Ampelourgos:} “He himself does not speak about his own experiences [*pathos* plural], stranger [*xenos*], except, of course, that he died at Troy because of Helen, but then came to life [*anabiōnai*] in Phthia because he loved Laodameia.”

^{2.10} {Phoenician:} “And yet it is said that he died after he came to life [*anabiōnai*] and persuaded his wife to follow him.”

^{2.11} {Ampelourgos:} “He himself also says these things. But how he returned after this too, he does not tell me even though I’ve wanted to find out for a long time. He is hiding, he says, some secret [*aporrhēton*]

of the Fates [*Moirai*]. And his fellow warriors also, who were there in Troy, still appear [*phainontai*] on the plain, holding the pose [*skhēma*] of fighting men and shaking the crests of their helmets.”

^{3.1} {Phoenician:} “By Athena, Ampelourgos, I don’t believe [*pisteuein*] it, although I wish these things were so. But if you are not attending to the plants, nor irrigating them, tell me now about these things and all that you know about Protesilaos. After all, you would please the heroes if I would go away believing [*pisteuein*].”

^{3.2} {Ampelourgos:} “Stranger [*xenos*], the plants no longer need watering at midday, since it is already late autumn and the season [*hōrā*] itself waters them. So, I have leisure to relate everything in detail. Since these matters are sacred to the gods and so important, may they not escape the notice of those humans who are cultivated [*kharientes*]! It is also better for us to sit down in the beauty of this place.”

{Phoenician:} “Lead the way; I will follow even beyond the interior of Thrace.”

^{3.3} {Ampelourgos:} “Let us enter the vineyard, Phoenician. For you may even discover in it something to give cheer [*euphrosunē*] to you.”

{Phoenician:} “Yes, let us enter. I think a sweet scent is being breathed out [*ana-pneîn*] from the plants.”

^{3.4} {Ampelourgos:} “What are you saying, ‘sweet’? It is something godlike [*theion*]! The blossoms of the uncultivated trees are fragrant, as are the fruits of those that are cultivated. If you ever come upon a cultivated plant with fragrant blossoms, pluck rather the leaves, since the sweet scent comes from them.”

^{3.5} {Phoenician:} “How diverse [*poikilē*] is the beauty [*hōrā*] of this place you have here, and how lush have the clusters of grapes grown! How well-arranged are all the trees, and how ambrosial [*ambrosiā*] is the fragrance of the place! And, I think that the walkways [*dromoi*] that you have left untilled are pleasing, but, Ampelourgos, I think you live luxuriantly [*truphân*], since you use so much uncultivated land.”

^{3.6} {Ampelourgos:} “The walkways [*dromoi*] are sacred, stranger [*xenos*], for the hero strips down and exercises [*gumnazetai*] there.”

Hērōikos 6.7–7.2

^{6.7} {Ampelourgos:} “My guest [*xenos*], you have arrived here truly by the will of a god, and you are interpreting your dream in a sound way. So, let us go ahead with the story [*logos*], so that you will not say that I am morally careless by distracting you from it.”

^{7.1} {Phoenician:} “So, now, I see that you understand the things that I am longing [*>potheîn*] to learn. For I do need to hear what this relationship [*sunousiā*] is that you have with Protesilaos, and what he is like when he comes to you, and whether he knows anything similar to what the poets know about the events at Troy—or whether he knows anything about them that the poets don’t know. ^{7.2} When I say ‘about the events at Troy’ I mean: about the assembly of the [Achaean] army in Aulis—and about the heroes themselves. I want to know something about each one of them, one by one. Were they beautiful, as they are said to be in song? Were they manly and intelligent? I am talking like this because I’m wondering how he [= Protesilaos] could narrate the story about the war that happened at Troy when he never had a chance to fight in the war to the finish, having been the first of all the Greek forces to die at Troy, as they say, right at the beginning, as soon as he stepped off [his ship].”

Hērōikos 7.4–6

^{7.4} At any rate, among those who critically examine Homer's poems, who will you say has read [*ana-gignōskein*] them in such a way as Protesilaos has read them and sees all the way through [*di-horân*] them?

^{7.5} Besides, my guest [*xenos*], before Priam and Troy there wasn't even any epic recitation [*rhapsōidiā*], nor was there any singing about events that had not yet taken place. I say this because the art of composing poetry back then about oracular utterances [*manteía*] and about, say, Hēraklēs, son of Alkmēnē, was only starting to take shape and had not yet reached a stage of maturity, and there was no Homer yet, so there was no Homer to do any singing. Some say that it was only when Troy was captured, while others say it was eight generations later, that he [= Homer] applied himself to practicing the art of poetry. ^{7.6} But, in spite of all that, Protesilaos knows all the things of Homer, and he sings of many Trojan events that took place after the hero's own lifetime, as also of many events that have to do with Greeks and Persians.

Hērōikos 9.1–3

^{9.1} Listen to such stories now, my guest [*xenos*]. Protesilaos lies buried not at Troy but here on the Chersonesus. This large tumulus [*kolōnos*] over here on the left no doubt contains him. The nymphs generated [*phuein*] these elms [that you see here] around the tumulus [*kolōnos*], and they wrote, so to speak, the following decree concerning these trees: ^{9.2} “Those branches that turn toward Ilion [= Troy] will blossom early and will then immediately shed their leaves and perish before their season [*hōrā*—for this was also the life experience [*pathos*] of Protesilaos—but a tree on its other side will live and prosper.” ^{9.3} All the trees that do not stand around the tomb [*sēma*], such as these trees [that you see right over here] in the grove, have strength in all their branches and flourish according to their particular nature.

Hērōikos 10.1–2

^{10.1} {Phoenician:} Why don't you describe [*dia-graphein*] him to me and share what he looks like.

