A detailed classical illustration at the top of the page depicts a scene from the Odyssey. A figure, presumably Odysseus, is being hoisted over the side of a dark wooden ship by several crew members. The ship is on choppy blue waves. In the background, a rocky shore with trees and a small building is visible under a clear sky.

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# THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER

*Translated and with an introduction by*

richmond lattimore

# **The Odyssey of Homer**

**Translated with an introduction by**

**Richmond Lattimore**

 HarperCollins e-books



## **Dedication**

To Royal Nemiah

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# **Introduction**

## The Outline of The Odyssey

The Odyssey as we have it is an epic of over twelve thousand lines. It has been divided, like the *Iliad* and probably at the same time, into twenty-four books. Book number and line number are the standard terms of reference.

The contents can be, very broadly, divided as follows:

The Telemachy or Adventures of Telemachos, i-iv  
The Homecoming of Odysseus, v-viii and xiii.1-187  
The Great Wanderings, ix-xii  
Odysseus on Ithaka, xiii.187-xxiv.548.

We can also distinguish a Proem, Book i.1-10, and an End of the *Odyssey*, all of Book xxiv. This division is for convenience; it is arbitrary and not water-tight, but gives us terms to work with.<sup>1</sup>

I begin by summarizing the bare facts of the story. Odysseus spent ten years fighting at Troy, and another ten years getting home. During this time, none of his family knew what had happened to him, and he lost all his ships, all his men, and the spoils from Troy. After ten years, or in the tenth year, he was set down in his own country, alone and secretly, though with a new set of possessions, by the Phaiakians of Scheria, who were the last people he visited on his wanderings.

When he took ship for Troy, Odysseus left behind his wife, Penelope, and his infant son, Telemachos. A few years before his return, the young bachelors of Odysseus' kingdom, Ithaka and the surrounding islands, began paying court to Penelope (ii.89-90). She was accomplished and clever, still beautiful, an heiress and presumably a widow; but she clung to the hope that Odysseus might come back, and held them off, without ever saying positively that she would never marry again.

The suitors made themselves at home as uninvited guests in the palace of Odysseus. Shortly before the return of Odysseus, Telemachos visited the mainland in search of news about his father. He heard from Menelaos that Odysseus was alive but detained without means of return on the island of Kalypso (iv.555-560). Telemachos returned to Ithaka. The suitors set an ambush, meaning to murder him, but he eluded them and reached Ithaka just after his father arrived.

The voyage of Telemachos, the arrival of Odysseus, and the recognition and

reunion of father and son, were all supervised by Athene.

Father and son plotted the destruction of the suitors. Odysseus entered his own house unrecognized, mingled with the suitors and talked with Penelope. He and Telemachos contrived to catch them unarmed and with the help of two loyal serving men (and of course Athene) they slaughtered all 108 suitors. Penelope knew nothing of the plot; Odysseus revealed himself to her after the fighting was over. The relatives of the dead suitors attacked the heroes on the farm of Laertes, father of Odysseus, and a battle began, but it was ended by Zeus and Athene, who patched up a hasty reconciliation.

## The Telemachy

The *Odyssey*, like the *Iliad*, begins in the tenth year of the story's chief action, with events nearing their climax and final solution. We begin with a very rapid location of Odysseus in place, time, and stage in his career, but then (via the councils of the gods concerning his immediate fate) pass to Telemachos, with Athene's visit which sends him off on his journey. It is only after Telemachos has begun his visit in Sparta, and heard from Menelaos that his father is alive, and after the suitors have set their trap, that we return directly to Odysseus himself. We then follow Odysseus for the rest of the *Odyssey*. The poet now tells us of Odysseus' journey to Scheria and his sojourn there; and he makes Odysseus himself recount to the Phaiakians his previous wanderings (The Great Wanderings). They then convey him to Ithaka, and with his homecoming the tale of the wanderings of Odysseus joins on to the tale of Odysseus on Ithaka.

Thus in two respects the narrative order of the poem disagrees with the chronological order of the story. The early and chief wanderings of Odysseus are told by throwback narrative toward the middle of the poem; and the wanderings of Telemachos come first.

The joins or transitions from theme to theme are noteworthy. After the poet has located Odysseus in time and space, the gods consider the question. Athene urges the homecoming of Odysseus. Zeus proclaims that Athene shall have her way; Odysseus may now start for home. Athene answers (i.81-95)

*Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty,  
if in truth this is pleasing to the blessed immortals,  
that Odysseus of the many designs shall return home, then  
let us dispatch Hermes, the guide, the slayer of Argos,  
to the island of Ogygia, so that with all speed  
he may announce to the lovely-haired nymph our absolute purpose,  
the homecoming of enduring Odysseus, that he shall come back.  
But I shall make my way to Ithaka, so that I may stir up  
his son a little, and put some confidence in him  
to summon into assembly the flowing-haired Achaians,  
and make a statement to all the suitors, who now forever  
slaughter his crowding sheep and lumbering horn-curved cattle;  
and I will convey him into Sparta and to sandy Pylos  
to ask after his dear father's homecoming, if he can hear something,*

*and so that among people he may win a good reputation.*

This excellently motivates the Telemachy but it does perforce leave Odysseus stranded, and after the major part of the Telemachy, at the opening of Book v, the return to Odysseus shows more strain than the departure from him did. Athene has been to Ithaka, and to Pylos with Telemachos. She left the court of Nestor, presumably for Olympos (iii.371). Now she has to start all over again, almost as if the case of Odysseus had never come up, to complain of his sorrows; but ends with the perils of Telemachos; and Zeus seems to have to remind her that she herself planned everything that has just been happening (v.23). Hermes, who has been waiting for this for four books and five days, can at last get off (i.84; v.28) and the wanderings of Odysseus may be resumed.

The obviousness of the joins and the bulk of material not specifically related to Odysseus in Books iii-iv, his absence from Books i-ii, have suggested that the Telemachy was an independent poem which was, at some stage, incorporated more or less whole in the *Odyssey*.<sup>2</sup> This may be true, and there is no way to prove that it is not true. But it is also possible that the poet (or poets)<sup>3</sup> of the *Odyssey*, in the form in which we have it, deliberately developed this diversion, never meaning to take up Odysseus until he had first established Telemachos; that he so much desired to do this that he was willing to accept the necessary awkwardnesses of narrative joining in which it would involve him.

Why so? Let us consider the effects gained for the total poem from having the Telemachy with its present contents in its present place.

Odysseus in the *Iliad* was a great man, but his magnitude is increased by the flattering mentions of him by Nestor (iii.120-123), Menelaos (iv.333-346), and Athene herself (i.255-256 with 265-266). It is increased still more by the evident need for him felt by his family and friends, concisely stated by Athene (i.253-254): "How great your need is now of the absent Odysseus," and everywhere apparent.

Through Nestor and Menelaos, also, the *Odyssey* is secured in its place among the *Nostoi*,<sup>4</sup> the homecomings of the Achaians. The general character of the *Nostoi* is succinctly stated by Nestor (iii.130-135)

*But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam,  
and were going away in our ships, and the god scattered the Achaians,  
then Zeus in his mind devised a sorry homecoming  
for the Argives, since not all were considerate and righteous;  
therefore many of them found a bad way home, because of  
the ruinous anger of the Gray-eyed One, whose father is mighty.*

The sufferings of two great heroes, by long wandering away from home (Menelaos) and by treachery and disaster on arrival (Agamemnon), both well point up the case of Odysseus in two of its different aspects. For an audience well versed in the tale of Troy, or the *Iliad*, interest is added in a second viewing of some old favorites: Nestor, Helen, Menelaos, all very like themselves in the *Iliad*. Without planning some such excursus as the Telemachy, the poet could not have worked them in without a great deal more awkwardness than it has, in fact, cost him.

Another point gained through the Telemachy is the instigation to murder.

For Odysseus must end by murdering Penelope's suitors. So, it appears, the story demanded. Further, the story demanded, or the poet firmly intended, that Telemachos should assist his father in this business. The suitors are a bad lot and they have put themselves in the wrong, but we cannot assume that Homer's audience was so inured to bloodshed that they could take this altogether lightly (modern readers mostly cannot). In any case, there are numerous passages in the Telemachy which look as if they might be designed, which do in any case serve, to shore up the consciences of the avenging heroes and of their sympathizers in the story or in the audience.

Aigisthos seduced Agamemnon's wife while he was gone at Troy and murdered him on his return. Orestes murdered his father's murderer. The case may not seem quite parallel to the situation of the *Odyssey*, but Agamemnon's ghost used his story as a warning against the wife's-suitor danger (xi.441-446; 454-456); and when Athene tells Odysseus about Penelope and her suitors he immediately thinks of Agamemnon (xiii.383-385). Orestes' act seems to be taken as a precedent justifying murder when it means putting one's house in order. It is mentioned with approval by Zeus (i.35-43), and Athene specifically holds up Orestes as an example to Telemachos (i.298-300). Nestor tells Telemachos of Orestes' revenge, and immediately warns Telemachos not to stay too long away from home—once again, as if there were a specific connection (iii.306-316).

It is not only through her praise of Orestes that Athene shows, at the very outset of the *Odyssey*, that she favors, one might even say insists on, the slaughter of the suitors. She definitely tells Telemachos to do it (i.294-296). And in order that they may be the more guilty, she has apparently put the plot of ambushing Telemachos into their minds, while at the same time making sure that it must fail (v.23-24). The whole later action of the *Odyssey* is approved, authorized, encouraged by Athene.

She is carefully established in this role at the outset of the epic as we have it. This, I believe, is the chief reason why we start with the Telemachy. Here she can be cast as the fairy godmother, or guardian spirit. If the poet had begun at the

beginning of the wanderings of Odysseus, he could not have cast her in this role, because the tradition was that at this time Athene was angry with all the Achaians, including even Odysseus. So, for instance, Phemios sang of (i.326-327)

*the Achaians' bitter homecoming  
from Troy, which Pallas Athene had inflicted upon them.*

Nestor agrees, adding the wrath of Zeus (iii.130-135 quoted above).

The wrath of Athene deserves special consideration, and I shall return to it when I discuss the wanderings of Odysseus. Here it may be sufficient to say that the poet has established the position of Athene, as guardian spirit of the family, by beginning with the Telemachy.

Last of all, and most obvious of all, the Telemachy gives us Telemachos. Once Odysseus is on the scene, our attention is mainly fixed on him, but his young helper quietly maintains the character that has been built up for him, without strain or hurry, in the first four books.

I think, then, that it can be said, as objectively as is possible in such cases, that the *Odyssey* gains much from its Telemachy. The cost is the delay in bringing us, first-hand, to Odysseus and his wanderings. But did Homer count such delay as cost?

In the *Odyssey*, the poet gives us a few indications of his views about storytelling. One should not be repetitive, xii.450-453:

*Why tell the rest of  
this story again, since yesterday in your house I told it  
to you and your majestic wife? It is hateful to me  
to tell a story over again, when it has been well told.*

And well has Odysseus (Homer, that is) told his story. Thus Alkinoös, xi.366-368:

*You have  
a grace upon your words, and there is sound sense within them,  
and expertly, as a singer would do, you have told the story.*

It is storytelling they like, and they are not impatient, xi.372-376:

*Here is  
a night that is very long, it is endless. It is not time yet*

*to sleep in the palace. But go on telling your wonderful story.  
I myself could hold out until the bright dawn, if only  
you could bear to tell me, here in the palace, of your sufferings.*

“If you could only hear him,” says Eumaios to Penelope. “I had him for three nights, and he enchanted me” (xvii.512-521).

Delay, excursus, elaboration—whether by creative expansion or incorporation of by-material—is part of the technique of the epic, as opposed to chronicle. In the *Iliad*, the wrath of Achilleus is not hastened to its fulfillment; nor, in the *Odyssey*, the vengeance of Odysseus. Consider the daydream of Telemachos, how he visualizes his father's homecoming, i.115-116:

*imagining in his mind his great father, how he might come back  
and all throughout the house might cause the suitors to scatter.*

All he has to do is appear, armed, and the suitors will scatter in panic. So too Athene, i.255-256; 265-266:

*I wish he could come now to stand in the outer doorway  
of his house, wearing a helmet and carrying shield and two spears....  
I wish that such an Odysseus would come now among the suitors.  
They all would find death was quick, and marriage a painful matter.<sup>5</sup>*

Over too quickly, a tableau, not a story. How different is the actual return and slow-plotted slaying, directed by Athene herself. Delaying matter, if worthy, was, I think, welcome.

## The Wanderings of Odysseus

The wanderings themselves can be considered under four headings, as follows.

- a. The Wanderings as part of the *Nostoi*, or general homecoming of the Achaians.
  - b. The Great Wanderings, from Troy to Kalypso's isle, recounted to the Phaiakians by Odysseus himself, Books ix-xii.
  - c. The Homecoming, from Kalypso's isle to Ithaka, including the stay with the Phaiakians. This is told by the poet as narrator, not by Odysseus, and occupies Books v-viii, and xiii.1-187, being interrupted by Odysseus' account of the Great Wanderings.
  - d. The lying stories told by Odysseus when he is disguised as a tramp pretending to be a fallen noble; together with some information which Odysseus as tramp claims to have heard about the true Odysseus.
- a. The Wanderings of Odysseus are placed among the general homecomings, or *Nostoi* (the subject of a later epic) at the very outset, i.11-14:

*Then all the others, as many as fled sheer destruction,  
were at home now, having escaped the sea and the fighting.  
This one alone, longing for his wife and his homecoming,  
was detained by the queenly nymph Kalypso, bright among goddesses.*

Elsewhere in the first four books we have scattered allusions to the homecomings. They are generally characterized by Nestor's speech, iii.130-135:

*But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam,  
and were going away in our ships, and the god scattered the Achaians,  
then Zeus in his mind devised a sorry homecoming  
for the Argives, since not all were considerate nor righteous;  
therefore many of them found a bad way home, because of  
the ruinous anger of the Gray-eyed One, whose father is mighty.*

We are told of the murder of Agamemnon, the wreck and drowning of Aias Oileus, the storm battering and wanderings of Menelaos. Yet there is sometimes an odd note of inconsistency. Nestor reports that he and Diomedes came home

without mishap, and that he has heard that Neoptolemos, Philoktetes, and Idomeneus did the same.<sup>6</sup> Proteus tells Menelaos that only two chiefs perished in the homecoming (iv.496-497). This does not square very well with the “sorry homecoming” spoken of by Nestor and mentioned elsewhere, nor does Nestor’s account of the departure of Odysseus agree well with Odysseus’ own account.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that there was an early variant version of the *Nostoi*.

b. and c. The Great Wanderings, starting from Troy, take Odysseus to the Kikonians, the Lotus-Eaters, the Cyclopes, Aiolos, the Laistrygones, Circe’s isle, the Land of the Dead, the Sirens, Skylla and Charybdis, Thrinakia, and Kalypso’s isle. From the Kikonians he is driven south, off the map, and his last certainly identifiable landmark is Kythera (ix.81). After that, except for a brief sight of Ithaka (x.28-55), he wanders among marvels, and though his seas and landfalls have often been identified, all is hypothetical and nothing is secure.

Through these adventures, partly perhaps because Odysseus is telling them in his own person, the major gods appear very little. Athene does not appear at all. Responsibility for the troubled wanderings is pinned on Poseidon through the prayer of Polyphemos, his son, after his blinding (ix.528-536).

Here, as we have noted, the order in the epic narrative does not follow the chronological order. The invocation and the opening scene, before leading to the Telemachy, establishes Poseidon as the persecutor of Odysseus, i.68-79 (Zeus speaking):

*It is the earth encircler Poseidon who, ever relentless,  
nurses a grudge because of the Cyclops, whose eye he blinded;  
for Polyphemos like a god, whose power is greatest  
over all the Cyclopes. Thoësa, a nymph, was his mother,  
and she is daughter of Phorkys, lord of the barren salt water,  
who in the hollows of the caves had lain with Poseidon.  
For his sake Poseidon, shaker of the earth, although he does not  
kill Odysseus, yet drives him back from the land of his fathers.  
But come, let all of us who are here work out his homecoming,  
and see to it that he returns. Poseidon shall put away  
his anger; for all alone and against the will of the other  
immortal gods united he can accomplish nothing.*

Poseidon is Odysseus’ persecutor, just as Athene is firmly established as his protector (i.48-62).

The Telemachy follows, and then the Homecoming, which as we have seen starts with Athene taking up the case of Odysseus. She helps him against

Poseidon, who wrecks his raft and who proposes to take a final revenge on the Phaiakians for conveying him home. It looks like contrivance; at least, the result is to mitigate any tradition that the sufferings of Odysseus and the other Achaians were due to the wrath of Athene.

The hallmark of the wanderings, from Troy to home, is imaginative combination.

Except for the very beginning, known places do not figure; nor traditional characters, except in the Land of the Dead. The gods of Olympos, I have said, are not prominent. Rather, we see much of minor divinities, ill-attested outside of the *Odyssey* itself, such as Circe and Kalypso. We find monsters like Skylla and Charybdis, and the delightful but almost equally monstrous Sirens. We have mortals who are almost superhuman in one dimension or another. The Lotus-Eaters offer magic fruit (ix.92-97). The Phaiakians have their magic ships (viii.555-563), they may even have automatons (vii.91-94; 100-102),<sup>8</sup> their orchards bear fruit forever in season and out (vii.114-126), and the gods, who live near them, visit them openly without disguise (vii.201-206). The Laistrygones have supernatural strength and ferocity (x.116-124), and the normal seasons do not seem to apply in their country.

Consider also Aiolos. He lives a blissful life in a brazen tower with his six sons married to his six daughters (x.1-2) and, in flat contradiction to epic tradition elsewhere, he, a mortal, has been put by Zeus in charge of all the winds, whom he keeps tied up in a bag.

So, too, the Cyclopes of the *Odyssey* are quite different from the Cyclopes in Hesiod and elsewhere. Elsewhere they are gods; in the *Odyssey* they are mortals. Elsewhere there are three of them, and their names are Brontes, Steropes, and Arges; in the *Odyssey* they are apparently numerous, and one of them is named Polyphemos; this Polyphemos is the son of Poseidon, but elsewhere the Cyclopes are the sons of Ouranos and Gaia. Elsewhere they are smiths and builders, but in the *Odyssey* they are herdsmen, or at least Polyphemos is. Their chief and perhaps sole similarity is the single eye, and the name of Cyclops.<sup>9</sup>

Now Cyclops (*Kyklops*) means not “one-eyed” but “round-eyed.” Thus Hesiod, not content with the name, describes them as being not merely round-eyed but one-eyed, *Theogony* 142-145:

*These in all the rest of their shape were made like gods,  
but they had only one eye set in the middle of their foreheads.  
Kyklopes, Wheel-eyed, was the name given them, by reason  
of the single wheel-shaped eye that was set in their foreheads.*

Homer, on the other hand, while describing their nature and way of life, never tells us that they are one-eyed, but seems rather to assume that Polyphemos is one-eyed, or rather that we know he is. This comes up when Odysseus proposes to blind him, ix.331-333:

*Next I told the rest of the men to cast lots, to find out  
which of them must endure with me to take up the great beam  
and spin it in Cyclops' eye when sweet sleep had come over him.*

The blinding scene which follows assumes throughout that there is only one eye to deal with.

This suggests to me that Homer “borrowed” the name and the notion of Cyclops for his story and that the name Cyclops by now “meant,” that is implied, a one-eyed giant. The story itself may have been a previous folk tale, since it has many analogies;<sup>10</sup> or it may have been free invention. Be that as it may, the story of the blinding of Polyphemos the Cyclops as we have it brings Poseidon into the story. His prayer to his father (ix.526-536) causes the troubled wanderings of Odysseus, as we were told at the start (i.68-75) and elsewhere. But Odysseus at the time of the blinding was *already* lost from home; his wanderings were begun before they were caused.

The paradox seems most plausibly explained as a compromise. Homer knew and admitted the wrath of Athene (and Zeus and other gods)<sup>11</sup> which caused suffering to the Achaians, including Odysseus. But he alters it as far as he can to a situation where Athene merely acquiesces in the sufferings of Odysseus out of respect for Poseidon, whose wrath is thus emphasized.

On Ithaka, Odysseus gently complains to Athene that, while he enjoyed her patronage at Troy and among the Phaiakians, he did miss her company in between, that is, on the Great Wanderings (xiii.314-323). She ultimately answers this, xiii.339-343:

*And I never did have any doubt, but in my heart always  
knew how you would come home, having lost all of your companions.  
But, you see, I did not want to fight with my father's  
brother, Poseidon, who was holding a grudge against you  
in his heart, and because you blinded his dear son, hated you.*

Perhaps this will stand as Athene's official version.

d. In addition to the authentic wanderings of Odysseus recounted by the hero himself or by the poet, there are five false stories told by the hero about himself.

These are addressed respectively to Athene (xiii.256-286), Eumaios (xiv.191-359), the suitors (xvii.419-444), Penelope (xix. 165-202), and Laertes (xxiv.302-308). All the stories serve as answers to the standard question, spoken or unspoken, raised by the presence of a stranger (especially on an island): "Who are you and where do you come from?" All the stories involve known and identifiable places. They are meant to be plausible, and the supernatural and the marvelous elements of the wanderings find no place here.

The longest and fullest account is the second, given to Eumaios. Here Odysseus represents himself as a Cretan, a veteran of the Trojan War, who subsequently led a disastrous raid on Egypt, was spared and befriended by the Egyptian King, survived the wreck of a Phoenician ship, and came to Ithaka by way of Thesprotia. The first, third, and fourth accounts vary or repeat these themes. All the first four necessarily represent Odysseus as a former nobleman down on his luck. By the time he talks to Laertes, however, he has recovered his property and status, and the story of the fallen noble is no longer necessary. He is from Alybas, wherever that may be, and has arrived from Sikania, presumably Sicily.

The story of the raid on Egypt has attracted special attention. It reads like an account of one of the great raids by the Peoples of the Sea, attested in the annals of Egypt, but told here from the invaders' point of view.<sup>12</sup> This would tie the Homeric poems to history, and suggest that the tradition of troubled homecomings for the Achaeans might have originated in actual turbulence and wanderings after the Trojan War.

The presence of these stories in the final version of the *Odyssey* could perhaps be accounted for by the poet's desire to exploit and develop the talents of his hero, giving content to the general comment, xix.203:

*He knew how to say many false things that were like true sayings.*

But it is also possible that the lying stories, taken together, might represent a fragmentary outline of an original *Odyssey*, in which the wanderings were confined to known places in the Mediterranean: Crete, Cyprus, Egypt, Phoenicia, Thesprotia; and which the present *Odyssey* has replaced. One could thus make up a rough and imperfect series of analogies, such as, for instance:

Raid on Egypt  
Great Wanderings  
Egyptian counterattack  
Laistrygones

King of Egypt  
Circe or Kalypso  
Phoenician wreck  
Wreck of Odysseus' last ship or of the raft  
Thesprotia  
Scheria, the land of the Phaiakians:

Nothing like this can, of course, be pressed, but the lying stories in themselves emphasize the element of imagination in the *Odyssey* as we have it. By contrast to the Great Wanderings, the lying stories link rather to the *Nostoi*.

## The World of The Wanderings

The world of the Wanderings has occasioned even more controversy. Briefly, there are two extreme views. On the one, the places in the Wanderings, such as the land of the Lotus-Eaters, Circe's Isle, Scheria, and so forth, represent real places in the Mediterranean, or even out of it; or at least some of them do. On the other view, they are imaginary. Both these views seem indeed to be extreme, but it is difficult to find a middle ground.

Many identifications have been made, and the whole subject is too large and complicated to treat in detail.<sup>13</sup> It may be useful to look at a few favorite identifications. The Lotus-Eaters are regularly located on the coast of Libya (Africa), because of the sailing log, though Homer, who knows of Libya, does not use the name here. There is a strong tradition that places Polyphemos and the Cyclopes in Sicily. Skylla and Charybdis have often, despite many objections, been located in the Straits of Messina. Korkyra (now often called Corfu) claimed to be Scheria, the land of the Phaiakians.

Some of these traditions are early. Thucydides, writing at the end of the fifth century B.C., refers to legends about Cyclopes, and also Laistrygones, in Sicily, and to the Korkyraians' pride in the ancient sea fame of the Phaiakians.<sup>14</sup> Also, the traditions have survived, or have been resuscitated, and to this day near Acireale the Sicilians will show you the rocks Polyphemos threw at the ship of Odysseus,<sup>15</sup> while at Corfu your guide will point out the little island which is the Phaiakian ship turned to stone, and the bay where Odysseus encountered Nausikaa.<sup>16</sup>

Yet there are serious difficulties. Nothing in the text of the *Odyssey* indicates that the Cyclopes lived in Sicily or, in fact, on an island at all. Phaiakian Scheria does seem to be an island, far out in the sea with no land near. Corfu is an island, but lies so close off the mainland that from the open sea, whence Odysseus approached it, and even from some places on the landward side, it is impossible to tell where the mainland ends and the island begins, or even that Corfu is an island at all. Yet as Odysseus first sees it (v.281)

*it looked like a shield lying on the misty face of the water.*

External evidence raises still greater difficulties. The *Odyssey* substantially as we have it could not have been completed much before the end of the eighth century B.C. The traditional foundation dates for many Greek cities in the West

are earlier than that. Sicilian Naxos is said to have been settled in 735 B.C., Syracuse and Korkyra in 734, and half a dozen others before 700; Kyme (Cumae), near Naples, claims even greater age. These dates are generally accepted by modern scholars, and the pottery in some places even goes back to Mycenaean times.<sup>17</sup> Thus, by the time of the *Odyssey*'s completion, the western Mediterranean as far as Sicily was not only well explored, but pretty well settled with Greek colonies, colonies almost or quite as Hellenic as their mother cities in old Greece. How could such a place belong simultaneously to the known world and the wonder world of the Wanderings? How could Korkyra be both itself and Scheria? Only, one might say, by embedding features conceived very early in the process of accumulation, and ignoring later phases.

This does not seem to be the normal process. Homer's Ithaka is Ithaka, not a wonderland. Sicily as Sikania is mentioned as if it were a real place (xxiv.307); the land of the Sikels (presumably Sicilians) is a source or market for slaves, not Cyclopes or other monsters (xx.383; xxiv.211; 365; 389). Menelaos speaks of Libya among other far but real places, iv.83-85:

*I wandered to Cyprus and Phoenicia, to the Egyptians,  
I reached the Aithiopians, Eremboi, Sidonians,  
and Libya.*

The place is preternaturally prosperous, but it keeps company with Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, not with the Lotus-Eaters, and a relatively workaday Phoenician ship was carrying Odysseus there to be sold as a slave (xiv.295-297).

Those who would find true points of reference for Aiolos, the Phaiakians, Laistrygones, and the rest frequently offer the support of topographical detail from the Homeric text. Sometimes this is too general for identification, but often it is plausible. The little island off the land of the Cyclopes is described in thoughtful detail, as if seen by the eye of a prospective settler (ix.116-169); but where is it? The land of the Laistrygones is vividly presented; we can still ask the same question. In these and other cases, the descriptions may well be based on authentic reports from mariners.

But they also may be put in the wrong place. That is, to say it another way, for this is important, it is possible to combine topographical accuracy with geographical incoherence.

This seems actually to have happened in the case of Ithaka. Topographical details are scattered through the poem. The scholar can review these and honestly say that Homer seems to know his Ithaka, and what it is like.<sup>18</sup> Only he

does not seem to know where it is. Listen to Odysseus himself, who *ought* to know, ix.21-26:

*I am at home in sunny Ithaka. There is a mountain  
there that stands tall, leaf-trembling Neritos, and there are islands  
settled around it, lying one very close to another.  
There is Doulichion and Same, wooded Zakynthos,  
but my island lies low and away, last of all on the water  
toward the dark, with the rest below facing east and sunshine.*

This simply will not do for Ithaka (Thiaki), though that has the landmarks, for it lies tucked close in against the *eastern* side of the far larger Kephallenia (Same?). Homer's description would in fact better suit Corfu (Korkyra), which all the world has already identified with Phaiakian Scheria.

I am thus forced back to the belief that the places of the Wanderings are combinations. They are made by the imagination. They are in part sheer fancy; and sailors' stories can involve monsters and enchanted places, as well as authentic report. But they probably contain bits and pieces of solid unassimilated fact. The lands of the Wanderings seem to stand on the same footing as their inhabitants. These too are of this world and stature, rather than that of Olympos and the Olympians. Yet they are not quite of this world either. They are people endowed like no people we shall ever meet, and live in places where no one, since Odysseus, will ever go.<sup>19</sup> And thus the Land of the Dead, where Odysseus and his men (so soon to die) are the only living visitors, takes its natural place among the Wanderings. For it is described not as an underworld but as a far shore, with landmarks borrowed (perhaps) from some or several true places in the real world.

If the *Odyssey* is a work of the imagination, then, we must ask, are the Wanderings symbolic or allegorical? Do they represent the story not of a man but of Man? Many have thought so.<sup>20</sup> I think not. But the Wanderings do lend themselves to a morality, for it is easy to read the adventures as a series of trials. The Greek authors liked to dramatize the test (*peira*) by which a person established his quality. Odysseus passes or at least survives the trials by terror and force: the Kikonians, the Cyclops, the Laistrygones, the confrontation with the ghosts, Skylla, Charybdis, Zeus' storm, Poseidon's storm. And there is trial by temptation. His men fail disastrously against curiosity and hunger with the Bag of Winds and the Cattle of the Sun, but Odysseus endures, and he endures also against the temptations to stay with comfort and beauty and give up the hard voyage home: the charms of the Lotus-Eaters, Circe, the Sirens, Kalypso,

Nausikaa.

But symbolism and allegory seem foreign to the biology of early Greek epic; it is hard for me to think that the moral proposition came first, with the story shaped to present it. Even in the case of Circe turning the men to swine, it is probably mistaken to read anything more meaningful than a fairy-tale transformation. There is plenty of morality in the *Odyssey*, but it is where it ought to be, inextricably implicit in the story itself. This is a brilliant series of adventures linked and fused by character. The tests (including the tests on Ithaka) are passed by the exercise of virtues, viz. (in ascending order) physical courage and strength; ingenuity where these might fail; restraint, patience, tact, and self-control; and the *will* for home.

These are the virtues not of Man, but of a particular valiant, resourceful, much-enduring hero, established as such in the *Iliad*, and developed in a development of the *Nostoi*, the sequel to the *Iliad*.

## **Odysseus on Ithaka**

In the middle of a line, xiii.187, we leave the Phaiakians forever, without even learning what finally happened to them, and henceforth we are concerned almost exclusively with Odysseus on Ithaka. He will not attack the suitors until Book xxii, and he will not reveal himself to Penelope until Book xxiii. Thus the length allotted to Odysseus on Ithaka is extraordinary. Nearly nine books, more than twice the text given to the Great Wanderings, are devoted to the time from Odysseus' arrival to his dropping of disguise and attack on the suitors, and for nearly nine books very little happens.

We can only guess at the purpose of this drawing-out. We may observe some of the effects. The revelations and recognitions, by Telemachos, Eumaios and Philoitios, Penelope, Laertes, are strung out bit by bit. We are teased by the abortive recognitions by Argos and Eurykleia, and by the times when the careful hero nearly gives himself and the game away (xviii.90-94; xx.28-30). There is the constant threat that Penelope will, at the very last moment, give in to the suitors (xix. 524-534; 576-581; xxi. 68-79). There arises that special irony where the audience or reader, in on the whole secret, can watch the victims being gulled by the hero, his merciless guarding divinity, and his equally merciless son.

The story of near-recognition is beautifully played out in the interview between the hero and his wife, where she confides in the stranger to whom she is so drawn that she can hardly let him go (xix.509). Here and elsewhere, the leisurely composition, in which talk is overwhelmingly predominant, gives opportunity to elaborate the characters. The epithets of the three leading persons—resourceful Odysseus, thoughtful Telemachos, and circumspect Penelope—gain depth and intensity through these slow books. Penelope, in particular, is done with great subtlety. Desperately pressed, with no power but her wits, charm, and heart, she plays a waiting game and never commits herself.

The leading suitors, Antinoös, Eurymachos, and Amphinomos, also gain some dimension. Both as a group and as individuals, in a few cases, the suitors could have been much simpler than they are. For the poet seems mostly to have seen the moral issue as just right against wrong.<sup>21</sup> The sin of the faithless maids and of the one faithless thrall is disloyalty. The sin of the suitors is perhaps this, too, but they also abuse hospitality. To Homer, perhaps because he was a wandering poet, this virtue is thematic, and again and again we are given object lessons on the right dealings between host and guest, through the conduct of Telemachos,

Nestor and his family, Menelaos and a reformed Helen, the Phaiakians, Odysseus, Kalypso, Penelope. Horrid counter-examples are furnished by Polyphemos and the Laistrygones. The suitors are aware of the principle (xvii.481-487) but in action they are a living travesty of all proper custom. Thus they lose all divine favor. Not even an Olympian god is so prejudiced as to take their part.

Yet they are no indiscriminate group of villains, nor are they all villains. They are said to be plotting the murder of Telemachos but, once he has slipped past them, they seem irresolute about it (xvi.371-406). They appear to be more an intolerable nuisance than an actual menace. They have some moral notions and some sense of decency (xvi.400-406; xvii. 365-368; 481-487). While indirectly offending the gods by their treatment of people, they respect the gods and regularly observe the forms of religion. This, and their occasional kindnesses, do them no good (xvii. 363-364). Odysseus tries to warn the best of them, but Athene has no mercy (xviii.124-157).

Their doom seems excessive to me. I do not know how it seemed to Homer. But Penelope cried over her pet geese (xix.535-558), and Homer may have conceived some liking for his own creatures, and put off, as long as he could, their necessary slaughter.

## The End of The Odyssey

After the killing of the suitors and the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus, the end of the *Odyssey* reads like a hurried composition. The purpose of the second visit to the dead is not altogether clear. It does, however, in some sense dispose of the suitors, whose bodies were for some time lying about the palace (they are finally buried, xxiv.417); and it does link the Ithakan episode with the background of the Trojan War, in a manner not uncongenial to the poet of the eleventh book, if this is he.

On the other hand, the previous narrative demands a reunion with Laertes, and it certainly demands some kind of patch-up of the chaotic situation in Ithaka, where “all the best young men” (i.245) are lying dead. A reconciliation is scrambled together by a hasty and inadequate *deus ex machina*, which ends the epic. The hand has lost its firmness,<sup>22</sup> but who can say for sure that the hand is not Homer's?

## The Odyssey and The Iliad

This brings us to the question of unity, which cannot be solved but must be faced. For the *Odyssey*, as previously for the *Iliad*, I have been writing as if on the assumption of a single master hand or, in Kirk's phrase, monumental poet.<sup>23</sup> Only a study devoted to disintegration would proceed otherwise. Such unity cannot be proved, though the burden of proof is on the analysts rather than on the unitarians. Such unity also, if it exists, is qualified by the conditions of oral poetry, namely, the accumulation of saga material (less for the *Odyssey* than for the *Iliad*), and of formulaic language.

If there was such a monumental poet for the *Odyssey*, and a monumental poet for the *Iliad*, were they the same man? I can only say as I have said before: that this cannot be proved; but that, if someone not Homer composed the *Odyssey*, nobody had a name to give him; and that the burden of proof rests on those who would establish separate authorship.

Still, it is well to note some of the similarities and differences in the two poems. The *Odyssey*, like the *Iliad*, ignores historical developments between the time of the originating events and the time of composition. In the *Odyssey*, as in the *Iliad*, this principle is violated by occasional slips, the so-called anachronisms. The *Odyssey* adds a few of its own: Sicilians, Phoenicians in the western seas, Dorians in Crete, consultation of oracles. Little can be proved by this. The important anachronisms are deeper and harder to assess. How far, for instance, does the picture of Ithaka reflect life in a Mycenaean palace, and how much does it reflect life in a baronial house of the poet's own day, centuries later?

The *Odyssey* seems later than the *Iliad* principally because it assumes the existence of the *Iliad*, or at least of a fully told tale of Troy. That does not mean it must be so much later that we require a separate author. It is a coherent sequel to the *Iliad* and does not contradict it.

Consider the characters who are carried over from one epic to the other. Judgment of characterization is admittedly a subjective business. For what my opinion is worth, I would say that Odysseus, Nestor, Agamemnon, Menelaos, Helen, and Achilleus are the same "people" in both poems.<sup>24</sup> Those qualities which mark the Odysseus of the *Odyssey*—strength and courage, ingenuity, patience and self-control—all characterize the same hero in the *Iliad*. His friendship with the Atreidae and Nestor, suggested in the *Iliad*, is still more notable in the *Odyssey*. And in the *Iliad* his determination to win the war

matches his determination to win the home-coming in the *Odyssey*. To achieve both ends, he is ruthless. Nestor in his garrulity, Agamemnon in his self-pity, Menelaos in his courtesy and strong moral sense, Achilleus in his devotion to the ideal of the warrior, all repeat striking characteristics of the persons in the *Iliad*. And Helen is as self-centered as ever; in neither epic can she make a speech without talking about herself.

All this, if it is allowed, does not of course prove a single poet for the two poems. It could mean no more than that whoever composed the *Odyssey* knew his *Iliad* well. But here we come upon a striking fact. When the *Odyssey* recounts episodes from the tale of Troy, these episodes are never a part of the *Iliad*, but seem to fall outside, either before or after, the action of the *Iliad*. Thus, apart from the Returns or *Nostoi*, we hear of the following:

The Trojan Horse and the final battle for Troy, iv.271-289; viii.499-520; xi.523-537.

Odysseus' spying expedition in Troy, iv.240-264 (rather than his spying expedition with Diomedes, *Iliad* X.254-578).

His wrestling match with Philomeleides of Lesbos, iv.341-344 (rather than with Aias, *Iliad* XXIII.707-737).

His fight in defense of the body of Achilleus, v.308-310 (rather than his fight alone against the Trojans when the other Achaians had fled, *Iliad* XI.401-488).

The quarrel of Odysseus and Achilleus, viii.75-82 (rather than that of Agamemnon and Achilleus, *Iliad* I.1-305).

The death and burial of Achilleus, xxiv.35-94 (rather than the death and burial of Patroklos).

The quarrel of Odysseus and Aias over the armor of Achilleus, xi.541-564.

The death of Antilochos, iv.187-188; 199-202.

The exploits or excellences of heroes who reached Troy after the action of the *Iliad* was over, such as Neoptolemos, Eurypylos, and Memnon, xi.505-537, and Philoktetes, viii.219.

The recruiting of the heroes, xxiv.114-119.

The exclusion of Iliadic episodes from the *Odyssey* can scarcely be accidental. We are left, as I see it, to choose between two conclusions. Either the poet of the *Odyssey* was ignorant of the *Iliad*;<sup>25</sup> or he deliberately avoided trespassing on the earlier poem. I cannot believe in the first alternative, and am forced to choose the second.

What are the other important *differences* between the two poems? Every Homeric scholar has his own list, and I must be brief. To me, the main differences are details of the whole general style of narrative. The *Odyssey* concentrates on relatively small groups. Without nations embattled, the Olympians of the *Iliad* are less needed, and the first-person narrative of the Great Wanderings virtually excludes them. There are also a few important and well-known differences in the concept of the divinities. Hermes, more of a magician than Iris, takes over her functions as messenger. Aphrodite, not Charis, is the wife of Hephaistos. Olympos turns into a never-never land (vi.41-47), strangely like the Elysian Field which is Menelaos' destination (iv.561-569), and well in accord with the *Odyssey's* wander-world of monsters and fairyland people. Invention in the *Odyssey* extends to name making; a list of young Phaiakians shows a dozen and a half names, all meaning something to do with seamanship and shipbuilding (viii.111-115). The little thumbnail sketches of slaughtered warriors in the *Iliad* have a more traditional sound; such sketches are rare in the *Odyssey*, where we do not deal in large masses. The poet of the *Iliad* shows much lyric imagination in his similes. The *Odyssey* is far poorer here, and much of the same material is used differently. Storms in the *Iliad* are used imaginatively in similes; there is no weather in the *Iliad*.<sup>26</sup> Storms in the *Odyssey* are something Odysseus must contend with. The humble workingman enters the *Iliad* only through simile, but in the *Odyssey* he is there in the flesh.

When we come to language, rhythm, metrical phrasing, the overmastering impression is one of unity. If there were two (or more) poets, they were trained in the same tradition of formula. Agamemnon is hailed in the *Iliad* (II.434, etc.) as

*Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,*

and so he is in the *Odyssey* when the occasion arises (xi.397). His answering address (xi.405),

*Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,*

is common to both epics. So is the summons to assembly (*Iliad* II.50-52; *Odyssey* ii.6-8), the introduction of a speaker (*Iliad* I.73, etc.; *Odyssey* ii.160, etc.), the course of ships through the water (*Iliad* I.481-483; *Odyssey* ii.427-429). In both epics, children are innocent, women are deep-girdled, iron is gray, ships are hollow, words are winged and go through the barrier of the teeth, the sea is wine-blue, barren, and salt, bronze is sharp and pitiless. The list is almost endless. Even the Ithakans are strong-greaved Achaians (*Odyssey* ii.72; xx.146), though they are not armed.

The *Odyssey* has many phrases, journey formulae for instance, which are not found in the *Iliad*.<sup>27</sup> Naturally, the *Iliad* has many combat formulae which are missing from the *Odyssey*. But when combat finally ensues between Odysseus and the suitors, the poet repeats brief formulae and even sizable sequences (compare *Iliad* XV.479-481 and *Odyssey* xxii.122-124). Adaptation may be necessary. Amphinomos goes down, *Odyssey* xxii.94:

*He fell, thunderously, and took the earth full on his forehead.*

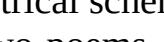
We cannot quite have the standard *Iliad* line:

*He fell, thunderously, and his armor clattered upon him.*

Amphinomos has no armor. Occasionally, a few lines from a combat in the *Iliad* can fit a context in the *Odyssey* which is not military. The language for the Cyclops' throwing a stone is the same as that used for Aias (*Iliad* VII.268-269; *Odyssey* ix.537-538). The death of Odysseus' steersman (xii.412-414) is neatly adapted from the death of Epikles on the wall (*Iliad* XII.384-386).

Can the formula in a changed setting ever mean parody? Sarpedon advances on the wall of the Achaians like a lion against a guarded sheepfold (*Iliad* XII.299-301), and that is appropriate; but the same language is adapted to Odysseus' embarrassed advance on a group of frightened girls (*Odyssey* vi.130; 133-134). When Telemachos sneezes, the sneeze "clashed horribly" (*Odyssey* xvii.542); the phrase was used of the helmet of Hektor in battle (*Iliad* XV.648) and other warlike noises. Eumaios is called *orchamos andron*, "leader of men" (xiv.121). This could mean "foreman (of swineherds)," which is what he is, but it suggests "commander of armies," which is what it means in the *Iliad*. It has been suggested that the arrangement that "noble swineherd" made for his sows reflected those made by Priam for his daughters (*Odyssey* xiv.13-15; *Iliad* VI.244-246). There are other such combinations which, with enough good will, can be seen as parodies. It is hard to be sure, but such amusements with formula

would be in accord with the generally lighter tone of the *Odyssey*.<sup>28</sup>

Yet these very manipulations of metrical phrases attest a deep, intimate similarity of ear and verse building which can only be suggested here. We can illustrate by a short phrase taken almost at random: *peri chroi*, which means “next the skin” or “around the body,” and having the metrical scheme . It is used in a dozen *otherwise quite different* lines in the two poems. But it always comes in exactly the same place in the line, to form the line-end . This shows not merely the reuse of materials, but a constant habit of metrical thought.

There is much that is obscure about the functions of a monumental poet. Within the limits of my ignorance, I can think of one Homer, composing, or completing, first the *Iliad*, then the *Odyssey*. Or I can think of an old master, called *Homer*, mainly responsible for the *Iliad*; and a young master, favored apprentice and poetic heir; perhaps a nephew or son-in-law; also going by the name, or assuming the name, of Homer; and mainly responsible for the *Odyssey*. I find the second combination more persuasive, but that is all I can say for it.

## **Note on The Translation**

In my translation, I have followed the principles stated and followed in my translation of the *Iliad*. In particular, I have tried to follow, as far as the structure of English will allow, the formulaic practice of the original. Of course my memory has failed me at times and I have allowed myself some liberties.

## Note on The Text

I have used the Oxford text of T. W. Allen, 2nd edition, and followed it except in a very few places. At iv.515-521 I have followed Bothe's suggestion and transposed the lines; the numbers show the original order. In x.117, I read the singular *nea*, "the (i.e., my) ship" instead of plural *neas*, "ships," which is in the manuscripts. The context shows that Odysseus, who sent the men, was separated from his main fleet. In xiii.158, I follow an ancient conjecture and read *mede* instead of the manuscripts' *mega de*. In xvii.531, I read the plural *auton* instead of the singular *autou*, which is in the manuscripts.

## Book I



Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven  
far journeys, after he had sacked [Troy's](#) sacred citadel.  
Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of,  
many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea,  
5      struggling for his own life and the homecoming of his companions.  
Even so he could not save his companions, hard though  
he strove to; they were destroyed by their own wild recklessness,  
fools, who devoured the oxen of [Helios](#), the Sun God,  
and he took away the day of their homecoming. From some point  
10     here, goddess, daughter of [Zeus](#), speak, and begin our story.  
Then all the others, as many as fled sheer destruction, were at home  
now, having escaped the sea and the fighting.  
This one alone, longing for his wife and his homecoming,  
was detained by the queenly nymph [Kalypso](#), bright among goddesses,  
15     in her hollowed caverns, desiring that he should be her husband.  
But when in the circling of the years that very year came in which the  
gods had spun for him his time of homecoming  
to [Ithaka](#), not even then was he free of his trials  
nor among his own people. But all the gods pitied him  
20     except [Poseidon](#); he remained relentlessly angry with godlike  
[Odysseus](#), until his return to his own country.  
But Poseidon was gone now to visit the far Aithiopians,  
Aithiopians, most distant of men, who live divided,  
some at the setting of [Hyperion](#), some at his rising,

## The council of the gods

25 to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams. There he sat at the feast and took his pleasure. Meanwhile the other Olympian gods were gathered together in the halls of Zeus. First among them to speak was the father of gods and mortals, for he was thinking in his heart of stately *Aigisthos*,

30 whom *Orestes*, Agamemnon's far-famed son, had murdered. Remembering him he spoke now before the immortals:

‘Oh for shame, how the mortals put the blame upon us gods, for they say evils come from us, but it is they, rather, who by their own recklessness win sorrow beyond what is given,

35 as now lately, beyond what was given, Aigisthos married the wife of *Atreus'* son, and murdered him on his homecoming, though he knew it was sheer destruction, for we ourselves had told him, sending *Hermes*, the mighty watcher, *Argeiphontes*, not to kill the man, nor court his lady for marriage;

40 for vengeance would come on him from Orestes, son of Atreides, whenever he came of age and longed for his own country.

So Hermes told him, but for all his kind intention he could not persuade the mind of Aigisthos. And now he has paid for everything.’

Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed *Athene* answered him:

45 ‘Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty, Aigisthos indeed has been struck down in a death well merited.

Let any other man who does thus perish as he did.

But the heart in me is torn for the sake of wise Odysseus, unhappy man, who still, far from his friends, is suffering

50 griefs, on the sea-washed island, the navel of all the waters, a wooded island, and there a goddess has made her dwelling place; she is daughter of malignant *Atlas*, who has discovered all the depths of the sea, and himself sustains the towering columns which bracket earth and sky and hold them together.

55 This is his daughter; she detains the grieving, unhappy man, and ever with soft and flattering words she works to charm him to forget Ithaka; and yet Odysseus, straining to get sight of the very smoke uprising from his own country, longs to die. But you, Olympian,

60 the heart in you is heedless of him. Did not Odysseus do you grace by

the ships of the Argives, making sacrifice  
in wide Troy? Why, Zeus, are you now so harsh with him?'

Then in turn Zeus who gathers the clouds made answer:

## and the wrath of Poseidon

‘My child, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier?

65 How could I forget Odysseus the godlike, he who is beyond all other men in mind, and who beyond others has given sacrifice to the gods, who hold wide heaven? It is the Earth Encircler Poseidon who, ever relentless, nurses a grudge because of the Cyclops, whose eye he blinded;

70 for Polyphemos like a god, whose power is greatest over all the Cyclopes. Thoësa, a nymph, was his mother, and she was daughter of Phorkys, lord of the barren salt water. She in the hollows of the caves had lain with Poseidon.

For his sake Poseidon, shaker of the earth, although he does not  
75 kill Odysseus, yet drives him back from the land of his fathers. But come, let all of us who are here work out his homecoming and see to it that he returns. Poseidon shall put away his anger; for all alone and against the will of the other immortal gods united he can accomplish nothing.’

80 Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered him: ‘Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty, if in truth this is pleasing to the blessed immortals that Odysseus of the many designs shall return home, then let us dispatch Hermes, the guide, the slayer of Argos,

85 to the island of Ogygia, so that with all speed he may announce to the lovely-haired nymph our absolute purpose, the homecoming of enduring Odysseus, that he shall come back. But I shall make my way to Ithaka, so that I may stir up his son a little, and put some confidence in him

90 to summon into assembly the flowing-haired Achaians and make a statement to all the suitors, who now forever slaughter his crowding sheep and lumbering horn-curved cattle; and I will convey him into Sparta and to sandy Pylos to ask after his dear father's homecoming, if he can hear something,  
95 and so that among people he may win a good reputation.’

Speaking so she bound upon her feet the fair sandals, golden and immortal, that carried her over the water as over the dry boundless earth abreast of the wind's blast. Then she caught up a powerful spear, edged with sharp bronze,

100 heavy, huge, thick, wherewith she beats down the battalions of  
fighting  
men, against whom she of the mighty father is angered,  
and descended in a flash of speed from the peaks of [Olympos](#),

## Athene disguised as Mentes

and lighted in the land of Ithaka, at the doors of Odysseus  
at the threshold of the court, and in her hand was the bronze spear.  
105    She was disguised as a friend, leader of the [Taphians, Mentes](#).  
There she found the haughty suitors. They at the moment  
in front of the doors were amusing their spirits with draughts games,  
sitting about on skins of cattle whom they had slaughtered  
themselves, and about them, of their heralds and hard-working  
henchmen,  
110   some at the mixing bowls were combining wine and water,  
while others again with porous sponges were wiping the tables  
and setting them out, and others cutting meat in quantities.  
Now far the first to see Athene was godlike [Telemachos](#),  
as he sat among the suitors, his heart deep grieving within him,  
115   imagining in his mind his great father, how he might come back  
and all throughout the house might cause the suitors to scatter,  
and hold his rightful place and be lord of his own possessions.  
With such thoughts, sitting among the suitors, he saw Athene  
and went straight to the forecourt, the heart within him scandalized  
120   that a guest should still be standing at the doors. He stood beside her  
and took her by the right hand, and relieved her of the bronze spear,  
and spoke to her and addressed her in winged words: ‘Welcome,  
stranger.  
You shall be entertained as a guest among us. Afterward,  
when you have tasted dinner, you shall tell us what your need is.’  
125   So speaking he led the way, and [Pallas](#) Athene followed him. Now,  
when the two of them were inside the lofty dwelling,  
he took the spear he carried and set it against a tall column  
in a rack for spears, of polished wood, where indeed there were other  
spears of patient-hearted Odysseus standing in numbers,  
130   and he led her and seated her in a chair, with a cloth to sit on,  
the chair splendid and elaborate. For her feet there was a footstool.  
For himself, he drew a painted bench next her, apart from the others,  
the suitors, for fear the guest, made uneasy by the uproar,  
might lose his appetite there among overbearing people,  
135   and so he might also ask him about his absent father.  
A maid servant brought water for them and poured it from a splendid

and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin  
for them to wash, and she pulled a polished table before them.  
A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to them,  
140 adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions,  
while a carver lifted platters of all kinds of meat and set them

## visits Telemachos

in front of them, and placed beside them the golden goblets,  
and a herald, going back and forth, poured the wine for them.

- Then the haughty suitors came in, and all of them straightway  
145 took their places in order on chairs and along the benches,  
and their heralds poured water over their hands for them to wash with,  
and the serving maids brought them bread heaped up in the baskets,  
and the young men filled the mixing bowls with wine for their drinking.  
They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.
- 150 But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
the suitors found their attention turned to other matters,  
the song and the dance; for these things come at the end of the feasting.  
A herald put the beautifully wrought lyre in the hands  
of [Phemios](#), who sang for the suitors, because they made him.
- 155 He played his lyre and struck up a fine song. Meanwhile  
Telemachos talked to Athene of the gray eyes, leaning  
his head close to hers, so that none of the others might hear him:  
'Dear stranger, would you be scandalized at what I say to you?  
This is all they think of, the lyre and the singing. Easy  
160 for them, since without penalty they eat up the substance  
of a man whose white bones lie out in the rain and fester  
somewhere on the mainland, or roll in the wash of the breakers.  
If they were ever to see him coming back to Ithaka  
all the prayer of them all would be to be lighter on their feet  
165 instead of to be richer men for gold and clothing.  
As it is, he has died by an evil fate, and there is no comfort  
left for us, not even though some one among mortals  
tells us he will come back. His day of homecoming has perished.  
But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.
- 170 What man are you, and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?  
What kind of ship did you come here on? And how did the sailors  
bring you to Ithaka? What men do they claim that they are?  
For I do not think you could have traveled on foot to this country.  
And tell me this too, tell me truly, so that I may know it.
- 175 Are you here for the first time, or are you a friend of my father's  
from abroad? Since many other men too used to come and visit  
our house, in the days when he used to go about among people.'

Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered him:  
‘See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.

180    I announce myself as Mentes, son of [Anchialos](#)

## Athene disapproves of the suitors

the wise, and my lordship is over the oar-loving Taphians.  
Now I have come in as you see, with my ship and companions  
sailing over the wine-blue water to men of alien language,  
to [Temese](#), after bronze, and my cargo is gleaming iron.

- 185     And my ship stands near by, at the country, away from the city,  
at the harbor, [Rheithron](#), underneath wooded Neion.  
Your father and I claim to be guest-friends by heredity  
from far back, as you would know if you went to the aged hero  
[Laertes](#), who, they say, no longer comes to the city
- 190     now, but away by himself on his own land leads a hard life  
with an old woman to look after him, who serves him his victuals  
and drink, at the times when the weariness has befallen his body  
from making his toilsome way on the high ground of his vineyard.  
Now I have come. They told me he was here in this country,
- 195     your father, I mean. But no. The gods are impeding his passage.  
For no death on the land has befallen the great Odysseus,  
but somewhere, alive on the wide sea, he is held captive,  
on a sea-washed island, and savage men have him in their keeping,  
rough men, who somehow keep him back, though he is unwilling.
- 200     Now, I will make you a prophecy, in the way the immortals  
put it into my mind, and as I think it will come out,  
though I am no prophet, nor do I know the ways of birds clearly.  
He will not long be absent from the beloved land of his fathers,  
even if the bonds that hold him are iron, but he will be thinking
- 205     of a way to come back, since he is a man of many resources.  
But come now tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
Are you, big as you are, the very child of Odysseus?  
Indeed, you are strangely like about the head, the fine eyes,  
as I remember; we used to meet so often together
- 210     before he went away to Troy, where others beside him  
and the greatest of the Argives went in their hollow vessels.  
Since that time I have not seen Odysseus nor has he seen me.'
- Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
'See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.
- 215     My mother says indeed I am his. I for my part  
do not know. Nobody really knows his own father.

But how I wish I could have been rather son to some fortunate  
man, whom old age overtook among his possessions.  
But of mortal men, that man has proved the most ill-fated

## and Telemachos explains

- 220 whose son they say I am: since you question me on this matter.'  
Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered him:  
'The gods have not made yours a birth that will go nameless  
hereafter, since [Penelope](#) bore such a son as you are.  
But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.
- 225 What feast is this, what gathering? How does it concern you?  
A festival, or a wedding? Surely, no communal dinner.  
How insolently they seem to swagger about in their feasting  
all through the house. A serious man who came in among them  
could well be scandalized, seeing much disgraceful behavior.'
- 230 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer: 'My guest,  
since indeed you are asking me all these questions,  
there was a time this house was one that might be prosperous  
and above reproach, when a certain man was here in his country.  
But now the gods, with evil intention, have willed it otherwise,
- 235 and they have caused him to disappear, in a way no other  
man has done. I should not have sorrowed so over his dying  
if he had gone down among his companions in the land of the [Trojans](#),  
or in the arms of his friends, after he had wound up the fighting.  
So all the Achaians would have heaped a grave mound over him,
- 240 and he would have won great fame for himself and his son hereafter.  
But now ingloriously the stormwinds have caught and carried him  
away, out of sight, out of knowledge, and he left pain and lamentation  
to me. Nor is it for him alone that I grieve in my pain now.  
No longer. For the gods have inflicted other cares on me.
- 245 For all the greatest men who have the power in the islands,  
in [Doulichion](#) and [Same](#) and in wooded [Zakynthos](#),  
and all who in rocky Ithaka are holders of lordships,  
all these are after my mother for marriage, and wear my house out.  
And she does not refuse the hateful marriage, nor is she able
- 250 to make an end of the matter; and these eating up my substance  
waste it away; and soon they will break me myself to pieces.'
- Pallas Athene answered him in great indignation:  
'Oh, for shame. How great your need is now of the absent  
Odysseus, who would lay his hands on these shameless suitors.
- 255 I wish he could come now to stand in the outer doorway

of his house, wearing a helmet and carrying shield and two spears,  
the way he was the first time that ever I saw him  
in our own house, drinking his wine and taking his pleasure,

## Telemachos is to search for news of his father

coming in from [Ephyre](#) and from [Ilos](#) son of [Mermeros](#).  
260 Odysseus, you see, had gone there also in his swift ship  
in search of a poison to kill men, so he might have it  
to smear on his bronze-headed arrows, but Ilos would not  
give him any, since he feared the gods who endure forever.  
But my father did give it to him, so terribly did he love him.  
265 I wish that such an Odysseus would come now among the suitors.  
They all would find death was quick, and marriage a painful matter.  
Yet all these are things that are lying upon the gods' knees:  
whether he will come home to his vengeance, here in his household,  
or whether he will not. Rather I will urge you to consider  
270 some means by which you can force the suitors out of your household.  
Come now, pay close attention to me and do as I tell you.  
Tomorrow, summon the Achaian warriors into assembly  
and publish your word to all, let the gods be your witnesses.  
Tell the suitors to scatter and go back to their own holdings,  
275 and as for your mother, if the spirit urges her to be married,  
let her go back to the palace of her powerful father,  
and they shall appoint the marriage and arrange for the wedding  
presents  
in great amount, as ought to go with a beloved daughter.  
But for yourself, I will counsel you shrewdly, and hope you will listen.  
280 Fit out a ship with twenty oars, the best you can come by,  
and go out to ask about your father who is so long absent,  
on the chance some mortal man can tell you, who has listened to Rumor  
sent by Zeus. She more than others spreads news among people.  
First go to Pylos, and there question the great [Nestor](#),  
285 and from there go over to Sparta to see fair-haired Menelaos,  
since he came home last of all the bronze-armored Achaians.  
Thus if you hear your father is alive and on his way home,  
then, hard pressed though you are, you should still hold out for another  
year. But if you hear he has died and lives no longer,  
290 then make your way home to the beloved land of your fathers,  
and pile up a tomb in his honor, and there make sacrifices  
in great amount, as is fitting. And give your mother to a husband.  
Then, after you have made an end of these matters, and done them,

next you must consider well in your heart and spirit  
295 some means by which you can kill the suitors who are in your  
household,  
by treachery or open attack. You should not go on  
clinging to your childhood. You are no longer of an age to do that.

## Enter Penelope

Or have you not heard what glory was won by great Orestes  
among all mankind, when he killed the murderer of his father,  
300     the treacherous Aigisthos, who had slain his famous father?  
So you too, dear friend, since I can see you are big and splendid,  
be bold also, so that in generations to come they will praise you.  
But now it is time for me to go back down to my fast ship  
and my companions, who must be very restless waiting  
305     for me. Let all this be on your mind, and do as I tell you.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
'My guest, your words to me are very kind and considerate,  
what any father would say to his son. I shall not forget them.  
But come now, stay with me, eager though you are for your journey,  
310     so that you may first bathe and take your ease and, well rested  
and happy in your heart, then go back to your ship with a present,  
something prized, altogether fine, which will be your keepsake  
from me, what loving guests and hosts bestow on each other.'

Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered him:  
315     'Do not detain me longer, eager as I am for my journey;  
and that gift, whatever it is your dear heart bids you give me,  
save it to give when I come next time, so I can take it  
home; and choose a good one, and a fair exchange will befall you.'

So spoke the goddess gray-eyed Athene, and there she departed  
320     like a bird soaring high in the air, but she left in his spirit  
determination and courage, and he remembered his father  
even more than he had before, and he guessed the meaning,  
and his heart was full of wonder, for he thought it was a divinity.  
At once he went over, a godlike man, to sit with the suitors.

325     The famous singer was singing to them, and they in silence sat  
listening. He sang of the Achaians' bitter homecoming  
from Troy, which Pallas Athene had inflicted upon them.

The daughter of [Ikarios](#), circumspect Penelope,  
heard and heeded the magical song from her upper chamber,  
330     and descended the high staircase that was built in her palace,  
not all alone, since two handmaidens went to attend her.  
When she, shining among women, came near the suitors,  
she stood by the pillar that supported the roof with its joinery,

holding her shining veil in front of her face, to shield it,  
335      and a devoted attendant was stationed on either side of her.  
All in tears she spoke then to the divine singer:

## Penelope dismissed

'Phemios, since you know many other actions of mortals  
and gods, which can charm men's hearts and which the singers  
celebrate,

sit beside them and sing one of these, and let them in silence

340 go on drinking their wine, but leave off singing this sad  
song, which always afflicts the dear heart deep inside me,  
since the unforgettable sorrow comes to me, beyond others,  
so dear a head do I long for whenever I am reminded  
of my husband, whose fame goes wide through Hellas and midmost  
[Argos](#).'

345 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer: 'Why, my  
mother, do you begrudge this excellent singer  
his pleasing himself as the thought drives him? It is not the singers  
who are to blame, it must be Zeus is to blame, who gives out  
to men who eat bread, to each and all, the way he wills it.

350 There is nothing wrong in his singing the sad return of the [Danaans](#).  
People, surely, always give more applause to that song  
which is the latest to circulate among the listeners.  
So let your heart and let your spirit be hardened to listen.  
Odysseus is not the only one who lost his homecoming

355 day at Troy. There were many others who perished, besides him.  
Go therefore back in the house, and take up your own work,  
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens  
ply their work also; but the men must see to discussion,  
all men, but I most of all. For mine is the power in this household.'

360 Penelope went back inside the house, in amazement, for she laid the  
serious words of her son deep away in her spirit,  
and she went back to the upper story with her attendant  
women, and wept for Odysseus, her beloved husband, until  
gray-eyed Athene cast sweet slumber over her eyelids.

365 But the suitors all through the shadowy halls were raising a tumult,  
and all prayed for the privilege of lying beside her,  
until the thoughtful Telemachos began speaking among them:  
'You suitors of my mother, overbearing in your rapacity,  
now let us dine and take our pleasure, and let there be no  
370 shouting, since it is a splendid thing to listen to a singer

who is such a singer as this man is, with a voice such as gods have.  
Then tomorrow let us all go to the place of assembly,  
and hold a session, where I will give you my forthright statement,  
that you go out of my place and do your feasting elsewhere,

## Telemachos and the suitors

- 375    eating up your own possessions, taking turns, household by household.  
But if you decide it is more profitable and better  
to go on, eating up one man's livelihood, without payment,  
then spoil my house. I will cry out to the gods everlasting  
in the hope that Zeus might somehow grant a reversal of fortunes.
- 380    Then you may perish in this house, with no payment given.'  
So he spoke, and all of them bit their lips, in amazement  
at Telemachos and the daring way he had spoken to them.  
It was [Antinoös](#) the son of [Eupeithes](#) who answered:  
'Telemachos, surely it must be the very gods who prompt you  
385    to take the imperious line and speak so daringly to us.  
I hope the son of [Kronos](#) never makes you our king in seagirt  
Ithaka. Though to be sure that is your right by inheritance.'
- Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Antinoös, in case you wonder at what I am saying,  
390    I would be willing to take that right, if Zeus should give it.  
Do you think that is the worst thing that could happen to anyone?  
It is not bad to be a king. Speedily the king's house  
grows prosperous, and he himself has rank beyond others.  
But in fact there are many other Achaian princes,
- 395    young and old, in seagirt Ithaka, any of whom might  
hold this position, now that the great Odysseus has perished.  
But I will be the absolute lord over my own household  
and my servants, whom the great Odysseus won by force for me.'
- Then in turn Eurymachos, son of [Polybos](#), answered:  
400    'Telemachos, these matters, and which of the Achaians will be king  
in seagirt Ithaka, are questions that lie on the gods' knees.  
But I hope you keep your possessions and stay lord in your own  
household.  
May the man never come who against your will and by force shall drive  
you  
away from your holdings, while Ithaka is a place still lived in.'
- 405    But, best of men, I wish to ask you about this stranger,  
where he came from, what country he announces as being  
his own, where lies his parent stock, and the fields of his fathers.  
Has he brought some message from your father who is on his way here?

Or did he arrive pursuing some matter of his own business?  
410 How suddenly he started away and vanished, and did not  
wait to be made known. He was no mean man, by the look of him.'  
Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

## All retire

'Eurymachos, there is no more hope of my father's homecoming.  
I believe no messages any more, even should there be one,  
415 nor pay attention to any prophecy, those times my mother  
calls some diviner into the house and asks him questions.  
This stranger is a friend of my father's. He comes from Taphos  
and announces himself as Mentes, the son of Anchialos  
the wise. And he is lord of the lovers of the oar, the Taphians.'

420 So spoke Telemachos, but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess.  
The others, turning to the dance and the delightful  
song, took their pleasure and awaited the coming of evening,  
and the black evening came on as they were taking their pleasure.  
Then they went home to go to bed, each to his own house,  
425 but Telemachos went where, off the splendid courtyard, a lofty  
bedchamber had been built for him, in a sheltered corner.  
There he went to go to bed, his heart full of problems,  
and devoted [Eurykleia](#) went with him, and carried the flaring  
torches. She was the daughter of [Ops](#) the son of Peisenor,  
430 and Laertes had bought her long ago with his own possessions  
when she was still in her first youth, and gave twenty oxen for her,  
and he favored her in his house as much as his own devoted  
wife, but never slept with her, for fear of his wife's anger.  
She now carried the flaring torches for him. She loved him  
435 more than the other maidservants, and had nursed him when he was  
little.  
He opened the doors of the close-compacted bedchamber,  
and sat down on the bed and took off his soft tunic  
and put it into the hands of the sagacious old woman,  
and she in turn folded the tunic, and took care of it for him,  
440 and hung it up on a peg beside the corded bedstead.  
Then she went out of the room, and pulled the door to behind her  
with a silver hook, and with a strap drew home the door bolt.  
There, all night long, wrapped in a soft sheepskin, he pondered  
in his heart the journey that Pallas Athene had counseled.

## Book II



Now when the young [Dawn](#) showed again with her rosy fingers,  
the dear son of Odysseus stirred from where he was sleeping,  
and put on his clothes, and slung a sharp sword over his shoulder.  
Underneath his shining feet he bound the fair sandals  
5 and went on his way from the chamber, like a god in presence.  
He gave the word now to his clear-voiced heralds to summon  
by proclamation to assembly the flowing-haired Achaians,  
and the heralds made their cry, and the men were assembled swiftly.  
Now when they were all assembled in one place together,  
10 he went on his way to assembly, in his hands holding a bronze spear,  
not all alone, but a pair of light-footed dogs went with him.  
Athene drifted an enchantment of grace upon him.  
and all the people had their eyes on him as he came forward.  
He sat in his father's seat, and the elders made way before him.  
15 The first now to speak to them was the hero [Aigyptios](#),  
who was bent over with age, and had seen things beyond number.  
His own dear son, [Antiphos](#) the spearman, had gone off  
with godlike Odysseus to [Ilion](#), land of good horses,  
in the hollow ships, and now the wild Cyclops had killed him  
20 deep in his cave, and this was the last man he had eaten.  
He had three other sons. One of them, [Eurynomos](#),  
went with the suitors; the other two kept the estates of their fathers.

## Issues in Ithaka

Even so, he could not forget the lost one. He grieved and mourned for him,

and it was in tears for him, now, that he stood forth and addressed them:

25     ‘Hear me now, men of Ithaka, and the word I give you.

Never has there been an assembly of us or any session  
since great Odysseus went away in the hollow vessels.

Now who has gathered us, in this way? What need has befallen  
which of the younger men, or one of us who are older?

30     Has he been hearing some message about the return of the army  
which, having heard it first, he could now explain to us?

Or has he some other public matter to set forth and argue?

I think he is a good man and useful. So may Zeus grant him  
good accomplishment for whatever it is his mind desires.’

35     He spoke, and the dear son of Odysseus was glad for the omen, nor did  
he remain seated long, his heart was for speaking,  
and he stood in the middle of the assembly. The herald [Peisenor](#),  
a man of deep discretion, put into his hands the scepter.

First, in answer to the old man, he spoke and addressed him:

40     ‘Old sir, the man is not far, but here; you yourself shall know him.

It is I who assembled the people. To me this grief comes closest.

Not that I heard some message about the return of the army,  
which, having heard it first, I could now explain to you;  
nor have I some other public matter to set forth and argue,

45     but my own need, the evil that has befallen my household.

There are two evils. I have lost a noble father, one who  
was king once over you here, and was kind to you like a father;  
and now here is a greater evil, one which presently  
will break up the whole house and destroy all my livelihood.

50     For my mother, against her will, is beset by suitors,  
own sons to the men who are greatest hereabouts. These  
shrink from making the journey to the house of her father  
Ikarios, so that he might take bride gifts for his daughter  
and bestow her on the one he wished, who came as his favorite;

55     rather, all their days, they come and loiter in our house  
and sacrifice our oxen and our sheep and our fat goats  
and make a holiday feast of it and drink the bright wine

recklessly. Most of our substance is wasted. We have no man here such as Odysseus was, to drive this curse from the household.

## Absence of Odysseus and persecution by the suitors

60     We ourselves are not the men to do it; we must be  
weaklings in such a case, not men well seasoned in battle.  
I would defend myself if the power were in me. No longer  
are the things endurable that have been done, and beyond all decency  
my house has been destroyed. Even you must be scandalized  
65     and ashamed before the neighboring men about us, the people  
who live around our land; fear also the gods' anger,  
lest they, astonished by evil actions, turn against you.  
I supplicate you, by Zeus the Olympian and by [Themis](#)  
who breaks up the assemblies of men and calls them in session:  
70     let be, my friends, and leave me alone with my bitter sorrow  
to waste away; unless my noble father Odysseus  
at some time in anger did evil to the strong-greaved Achaians,  
for which angry with me in revenge you do me evil  
in setting these on me. But for me it would be far better  
75     for you to eat away my treasures and eat my cattle.  
If you were to eat them, there might be a recompense someday,  
for we could go through all the settlement, with claims made public  
asking for our goods again, until it was all regiven.  
But now you are heaping me with troubles I cannot deal with.'

80     So he spoke in anger, and dashed to the ground the scepter in a  
stormburst of tears; and pity held all the people.  
Now all the rest were stricken to silence, none was so hardy  
as to answer, angry word against word, the speech of Telemachos.  
It was Antinoös alone spoke to him in answer:

85     ‘High-spoken intemperate Telemachos, what accusations you have  
made to our shame, trying to turn opinion against us!  
And yet you have no cause to blame the Achaian suitors,  
but it is your own dear mother, and she is greatly resourceful.  
And now it is the third year, and will be the fourth year presently,  
90     since she has been denying the desires of the Achaians.  
For she holds out hope to all, and makes promises to each man,  
sending us messages, but her mind has other intentions.  
And here is another stratagem of her heart's devising.  
She set up a great loom in her palace, and set to weaving  
95     a web of threads long and fine. Then she said to us:

“Young men, my suitors now that the great Odysseus has perished,  
wait, though you are eager to marry me, until I finish  
this web, so that my weaving will not be useless and wasted.

## The charms and guile of Penelope

This is a shroud for the hero Laertes, for when the destructive  
100 doom of death which lays men low shall take him, lest any  
Achaian woman in this neighborhood hold it against me  
that a man of many conquests lies with no sheet to wind him.”  
So she spoke, and the proud heart in us was persuaded.  
Thereafter in the daytime she would weave at her great loom,  
105 but in the night she would have torches set by, and undo it.  
So for three years she was secret in her design, convincing  
the Achaians, but when the fourth year came with the seasons returning,  
one of her women, who knew the whole of the story, told us,  
and we found her in the act of undoing her glorious weaving.  
110 So, against her will and by force, she had to finish it.  
Now the suitors answer you thus, so that you yourself  
may know it in your mind, and all the Achaians may know it:  
send your mother back, and instruct her to be married  
to any man her father desires and who pleases her also.  
115 But if she continues to torment the sons of the Achaians,  
since she is so dowered with the wisdom bestowed by Athene,  
to be expert in beautiful work, to have good character  
and cleverness, such as we are not told of, even of the ancient  
queens, the fair-tressed Achaian women of times before us,  
120 Tyro and [Alkmene](#) and [Mykene](#), wearer of garlands;  
for none of these knew thoughts so wise as those Penelope  
knew; yet in this single matter she did not think rightly;  
so long, I say, will your livelihood and possessions be eaten  
away, as long as she keeps this purpose, one which the very  
125 gods, I think, put into her heart. She is winning a great name  
for herself, but for you she is causing much loss of substance.  
We will not go back to our own estates, nor will we go elsewhere  
until she marries whichever Achaian man she fancies.’  
Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
130 ‘Antinoös, I cannot thrust the mother who bore me,  
who raised me, out of the house against her will. My father,  
alive or dead, is elsewhere in the world. It will be hard  
to pay back Ikarios, if willingly I dismiss my mother.  
I will suffer some evil from her father, and the spirit will give me

135 more yet, for my mother will call down her furies upon me  
as she goes out of the house, and I shall have the people's  
resentment. I will not be the one to say that word to her.

## Favorable portents

But as for you, if your feeling is scandalized by my answer,  
go away from my palace and do your feasting elsewhere,  
140 eating up your own possessions, taking turns, household by household.  
But if you decide it is more profitable and better  
to go on, eating up one man's livelihood, without payment,  
then spoil my house. I will cry out to the gods everlasting  
in the hope that Zeus might somehow grant a reversal of fortunes.

145 Then you may perish in this house with no payment given.'

So spoke Telemachos, and for his sake Zeus of the wide brows  
sent forth two eagles, soaring high from the peak of the mountain.  
These for a while sailed on the stream of the wind together,  
wing and wing, close together, wings spread wide. But when  
150 they were over the middle of the vociferous assembly,  
they turned on each other suddenly in a thick shudder  
of wings, and swooped over the heads of all, with eyes glaring  
and deadly, and tore each other by neck and cheek with their talons,  
then sped away to the right across the houses and city.

155 Then all were astounded at the birds, when their eyes saw them,  
and they pondered in their hearts over what might come of it,  
and [Halitherses](#), [Mastor's](#) son, an aged warrior,  
spoke to them. He was far beyond the men of his generation  
in understanding the meaning of birds and reading their portents.

160 Now, in kind intention toward all, he spoke and addressed them:  
'Hear me now, men of Ithaka, what I have to tell you;  
but what I say will be mostly a warning to the suitors,  
for a great disaster is wheeling down on them. Surely Odysseus  
will not be long away from his family, but now, already,

165 is somewhere close by, working out the death and destruction  
of all these men, and it will be an evil for many others  
of us who inhabit sunny Ithaka. So, well beforehand,  
let us think how we can make them stop, or better let them  
stop themselves. It will soon be better for them if they do so.

170 I who foretell this am not untried, I know what I am saying.  
Concerning him, I say that everything was accomplished  
in the way I said it would be at the time the Argives took ship  
for Ilion, and with them went resourceful Odysseus.

I said that after much suffering, with all his companions  
175    lost, in the twentieth year, not recognized by any,  
      he would come home. And now all this is being accomplished.'

## The suitors refuse to leave

- Then in turn [Eurymachos](#), son of Polybos, answered:  
'Old sir, better go home and prophesy to your children,  
for fear they may suffer some evil to come. In these things  
180 I can give a much better interpretation than you can.  
Many are the birds who under the sun's rays wander  
the sky; not all of them mean anything; Odysseus  
is dead, far away, and how I wish that you had died with him  
also. Then you would not be announcing all these predictions,  
185 nor would you so stir up Telemachos, who is now angry,  
looking for the gift for your own household, which he might give you.  
But I will tell you straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished:  
if you, who know much and have known it long, stir up a younger  
man, and by talking him round with words encourage his anger,  
190 then first of all, it will be the worse for him; he will not  
on account of all these sayings be able to accomplish anything;  
and on you, old sir, we shall lay a penalty, and it will grieve your  
mind as you pay it, and that for you will be a great sorrow.  
I myself, before you all, will advise Telemachos.  
195 Let him urge his mother to go back to her father's,  
and they shall appoint the marriage and arrange for the wedding  
presents  
in great amount, as ought to go with a beloved daughter.  
For I think the sons of the Achaians will not give over  
their harsh courtship, for in any case we fear no one,  
200 and surely not Telemachos, for all he is so eloquent.  
Nor do we care for any prophecy, which you, old sir,  
may tell us, which will not happen, and will make you even more hated;  
and his possessions will wretchedly be eaten away, there will not  
be compensation, ever, while she makes the Achaians put off  
205 marriage with her, while we, awaiting this, all our days  
quarrel for the sake of her excellence, nor ever go after  
others, whom any one of us might properly marry.'
- Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Eurymachos, and all you others who are haughty suitors,  
210 I no longer entreat you in these matters, nor speak about them,  
since by now the gods know about this, as do all the Achaians.'

But come now, grant me a swift ship, and twenty companions  
who can convey me on a course from one place to another.

For I am going to Sparta and going to sandy Pylos

215      to ask about the homecoming of my father, who is long absent,

## Telemachos requests a ship

on the chance of some mortal man telling me, or of hearing a Rumor sent by Zeus. She more than others spreads news among people.

Then if I hear my father is alive and on his way home, then, hard pressed though I be, I will still hold out for another

220 year. But if I hear he has died and lives no longer, then I will make my way home to the beloved land of my fathers, and pile up a tomb in his honor, and there make sacrifices in great amount, as is fitting. And give my mother to a husband.'

So he spoke, and sat down again, and among them rose up

225 [Mentor](#), who once had been the companion of stately Odysseus, and Odysseus, going on the ships, had turned over the household to the old man, to keep it well, and so all should obey him.

He in kind intention now spoke forth and addressed them:

'Hear me now, men of Ithaka, what I have to tell you.

230 No longer now let one who is a sceptered king be eager to be gentle and kind, be one whose thought is schooled in justice, but let him always rather be harsh, and act severely, seeing the way no one of the people he was lord over remembers godlike Odysseus, and he was kind, like a father.

235 Now it is not so much the proud suitors I resent for doing their violent acts by their minds' evil devising; for they lay their heads on the line when violently they eat up the house of Odysseus, who, they say to themselves, will not come back;

but now I hold it against you other people, how you all

240 sit there in silence, and never with an assault of words try to check the suitors, though they are so few, and you so many.'

Then [Leokritos](#), son of [Euenor](#), spoke forth against him:

'Mentor, reckless in words, wild in your wits, what a thing you have said, urging them to stop us. It would be difficult

245 even with more men than these to fight us over our feasting.

For even if Odysseus of Ithaka himself were to come back, and find the haughty suitors feasting in his house, and be urgent in his mind to drive them out of his palace,

his wife would have no joy of his coming, though she longs for it

250 greatly, but rather he would meet an unworthy destiny

if he fought against too many. You have spoken to no purpose.  
Come then, all people disperse now, each to his own holdings,  
and Mentor and Halitherses will push forward this man's journey,  
since these from the first have been his friends, as friends of his father.

## End of assembly

- 255    But, I think, he will sit still for a long time, waiting for messages here in Ithaka, and will never accomplish this voyage.'
- So he spoke, and suddenly broke up the assembly, and the people scattered and went their ways, each to his own house, while the suitors went away into the house of godlike Odysseus.
- 260    But Telemachos, walking along the sea beach away from the others, washed his hands in the gray salt water and prayed to Athene:
- 'Hear me, you who came yesterday, a god, into our house and urged me on to go by ship out over the misty face of the sea, to ask about the homecoming of my father
- 265    who is so long absent: now all this is delayed by the Achaians and particularly the suitors in their evil overconfidence.'
- So he spoke in prayer, and from nearby Athene came to him likening herself to Mentor in voice and appearance.
- Now she spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:
- 270    'Telemachos, you are to be no thoughtless man, no coward, if truly the strong force of your father is instilled in you; such a man he was for accomplishing word and action.
- Your journey then will be no vain thing nor go unaccomplished. But if you are not the seed begotten of him and Penelope,
- 275    I have no hope that you will accomplish all that you strive for. For few are the children who turn out to be equals of their fathers, and the greater number are worse; few are better than their father is. But since you are to be no thoughtless man, no coward, and the mind of Odysseus has not altogether given out in you,
- 280    there is some hope that you can bring all these things to fulfillment. So now, let be the purpose and the planning of these senseless suitors, since they are neither thoughtful men nor just men, and have not realized the death and black fatality that stands close by, so that on a day they all must perish.
- 285    And that journey for which you are so urgent will not be long now, such a companion am I to you, as of your father. I will fit you out a fast ship, I myself will go with you. But now you must go back to the house, and join the suitors, and get ready provisions for the journey, pack all in containers,
- 290    have wine in handled jars, and barley meal, men's marrow,

in thick leather bags, and I, going round the town, will assemble  
volunteer companions to go with you. There are ships in plenty  
here in seagirt Ithaka, both old and new ones,

## Athene as Mentor advises Telemachos

and I will look them over for you to find out the best one,  
295 and soon we shall stow our gear and put out onto the wide sea.'