^{10.2} {Ampelourgos:} With pleasure [*khairein*], my guest, I swear by Athena. He was about twenty years old at most when he sailed to Troy. He teems in his life force [*bruein*] with the luxuriant [*habron*] fuzz on his cheeks, and he smells sweeter than myrtles in autumn. Radiant eyebrows frame the look of his eyes, since whatever is charming [*epi-khari*] is near and dear [*philon*] to him.

***Hērōikos* 11.1–4**

^{11.1} {Phoenician:} “So, the passionate love [*erōs*] that he used to have in loving [*erân*] Laodameia—how is it going for him these days?”

{Ampelourgos:} “Oh, he is still very much loving [*erân*] her, and he is still being loved [*erâsthai*] right back by her, and they relate to each other just like a couple that has just come out, all hot [*thermoi*], from a honeymoon chamber.”

^{11.2} {Phoenician:} “And do you embrace him when he comes to you [in the garden]—or does he elude you by going up in a puff of smoke, the same way he eludes the poets?”

{Ampelourgos:} “Actually, he takes pleasure [*khairein*] when I embrace him and lets me kiss [*phileîn*] him and put my arm around his neck.”

^{11.3} {Phoenician:} “Does he come to you often or just once in a while?”

{Ampelourgos:} Oh, I guess it's about four or five times a month that I get to have my share of him, whenever he feels like planting one of the plants you see here, or when he harvests one of them, or when he does some cuttings of blossoms [*anthos* plural]. When somebody is a lover of

garlands [*philo-stephanos*], he will have sweeter-smelling blossoms to show for it [in the garlands he wears] whenever he [= Protesilaos] is all over those blossoms [*anthos* plural].”

^{11.4} {Phoenician:} “You’re talking about a very convivial hero [*hērōs*]: he must be quite the bridegroom!”

Hērōikos 22.3

My guest [*xenos*], I will lose my voice if I try to recall all such stories [about heroes who make epiphanies at the Plain of Scamander in the region of Troy]. For example, there is a song about Antilokhos, how a girl from the city of [New] Ilion who was wandering along the banks of the river Scamander had an encounter [*en-tunkhanein*] with the phantom [*eidōlon*] of Antilokhos and embraced his tomb [*sēma*] in a fit of passionate erotic desire [*erōsa*] for the phantom [*eidōlon*].

Hērōikos 23.1–2

^{23.1} {Ampelourgos:} “So, now, let us take up, my guest [*xenos*], the story of the shield—about which, as Protesilaos says, Homer and all the other poets knew nothing.”

^{23.2} {Phoenician:} “I am longing [*potheîn*] for the story you are about to recount about it [= the shield], Ampelourgos! I think it will be a rare occasion when I will ever hear it again.”

Hērōikos 51.12–13

^{51.12} This tumulus [*kolōnos*], my guest [*xenos*], which you see standing at the brow of the promontory [*aktē*], was heaped up [*ageirein*, ‘pile stones together’] by the Achaeans who came together at the time when he [=

Achilles] was mixed together with Patroklos for their joint burial, having provided for himself [= Achilles] and for that one [= Patroklos] the most beautiful of funeral rites. And this is the origin of the custom of singing his name in praise when people celebrate the bonds of love between friends. ^{51.13} Of all mortals who ever existed, he [= Achilles] was buried in the most spectacular way, what with all the gifts that Greece [= Hellas] bestowed upon him. No longer could they [= the Achaeans] consider it a beautiful thing to grow their hair long, once Achilles was gone. Whatever gold or other possession each of them had brought to Troy or had taken away from the division of spoils [= spoils taken at Troy] was now collected and heaped up on top of the funeral pyre, right then and there. The same thing happened also later when Neoptolemos came to Troy. He [= Achilles] received another round of glorious gifts from his son and from the Achaeans who were trying to show their gratitude [*kharis*] to him. Even as they were getting ready to sail away from Troy, they would keep throwing themselves on top of the place of burial and believe that they were embracing Achilles.

***Hērōikos* 53.8–13**

^{53.8} The Thessalian sacrificial offerings [*enagismata*] that came regularly to Achilles from Thessaly were decreed for the Thessalians by the oracle at Dodona. You see, the oracle ordered the Thessalians to sail to Troy each year to sacrifice [*thuein*] to Achilles and to slaughter some sacrificial victims as for a god, while slaughtering other victims as for the dead. ^{53.9} From the very beginnings, the following was the procedure: a ship sailed from Thessaly to Troy with black sails raised, bringing twice seven sacred delegates [*theōroi*], one white bull and one black bull, both tame to the touch, and wood from Mount Pelion, so that they would need nothing from the city [= New Ilion]. They also brought fire from Thessaly as well as water drawn from the river Sperkheios for libations. As a consequence [of these practices], the Thessalians were the first to institute the custom of using unwilting garlands [*stephanoi amarantinoi*]

for the funerary rituals [*kēdos* plural] [in honor of Achilles], in order that, even if the wind delayed the ship, they would not wear garlands [*stephanoi*] that were wilted [*saproi*] or past their season [*ex-hōroi*]. ^{53.10} And evidently they found it necessary to put into the harbor at night and, before touching land, to sing from the ship a hymn [*humnos*] to Thetis, which is composed of these words:

Thetis, sea-blue, Thetis consort of Peleus, | you who bore the great son | Achilles. The part of him that his mortal | nature brought him | was the share of Troy, but the part of him that from your immortal | lineage was drawn by the child, the sea [*pontos*] has that part. | Come, proceed to this steep tumulus [*kolōnos*] | in the company of Achilles [to receive] the offerings placed over the fire. | Come, proceed without tears in the company of Thessaly, | you sea-blue Thetis, you consort of Peleus.