So spoke Athene, daughter of Zeus, nor did Telemachos  
delay long after he had heard the voice of the goddess,  
but went on his way to the house, the heart troubled within him.  
He came upon the haughty suitors, there in his palace,  
300 skinning goats and singeing fatted swine in the courtyard.  
Antinoös, with a smile, came straight up to Telemachos,  
and took him by the hand and spoke and named him, saying:  
'High-spoken intemperate Telemachos, now let no other  
evil be considered in your heart, neither action  
305 nor word, but eat and drink with me, as you did in past time.  
The Achaians will see to it that all these things are accomplished,  
the ship, and chosen companions, so that you may the more quickly  
reach sacred Pylos, after news about your proud father.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

310 'Antinoös, there is no way for me to dine with you  
against my will, and take my ease, when you are so insolent.  
Is it not enough, you suitors, that in time past you ruined  
my great and good possessions, when I was still in my childhood?  
But now, when I am grown big, and by listening to others  
315 can learn the truth, and the anger is steaming up inside me,  
I will endeavor to visit evil destructions upon you,  
either by going to Pylos, or remaining here in the district.  
But I will go; that journey I speak of will not be made void;  
but as a passenger; for I control no ship, not any  
320 companions; this, I think, was the way you wished to have it.'

He spoke, and lightly drew away his hand from Antinoös'  
hand, but the suitors about the house prepared their dinner,  
and in their conversation they insulted him and mocked him,  
and thus would go the word of one of the arrogant young men:  
325 'Surely now Telemachos is devising our murder.  
Either he will bring some supporters from sandy Pylos,  
or even from Sparta, now he is so terribly eager;  
or perhaps his purpose is to go to Ephyre, that rich  
corn land, so that thence he can bring back poisonous medicines

330 and put them into our wine bowl, and so destroy all of us.'

And thus would speak another one of these arrogant young men:  
'Who knows whether, when he goes in a hollow ship, he also

## The ship is ready

might perish straying far from his people, as did Odysseus?  
Were this to happen, he would lighten all our work for us.

335 Then we could divide up his possessions, and give the house  
to this man's mother to keep, and to the man who marries her.'

So they spoke, but he went down into his father's high-roofed  
and wide storeroom, where gold and bronze were lying piled up,  
and abundant clothing in the bins, and fragrant olive oil,

340 and in it jars of wine, sweet to drink, aged,  
were standing, keeping the unmixed divine drink inside them,  
lined up in order close to the wall, for the day when Odysseus  
might come home even after laboring through many hardships.

To close it there were double doors that fitted together

345 with two halves, and there by night and day was a woman  
in charge who, with intelligent care, watched over all this,  
Eurykleia the daughter of Ops the son of Peisenor.

Now Telemachos called her to the room, and spoke to her:  
'Dear nurse, come, draw me some sweet wine in the handled

350 jars, choicest of all you have in your keeping, next after  
what you are saving for the ill-fated man, the day when Zeus-sprung  
Odysseus might come home, escaping death and its spirits.

Fill me twelve in all and fit them all with covers.

And pour me barley into bags stitched strongly, of leather.

355 Let me have twenty measures of the choice milled barley. You be  
the only one that knows this. Let all be gathered together,  
for I will pick it up in the evening, after my mother  
climbs to her upper chamber and is ready for sleeping.

For I am going into Sparta and to sandy Pylos,

360 to ask after my dear father's homecoming, if I might hear something.'

So he spoke, and the dear nurse Eurykleia cried out,  
and bitterly lamenting she addressed him in winged words:

'Why, my beloved child, has this intention come into  
your mind? Why do you wish to wander over much country,

365 you, an only and loved son? Illustrious Odysseus  
has perished far from his country in some outlandish region.  
And these men will devise evils against you, on your returning,  
so you shall die by guile, and they divide all that is yours.

No, but stay here and guard your possessions. It is not right  
370 for you to wander and suffer hardships on the barren wide sea.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:

## Preparations for sailing

'Do not fear, nurse. This plan was not made without a god's will.  
But swear to tell my beloved mother nothing about this  
until the eleventh day has come or the twelfth hereafter,  
375     or until she misses me herself or hears I am absent,  
so that she may not ruin her lovely skin with weeping.'

So he spoke, and the old woman swore to the gods a great oath,  
and after she had sworn to it and completed the oath taking,  
she drew the wine in the handled jars at once thereafter

380     and poured his barley into bags stitched strongly of leather,  
but Telemachos went back into the house and joined the suitors.

Now the gray-eyed goddess Athene thought what to do next.  
In the likeness of Telemachos she went all through the city  
and, standing beside each man as she came to him, told them  
385     all to assemble beside the fast ship in the evening.

Then she asked [Noëmon](#), the glorious son of [Phronios](#),  
for a fast ship. And he with good will promised it to her.

And the sun set, and all the journeying ways were darkened.  
Now she drew the fast ship down to the sea, and in her

390     stowed all the running gear that strong-benched vessels carry.  
She set it at the edge of the harbor, and around her the good companions  
thronged and were assembled and the goddess urged on each man.

Now the gray-eyed goddess Athene thought what to do next.  
She went on her way, into the house of godlike Odysseus,

395     and there she drifted a sweet slumber over the suitors,  
and struck them as they drank, and knocked the goblets out of  
their hands, and they went to sleep in the city, nor did any one  
sit long, after sleep was fallen upon his eyelids.

Afterward gray-eyed Athene spoke to Telemachos

400     when she had called him out from the well-established palace,  
likening herself to Mentor in voice and appearance:  
'Telemachos, already now your strong-greaved companions  
are sitting at the oars, and waiting for you to set forth.  
So let us go, and not delay our voyaging longer.'

405     So spoke Pallas Athene, and she led the way swiftly, and the man  
followed behind her walking in the god's footsteps.  
But when they had come down to the sea, and where the ship was,

they found the flowing-haired companions there by the seashore.

Now the hallowed prince, Telemachos, spoke his word to them:

410    'Here, friends, let us carry the provisions. They are all ready

## The sailing

and stacked in the hall. But my mother has been told nothing of this,  
nor the rest of the serving women. Only one knows the story.'

So he spoke and led the way, and the rest went with him.  
They all carried the provisions down, and stowed them in the strong-  
benched

- 415 vessel, in the way the dear son of Odysseus directed them.  
Telemachos went aboard the ship, but Athene went first  
and took her place in the stern of the ship, and close beside her  
Telemachos took his place. The men cast off the stern cables  
and themselves also went aboard and sat to the oarlocks.
- 420 The goddess gray-eyed Athene sent them a favoring stern wind,  
strong Zephyros, who murmured over the wine-blue water.  
Telemachos then gave the sign and urged his companions  
to lay hold of the tackle, and they listened to his urging  
and, raising the mast pole made of fir, they set it upright
- 425 in the hollow hole in the box, and made it fast with forestays,  
and with halyards strongly twisted of leather pulled up the white sails.  
The wind blew into the middle of the sail, and at the cutwater  
a blue wave rose and sang strongly as the ship went onward.  
She ran swiftly, cutting across the swell her pathway.
- 430 When they had made fast the running gear all along the black ship,  
then they set up mixing bowls, filling them brimful  
with wine, and poured to the gods immortal and everlasting  
but beyond all other gods they poured to Zeus' gray-eyed daughter.  
All night long and into the dawn she ran on her journey.

## Book III



Helios, leaving behind the lovely standing waters, rose up  
into the brazen sky to shine upon the immortals  
and also on mortal men across the grain-giving farmland.  
They came to Pylos, Neleus' strong-founded citadel,  
5 where the people on the shore of the sea were making sacrifice  
of bulls who were all black to the dark-haired Earthshaker.  
There were nine settlements of them, and in each five hundred  
holdings, and from each of these nine bulls were provided.  
Now as these tasted the entrails, and burned, for the god, the thigh  
bones,  
10 these others put straight in, and on the balanced ship took off  
the sails, and stowed them, and moored her in, and themselves landed.  
Telemachos stepped out of the ship, but Athene went first,  
and it was the gray-eyed goddess Athene who first spoke to him:  
'Telemachos, here is no more need at all of modesty;  
15 for this was why you sailed on the open sea, to find news  
of your father, what soil covers him, what fate he has met with.  
So come now, go straight up to Nestor, breaker of horses,  
for we know what intelligence is hidden inside him.  
You yourself must entreat him to speak the whole truth to you.  
20 He will not tell you any falsehood; he is too thoughtful.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
'Mentor, how shall I go up to him, how close with him?  
I have no experience in close discourse. There is  
embarrassment for a young man who must question his elder.'

## Entertainment by Nestor

- 25 Then in turn the gray-eyed goddess Athene answered him:  
‘Telemachos, some of it you yourself will see in your own heart,  
and some the divinity will put in your mind. I do not  
think you could have been born and reared without the gods' will.’  
So spoke Pallas Athene, and she led the way swiftly,
- 30 and the man followed behind her walking in the god's footsteps.  
They came to where the men of Pylos were gathered in session,  
where Nestor was sitting with his sons, and companions about him  
were arranging the feast, and roasting the meat, and spitting more  
portions.
- These men, when they sighted the strangers, all came down together
- 35 and gave them greeting with their hands and offered them places.  
First [Peisistratos](#), son of Nestor, came close up to them  
and took them both by the hands, and seated them at the feasting  
on soft rugs of fleece there on the sand of the seashore  
next to his brother [Thrasymedes](#) and next to his father.
- 40 He gave them portions of the vitals, and poured wine for them  
in a golden cup, and spoke a word to both of them, pledging  
Pallas Athene, who is daughter of Zeus of the aegis:  
‘My guest, make your prayer now to the lord Poseidon,  
for his is the festival you have come to on your arrival;
- 45 but when you have poured to him and prayed, according to custom,  
then give this man also a cup of the sweet wine, so that  
he too can pour, for I think he also will make his prayer  
to the immortals. All men need the gods. But this one  
is a younger man than you, and of the same age as I am.
- 50 This is why I am first giving you the golden goblet.’  
So he spoke, and put in her hand the cup of sweet wine,  
and Athene was happy at the thoughtfulness of a just man,  
because it was to her he first gave the golden goblet.  
Immediately she made her prayer to the lord Poseidon:
- 55 ‘Hear us, Poseidon, who circle the earth, and do not begrudge us  
the accomplishment of all these actions for which we pray you.  
First of all to Nestor and to his sons grant glory,  
and then on all the rest of the Pylians besides confer  
gracious recompense in return for this grand hecatomb,

60 and yet again grant that Telemachos and I go back  
with that business done for which we came this way in our black ship.'  
She spoke in prayer, but herself was bringing it all to completion.

## Telemachos asks after Odysseus

Next she gave Telemachos the fine two-handled goblet,  
and the dear son of Odysseus prayed in the way that she had.

- 65     When they had roasted and taken off the spits the outer  
meats, dividing shares they held their communal high feast.  
But when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking,  
first to speak was the [Gerenian](#) horseman, Nestor:  
‘Now is a better time to interrogate our guests and ask  
70    them who they are, now they have had the pleasure of eating.  
Strangers, who are you? From where do you come sailing over the  
watery  
ways? Is it on some business, or are you recklessly roving  
as pirates do, when they sail on the salt sea and venture  
their lives as they wander, bringing evil to alien people?’
- 75     Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer,  
taking courage, for Athene herself had put that courage  
in his heart, so that he might ask after his absent father,  
and so that among people he might win a good reputation:  
‘O Nestor, Neleus' son, great glory of the Achaians,  
80    you ask us where we come from. Therefore I will tell you.  
We come from Ithaka under the mountain Neion. This is  
a private matter, no public business, of which I tell you.  
I follow the wide fame of my father, on the chance of hearing  
of the great patient-hearted Odysseus, the man they say once  
85    fought beside you and helped sack the city of the Trojans.  
For we have been told about all the other men who once fought  
the Trojans, how each one of them perished in sad destruction,  
but the son of Kronos has made this man's death one that none knows.  
There is no man who can plainly tell us when he perished,  
90    whether he was killed on the mainland by men embattled  
or on the open sea in the billows of [Amphitrite](#).  
That is why I come to your knees now, in case you might wish  
to tell me of his dismal destruction, whether you saw it  
perhaps with your own eyes, or heard the tale from another  
95    who wandered too. His mother bore this man to be wretched.  
Do not soften it because you pity me and are sorry  
for me, but fairly tell me all that your eyes have witnessed.

I implore you, if ever noble Odysseus, my father,  
ever undertook any word or work and fulfilled it

100 for you, in the land of the Trojans where you Achaians suffered,  
tell me these things from your memory. And tell me the whole truth.'

## Nestor remembers Troy

In turn Nestor the Gerenian horseman answered him:

'Dear friend, since you remind me of sorrows which in that country  
we endured, we sons of the Achaians valiant forever,  
105 or all we endured in our ships on the misty face of the water  
cruising after plunder wherever Achilleus led us,  
or all we endured about the great city of the lord [Priam](#)  
fighting; and all who were our best were killed in that place;  
there Aias lies, a man of battles, there lies Achilleus,  
110 there lies [Patroklos](#), one who was like the gods for counsel,  
and there lies my own beloved son, both strong and stately,  
[Antilochos](#), surpassingly swift to run, and a fighter;  
and many besides these were the evils we suffered; what man  
who was one of the mortal people could ever tell the whole of it,  
115 not if you were to sit beside me five years, and six years,  
and asked me about the evils the great Achaians endured there;  
sooner you would be tired of it and go back to your country.  
For nine years we fabricated evils against them, trying them  
with every kind of stratagem, and at last the son of Kronos  
120 finished it. Then there was no man who wanted to be set up  
for cunning against great Odysseus; he far surpassed them  
in every kind of stratagem; your father; if truly  
you are his son; and wonder seizes me when I look on you.  
For surely your words are like his words, nor would anyone  
125 ever have thought that a younger man could speak so like him.  
For while I and the great Odysseus were there together,  
we never spoke against one another, neither in council  
nor assembly, but forever one in mind and in thoughtful  
planning, we worked out how things would go best for the Argives.  
130 But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam,  
and were going away in our ships, and the god scattered the Achaians,  
then Zeus in his mind devised a sorry homecoming  
for the Argives, since not all were considerate nor righteous;  
therefore many of them found a bad way home, because of  
135 the ruinous anger of the Gray-eyed One, whose father is mighty.  
It was she who made a quarrel between the two sons of Atreus.  
When these two called all the Achaians into assembly,

wildly, and in no kind of order, as the sun was setting,  
and the sons of the Achaians came in, heavy with drinking

140      wine, these two spoke forth. It was why they assembled the people.

## and the start of the homecoming

At this time Menelaos was urging all the Achaians  
to think upon going home over the sea's wide ridges,  
but this did not please [Agamemnon](#) at all; he wished rather  
to hold the people there, and accomplish holy hecatombs  
145 so as to soften Athene's deadly anger, poor fool  
who had no thought in his mind that she would not listen to him.  
The will of the everlasting gods is not turned suddenly.  
So these two, after making exchange with hard words, stood up  
to go, and the rest of the strong-greaved Achaians rushed out  
150 with inhuman clamor, and two opposed counsels pleased them.  
That night we slept there, pondering in our minds hard thoughts  
against each other; Zeus was contriving pain of hardship.  
At dawn, some of us hauled our ships down into the divine sea,  
and loaded our possessions aboard, and the deep-girdled women.  
155 But half the people were held back because they remained there  
with Agamemnon, Atreus' son, shepherd of the people.  
We the other half went aboard and drove on, and the ships went  
very fast, as a god flattened the sea full of monsters.  
We came to [Tenedos](#) and made sacrifice to the immortals.  
160 We were straining homeward; but Zeus, hard-hearted, was not yet  
devising  
homecoming for us, but again inspired yet another quarrel.  
Then some, who followed the lord Odysseus, the wise and resourceful,  
turned about, and boarding once more their oarswept vessels  
went back, bringing comfort to Atreus' son, Agamemnon.  
165 But I, with all the ships that followed pulled together,  
fled away, for I saw how the god was devising evils,  
and the warlike son of [Tydeus](#) fled and urged his companions  
on, and, late, fair-haired Menelaos came to join us  
and caught us at Lesbos as we pondered our long sea-voyage,  
170 whether we should sail over the top of rocky [Chios](#)  
by the island [Psyros](#), keeping it on our left hand, or else  
to pass under Chios, by windy [Mimas](#). We asked the god  
to give us some portent for a sign, and the god gave us  
one, and told us to cut across the middle main sea  
175 for [Euboia](#), and so most quickly escape the hovering evil.

A whistling wind rose up and began to blow and the ships ran very fast across those ways full of fish, and at nighttime brought us in at [Geraistos](#). We sacrificed many thigh bones

## The murder of Agamemnon

of bulls to Poseidon, having measured the great open water.

- 180 It was the fourth day when the companions of [Diomedes](#)  
breaker of horses, Tydeus' son, made fast their balanced  
ships at Argos. I held on for Pylos. Never once  
did the wind fail, once the god had set it to blowing.  
So, dear child, I came back, without news, and I knew nothing  
185 of those other Achaians, which had survived, which ones had perished.  
But all I have got by hearsay sitting here in my palace,  
this you shall know; it is right you should; I will not conceal it.  
They say that the [Myrmidons](#), those furious spearmen led by  
the glorious son of great-hearted Achilleus made a good voyage,  
190 and [Philoktetes](#), [Poias'](#) shining son, had fair sailing,  
and [Idomeneus](#) brought back to [Crete](#) all of his companions  
who had escaped from the fighting. The sea took none of these men.  
You yourselves, though you live apart, have heard of [Atreides](#),  
how he came home, and how Aigisthos devised his wretched  
195 death; but Aigisthos too paid for it, in a dismal fashion;  
so it is good, when a man has perished, to have a son left  
after him, since this one took vengeance on his father's killer,  
the treacherous Aigisthos, who cut down his glorious father.  
So you too, dear friend, for I see you are tall and splendid,  
200 be brave too, so that men unborn may speak well of you.'
- Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'O Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians,  
it is all too true that he took revenge, and so the Achaians  
will carry his glory far and wide, a theme for the singers  
205 to come. If only the gods would give me such strength as he has  
to take revenge on the suitors for their overbearing oppression.  
They force their way upon me and recklessly plot against me.  
No, the gods have spun out no such strand of prosperity  
for me and my father. Now we must even have to endure it.'
- 210 Then in turn Nestor the Gerenian horseman answered him:  
'Dear friend, since you have spoken about these things and reminded  
me,  
they do say that many suitors for the sake of your mother  
are in your palace against your will, and plot evil against you.'

Tell me, are you willingly put down, or are the people  
215 who live about you swayed by some divine voice, and hate you?  
Who knows whether he will come someday and punish the violence  
of these people, either by himself or all the Achaians with him?

## Telemachos asks for details

If only gray-eyed Athene would deign to love you, as in  
those days she used so to take care of glorious Odysseus  
220    in the Trojan country, where we Achaians suffered miseries;  
for I never saw the gods showing such open affection  
as Pallas Athene, the way she stood beside him, openly;  
if she would deign to love you as she did him, and care for you  
in her heart, then some of those people might well forget about  
marrying.'

225    Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Old sir, I think that what you have said will not be accomplished.  
What you mean is too big. It bewilders me. That which I hope for  
could never happen to me, not even if the gods so willed it.'

Now in turn the gray-eyed goddess Athene spoke to him:  
230    'Telemachos, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier?  
Lightly a god, if he wishes, can save a man, even from far off.  
I myself would rather first have gone through many hardships  
and then come home, and look upon my day of returning,  
than come home and be killed at my own hearth, as Agamemnon  
235    was killed, by the treacherous plot of his wife, and by Aigisthos.  
But death is a thing that comes to all alike. Not even  
the gods can fend it away from a man they love, when once  
the destructive doom of leveling death has fastened upon him.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
240    'Mentor, though we sorrow let us speak no more of these things.  
His homecoming is no longer a real thing, but already  
the immortal gods must have contrived his death and black doom.  
But now I would find out about another story, and question  
Nestor, since the righteousness and thought in his mind outpass  
245    others', and they say he has been lord over three generations  
of men. He shapes as an immortal for me to look upon.  
O Nestor, son of Neleus, tell me the true story.  
How did Atreus' son, widely ruling Agamemnon,  
die? And where was Menelaos? What scheme of death  
250    did treacherous Aigisthos have, to kill one far better than he was?  
Was Menelaos out of Achaia and Argos, wandering  
elsewhere among men, that Aigisthos had courage to do it?'

Then in turn Nestor the Gerenian horseman answered:

'So, my child, I will relate you the whole true story.

255 All would have happened just in the way you yourself have seen it,  
if Atreus' son, fair-haired Menelaos, on his homecoming

## The murder of Agamemnon

from Troy had found Aigisthos still alive in his palace.  
Even after his death none would have heaped any earth upon him,  
but he would have lain in the field outside the city, and the dogs  
260 and birds would have feasted on him, nor would any Achaian woman  
have wailed over him. That was a monstrous plot he accomplished.  
For we were sitting out there and accomplishing many hard tasks  
while he, at ease deep in the corner of horse-pasturing Argos,  
kept talking to Agamemnon's wife and trying to charm her.

265 Now in time before, beautiful [Klytaimestra](#) would not  
consent to the act of shame, for her own nature was honest,  
and also a man was there, a singer, whom Agamemnon,  
when he went to Troy, had given many instructions to keep watch  
on his wife; but when the doom of the gods had entangled her, so that  
270 she must submit, Aigisthos took the singer and left him  
on a desert island for the birds of prey to spoil and feed on,  
and took her back to his house, and she was willing as he was.  
Then on the sacred altars of the gods he burned many thigh bones  
and hung up many dedications, gold, and things woven,  
275 for having accomplished this monstrous thing he never had hoped for.  
Now we sailed back on our way from Troy together, Atreus'  
son, Menelaos, and I, with friendly thoughts toward each other,  
but when we came to holy [Sounion](#), the cape of [Athens](#),  
there [Phoibos Apollo](#), with a visitation of his painless  
arrows, killed the steersman of Menelaos, the one who  
280 held in his hands the steering oar of the running ship. This was  
[Phrontis](#), [Onotor's](#) son, who surpassed all the breed of mortals  
in the steering of a ship whenever stormwinds were blowing.  
So Menelaos, though straining for the journey, was detained  
285 there, to bury his companion, and give him due rites.  
But when he too had gone out on the wine-blue open water  
in his hollow ships, and made his run as far as the steep rock  
of [Maleia](#), then Zeus of the wide brows devised that his journey  
should be hateful, and poured out upon him the blast of shrilling  
290 winds, and waves that bulged and grew monstrous, like mountains.  
There he cut the fleet in two parts, and drove some on Crete  
where the [Kydonians](#) lived around the streams of [Iardanos](#).

There is the sheer of a cliff, a steep rock out in the water  
at the other end of [Gortys](#) on the misty face of the main, where  
295      the south wind piles up a huge surf on the left of the rock horn

## and the wanderings of Menelaos

toward [Phaistos](#), and a little stone holds out the big water.  
It was there they came, and by lively work the men avoided  
destruction, but the waves smashed their ships on the splinters  
of rock, but the wind and the water catching up the other  
300 five dark-prowed ships bore them along and drove them on [Egypt](#).  
So Menelaos, gathering much gold and livelihood in those  
parts, sailed with his ships to men of alien language,  
and all the while at home Aigisthos worked out his grim plans.  
Seven years he lived as lord over golden Mykene,  
305 after he killed Atreides, with the people subject beneath him,  
but in the eighth the evil came on him, great Orestes  
come home from Athens, and he killed his father's murderer,  
the treacherous Aigisthos, who had killed his glorious father.  
When he had killed, he ordered among the [Argives](#) a grave mound  
310 for his mother who was hateful and for unwarlike Aigisthos;  
and on the same day Menelaos of the great war cry sailed in  
bringing back many possessions, the burden his ships carried.  
So, dear friend, do not you stay long and far wandering  
away from home, leaving your possessions, and in your house men  
315 so overbearing, for fear they divide up all your property  
and eat it away, so all your journey will have no profit.  
And yet I do encourage you and urge you to visit  
Menelaos, for he is newly come from abroad, and people  
who live where no man's mind would ever have hope of returning,  
320 once the stormwinds had blundered him off his course and into  
an open sea that is so great that not the birds even  
cross it by their own strength, it is so big and terrible.  
But go to him now, with your ship and with your companions,  
or if you wish to go by land, here are horses and chariot,  
325 and here are my own sons at your service, who will be your escorts  
into shining [Lakedaimon](#), the home of fair-haired Menelaos.  
You yourself must entreat him to speak the whole truth to you.  
He will not tell you any falsehood; he is too thoughtful.'

So he spoke, and the sun went down and the darkness came over,  
330 and now the gray-eyed goddess Athene spoke forth before them:  
'Old sir, all that you have said was fair and orderly.'

But come now, cut out the tongues of the victims and mix the wine bowls,  
so that when we have poured an offering to Poseidon  
and the other immortals, we can think about sleep. It is that time.

## Departure of Athene

- 335 For now the light has gone into the darkness, nor is it becoming  
to sit about at the feast of the gods; but better to go home.'  
So she spoke, the daughter of Zeus, and they listened to her.  
The heralds poured water over their hands to wash with,  
and the young men filled the mixing bowls with wine for their drinking,
- 340 and passed to all, after they had offered a drink in the goblets.  
They threw the tongues in the fire and stood up and made a libation.  
But when they had poured and drunk each as much as he wanted,  
then Athene and godlike Telemachos started  
up together to go away to their hollow vessel,
- 345 but Nestor detained them where they were, and made a speech to  
them:  
'May Zeus and all the other immortals beside forbend  
that you, in my domain, should go on back to your fast ship  
as from some man altogether poor and without clothing,  
who has not any abundance of blankets and rugs in his household
- 350 for his guests, or for himself to sleep in soft comfort.  
But I do have abundance of fine rugs and blankets.  
No, no, in my house the dear son of Odysseus shall not  
have to go to sleep on the deck of a ship, as long as  
I am alive, and my sons after me are left in my palace
- 355 to entertain our guests, whoever comes to my household.'
- Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene said to him:  
'This was well said by you, dear old sir; it is fitting  
that Telemachos should obey you, since it is much better that way.  
So he shall go along with you now, so that he can sleep
- 360 in your palace, but I shall be going down to my black ship,  
so that I can encourage my companions and tell them everything.  
For I am the only man among them who can call myself  
an elder; the rest, all of an age with the great-hearted  
Telemachos, are younger men who out of love for him
- 365 went along. There I will lie down beside the black ship  
now, but at dawn shall make for the great-hearted [Kaukones](#),  
where a debt owed me has been piling up, it is not a new thing  
nor a small one. You, since this young man has come to your  
household,

370 give him conveyance with your son by chariot, and give him  
those horses that are best for strength and the lightest runners.'

So speaking, gray-eyed Athene went away in the likeness  
of a vulture, and amazement seized on all the Achaians,  
and the old man was amazed at what his eyes saw. He took

## as Telemachos stays with Nestor

Telemachos by the hand and spoke a word to him and named him:

- 375    'Dear friend, I have no thought that you will turn out mean and cowardly  
if, when you are so young, the gods go with you and guide you  
thus. Here was no other of those who have their homes on Olympos  
but the very daughter of Zeus, most honored [Tritogeneia](#),  
who always among the Argives favored your noble father.
- 380    So now, O queen, be gracious, and grant me good reputation  
for myself and for my children also and for my grave wife,  
and I will sacrifice you a yearling cow, with wide forehead,  
unbroken, one no man has ever led under the yoke yet.  
I will gild both her horns with gold and offer her to you.'
- 385    So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athene heard him.  
Now the Gerenian horseman Nestor led the way for  
his sons and his sons-in-law back to his splendid dwelling.  
But after they had reached the glorious dwelling of the king,  
they took their places in order on chairs and along the benches,
- 390    and as they came in the old man mixed the wine bowl for them  
with wine sweet to drink which the housekeeper had opened  
in its eleventh year and loosed the sealing upon it.  
The old man mixed the wine in the bowl and prayed much, pouring  
a libation out to Athene daughter of Zeus of the aegis.
- 395    When they had poured and drunk, each man as much as he wanted,  
they went away each one to sleep in his own dwelling,  
but Nestor the Gerenian horseman gave Telemachos  
the dear son of godlike Odysseus a place to sleep in  
upon a corded bedstead in the echoing portico.
- 400    Next him was Peisistratos of the strong ash spear, leader  
of men, who of his sons in the palace was still a bachelor.  
But Nestor himself slept in the inner room of the high house,  
and at his side the lady his wife served as bedfellow.
- 405    But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then Nestor the Gerenian horseman rose up from his bed,  
and went outside and took his seat upon the polished stones  
which were there in place for him in front of the towering doorway,  
white stones, with a shine on them that glistened. On these before him

410     *Neleus*, a counselor like the gods, had held his sessions,  
        but he had been beaten down by his doom and gone down to Hades'  
        house, and now Gerenian Nestor, the Achaians' watcher,  
        sat there holding his staff, and his sons coming out of their chambers

## Sacrifice to Athene

gathered in a cluster about him, *Echephron* and *Stratios*,  
*Perseus* and *Aretos* and Thrasymedes the godlike,  
415 and sixth was the hero Peisistratos who came to join them.  
They brought out godlike Telemachos and seated him next them,  
and Nestor the Gerenian horseman began speaking to them:  
'Act quickly now, dear children, and do me this favor, so that  
I may propitiate first of all the gods, Athene,  
420 who came plainly to me at our happy feasting in the god's honor.  
Come then, let one man go to the field for a cow, so that  
she may come with all speed, and let one of the oxherds be driving her,  
and one go down to the black ship of great-hearted Telemachos,  
and bring back all his companions, leaving only two beside her,  
425 and yet another go tell the worker in gold *Laerkes*  
to come, so that he can cover the cow's horns with gold. You others  
stay here all together in a group but tell the serving  
women who are in the house to prepare a glorious dinner,  
and set chairs and firewood in readiness, and fetch bright water.'

430 So he spoke, and they all bustled about. The cow came  
in from the field, and the companions of great-hearted Telemachos  
came from beside their fast black ship, and the smith came, holding  
in his hands the tools for forging bronze, his handicraft's symbols,  
the anvil and the sledgehammer and the well-wrought pincers  
435 with which he used to work the gold, and Athene also  
came to be at her rites. Now Nestor, the aged horseman,  
gave the smith the gold, and he gilded the cow's horns with it  
carefully, so the god might take pleasure seeing her offering.  
Stratios and the noble Echephron led the cow by  
440 the horns, and Aretos came from the inner chamber carrying  
lustral water in a flowered bowl, and in the other hand  
scattering barley in a basket. Steadfast Thrasymedes  
stood by with the sharp ax in his hand, to strike down the heifer.  
Perseus held the dish for the blood, and the aged horseman  
445 Nestor began with the water and barley, making long prayers  
to Athene, in dedication, and threw the head hairs in the fire.  
Now when all had made prayer and flung down the scattering barley,  
Thrasymedes, the high-hearted son of Nestor, standing

close up, struck, and the ax chopped its way through the tendons  
450 of the neck and unstrung the strength of the cow, and now the  
daughters  
and daughters-in-law of Nestor and his grave wife [Eurydike](#),

## Departure of Telemachos and Peisistratos

eldest of the daughters of *Klymenos*, raised the outcry.  
They lifted the cow from earth of the wide ways, and held her  
fast in place, and Peisistratos, leader of men, slaughtered her.

455 Now when the black blood had run out, and the spirit went from  
the bones, they divided her into parts, and cut out the thigh bones  
all according to due order, and wrapped them in fat,  
making a double fold, and laid shreds of flesh upon them.  
The old man burned these on cleft sticks, and poured the gleaming  
460 wine over, while the young men with forks in their hands stood about  
him.  
But when they had burned the thigh pieces and tasted the vitals,  
they cut all the remainder into pieces and spitted them,  
and roasted all carefully and took off the pieces.

Meanwhile lovely *Polykaste*, who was the youngest  
465 of the daughters of Nestor, son of Neleus, had bathed Telemachos.  
But when she had bathed him and anointed him sleekly with olive oil,  
she threw a splendid mantle and a tunic about him,  
and he came out from the bath looking like an immortal  
and came and sat down beside Nestor, shepherd of the people.

470 When they had roasted and taken off the spits the outer  
meats, they dined where they were sitting, and men of quality  
started up and poured them wine in the golden goblets.  
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
Nestor the Gerenian horseman began speaking to them:

475 ‘Come now, my children, harness the bright-maned horses under  
the yoke for Telemachos so that he can get on with his journey.’

So he spoke, and they listened well to him and obeyed him,  
and quickly they harnessed the fast horses under the chariot,  
and the woman who was housekeeper put bread and wine in,

480 and meats, such as kings whom the gods love feed on,  
and Telemachos stepped up into the fair-wrought chariot,  
and by him Peisistratos leader of men, the son of Nestor,  
went up into the chariot, and in his hands took the reins  
and whipped the horses to run, and they winged their way unreluctant

485 into the plain, and left behind the sheer city of Pylos.  
All day long they shook the yoke they wore on their shoulders.

And the sun set, and all the journeying ways were darkened.  
They came to Pherai and reached the house of [Diokles](#), who was  
son of [Ortilochos](#), whom [Alpheios](#) once had childed.

490    There they slept the night and he gave them hospitality.

## **Arrival**

But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
they yoked the horses again and mounted the chariots bright with  
bronze, and drove them out the front door and the echoing portico,  
and he whipped them into a run and they winged their way unreluctant.

495 They came into the plain full of wheat, and by that way  
made good their journey as their fast horses took this by-way.  
And the sun set, and all the journeying ways were darkened.

## Book IV



They came into the cavernous hollow of Lakedaimon  
and made their way to the house of glorious [Menelaos](#).  
They found him in his own house giving, for many townsmen,  
a wedding feast for his son and his stately daughter. The girl  
5 he was sending to the son of Achilleus, breaker of battalions,  
for in Troy land first he had nodded his head to it and promised  
to give her, and now the gods were bringing to pass their marriage;  
so he was sending her on her way, with horses and chariots,  
to the famous city of the Myrmidons, where Neoptolemos  
10 was lord, and he brought [Alektor's](#) daughter from Sparta, to give  
powerful [Megapenthes](#), his young grown son born to him  
by a slave woman; but the gods gave no more children to [Helen](#)  
once she had borne her first and only child, the lovely  
[Hermione](#), with the beauty of [Aphrodite](#) the golden.  
15 So these neighbors and townsmen of glorious Menelaos  
were at their feasting all about the great house with the high roof,  
and taking their ease, and among them stepped an inspired singer  
playing his lyre, while among the dancers two acrobats  
led the measures of song and dance, revolving among them.  
20 These two now, the hero Telemachos and the shining  
son of Nestor in the forecourt, themselves and their horses,  
stood, while powerful [Eteoneus](#), who was the active  
henchman of glorious Menelaos, came forward and saw them  
and went with his message through the house to the shepherd of the  
people.

## Entertainment by Menelaos

- 25     He came and standing close beside him addressed him in winged words:  
‘Menelaos, dear to Zeus, here are certain strangers,  
two men, and they look like the breed of great Zeus. Tell me  
then, whether we should unharness their fast horses,  
or send them on to somebody else, who can entertain them.’
- 30     Then, deeply vexed, fair-haired Menelaos answered him:  
‘Eteoneus, son of *Boëthoös*, you were never  
a fool before, but now you are babbling nonsense, as a child  
would do. Surely we two have eaten much hospitality  
from other men before we came back here. May Zeus only
- 35     make an end of such misery hereafter. Unharness  
the strangers' horses then, and bring the men here to be feasted.’  
So he spoke, and the man hurried through the hall, bestirring  
the other active henchmen to come on the way along with him.  
They set free the sweating horses from under the harness,
- 40     and tethered them fast by the reins in front of the horse mangers,  
and put down fodder before them and mixed white millet into it,  
and leaned the chariots up against the glittering inner walls,  
and led the men inside the divine house. These marveled  
as they admired the palace of the king whom Zeus loved,
- 45     for as the shining of the sun or the moon was the shining  
all through this high-roofed house of glorious Menelaos.  
When with their eyes they had had their pleasure in admiration,  
they stepped into the bathtubs smooth-polished and bathed there.  
Then when the maids had bathed them and anointed them with oil,
- 50     and put cloaks of thick fleece and tunics upon them, they went  
and sat on chairs beside Menelaos the son of Atreus.  
A maid servant brought water for them and poured it from a splendid  
and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin  
for them to wash, and she pulled a polished table before them.
- 55     A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to them,  
adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions,  
while a carver lifted platters of all kinds of meat and set them  
in front of them, and placed beside them the golden goblets.  
Then in greeting fair-haired Menelaos said to them:

60     ‘Help yourselves to the food and welcome, and then afterward,  
when you have tasted dinner, we shall ask you who among  
men you are, for the stock of your parents can be no lost one,  
but you are of the race of men who are kings, whom Zeus sustains,

## **who remembers his wanderings**

who bear scepters; no mean men could have sons such as you are.'

65     So he spoke, and taking in his hands the fat beef loin  
which had been given as his choice portion, he set it before them.  
They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.  
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
then Telemachos talked to the son of Nestor, leaning  
70     his head close to his, so that none of the others might hear him:  
'Son of Nestor, you who delight my heart, only look at  
the gleaming of the bronze all through these echoing mansions,  
and the gleaming of gold and amber, of silver and of ivory.  
The court of Zeus on Olympos must be like this on the inside,  
75     such abundance of everything. Wonder takes me as I look on it.'

Menelaos of the fair hair overheard him speaking,  
and now he spoke to both of them and addressed them in winged words:  
'Dear children, there is no mortal who could rival Zeus, seeing  
that his mansions are immortal and his possessions. There may be  
80     some man who could rival me for property, or there may be  
none. Much did I suffer and wandered much before bringing  
all this home in my ships when I came back in the eighth year.  
I wandered to [Cyprus](#) and [Phoenicia](#), to the Egyptians,  
I reached the Aithiopians, [Eremboi](#), Sidonians,  
85     and [Libya](#) where the rams grow their horns quickly. Three times  
in the fulfillment of a year their sheepflocks give birth,  
and there no lord would ever go wanting, nor would his shepherd,  
for cheese or meat, nor for the sweet milk either, but always  
the sheep yield a continuous supply for their sucklings.

90     But while I was wandering those parts and bringing together  
much property, meanwhile another man killed my brother  
secretly, by surprise and by his cursed wife's treachery.  
So it is with no pleasure I am lord over all these possessions.  
You will have heard all this from your fathers, whoever your fathers  
95     are, for I have suffered much, and destroyed a household  
that was very strongly settled and held many goods within it.  
I wish I lived in my house with only a third part of all  
these goods, and that the men were alive who died in those days  
in wide Troy land far away from horse-pasturing Argos.

100 Still and again lamenting all these men and sorrowing  
many a time when I am sitting here in our palace  
I will indulge my heart in sorrow, and then another time

## Enter Helen

give over, for surfeit of gloomy lamentation comes quickly.  
But for none of all these, sorry as I am, do I grieve so much  
105 as for one, who makes hateful for me my food and my sleep, when I  
remember, since no one of the Achaians labored as much  
as Odysseus labored and achieved, and for him the end was  
grief for him, and for me a sorrow that is never forgotten  
for his sake, how he is gone so long, and we knew nothing  
110 of whether he is alive or dead. The aged Laertes  
and temperate Penelope must surely be grieving for him,  
with Telemachos whom he left behind in his house, a young child.'

He spoke, and stirred in the other the longing to weep for his father,  
and the tears fell from his eyes to the ground when he heard his father's  
115 name, holding with both hands the robe that was stained with purple  
up before his eyes. And Menelaos perceived it,  
and now he pondered two ways within, in mind and in spirit  
whether he would leave it to him to name his father,  
or whether he should speak first and ask and inquire about everything.

120 While he was pondering these things in his heart and his spirit,  
Helen came out of her fragrant high-roofed bedchamber,  
looking like Artemis of the golden distaff. [Adreste](#)  
followed and set the well-made chair in place for her,  
and the coverlet of soft wool was carried in by [Alkippe](#),  
125 and [Phylo](#) brought the silver workbasket which had been given  
by [Alkandre](#), the wife of Polybos, who lived in Egyptian  
[Thebes](#), where the greatest number of goods are stored in the houses.  
Polybos himself gave Menelaos two silver bathtubs,  
and a pair of tripods, and ten talents of gold, and apart from  
130 these his wife gave her own beautiful gifts to Helen.  
She gave her a golden distaff and a basket, silver,  
with wheels underneath, and the edges were done in gold. Phylo,  
her maidservant, now brought it in and set it beside her  
full of yarn that had been prepared for spinning. The distaff

135 with the dark-colored wool was laid over the basket. Helen  
seated herself on the chair, and under her feet was a footstool.  
At once she spoke to her husband and questioned him about everything:  
'Do we know, Menelaos beloved of Zeus, who these men

announce themselves as being, who have come into our house now?  
140 Shall I be wrong, or am I speaking the truth? My heart tells me  
to speak, for I think I never saw such a likeness, neither

## Telemachos is identified

in man nor woman, and wonder takes me as I look on him,  
as this man has a likeness to the son of great-hearted Odysseus,  
Telemachos, who was left behind in his house, a young child

145 by that man when, for the sake of shameless me, the Achaians  
went beneath Troy, their hearts intent upon reckless warfare.'