^{53.11} When they approached the tomb [*sēma*] after the hymn [*humnos*], a shield was banged upon as in battle, and together with rhythmic coordination they cried alala while calling upon Achilles. When they had garlanded [*stephanoûn*] the summit of the tumulus [*kolōnos*] and dug sacrificial pits on it, they slaughtered the black bull as to one who is dead. ^{53.12} They also called upon Patroklos to come to the feast, so as to gratify [= make *kharis* for] Achilles. ^{53.13} After they slit the victim's throat and made this sacrifice [*enagizein*], they evidently proceeded to go down to the ship, and, after sacrificing [*thuein*] the other bull on the beach again to Achilles and having begun the offering by taking from the basket and by partaking of the entrails for that sacrifice [*thusiā*] (for they sacrificed [*thuein*] that sacrifice [*thusiā*] as to a god), they sailed away as dawn approached, taking the sacrificed animal so as not to be feasting in the enemy's territory.

Notes

[[back](#)] 1 Originally published in J. K. Berenson Maclean and E. B. Aitken, eds., *Flavius Philostratus, Heroikos* (Atlanta 2001) xv–xxxv. The original pagination, which was indicated in roman numerals, will be indicated in this electronic version by way of the corresponding arabic numerals within braces (“{” and “}”). For example, “{16|17}” indicates where p. xvi of the printed article ends and p. xvii begins.

[[back](#)] 2. On the history and archaeology of hero cults, see Anthony M. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of a Discipline* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) 159–165. Two pathfinding general works on hero cults are Angelo Brelich, *Gli eroi greci: Un problema storico-religioso* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1958) and Friedrich Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (2 vols.; Giessen: A. Topelmann, 1909–1912). Specialized works include Emily Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London: Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement 57, 1989), Uta Kron, *Die zehn attischen Phylenheroen: Geschichte, Mythos, Kult und Darstellungen* (Berlin: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung, Beiheft 5, 1976), and Corinne Pache, *Baby and Child Heroes in Ancient Greece* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999; published as a book, with the same title, Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004). Snodgrass (p. 172) speaks of “the transformation in the whole attitude to the heroic past that came about with the westward spread of Ionian epic.” Prior to this spread, he argues (*ibid.*), “it seems that on the Greek mainland (and at least some offshore islands) the idea of the ‘hero’ was linked to ancestor worship, and was not tied to one specific past era; afterwards, these attitudes had to be merged with the notion of an eternally receding ‘Heroic Age,’ set already in the distant past, and a prime heritage of the whole Greek world.” For another line of argumentation, see Carla M. Antonaccio, *An Archaeology of Ancestors: Tomb Cult and hero Cult in Early Greece* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

[[back](#)] 3. For epic, see Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979; 2nd ed., with new introduction, 1999) 9–11 (also p. vii in the new introduction). For drama, see Albert Henrichs, “The Tomb of Aias and the Prospect of hero Cult in Sophokles,” *Classical Antiquity* 12 (1993) 165–180. In Homeric usage, a key word for implicitly referring to the cult of a hero is *sēma*, meaning, ‘sign, signal’ and ‘tomb [of a hero]’: see Nagy pp. 340–43; cf. Henrichs pp. 171–72.

[[back](#)] 4. Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” in *MHTIC. Revue d’anthropologie du monde grec ancien* 2/2 (1987) 207–13. See also Deborah Boedeker, “Protesilaos and the End of Herodotus’ *Histories*,” *Classical Antiquity* 7/1 (1988) 30–48.

[[back](#)] 5. This point about the inherent mysticism of hero cults is relevant to the two articles cited in the previous note. Both these articles concern references to hero cults in Herodotus, but they differ in emphasis and in lines of interpretation. Whereas Boedeker (1988) studies Herodotus’ use of a traditional story about the cult hero Protesilaos as it relates to the narrative ending of the *Histories*, I concentrate on Herodotus’ use of the traditional language inherent in this story (as signaled by such words as *sēmainein*, *oikos*, etc.); this language, I argue, conveys not only the mystical agenda of hero cult but also the “subtext” of the entire narration of the *Histories*, ending and all. This argument is elaborated in Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 268–73.

[[back](#)] 6. See again Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos”; also *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 270–271, with further references.

[[back](#)] 7. Alan B. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II* (vol. 2; Leiden: Brill, 1976) 18.

[[back](#)] 8. Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” p. 210; = *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 270.

[[back](#)] 9. Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” p. 210; = *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 271. For more on the concept of the cult hero as revenant, see Nagy, “Theognis and Megara: A Poet’s Vision of His City,” *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the polis* (ed. Thomas J. Figueira and Gregory Nagy; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) 22–81, especially pp. 76–81 (a subsection entitled “The Starving Revenant”). For another instance of a narrative featuring a *tarikhos* ‘preserved fish’ that comes back to life, see the Alexander Romance (ca. third century CE) 2.39.12: here the dead fish is washed in the Water of Life in the Land of the Blessed (Makares), and it *epsukhōthē* ‘recovered its psyche’; on the relevance of this theme to the official Ptolemaic propaganda about the mummy of Alexander the Great, see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* pp. 271–272.

[[back](#)] 10. Nagy, “*sēma* and *Noēsis*: Some Illustrations,” *Arethusa* 16 (1983) 35–55, rewritten as Ch.8 of Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 202–222 (“*sēma* and *Noēsis*: The hero’s Tomb and the ‘Reading’ of Symbols in Homer and Hesiod”). Note too the mysticism surrounding the funerals of heroes, as discussed in Nagy, “On the Death of Sarpedon,” *Approaches to Homer* (ed. Cynthia W. Shelmerdine and Carl A. Rubino; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983) 189–217, rewritten as part of Ch.5 of *Greek Mythology and Poetics* pp. 122–142 (“The Death of Sarpedon and the Question of Homeric Uniqueness”). For a most valuable survey of ancient testimony concerning the tombs of cult heroes, see the book of Brelich (n. 1 above), pp. 80–90. See also Jeffrey Rusten, “*Geitōn hērōs*: Pindar’s Prayer to Heracles (N. 7.86–101) and Popular Religion,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 87 (1983) 289–297.

[[back](#)] 11. Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* pp. 233–236.

[[back](#)] 12. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* pp. p. 240–1, 261, 329–30. For a different interpretation of the ending of Herodotus' *Histories*, see Carolyn Dewald, "Wanton Kings, Pickled Heroes, and Gnostic Founding Fathers: Strategies of Meaning at the End of Herodotus' *Histories*," in *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (ed. Deborah H. Roberts, Francis M. Dunn, and Don Fowler; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 62–82, especially p. 67 (where she refers to the article of Boedeker, "Protesilaos and the End of Herodotus' *Histories*" [see n. 3 above]).

[[back](#)] 13. Nagy, "The Sign of Protesilaos," p. 213; = *Pindar's Homer*, p. 273. On the *sēma* of Protesilaos in the sense of 'tomb', see Philostratus, *Heroikos* 9.3.

[[back](#)] 14. On Protesilaos as a mystical cult hero, see Brelich p. 198; for other heroes, see pp. 118–123. The sense of mystery is neatly encoded in this observation of the worshipper, as portrayed by Philostratus: you cannot even see the cult hero Protesilaos in the act of actually consuming the offerings left for him, since it all happens *thatton ē katamusai* 'quicker than blinking' (*Heroikos* 11.9). With reference to this expression, involving *katamuein* 'blink', I draw special attention to the semantic relationship of the basic word *muein* 'have the eyes / mouth closed' to derivative words like *mustērion* 'mystery'; see Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* (n. 4) 32.

[[back](#)] 15. Agamedes was the brother of Trophonios. In the myth that corresponds to the ritual being described, Agamedes dies when the two brothers are buried alive, while Trophonios escapes with his life; later, Trophonios experiences the mystical process of engulfment by the earth: Pausanias 9.37.5–7.

[[back](#)] 16. "Hermae" is the plural of "Hermes."

[[back](#)] 17. According to this mentality of sacred metonymy, the local earth of the cult hero can be trodden only by local footwear.

[[back](#)] 18. Note that Pausanias considers the hero in the afterlife to be a *theos* ‘god’. There is a comparable reference to Protesilaos in Herodotus *Histories* 9.120.3: here the quoted words of the non-Greek express the idea that he has finally recognized the power of the cult hero, and in this context he now refers to Protesilaos as a *theos*. All this is not to say that the hero is some kind of “faded god”; rather, in terms of the hero cult, the hero becomes a *theos* when he is immortalized after death.

[[back](#)] 19. It is relevant to note the suggestive use of the word *pathos* ‘experience’ in an earlier context: ‘He himself [Protesilaos] does not speak about his own experiences [*pathē*]’ (*Heroikos* 2.9). The speaker goes on to say that the *aporrhēton* ‘sacred secret’ belongs to the *moirai* ‘Fates’ (2.11). In the formulaic language of epic diction, the name *Prōtesi-lāos* seems to be associated with the word *prōtos* ‘first’, in the sense that this hero was the first Achaean to die at Troy (*Iliad* 2.702: *prōtistos*). But the name seems also to be associated with the root of *pe-prō-tai* ‘it is fated’ (as in *Iliad* 18.329), in that Protesilaos is linked with traditional epic narratives about the fate of the Achaean *lāos* or ‘people’ (Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* [n. 2] 70). A turning point in the plot of the *Iliad* is the moment when the fire of Hektor reaches the ships of the Achaeans, and here the narrative focus centers on the ship of Protesilaos himself (*Iliad* 15.704–705; 716–718; cf. also 16.286). This same precise moment is figured as a turning point for the very destiny of all Hellenes as descendants of the epic Achaeans, in that the *Iliad* equates the threat of destruction for the Achaeans’ ships with the threat of extinction for the Hellenes that are yet to be (Nagy [n. 2] 335–337).

[[back](#)] 20. Such a traditional metonymy depends on a pre-existing traditional metaphor that pictures an interchangeability between breath and wind, on which see Nagy, “As the World Runs out of Breath:

Metaphorical Perspectives on the Heavens and the Atmosphere in the Ancient World,” in Jill Ker Conway, Kenneth Keniston, and Leo Marx, eds., *Earth, Air, Fire, Water: Humanistic Studies of the Environment* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999) 37–50.

[[back](#)] 21. In contexts of beautiful natural settings, the cult hero is conventionally eroticized, as here in *Heroikos* 10.2–4 and elsewhere; see especially 11.2, describing the urge of the worshipper to embrace and kiss the hero. A sense of personal intimacy is conveyed by the worshipper of the hero when he says about Protesilaos (9.7): ‘I spend time with him [*autōi gar xuneimi*], and no cult statue [*agalma*] can be sweeter [*hēdion*] than he, that one [*ekeinos*]’. The worshipper’s experience of the hero as a real person, not as a cult statue [*agalma*], is here conveyed by the deictic pronoun *ekeinos* ‘that one’, which is conventionally used to refer to a hero who appears in an epiphany (see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* [n. 4] 200–201, with special reference to Mimnermus F 14.1 W and Sappho 31.1 LP). The deixis of *ekeinos* conveys the remoteness (‘that’ not ‘this’) of the hero, even in the immediacy of his epiphany. The gap between the superhuman and the human is so great that it sets the superhuman apart from the human even in the process of attempting to bridge that gap in an epiphany. The human response is a sense of longing and yearning as experienced even during the immediacy of an epiphany. I refer again to *Heroikos* 11.2, describing the urge of the worshipper to embrace and kiss the cult hero. The convention of eroticizing this sense of longing and yearning is implicit, I further suggest, in the epic usage of *potheîn* ‘long for, yearn for’, as at *Iliad* 2.703, 709. On one level of meaning, the warriors native to Phthia long for the epic hero Protesilaos as their leader. On a deeper level, however, the reference implies the emotional response of native worshippers who are ‘yearning’ for their local cult hero in all his immanent beauty; we may compare the application of *potheîn* to Patroklos at his funeral, *Iliad* 23.16. For other Homeric examples of similar two-level references to heroes of epic / cult, see Nagy, “On the Death of Sarpedon” (n. 9), especially pp. 132–134 on the

usage of the word *dēmos* (in the sense of ‘local district’) as an index of localized cult practices.