Then in answer fair-haired Menelaos said to her:

'I also see it thus, my wife, the way you compare them,  
for Odysseus' feet were like this man's, his hands were like this,  
150 and the glances of his eyes and his head and the hair growing.  
Now too I was remembering things about Odysseus  
and spoke of him, what misery he had in his hard work  
for me, and he let fall a heavy tear from under his eyelids,  
holding before his eyes the robe that was stained with purple.'

155 Now Peisistratos son of Nestor spoke up before him:  
'Great Menelaos, son of Atreus, leader of the people,  
this is in truth the son of that man, just as you are saying;  
but he is modest, and his spirit would be shocked at the thought  
of coming here and beginning a show of reckless language

160 in front of you, for we both delight in your voice, as if a god  
were speaking. The Gerenian horseman Nestor sent me  
to go along with him and escort him. He longed to see you  
so that you could advise him somewhat, for word or action.  
For a child endures many griefs in his house when his father

165 is gone away, and no others are there to help him, as now  
Telemachos' father is gone away, and there are no others  
who can defend him against the evil that is in his country.'

Then in answer fair-haired Menelaos said to him:

'See now, this is the son of a man greatly beloved who has come now  
170 into my house, one who for my sake endured many trials,  
and I thought he would come, and I would love him beyond all other  
Argives, if only Olympian Zeus of the wide brows granted  
both of us to come home across the sea in our fast ships.  
I would have settled a city in Argos for him, and made him  
175 a home, bringing him from Ithaka with all his possessions,  
his son, all his people. I would have emptied one city for him  
out of those that are settled round about and under my lordship.

And, both here, we would have seen much of each other; nothing  
would then have separated us two in our friendship and pleasure,  
180      until the darkening cloud of death had shrouded us over.

## Memories of Troy

All this must be what the very god himself begrudged him,  
who made only him an unhappy man, without a homecoming.'

He spoke, and started in all of them the desire for weeping.

Helen of Argos, daughter of Zeus, wept, so too Telemachos

185 wept, as did Menelaos the son of Atreus, nor did  
Nestor's son, Peistratros, have eyes altogether tearless,  
for he was thinking in his heart of stately Antilochos,  
one whom the glorious son of the shining Dawn had cut down.  
It was of him he thought as he addressed them in winged words:

190 'Son of Atreus, the aged Nestor used to say you were  
thoughtful, surpassing other men, when we spoke about you  
there in his own palace, and when we questioned each other.  
So now, if it may be, would you do me a favor? For my part  
I have no joy in tears after dinnertime. There will always

195 be a new dawn tomorrow. Yet I can have no objection  
to tears for any mortal who dies and goes to his destiny.  
And this is the only consolation we wretched mortals  
can give, to cut our hair and let the tears roll down our faces.  
For I myself had a brother who died, he was not the meanest

200 of the Argives, and you would have known him, but I for my part  
never met nor saw him. They say he surpassed all others:  
Antilochos: surpassingly swift of foot, and a fighter.'

Then in answer fair-haired Menelaos said to him:

'Dear friend, since you have said all that a man who is thoughtful  
205 could say or do, even one who was older than you are—  
why, this is the way your father is, so you too speak thoughtfully.  
Easily recognized is the line of that man, for whom Kronos'  
son weaves good fortune in his marrying and begetting,  
as now he has given to Nestor, all his days, for himself

210 to grow old prosperously in his own palace, and also  
that his sons should be clever and excellent in the spear's work.  
Now we shall let the weeping be, that came to us just now,  
and let us think again about dinner, let someone pour us  
water for our hands, and there will be time for words tomorrow  
215 at dawn, for Telemachos and me, to talk with each other.'

He spoke, and [Asphalion](#), who was the active henchman

of glorious Menelaos, poured water for them to wash with.  
They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.  
Now Helen, who was descended of Zeus, thought of the next thing.

## and exploits of Odysseus

- 220 Into the wine of which they were drinking she cast a medicine  
of heartsease, free of gall, to make one forget all sorrows,  
and whoever had drunk it down once it had been mixed in the wine  
bowl,  
for the day that he drank it would have no tear roll down his face,  
not if his mother died and his father died, not if men
- 225 murdered a brother or a beloved son in his presence  
with the bronze, and he with his own eyes saw it. Such were  
the subtle medicines Zeus' daughter had in her possessions,  
good things, and given to her by the wife of [Thon](#), [Polydamna](#)  
of Egypt, where the fertile earth produces the greatest number
- 230 of medicines, many good in mixture, many malignant,  
and every man is a doctor there and more understanding  
than men elsewhere. These people are of the race of [Paeon](#).  
Now when she had put the medicine in, and told them to pour it,  
taking up the story again she began to speak to them:
- 235 ‘Son of Atreus, dear to Zeus, Menelaos: and you who  
are here, children of noble fathers; yet divine Zeus sometimes  
gives out good, or sometimes evil; he can do anything.  
Sit here now in the palace and take your dinner and listen  
to me and be entertained. What I will tell you is plausible.
- 240 I could not tell you all the number nor could I name them,  
all that make up the exploits of enduring Odysseus,  
but here is a task such as that strong man endured and accomplished  
in the Trojan country where you Achaians suffered miseries.  
He flagellated himself with degrading strokes, then threw on
- 245 a worthless sheet about his shoulders. He looked like a servant.  
So he crept into the wide-wayed city of the men he was fighting,  
disguising himself in the likeness of somebody else, a beggar,  
one who was unlike himself beside the ships of the Achaians,  
but in his likeness crept into the Trojans' city, and they all
- 250 were taken in. I alone recognized him even in this form,  
and I questioned him, but he in his craftiness eluded me;  
but after I had bathed him and anointed him with olive oil  
and put some clothing upon him, after I had sworn a great oath  
not to disclose before the Trojans that this was Odysseus

255 until he had made his way back to the fast ships and the shelters,  
then at last he told me all the purpose of the Achaians,  
and after striking many Trojans down with the thin bronze  
edge, he went back to the Argives and brought back much information.

## Memories of Odysseus

- The rest of the Trojan women cried out shrill, but my heart  
260 was happy, my heart had changed by now and was for going back  
home again, and I grieved for the madness that Aphrodite  
bestowed when she led me there away from my own dear country,  
forsaking my own daughter, my bedchamber, and my husband,  
a man who lacked no endowment either of brains or beauty.'
- 265 Then in answer fair-haired Menelaos said to her:  
'Yes, my wife, all this that you said is fair and orderly.  
In my time I have studied the wit and counsel of many  
men who were heroes, and I have been over much of the world, yet  
nowhere have I seen with my own eyes anyone like him,  
270 nor known an inward heart like the heart of enduring Odysseus.  
Here is the way that strong man acted and the way he endured  
action, inside the wooden horse, where we who were greatest  
of the Argives all were sitting and bringing death and destruction  
to the Trojans. Then you came there, Helen; you will have been moved  
by  
275 some divine spirit who wished to grant glory to the Trojans,  
and [Deiphobos](#), a godlike man, was with you when you came.  
Three times you walked around the hollow ambush, feeling it,  
and you called out, naming them by name, to the best of the Danaans,  
and made your voice sound like the voice of the wife of each of the  
Argives.  
280 Now I myself and the son of Tydeus and great Odysseus  
were sitting there in the middle of them and we heard you crying  
aloud, and Diomedes and I started up, both minded  
to go outside, or else to answer your voice from inside,  
but Odysseus pulled us back and held us, for all our eagerness.  
285 Then all the other sons of the Achaians were silent:  
there was only one, it was [Antiklos](#), who was ready to answer,  
but Odysseus, brutally squeezing his mouth in the clutch of his powerful  
hands, held him, and so saved the lives of all the Achaians  
until such time as Pallas Athene led you off from us.'  
290 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Great Menelaos, son of Atreus, leader of the people:  
so much the worse; for none of all this kept dismal destruction

from him, not even if he had a heart of iron within him.  
But come, take us away to our beds, so that at last now  
295      we can go to bed and enjoy the pleasure of sweet sleep.'

So he spoke, and Helen of Argos told her serving maids

## **Next morning, Telemachos asks about him**

to make up beds in the porch's shelter and to lay upon them  
fine underbedding of purple, and spread blankets above it  
and fleecy robes to be an over-all covering. The maidservants

300    went forth from the main house, and in their hands held torches,  
and they made the beds. The guests were led outside by a herald.  
So the hero Telemachos and the glorious son of Nestor  
slept in the place outside the house in the porch's shelter,  
but the son of Atreus slept in the inner room of the high house,  
305    and by him lay Helen of the light robes, shining among women.

Now when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
Menelaos of the great war cry rose from where he was sleeping  
and put on his clothes, and slung a sharp sword over his shoulder.  
Underneath his shining feet he bound the fair sandals

310    and went on his way from the chamber, like a god in presence,  
and sat down by Telemachos and spoke to him and named him:  
'What is the need that has brought you here, O hero Telemachos,  
to shining Lakedaimon over the sea's wide ridges?  
A public or a private matter? Tell me this truly.'

315    Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Great Menelaos, son of Atreus, leader of the people,  
I have come to see if you could tell me some news of my father,  
for my home is being eaten away, the rich fields are ruined,  
and the house is full of hateful men, who now forever

320    slaughter my crowding sheep and lumbering horn-curved cattle,  
these suitors of my mother, overbearing in their rapacity.  
That is why I come to your knees now, in case you might wish  
to tell me of his dismal destruction, whether you saw it  
perhaps with your own eyes, or heard the tale from another

325    who wandered too. His mother bore this man to be wretched.  
Do not soften it because you pity me and are sorry  
for me, but fairly tell me all that your eyes have witnessed.

I implore you, if ever noble Odysseus, my father,  
undertook any kind of word or work and fulfilled it

330    for you, in the land of the Trojans where all you Achaians suffered,  
tell me these things from your memory. And tell me the whole truth.'

Then deeply angered fair-haired Menelaos said to him:

‘Oh, for shame, it was in the bed of a bold and strong man  
they wished to lie, they themselves being all unwarlike.

335 As when a doe has brought her fawns to the lair of a lion

## The wanderings of Menelaos,

- and put them there to sleep, they are newborn and still suckling,  
then wanders out into the foothills and the grassy corners,  
grazing there, but now the lion comes back to his own lair  
and visits a shameful destruction on both mother and children;
- 340 so Odysseus will visit shameful destruction on these men.  
O father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, I wish that  
as he was when upon a time in strong-founded [Lesbos](#)  
he stood up and wrestled [Philomeleides](#) from a challenge  
and threw him strongly, so delighting all the Achaians,
- 345 I wish that such an Odysseus would come now among the suitors.  
They all would find death was quick and marriage a painful matter.  
But for what you entreat me for and ask me about, I will not  
turn away from the tale and speak idly, nor will I deceive you,  
but of what the ever-truthful Old Man of the Sea told me
- 350 I will tell all without concealment, and hold back nothing.  
‘The gods held me still in Egypt when I was eager to come back  
here, for I had not rendered complete hecatombs to them.  
The gods have always desired that their orders should be listened to.  
There is an island there in the heavy wash of the open
- 355 sea, in front of Egypt, and they call it [Pharos](#), as far out  
as the distance a hollow ship can make in a whole day's sailing  
when a sharp and following wind is blowing it onward.  
And there is a harbor there with good anchorage, whence they put forth  
their balanced ships to sea, after they have drawn dark water.
- 360 There the gods held me twenty days, nor did the sea winds  
ever appear and blow across the salt water, such winds  
as act to send ships sailing over the sea's wide ridges.  
And now the food would all have been gone, and the men's strength  
with it,  
if one of the gods had not been sorry for me, and shown mercy,
- 365 [Eidothea](#), daughter to mighty [Proteus](#), the Old Man  
of the Sea, for it was her heart that I moved mostly  
when she met me wandering by myself without my companions.  
For always ranging about the island they would go fishing  
with crooked fishhooks, and always the hunger oppressed their bellies.
- 370 She came and stood close beside me and spoke a word and addressed

me:

“Are you so simple then, O stranger, and flimsy-minded,  
or are you willingly giving up, and enjoying your hardships?  
See, you are held so long on the island, and can find no way

## stormbound off Egypt

out of it, while the heart in your companions diminishes.”

375 So she spoke, and I in turn spoke up and made answer:  
“So I will tell, whoever you may be of the goddesses,  
that I am not detained of my own free will, but it must be  
I have offended the immortals who hold wide heaven.  
But do you then tell me, for the gods know everything, which one

380 of the immortals hampers me here and keeps me from my journey  
and tell me how to make my way home on the sea where the fish  
swarm.”  
So I spoke, and she, shining among the goddesses, answered:  
“See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.  
The ever truthful Old Man of the Sea ranges in these parts.

385 This is the Egyptian, immortal Proteus, and he knows  
all the depths of the sea. He is Poseidon's underthegn.  
And they say also he is my father, that he begot me.  
If somehow you could lie in ambush and catch hold of him,  
he could tell you the way to go, the stages of your journey,

390 and tell you how to make your way home on the sea where the fish  
swarm.  
And he could tell you too, illustrious one, if you wish it,  
what evil and what good has been done in your palace  
while you have been gone away on your long and arduous voyage.”  
So she spoke, but then I answered her and said to her:

395 “Show me the way to lie in wait for this divine ancient,  
for fear he may somehow see me first and be warned and avoid me.  
A god is difficult for a mortal man to master.”  
So I spoke, and she, shining among goddesses, answered:  
“See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.

400 At the time when the sun has gone up to bestride the middle of heaven,  
then the ever-truthful Old Man of the Sea will come out of the water  
under the blast of the West Wind, circled in a shudder of darkening  
water, and when he comes out he will sleep, under hollow caverns,  
and around him seals, those darlings of the sea's lovely lady,

405 sleep in a huddle, after they have emerged from the gray sea,  
giving off the sour smell that comes from the deep salt water.  
There I will take you myself when dawn shows and arrange you

orderly in your ambush; you must choose from your companions those three who are your best beside your strong-benched vessels.

410 Now I will tell you all the devious ways of this old man.

First of all he will go among his seals and count them,  
but after he has reviewed them all and noted their number,

## Capture of

he will lie down in their midst, like a herdsman among his sheepflocks.  
Next, as soon as you see that he is asleep, that will be  
415    the time for all of you to use your strength and your vigor,  
and hold him there while he strives and struggles hard to escape you.  
And he will try you by taking the form of all creatures that come forth  
and move on the earth, he will be water and magical fire.  
You must hold stiffly on to him and squeeze him the harder.

420    But when at last he himself, speaking in words, questions you,  
being now in the same form he was in when you saw him sleeping,  
then, hero, you must give over your force and let the old man  
go free, and ask him which one of the gods is angry with you,  
and ask him how to make your way home on the sea where the fish  
swarm."

425    So she spoke, and dived back into the surf of the water.  
Then I went back again to our ships where they were stationed  
along the sand, but my heart was a storm in me as I went. Now  
when I had come back to where my ship lay by the seaside,  
we made ready our dinner, and the immortal night came over,

430    and then we lay down to sleep along the break of the sea beach.  
But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then I made my way along the beach of the wide-wayed  
sea, praying much to the gods, and I took along with me  
those three companions I trusted most for any adventure.

435    'Meanwhile she had dived down into the sea's great cavern  
and brought back the skins of four seals out of the water.  
All were newly skinned. She was planning a trick on her father.  
And hollowing out four beds in the sand of the sea, she sat there  
waiting for us, and we came close up to her. Thereupon

440    she bedded us down in order, and spread a skin over each man.  
That was a most awful ambush, for the pernicious  
smell of those seals, bred in the salt water, oppressed us terribly.  
Who would want to lie down to sleep by a sea-bred monster?  
But she herself came to our rescue and devised a great help.

445    She brought ambrosia, and put it under the nose of each man,  
and it smelled very sweet, and did away with the stench of the monster.  
All that morning we waited there, with enduring spirit,

and the seals came crowding out of the sea, and when they came out  
they lay down to sleep in order along the break of the sea beach.

450 At noon the Old Man came out of the sea and found his well-fed

## **the prophetic Old Man of the Sea**

seals, and went about to them all, and counted their number,  
and we were among the first he counted; he had no idea  
of any treachery. Then he too lay down among us.

455 We with a cry sprang up and rushed upon him, locking him  
in our arms, but the Old Man did not forget the subtlety  
of his arts. First he turned into a great bearded lion,  
and then to a serpent, then to a leopard, then to a great boar,  
and he turned into fluid water, to a tree with towering branches,  
but we held stiffly on to him with enduring spirit.

460 But when the Old Man versed in devious ways grew weary  
of all this, he spoke to me in words and questioned me:  
“Which of the gods now, son of Atreus, has been advising you  
to capture me from ambush against my will. What do you want?”  
So he spoke, and I in turn spoke up and made answer:

465 “You know, Old Man. Why try to put me off with your answer?  
See, I am held so long on the island, and can find no way  
out of it, while the inward heart in me diminishes.  
Do you then tell me, for the gods know everything, which one  
of the immortals hampers me here and keeps me from my journey,

470 and tell me how to make my way home on the sea where the fish  
swarm.”

So I spoke, and he in turn spoke up and made answer:  
“But you should have made grand sacrifices to Zeus and the other  
immortal gods, and so gone on board, so most quickly  
to reach your own country, sailing over the wine-blue water.

475 It is not your destiny now to see your own people and come back  
to your strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers,  
until you have gone back once again to the water of Egypt,  
the sky-fallen river, and there have accomplished holy hecatombs  
in honor of all the immortal gods who hold wide heaven.

480 Then the gods will grant you that journey that you so long for.”  
So he spoke, and the inward heart in me was broken  
because he ordered me to go back on the misty surface  
of the water to Egypt again, a long way and a hard one,  
but even so I answered him in words and said to him:

485 “All these things I will do, Old Man, in the way you tell me.

But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
Did all those Achaians Nestor and I left behind when we went  
sailing from Troy come back in their ships, without injury,  
or did any of them die by a dismal death on shipboard

## The Old Man tells about Agamemnon

- 490     or in the arms of his friends after he had wound up the fighting?"  
So I spoke, and he in turn spoke up and made answer:  
"Son of Atreus, why did you ask me that? You should not  
learn it, nor know what my mind knows, and I think you will not be  
free of tears for long, once you have heard the whole story.
- 495     There were many of these men who were lost, and many left over,  
but two alone who were leaders of the bronze-armored Achaians  
died on the way home. You yourself were there at the fighting.  
And there is one who is being held alive on the wide sea  
somewhere. Aias was lost, and his long-oared vessels with him.
- 500     First of all Poseidon drove him against the great rocks  
of [Gyrai](#), and yet he saved him out of the water,  
and Aias would have escaped his doom, though Athene hated him,  
had he not gone wildly mad and tossed out a word of defiance;  
for he said that in despite of the gods he escaped the great gulf
- 505     of the sea, and Poseidon heard him, loudly vaunting,  
and at once with his ponderous hands catching up the trident  
he drove it against the Gyrean rock, and split a piece off it,  
and part of it stayed where it was, but a splinter crashed in the water,  
and this was where Aias had been perched when he raved so madly.
- 510     It carried him down to the depths of the endless and tossing main sea.  
So Aias died, when he had swallowed down the salt water.  
Your brother somehow got away and escaped the death spirits  
with his hollow ships. It was the lady [Hera](#) who saved him.  
But now as he had come close to the point of making the sheer peak
- 515     Maleia, then the stormwinds caught him away and carried him,  
516     groaning heavily, out on the open sea where the fish swarm.
- 519     But since even from out there an easy homecoming was manifest  
520     for him, the gods twisted the wind back, and they made the homeland  
517     at the uttermost edge of his estate, where before now [Thyestes](#)  
518     had made his home, but now Aigisthos son of Thyestes  
521     lived. Agamemnon stepped rejoicing on the soil of his country  
and stroked the ground with his hand and kissed it, and his thronging  
hot tears streamed down, so dear to him was the sight of his country.  
But a watchman saw him from his lookout, a man whom Aigisthos  
525     had treacherously taken and stationed there, and promised him

two talents of gold as pay. For a year he had been watching so Agamemnon would not go by unnoticed and mindful of his furious valor. The man ran to the house of the war lord

## and of Odysseus with Kalypso

with his news, and at once Aigisthos devised a treacherous stratagem.

530     Choosing out the twenty best fighting men in the district,  
he set an ambush, and beside it had them arrange a festival,  
and went down to welcome Agamemnon, shepherd of the people,  
with horses and chariots, and with shameful thoughts in his mind, then  
led him in all unsuspecting of death, and feasted him

535     and killed him feasting, as one strikes down an ox at his manger.  
Not one of Agamemnon's men who followed him was left  
alive, nor one of Aigisthos' men. All were killed in the palace.”  
So he spoke, and the inward heart in me was broken,  
and I sat down on the sand and cried, nor did the heart in me

540     wish to go on living any longer nor to look on the sunlight.  
But when I had glutted myself with rolling on the sand and weeping,  
then the ever-truthful Old Man of the Sea said to me:  
“No longer now, son of Atreus, spend your time on these wasting  
tears, for I know no good that will come of it. Rather with all speed

545     endeavor to make good your way back to the land of your fathers.  
You might find Aigisthos still alive, or perhaps Orestes  
has beaten you to the kill, but you might be there for the burying.”  
So he spoke, and the heart within me and the proud spirit  
of the breast were softened, even though I was so sorrowful,

550     and now I spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
“These then I know. But do you tell me the name of the third man,  
whoever it is who is being held alive on the wide sea,  
or else he has died, but for all my sorrow, I would hear this.”  
So I spoke, and he in turn spoke up and made answer:

555     “That was Odysseus son of Laertes, who makes his home in  
Ithaka, whom I saw on an island, weeping big tears  
in the palace of the nymph Kalypso, and she detains him  
by constraint, and he cannot make his way to his country,  
for he has not any ships by him, nor any companions

560     who can convey him back across the sea's wide ridges.  
But for you, Menelaos, O fostered of Zeus, it is not the gods' will  
that you shall die and go to your end in horse-pasturing Argos,  
but the immortals will convoy you to the [Elysian Field](#), and the limits of  
the earth, where fair-haired [Rhadamanthys](#)

565 is, and where there is made the easiest life for mortals,  
for there is no snow, nor much winter there, nor is there ever  
rain, but always the stream of the [Ocean](#) sends up breezes

## **Gift-giving**

of the West Wind blowing briskly for the refreshment of mortals.

This, because Helen is yours and you are son-in-law therefore

570      to Zeus." He spoke, and dived back into the tossing deep water.

But I went back again to my ships, and my godlike companions  
went with me, but my heart was a storm in me as I went. Now  
when we had come back to where our ship lay by the seaside,  
we made ready our dinner, and the immortal night came over,

575      and then we lay down to sleep along the break of the sea beach.

But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
first of all we dragged the ship down into the bright water,  
and in the balanced ships set the masts in place, and set sails,  
and we ourselves also went aboard and sat to the oarlocks,

580      and sitting well in order we dashed the oars in the gray sea,

back to where Egypt is, the sky-fallen river, and there

I stranded my ships, and there I rendered complete hecatombs.

But when I had ended the anger of the gods, who are everlasting,

I piled a mound for Agamemnon, so that his memory

585      might never die. I did this, and set sail, and the immortals

gave me a wind, so brought me back to my own dear country  
with all speed. Come, now, stay here with me in my palace  
until it is the eleventh day and even the twelfth day,

and then I will send you well on your way, and give you glorious

590      gifts, three horses and a well-finished chariot; also

I will give you a fine goblet so that you can pour libations

to the immortals; and think of me, all your days, when you do so.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

'Son of Atreus, do not keep me with you here for a long time,

595      since I could well be satisfied to sit here beside you

for a year's time, without any longing for home or parents,

such strange pleasure do I take listening to your stories

and sayings, but by now my companions in sacred Pylos

are growing restless, yet for some time you would keep me with you.

600      And let the gift you give me be something that can be stored up.

I will not take the horses to Ithaka, but will leave them

here, for your own delight, since you are lord of a spreading

plain, there is plenty of clover here, there is galingale,

and there is wheat and millet here and white barley, wide grown.

605    There are no wide courses in Ithaka, there is no meadow;  
a place to feed goats; but lovelier than a place to feed horses;

## The suitors learn of Telemachos' voyage

for there is no one of the islands that has meadows for driving horses; they are all sea slopes; and Ithaka more than all the others.'

He spoke, and Menelaos of the great war cry smiled on him,  
610 and stroked him with his hand and called him by name and spoke to him:

'You are of true blood, dear child, in the way you reason.  
So I shall change all this for you, since I am able to,  
and of all those gifts that lie stored away in my house I will give you  
the one which is most splendid and esteemed at the highest value.

615 I will give you a fashioned mixing bowl. It is of silver  
all but the edges, and these are finished in gold. This is  
the work of [Hephaistos](#). The hero [Phaidimos](#), the Sidonians'  
king, gave it to me, when his house took me in and sheltered me  
there on my way home. I would give it to you for a present.'

620 So these two remained conversing this way together,  
and the banqueters came now into the divine king's palace,  
and they drove sheep and carried heartening wine, and with them  
their wives, in handsome hoods, brought food along. In this way  
they about the palace were busy preparing dinner;

625 but meanwhile before the palace of Odysseus the suitors  
amused themselves with discs and with light spears for throwing  
on a leveled floor, unruly men as they always had been,  
but Antinoös and Eurymachos the godlike were seated  
as lords of the suitors, out and away the best men among them,

630 and to them now came Phronios' son Noëmon, approaching  
Antinoös, and spoke to him and asked him a question:  
'Antinoös, do we have an idea in our minds or do we  
not, when Telemachos will come back from sandy Pylos?

He has gone, and taken my ship, and now I find that I need her  
635 for crossing over to spacious [Elis](#), where I have a dozen  
horses, mares, and suckling from them hard-working unbroken  
mules; I would like to break one in, taking it from the others.'

So he spoke, and they were amazed at heart; they had not thought  
he had gone to Pylos, the city of Neleus, but that he was somewhere  
640 near, on his lands, among the flocks, or else with the swineherd.  
It was Antinoös the son of Eupeithes that answered:

‘Tell me the truth now, when did he go, and which of the young men  
went with him? The choice men of Ithaka, or were they his own  
following, henchmen and servants? Even he could accomplish so much.

645     And tell me this and tell me truly, so I can be certain,

## Ambush plotted against Telemachos

did he take your black ship from you by force, when you were unwilling,  
or did you willingly give it him, when he spoke to you for it?'

Then the son of Noëmon, Phronios, gave him an answer:

'I gave it to him of my free will. What else could one do

650 when a man like this, with so many cares to trouble his spirit,  
asked for it? It would be hard to deny him the giving.

And the young men who are going along with him are the noblest  
in our neighborhood. Also, I saw going aboard as leader  
Mentor, or it was a god, but he was in every way like him,

655 and yet I wonder, for yesterday early I saw the splendid  
Mentor here; before, he was boarding a ship for Pylos.'

So he spoke, and went away to the house of his father,  
and the proud heart in both these suitors was filled with amazement.  
They had the suitors sit down in a group and stopped their contests.

660 It was Antinoös the son of Eupeithes who spoke to them,  
raging, the heart within filled black to the brim with anger  
from beneath, but his two eyes showed like fire in their blazing:  
'Here now is a monstrous thing, this voyage made by Telemachos,  
and insolently put through. We thought he would never achieve it.

665 A young boy, in despite of so many of us, has hauled down  
his ship, and gone away, choosing out the best men in the country.  
The evil will begin to go further. May Zeus grant destruction  
of the life in him, before he comes to full measure of manhood.  
But come now, give me a fast ship and twenty companions,

670 so that I can watch his return and lie in wait for him  
in the narrow strait between Ithaka and towering Samos,  
and make him sorry for this sea-going in search of his father.'

So he spoke, and they all approved what he said and urged it,  
and at once they stood up and went inside the house of Odysseus.

675 Nor did Penelope go for a long time without knowing  
of the counsels which the suitors had been secretly planning,  
for Medon the herald told her, having overheard their counsels.  
He had been standing outside the court while they plotted inside it,  
and he went on his way with the message into the house of Penelope.

680 Penelope spoke to him as he stepped over the threshold:

‘Herald, on what errand have the proud suitors sent you?  
Is it to tell the serving maids of godlike Odysseus  
to stop their work, so as to prepare the suitors a dinner?  
Could this not be the last and the latest time of their dining

## Penelope hears the news

685 here, whether coming to court me or meeting for some other reason? You, who keep gathering here, and consuming away much livelihood, the property of wise Telemachos, nor have you listened to what you heard from your fathers before you, when you were children, what kind of man Odysseus was among your own parents, 690 how he did no act and spoke no word in his own country that was unfair; and that is a way divine kings have, one will be hateful to a certain man, and favor another, but Odysseus was never outrageous at all to any man. But in you the spirit is plain to see, and your unjust actions, 695 how you have no gratitude thereafter for good things done you.'

Medon in turn, a man of thoughtful mind, said to her: 'If only, my queen, that could be the worst of the evil. But the suitors now are devising another thing that is much worse and harder to bear. May the son of Kronos not see it accomplished.

700 Now they are minded to kill Telemachos with the sharp bronze on his way home. He went in quest of news of his father to Pylos the sacrosanct and to glorious Lakedaimon.'

So he spoke, and her knees gave way and the heart in her. She stayed a long time without a word, speechless, and her eyes 705 filled with tears, the springing voice was held still within her. At long last she found words to speak to him and answer: 'Herald, why is my child gone from me? There was no reason for him to board fast-running ships, which serve as horses for men on the salt sea, and they cross the expanses of water.

710 Must it be so that even his name shall be gone from men's minds?' Medon then, a thoughtful man, spoke to her in answer: 'I do not know whether some god moved him, or whether his own mind had the impulse to go to Pylos, in order to find out about his father's homecoming, or what fate he had met with.'

715 So speaking he went away back into the house of Odysseus, and a cloud of heart-wasting sorrow was on her, she had no strength left to sit down in a chair, though there were many there in the palace, but sat down on the floor of her own well-wrought bedchamber weeping pitifully, and about her her maids were wailing

720 all, who were there in the house with her, both young and old ones.  
To them weeping constantly Penelope spoke now:  
'Hear me, dear friends. The Olympian has given me sorrows  
beyond all others who were born and brought up together

## The sorrows of Penelope

with me, for first I lost a husband with the heart of a lion  
725 and who among the Danaans surpassed in all virtues,  
and great, whose fame goes wide through Hellas and midmost Argos;  
and now again the stormwinds have caught away my beloved  
son, without trace, from the halls, and I never heard when he left me.  
Hard-hearted, not one out of all of you then remembered  
730 to wake me out of my bed, though your minds knew all clearly,  
when he went out and away to board the hollow black ship.  
For if I had heard that he was considering this journey,  
then he would have had to stay, though hastening to his voyage,  
or he would have had to leave me dead in the halls. So now  
735 let someone make her way quickly and summon the old man [Dolios](#),  
my own servant, whom my father gave me to have as I came here,  
and he keeps an orchard full of trees for me, so that he may  
go with speed to Laertes and sit beside him and tell him  
all, and perhaps he, weaving out the design in his heart,  
740 may go outside and complain to the people of those who are striving  
to waste away his own seed and that of godlike Odysseus.'

Then in turn Eurykleia her dear nurse said to her:  
'Kill me then, dear girl, with the pitiless bronze, or else  
let me be in the halls. I will not hide the story from you.  
745 I did know all these things, and I gave him all that he asked for,  
both bread and sweet wine, but he took a great oath from me  
never to tell you of it until it came to the twelfth day,  
or until you might miss him yourself or hear he was absent,  
so that you might not ruin your lovely skin with weeping.  
750 But go, wash with water and put clean clothing upon your body,  
and going on to the upper story with your attendant  
women, pray to Athene daughter of Zeus of the aegis,  
for she would then be able to save him, even from dying.  
But do not embitter the bitterness of the old man. I think  
755 the seed of Arkeisios is not altogether hated  
by the blessed gods, but there will still be one left to inherit  
the high-roofed house and the rich fields that lie at a distance.'

So she spoke, and stilled her grieving and stopped the weeping  
of her eyes, and she washed and put clean clothing upon her body;

760 and went to the upper story with her attendant women,  
and laid the barley grains in the basket and prayed to Athene:  
‘Hear me, [Atrytone](#), child of Zeus of the aegis,

## The ambush is set

if ever here in his own palace resourceful Odysseus  
burned the rich thigh pieces of an ox or sheep in your honor,  
765 remember it now for my sake and save for me my beloved  
son, and fend off the suitors who are evilly overbearing.'

She spoke, and raised the outcry, and the goddess listened to her  
praying.

But the suitors all through the shadowy halls were raising a tumult,  
and thus would go the word of one of the arrogant young men:

770 'Surely our much sought-after queen is consenting to marriage  
with one of us, not knowing how the murder of her son is appointed.'

Thus one of them would speak, not knowing what was appointed.

But it was Antinoös who now stood forth and addressed them:

'You are all mad. Keep clear of all this kind of disorderly

775 talk, for fear somebody may go inside and report us.

But come let us silently rise up now and put into action  
that counsel which has been resolved in the hearts of all of us.'

So he spoke, and chose out the twenty best men among them,  
and they went along to the fast ship and the sand of the seashore,

780 and first of all they dragged the ship out to the deepening water,  
and in the black hull set the mast in place, and set sails,  
and made the oars fast in the leather slings of the oarlocks  
all in good order, and hoisted the white sails and set them,  
and their high-hearted henchmen carried their gear on for them.

785 They anchored her deep enough in the channel, and then disembarking  
themselves, prepared their dinner and waited for the coming of evening.

But she in the upper chamber, circumspect Penelope,  
lay there fasting, she had tasted no food nor drink, only  
pondering whether her stately son would escape from dying

790 or have to go down under the hands of the insolent suitors;  
and as much as a lion caught in a crowd of men turns about  
in fear, when they have made a treacherous circle about him,  
so she was pondering, when the painless sleep came upon her  
and all her joints were relaxed so that she slept there reclining.

795 Then the gray-eyed goddess Athene thought what to do next.  
She made an image, and likened it to Penelope's sister  
[Iphthime](#), the daughter of great-hearted Ikarios,

whose husband was [Eumelos](#), and he lived in his home at [Pherai](#).  
She sent her now into the house of godlike Odysseus  
800      in order to stop Penelope, who was grieving, lamenting,

## A dream from Athene

from her crying and tearful lamentation. The dream figure went into the bedchamber passing beside the thong of the door bar, and came and stood above her head and spoke a word to her:

‘Penelope, are you sleeping so sorrowful in the inward heart? But the gods who live at their ease do not suffer you to weep and to be troubled, since your son will have his homecoming even yet, since he has done no wrong in the gods' sight.’

Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer, sleeping very sweetly now in the dreams' gateway:

810 ‘Why have you come here, sister, now, when you were not used to come before, since the home where you live is far away from us, and now you tell me to give over from the grieving and sorrows that are many upon me and trouble me in my heart and spirit, since first I lost a husband with the heart of a lion,

815 and who among the Danaans surpassed in all virtues, a great man, whose fame goes wide through Hellas and midmost Argos; and now again a beloved son is gone on a hollow ship, an innocent all unversed in fighting and speaking, and it is for him I grieve even more than for that other one,

820 and tremble for him and fear, lest something should happen to him either in the country where he has gone, or on the wide sea, for he has many who hate him and are contriving against him and striving to kill him before he comes back into his own country.’

Then in turn the dark dream image spoke to her in answer:

825 ‘Take courage, let not your heart be too altogether frightened, such an escort goes along with him, and one that other men would have prayed to have standing beside them, for she has power, Pallas Athene, and she has pity on you in your grieving, and it is she who has sent me to you to tell you of these things.’

830 Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer:

‘If then you are a god, and have heard the voice of the goddess, come then, tell me of that other unfortunate, tell me whether he still lives and looks upon the sun's shining, or whether he has died and is now in the house of Hades.’

835 Then in turn the dark dream image spoke to her in answer:

‘As for that other one, I will not tell you the whole story whether he lives or has died. It is bad to babble emptily.’

So she spoke, and drifted away by the bolt and the door post and out and into the blowing winds. Ikarios' daughter

## **comforts Penelope**

840    started up from her sleep, soothed in the inward heart, because  
this clear dream in the dim of the night had come to visit her.

    But the suitors went aboard and sailed out into the flowing  
ways, in their hearts devising sudden death for Telemachos.  
There is a rocky island there in the middle channel

845    halfway between Ithaka and towering Samos,  
called [Asteris](#), not large, but it has a double anchorage  
where ships can be hidden. There the Achaians waited in ambush.

## Book V



Now Dawn rose from her bed, where she lay by haughty [Tithonos](#),  
carrying light to the immortal gods and to mortals,  
and the gods came and took their places in session, and among them  
Zeus who thunders on high, and it is his power that is greatest,  
5 and Athene spoke to them of the many cares of Odysseus,  
remembering. Though he was in the nymph's house, she still thought of  
him:  
'Father Zeus, and all other blessed gods everlasting,  
no longer now let one who is a sceptered king be eager  
to be gentle and kind, be one whose thought is schooled in justice,  
10 but let him always rather be harsh, and act severely,  
seeing the way no one of the people he was lord over  
remembers godlike Odysseus, and he was kind, like a father.  
But now he lies away on an island suffering strong pains  
in the palace of the nymph Kalypso, and she detains him  
15 by constraint, and he cannot make his way to his country,  
for he has not any ships by him, nor any companions  
who can convey him back across the sea's wide ridges.  
And now there are those who are determined to murder his dear son  
on his way home. He went in quest of news of his father  
20 to Pylos the sacrosanct and to glorious Lakedaimon.'

Then in turn Zeus who gathers the clouds made answer:  
'My child, what sort of word has escaped your teeth's barrier?  
For is not this your own intention, as you have counseled it,

## Hermes is sent to liberate Odysseus

how Odysseus shall make his way back, and punish those others?

25 Then bring Telemachos home skillfully, since you can do this,  
so that all without harm he can come back to his own country  
while the suitors in their ship come back with nothing accomplished.'

He spoke, and then spoke directly to his beloved son, Hermes:  
'Hermes, since for other things also you are our messenger,  
30 announce to the nymph with the lovely hair our absolute purpose:  
the homecoming of enduring Odysseus, that he shall come back  
by the convoy neither of the gods nor of mortal people,  
but he shall sail on a jointed raft and, suffering hardships,  
on the twentieth day make his landfall on fertile Scheria

35 at the country of the Phaiakians who are near the gods in origin,  
and they will honor him in their hearts as a god, and send him  
back, by ship, to the beloved land of his fathers,  
bestowing bronze and gold in abundance upon him, and clothing,  
more than Odysseus could ever have taken away from Troy, even

40 if he had escaped unharmed with his fair share of the plunder.  
For so it is fated that he shall see his people and come back  
to his house with the high roof and to the land of his fathers.'

He spoke, nor disobeyed him the courier Argeiphontes.  
Immediately he bound upon his feet the fair sandals,

45 golden and immortal, that carried him over the water  
as over the dry boundless earth abreast of the wind's blast.  
He caught up the staff, with which he mazes the eyes of those mortals  
whose eyes he would maze, or wakes again the sleepers. Holding  
this in his hands, strong Argeiphontes winged his way onward.

50 He stood on Pieria and launched himself from the bright air  
across the sea and sped the wave tops, like a shearwater  
who along the deadly deep ways of the barren salt sea  
goes hunting fish and sprays quick-beating wings in the salt brine.  
In such a likeness Hermes rode over much tossing water.

55 But after he had made his way to the far-lying island,  
he stepped then out of the dark blue sea, and walked on over  
the dry land, till he came to the great cave, where the lovely-haired  
nymph was at home, and he found that she was inside. There was  
a great fire blazing on the hearth, and the smell of cedar

60 split in billets, and sweetwood burning, spread all over  
the island. She was singing inside the cave with a sweet voice  
as she went up and down the loom and wove with a golden shuttle.

## Kalypso's island

There was a growth of grove around the cavern, flourishing,  
alder was there, and the black poplar, and fragrant cypress,  
65 and there were birds with spreading wings who made their nests in it,  
little owls, and hawks, and birds of the sea with long beaks  
who are like ravens, but all their work is on the sea water;  
and right about the hollow cavern extended a flourishing  
growth of vine that ripened with grape clusters. Next to it  
70 there were four fountains, and each of them ran shining water,  
each next to each, but turned to run in sundry directions;  
and round about there were meadows growing soft with parsley  
and violets, and even a god who came into that place  
would have admired what he saw, the heart delighted within him.

75 There the courier Argeiphontes stood and admired it.  
But after he had admired all in his heart, he went in  
to the wide cave, nor did the shining goddess Kalypso  
fail to recognize him when she saw him come into her presence;  
for the immortal gods are not such as to go unrecognized  
80 by one another, not even if one lives in a far home.  
But Hermes did not find great-hearted Odysseus indoors,  
but he was sitting out on the beach, crying, as before now  
he had done, breaking his heart in tears, lamentation, and sorrow,  
as weeping tears he looked out over the barren water.