[[back](#)] 22. On the religious mentality of equating ritual perfection with beauty itself, see in general the work of Pache (n. 1). The concept of *hōrā* as the ‘right season’ conveys the context of ritual perfection and correctness; in that sense, *hōrā* is conceived as the perfect moment of beauty, as in Philostratus, *Heroikos* 3.2, 3.5. The Modern Greek adjective derived from *hōrā*, *oréos* (*hōraios*), means ‘beautiful’. On the formal and semantic connections of *hōrā* and *Hēra* and *hērōs* (‘hero’), see Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996) 48 n. 79: heroes become ‘seasonal’ after they die and achieve mystical immortalization, but they are ‘unseasonal’ during their own lifetime in the heroic age (thus for example Achilles while he is alive in his own epic narrative is described as *pan-a-hōrios* ‘the most unseasonal of them all’ in *Iliad* 24.540). The formal connections between *hōrā* and hero cult are evident in *Heroikos* 18.2–3, a passage that describes in explicit terms the ritually correct times (*hōrai*) for slaughtering herd animals as sacrifices to cult heroes; in this particular context, diseases afflicting herd animals are said to be caused by an angry Ajax, *in his capacity as a cult hero*. In this context, such a belief is linked to the myth about the ritually incorrect slaughter of herd animals by Ajax (as dramatized, for example, in Sophocles’ *Ajax*).

[[back](#)] 23. On the “iatric” function of cult heroes, see in general Brelich (n. 1) 113–118. Cult heroes, when they feel benign, will cure illnesses afflicting humans, animals, and plants—just as they will inflict these same illnesses when they feel malign (see the previous note). On the *phrikē* or sacred ‘frisson’ induced by a cult-hero’s presence, see *Heroikos* 6.4, 8.11, 18.4, etc.

[[back](#)] 24. See also *Heroikos* 14.4: Protesilaos is an ‘advisor’ *sumboulos* ‘advisor’ to athletes who cultivate him (cf. 15.5: Protesilaos is said to give

oracular advice, *khṛēsai*, to an athlete who consults him on how to win). Already in Homeric poetry, we see implicit references to consultations of cult heroes: in *Iliad* 10.415, for example, Hektor *boulas bouleuei* ‘plans his plans’ at the *sēma* ‘tomb’ of Ilos, a stylized cult hero of Ilion.

[[back](#)] 25. Signals of initiation, such as ritual silence and ritual whispering, can be formalized as mystical names of cult heroes, as in the case of *Sigēlos* [‘The Silent One’] and *Psithuros* [‘The Whisperer’] respectively; see Brelich (n. 1) 157.

[[back](#)] 26. Richard P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) xiv.

[[back](#)] 27. Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 208; at p. 207, Reynolds quotes the formulation of Martin, cited here in the previous note, as a heuristic paradigm for his own ethnographic fieldwork.

[[back](#)] 28. For a particularly valuable collection of examples, see Stuart H. Blackburn, Peter J. Claus, Joyce B. Flueckiger, and Susan S. Wadley, eds., *Oral Epics in India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); see especially Peter J. Claus, “Behind the Text: Performance and Ideology in a Tulu Oral Tradition,” pp. 55–74. At p. 60, Claus notes: “In his performance the possessed priest must not only recite Kordabbu’s story, but also assume his character and dramatically portray his exploits for several hours on end.”

[[back](#)] 29. Claus (see the previous note) 74, who adds: “Accompanying these transitions are shifts in verbal style: from the third person pronominal referent, to the second, to the first. There are also changes in the behavior of the performers and the audience.” In this comparative context, it is relevant to reconsider Philostratus, *Heroikos* 12.3, where

Protesilaos *epaineî* ‘confirms’ the words spoken by Homer ‘to’ (*es*) himself, not ‘about’ himself. The implication of *epaineî* is that Protesilaos ‘confirms’ *Iliad* 2.695–709, the short narrative about his epic deeds at Troy, by way of *re-performing* these Homeric verses. On the poetics of authentication-by-reperformance, as implied by the verb *epaineîn*, see the comments on the use of this word by Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 102, at p. 129 n. 16 of Nagy, “Homer and Plato at the Panathenaia: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives,” *Contextualizing Classics: Ideology, Performance, Dialogue. Essays in Honor of John J. Peradotto* (eds. Thomas M. Falkner, Nancy Felson, David Konstan; Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) 123–150; recast in Nagy, *Plato’s Rhapsody and Homer’s Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival in Classical Athens* (Cambridge MA and Athens: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2002) ch. 1.

[[back](#)] 30. The anecdote is entitled *Dofallsigud Tána Bó Cuailnge* and was published at pp. 433–434 of Heinrich Zimmer, “Keltische Studien,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 28 (1887) 417–689. It is taken from the *Book of Leinster* (twelfth century), on which see the next note.

[[back](#)] 31. There are two main surviving recensions of the *Táin*, as attested in two manuscript families: (1) the *Book of the Dun Cow* (*Lebor na hUidre*, twelfth century CE) and the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (fourteenth century) and (2) the *Book of Leinster* (twelfth century). For a translation, see Thomas Kinsella *The Táin: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[[back](#)] 32. On the concept of “charter myth,” see especially p. 5 of Edmund R. Leach, “Critical Introduction” to M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij, *Myth* (translated by Mary P. Coote; Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1982) 1–20.

[[back](#)] 33. There is a translation provided by Kinsella, pp. 1–2.

[[back](#)] 34. Kinsella p. 1. The concept of a *blog* ‘fragment’ of a corpus that has disintegrated is a traditional theme found in the charter myths of many cultures; for a brief survey, see Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (n. 21) 70–74.