85 But Kalypso, shining among goddesses, questioned Hermes  
when she had seated him on a chair that shone and glittered:  
'How is it, Hermes of the golden staff, you have come to me?  
I honor you and love you; but you have not come much before this.  
90 Speak what is in your mind. My heart is urgent to do it  
if I can, and if it is a thing that can be accomplished.  
But come in with me, so I can put entertainment before you.'

So the goddess spoke, and she set before him a table  
which she had filled with ambrosia, and mixed red nectar for him.  
The courier, Hermes Argeiphontes, ate and drank then,  
95 but when he had dined and satisfied his hunger with eating,  
then he began to speak, answering what she had asked him:  
'You, a goddess, ask me, a god, why I came, and therefore  
I will tell you the whole truth of the tale. It is you who ask me.'

It was Zeus who told me to come here. I did not wish to.

100 Who would willingly make the run across this endless  
salt water? And there is no city of men nearby, nor people

## Hermes tells her to let Odysseus go

who offer choice hecatombs to the gods, and perform sacrifice.

But there is no way for another god to elude the purpose  
of aegis-bearing Zeus or bring it to nothing. He says

- 105 you have with you the man who is wretched beyond all the other  
men of all those who fought around the city of Priam  
for nine years, and in the tenth they sacked the city and set sail  
for home, but on the voyage home they offended Athene,  
who let loose an evil tempest and tall waves against them.
- 110 Then all the rest of his excellent companions perished,  
but the wind and the current carried him here and here they drove him.  
Now Zeus tells you to send him on his way with all speed.  
It is not appointed for him to die here, away from his people.  
It is still his fate that he shall see his people and come back
- 115 to his house with the high roof and to the land of his fathers.'
- So he spoke, and Kalypso, shining among divinities,  
shuddered, and answered him in winged words and addressed him:  
'You are hard-hearted, you gods, and jealous beyond all creatures  
beside, when you are resentful toward the goddesses for sleeping  
120 openly with such men as each has made her true husband.  
So when Dawn of the rosy fingers chose out [Orion](#),  
all you gods who live at your ease were full of resentment,  
until chaste Artemis of the golden throne in [Ortygia](#)  
came with a visitation of painless arrows and killed him;
- 125 and so it was when [Demeter](#) of the lovely hair, yielding  
to her desire, lay down with [Iasion](#) and loved him  
in a thrice-turned field, it was not long before this was made known  
to Zeus, who struck him down with a cast of the shining thunderbolt.  
So now, you gods, you resent it in me that I keep beside me
- 130 a man, the one I saved when he clung astride of the keel board  
all alone, since Zeus with a cast of the shining thunderbolt  
had shattered his fast ship midway on the wine-blue water.  
Then all the rest of his excellent companions perished,  
but the wind and the current carried him here and here they drove him,
- 135 and I gave him my love and cherished him, and I had hopes also  
that I could make him immortal and all his days to be endless.  
But since there is no way for another god to elude the purpose

of aegis-bearing Zeus or bring it to nothing, let him go,  
let him go, if he himself is asking for this and desires it,  
140      out on the barren sea; but I will not give him conveyance,

## Kalypso tells Odysseus

for I have not any ships by me nor any companions  
who can convey him back across the sea's wide ridges;  
but I will freely give him my counsel and hold back nothing,  
so that all without harm he can come back to his own country.'

- 145 Then in turn the courier Argeiphontes answered her: 'Then send him accordingly on his way, and beware of the anger of Zeus, lest he hold a grudge hereafter and rage against you.'
- So spoke powerful Argeiphontes, and there he left her, while she, the queenly nymph, when she had been given the message
- 150 from Zeus, set out searching after great-hearted Odysseus, and found him sitting on the the seashore, and his eyes were never wiped dry of tears, and the sweet lifetime was draining out of him, as he wept for a way home, since the nymph was no longer pleasing to him. By nights he would lie beside her, of necessity,
- 155 in the hollow caverns, against his will, by one who was willing, but all the days he would sit upon the rocks, at the seaside, breaking his heart in tears and lamentation and sorrow as weeping tears he looked out over the barren water.
- She, bright among divinities, stood near and spoke to him:
- 160 'Poor man, no longer mourn here beside me nor let your lifetime fade away, since now I will send you on, with a good will. So come, cut long timbers with a bronze ax and join them to make a wide raft, and fashion decks that will be on the upper side, to carry you over the misty face of the water.
- 165 Then I will stow aboard her bread and water and ruddy wine, strength-giving goods that will keep the hunger from you, and put clothing on you, and send a following stern wind after, so that all without harm you can come back to your own country, if only the gods consent. It is they who hold wide heaven.'
- 170 And they are more powerful than I to devise and accomplish.'
- So she spoke to him, but long-suffering great Odysseus shuddered to hear, and spoke again in turn and addressed her: 'Here is some other thing you devise, O goddess; it is not conveyance, when you tell me to cross the sea's great open
- 175 space on a raft. That is dangerous and hard. Not even balanced ships rejoicing in a wind from Zeus cross over.'

I will not go aboard any raft without your good will,  
nor unless, goddess, you can bring yourself to swear me a great oath  
that this is not some painful trial you are planning against me.'

## the will of the gods

- 180 So he spoke, and Kalypso, shining among divinities, smiled and stroked him with her hand and spoke to him and named him:  
‘You are so naughty, and you will have your own way in all things.  
See how you have spoken to me and reason with me.  
Earth be my witness in this, and the wide heaven above us,
- 185 and the dripping water of the [Styx](#), which oath is the biggest  
and most formidable oath among the blessed immortals,  
that this is no other painful trial I am planning against you,  
but I am thinking and planning for you just as I would do it  
for my own self, if such needs as yours were to come upon me;
- 190 for the mind in me is reasonable, and I have no spirit  
of iron inside my heart. Rather, it is compassionate.
- So she spoke, a shining goddess, and led the way swiftly,  
and the man followed behind her walking in the god's footsteps.  
They made their way, the man and the god, to the hollow cavern,
- 195 and he seated himself upon the chair from which Hermes lately  
had risen, while the nymph set all manner of food before him  
to eat and drink, such things as mortal people feed upon.  
She herself sat across the table from godlike Odysseus,  
and her serving maids set nectar and ambrosia before her.
- 200 They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.  
But after they had taken their pleasure in eating and drinking,  
the talking was begun by the shining goddess Kalypso:  
‘Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
are you still all so eager to go on back to your own house
- 205 and the land of your fathers? I wish you well, however you do it,  
but if you only knew in your own heart how many hardships  
you were fated to undergo before getting back to your country,  
you would stay here with me and be the lord of this household  
and be an immortal, for all your longing once more to look on
- 210 that wife for whom you are pining all your days here. And yet  
I think that I can claim that I am not her inferior  
either in build or stature, since it is not likely that mortal  
women can challenge the goddesses for build and beauty.’
- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:
- 215 ‘Goddess and queen, do not be angry with me. I myself know

that all you say is true and that circumspect Penelope  
can never match the impression you make for beauty and stature.  
She is mortal after all, and you are immortal and ageless.

## Odysseus builds a raft

But even so, what I want and all my days I pine for  
220 is to go back to my house and see my day of homecoming.  
And if some god batters me far out on the wine-blue water,  
I will endure it, keeping a stubborn spirit inside me,  
for already I have suffered much and done much hard work  
on the waves and in the fighting. So let this adventure follow.'

225 So he spoke, and the sun went down and the darkness came over.  
These two, withdrawn in the inner recess of the hollowed cavern,  
enjoyed themselves in love and stayed all night by each other,  
But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
Odysseus wrapped himself in an outer cloak and a tunic,

230 while she, the nymph, mantled herself in a gleaming white robe  
fine-woven and delightful, and around her waist she fastened  
a handsome belt of gold, and on her head was a wimple.  
She set about planning the journey for great-hearted Odysseus.  
She gave him a great ax that was fitted to his palms and headed

235 with bronze, with a double edge each way, and fitted inside it  
a very beautiful handle of olive wood, well hafted;  
then she gave him a well-finished adze, and led the way onward  
to the far end of the island where there were trees, tall grown,  
alder and black poplar and fir that towered to the heaven,

240 but all gone dry long ago and dead, so they would float lightly.  
But when she had shown him where the tall trees grew, Kalypso,  
shining among divinities, went back to her own house  
while he turned to cutting his timbers and quickly had his work  
finished.

He threw down twenty in all, and trimmed them well with his bronze  
ax,

245 and planed them expertly, and trued them straight to a chalkline.  
Kalypso, the shining goddess, at that time came back, bringing him  
an auger, and he bored through them all and pinned them together  
with dowels, and then with cords he lashed his raft together.  
And as great as is the bottom of a broad cargo-carrying

250 ship, when a man well skilled in carpentry fashions it, such was  
the size of the broad raft made for himself by Odysseus.  
Next, setting up the deck boards and fitting them to close uprights

he worked them on, and closed in the ends with sweeping gunwales.  
Then he fashioned the mast, with an upper deck fitted to it,  
and made in addition a steering oar by which to direct her,  
and fenced her in down the whole length with wattles of osier  
to keep the water out, and expended much timber upon this.

## and Kalypso sends him off

Next Kalypso, the shining goddess, brought out the sail cloth  
to make the sails with, and he carefully worked these also,  
260 and attached the straps and halyards and sheets all in place aboard her,  
and then with levers worked her down to the bright salt water.

It was the fourth day and all his work was finished. Then on  
the fifth day shining Kalypso saw him off from the island  
when she had bathed him and put fragrant clothing upon him,  
265 and the goddess put two skins aboard, one filled with dark wine  
and the other, the big one, filled with water, and put on provisions  
in a bag, and stored there many good things to keep a man's strength up,  
and sent a following wind to carry him, warm and easy.

Glorious Odysseus, happy with the wind, spread sails  
270 and taking his seat artfully with the steering oar he held her  
on her course, nor did sleep ever descend on his eyelids  
as he kept his eye on the [Pleiades](#) and late-setting [Boötes](#),  
and the Bear, to whom men give also the name of the Wagon,  
who turns about in a fixed place and looks at Orion,

275 and she alone is never plunged in the wash of the Ocean.  
For so Kalypso, bright among goddesses, had told him  
to make his way over the sea, keeping the Bear on his left hand.  
Seventeen days he sailed, making his way over the water,  
and on the eighteenth day there showed the shadowy mountains  
280 of the Phaiakian land where it stood out nearest to him,  
and it looked like a shield lying on the misty face of the water.

Coming back from the [Aithiopians](#) the strong Earthshaker  
saw him from far on the mountains of the [Solymoi](#). He was visible  
sailing over the sea. Poseidon was the more angered  
285 with him, and shook his head, and spoke to his own spirit:  
'For shame, surely the gods have rashly changed their intentions  
about Odysseus while I was away in the Aithiopians'  
land, and he nears the Phaiakian country where it is appointed  
that he shall escape this great trial of misery that is now his.

290 But I think I can still give him a good full portion of trouble.'

He spoke, and pulled the clouds together, in both hands gripping  
the trident, and staggered the sea, and let loose all the stormblasts  
of all the winds together, and huddled under the cloud scuds

land alike and the great water. Night sprang from heaven.

295    East Wind and South Wind clashed together, and the bitter blown  
West Wind

## Poseidon wrecks the raft

and the North Wind born in the bright air rolled up a heavy sea.  
The knees of Odysseus gave way for fear, and the heart inside him,  
and deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:

‘Ah me unhappy, what in the long outcome will befall me?

- 300 I fear the goddess might have spoken the truth in all ways  
when she said that on the sea and before I came to my country  
I would go through hardships; now all this is being accomplished,  
such clouds are these, with which Zeus is cramming the wide sky  
and has staggered the sea, and stormblasts of winds from every  
305 direction are crowding in. My sheer destruction is certain.
- Three times and four times happy those Danaans were who died then  
in wide Troy land, bringing favor to the sons of Atreus,  
as I wish I too had died at that time and met my destiny  
on the day when the greatest number of Trojans threw their bronze-  
headed

- 310 weapons upon me, over the body of perished Achilleus,  
and I would have had my rites and the Achaians given me glory.  
Now it is by a dismal death that I must be taken.’

As he spoke so, a great wave drove down from above him  
with a horrible rush, and spun the raft in a circle,

- 315 and he was thrown clear far from the raft and let the steering oar  
slip from his hands. A terrible gust of stormwinds whirling  
together and blowing snapped the mast tree off in the middle,  
and the sail and the upper deck were thrown far and fell in the water.  
He himself was ducked for a long time, nor was he able

- 320 to come up quickly from under the great rush of the water,  
for the clothing which divine Kalypso had given weighted him  
down. At last he got to the surface, and spat the bitter  
salt sea water that drained from his head, which was filled with it.  
But he did not forget about his raft, for all his trouble,

- 325 but turned and swam back through the waves, and laid hold of it,  
and huddled down in the middle of it, avoiding death's end.  
Then the waves tossed her about the current now here, now there;  
as the North Wind in autumn tumbles and tosses thistledown  
along the plain, and the bunches hold fast one on another,

- 330 so the winds tossed her on the great sea, now here, now there,

and now it would be South Wind and North that pushed her between them,  
and then again East Wind and West would burst in and follow.

## but Leukothea rescues Odysseus

The daughter of Kadmos, sweet-stepping Ino called Leukothea,  
saw him. She had once been one who spoke as a mortal,  
335    but now in the gulfs of the sea she holds degree as a goddess.  
She took pity on Odysseus as he drifted and suffered hardship,  
and likening herself to a winged gannet she came up  
out of the water and perched on the raft and spoke a word to him:  
‘Poor man, why is Poseidon the shaker of the earth so bitterly  
340    cankered against you, to give you such a harvest of evils?  
And yet he will not do away with you, for all his anger.  
But do as I say, since you seem to me not lacking in good sense.  
Take off these clothes, and leave the raft to drift at the winds' will,  
and then strike out and swim with your hands and make for a landfall  
345    on the Phaiakian country, where your escape is destined.  
And here, take this veil, it is immortal, and fasten it under  
your chest; and there is no need for you to die, nor to suffer.  
But when with both your hands you have taken hold of the mainland,  
untie the veil and throw it out in the wine-blue water  
350    far from the land; and turn your face away as you do so.’  
So spoke the goddess and handed him the veil, then herself  
in the likeness of a gannet slipped back into the heaving  
sea, and the dark and tossing water closed above her.  
Now long-suffering great Odysseus pondered two courses,  
355    and troubled he spoke then to his own great-hearted spirit:  
‘Ah me, which of the immortals is weaving deception  
against me, and tells me to put off from the raft? But no,  
I will not do it yet, since I have seen with my own eyes  
that the shore, where she said I could escape, is still far from me.  
360    But here is what I will do, and this seems to me the best way.  
As long as the timbers hold together and the construction  
remains, I will stay with it and endure though suffering hardships;  
but once the heaving sea has shaken my raft to pieces,  
then I will swim. There is nothing better that I can think of.’  
365    Now as he was pondering these ways in his heart and spirit, Poseidon,  
shaker of the earth, drove on a great wave,  
that was terrible and rough, and it curled over and broke down  
upon him, and as when the wind blows hard on a dry pile

of chaff, and scatters it abroad in every direction,

370 so the raft's long timbers were scattered, but now Odysseus  
sat astride one beam, like a man riding on horseback,

## Odysseus aided by Athene

and stripped off the clothing which the divine Kalypso had given him,  
and rapidly tied the veil of Ino around his chest, then  
threw himself head first in the water, and with his arms spread

- 375     stroked as hard as he could. The strong Earthshaker saw him  
swimming, and shook his head and spoke to his own spirit:  
‘There, now, drift on the open sea, suffering much trouble,  
until you come among certain people who are the gods' fosterlings.  
Even so, I hope you will not complain that I stinted your hardships.’
- 380     So he spoke, and laid the lash on his fair-maned horses, and made his  
way to [Aigai](#), where he has his fabulous palace.

But now Athene, daughter of Zeus, planned what was to follow.

She fastened down the courses of all the rest of the stormwinds,  
and told them all to go to sleep now and to give over,

- 385     but stirred a hastening North Wind, and broke down the seas before  
him,  
until Zeus-sprung Odysseus, escaping death and the spirits  
of death, might join the company of oar-loving Phaiakians.

Then he was driven two nights and two days on the heavy  
seas, and many times his heart foresaw destruction,

- 390     but when Dawn with the lovely hair had brought the third morning,  
then at last the gale went down and windless weather  
came on, and now he saw the land lying very close to him  
as he took a sharp look, lifted high on the top of a great wave.  
And as welcome as the show of life again in a father

- 395     is to his children, when he has lain sick, suffering strong pains,  
and wasting long away, and the hateful death spirit has brushed him,  
but then, and it is welcome, the gods set him free of his sickness,  
so welcome appeared land and forest now to Odysseus,  
and he swam, pressing on, so as to set foot on the mainland.

- 400     But when he was as far away as a voice can carry  
he heard the thumping of the sea on the jagged rock-teeth,  
for a big surf, terribly sucked up from the main, was crashing  
on the dry land, all was mantled in salt spray, and there were  
no harbors to hold ships, no roadsteads for them to ride in,

- 405     but promontories out-thrust and ragged rock-teeth and boulders.  
The knees of Odysseus gave way for fear, and the heart inside him,

and deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:  
‘Ah me, now that Zeus has granted a sight of unhoped-for  
land, and now I have made the crossing of this great distance,

410     I see no way for me to get out of the gray sea water,

## barely avoids the rocks

for on the outer side are sharp rocks, and the surf about them  
breaks and roars, and the sheer of the cliff runs up above them,  
and the sea is deep close in shore so that there is no place  
to stand bracing on both my feet and so avoid trouble.

- 415 I fear that as I climb out a great wave will catch and throw me  
against the stony cliff. That will be a pitiful landing.  
Yet if I try to swim on along in the hope of finding  
beaches that slant against the waves or harbors for shelter  
from the sea, I fear that once again the whirlwind will snatch me
- 420 and carry me out on the sea where the fish swarm, groaning heavily,  
or else the divinity from the deep will let loose against me  
a sea monster, of whom Amphitrite keeps so many;  
for I know how bitterly the renowned Earthshaker hates me.'
- Now as he was pondering this in his heart and spirit,
- 425 meanwhile a great wave carried him against the rough rock face,  
and there his skin would have been taken off, his bones crushed  
together,  
had not the gray-eyed goddess Athene sent him an inkling,  
and he frantically caught hold with both hands on the rock face  
and clung to it, groaning, until the great wave went over. This one
- 430 he so escaped, but the backwash of the same wave caught him  
where he clung and threw him far out in the open water.  
As when an octopus is dragged away from its shelter  
the thickly-clustered pebbles stick in the cups of the tentacles,  
so in contact with the rock the skin from his bold hands
- 435 was torn away. Now the great sea covered him over,  
and Odysseus would have perished, wretched, beyond his destiny,  
had not the gray-eyed goddess Athene given him forethought.  
He got clear of the surf, where it sucks against the land, and swam on  
along, looking always toward the shore in the hope of finding
- 440 beaches that slanted against the waves or harbors for shelter  
from the sea, but when he came, swimming along, to the mouth of  
a sweet-running river, this at last seemed to him the best place,  
being bare of rocks, and there was even shelter from the wind there.  
He saw where the river came out and prayed to him in his spirit:
- 445 'Hear me, my lord, whoever you are. I come in great need

to you, a fugitive from the sea and the curse of Poseidon;  
even for immortal gods that man has a claim on their mercy  
who comes to them as a wandering man, in the way that I now  
come to your current and to your knees after much suffering.

## Odysseus comes ashore

- 450 Pity me then, my lord. I call myself your suppliant.'  
He spoke, and the river stayed his current, stopped the waves  
breaking,  
and made all quiet in front of him and let him get safely  
into the outlet of the river. Now he flexed both knees  
and his ponderous hands; his very heart was sick with salt water,
- 455 and all his flesh was swollen, and the sea water crusted stiffly  
in his mouth and nostrils, and with a terrible weariness fallen  
upon him he lay unable to breathe or speak in his weakness.  
But when he got his breath back and the spirit regathered into  
his heart, he at last unbound the veil of the goddess from him,
- 460 and let it go, to drift in the seaward course of the river,  
and the great wave carried it out on the current, and presently Ino  
took it back into her hands. Odysseus staggered from the river  
and lay down again in the rushes and kissed the grain-giving soil.  
Then deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:
- 465 'What will happen now, and what in the long outcome will befall me?  
For if I wait out the uncomfortable night by the river,  
I fear that the female dew and the evil frost together  
will be too much for my damaged strength, I am so exhausted,  
and in the morning a chilly wind will blow from the river;
- 470 but if I go up the slope and into the shadowy forest,  
and lie down to sleep among the dense bushes, even if the chill  
and weariness let me be, and a sweet sleep comes upon me,  
I fear I may become spoil and prey to the wild animals.'
- In the division of his heart this last way seemed best,
- 475 and he went to look for the wood and found it close to the water  
in a conspicuous place, and stopped underneath two bushes  
that grew from the same place, one of shrub, and one of wild olive,  
and neither the force of wet-blown winds could penetrate these  
nor could the shining sun ever strike through with his rays, nor yet
- 480 could the rain pass all the way through them, so close together  
were they grown, interlacing each other; and under these now Odysseus  
entered, and with his own hands heaped him a bed to sleep on,  
making it wide, since there was great store of fallen leaves there,  
enough for two men to take cover in or even three men

485 in the winter season, even in the very worst kind of weather.  
Seeing this, long-suffering great Odysseus was happy,  
and lay down in the middle, and made a pile of leaves over him.  
As when a man buries a burning log in a black ash heap

## **on the island of the Phaiakians**

in a remote place in the country, where none live near as neighbors,  
490 and saves the seed of fire, having no other place to get a light  
from, so Odysseus buried himself in the leaves, and Athene  
shed a sleep on his eyes so as most quickly to quit him,  
by veiling his eyes, from the exhaustion of his hard labors.

## Book VI



So long-suffering great Odysseus slept in that place  
in an exhaustion of sleep and weariness, and now Athene  
went her way to the district and city of the Phaiakian  
men, who formerly lived in the spacious land, *Hypereia*,  
5 next to the Cyclopes, who were men too overbearing,  
and who had kept harrying them, being greater in strength. From here  
godlike *Nausithoös* had removed and led a migration,  
and settled in Scheria, far away from men who eat bread,  
and driven a wall about the city, and built the houses,  
10 and made the temples of the gods, and allotted the holdings.  
But now he had submitted to his fate, and gone to Hades',  
and *Alkinoös*, learned in designs from the gods, now ruled there.  
It was to his house that the gray-eyed goddess Athene  
went, devising the homecoming of great-hearted Odysseus,  
15 and she went into the ornate chamber, in which a girl  
was sleeping, like the immortal goddesses for stature and beauty,  
*Nausikaa*, the daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös,  
and beside her two handmaidens with beauty given from the *Graces*  
slept on either side of the post with the shining doors closed.  
20 She drifted in like a breath of wind to where the girl slept,  
and came and stood above her head and spoke a word to her,  
likening herself to the daughter of *Dymas*, famed for seafaring,  
a girl of the same age, in whom her fancy delighted.  
In this likeness the gray-eyed Athene spoke to her:

## Nausikaa is inspired to go and wash the clothes

- 25     ‘Nausikaa, how could your mother have a child so careless?  
The shining clothes are lying away uncared for, while your  
marriage is not far off, when you should be in your glory  
for clothes to wear, and provide too for those who attend you.  
It is from such things that a good reputation among people
- 30     springs up, giving pleasure to your father and the lady your mother.  
So let us go on a washing tomorrow when dawn shows. I too  
will go along with you and help you, so you can have all  
done most quickly, since you will not long stay unmarried.  
For already you are being courted by all the best men
- 35     of the Phaiakians hereabouts, and you too are a Phaiakian.  
So come, urge your famous father early in the morning  
to harness the mules and wagon for you, and it shall carry  
the sashes and dresses and shining coverlets for you. In this way  
it will be so much more becoming than for you to go there
- 40     on foot, for the washing places are a long way from the city.’  
So the gray-eyed Athene spoke and went away from her  
to Olympos, where the abode of the gods stands firm and unmoving  
forever, they say, and is not shaken with winds nor spattered  
with rains, nor does snow pile ever there, but the shining bright air
- 45     stretches cloudless away, and the white light glances upon it.  
And there, and all their days, the blessed gods take their pleasure.  
There the Gray-eyed One went, when she had talked with the young  
girl.
- And the next the Dawn came, throned in splendor, and wakened the  
well-robed  
girl Nausikaa, and she wondered much at her dreaming,
- 50     and went through the house, so as to give the word to her parents,  
to her dear father and her mother. She found them within there;  
the queen was sitting by the fireside with her attendant  
women, turning sea-purple yarn on a distaff; her father  
she met as he was going out the door to the council
- 55     of famed barons, where the proud Phaiakians used to summon him.  
She stood very close up to her dear father and spoke to him:  
‘Daddy dear, will you not have them harness me the wagon,  
the high one with the good wheels, so that I can take the clothing

to the river and wash it? Now it is lying about, all dirty,  
60 and you yourself, when you sit among the first men in council  
and share their counsels, ought to have clean clothing about you;  
and also, you have five dear sons who are grown in the palace,

## Odysseus wakened by Nausikaa

two of them married, and other three are sprightly bachelors,  
and they are forever wanting clean fresh clothing, to wear it  
65      when they go to dance, and it is my duty to think about all this.'

So she spoke, but she was ashamed to speak of her joyful  
marriage to her dear father, but he understood all and answered:  
'I do not begrudge you the mules, child, nor anything  
else. So go, and the serving men will harness the wagon,  
70      the high one with the good wheels that has the carrying basket.'

He spoke, and gave the order to the serving men. These obeyed,  
and brought the mule wagon with good wheels outside and put it  
together, and led the mules under the yoke and harnessed them,  
and the girl brought the bright clothing out from the inner chamber  
75      and laid it in the well-polished wagon. Meanwhile her mother  
put in a box all manner of food, which would preserve strength,  
and put many good things to eat with it, and poured out  
wine in a goatskin bottle, and her daughter put that in the wagon.  
She gave her limpid olive oil in a golden oil flask  
80      for her and her attendant women to use for anointing.

Nausikaa took up the whip and the shining reins, then  
whipped them into a start and the mules went noisily forward  
and pulled without stint, carrying the girl and the clothing.  
She was not alone. The rest, her handmaidens, walked on beside her.

85      Now when they had come to the delightful stream of the river,  
where there was always a washing place, and plenty of glorious  
water that ran through to wash what was ever so dirty,  
there they unyoked the mules and set them free from the wagon,  
and chased them out along the bank of the swirling river

90      to graze on the sweet river grass, while they from the wagon  
lifted the wash in their hands and carried it to the black water,  
and stamped on it in the basins, making a race and game of it  
until they had washed and rinsed all dirt away, then spread it  
out in line along the beach of the sea, where the water  
95      of the sea had washed the most big pebbles up on the dry shore.  
Then they themselves, after bathing and anointing themselves with olive  
oil,  
ate their dinner all along by the banks of the river

and waited for the laundry to dry out in the sunshine.  
But when she and her maids had taken their pleasure in eating,  
100      they all threw off their veils for a game of ball, and among them

## and the girls at play

- it was Nausikaa of the white arms who led in the dancing;  
and as [Artemis](#), who showers arrows, moves on the mountains  
either along [Taÿgetos](#) or on high-towering  
[Erymanthos](#), delighting in boars and deer in their running,
- 105 and along with her the nymphs, daughters of Zeus of the aegis,  
range in the wilds and play, and the heart of [Leto](#) is gladdened,  
for the head and the brows of Artemis are above all the others,  
and she is easily marked among them, though all are lovely,  
so this one shone among her handmaidens, a virgin unwedded.
- 110 But now, when she was about ready once more to harness  
the mules, and fold the splendid clothing, and start on the way home,  
then the gray-eyed goddess Athene thought what to do next;  
how Odysseus should awake, and see the well-favored young girl,  
and she should be his guide to the city of the Phaiakians.
- 115 Now the princess threw the ball toward one handmaiden,  
and missed the girl, and the ball went into the swirling water,  
and they all cried out aloud, and noble Odysseus wakened  
and sat up and began pondering in his heart and his spirit:  
'Ah me, what are the people whose land I have come to this time,
- 120 and are they violent and savage, and without justice,  
or hospitable to strangers, with a godly mind? See now  
how an outcry of young women echoes about me,  
of nymphs, who keep the sudden and sheer high mountain places  
and springs of the rivers and grass of the meadows, or am I truly
- 125 in the neighborhood of human people I can converse with?  
But come now, I myself shall see what I can discover.'
- So speaking, great Odysseus came from under his thicket,  
and from the dense foliage with his heavy hand he broke off  
a leafy branch to cover his body and hide the male parts,
- 130 and went in the confidence of his strength, like some hill-kept lion,  
who advances, though he is rained on and blown by the wind, and both  
eyes  
kindle; he goes out after cattle or sheep, or it may be  
deer in the wilderness, and his belly is urgent upon him  
to get inside of a close steading and go for the sheepflocks.
- 135 So Odysseus was ready to face young girls with well-ordered

hair, naked though he was, for the need was on him; and yet he appeared terrifying to them, all crusted with dry spray, and they scattered one way and another down the jutting beaches.

## Odysseus supplicates Nausikaa

Only the daughter of Alkinoös stood fast, for Athene  
140 put courage into her heart, and took the fear from her body,  
and she stood her ground and faced him, and now Odysseus debated  
whether to supplicate the well-favored girl by clasping  
her knees, or stand off where he was and in words of blandishment  
ask if she would show him the city, and lend him clothing.  
145 Then in the division of his heart this way seemed best to him,  
to stand well off and supplicate in words of blandishment,  
for fear that, if he clasped her knees, the girl might be angry.  
So blandishingly and full of craft he began to address her:  
'I am at your knees, O queen. But are you mortal or goddess?  
150 If indeed you are one of the gods who hold wide heaven,  
then I must find in you the nearest likeness to Artemis  
the daughter of great Zeus, for beauty, figure, and stature.  
But if you are one among those mortals who live in this country,  
three times blessed are your father and the lady your mother,  
155 and three times blessed your brothers too, and I know their spirits  
are warmed forever with happiness at the thought of you, seeing  
such a slip of beauty taking her place in the chorus of dancers;  
but blessed at the heart, even beyond these others, is that one  
who, after loading you down with gifts, leads you as his bride  
160 home. I have never with these eyes seen anything like you,  
neither man nor woman. Wonder takes me as I look on you.  
Yet in [Delos](#) once I saw such a thing, by Apollo's altar.  
I saw the stalk of a young palm shooting up. I had gone there  
once, and with a following of a great many people,  
165 on that journey which was to mean hard suffering for me.  
And as, when I looked upon that tree, my heart admired it  
long, since such a tree had never yet sprung from the earth, so  
now, lady, I admire you and wonder, and am terribly  
afraid to clasp you by the knees. The hard sorrow is on me.  
170 Yesterday on the twentieth day I escaped the wine-blue  
sea; until then the current and the tearing winds had swept me  
along from the island Ogygia, and my fate has landed me  
here; here too I must have evil to suffer; I do not  
think it will stop; before then the gods have much to give me.

175 Then have pity, O queen. You are the first I have come to  
after much suffering, there is no one else that I know of  
here among the people who hold this land and this city.

## **who receives him kindly**

Show me the way to the town and give me some rag to wrap me in, if you had any kind of piece of cloth when you came here,

180 and then may the gods give you everything that your heart longs for; may they grant you a husband and a house and sweet agreement in all things, for nothing is better than this, more steadfast than when two people, a man and his wife, keep a harmonious household; a thing that brings much distress to the people who hate them

185 and pleasure to their well-wishers, and for them the best reputation.'

Then in turn Nausikaa of the white arms answered him:

'My friend, since you seem not like a thoughtless man, nor a mean one, it is Zeus himself, the Olympian, who gives people good fortune, to each single man, to the good and the bad, just as he wishes;

190 and since he must have given you yours, you must even endure it. But now, since it is our land and our city that you have come to, you shall not lack for clothing nor anything else, of those gifts which should befall the unhappy suppliant on his arrival; and I will show you our town, and tell you the name of our people.

195 It is the Phaiakians who hold this territory and city, and I myself am the daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös, whose power and dominion are held by right, given from the Phaiakians.'

She spoke, and to her attendants with well-ordered hair gave instruction:

'Stand fast, girls. Where are you flying, just because you have looked on

200 a man? Do you think this is some enemy coming against us? There is no such man living nor can there ever be one who can come into the land of the Phaiakians bringing warlike attack; we are so very dear to the immortals, and we live far apart by ourselves in the wash of the great sea

205 at the utter end, nor do any other people mix with us. But, since this is some poor wanderer who has come to us, we must now take care of him, since all strangers and wanderers are sacred in the sight of Zeus, and the gift is a light and a dear one. So, my attendants, give some food and drink to the stranger,

and bathe him, where there is shelter from the wind, in the river.'

She spoke, and they stopped their flight, encouraging each other,  
and led Odysseus down to the sheltered place, as Nausikaa  
daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös had told them  
to do, and laid out for him to wear a mantle and tunic,  
215 and gave him limpid olive oil in a golden oil flask,

## Athene glorifies Odysseus

and told him he could bathe himself in the stream of the river.  
Then the glorious Odysseus spoke to these serving maids:  
'Stand as you are, girls, a little away from me, so that  
I can wash the salt off my shoulders and use the olive oil  
220      on them. It is long since my skin has known any ointment.  
But I will not bathe in front of you, for I feel embarrassed  
in the presence of lovely-haired girls to appear all naked.'

He spoke, and they went away and told it to their young mistress.  
But when great Odysseus had bathed in the river and washed from his  
body

225      the salt brine, which clung to his back and his broad shoulders,  
he scraped from his head the scurf of brine from the barren salt sea.  
But when he had bathed all, and anointed himself with olive oil,  
and put on the clothing this unwedded girl had given him,  
then Athene, daughter of Zeus, made him seem taller

230      for the eye to behold, and thicker, and on his head she arranged  
the curling locks that hung down like hyacinthine petals.  
And as when a master craftsman overlays gold on silver,  
and he is one who was taught by Hephaistos and Pallas Athene  
in art complete, and grace is on every work he finishes,

235      so Athene gilded with grace his head and his shoulders,  
and he went a little aside and sat by himself on the seashore,  
radiant in grace and good looks; and the girl admired him.  
It was to her attendants with well-ordered hair that she now spoke:  
'Hear me, my white-armed serving women; let me say something.'

240      It is not against the will of all the gods on Olympos  
that this man is here to be made known to the godlike Phaiakians.  
A while ago he seemed an unpromising man to me. Now  
he even resembles one of the gods, who hold high heaven.  
If only the man to be called my husband could be like this one,

245      a man living here, if only this one were pleased to stay here.  
But come, my attendants, give some food and drink to the stranger.'

So she spoke, and they listened well to her and obeyed her,  
and they set food and drink down beside Odysseus. He then,  
noble and long-suffering Odysseus, eagerly

250      ate and drank, since he had not tasted food for a long time.

Then Nausikaa of the white arms thought what to do next.  
She folded the laundry and put it away in the fine mule wagon,  
and yoked the mules with powerful hooves, and herself mounted,

## **and Nausikaa is impressed**

and urged Odysseus and spoke a word and named him by title:  
255   ‘Rise up now, stranger, to go to the city, so I can see you  
to the house of my own prudent father, where I am confident  
you will be made known to all the highest Phaiakians.  
Or rather, do it this way; you seem to me not to be thoughtless.  
While we are still among the fields and the lands that the people  
260   work, for that time follow the mules and the wagon, walking  
lightly along with the maids, and I will point the way to you.  
But when we come to the city, and around this is a towering  
wall, and a handsome harbor either side of the city,  
and a narrow causeway, and along the road there are oarswept  
265   ships drawn up, for they all have slips, one for each vessel;  
and there is the place of assembly, put together with quarried  
stone, and built around a fine precinct of Poseidon,  
and there they tend to all that gear that goes with the black ships,  
the hawsers and the sails, and there they fine down their oarblades;  
270   for the Phaiakians have no concern with the bow or the quiver,  
but it is all masts and the oars of ships and the balanced vessels  
themselves, in which they delight in crossing over the gray sea;  
and it is their graceless speech I shrink from, for fear one may mock us  
hereafter, since there are insolent men in our community,  
275   and see how one of the worse sort might say when he met us,  
“Who is this large and handsome stranger whom Nausikaa  
has with her, and where did she find him? Surely, he is  
to be her husband, but is he a stray from some ship of alien  
men she found for herself, since there are no such hereabouts?  
280   Or did some god after much entreaty come down in answer  
to her prayers, out of the sky, and all his days will he have her?  
Better so, if she goes out herself and finds her a husband  
from elsewhere, since she pays no heed to her own Phaiakian  
neighbors, although many of these and the best ones court her.”  
285   So they will speak, and that would be a scandal against me,  
and I myself would disapprove of a girl who acted  
so, that is, without the good will of her dear father  
and mother making friends with a man, before being formally  
married. Then, stranger, understand what I say, in order

290 soon to win escort and a voyage home from my father.  
You will find a glorious grove of poplars sacred to Athene  
near the road, and a spring runs there, and there is a meadow

## **Odysseus and Nausikaa return to the city**

about it, and there is my father's estate and his flowering orchard,  
as far from the city as the shout of a man will carry.

- 295 Sit down there and wait for time enough for the rest of us  
to reach the town and make our way to my father's palace.  
But when you estimate that we shall have reached the palace,  
then go to the city of the Phaiakians and inquire for  
the palace of my father, great-hearted Alkinoös. This is  
300 easily distinguished, so an innocent child could guide you  
there, for there are no other houses built for the other  
Phaiakians anything like the house of the hero Alkinoös.  
But when you have disappeared inside the house and the courtyard,  
then go on quickly across the hall until you come to  
305 my mother, and she will be sitting beside the hearth, in the firelight,  
turning sea-purple yarn on a distaff, a wonder to look at,  
and leaning against the pillar, and her maids are sitting behind her;  
and there is my father's chair of state, drawn close beside her,  
on which he sits when he drinks his wine like any immortal.

- 310 Go on past him and then with your arms embrace our mother's  
knees; do this, so as to behold your day of homecoming  
with happiness and speed, even if you live very far off.  
For if she has thoughts in her mind that are friendly to you,  
then there is hope that you can see your own people, and come back  
315 to your strong-founded house, and to the land of your fathers.'

- So Nausikaa spoke and with the shining lash whipped up  
her mules, and swiftly they left the running river behind them,  
and the mules, neatly twinkling their feet, ran very strongly,  
but she drove them with care, so that those on foot, Odysseus  
320 and the serving maids, could keep up, and used the whip with  
discretion.  
And the sun went down and they came to the famous grove, sacred  
to Athene; and there the great Odysseus sat down  
and immediately thereafter prayed to the daughter of great Zeus:  
'Hear me, Atrytone child of Zeus of the aegis,  
325 and listen to me now, since before you did not listen  
to my stricken voice as the famous shaker of the earth battered me.  
Grant that I come, as one loved and pitied, among the Phaiakians.'

So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athene heard him,  
but she did not yet show herself before him, for she respected  
330 her father's brother, Poseidon, who still nursed a sore anger  
at godlike Odysseus until his arrival in his own country.

## Book VII



So long-suffering great Odysseus prayed, in that place,  
but the strength of the mules carried the young girl on, to the city,  
and when she had arrived at the glorious house of her father,  
she stopped in the forecourt, and there her brothers around her  
5      came and stood, men like immortal gods. They from  
the mule wagon unyoked the mules and carried the laundry  
inside, and she went into her chamber. There an old woman  
of [Apeire](#), [Eurymedousa](#) the chamber attendant, lighted  
a fire for her. Oarswept ships once carried her over  
10     from Apeire, and they chose her out as a prize for Alkinoös  
because he ruled all the Phaiakians and the people listened, as to  
a god. She had nursed white-armed Nausikaa in the palace.  
Now she lit her a fire, and prepared her a supper, indoors.  
Then Odysseus rose to go to the city. Athene  
15     with kind thought for Odysseus drifted a deep mist about him,  
for fear some one of the great-hearted Phaiakians, meeting him,  
might speak to him in a sneering way and ask where he came from.  
But when he was about to enter the lovely city,  
there the gray-eyed goddess Athene met him, in the likeness  
20     of a young girl, a little maid, carrying a pitcher,  
and she came and stood before him and great Odysseus questioned her:  
'My child, would you not show me the way to the house of a certain  
man, Alkinoös, who is lord over all these people?  
For I am an unhappy stranger, and I have come here

## Athene in disguise informs Odysseus

25      a long way from a distant land, and I know nobody  
here of the people who keep this city and the fields about it.'

Then in turn the gray-eyed goddess Athene answered him:  
'Then, my friend and father, I will show you the house that you ask me  
to show, since the king lives close beside my own stately father.