[[back](#)] 35. Kinsella p. 1. We may compare the use of the word *kolōnos* at *Heroikos* 9.1, which I propose to translate as ‘landmark’; in this context, it marks the mound, surrounded by elm-trees, that ‘extends over’ (*epēkhei*) the body of the cult hero Protesilaos at Elaious in the Chersonesus. (The expression *kolōnos lithōn*, as in Herodotus 4.92, suggests the *ad hoc* translation ‘mound of stones’.) At *Heroikos* 51.12, *kolōnos* designates the mound that the Achaeans built (the verb here, *ageirein*, suggests a piling of stones) over the bodies of Achilles and Patroklos, situated on a headland overlooking the Hellespont (thus facing the mound of Protesilaos on the other side of the strait); at 53.10–11, *kolōnos* refers, again, to the tomb of Achilles, and here the word is used synonymously with *sēma* (53.11). In Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, the place-name Kolōnos refers to a sacred grove (690, 889) where Oedipus’ body is destined to receive an *oikos*, that is, an ‘abode’ befitting a cult hero (627; on this context of *oikos*, see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* [n. 4] 269). There is a metonymy implicit in the name: *kolōnos* as a landmark becomes, by extension, the name of the whole sacred grove—and, by further extension, the name of the whole deme of Attica in which the grove is situated. Moreover, the landmark is associated with a stone called the *Thorikios petros* (1595), sacred to Poseidon, which marks the last place where Oedipus is to be seen before he is mystically engulfed into the earth. As I argue elsewhere, the metonymy extends even further: the inherited imagery of the *Thorikios petros* as a mystical ‘white rock’ becomes coextensive with the description of Colonus itself as a white rock shining from afar (690: *argēs*); see Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1990) 231. Finally, we come to the ultimate metonymy, perhaps: in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*,

Colonus is personified as a cult-hero, the mysterious *Kolōnos* (59; he is described as *hippotēs* ‘horseman’). We may compare the metonymy of incantation in the *Táin*: Muirgen sings to the gravestone ‘as though it were Fergus himself,’ and then the hero Fergus materializes from the dead.

[[back](#)] 36. Kinsella pp. 1-2. The point of this charter myth, then, is that the corpus of the *Táin* is reintegrated in performance, and thus the “lost book” is finally recovered, even resurrected. See Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (n. 21) 70, following especially pp. 284 and 289 of the discussion in Joseph F. Nagy, “Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative,” *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986) 272-301. On traditional metaphors about a book (or a library of books) as a corpus destined for resurrection, see pp. 196-198 of Nagy, “The Library of Pergamon as a Classical Model,” *Pergamon: Citadel of the Gods* (ed. Helmut Koester), *Harvard Theological Studies* 46 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1998) 185-232.

[[back](#)] 37. Nagy, Gregory. 2013. *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Additional Selections from Ancient Greek and Other Texts

Translated by Gregory Nagy

Bacchylides *Ode* 13 lines 61–63

[...] the blossoms [*anthea*] nurture a fame *doxa*] that is *polu-* *phantos* (made visible [*phainein*] to many) in the recircling of time [*aiōn*]*—*a fame meant for only a few mortals, lasting forever [*aiei*].

Bacchylides *Ode* 13 lines 63–66

And when the dark blue cloud of death covers over these few [= victors], what gets left behind is ₆₅ an undying glory [*kleos*] for what they did so well, in accord with a destiny [*aisa*] that cannot be dislodged.

CPG I p. 19.6–11

more barren [*a-karpos*] than the Gardens of Adonis

“pseudo-” Demosthenes 61.28

When the [chariot] teams had started and some had rushed ahead while some were being reined in, you, prevailing over both [the faster and the slower chariot teams], first one and then the other, [surpassing each chariot team] in a way that was most suited [for each situation], seized the victory, winning that envied garland in such a way that, even though it was glorious enough to win, it seemed even more glorious and dazzling that you came out of it safely. For when the chariot of your opponents was speeding toward [*enantion*] you and everyone thought that the momentum of their horses could not be resisted, you, aware that some [runners], even when no danger threatens, become overanxious for their own safety, not only did not lose your head or your nerve, but by

your courage overcame the impetus of their [chariot] team and by your speed [as a runner] passed even those contenders [= the other runners] whose luck had not yet had any setbacks.

Dio of Prusa 12.60–61

Because of their attraction to the divine unknown [*daimonion*], all humans have a powerful erotic desire [*erōs*] to worship [*timân*] and to take care of [*therapeuein*] the divinity [*theion*] that they do know, by being up close to it and near it, as they approach it and try to touch it in an act of persuasion, and they sacrifice to it and offer it garlands. Quite simply, they are like disconnected [*nēpioi*] children who have been torn away from their father or mother and who, feeling a terrific urge [*himeros*] and longing [*pothos*], often reach out their hands while they are dreaming, in the direction of their parents who are not there, so also are humans in their relationship with the gods, loving them as they do, and justifiably so, because the gods do good things for them and have an affinity with them. And, in their love for the gods, humans strive in all possible ways to be with them and in their company.

Euripides *Herakles* 687–695

⁶⁸⁷ A paean [*paiān*] do the Delian Maidens ⁶⁸⁸ sing as a hymn [*humnos*] around the temple gates, ⁶⁸⁹ singing [Apollo] the true child of Leto ⁶⁹⁰ as they swirl, and they have such a beautiful chorus [*khōros*] [of singers and dancers]. ⁶⁹¹ I too, singing paeans [*paiānes*] at your palace, ⁶⁹² aged singer that I am, like a swan [*kuknos*], ⁶⁹³ from my graybearded throat, ⁶⁹⁴ will send forth a cry. For whatever is real ⁶⁹⁵ has a place to stay in my hymns [*humnoi*].

Heraclitus 22 B 93 DK, as quoted by Plutarch *On the oracular pronouncements of the Pythia* 404d

The Lord [= Apollo], whose oracle [*manteíon*] is in Delphi, neither says [*legei*] nor conceals [*kruptei*]: he indicates [*sēmainei*].