30      But go on in silence the while I lead the way for you, and do not  
give any of these people your eye, neither ask them questions,  
for they do not have very much patience with men from the outlands,  
nor do they lovingly entertain the man come from elsewhere;  
they, confident in the speed of their running ships, cross over

35      the great open water, since this is the gift of the Earthshaker  
to them, whose ships move swift as thought, or as a winged creature.'

So spoke Pallas Athene and she led the way swiftly,  
and the man followed behind her walking in the god's footsteps;  
but the Phaiakians famed for seafaring were not aware of him

40      as he walked among them through their city, because Athene  
of the ordered hair, a dread goddess, would not suffer them to, but  
drifted  
a magical mist about him, as she cared for him lovingly.  
But Odysseus now admired their balanced ships and their harbors,  
the meeting places of the heroes themselves and the long lofty

45      walls that were joined with palisades, a wonder to look at.  
But when they came to the king's glorious palace, then it was  
Pallas Athene, the gray-eyed goddess, who began speaking:  
'Here, my friend and father, you see the house which you asked me  
to tell you of. Here you will find the kings whom the gods love

50      busy feasting, but you go on in with a spirit that fears  
nothing. The bold man proves the better for every action  
in the end, even though he be a stranger coming from elsewhere.  
First of all you will find the mistress there in her palace.  
*Arete* is the name she is called, and she comes of the same

55      forebears as in fact produced the king Alkinoös.  
First of all Poseidon, shaker of the earth, and the fairest  
in form of women, *Periboeia*, had a son Nausithoös.  
She was the youngest daughter of great-hearted *Eurymedon*,  
who in his time had been king over the high-hearted Giants.

60     But he lost his recklessly daring people and himself perished,  
but Poseidon lay in love with his daughter, and she engendered  
Nausithoös the great-hearted, who was lord over the Phaiakians.  
Nausithoös had children, Alkinoös and [Rhexenor](#),

## The palace of Alkinoös

but Apollo of the silver bow then struck down Rhexenor,  
65      married but without sons in his hall, leaving only the one child  
Arete, and Alkinoös made her his wife, and gave her  
such pride of place as no other woman on earth is given  
of such women as are now alive and keep house for husbands.  
So she was held high in the heart and still she is so,  
70      by her beloved children, by Alkinoös himself, and by  
the people, who look toward her as to a god when they see her,  
and speak in salutation as she walks about in her city.  
For there is no good intelligence that she herself lacks.  
She dissolves quarrels, even among men, when she favors them.  
75      So if she has thoughts in her mind that are friendly to you,  
then there is hope that you can see your own people, and come back  
to your house with the high roof and to the land of your fathers.'

So gray-eyed Athene spoke and went away from him  
across the barren and open water, left lovely Scheria  
80      and came to [Marathon](#) and to Athens of the wide ways,  
and entered the close-built house of [Erechtheus](#). But now Odysseus  
came to the famous house of Alkinoös, but the heart pondered  
much in him as he stood before coming to the bronze threshold.  
For as from the sun the light goes or from the moon, such was  
85      the glory on the high-roofed house of great-hearted Alkinoös.  
Brazen were the walls run about it in either direction  
from the inner room to the door, with a cobalt frieze encircling,  
and golden were the doors that guarded the close of the palace,  
and silver were the pillars set in the brazen threshold,  
90      and there was a silver lintel above, and a golden handle,  
and dogs made out of gold and silver were on each side of it,  
fashioned by Hephaistos in his craftsmanship and cunning,  
to watch over the palace of great-hearted Alkinoös,  
being themselves immortal, and all their days they are ageless.  
95      And within, thrones were backed against the wall on both sides  
all the way from the inner room to the door, with fine-spun  
delicate cloths, the work of women, spread out upon them.  
There the leaders of the Phaiakians held their sessions  
and drank and ate, since they held these forever, and there were

100 young men fashioned all of gold and in their hands holding  
flaring torches who stood on the strong-compounded bases,  
and shed a gleam through the house by night, to shine on the feasters.

## The palace of Alkinoös

And in his house are fifty serving women, and of these  
some grind the apple-colored grain at the turn of the hand mill,  
105 and there are those who weave the webs and who turn the distaffs,  
sitting restless as leaves of the tall black poplar, and from  
the cloths where it is sieved oozes the limpid olive oil.  
As much as Phaiakian men are expert beyond all others  
for driving a fast ship on the open sea, so their women  
110 are skilled in weaving and dowered with wisdom bestowed by Athene,  
to be expert in beautiful work, to have good character.  
On the outside of the courtyard and next the doors is his orchard,  
a great one, four land measures, with a fence driven all around it,  
and there is the place where his fruit trees are grown tall and  
flourishing,  
115 pear trees and pomegranate trees and apple trees with their shining  
fruit, and the sweet fig trees and the flourishing olive.  
Never is the fruit spoiled on these, never does it give out,  
neither in winter time nor summer, but always the West Wind  
blowing on the fruits brings some to ripeness while he starts others.  
120 Pear matures on pear in that place, apple upon apple,  
grape cluster on grape cluster, fig upon fig. There also  
he has a vineyard planted that gives abundant produce,  
some of it a warm area on level ground where the grapes are  
left to dry in the sun, but elsewhere they are gathering others  
125 and trampling out yet others, and in front of these are unripe  
grapes that have cast off their bloom while others are darkening.  
And there at the bottom strip of the field are growing orderly  
rows of greens, all kinds, and these are lush through the seasons;  
and there two springs distribute water, one through all the garden  
130 space, and one on the other side jets out by the courtyard  
door, and the lofty house, where townspeople come for their water.  
Such are the glorious gifts of the gods at the house of Alkinoös.  
And there long-suffering great Odysseus stopped still and admired it.  
But when his mind was done with all admiration, lightly  
135 he stepped over the threshold and went on into the palace,  
and there found the leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel  
pouring libation in cups to sharp-eyed Argeiphontes

to whom they always poured the last drink, when mindful of bedtime.  
But now long-suffering great Odysseus went on through the house,  
140      wearing still the deep mist that Athene had drifted about him,

## Odysseus supplicates the Phaiakians

until he came to Arete and to the king, Alkinoös.

Odysseus clasped Arete's knees in his arms, and at that time  
the magical and surrounding mist was drifted from him,  
and all fell silent through the house when they saw the man there,

145 and they wondered looking on him, and Odysseus made his entreaty:

'Arete, daughter of godlike Rhexenor, after much hardship  
I have come to your knees as a suppliant, and to your husband  
and to these feasters, on whom may the gods bestow prosperity  
in their own lives, and grant to each to leave to his children

150 his property in his house and the rights the people have given him.

But for me, urge that conveyance be given quickly  
to my country, since long now far from my people I suffer hardships.'

So he spoke, and sat down beside the hearth in the ashes  
next the fire, while all of them stayed stricken to silence.

155 But at long last the aged hero [Echeneos](#) spoke forth.

He was the most advanced in age of all the Phaiakians,  
and surpassed all in words, knowing many things from time long past.  
He in kind intention now spoke forth and addressed them:

'Alkinoös, this is not the better way, nor is it fitting

160 that the stranger should sit on the ground beside the hearth, in the  
ashes.

These others are holding back because they await your order.

But come, raise the stranger up and seat him on a silver-studded  
chair, and tell your heralds to mix in more wine for us,  
so we can pour a libation to Zeus who delights in the thunder,

165 and he goes together with suppliants, whose rights are sacred.

And let the housekeeper from her stores give the stranger a supper.'

But when Alkinoös of the hallowed strength had heard this,  
he took by the hand the wise and much-devising Odysseus,  
and raised him up from the fireside, and set him in a shining chair,

170 displacing for this powerful [Laodamas](#), his son,

who had been sitting next him and who was the one he loved most.  
A maid servant brought water for him and poured it from a splendid  
and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin  
for him to wash, and she pulled a polished table before him.

175 A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to him,

adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions. Then long-suffering great Odysseus ate and drank. After this, Alkinoös, the hallowed prince, spoke to his herald: ‘Pontonoös, now mix a wine bowl and serve it to all here

## Odysseus kindly received

- 180    in the hall, to make a libation to Zeus who delights in the thunder  
and who goes together with suppliants, whose rights are sacred.'
- So he spoke, and *Pontonoös* mixed the kindly sweet wine,  
and passed a portion to all, offering a drink in the goblets.
- Then when they had made libation and drunk as much as each wanted,
- 185    Alkinoös made a public speech for them, and spoke thus:  
'Hear me, leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel,  
while I speak forth what the heart within my breast urges.  
Now, having feasted, go home and take your rest, and tomorrow  
at dawn we shall call the elders in, in greater numbers,
- 190    and entertain the guest in our halls, and to the immortals  
accomplish fine sacrifices, and after that we shall think of  
conveyance, and how our guest without annoyance or hardship  
may come again, convoyed by us, to his own country,  
in happiness and speed, even though it lies very far off,
- 195    and on the way between suffer no pain nor evil  
until he sets foot on his own country; but there in the future  
he shall endure all that his destiny and the heavy Spinners  
spun for him with the thread at his birth, when his mother bore him.  
But if he is one of the immortals come down from heaven,
- 200    then this is a new kind of thing the gods are devising;  
for always in time past the gods have shown themselves clearly  
to us, when we render them glorious grand sacrifices,  
and they sit beside us and feast with us in the place where we do,  
or if one comes alone and encounters us, as a wayfarer,
- 205    then they make no concealment, as we are very close to them,  
as are the Cyclopes and the savage tribes of the Giants.'
- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Alkinoös, let something else be in your mind; I am not  
in any way like the immortals who hold wide heaven,
- 210    neither in build nor stature, but only to men who are mortal.  
Whoever it is of people you know who wear the greatest  
burden of misery, such are the ones whom I would equal  
for pain endured, and I could tell of still more troubles  
that are all mine and by the will of the gods I suffered.
- 215    But leave me now to eat my dinner, for all my sorrow,

for there is no other thing so shameless as to be set over  
the belly, but she rather uses constraint and makes me think of her,  
even when sadly worn, when in my heart I have sorrow

## tells how he arrived

as now I have sorrow in my heart, yet still forever

220     she tells me to eat and drink and forces me to forgetfulness  
of all I have suffered, and still she is urgent that I must fill her.  
But you, when dawn tomorrow shows, see that you make speed  
to set unhappy me once more on my own land, even  
when I have much suffered; and let life leave me when I have once  
more

225     seen my property, my serving people, and my great high-roofed  
house.'

So he spoke, and they all approved his word and encouraged  
convoy for the stranger, for what he said was fair and orderly;  
but when they had made libation and drunk, each as much as his heart  
desired, they went away each to his house to rest, and now

230     he, the great Odysseus, remained still in the palace,  
and along with him were Arete and the godlike Alkinoös,  
who sat by him, and the servants cleared away the dinner things.

Now it was white-armed Arete who began their discourse,  
for she recognized the mantle and tunic when she saw them, splendid  
235     clothes which she herself had made, with her serving women.

Now she spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
'Stranger and friend, I myself first have a question to ask you.

What man are you, and whence? And who was it gave you this  
clothing?

Did you not say that you came here ranging over the water?'

240     Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'It is a  
hard thing, O queen, to tell you without intermission,  
all my troubles, since the gods of the sky have given me many.  
But this now I will tell you in answer to the question you asked me.  
There is an island, Ogygia. It lies in the water

245     far off. There the daughter of Atlas, subtle Kalypso,  
lives, with ordered hair, a dread goddess, and there is no one,  
neither a god nor mortal person, who keeps her company.  
It was unhappy I alone whom my destiny brought there  
to her hearth, when Zeus with a gathered cast of the shining lightning

250     shattered my fast ship midway on the wine-blue water.  
There all the rest of my excellent companions perished,

but I, catching in my arms the keel of the oarswept vessel,  
was carried for nine days, and on the tenth in the black night  
the gods brought me to the island Ogygia, where Kalypso

255   lives, with ordered hair, a dread goddess, and she received me  
and loved me excessively and cared for me, and she promised  
to make me an immortal and all my days to be ageless,

## **Alkinoös offers to send Odysseus on his way**

but never so could she win over the heart within me.  
There seven years I remained fast, but forever was drenching  
260 with tears that clothing, immortal stuff, Kalypso had given.  
But when in the turning of time the eighth year had befallen me,  
she herself told me to go and urged me to do it, whether  
by a message from Zeus or whether her own mind turned within her,  
and she sent me on my way on a jointed raft, and gave me  
265 much, bread and sweet wine, and put immortal clothing upon me,  
and sent a following wind to carry me, warm and easy.  
Seventeen days I sailed, making my way over the water,  
and on the eighteenth day there showed the shadowy mountains  
of your own country, and the dear heart was happy within me;  
270 but I was unlucky, and had much misery left to live with  
still, what was driven upon me by the Earthshaker, Poseidon,  
who hampered me from my way, letting loose the winds upon me,  
and stirred up an unspeakable sea, nor did the surf swell  
let me sail along on my raft, though groaning constantly.  
275 For now the stormwind scattered it far and wide, and I now  
made my way across the great gulf by swimming, until  
the wind and the water carried me and drove me to your shore;  
but there, had I tried to set foot on the land, the rough wave  
would have dashed me against tall rocks in a place that was cheerless,  
280 so I backed away and swam again, until I came to  
a river, and this at last seemed to me to be the best place,  
being bare of rocks, and there was even shelter from the wind there.  
I came out and dropped, nursing a hold on life, and immortal  
night came on. I went out and away from the sky-fallen river,  
285 and went to sleep there among the bushes, piled in a covering  
of leaves, and the god drifted an infinite sleep about me.  
And there among the leaves, my heart exhausted with sorrow,  
I slept nightlong, and into the dawn, and on to the noonday,  
and the sun was losing its light, and then the sweet sleep released me.  
290 Then I was aware of your daughter's attendant women playing  
on the beach, and she, looking like the goddesses, went there among  
them.  
I supplicated her, nor did she fail of the right decision;

it was as you could never have hoped for a young person, so confronted,  
to act, for always the younger people are careless. Also

295      she gave me food in plenty to eat, she gave me gleaming  
wine, and a bath in the river. She also gave me this clothing.

## after suggesting a marriage with Nausikaa

Sorrowful as I am, all this is true I have told you.'

Then in turn Alkinoös spoke to him and answered:

'My friend, here is one proper thought that my daughter was not

300 aware of, when she failed to bring you, with her attendants,  
here to our house. It was she to whom you first came as a suppliant.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:

'Hero, do not for my sake find fault with your blameless daughter.

She did urge me to follow along with her serving maidens,

305 but I for embarrassment and dread was not willing, for fear  
that something in this might stir your spirit to anger seeing us.  
For we who are people upon this earth are jealous in judgment.'

Then in turn Alkinoös spoke to him and answered:

'Stranger, the inward heart in my breast is not of such a kind

310 as to be recklessly angry. Always moderation is better.

O father Zeus, Athene and Apollo, how I wish  
that, being the man you are and thinking the way that I do,  
you could have my daughter and be called my son-in-law, staying  
here with me. I would dower you with a house and properties,

315 if you stayed by your own good will. Against that, no Phaiakian  
shall detain you. Never may such be to Zeus father's liking.

As for conveyance, so that you may be sure, I appoint it  
for tomorrow, until which time giving way to slumber  
you may rest, and they will sail in the calm, to bring you

320 back to your country and house and whatever else is dear to you,  
even if this may be much further away than Euboia,  
which those of our people who have seen it say is the farthest  
away of all, at that time they carried fair-haired Rhadamanthys  
on his way to visit Tityos the son of [Gaia](#).

325 They went there, and without any strain they accomplished  
the journey, and on the very same day they were back home with us.  
You yourself will see and know in your mind how my ships  
are best, and my young men for tossing up sea with the oarblade.'

So he spoke, and long-suffering great Odysseus was happy.

330 He spoke a word then in prayer and named him by name, saying:  
'Father Zeus, may Alkinoös accomplish everything  
of which he spoke, and so may he have imperishable glory'

upon the grain-giving earth; and I come home to my country.'

So now these two were conversing thus with each other,  
335      but Arete of the white arms told her attendant women

## **Odysseus rests**

to make up a bed in the porch's shelter and to lay upon it  
fine underbedding of purple and spread blankets above it,  
and fleecy robes to be an over-all covering. The maidservants  
went forth from the main house, and in their hands held torches.

- 340 When they had set to work and presently had a firm bed made,  
they came and stood beside Odysseus, and with words roused him:  
'Up, stranger, so you can go to rest. Your bed is made for you.'  
So they spoke, and the thought of sleeping was welcome to him.  
Then long-suffering great Odysseus lay down and slept there
- 345 upon a corded bedstead in the echoing portico,  
but Alkinoös went to bed in the inner room of the high house,  
and at his side the lady his wife served as bedfellow.

## Book VIII



Then when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
Alkinoös, the hallowed prince, rose up from his sleeping,  
and the descendant of Zeus, Odysseus sacker of cities,  
rose up, and Alkinoös, the hallowed prince, guided them  
5 to the Phaiakians' place of assembly, which was built for them by the  
ships. They went and took their seats on the polished  
stones together, but Pallas Athene went through the city,  
likening herself to the herald of wise Alkinoös,  
as she was devising the return of great-hearted Odysseus.  
10 She would go and stand beside each man and speak a word to him:  
'Come with me, leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel,  
to the place of assembly, there to find out about the stranger  
who is new-come to the house of wise Alkinoös, after  
wandering on the great sea, and in shape he is like the immortals.'  
15 So she spoke, and stirred the spirit and strength in each man, and  
quickly the place of assembly and seats were filled with people who  
gathered there, and many wondered much as they looked on  
the wise son of Laertes, and upon him Athene  
drifted a magical grace about his head and his shoulders,  
20 and made him taller for the eye to behold, and thicker, so that he might  
be loved by all the Phaiakians, and to them  
might be wonderful and respected, and might accomplish many  
trials of strength by which the Phaiakians tested Odysseus.  
But when they were assembled and all in one place together,

## Feast in the palace

- 25 to them now Alkinoös spoke forth and addressed them: ‘Hear me, you leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel, while I speak forth what the heart within my breast urges. Here is this stranger, I do not know who he is, come wandering suppliant here to my house from the eastern or western people.
- 30 He urges conveyance, and entreats us for its assurance. So let us, as we have done before, hasten to convey him, for neither has any other man who has come to my house stayed here grieving a long time for the matter of convoy. Come then, let us drag a black ship down to the bright sea,
- 35 one sailing now for the first time, and have for it a selection from the district, fifty-two young men, who have been the finest before. Then, each man fastening his oar to the oarlock, disembark, then come to my house and make yourselves busy for a present feast, and I will make generous provision
- 40 for all. I say this to the young men, but also, you other sceptered kings, come to me in my splendid dwelling, so we can entertain the stranger guest in our palace. Let none refuse; and summon also the inspired singer [Demodokos](#), for to him the god gave song surpassing
- 45 in power to please, whenever the spirit moves him to singing.’
- So he spoke, and led the way, and the others followed, as sceptered kings, but a herald went seeking the inspired singer, and also the fifty-two young men who had been selected went, as he told them, along the beach of the barren salt sea.
- 50 But when they had come down to the sea, and where the ship was, they dragged the black ship down to the deeper part of the water, and in the black hull set the mast in place, and set sails, and made the oars fast in the leather slings of the oarlocks all in good order, and hoisted the white sails and set them.
- 55 They anchored her deep enough in the channel, and then themselves made their way to the great house of wise Alkinoös, and the porticoes and enclosures and rooms were filled with people assembling, there were many men there, both old and young ones, and for them Alkinoös made a sacrifice, twelve sheep, eight
- 60 pigs with shining tusks, and two drag-footed oxen. These they skinned

and prepared and made the lovely feast ready.

The herald came near, bringing with him the excellent singer  
whom the Muse had loved greatly, and gave him both good and evil.

## Demodokos sings about Odysseus at Troy

She reft him of his eyes, but she gave him the sweet singing  
65 art. Pontonoös set a silver-studded chair out for him in the middle of  
the feasters, propping it against a tall column,  
and the herald hung the clear lyre on a peg placed over  
his head, and showed him how to reach up with his hands and take it  
down, and set beside him a table and a fine basket,  
70 and beside him a cup to drink whenever his spirit desired it. They put  
forth their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.  
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
the Muse stirred the singer to sing the famous actions  
of men on that venture, whose fame goes up into the wide heaven,  
75 the quarrel between Odysseus and Peleus' son, Achilleus, how these  
once contended, at the god's generous festival,  
with words of violence, so that the lord of men, Agamemnon,  
was happy in his heart that the best of the Achaians were quarreling;  
for so in prophecy Phoibos Apollo had spoken to him  
80 in sacred [Pytho](#), when he had stepped across the stone doorstep to  
consult; for now the beginning of evil rolled on, descending  
on Trojans, and on Danaans, through the designs of great Zeus.  
These things the famous singer sang for them, but Odysseus,  
taking in his ponderous hands the great mantle dyed in  
85 sea-purple, drew it over his head and veiled his fine features, shamed  
for tears running down his face before the Phaiakians;  
and every time the divine singer would pause in his singing,  
he would take the mantle away from his head, and wipe the tears off,  
and taking up a two-handled goblet would pour a libation  
90 to the gods, but every time he began again, and the greatest of the  
Phaiakians would urge him to sing, since they joyed in his stories,  
Odysseus would cover his head again, and make lamentation.  
There, shedding tears, he went unnoticed by all the others,  
but Alkinoös alone understood what he did and noticed,  
95 since he was sitting next him and heard him groaning heavily. At once  
he spoke aloud to the oar-loving Phaiakians:  
'Hear me, you leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel.  
By this time we have filled our desire for the equal feasting  
and for the lyre, which is the companion to the generous

100 feast. Now let us go outside and make our endeavor in all contests, so  
that our stranger can tell his friends, after  
he reaches his home, by how much we surpass all others

## **Games to console Odysseus**

in boxing, wrestling, leaping and speed of our feet for running.'

So he spoke, and led the way, and the rest went with him,

105 and the herald hung up the clear lyre on its peg, and taking Demodokos by the hand he led him out of the palace and set him on the start of the way, where all the other best men of the Phaiakians went, to gaze at the contests.

They went to the place of assembly, with an endless multitude

110 following, and many and excellent young men stood forth. *Akroneos* stood up, and *Okyalos* and *Elatreus*,  
*Nauteus* and *Prymneus*, *Anchialos* and *Eretmeus*,  
*Ponteus* and *Proreus*, *Thoön* and *Anabesineos*,  
*Amphialos*, son of *Polyneos*, the son of *Tekton*,

115 and Euryalos stood up, *Naubolos'* son, a man like murderous Ares himself, and he was best of all the Phaiakians in build and beauty, only except for stately Laodamas. Also there stood forth three sons of stately Alkinoös,  
Laodamas and *Halios* and godlike *Klytoneos*.

120 First of all they held a contest for speed in running. The field strung out from the starting scratch, yet all at the same time flew on together, turning up the dust of the plain. Of these stately Klytoneos was far the best in the running,  
and was out in front by the length of a furrow for mules plowing

125 a field, and came back first to the crowd, with the rest behind him. Next these tried each other out in the painful wrestling,  
and in this Euryalos surpassed all the best among them. In the jump it was Amphialos who outdid all others,  
while with the discus far the best of them was Elatreus,

130 and in boxing it was Alkinoös fine son, Loadamas. But after all had enjoyed their hearts with athletic contests,  
Loadamas the son of Alkinoös spoke forth among them:  
'Come, friends, let us ask the stranger if he has skill and knowledge  
for any kind of contest. In his build he is no mean man,

135 for the lower legs and thighs he has, and both arms above them, for the massive neck and the great strength, nor is it that he lacks youth, but the crush of many misfortunes has used him hardly.  
For I say there is no other thing that is worse than the sea is

for breaking a man, even though he may be a very strong one.'

140 Then in turn Euryalos spoke forth and answered: 'Loadamas, this word you spoke was fair and orderly.

## He declines to compete

Go yourself then, and say it to him, and invite him to try it.'

Then when the excellent son of Alkinoös heard this answer, he went and stood in the midst of them and spoke to Odysseus:

145 'Come you also now, father stranger, and try these contests, if you have skill in any. It beseems you to know athletics, for there is no greater glory that can befall a man living than what he achieves by speed of his feet or strength of his hands. So come then and try it, and scatter those cares that are on your spirit.

150 Your voyage will not be put off for long, but now already your ship is hauled down to the sea, and your companions are ready.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:

'Laodamas, why do you all urge me on in mockery to do these things? Cares are more in my mind than games are,

155 who before this have suffered much and had many hardships, and sit here now in the middle of your assembly, longing to go home, entreating your king for this, and all of his people.'

Euryalos answered him to his face and spoke to him roughly:

'No, stranger, for I do not see that you are like one versed

160 in contests, such as now are practiced much among people, but rather to one who plies his ways in his many-locked vessel, master over mariners who also are men of business, a man who, careful of his cargo and grasping for profits, goes carefully on his way. You do not resemble an athlete.'

165 Then looking at him darkly resourceful Odysseus answered: 'Friend, that was not well spoken; you seem like one who is reckless. So it is that the gods do not bestow graces in all ways on men, neither in stature nor yet in brains or eloquence; for there is a certain kind of man, less noted for beauty,

170 but the god puts comeliness on his words, and they who look toward him are filled with joy at the sight, and he speaks to them without faltering in winning modesty, and shines among those who are gathered, and people look on him as on a god when he walks in the city. Another again in his appearance is like the immortals,

175 but upon his words there is no grace distilled, as in your case the appearance is conspicuous, and not a god even

would make it otherwise, and yet the mind there is worthless.  
Now you have stirred up anger deep in the breast within me  
by this disorderly speaking, and I am not such a new hand

180      at games as you say, but always, as I think, I have been

## **But angered by the rude Euryalos**

among the best when I still had trust in youth and hands' strength. Now  
I am held in evil condition and pain; for I had much  
to suffer: the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters.

But even so for all my troubles I will try your contests,  
185 for your word bit in the heart, and you have stirred me by speaking.'

He spoke, and with mantle still on sprang up and laid hold of a discus  
that was a bigger and thicker one, heavier not by a little  
than the one the Phaiakians had used for their sport in throwing.

He spun, and let this fly from his ponderous hand. The stone  
190 hummed in the air, and the Phaiakians, men of long oars and famed for  
seafaring, shrank down against the ground, ducking  
under the flight of the stone which, speeding from his hand lightly,  
overflowed the marks of all others, and Athene, likening  
herself to a man, marked down the cast and spoke and addressed him:

195 'Even a blind man, friend, would be able to distinguish your mark by  
feeling for it, since it is not mingled with the common  
lot, but far before. Have no fear over this contest.

No one of the Phaiakians will come up to this mark or pass it.'

She spoke, and much-enduring great Odysseus rejoiced, happy  
200 to find one friendly companion in the assembled company. Again he  
spoke to the Phaiakians, in language more blithe:  
'Now reach me that mark, young men, and then I will make another  
throw, as great as this, I think, or one even better.

Let any of the rest, whose heart and spirit are urgent for it,  
205 come up and try me, since you have irritated me so, either at boxing or  
wrestling or in a foot race, I begrudge nothing;  
any of the Phaiakians, that is, except Laodamas  
himself, for he is my host; who would fight with his friend? Surely  
any man can be called insensate and good for nothing

210 who in an alien community offers to challenge his friend and host in  
the games. He damages what is his. No,  
but I refuse not one of the rest, nor do I scorn him,  
but I am willing to look in his eyes and be tested against him.  
I am not bad in any of the contests where men strive.

215 I know well how to handle the polished bow, and would be first to  
strike my man with an arrow aimed at a company

of hostile men, even though many companions were standing close beside me, and all shooting with bows at the enemies. There was Philoktetes alone who surpassed me in archery

## Odysseus excels in throwing the discus

- 220    when we Achaians shot with bows in the Trojan country. But I will say  
that I stand far out ahead of all others  
such as are living mortals now and feed on the earth. Only  
I will not set myself against men of the generations  
before, not with Herakles nor *Eurytos* of Oichalia,  
225    who set themselves against the immortals with the bow, and therefore  
great Eurytos died suddenly nor came to an old age  
in his own mansions, since Apollo in anger against him  
killed him, because he had challenged Apollo in archery. I can  
throw with the spear as far as another casts with an arrow.
- 230    Only in a foot race I fear one of the Phaiakians might outpass me; I  
have been through too much and shamefully battered  
on many rough seas, since there could be no orderly training  
on shipboard; because of this my legs have lost their condition.'
- So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence.
- 235    Only Alkinoös spoke up and gave him an answer: 'My friend, since it  
is not graceless for you to speak thus among us,  
but you are willing to show that excellence you are endowed with,  
angered because this man came up to you in our assembly  
and belittled you, in a way no man would properly find fault
- 240    with your excellence, if he knew in his heart how to speak sensibly:  
come then, attend to what I say, so that you can tell it  
even to some other hero after this, when in your palace  
you sit at the feasting with your own wife and children beside you,  
remembering our excellence and what Zeus has established
- 245    as our activities, through time, from the days of our fathers. For we are  
not perfect in our boxing, nor yet as wrestlers,  
but we do run lightly on our feet, and are excellent seamen,  
and always the feast is dear to us, and the lyre and dances  
and changes of clothing and our hot baths and beds. Come then,
- 250    you who among all the Phaiakians are the best dancers, do your dance,  
so that our guest, after he comes home  
to his own people, can tell them how far we surpass all others  
in our seamanship and the speed of our feet and dancing and singing.  
Let someone go quickly and bring Demodokos his clear-voiced
- 255    lyre, which must have been set down somewhere in our palace.'

So godlike Alkinoös spoke, and the herald rose up to bring the  
hollowed lyre out of the king's house, and now  
stewards of the course stood up, nine in all of them, chosen

## Demodokos sings

out of the people, who on every occasion set in good order  
260 the grounds for games, and they smoothed the dancing floor and set right all the ground, and the herald came bringing with him the clear lyre  
for Demodokos, who moved into the middle, and about him stood forth young men in the first of their youth, well trained in dancing, and beat the wonderful dancing floor with their feet. Odysseus  
265 gazed on the twinkling of their feet, his heart full of wonder.

Demodokos struck the lyre and began singing well the story about the love of [Ares](#) and sweet-garlanded Aphrodite,  
how they first lay together in the house of Hephaistos  
secretly; he gave her much and fouled the marriage  
270 and bed of the lord Hephaistos; to him there came as messenger Helios, the sun, who had seen them lying in love together.  
Hephaistos, when he had heard the heartsore story of it,  
went on his way to his smithy, heart turbulent with hard sorrows,  
and set the great anvil upon its stand, and hammered out fastenings  
275 that could not be slipped or broken, to hold them fixed in position.  
Now when, in his anger against Ares, he had made this treacherous snare, he went to his chamber where his own dear bed lay,  
and spun his fastenings around the posts from every direction,  
while many more were suspended overhead, from the roof beams,  
280 thin, like spider webs, which not even one of the blessed gods could see. He had fashioned it to be very deceptive.  
But when he had spun about the bedstead all of his treacherous device, he started for [Lemnos](#), the strong-founded citadel,  
which, of all territories on earth, was far dearest to him.

285 Nor did Ares of the golden reins keep a blind watch on him, as he saw Hephaistos the glorious smith go away, but he then took his course so he entered the house of glorious Hephaistos lusting after the love of sweet-garlanded [Kythereia](#).  
She had lately come in from the house of her father, the powerful  
290 son of Kronos, and sat there when Ares entered the house. Then he took her by the hand and spoke to her and named her, saying:  
'Come, my dear, let us take our way to the bed, and lie there,  
for Hephaistos is no longer hereabouts, but by this time

he must have come to Lemnos and the wild-spoken [Sintians](#).'

295 So he spoke, and she was well pleased to sleep with him. These two went to bed, and slept there, and all about them were bending the artful bonds that had been forged by subtle Hephaistos,

## **about the love of Ares and Aphrodite**

so neither of them could stir a limb or get up, and now  
they saw the truth, and there was no longer a way out for them.

- 300    The glorious smith of the strong arms came and stood near. He had turned back on his way, before ever reaching the Lemnian country, for Helios had kept watch for him, and told him the story.  
He took his way back to his own house, heart grieved within him, and stood there in the forecourt, with the savage anger upon him,
- 305    and gave out a terrible cry and called to all the immortals: 'Father Zeus and all you other blessed immortal gods, come here, to see a ridiculous sight, no seemly matter, how Aphrodite daughter of Zeus forever holds me in little favor, but she loves ruinous Ares
- 310    because he is handsome, and goes sound on his feet, while I am misshapen from birth, and for this I hold no other responsible but my own father and mother, and I wish they never had got me. Now look and see, where these two have gone to bed and lie there in love together. I am sickened when I look at them, and yet
- 315    I think they will not go on lying thus even for a little, much though they are in love, I think they will have no wish for sleeping, but then my fastenings and my snare will contain them until her father pays back in full all my gifts of courtship I paid out into his hand for the sake of his bitch-eyed daughter.
- 320    The girl is beautiful indeed, but she is intemperate.'
- So he spoke, and the gods gathered to the house with the brazen floor. Poseidon came, the shaker of the earth, and the kindly Hermes came, and the lord who works from afar, Apollo, but the female gods remained each at her home, for modesty.
- 325    The gods, the givers of good things, stood there in the forecourt, and among the blessed immortals uncontrollable laughter went up as they saw the handiwork of subtle Hephaistos. And thus they would speak to each other, each looking at the god next him:  
'No virtue in bad dealings. See, the slow one has overtaken
- 330    the swift, as now slow Hephaistos has overtaken Ares, swiftest of all the gods on Olympos, by artifice, though he was lame, and Ares must pay the adulterer's damage.'

This was the way of the gods as they conversed with each other,  
but the lord Apollo son of Zeus said a word to Hermes:

335    ‘Hermes, son of Zeus, guide and giver of good things, tell me,

## Ares and Aphrodite concluded

would you, caught tight in these strong fastenings, be willing to sleep in bed by the side of Aphrodite the golden?’

Then in turn the courier Argeiphontes answered:

‘Lord who strike from afar, Apollo, I wish it could only  
340 be, and there could be thrice this number of endless fastenings, and all you gods could be looking on and all the goddesses, and still I would sleep by the side of Aphrodite the golden.’

He spoke, and there was laughter among the immortals, only there was no laughter for Poseidon, but he kept entreating

345 Hephaistos, the famous craftsman, asking him to set Ares free, and spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
‘Let him go, and I guarantee he will pay whatever you ask, all that is approved among the immortal deities.’

Then in turn the renowned smith of the strong arms answered:

350 ‘Shaker of the earth, Poseidon, do not urge this on me. The business of wretches is wretched even in guarantee giving.  
To what could I hold you among the immortal gods, if Ares were to go off, avoiding both his debt and his bondage?’

Then in turn Poseidon, shaker of the earth, answered:

355 ‘Hephaistos, if Ares goes off and escapes, not paying anything he may owe you, then I myself will pay it.’

Then in turn the renowned smith of the strong arms answered:  
‘It cannot be, and it is not right, that I should deny you.’

So mighty Hephaistos spoke and undid the fastenings. Straightway  
360 the two of them, when they were set free of the fastening, though it was so strong, sprang up, and Ares took his way [Thraceward](#), while she, Aphrodite lover of laughter, went back to [Paphos](#) on Cyprus, where lies her sacred precinct and her smoky altar, and there the Graces bathed her and anointed her with ambrosial  
365 oil, such as abounds for the gods who are everlasting, and put delightful clothing about her, a wonder to look on.

So the famous singer sang his song, and Odysseus enjoyed it in his heart as he listened, as did the others there, Phaiakians, men of the long oar, famed for seafaring.

370 Then Alkinoös asked Halios and Laodamas to dance all by themselves, since there was none to challenge them. These two, after they had taken

up in their hands the ball, a beautiful thing, red, which Polybos the skillful craftsman had made them, one of them, bending far back, would throw it up to the shadowy

## Dancing—apology from Euryalos

- 375 clouds, and the other, going high off the ground, would easily catch it again, before his feet came back to the ground. Then after they had played their game with the ball thrown upward, these two performed a dance on the generous earth, with rapid interchange of position, and the rest of the young men standing
- 380 about the field stamped out the time, and a great sound rose up. Then great Odysseus spoke a word to Alkinoös, saying:  
‘O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people, truly, as you boasted your people were the best dancers, so it is done before me. Wonder takes me as I look on them.’
- 385 He spoke, and Alkinoös the hallowed king was pleased, and at once he spoke aloud to the oar-loving Phaiakians: ‘Hear me, leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel.  
I think this stranger is a man of discretion. Therefore come, let us give him a gift of friendship, as is becoming.
- 390 For here are twelve who are marked out as kings in our country with power, and they act as leaders, and I myself am the thirteenth. Then let each of you who are such contribute a well-washed robe, and a tunic, and a talent of precious gold. Then we shall assemble it all together, so that our stranger
- 395 may have it in his hands and be pleased as he goes in to supper. But Euryalos shall make amends to him with a spoken word and a gift, for having spoken out of due measure.’  
So he spoke, and they all approved what he said and urged it, and each one sent his herald away to bring the gifts back.
- 400 Then Euryalos spoke in his turn and answered Alkinoös: ‘O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people, certainly I will make amends to our guest, as you urge me. I will give him this sword, which is all bronze, but the handle on it is silver, and there is a scabbard of fresh-sawn ivory
- 405 cut in rings to hold it. He will find that it is of great value.’  
So he spoke, and put the sword with the nails of silver into his hands, and spoke to him and addressed him in winged words:  
‘Farewell, father and stranger, and if any word was let slip that was improper, may the stormwinds catch it away and carry it
- 410 off, and the gods grant you safe homecoming to your own country and

wife; since here, far from your own people, you must be suffering.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Farewell also to you, dear friend, and may the gods grant you

## Gifts for Odysseus

prosperity; may you never miss this sword you have given

415 me now, as a gift, and made amends to me with words spoken.'

So he spoke, and slung the sword with the nails of silver over his shoulder. The sun went down, and the glorious presents came in, carried by the proud heralds of Alkinoös, and these, surpassingly lovely gifts, the sons of Alkinoös

420 took over, and set them down beside their respected mother. Now Alkinoös the hallowed king was their leader, and all of them went into the house and sat on their high thrones.

Thereupon the king Alkinoös said to Arete:

'Come, wife, bring out a magnificent coffer, the best one you have,

425 and in it yourself lay a robe that is newly washed, and a tunic. Then warm a brazen caldron over the fire, and heat water for this man, so he may bathe and then see, all set out in order, the presents which the stately Phaiakians brought here to give him, and rejoice in the feast and in listening to the song of the singer.

430 I myself make him a present of this surpassingly lovely golden cup, so that all his days he may remember me as he makes libation at home to Zeus and the other immortals.'

So he spoke, and Arete going to her maidservants told them to set the great caldron over the fire, as quickly as might be,

435 and they set the tripod for the bathwater over the blazing fire, and poured in the water and gathered kindling and lit it.

The fire worked on the belly of the caldron, the water heated.

Meanwhile Arete brought from out of her chamber the splendid chest for the stranger, and in it laid the beautiful presents,

440 the clothing and the gold which the Phaiakians had given, and she herself put in a robe, and a handsome tunic,

and spoke to the stranger and addressed him in winged words, saying:

'You yourself must see to the cover and nimbly fasten a knot, so none may break in, while on your journey

445 you rest in a pleasant sleep as you go your ways in the black ship.'

When long-suffering great Odysseus had heard this, straightway he made the covering tight upon it and fastened it nimbly with an intricate knot, whose knowledge the lady [Circe](#) had taught him. Then the housekeeper told him without delay to enter

450 the tub for his bath, and he with joy in his heart looked on the hot water, for he had not been used to be so looked after in the time since he had left the house of fair-haired Kalypso,

## Goodbye Nausikaa

though in that time he had been looked after as if he were truly  
a god. When the maids had bathed him and anointed him with oil,  
455 they put a lovely mantle and a tunic about him, and he stepped from  
the bath and went to join the men at their wine  
drinking. Then Nausikaa, with the gods' loveliness on her,  
stood beside the pillar that supported the roof with its joinery,  
and gazed upon Odysseus with all her eyes and admired him,  
460 and spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words, saying:  
'Goodbye, stranger, and think of me sometimes when you are  
back at home, how I was the first you owed your life to.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

'Nausikaa, daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös,

465 even so may Zeus, high-thundering husband of Hera, grant me to reach  
my house and see my day of homecoming.  
So even when I am there I will pray to you, as to a goddess,  
all the days of my life. For, maiden, my life was your gift.'

He spoke, and went to sit on a chair by the king Alkinoös.

470 And now they were serving out the portions and mixing the wine, as  
the herald came near, bringing with him the excellent singer  
Demodokos, prized among the people, and set a chair for him  
in the middle of the feasters, propping it against a tall column.

Resourceful Odysseus called the herald over and spoke to him,

475 but first he cut a piece from the loin of the pig with shining teeth, with  
most of the meat left on, and edged with rich fat:  
'Here, herald, take this piece of meat to Demodokos so that  
he may eat, and I, though a sorry man, embrace him.'