Homeric Hymn to Herakles 4–6

⁴ He [= Hēraklēs] used to travel all over the boundless earth and all over the sea, ⁵ veering from his path and wandering off, all because of the missions assigned to him by Eurystheus the king. ⁶ He [= Hēraklēs] performed many reckless things on his own, and he suffered many such things in return.

Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi XXIV 5 I lines 15–16

And for you [= the divinity], here are these ritual substitutes [*tarpalliūs*] |
... And may they die, but I will not die.

Scholia for Lycophron 766

Others say that, in the vicinity of the rocks at Athenian Colonus [*Kolōnos*], he [Poseidon], falling asleep, had an emission of semen, and a horse named *Skuphios* came out, who is also named *Skīrōnitēs*.

Matthew 22:14

“Many are called but few are chosen.”

Plutarch Life of Nikias 3.5–7

Nikias is remembered for his ambitious accomplishments with regard to Delos—accomplishments most spectacular in all their splendor and most worthy of the gods in all their magnificence. Here is an example. The choral groups [*khoroi*] that cities used to send [to Delos] for the performances of songs sacred to the god (Apollo) used to sail in [to the

harbor of Delos] in a haphazard fashion, and the crowds that would gather to greet the ship used to start right away to call on the performers to start singing their song. There was no coordination, since the performers were still in the process of disembarking in a rushed and disorganized way, and they were still putting on their garlands and changing into their costumes. But when he [= Nikias] was in charge of the sacred voyage [*theōriā*] [to Delos], he first took a side trip to the island of Rheneia, bringing with him the choral group [*khoros*] and the sacrificial offerings [*hiereia*] and all the rest of the equipment. And he brought with him a bridge that had been made in advance, back in Athens, to fit the present occasion, and this bridge was most splendidly adorned with golden fixtures, with dyed colors, with garlands, with tapestries. Overnight, he took this bridge and spanned with it the strait between Rheneia and Delos—not a very great distance. ^{3.6} Then, come daylight, he led the procession in honor of the god and brought across the bridge to their destination the performers of the choral group [*khoros*], who were outfitted most magnificently and were all along performing their song. ^{3.7} Then, after the sacrifice [*thusiā*] and after the competition [*agōn*] and after the feasting, he set up as a dedication to the god the [famous] bronze palm tree.

“An die Musik” (“To Music”) by Franz Schubert (D. 547 Op. 88 No. 4). Text by Franz von Schober

You, O sacred art, how often, in hours that were gray,
while I was caught up in the savage cycle of life,
you brought back my heart to warm love, reigniting it,
and spirited me off to a better world.
Often has a sigh drifted from your harp—
a sweet and holy chord coming from you,
revealing from the heavens a glimpse of better times
You, O sacred art, I thank you for this.

Giorgos Seferis, 'Arnisi' (Ἄρνηση, from the collection Στροφή, 1931)

At the shoreline the secret one | and white like a dove | we thirsted at noon. | But the water was salty. || On the sand, golden-blond, | we wrote down her name. | Beautiful, the way the sea breeze exhaled, | and the writing was wiped out. || With what heart, with what breath, | what longings and what passion, | we seized our life—no, wrong! | —and we changed life.

Theophrastus *About the aetiologies of plants* 2.16.8

For almond trees, poor soil [is preferable], for if the soil is deep and rich, the trees experience an exuberance [*hubris*] because of all the good nutrition, and they stop bearing fruit [*a-karpeîn*].

Theophrastus *About the aetiologies of plants* 3.1.5

The white lupin [shrub] becomes *a-karpos* [= stops bearing *karpos*, 'fruit'] when it gets wood-crazy, as it were, and behaves with exuberance [*hubris*].

Theophrastus *Research about plants* 2.7.7

In Arcadia they have an expression 'straightening [*euthunein*] the sorbapple tree [*oa*]'. There are many such trees in their region. And they say that, when this ['straightening'] happens to the trees, those that have not been bearing fruit will now start to bear fruit, and those that bear fruit that will not ripen [on the tree] will now have fruit that ripens, and ripens beautifully.

Core Vocabulary of Greek Terms

Depending on context, adjectives in *-os* (masculine), may be given with other endings: *-ē* (feminine), *-on* (neuter), *-oi* (masculine plural), *-ai* (feminine plural), *-a* (neuter plural).

agathos ‘good, noble’

agōn, plural *agōnes* ‘coming together; competition (antagonism); ordeal (agony); bringing together, assembly’

agorā, plural *agorai* ‘public assembly, place of public assembly’

aidōs ‘shame, sense of shame; sense of respect for others; honorableness; modesty’

ainos ‘authoritative utterance for and by a social group; praise; fable’;

ainigma ‘riddle’

aitios ‘responsible, guilty’; *aitiā* ‘responsibility, guilt; cause, case’

akhos ‘grief, public expression of grief by way of lamentation or keening; sorrow (synonym of *penthos*)’

alēthēs (adjective) ‘true, true things’; *alētheia* (noun) ‘truth’

aphthito- ‘imperishable, unfailing, unwilting’

aretē ‘striving for a noble goal, for high ideals; noble goal, high ideals, merit’

aristos ‘best’, superlative of *agathos*; *aristeiā*: designates the hero’s great epic moments that demonstrate his being *aristos*

atē, plural *atai* ‘aberration, derangement, veering off-course; disaster; punishment for disaster’

āthlos (*aethlos*) ‘contest, ordeal; competition; prize’; *āthlētēs* ‘athlete’

biā (*biē* in the language of Homeric poetry) ‘force, violence’

daimōn, plural *daimones* ‘superhuman force (= unspecified god or hero) intervening in human life’; *eudaimoniā* ‘state of being blessed with a good *daimōn*’

daimonion ‘a superhuman thing’

dēmos, plural *dēmoi* ‘district, population of a district; community, locale’

dikē, plural *dikai* ‘judgment (short-range); justice (long-range)’; *dikaio* ‘just’

ekhthros ‘enemy [within the community], non-*philos*’

epos, plural *epea* ‘word(s) said, utterance, poetic utterance’

eris ‘strife, conflict’

esthlos ‘genuine, good, noble’; synonym of *agathos*

eudaimoniā See *daimōn*

genos ‘stock (“breeding”); generating [of something or someone]; generation’

hērōs, plural *hērōes* ‘hero’

hēsukhos ‘serene’; *hēsukhiā* ‘state of being *hēsukhos*’

hieros ‘sacred, holy’

hōrā, plural *hōrai* ‘season, seasonality, the right time, the perfect time; beauty’

hubris ‘outrage’; the opposite of *dikē*

kakos ‘bad, evil, base, worthless, ignoble’; *kakotēs* ‘state of being *kakos*; debasement’

kamatos ‘ordeal, labor, pain’

kerdos, plural *kerdea* ‘gain, profit; desire for gain; craft employed for gain; craftiness; craft’

kharis, plural *kharites* ‘reciprocity, give-and-take, reciprocal relationship; initiation of reciprocal relationship; the pleasure or beauty derived from reciprocity, from a reciprocal relationship; gratification; grace, gracefulness; favor, favorableness; gratitude; for the sake of’

khoros ‘chorus’ = ‘group of singers/dancers’

kleos, plural *klea* ‘glory, fame (especially as conferred by poetry or song); that which is heard’

kolōnos ‘tumulus, elevation in a local landscape’

koros ‘being satiated; being insatiable’

kosmos ‘arrangement, order, law and order, the social order, the universal order; cosmic order, orderliness of costume, hairdo; orderliness of group or society, of cosmos, of song; ritual adornments’

krinein ‘sort out, separate, decide, judge, make distinctions, interpret’

lyssa [or, more accurately, *lussa*] ‘rage, fury, frenzy’. This word is related to *lykos* ‘wolf’ [or, more accurately, *lukos*]; so the image is one of wolf-like rage.

mantis ‘seer, prophet’

memnēmai ‘I remember, I have total recall’

mēnis ‘superhuman anger’

menos ‘power, life-force, activation’ (divinely infused into cosmic forces, like fire and wind, or into heroes); a partial synonym of *thūmos*; a partial synonym of *mēnis*

mētis ‘artifice, stratagem, cunning intelligence’

miasma ‘pollution’; verb *miainein* ‘to pollute’

moira, plural *moirai* ‘portion; portion of meat divided at a sacrifice; lot in life, fate, destiny’

mūthos ‘special speech; special utterance; myth; words, wording, something said for the record’

nemesis indicates the process whereby everyone gets what he or she deserves

nēpios, plural *nēpioi* ‘disconnected’ (the disconnection can be mental, moral, or emotional); on this meaning, see Edmunds 1990

nomos, plural *nomoi* ‘local custom; customary law; law’

noos ‘mind, thinking; perception; intuition; consciousness’; also, this word stands for the principle that reintegrates *thūmos* (or *menos*) and *psūkhē* after death

nostos ‘return, homecoming; song about homecoming; return to light and life’

oikos ‘house, dwelling, abode; resting place of cult hero; family line’; verb *oikein* ‘have a dwelling’

olbios ‘blessed, blissful; fortunate’; *olbos* ‘bliss’ (ordinarily pictured as material security)

paskhein ‘suffer, experience, be treated [badly or well]’; *pathos* ‘suffering, experience’

penthos ‘grief, public expression of grief by way of lamentation or keening’

philos ‘friend’ (noun); ‘dear, near-and-dear, belonging to self’ (adjective);

philotēs or *philiā* ‘the state of being *philos*’

phrēn, plural *phrenes*: physical localization of the *thūmos*

polis ‘city, city-state’

ponos ‘ordeal, labor, pain’

pontos ‘sea’ (‘crossing’)

pothos ‘longing, yearning, desire’; a variant form is *pothē*, with the same meaning; the verb derived from this noun is *potheîn* ‘long for, yearn for, desire’

psūkhē, plural *psūkhai*: synonym of *thūmos* (or *menos*) at the moment of death; essence of life while one is alive; conveyor of identity while one is dead

sēma, plural *sēmata* ‘sign, signal, symbol; tomb’;

sēmainein (verb) ‘mean something, indicate something by way of a *sēma*’

sophos ‘skilled, skilled in understanding special language’; *sophiā* ‘being *sophos*’

sōphrōn ‘moderate, balanced, with equilibrium’; *sōphrosunē* ‘being *sōphrōn*’

sōtēr ‘savior’ (either ‘bringing to safety’ or, mystically, ‘bringing back to life’); *sōtēriā* ‘safety, salvation’; *sōzein* (verb) ‘save; be a *sōtēr* (for someone)’

stasis ‘division in a group; strife; division [= part of an organization, like a chorus]; dancing pose’

telos ‘end, ending, final moment; goal, completion, fulfillment; coming full circle, rounding out; successfully passing through an ordeal; initiation; ritual, rite’

themis, plural *themistes* ‘something divinely ordained or cosmically ordained; cosmic law’

theōriā ‘sacred journey; ritualized journey undertaken for the purpose of achieving a sacralized vision’

therapōn, plural *therapontes* ‘attendant; ritual substitute’

thūmos ‘heart, spirit’ (designates realm of consciousness, of rational and emotional functions); depending on context can be translated as either ‘mind’ (thinking) or ‘heart’ (feeling)

tīmē, plural *tīmai* ‘honor; honor paid to a superhuman force by way of cult’

turannos, plural *turannoi* (Lydian word for ‘king’): ‘king’ (from the viewpoint of most Greek dynasties); ‘unconstitutional ruler’ (from the viewpoint of Greek democracy)

xenos, plural *xenoi* ‘stranger who should be treated like a guest by a host, or like a host by a guest; foreigner; *xeniā* ‘reciprocal relationship between *xenoi*’; when the rules of *xeniā* do not work, a *xenos* risks defaulting to the status of simply stranger