For with all peoples upon the earth singers are entitled

480 to be cherished and to their share of respect, since the Muse has taught  
them her own way, and since she loves all the company of singers.'

So he spoke, and the herald took the portion and placed it  
in the hands of the hero Demodokos, who received it happily.

They put forth their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.

485 But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
Odysseus the resourceful spoke to Demodokos, saying:

'Demodokos, above all mortals beside I prize you.'

Surely the Muse, Zeus' daughter or else Apollo has taught you,

for all too right following the tale you sing the Achaians'  
490      venture, all they did and had done to them, all the sufferings

## Demodokos sings of the Trojan Horse

of these Achaians, as if you had been there yourself or heard it from one who was. Come to another part of the story, sing us  
the wooden horse, which Epeios made with Athene helping,  
the stratagem great Odysseus filled once with men and brought it

495 to the upper city, and it was these men who sacked Ilion. If you can tell me the course of all these things as they happened,  
I will speak of you before all mankind, and tell them  
how freely the goddess gave you the magical gift of singing.'

He spoke, and the singer, stirred by the goddess, began, and showed them

500 his song, beginning from where the Argives boarded their well-benched ships, and sailed away, after setting fire to their shelters;  
but already all these others who were with famous Odysseus  
were sitting hidden in the horse, in the place where the Trojans  
assembled,

for the Trojans themselves had dragged it up to the height of the city,

505 and now it was standing there, and the Trojans seated around it talked endlessly, and three ways of thought found favor, either  
to take the pitiless bronze to it and hack open the hollow  
horse, or drag it to the cliffs' edge and topple it over,  
or let it stand where it was as a dedication to blandish

510 the gods, and this last way was to be the end of it, seeing that the city  
was destined to be destroyed when it had inside it  
the great horse made of wood, with all the best of Argives  
sitting within and bearing death and doom for the Trojans.

He sang then how the sons of the Achaians left their hollow

515 hiding place and streamed from the horse and sacked the city, and he  
sang how one and another fought through the steep citadel,  
and how in particular Odysseus went, with godlike  
Menelaos, like Ares, to find the house of Deiphobos,  
and there, he said, he endured the grimdest fighting that ever

520 he had, but won it there too, with great-hearted Athene aiding.

So the famous singer sang his tale, but Odysseus melted, and from under his eyes the tears ran down, drenching  
his cheeks. As a woman weeps, lying over the body  
of her dear husband, who fell fighting for her city and people

525 as he tried to beat off the pitiless day from city and children; she sees him dying and gasping for breath, and winding her body about him she cries high and shrill, while the men behind her, hitting her with their spear butts on the back and the shoulders,

## Odysseus is asked to identify himself

force her up and lead her away into slavery, to have  
530 hard work and sorrow, and her cheeks are wracked with pitiful weeping. Such were the pitiful tears Odysseus shed from under his brows, but they went unnoticed by all the others, but Alkinoös alone understood what he did and noticed, since he was sitting next him and heard him groaning heavily.

535 At once he spoke aloud to the oar-loving Phaiakians: ‘Hear me, you leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel. Let Demodokos now give over his loud lyre playing, since it cannot be that he pleases all alike with this song. Ever since we ate our supper and the divine singer

540 began, our guest has never ceased since then his sorry lament. Great sorrow must have come on his heart, surely. But let him hold now, so that all of us, guest receivers and guest alike, may enjoy ourselves. This is the better way, seeing that all this has been done for the sake of our honored

545 guest, this escort, these loving gifts we give him for friendship. For any man whose wits have hold on the slightest achievement, his suppliant and guest is as good as a brother to him. So do not longer keep hiding now with crafty purposes the truth of what I ask you. It is better to speak out.

550 Tell me the name by which your mother and father called you in that place, and how the rest who live in the city about you call you. No one among all the peoples, neither base man nor noble, is altogether nameless, once he has been born, but always his parents as soon as they bring him forth put upon him

555 a name. Tell me your land, your neighborhood and your city, so that our ships, straining with their own purpose, can carry you there, for there are no steersmen among the Phaiakians, neither are there any steering oars for them, such as other ships have, but the ships themselves understand men's thoughts and purposes,

560 and they know all the cities of men and all their fertile fields, and with greatest speed they cross the gulf of the salt sea, huddled under a mist and cloud, nor is there ever any fear that they may suffer damage or come to destruction. Yet this I have heard once on a time from my father, Nausithoös

565 who said it, and told me how Poseidon would yet be angry with us,  
because we are convoy without hurt to all men.  
He said that one day, as a well-made ship of Phaiakian

## **Odysseus is invited to tell his life**

men came back from a convoy on the misty face of the water,  
he would stun it, and pile a great mountain over our city, to hide it.

- 570 So the old man spoke, and the god might either bring it to pass, or it  
might be left undone, as the god's heart pleases.  
So come now tell me this and give me an accurate answer:  
Where you were driven off your course, what countries peopled  
by men you came to, the men themselves and their strong-founded  
575 cities, and which were savage and violent, and without justice, and  
which were hospitable and with a godly mind for strangers.  
And tell me why you weep in your heart and make lamentation  
when you hear of the Argives' and the Danaans' venture, and hear  
of Ilion. The gods did this, and spun the destruction  
580 of peoples, for the sake of the singing of men hereafter. Was there  
perhaps some kinsman by marriage, wife's father or brother,  
a brave man who perished before Ilion? Such are the relatives  
who next to a man's own blood and kin come closest to him?  
Or could it then have been some companion, a brave man knowing  
585 thoughts gracious toward you, since one who is your companion, and  
has thoughts honorable toward you, is of no less degree than a brother?'

## Book IX



Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
‘O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people,  
surely indeed it is a good thing to listen to a singer  
such as this one before us, who is like the gods in his singing;  
5 for I think there is no occasion accomplished that is more pleasant  
than when festivity holds sway among all the populace,  
and the feasters up and down the houses are sitting in order  
and listening to the singer, and beside them the tables are loaded  
with bread and meats, and from the mixing bowl the wine steward  
10 draws the wine and carries it about and fills the cups. This  
seems to my own mind to be the best of occasions.  
But now your wish was inclined to ask me about my mournful  
sufferings, so that I must mourn and grieve even more. What then  
shall I recite to you first of all, what leave till later?  
15 Many are the sorrows the gods of the sky have given me.  
Now first I will tell you my name, so that all of you  
may know me, and I hereafter, escaping the day without pity,  
be your friend and guest, though the home where I live is far away from  
you.  
I am Odysseus son of Laertes, known before all men  
20 for the study of crafty designs, and my fame goes up to the heavens.  
I am at home in sunny Ithaka. There is a mountain  
there that stands tall, leaf-trembling Neritos, and there are islands  
settled around it, lying one very close to another.

## Odysseus' tale

There is Doulichion and Same, wooded Zakynthos,  
25    but my island lies low and away, last of all on the water  
toward the dark, with the rest below facing east and sunshine,  
a rugged place, but a good nurse of men; for my part  
I cannot think of any place sweeter on earth to look at.  
For in truth Kalypso, shining among divinities, kept me  
30    with her in her hollow caverns, desiring me for her husband,  
and so likewise Aiaian Circe the guileful detained me  
beside her in her halls, desiring me for her husband,  
but never could she persuade the heart within me. So it is  
that nothing is more sweet in the end than country and parents  
35    ever, even when far away one lives in a fertile  
place, when it is in alien country, far from his parents.  
But come, I will tell you of my voyage home with its many  
troubles, which Zeus inflicted on me as I came from Troy land.  
‘From Ilion the wind took me and drove me ashore at Ismaros  
40    by the Kikonians. I sacked their city and killed their people,  
and out of their city taking their wives and many possessions  
we shared them out, so none might go cheated of his proper  
portion. There I was for the light foot and escaping,  
and urged it, but they were greatly foolish and would not listen,  
45    and then and there much wine was being drunk, and they slaughtered  
many sheep on the beach, and lumbering horn-curved cattle.  
But meanwhile the Kikonians went and summoned the other  
Kikonians, who were their neighbors living in the inland country,  
more numerous and better men, well skilled in fighting  
50    men with horses, but knowing too at need the battle  
on foot. They came at early morning, like flowers in season  
or leaves, and the luck that came our way from Zeus was evil,  
to make us unfortunate, so we must have hard pains to suffer.  
Both sides stood and fought their battle there by the running  
55    ships, and with bronze-headed spears they cast at each other,  
and as long as it was early and the sacred daylight increasing,  
so long we stood fast and fought them off, though there were more of  
them;  
but when the sun had gone to the time for unyoking of cattle,

then at last the Kikonians turned the Achaians back and beat them,  
60      and out of each ship six of my strong-greaved companions  
were killed, but the rest of us fled away from death and destruction.

## Departure from Troy—the Lotus-Eaters

‘From there we sailed on further along, glad to have escaped death,  
but grieving still at heart for the loss of our dear companions.

Even then I would not suffer the flight of my oarswept vessels

65      until a cry had been made three times for each of my wretched  
companions, who died there in the plain, killed by the Kikonians.  
Cloud-gathering Zeus drove the North Wind against our vessels  
in a supernatural storm, and huddled under the cloud scuds  
land alike and the great water. Night sprang from heaven.

70      The ships were swept along yawning down the current; the violence  
of the wind ripped our sails into three and four pieces. These then,  
in fear of destruction, we took down and stowed in the ships' hulls,  
and rowed them on ourselves until we had made the mainland.

There for two nights and two days together we lay up,

75      for pain and weariness together eating our hearts out.  
But when the fair-haired Dawn in her rounds brought on the third day,  
we, setting the masts upright, and hoisting the white sails on them,  
sat still, and let the wind and the steersmen hold them steady.

80      And now I would have come home unscathed to the land of my fathers,  
but as I turned the hook of Maleia, the sea and current  
and the North Wind beat me off course, and drove me on past [Kythera](#).

‘Nine days then I was swept along by the force of the hostile  
winds on the fishy sea, but on the tenth day we landed  
in the country of the [Lotus-Eaters](#), who live on a flowering

85      food, and there we set foot on the mainland, and fetched water,  
and my companions soon took their supper there by the fast ships.  
But after we had tasted of food and drink, then I sent  
some of my companions ahead, telling them to find out  
what men, eaters of bread, might live here in this country.

90      I chose two men, and sent a third with them, as a herald.  
My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters,  
nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying  
our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of.

95      But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of lotus  
was unwilling to take any message back, or to go  
away, but they wanted to stay there with the lotus-eating  
people, feeding on lotus, and forget the way home. I myself

took these men back weeping, by force, to where the ships were,  
and put them aboard under the rowing benches and tied them

100 fast, then gave the order to the rest of my eager

## Arrival at the island

companions to embark on the ships in haste, for fear  
someone else might taste of the lotus and forget the way home,  
and the men quickly went aboard and sat to the oarlocks,  
and sitting well in order dashed the oars in the gray sea.

- 105    'From there, grieving still at heart, we sailed on further along, and reached the country of the lawless outrageous  
*Cyclopes* who, putting all their trust in the immortal  
gods, neither plow with their hands nor plant anything,  
but all grows for them without seed planting, without cultivation,
- 110    wheat and barley and also the grapevines, which yield for them  
wine of strength, and it is Zeus' rain that waters it for them.  
These people have no institutions, no meetings for counsels;  
rather they make their habitations in caverns hollowed  
among the peaks of the high mountains, and each one is the law
- 115    for his own wives and children, and cares nothing about the others.  
      'There is a wooded island that spreads, away from the harbor,  
neither close in to the land of the Cyclopes nor far out  
from it; forested; wild goats beyond number breed there,  
for there is no coming and going of human kind to disturb them,
- 120    nor are they visited by hunters, who in the forest  
suffer hardships as they haunt the peaks of the mountains,  
neither again is it held by herded flocks, nor farmers,  
but all its days, never plowed up and never planted,  
it goes without people and supports the bleating wild goats.
- 125    For the Cyclopes have no ships with cheeks of vermillion,  
nor have they builders of ships among them, who could have made  
them  
strong-benched vessels, and these if made could have run them sailings  
to all the various cities of men, in the way that people  
cross the sea by means of ships and visit each other,
- 130    and they could have made this island a strong settlement for them.  
For it is not a bad place at all, it could bear all crops  
in season, and there are meadow lands near the shores of the gray sea,  
well watered and soft; there could be grapes grown there endlessly,  
and there is smooth land for plowing, men could reap a full harvest
- 135    always in season, since there is very rich subsoil. Also

there is an easy harbor, with no need for a hawser  
nor anchor stones to be thrown ashore nor cables to make fast;  
one could just run ashore and wait for the time when the sailors'  
desire stirred them to go and the right winds were blowing.

## **off the land of the Cyclopes**

- 140 Also at the head of the harbor there runs bright water,  
spring beneath rock, and there are black poplars growing around it.  
There we sailed ashore, and there was some god guiding  
us in through the gloom of the night, nothing showed to look at,  
for there was a deep mist around the ships, nor was there any moon  
145 showing in the sky, but she was under the clouds and hidden.  
There was none of us there whose eyes had spied out the island,  
and we never saw any long waves rolling in and breaking  
on the shore, but the first thing was when we beached the well-benched  
vessels.
- Then after we had beached the ships we took all the sails down,  
150 and we ourselves stepped out onto the break of the sea beach,  
and there we fell asleep and waited for the divine Dawn.
- ‘But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
we made a tour about the island, admiring everything  
there, and the nymphs, daughters of Zeus of the aegis, started  
155 the hill-roving goats our way for my companions to feast on.  
At once we went and took from the ships curved bows and javelins  
with long sockets, and arranging ourselves in three divisions  
cast about, and the god granted us the game we longed for.  
Now there were twelve ships that went with me, and for each one nine  
goats
- 160 were portioned out, but I alone had ten for my portion.  
So for the whole length of the day until the sun's setting,  
we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine;  
for the red wine had not yet given out in the ships, there was  
some still left, for we all had taken away a great deal  
165 in storing jars when we stormed the Kikonians' sacred citadel.  
We looked across at the land of the Cyclopes, and they were  
near by, and we saw their smoke and heard sheep and goats bleating.  
But when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over,  
then we lay down to sleep along the break of the seashore;
- 170 but when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then I held an assembly and spoke forth before all:  
“The rest of you, who are my eager companions, wait here,  
while I, with my own ship and companions that are in it,

175 go and find out about these people, and learn what they are,  
whether they are savage and violent, and without justice,  
or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly."

## Odysseus and his companions

‘So speaking I went aboard the ship and told my companions also to go aboard, and to cast off the stern cables, and quickly they went aboard the ship and sat to the oarlocks,  
180 and sitting well in order dashed the oars in the gray sea. But when we had arrived at the place, which was nearby, there at the edge of the land we saw the cave, close to the water, high, and overgrown with laurels, and in it were stabled great flocks, sheep and goats alike, and there was a fenced yard  
185 built around it with a high wall of grubbed-out boulders and tall pines and oaks with lofty foliage. Inside there lodged a monster of a man, who now was herding the flocks at a distance away, alone, for he did not range with others, but stayed away by himself; his mind was lawless,  
190 and in truth he was a monstrous wonder made to behold, not like a man, an eater of bread, but more like a wooded peak of the high mountains seen standing away from the others.

‘At that time I told the rest of my eager companions to stay where they were beside the ship and guard it. Meanwhile  
195 I, choosing out the twelve best men among my companions, went on, but I had with me a goatskin bottle of black wine, sweet wine, given me by [Maron](#), son of [Euanthes](#) and priest of Apollo, who bestrides Ismaros; he gave it because, respecting him with his wife and child, we saved them  
200 from harm. He made his dwelling among the trees of the sacred grove of Phoibos Apollo, and he gave me glorious presents. He gave me seven talents of well-wrought gold, and he gave me a mixing bowl made all of silver, and gave along with it wine, drawing it off in storing jars, twelve in all. This was  
205 a sweet wine, unmixed, a divine drink. No one of his servants or thralls that were in his household knew anything about it, but only himself and his dear wife and a single housekeeper. Whenever he drank this honey-sweet red wine, he would pour out enough to fill one cup, then twenty measures of water  
210 were added, and the mixing bowl gave off a sweet smell; magical; then would be no pleasure in holding off. Of this wine I filled a great wineskin full, and took too provisions

in a bag, for my proud heart had an idea that presently  
I would encounter a man who was endowed with great strength,  
215 and wild, with no true knowledge of laws or any good customs.

## in the cave of Polyphemos

‘Lightly we made our way to the cave, but we did not find him there, he was off herding on the range with his fat flocks. We went inside the cave and admired everything inside it. Baskets were there, heavy with cheeses, and the pens crowded

220 with lambs and kids. They had all been divided into separate groups, the firstlings in one place, and then the middle ones, the babies again by themselves. And all his vessels, milk pails and pans, that he used for milking into, were running over with whey. From the start my companions spoke to me and begged me

225 to take some of the cheeses, come back again, and the next time to drive the lambs and kids from their pens, and get back quickly to the ship again, and go sailing off across the salt water; but I would not listen to them, it would have been better their way, not until I could see him, see if he would give me presents.

230 My friends were to find the sight of him in no way lovely. ‘There we built a fire and made sacrifice, and helping ourselves to the cheeses we ate and sat waiting for him inside, until he came home from his herding. He carried a heavy load of dried-out wood, to make a fire for his dinner,

235 and threw it down inside the cave, making a terrible crash, so in fear we scuttled away into the cave’s corners. Next he drove into the wide cavern all from the fat flocks that he would milk, but he left all the male animals, billygoats and rams, outside in his yard with the deep fences. Next thing,

240 he heaved up and set into position the huge door stop, a massive thing; no twenty-two of the best four-wheeled wagons could have taken that weight off the ground and carried it, such a piece of sky-towering cliff that was he set over his gateway. Next he sat down and milked his sheep and his bleating

245 goats, each of them in order, and put lamb or kid under each one to suck, and then drew off half of the white milk and put it by in baskets made of wickerwork, stored for cheeses, but let the other half stand in the milk pails so as to have it to help himself to and drink from, and it would serve for his supper.

250 But after he had briskly done all his chores and finished, at last he lit the fire, and saw us, and asked us a question:

“Strangers, who are you? From where do you come sailing over the  
watery  
ways? Is it on some business, or are you recklessly roving  
as pirates do, when they sail on the salt sea and venture

## In the cave of Polyphemos

- 255    their lives as they wander, bringing evil to alien people?"  
      "So he spoke, and the inward heart in us was broken  
      in terror of the deep voice and for seeing him so monstrous;  
      but even so I had words for an answer, and I said to him:  
      "We are Achaians coming from Troy, beaten off our true course  
260    by winds from every direction across the great gulf of the open  
      sea, making for home, by the wrong way, on the wrong courses.  
      So we have come. So it has pleased Zeus to arrange it.  
      We claim we are of the following of the son of Atreus,  
      Agamemnon, whose fame now is the greatest thing under heaven,  
265    such a city was that he sacked and destroyed so many  
      people; but now in turn we come to you and are suppliants  
      at your knees, if you might give us a guest present or otherwise  
      some gift of grace, for such is the right of strangers. Therefore  
      respect the gods, O best of men. We are your suppliants,  
270    and Zeus the guest god, who stands behind all strangers with honors  
      due them, avenges any wrong toward strangers and suppliants."  
      "So I spoke, but he answered me in pitiless spirit:  
      "Stranger, you are a simple fool, or come from far off,  
      when you tell me to avoid the wrath of the gods or fear them.  
275    The Cyclopes do not concern themselves over Zeus of the aegis,  
      nor any of the rest of the blessed gods, since we are far better  
      than they, and for fear of the hate of Zeus I would not spare  
      you or your companions either, if the fancy took me  
      otherwise. But tell me, so I may know: where did you  
280    put your well-made ship when you came? Nearby or far off?"  
      "So he spoke, trying me out, but I knew too much and was not  
      deceived, but answered him in turn, and my words were crafty:  
      "Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, has shattered my vessel.  
      He drove it against the rocks on the outer coast of your country,  
285    cracked on a cliff, it is gone, the wind on the sea took it;  
      but I, with these you see, got away from sudden destruction."  
      "So I spoke, but he in pitiless spirit answered  
      nothing, but sprang up and reached for my companions,  
      caught up two together and slapped them, like killing puppies,  
290    against the ground, and the brains ran all over the floor, soaking

the ground. Then he cut them up limb by limb and got supper ready, and like a lion reared in the hills, without leaving anything, ate them, entrails, flesh and the marrowy bones alike. We

## The men being eaten, two at a time

cried out aloud and held our hands up to Zeus, seeing  
295      the cruelty of what he did, but our hearts were helpless.  
But when the Cyclops had filled his enormous stomach, feeding  
on human flesh and drinking down milk unmixed with water,  
he lay down to sleep in the cave sprawled out through his sheep. Then I  
took counsel with myself in my great-hearted spirit  
300      to go up close, drawing from beside my thigh the sharp sword,  
and stab him in the chest, where the midriff joins on the liver,  
feeling for the place with my hand; but the second thought stayed me;  
for there we too would have perished away in sheer destruction,  
seeing that our hands could never have pushed from the lofty  
305      gate of the cave the ponderous boulder he had propped there.  
So mourning we waited, just as we were, for the divine Dawn.  
‘But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
he lit his fire, and then set about milking his glorious  
flocks, each of them in order, and put lamb or kid under each one.  
310      But after he had briskly done all his chores and finished,  
again he snatched up two men, and prepared them for dinner,  
and when he had dined, drove his fat flocks out of the cavern,  
easily lifting off the great doorstone, but then he put it  
back again, like a man closing the lid on a quiver.  
315      And so the Cyclops, whistling loudly, guided his fat flocks  
to the hills, leaving me there in the cave mumbling my black thoughts  
of how I might punish him, how Athene might give me that glory.  
And as I thought, this was the plan that seemed best to me.  
The Cyclops had lying there beside the pen a great bludgeon  
320      of olive wood, still green. He had cut it so that when it dried out  
he could carry it about, and we looking at it considered  
it to be about the size for the mast of a cargo-carrying  
broad black ship of twenty oars which crosses the open  
sea; such was the length of it, such the thickness, to judge by  
325      looking. I went up and chopped a length of about a fathom,  
and handed it over to my companions and told them to shave it  
down, and they made it smooth, while I standing by them sharpened  
the point, then put it over the blaze of the fire to harden.  
Then I put it well away and hid it under the ordure

330 which was all over the floor of the cave, much stuff lying about. Next I told the rest of the men to cast lots, to find out which of them must endure with me to take up the great beam

## The blinding of the drunken Polyphemos

and spin it in Cyclops' eye when sweet sleep had come over him.  
The ones drew it whom I myself would have wanted chosen,  
335 four men, and I myself was the fifth, and allotted with them.  
With the evening he came back again, herding his fleecy  
flocks, but drove all his fat flocks inside the wide cave  
at once, and did not leave any outside in the yard with the deep fence,  
whether he had some idea, or whether a god so urged him.

340 When he had heaved up and set in position the huge door stop,  
next he sat down and started milking his sheep and his bleating  
goats, each of them in order, and put lamb or kid under each one.  
But after he had briskly done all his chores and finished,  
again he snatched up two men and prepared them for dinner.

345 Then at last I, holding in my hands an ivy bowl  
full of the black wine, stood close up to the Cyclops and spoke out:  
“Here, Cyclops, have a drink of wine, now you have fed on  
human flesh, and see what kind of drink our ship carried  
inside her. I brought it for you, and it would have been your libation

350 had you taken pity and sent me home, but I cannot suffer  
your rages. Cruel, how can any man come and visit  
you ever again, now you have done what has no sanction?”

‘So I spoke, and he took it and drank it off, and was terribly  
pleased with the wine he drank and questioned me again, saying:

355 “Give me still more, freely, and tell me your name straightway  
now, so I can give you a guest present to make you happy.  
For the grain-giving land of the Cyclopes also yields them  
wine of strength, and it is Zeus' rain that waters it for them;  
but this comes from where ambrosia and nectar flow in abundance.”

360 ‘So he spoke, and I gave him the gleaming wine again. Three times I  
brought it to him and gave it to him, three times he recklessly  
drained it, but when the wine had got into the brains of the Cyclops,  
then I spoke to him, and my words were full of beguilement:  
“Cyclops, you ask me for my famous name. I will tell you

365 then, but you must give me a guest gift as you have promised.  
Nobody is my name. My father and mother call me  
Nobody, as do all the others who are my companions.”

‘So I spoke, and he answered me in pitiless spirit:

“Then I will eat Nobody after his friends, and the others

370    I will eat first, and that shall be my guest present to you.”

‘He spoke and slumped away and fell on his back, and lay there

## Trick of “Nobody”

with his thick neck crooked over on one side, and sleep who subdues all  
came on and captured him, and the wine gurgled up from his gullet  
with gobs of human meat. This was his drunken vomiting.

- 375 Then I shoved the beam underneath a deep bed of cinders,  
waiting for it to heat, and I spoke to all my companions  
in words of courage, so none should be in a panic, and back out;  
but when the beam of olive, green as it was, was nearly  
at the point of catching fire and glowed, terribly incandescent,
- 380 then I brought it close up from the fire and my friends about me  
stood fast. Some great divinity breathed courage into us.  
They seized the beam of olive, sharp at the end, and leaned on it  
into the eye, while I from above leaning my weight on it  
twirled it, like a man with a brace-and-bit who bores into
- 385 a ship timber, and his men from underneath, grasping  
the strap on either side whirl it, and it bites resolutely deeper.  
So seizing the fire-point-hardened timber we twirled it  
in his eye, and the blood boiled around the hot point, so that  
the blast and scorch of the burning ball singed all his eyebrows
- 390 and eyelids, and the fire made the roots of his eye crackle.  
As when a man who works as a blacksmith plunges a screaming  
great ax blade or plane into cold water, treating it  
for temper, since this is the way steel is made strong, even  
so Cyclops' eye sizzled about the beam of the olive.
- 395 He gave a giant horrible cry and the rocks rattled  
to the sound, and we scuttled away in fear. He pulled the timber  
out of his eye, and it blubbered with plenty of blood, then  
when he had frantically taken it in his hands and thrown it  
away, he cried aloud to the other Cyclopes, who live
- 400 around him in their own caves along the windy pinnacles.  
They hearing him came swarming up from their various places,  
and stood around the cave and asked him what was his trouble:  
“Why, Polyphemos, what do you want with all this outcry  
through the immortal night and have made us all thus sleepless?
- 405 Surely no mortal against your will can be driving your sheep off?  
Surely none can be killing you by force or treachery?”  
‘Then from inside the cave strong Polyphemos answered:

“Good friends, Nobody is killing me by force or treachery.”

‘So then the others speaking in winged words gave him an answer:

410    “If alone as you are none uses violence on you,

## Escape from the cave

why, there is no avoiding the sickness sent by great Zeus;  
so you had better pray to your father, the lord Poseidon."

'So they spoke as they went away, and the heart within me  
laughed over how my name and my perfect planning had fooled him.

415 But the Cyclops, groaning aloud and in the pain of his agony,  
felt with his hands, and took the boulder out of the doorway,  
and sat down in the entrance himself, spreading his arms wide,  
to catch anyone who tried to get out with the sheep, hoping  
that I would be so guileless in my heart as to try this;

420 but I was planning so that things would come out the best way,  
and trying to find some release from death, for my companions  
and myself too, combining all my resource and treacheries,  
as with life at stake, for the great evil was very close to us.  
And as I thought, this was the plan that seemed best to me.

425 There were some male sheep, rams, well nourished, thick and fleecy,  
handsome and large, with a dark depth of wool. Silently  
I caught these and lashed them together with pliant willow  
withes, where the monstrous Cyclops lawless of mind had used to  
sleep. I had them in threes, and the one in the middle carried

430 a man, while the other two went on each side, so guarding  
my friends. Three rams carried each man, but as for myself,  
there was one ram, far the finest of all the flock. This one  
I clasped around the back, snuggled under the wool of the belly,  
and stayed there still, and with a firm twist of the hands and enduring

435 spirit clung fast to the glory of this fleece, unrelenting.  
So we grieved for the time and waited for the divine Dawn.

'But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then the male sheep hastened out of the cave, toward pasture,  
but the ewes were bleating all through the pens unmilked, their udders

440 ready to burst. Meanwhile their master, suffering and in  
bitter pain, felt over the backs of all his sheep, standing  
up as they were, but in his guilelessness did not notice  
how my men were fastened under the breasts of his fleecy  
sheep. Last of all the flock the ram went out of the doorway,

445 loaded with his own fleece, and with me, and my close counsels.  
Then, feeling him, powerful Polyphemos spoke a word to him:

“My dear old ram, why are you thus leaving the cave last of  
the sheep? Never in the old days were you left behind by  
the flock, but long-striding, far ahead of the rest would pasture  
450      on the tender bloom of the grass, be first at running rivers,

## and rocks thrown by Polyphemos

and be eager always to lead the way first back to the sheepfold  
at evening. Now you are last of all. Perhaps you are grieving  
for your master's eye, which a bad man with his wicked companions  
put out, after he had made my brain helpless with wine, this

- 455     Nobody, who I think has not yet got clear of destruction.  
If only you could think like us and only be given  
a voice, to tell me where he is skulking away from my anger,  
then surely he would be smashed against the floor and his brains go  
spattering all over the cave to make my heart lighter
- 460     from the burden of all the evils this niddering Nobody gave me."
- 'So he spoke, and sent the ram along from him, outdoors,  
and when we had got a little way from the yard and the cavern,  
first I got myself loose from my ram, then set my companions  
free, and rapidly then, and with many a backward glance, we
- 465     drove the long-striding sheep, rich with fat, until we reached  
our ship, and the sight of us who had escaped death was welcome  
to our companions, but they began to mourn for the others;  
only I would not let them cry out, but with my brows nodded  
to each man, and told them to be quick and to load the fleecy
- 470     sheep on board our vessel and sail out on the salt water.  
Quickly they went aboard the ship and sat to the oarlocks,  
and sitting well in order dashed the oars in the gray sea.  
But when I was as far from the land as a voice shouting  
carries, I called out aloud to the Cyclops, taunting him:
- 475     "Cyclops, in the end it was no weak man's companions  
you were to eat by violence and force in your hollow  
cave, and your evil deeds were to catch up with you, and be  
too strong for you, hard one, who dared to eat your own guests  
in your own house, so Zeus and the rest of the gods have punished you."
- 480     So I spoke, and still more the heart in him was angered. He broke  
away the peak of a great mountain and let it  
fly, and threw it in front of the dark-prowed ship by only  
a little, it just failed to graze the steering oar's edge,  
but the sea washed up in the splash as the stone went under, the tidal
- 485     wave it made swept us suddenly back from the open  
sea to the mainland again, and forced us on shore. Then I

caught up in my hands the very long pole and pushed her  
clear again, and urged my companions with words, and nodding  
with my head, to throw their weight on the oars and bring us  
490      out of the threatening evil, and they leaned on and rowed hard.

## The curse of Polyphemos

But when we had cut through the sea to twice the previous distance,  
again I started to call to Cyclops, but my friends about me  
checked me, first one then another speaking, trying to soothe me:  
“Hard one, why are you trying once more to stir up this savage  
495 man, who just now threw his missile in the sea, forcing  
our ship to the land again, and we thought once more we were finished;  
and if he had heard a voice or any one of us speaking,  
he would have broken all our heads and our ship's timbers  
with a cast of a great jagged stone, so strong is his throwing.”  
500 ‘So they spoke, but could not persuade the great heart in me, but once  
again in the anger of my heart I cried to him:  
“Cyclops, if any mortal man ever asks you who it was  
that inflicted upon your eye this shameful blinding,  
tell him that you were blinded by Odysseus, sacker of cities.  
505 Laertes is his father, and he makes his home in Ithaka.”  
‘So I spoke, and he groaned aloud and answered me, saying:  
“Ah now, a prophecy spoken of old is come to completion.  
There used to be a man here, great and strong, and a prophet,  
[Telemos, Eurymos'](#) son, who for prophecy was pre-eminent  
510 and grew old as a prophet among the Cyclopes. This man told me  
how all this that has happened now must someday be accomplished,  
and how I must lose the sight of my eye at the hands of Odysseus.  
But always I was on the lookout for a man handsome  
and tall, with great endowment of strength on him, to come here;  
515 but now the end of it is that a little man, niddering, feeble,  
has taken away the sight of my eye, first making me helpless  
with wine. So come here, Odysseus, let me give you a guest gift  
and urge the glorious Shaker of the Earth to grant you conveyance  
home. For I am his son, he announces himself as my father.  
520 He himself will heal me, if he will, but not any other  
one of the blessed gods, nor any man who is mortal.”  
‘So he spoke, but I answered him again and said to him:  
“I only wish it were certain I could make you reft of spirit  
and life, and send you to the house of Hades, as it is certain  
525 that not even the Shaker of the Earth will ever heal your eye for you.”  
‘So I spoke, but he then called to the lord Poseidon

in prayer, reaching both arms up toward the starry heaven:  
“Hear me, Poseidon who circle the earth, dark-haired. If truly  
I am your son, and you acknowledge yourself as my father,

## **and his prayer to Poseidon**

530 grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, son of Laertes,  
who makes his home in Ithaka, may never reach that home;  
but if it is decided that he shall see his own people,  
and come home to his strong-founded house and to his own country,  
let him come late, in bad case, with the loss of all his companions,  
535 in someone else's ship, and find troubles in his household."

'So he spoke in prayer, and the dark-haired god heard him.  
Then for the second time lifting a stone far greater  
he whirled it and threw, leaning into the cast his strength beyond  
measure,  
and the stone fell behind the dark-prowed ship by only  
540 a little, it just failed to graze the steering oar's edge,  
and the sea washed up in the splash as the stone went under; the tidal  
wave drove us along forward and forced us onto the island.  
But after we had so made the island, where all the rest of  
our strong-benched ships were waiting together, and our companions  
545 were sitting about them grieving, having waited so long for us,  
making this point we ran our ship on the sand and beached her,  
and we ourselves stepped out onto the break of the sea beach,  
and from the hollow ships bringing out the flocks of the Cyclops  
we shared them out so none might go cheated of his proper  
550 portion; but for me alone my strong-greaved companions  
excepted the ram when the sheep were shared, and I sacrificed him  
on the sands to Zeus, dark-clouded son of Kronos, lord over  
all, and burned him the thighs; but he was not moved by my offerings,  
but still was pondering on a way how all my strong-benched  
555 ships should be destroyed and all my eager companions.  
So for the whole length of the day until the sun's setting,  
we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.  
But when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over,  
then we lay down to sleep along the break of the seashore;  
560 but when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then I urged on the rest of my companions and told them  
to go aboard their ships and to cast off the stern cables,  
and quickly they went aboard the ships and sat to the oarlocks,  
and sitting well in order dashed their oars in the gray sea.

565 From there we sailed on further along, glad to have escaped death,  
but grieving still at heart for the loss of our dear companions.

## Book X



'We came next to the Aiolian island, where [Aiolos](#) lived, [Hippotas'](#) son, beloved by the immortal gods, on a floating island, the whole enclosed by a rampart of bronze, not to be broken, and the sheer of the cliff runs upward  
5 to it; and twelve children were born to him in his palace, six of them daughters, and six sons in the pride of their youth, so he bestowed his daughters on his sons, to be their consorts. And evermore, beside their dear father and gracious mother, these feast, and good things beyond number are set before them;  
10 and all their days the house fragrant with food echoes in the courtyard, but their nights they sleep each one by his modest wife, under coverlets, and on bedsteads corded for bedding. We came to the city of these men and their handsome houses, and a whole month he entertained me and asked me everything  
15 of Ilion, and the ships of the Argives, and the Achaians' homecoming, and I told him all the tale as it happened. But when I asked him about the way back and requested conveyance, again he did not refuse, but granted me passage. He gave me a bag made of the skin taken off a nine-year  
20 ox, stuffed full inside with the courses of all the blowing winds, for the son of Kronos had set him in charge over the winds, to hold them still or start them up at his pleasure. He stowed it away in the hollow ship, tied fast with a silver string, so there should be no wrong breath of wind, not even

## The island of Aiolos and the bag of winds

25      a little, but set the West Wind free to blow me and carry  
the ships and the men aboard them on their way; but it was not  
so to be, for we were ruined by our own folly.  
‘Nevertheless we sailed on, night and day, for nine days,  
and on the tenth at last appeared the land of our fathers,  
30      and we could see people tending fires, we were very close to them.  
But then the sweet sleep came upon me, for I was worn out  
with always handling the sheet myself, and I would not give it  
to any other companion, so we could come home quicker  
to our own country; but my companions talked with each other  
35      and said that I was bringing silver and gold home with me,  
given me by great-hearted Aiolos, son of Hippotas;  
and thus they would speak to each other, each looking at the man next  
him:  
“See now, this man is loved by everybody and favored  
by all, whenever he visits anyone's land and city,  
40      and is bringing home with him handsome treasures taken from the  
plunder  
of Troy, while we, who have gone through everything he has  
on the same venture, come home with our hands empty. Now too  
Aiolos in favor of friendship has given him all these  
goods. Let us quickly look inside and see what is in there,  
45      and how much silver and gold this bag contains inside it.”  
‘So he spoke, and the evil counsel of my companions  
prevailed, and they opened the bag and the winds all burst out.  
Suddenly  
the storm caught them away and swept them over the water  
weeping, away from their own country. Then I waking  
50      pondered deeply in my own blameless spirit, whether  
to throw myself over the side and die in the open water,  
or wait it out in silence and still be one of the living;  
and I endured it and waited, and hiding my face I lay down  
in the ship, while all were carried on the evil blast of the stormwind  
55      back to the Aiolian island, with my friends grieving.  
‘There again we set foot on the mainland, and fetched water,  
and my companions soon took their supper there by the fast ships.

60

But after we had tasted of food and drink, then I  
took along one herald with me, and one companion,  
and went up to the famous house of Aiolos. There I found him  
sitting at dinner with his wife and with his own children.  
We came to the house beside the pillars, and on the doorstone

## All ships but one, with crews,

we sat down, and their minds wondered at us and they asked us:  
“What brings you back, Odysseus? What evil spirit has vexed you?

65     We sent you properly on your way, so you could come back  
to your own country and house and whatever else is dear to you.”

‘So they spoke, and I though sorry at heart answered:  
“My wretched companions brought me to ruin, helped by the pitiless  
sleep. Then make it right, dear friends; for you have the power.”

70     ‘So I spoke to them, plying them with words of endearment, but they  
were all silent; only the father found words and answered:  
“O least of living creatures, out of this island! Hurry!  
I have no right to see on his way, none to give passage  
to any man whom the blessed gods hate with such bitterness.

75     Out. This arrival means you are hateful to the immortals.”

‘So speaking he sent me, groaning heavily, out of his palace,  
and from there, grieving still at heart, we sailed on further,  
but the men's spirit was worn away with the pain of rowing  
and our own silliness, since homecoming seemed ours no longer.

80     ‘Nevertheless we sailed on, night and day, for six days, and on the  
seventh came to the sheer citadel of [Lamos](#),  
[Telepylos](#) of the [Laistrygones](#), where one herdsman, driving  
his flocks in hails another, who answers as he drives  
his flocks out; and there a man who could do without sleep could earn  
him

85     double wages, one for herding the cattle, one for the silvery  
sheep. There the courses of night and day lie close together.  
There as we entered the glorious harbor, which a sky-towering  
cliff encloses on either side, with no break anywhere,  
and two projecting promontories facing each other

90     run out toward the mouth, and there is a narrow entrance,  
there all the rest of them had their oar-swept ships in the inward  
part, they were tied up close together inside the hollow  
harbor, for there was never a swell of surf inside it,  
neither great nor small, but there was a pale calm on it.

95     I myself, however, kept my black ship on the outside,  
at the very end, making her fast to the cliff with a cable,  
and climbed to a rocky point of observation and stood there.

From here no trace of cattle nor working of men was visible;  
all we could see was the smoke going up from the country.

100 So I sent companions ahead telling them to find out

## destroyed by the Laistrygones

what men, eaters of bread, might live here in this country.  
I chose two men, and sent a third with them, as a herald.  
They left the ship and walked on a smooth road where the wagons  
carried the timber down from the high hills to the city,  
105 and there in front of the town they met a girl drawing water.  
This was the powerful daughter of the Laistrygonian  
Antiphates, who had gone down to the sweet-running wellspring,  
[Artakie](#), whence they would carry their water back to the city.  
My men stood by her and talked with her, and asked her who was  
110 king of these people and who was lord over them. She readily  
pointed out to them the high-roofed house of her father.  
But when they entered the glorious house, they found there a woman  
as big as a mountain peak, and the sight of her filled them with horror.  
At once she summoned famous Antiphates, her husband,  
115 from their assembly, and he devised dismal death against them.  
He snatched up one of my companions, and prepared him for dinner,  
but the other two darted away in flight, and got back to my ship.  
The king raised the cry through the city. Hearing him the powerful  
Laistrygones came swarming up from every direction,  
120 tens of thousands of them, and not like men, like giants.  
These, standing along the cliffs, pelted my men with man-sized  
boulders, and a horrid racket went up by the ships, of men  
being killed and ships being smashed to pieces. They speared them  
like fish, and carried them away for their joyless feasting.  
125 But while they were destroying them in the deep-water harbor,  
meanwhile I, drawing from beside my thigh the sharp sword,  
chopped away the cable that tied the ship with the dark prow,  
and called out to my companions, and urged them with all speed  
to throw their weight on the oars and escape the threatening evil,  
130 and they made the water fly, fearing destruction. Gladly  
my ship, and only mine, fled out from the overhanging  
cliffs to the open water, but the others were all destroyed there.  
‘From there we sailed on further along, glad to have escaped death,  
but grieving still at heart for the loss of our dear companions.  
135 We came to [Aiaia](#), which is an island. There lived Circe  
of the lovely hair, the dread goddess who talks with mortals,

who is own sister to the malignant-minded Aietes;  
for they both are children of Helios, who shines on mortals,  
and their mother is [Perse](#) who in turn is daughter of Ocean.

## Exploration of Circe's island

- 140 There we brought our ship in to the shore, in silence,  
at a harbor fit for ships to lie, and some god guided us  
in. There we disembarked, and for two days and two nights  
we lay there, for sorrow and weariness eating our hearts out.  
But when the fair-haired Dawn in her rounds brought on the third day,
- 145 then at last I took up my spear again, my sharp sword,  
and went up quickly from beside the ship to find a lookout  
place, to look for some trace of people, listen for some sound.  
I climbed to a rocky point of observation and stood there,  
and got a sight of smoke which came from the halls of Circe
- 150 going up from wide-wayed earth through undergrowth and forest.  
Then I pondered deeply in my heart and my spirit,  
whether, since I had seen the fire and smoke, to investigate;  
but in the division of my heart this way seemed the best to me,  
to go back first to the fast ship and the beach of the sea, and give
- 155 my companions some dinner, then send them forward to investigate.  
But on my way, as I was close to the oar-swept vessel,  
some god, because I was all alone, took pity upon me,  
and sent a great stag with towering antlers right in my very  
path; he had come from his range in the forest down to the river
- 160 to drink, for the fierce strength of the sun was upon him. As he  
stepped out, I hit him in the middle of the back, next to  
the spine, so that the brazen spearhead smashed its way clean through.  
He screamed and dropped in the dust and the life spirit fluttered from  
him.
- I set my foot on him and drew the bronze spear out of  
the wound it had made, and rested it on the ground, while I  
pulled growing twigs and willow withes and, braiding them into  
a rope, about six feet in length, and looping them over  
the feet of this great monster on both sides, lashed them together,  
and with him loaded over my neck went toward the black ship,
- 170 propping myself on my spear, for there was no way to carry him  
on the shoulder holding him with one hand, he was such a very  
big beast. I threw him down by the ship and roused my companions,  
standing beside each man and speaking to him in kind words:  
“Dear friends, sorry as we are, we shall not yet go down into

175 the house of Hades. Not until our day is appointed.  
Come then, while there is something to eat and drink by the fast ship,  
let us think of our food and not be worn out with hunger."

## Her enchanted beasts

‘So I spoke, and they listened at once to me and obeyed me,  
and unveiling their heads along the beach of the barren water  
180   they admired the stag, and truly he was a very big beast.  
But after they had looked at him and their eyes had enjoyed him,  
they washed their hands and set to preparing a communal high feast.  
So for the whole length of the day until the sun's setting  
we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.

185   But when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over,  
then we lay down to sleep along the break of the seashore;  
but when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then I held an assembly and spoke forth to all of them:  
“Hear my words, my companions, in spite of your hearts' sufferings.

190   Dear friends, for we do not know where the darkness is nor the  
sunrise,  
nor where the Sun who shines upon people rises, nor where  
he sets, then let us hasten our minds and think, whether there is  
any course left open to us. But I think there is none.  
For I climbed to a rocky place of observation and looked at

195   the island, and the endless sea lies all in a circle  
around it, but the island itself lies low, and my eyes saw  
smoke rising in the middle through the undergrowth and the forest.”

‘So I spoke, and the inward heart in them was broken,  
as they remembered Antiphates the Laistrygonian  
200   and the violence of the great-hearted cannibal Cyclops,  
and they wept loud and shrill, letting the big tears fall,  
but there came no advantage to them for all their sorrowing.  
‘I counted off all my strong-greaved companions into two  
divisions, and appointed a leader for each, I myself  
205   taking one, while godlike [Eurylochos](#) had the other.  
Promptly then we shook the lots in a brazen helmet,  
and the lot of great-hearted Eurylochos sprang out. He then  
went on his way, and with him two-and-twenty companions,  
weeping, and we whom they left behind were mourning also.

210   In the forest glen they came on the house of Circe. It was  
in an open place, and put together from stones, well polished,  
and all about it there were lions, and wolves of the mountains,

whom the goddess had given evil drugs and enchanted,  
and these made no attack on the men, but came up thronging  
215 about them, waving their long tails and fawning, in the way  
that dogs go fawning about their master, when he comes home

## Half the men changed to swine

from dining out, for he always brings back something to please them; so these wolves with great strong claws and lions came fawning on my men, but they were afraid when they saw the terrible big beasts.

- 220 They stood there in the forecourt of the goddess with the glorious hair, and heard Circe inside singing in a sweet voice as she went up and down a great design on a loom, immortal such as goddesses have, delicate and lovely and glorious their work. Now [Polites](#) leader of men, who was
- 225 the best and dearest to me of my friends, began the discussion: “Friends, someone inside going up and down a great piece of weaving is singing sweetly, and the whole place murmurs to the echo of it, whether she is woman or goddess. Come, let us call her.”
- ‘So he spoke to them, and the rest gave voice, and called her,
- 230 and at once she opened the shining doors, and came out, and invited them in, and all in their innocence entered; only Eurylochos waited outside, for he suspected treachery. She brought them inside and seated them on chairs and benches, and mixed them a potion, with barley and cheese and pale honey
- 235 added to [Pramneian wine](#), but put into the mixture malignant drugs, to make them forgetful of their own country. When she had given them this and they had drunk it down, next thing she struck them with her wand and drove them into her pig pens, and they took on the look of pigs, with the heads and voices
- 240 and bristles of pigs, but the minds within them stayed as they had been before. So crying they went in, and before them Circe threw down acorns for them to eat, and ilex and cornel buds, such food as pigs who sleep on the ground always feed on.
- ‘Eurylochos came back again to the fast black ship,
- 245 to tell the story of our companions and of their dismal fate, but he could not get a word out, though he was trying to speak, but his heart was stunned by the great sorrow, and both eyes filled with tears, he could think of nothing but lamentation. But after we had wondered at him and asked him questions,
- 250 at last he told us about the loss of his other companions: “We went, O glorious Odysseus, through the growth as you told us, and found a fine house in the glen. It was

in an open place, and put together from stones, well polished.

Someone, goddess or woman, was singing inside in a clear voice

255      as she went up and down her loom, and they called her, and spoke to  
                her,

## Odysseus encounters Hermes

- and at once she opened the shining doors, and came out and invited them in, and all in their innocence entered, only  
I waited for them outside, for I suspected treachery.  
Then the whole lot of them vanished away together, nor did one  
260 single one come out, though I sat and watched for a long time.”
- ‘So he spoke, and I slung my great bronze sword with the silver nails across my shoulders, and hung my bow on also, and told him to guide me back by the same way he had gone; but he, clasping my knees in both hands, entreated me,  
265 and in loud lamentation spoke to me and addressed me: “Illustrious, do not take me against my will there. Leave me here, for I know you will never come back yourself, nor bring back any of your companions. Let us rather make haste, and with these who are left, escape, for we still may avoid the day of evil.”
- 270 ‘So he spoke, and I answered again in turn and said to him: “Eurylochos, you may stay here eating and drinking, even where you are and beside the hollow black ship; only I shall go. For there is strong compulsion upon me.”
- ‘So I spoke, and started up from the ship and the seashore.  
275 But as I went up through the lonely glens, and was coming near to the great house of Circe, skilled in medicines, there as I came up to the house, Hermes, of the golden staff, met me on my way, in the likeness of a young man with beard new grown, which is the most graceful time of young manhood.
- 280 He took me by the hand and spoke to me and named me, saying: “Where are you going, unhappy man, all alone, through the hilltops, ignorant of the land-lay, and your friends are here in Circe's place, in the shape of pigs and holed up in the close pig pens. Do you come here meaning to set them free? I do not think
- 285 you will get back yourself, but must stay here with the others. But see, I will find you a way out of your troubles, and save you. Here, this is a good medicine, take it, and go into Circe's house; it will give you power against the day of trouble. And I will tell you all the malevolent guiles of Circe.
- 290 She will make you a potion, and put drugs in the food, but she will not

even so be able to enchant you, for this good medicine  
which I give you now will prevent her. I will tell you the details  
of what to do. As soon as Circe with her long wand strikes you,

## The herb moly saves Odysseus

then drawing from beside your thigh your sharp sword, rush  
295 forward against Circe, as if you were raging to kill her,  
and she will be afraid, and invite you to go to bed with her.  
Do not then resist and refuse the bed of the goddess,  
for so she will set free your companions, and care for you also;  
but bid her swear the great oath of the blessed gods, that she  
300 has no other evil hurt that she is devising against you,  
so she will not make you weak and unmanned, once you are naked.”

‘So spoke Argeiphontes, and he gave me the medicine,  
which he picked out of the ground, and he explained the nature  
of it to me. It was black at the root, but with a milky  
305 flower. The gods call it moly. It is hard for mortal  
men to dig up, but the gods have power to do all things.

‘Then Hermes went away, passing over the wooded island,  
toward tall Olympos, and I meanwhile made my way to the house  
of Circe, but my heart was a storm in me as I went. Now  
310 I stood outside at the doors of the goddess with the glorious  
hair, and standing I shouted aloud; and the goddess heard me,  
and at once she opened the shining doors and came out and invited  
me in; and I, deeply troubled in my heart, went in with her.

She made me sit down in a chair that was wrought elaborately  
315 and splendid with silver nails, and under my feet was a footstool.  
She made a potion for me to drink and gave it in a golden  
cup, and with evil thoughts in her heart added the drug to it.  
Then when she had given it and I drank it off, without being  
enchanted, she struck me with her wand and spoke and named me:

320 “Go to your sty now and lie down with your other friends there.”

‘So she spoke, but I, drawing from beside my thigh the sharp sword,  
rushed forward against Circe as if I were raging to kill her,  
but she screamed aloud and ran under my guard, and clasping both  
knees  
in loud lamentation spoke to me and addressed me in winged words:  
325 “What man are you and whence? Where are your city and parents?  
The wonder is on me that you drank my drugs and have not been  
enchanted, for no other man beside could have stood up  
under my drugs, once he drank and they passed the barrier

of his teeth. There is a mind in you no magic will work on.

330 You are then resourceful Odysseus. Argeiphontes  
of the golden staff was forever telling me you would come  
to me, on your way back from Troy with your fast black ship.

## **from Circe's spells**

Come then, put away your sword in its sheath, and let us  
two go up into my bed so that, lying together

335     in the bed of love, we may then have faith and trust in each other."

‘So she spoke, and I answered her again and said to her:

“Circe, how can you ask me to be gentle with you, when it  
is you who turned my companions into pigs in your palace?

And now you have me here myself, you treacherously

340     ask me to go into your chamber, and go to bed with you,  
so that when I am naked you can make me a weakling, unmanned.

I would not be willing to go to bed with you unless

you can bring yourself, O goddess, to swear me a great oath  
that there is no other evil hurt you devise against me.”

345     ‘So I spoke, and she at once swore me the oath, as I asked her, But  
after she had sworn me the oath, and made an end of it,  
I mounted the surpassingly beautiful bed of Circe.

‘Meanwhile, the four maidservants, who wait on Circe  
in her house, were busy at their work, all through the palace.

350     These are daughters born of the springs and from the coppices  
and the sacred rivers which flow down to the sea. Of these  
one laid the coverlets, splendid and stained in purple, over  
the backs of the chairs, and spread on the seats the cloths to sit on.  
The second drew up the silver tables and placed them in front of

355     the chairs, and laid out the golden serving baskets upon them.  
The third mixed wine, kindly sweet and fragrant, in the silver  
mixing bowl, and set out the golden goblets. The fourth one  
brought in water, then set about building up an abundant  
fire, underneath the great caldron, and the water heated.

360     But when the water had come to a boil in the shining bronze, then  
she sat me down in the bathtub and washed me from the great caldron,  
mixing hot and cold just as I wanted, and pouring it  
over shoulders and head, to take the heart-wasting weariness  
from my limbs. When she had bathed me and anointed me with olive  
oil,

365     she put a splendid mantle and a tunic upon me,  
and made me sit down in a chair that was wrought elaborately  
and splendid with silver nails, and under my feet was a footstool.

A maidservant brought water for us and poured it from a splendid  
and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin,

370      for us to wash, and she pulled a polished table before us.

## The swine changed back to men

A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to us, adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions, and told us to eat, but nothing pleased my mind, and I sat there thinking of something else, mind full of evil imaginings.

375 ‘When Circe noticed how I sat there without ever putting my hands out to the food, and with the strong sorrow upon me, she came close, and stood beside me and addressed me in winged words:

“Why, Odysseus, do you sit so, like a man who has lost his voice, eating your heart out, but touch neither food nor drink. Is it  
380 that you suspect me of more treachery? But you have nothing to fear, since I have already sworn my strong oath to you.”

‘So she spoke, but I answered her again and said to her:

“Oh, Circe, how could any man right in his mind ever endure to taste of the food and drink that are set before him,

385 until with his eyes he saw his companions set free? So then, if you are sincerely telling me to eat and drink, set them free, so my eyes can again behold my eager companions.”

‘So I spoke, and Circe walked on out through the palace, holding her wand in her hand, and opened the doors of the pigsty,

390 and drove them out. They looked like nine-year-old porkers. They stood

ranged and facing her, and she, making her way through their ranks, anointed each of them with some other medicine, and the bristles, grown upon them by the evil medicine Circe had bestowed upon them before, now fell away from them,

395 and they turned back once more into men, younger than they had been and taller for the eye to behold and handsomer by far.

They recognized me, and each of them clung to my hand. The lovely longing for lamentation came over us, and the house echoed terribly to the sound, and even the goddess took pity,

400 and she, shining among goddesses, came close and said to me:

“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, go back down now to your fast ship and the sand of the seashore, and first of all, drag your ship up on the land, stowing your possessions and all the ship's running gear away in the sea caves,

405 and then come back, and bring with you your eager companions."

‘So she spoke, and the proud heart in me was persuaded,  
and I went back down to my fast ship and the sand of the seashore,  
and there I found beside the fast ship my eager companions  
pitiful in their lamentation and weeping big tears.

## Reunion of all the crew

- 410 And as, in the country, the calves, around the cows returning from pasture back to the dung of the farmyard, well filled with grazing, come gamboling together to meet them, and the pens no longer can hold them in, but lowing incessantly they come running around their mothers, so these men, once their eyes saw me,
- 415 came streaming around me, in tears, and the spirit in them made them feel as if they were back in their own country, the very city of rugged Ithaka, where they were born and raised up. So they came in tears about me, and cried in winged words: "O great Odysseus, we are as happy to see you returning
- 420 as if we had come back to our own Ithakan country. But come, tell us about the death of our other companions."
- 'So they spoke, but I answered in soft words and told them: "First of all, let us drag our ship up on the land, stowing our possessions and all the ship's running gear away in the sea caves,
- 425 and then make haste, all of you, to come along with me, so that you can see your companions, in the sacred dwelling of Circe, eating and drinking, for they have all in abundance."
- 'So I spoke, and at once they did as I told them. Only Eurylochos was trying to hold back all my other
- 430 companions, and he spoke to them and addressed them in winged words:
- "Ah, poor wretches. Where are we going? Why do you long for the evils of going down into Circe's palace, for she will transform the lot of us into pigs or wolves or lions, and so we shall guard her great house for her, under compulsion.
- 435 So too it happened with the Cyclops, when our companions went into his yard, and the bold Odysseus was of their company; for it was by this man's recklessness that these too perished."
- 'So he spoke, and I considered in my mind whether to draw out the long-edged sword from beside my big thigh,
- 440 and cut off his head and throw it on the ground, even though he was nearly related to me by marriage; but my companions checked me, first one then another speaking, trying to soothe me: "Zeus-sprung Odysseus, if you ask us to, we will leave this man here to stay where he is and keep watch over

445 the ship. You show us the way to the sacred dwelling of Circe."

‘So they spoke, and started up from the ship and the seashore; nor would Eurylochos be left alone by the hollow ship, but followed along in fear of my fierce reproaches.

## Life with Circe

‘Meanwhile, inside the house, Circe with loving care bathed  
450 the rest of my companions, and anointed them well with olive oil,  
and put about them mantles of fleece and tunics. We found them  
all together, feasting well in the halls. When my men  
looked each other in the face and knew one another,  
they burst into an outcry of tears, and the whole house echoed,  
455 But she, shining among goddesses, came close and said to us:  
“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
no longer raise the swell of your lamentation. I too  
know all the pains you have suffered on the sea where the fish swarm,  
and all the damage done you on the dry land by hostile  
460 men. But come now, eat your food and drink your wine, until  
you gather back again into your chests that kind of spirit  
you had in you when first you left the land of your fathers  
on rugged Ithaka. Now you are all dried out, dispirited  
from the constant thought of your hard wandering, nor is there any  
465 spirit in your festivity, because of so much suffering.”  
‘So she spoke, and the proud heart in us was persuaded.  
There for all our days until a year was completed  
we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.  
But when it was the end of a year, and the months wasted  
470 away, and the seasons changed, and the long days were accomplished,  
then my eager companions called me aside and said to me:  
“What ails you now? It is time to think about our own country,  
if truly it is ordained that you shall survive and come back  
to your strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers.”  
475 ‘So they spoke, and the proud heart in me was persuaded. So for the  
whole length of the day until the sun's setting  
we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.  
But when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over,  
they lay down to sleep all about the shadowy chambers,  
480 but I, mounting the surpassingly beautiful bed of Circe,  
clasped her by the knees and entreated her, and the goddess  
listened to me, and I spoke to her and addressed her in winged words:  
“O Circe, accomplish now the promise you gave, that you  
would see me on my way home. The spirit within me is urgent

485 now, as also in the rest of my friends, who are wasting  
my heart away, lamenting around me, when you are elsewhere.”  
‘So I spoke, and she, shining among goddesses, answered:

## Odysseus before going home must visit the land of the dead

“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
you shall no longer stay in my house when none of you wish to;

490     but first there is another journey you must accomplish  
and reach the house of Hades and of revered [Persephone](#),  
there to consult with the soul of [Teiresias](#) the Theban,  
the blind prophet, whose senses stay unshaken within him,  
to whom alone Persephone has granted intelligence

495     even after death, but the rest of them are flitting shadows.”

‘So she spoke, and the inward heart in me was broken,  
and I sat down on the bed and cried, nor did the heart in me  
wish to go on living any longer, nor to look on the sunlight.

But when I had glutted myself with rolling about and weeping,

500     then at last I spoke aloud and answered the goddess:

“Circe, who will be our guide on that journey? No one  
has ever yet in a black ship gone all the way to Hades’.”

‘So I spoke, and she, shining among goddesses, answered:

“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,

505     let no need for a guide on your ship trouble you; only  
set up your mast pole and spread the white sails upon it,  
and sit still, and let the blast of the North Wind carry you.

But when you have crossed with your ship the stream of the Ocean, you  
will

find there a thickly wooded shore, and the groves of Persephone,

510     and tall black poplars growing, and fruit-perishing willows;  
then beach your ship on the shore of the deep-eddying Ocean  
and yourself go forward into the moldering home of Hades.

There [Pyriphlegethon](#) and [Kokytos](#), which is an off-break  
from the water of the Styx, flow into [Acheron](#). There is

515     a rock there, and the junction of two thunderous rivers.

There, hero, you must go close in and do as I tell you.

Dig a pit of about a cubit in each direction,  
and pour it full of drink offerings for all the dead, first  
honey mixed with milk, then a second pouring of sweet wine,

520     and the third, water, and over all then sprinkle white barley,  
and promise many times to the strengthless heads of the perished  
dead that, returning to Ithaka, you will slaughter a barren

cow, your best, in your palace and pile the pyre with treasures,  
and to Teiresias apart dedicate an all-back

525      ram, the one conspicuous in all your sheepflocks.

## Sailing instructions—the men are told

But when with prayers you have entreated the glorious hordes  
of the dead, then sacrifice one ram and one black female,  
turning them toward [Erebos](#), but yourself turn away from them  
and make for where the river runs, and there the numerous  
530      souls of the perished dead will come and gather about you.  
Then encourage your companions and tell them, taking  
the sheep that are lying by, slaughtered with the pitiless  
bronze, to skin these, and burn them, and pray to the divinities,  
to Hades the powerful, and to revered Persephone,  
535      while you yourself, drawing from beside your thigh the sharp sword,  
crouch there, and do not let the strengthless heads of the perished  
dead draw nearer to the blood until you have questioned Teiresias.  
Then, leader of the host, the prophet will soon come to you,  
and he will tell you the way to go, the stages of your journey,  
540      and tell you how to make your way home on the sea where the fish  
swarm.”  
“So she spoke, and Dawn of the golden throne came on us,  
and she put clothing upon me, an outer cloak and a tunic,  
while she, the nymph, mantled herself in a gleaming white robe  
fine-woven and delightful, and around her waist she fastened  
545      a handsome belt of gold, and on her head was a wimple;  
while I walked all about the house and roused my companions,  
standing beside each man and speaking to him in kind words:  
“No longer lie abed and dreaming away in sweet sleep.  
The queenly Circe has shown me the way. So let us go now.”  
550      ‘So I spoke, and the proud heart in them was persuaded. Yet I did not  
lead away my companions without some  
loss. There was one, [Elpenor](#), the youngest man, not terribly  
powerful in fighting nor sound in his thoughts. This man,  
apart from the rest of his friends, in search of cool air, had lain  
555      down drunkenly to sleep on the roof of Circe's palace,  
and when his companions stirred to go he, hearing their tumult  
and noise of talking, started suddenly up, and never thought,  
when he went down, to go by way of the long ladder,  
but blundered straight off the edge of the roof, so that his neck bone  
560      was broken out of its sockets, and his soul went down to Hades’.

‘Now as my men were on their way I said a word to them:  
“You think you are on your way back now to your own beloved  
country, but Circe has indicated another journey

## **Death of Elpenor**

for us, to the house of Hades and of revered Persephone  
565 there to consult with the soul of Teiresias the Theban.”

‘So I spoke, and the inward heart in them was broken.  
They sat down on the ground and lamented and tore their hair out,  
but there came no advantage to them for all their sorrowing.

‘When we came down to our fast ship and the sand of the seashore,  
570 we sat down, sorrowful, and weeping big tears. Circe  
meanwhile had gone down herself to the side of the black ship,  
and tethered aboard it a ram and one black female, easily  
passing by us unseen. Whose eyes can follow the movement  
of a god passing from place to place, unless the god wishes?

## Book XI



‘Now when we had gone down again to the sea and our vessel,  
first of all we dragged the ship down into the bright water,  
and in the black hull set the mast in place, and set sails,  
and took the sheep and walked them aboard, and ourselves also  
5      embarked, but sorrowful, and weeping big tears. Circe  
of the lovely hair, the dread goddess who talks with mortals,  
sent us an excellent companion, a following wind, filling  
the sails, to carry from astern the ship with the dark prow.  
We ourselves, over all the ship making fast the running gear,  
10     sat still, and let the wind and the steersman hold her steady.  
All day long her sails were filled as she went through the water,  
and the sun set, and all the journeying-ways were darkened.  
‘She made the limit, which is of the deep-running Ocean.  
There lie the community and city of [Kimmerian](#) people,  
15     hidden in fog and cloud, nor does Helios, the radiant  
sun, ever break through the dark, to illuminate them with his shining,  
neither when he climbs up into the starry heaven,  
nor when he wheels to return again from heaven to earth,  
but always a glum night is spread over wretched mortals.  
20     Making this point, we ran the ship ashore, and took out  
the sheep, and ourselves walked along by the stream of the Ocean  
until we came to that place to which Circe had spoken.  
‘There [Perimedes](#) and Eurylochos held the victims  
fast, and I, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword,

## The land of the dead—the ghost of Elpenor

25      dug a pit, of about a cubit in each direction,  
and poured it full of drink offerings for all the dead, first  
honey mixed with milk, and the second pouring was sweet wine,  
and the third, water, and over it all I sprinkled white barley.  
I promised many times to the strengthless heads of the perished  
30      dead that, returning to Ithaka, I would slaughter a barren  
cow, my best, in my palace, and pile the pyre with treasures,  
and to Teiresias apart would dedicate an all-black  
ram, the one conspicuous in all our sheep flocks.  
Now when, with sacrifices and prayers, I had so entreated  
35      the hordes of the dead, I took the sheep and cut their throats  
over the pit, and the dark-clouding blood ran in, and the souls  
of the perished dead gathered to the place, up out of Erebos,  
brides, and young unmarried men, and long-suffering elders,  
virgins, tender and with the sorrows of young hearts upon them,  
40      and many fighting men killed in battle, stabbed with brazen  
spears, still carrying their bloody armor upon them.  
These came swarming around my pit from every direction  
with inhuman clamor, and green fear took hold of me.  
Then I encouraged my companions and told them, taking  
45      the sheep that were lying by, slaughtered with the pitiless  
bronze, to skin these, and burn them, and pray to the divinities,  
to Hades the powerful, and to revered Persephone,  
while I myself, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword,  
crouched there, and would not let the strengthless heads of the perished  
50      dead draw nearer to the blood, until I had questioned Teiresias.  
‘But first there came the soul of my companion, Elpenor,  
for he had not yet been buried under earth of the wide ways,  
since we had left his body behind in Circe's palace,  
unburied and unwept, with this other errand before us.  
55      I broke into tears at the sight of him, and my heart pitied him,  
and so I spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
“Elpenor, how did you come here beneath the fog and the darkness?  
You have come faster on foot than I could in my black ship.”  
‘So I spoke, and he groaned aloud and spoke and answered:  
60      “Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,

the evil will of the spirit and the wild wine bewildered me.  
I lay down on the roof of Circe's palace, and never thought,  
when I went down, to go by way of the long ladder,

## The prophecy of Elpenor

but blundered straight off the edge of the roof, so that my neck bone  
65      was broken out of its sockets, and my soul went down to Hades'.  
But now I pray you, by those you have yet to see, who are not here,  
by your wife, and by your father, who reared you when you were little,  
and by Telemachos whom you left alone in your palace;  
for I know that after you leave this place and the house of Hades  
70      you will put back with your well-made ship to the island, Aiaia;  
there at that time, my lord, I ask that you remember me,  
and do not go and leave me behind unwept, unburied,  
when you leave, for fear I might become the gods' curse upon you;  
but burn me there with all my armor that belongs to me,  
75      and heap up a grave mound beside the beach of the gray sea,  
for an unhappy man, so that those to come will know of me.  
Do this for me, and on top of the grave mound plant the oar  
with which I rowed when I was alive and among my companions."

‘So he spoke, and I in turn spoke to him in answer:

80      “All this, my unhappy friend, I will do for you as you ask me.”  
‘So we two stayed there exchanging our sad words, I on  
one side holding my sword over the blood, while opposite  
me the phantom of my companion talked long with me.

‘Next there came to me the soul of my dead mother,  
85      Antikleia, daughter of great-hearted Autolykos,  
whom I had left alive when I went to sacred Ilion.  
I broke into tears at the sight of her and my heart pitied her,  
but even so, for all my throning sorrow, I would not  
let her draw near the blood until I had questioned Teiresias.

90      ‘Now came the soul of Teiresias the Theban, holding a staff of gold,  
and he knew who I was, and spoke to me:  
“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
how is it then, unhappy man, you have left the sunlight  
and come here, to look on dead men, and this place without pleasure?”

95      Now draw back from the pit, and hold your sharp sword away from  
me,  
so that I can drink of the blood and speak the truth to you.”  
‘So he spoke, and I, holding away the sword with the silver  
nails, pushed it back in the sheath, and the flawless prophet,

after he had drunk the blood, began speaking to me.

- 100    “Glorious Odysseus, what you are after is sweet homecoming,  
but the god will make it hard for you. I think you will not  
escape the Shaker of the Earth, who holds a grudge against you

## **about the last voyage of Odysseus**

in his heart, and because you blinded his dear son, hates you.  
But even so and still you might come back, after much suffering,  
105 if you can contain your own desire, and contain your companions',  
at that time when you first put in your well-made vessel  
at the island [Thrinakia](#), escaping the sea's blue water,  
and there discover pasturing the cattle and fat sheep  
of Helios, who sees all things, and listens to all things.

110 Then, if you keep your mind on homecoming, and leave these  
unharmed,  
you might all make your way to Ithaka, after much suffering;  
but if you do harm them, then I testify to the destruction  
of your ship and your companions, but if you yourself get clear,  
you will come home in bad case, with the loss of all your companions,

115 in someone else's ship, and find troubles in your household,  
insolent men, who are eating away your livelihood  
and courting your godlike wife and offering gifts to win her.  
You may punish the violences of these men, when you come home.  
But after you have killed these suitors in your own palace,

120 either by treachery, or openly with the sharp bronze,  
then you must take up your well-shaped oar and go on a journey  
until you come where there are men living who know nothing  
of the sea, and who eat food that is not mixed with salt, who never  
have known ships whose cheeks are painted purple, who never

125 have known well-shaped oars, which act for ships as wings do.  
And I will tell you a very clear proof, and you cannot miss it.  
When, as you walk, some other wayfarer happens to meet you,  
and says you carry a winnow-fan on your bright shoulder,  
then you must plant your well-shaped oar in the ground, and render

130 ceremonious sacrifice to the lord Poseidon,  
one ram and one bull, and a mounter of sows, a boar pig,  
and make your way home again and render holy hecatombs  
to the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven, all  
of them in order. Death will come to you from the sea, in

135 some altogether unwarlike way, and it will end you  
in the ebbing time of a sleek old age. Your people  
about you will be prosperous. All this is true that I tell you."

‘So he spoke, but I in turn said to him in answer:  
“All this, Teiresias, surely must be as the gods spun it.

140     But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
I see before me now the soul of my perished mother,

## **Antikleia his mother tells Odysseus**

but she sits beside the blood in silence, and has not yet deigned  
to look directly at her own son and speak a word to me.

Tell me, lord, what will make her know me, and know my presence?"

145    'So I spoke, and he at once said to me in answer: "Easily I will tell you  
and put it in your understanding.

Any one of the perished dead you allow to come up  
to the blood will give you a true answer, but if you begrudge this  
to any one, he will return to the place where he came from."

150    'So speaking, the soul of the lord Teiresias went back into the house of  
Hades, once he had uttered his prophecies, while I  
waited steadily where I was standing, until my mother  
came and drank the dark-clouding blood, and at once she knew me,  
and full of lamentation she spoke to me in winged words:

155    "My child, how did you come here beneath the fog and the darkness  
and still alive? All this is hard for the living to look on,  
for in between lie the great rivers and terrible waters  
that flow, Ocean first of all, which there is no means of crossing  
on foot, not unless one has a well-made ship. Are you

160    come now to this place from Troy, with your ship and your  
companions,  
after wandering a long time, and have you not yet come  
to Ithaka, and there seen your wife in your palace?"

'So she spoke, and I in turn said to her in answer:

"Mother, a duty brought me here to the house of Hades.

165    I had to consult the soul of Teiresias the Theban.

For I have not yet been near Achaian country, nor ever  
set foot on our land, but always suffering I have wandered  
since the time I first went along with great Agamemnon  
to Ilion, land of good horses, and the battle against the Trojans.

170    But come now, tell me this, and give me an accurate answer.  
What doom of death that lays men low has been your undoing?  
Was it a long sickness, or did Artemis of the arrows  
come upon you with her painless shafts, and destroy you?  
And tell me of my father and son whom I left behind. Is

175    my inheritance still with them, or does some other  
man hold them now, and thinks I will come no more? Tell me

about the wife I married, what she wants, what she is thinking,  
and whether she stays fast by my son, and guards everything,  
or if she has married the best man among the Achaians.”

180 ‘So I spoke, and my queenly mother answered me quickly:

## **something about Ithaka**

“All too much with enduring heart she does wait for you there in your own palace, and always with her the wretched nights and the days also waste her away with weeping.

No one yet holds your fine inheritance, but in freedom

185      Telemachos administers your allotted lands, and apportions the equal feasts, work that befits a man with authority to judge, for all call him in. Your father remains, on the estate where he is, and does not go to the city. There is no bed there nor is there bed clothing nor blankets nor shining coverlets,

190      but in the winter time he sleeps in the house, where the thralls do, in the dirt next to the fire, and with foul clothing upon him; but when the summer comes and the blossoming time of harvest, everywhere he has places to sleep on the ground, on fallen leaves in piles along the rising ground of his orchard,

195      and there he lies, grieving, and the sorrow grows big within him as he longs for your homecoming, and harsh old age is on him. And so it was with me also and that was the reason I perished, nor in my palace did the lady of arrows, well-aiming, come upon me with her painless shafts, and destroy me,

200      nor was I visited by sickness, which beyond other things takes the life out of the body with hateful weakness, but, shining Odysseus, it was my longing for you, your cleverness and your gentle ways, that took the sweet spirit of life from me.”

‘So she spoke, but I, pondering it in my heart, yet wished

205      to take the soul of my dead mother in my arms. Three times I started toward her, and my heart was urgent to hold her, and three times she fluttered out of my hands like a shadow or a dream, and the sorrow sharpened at the heart within me, and so I spoke to her and addressed her in winged words, saying:

210      “Mother, why will you not wait for me, when I am trying to hold you, so that even in Hades’ with our arms embracing we can both take the satisfaction of dismal mourning?

Or are you nothing but an image that proud Persephone sent my way, to make me grieve all the more for sorrow?”

215      ‘So I spoke, and my queenly mother answered me quickly: “Oh my child, ill-fated beyond all other mortals,

this is not Persephone, daughter of Zeus, beguiling you,  
but it is only what happens, when they die, to all mortals.  
The sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together,

## The queens of the past

- 220 and once the spirit has left the white bones, all the rest  
of the body is made subject to the fire's strong fury,  
but the soul flitters out like a dream and flies away. Therefore  
you must strive back toward the light again with all speed; but  
remember  
these things for your wife, so you may tell her hereafter."
- 225 'So we two were conversing back and forth, and the women came to  
me. They were sent my way by proud Persephone.  
These were all who had been the wives and daughters of princes,  
and now they gathered in swarms around the dark blood. I then  
thought about a way to question them, each by herself,
- 230 and as I thought, this was the plan that seemed best to me;  
drawing out the long-edged sword from beside my big thigh,  
I would not let them all drink the dark blood at the same time.  
So they waited and came to me in order, and each one  
told me about her origin, and I questioned all of them.
- 235 'There first I saw [Tyro](#), gloriously descended,  
and she told me she was the daughter of stately [Salmoneus](#),  
but said she was the wife of Kretheus, the son of [Aiolos](#),  
and she was in love with a river, godlike [Enipeus](#), by far  
the handsomest of all those rivers whose streams cross over
- 240 the earth, and she used to haunt Enipeus' beautiful waters;  
taking his likeness, the god who circles the earth and shakes it  
lay with her where the swirling river finds its outlet,  
and a sea-blue wave curved into a hill of water reared up  
about the two, to hide the god and the mortal woman;
- 245 and he broke her virgin zone and drifted a sleep upon her.  
But when the god had finished with the act of lovemaking,  
he took her by the hand and spoke to her and named her, saying:  
"Be happy, lady, in this love, and when the year passes  
you will bear glorious children, for the couplings of the immortals
- 250 are not without issue. You must look after them, and raise them.  
Go home now and hold your peace and tell nobody  
my name, but I tell it to you; I am the Earthshaker Poseidon."  
‘So he spoke and dived back into the heaving water  
of the sea, but she conceived and bore Pelias and Neleus,

255 and both of these grew up to be strong henchmen of mighty  
Zeus; [Pelias](#) lived, rich in sheepflocks, in the wide spaces  
of [Iolkos](#), while the other was king in sandy Pylos;  
but this queen among women bore the rest of her children to [Kretheus](#),

## **tell Odysseus their stories**

Aison and Pheres and Amythaon delighting in horses.

260   ‘After her I saw Antiope, who was the daughter of Asopos, who claimed she had also lain in the embraces of Zeus, and borne two sons to him, Amphion and Zethos. These first established the foundations of seven-gated Thebes, and built the bulwarks, since without bulwarks they could not have lived, for all their strength, in Thebes of the wide spaces.

‘After her I saw Amphitryon's wife, Alkmene, who, after lying in love in the embraces of great Zeus, brought forth Herakles, lion-hearted and bold of purpose. And I saw Megara, daughter of high-spirited Kreion,

270   whom Amphitryon's bold and weariless son had married.

‘I saw the beautiful Epikaste, Oidipodes' mother, who in the ignorance of her mind had done a monstrous thing when she married her own son. He killed his father and married her, but the gods soon made it all known to mortals.

275   But he, for all his sorrows, in beloved Thebes continued to be lord over the Kadmeians, all through the bitter designing of the gods; while she went down to Hades of the gates, the strong one, knotting a noose and hanging sheer from the high ceiling, in the constraint of her sorrow, but left to him who survived her

280   all the sorrows that are brought to pass by a mother's furies.

‘And I saw Chloris, surpassingly lovely, the one whom Neleus married for her beauty, giving numberless gifts to win her. She was the youngest daughter of Iasos' son Amphion, who once ruled strongly over Orchomenos of the Minyai.

285   So she was queen of Pylos and she bore him glorious children, Nestor and Chromios and proud Periklymenos. Also she bore that marvel among mortals, majestic Pero, whom all the heroes round about courted, but Neleus would not give her to any, unless he could drive away the broad-faced

290   horn-curved cattle of strong Iphikles out of Phylake.

It was hard to do, and only the blameless seer Melampous undertook it, but he was bound fast by the hard destiny of the god, and the painful fetters on him, and the loutish oxherds. But when the months and the days had come to an end, and the year

295 had gone full circle and come back with the seasons returning,  
then strong Iphikles released him, when he had told him  
all prophecies he knew; and the will of Zeus was accomplished.

## Interlude—Alkinoös and Arete

‘And I saw [Leda](#), who had been the wife of Tyndareos,  
and she had borne to Tyndareos two sons with strong hearts,  
300 Kastor, breaker of horses, and the strong boxer, [Polydeukes](#).  
The life-giving earth holds both of them, yet they are still living,  
and, even underneath the earth, enjoying the honor  
of Zeus, they live still every other day; on the next day  
they are dead, but they are given honor even as gods are.

305 ‘After her I saw [Iphimedea](#), wife of [Aloeus](#), but she told me how she  
had been joined in love with Poseidon  
and borne two sons to him, but these in the end had not lived  
long, [Otos](#) like a god, and the far-famed [Ephialtes](#);  
and these were the tallest men the grain-giving earth has brought forth  
310 ever, and the handsomest by far, after famous Orion.  
When they were only nine years old they measured nine cubits  
across, but in height they grew to nine fathoms, and even made threats  
against the immortal gods on Olympos, that they would carry  
the turmoil of battle with all its many sorrows against them,

315 and were minded to pile [Ossa](#) on Olympos, and above [Ossa](#)  
[Pelion](#) of the trembling leaves, to climb the sky. Surely  
they would have carried it out if they had come to maturity,  
but the son of Zeus whom Leto with ordered hair had borne him,  
Apollo, killed them both, before ever the down gathered  
320 below their temples, or on their chins the beards had blossomed.

‘I saw [Phaidra](#) and [Prokris](#) and [Ariadne](#), the beautiful  
daughter of malignant Minos. [Theseus](#) at one time  
was bringing her from Crete to the high ground of sacred Athens,  
but got no joy of her, since before that Artemis killed her  
325 in sea-washed [Dia](#), when Dionysos bore witness against her.

‘I saw [Maira](#), [Klymene](#), and [Eriphyle](#) the hateful,  
who accepted precious gold for the life of her own dear husband.  
But I could not tell over the whole number of them nor name all  
the women I saw who were the wives and daughters of heroes,  
330 for before that the divine night would give out. It is time now  
for my sleep, either joining my companions on board the fast ship,  
or here; but you, and the gods, will see to my homeward journey.’

So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence,

held in thrall by the story all through the shadowy chambers.

335 Now it was white-armed Arete who began the discourse:  
‘Phaiakians, what do you think now of this man before you

## admire Odysseus the storyteller

for beauty and stature, and for the mind well balanced within him?  
And again he is my own guest, but each one of you has some part  
in honoring him. Do not hurry to send him off, nor cut short

340 his gifts, when he is in such need, for you all have many  
possessions, by the grace of the gods, stored up in your palaces.'

Then in turn the aged hero Echeneos spoke forth,  
who was the most advanced in age of all the Phaiakians:  
'Friends, our circumspect queen is not off the mark in her speaking,  
345 nor short of what we expect of her. Do then as she tells us.  
From now on the word and the act belong to Alkinoös.'

Then in turn Alkinoös spoke to him and answered:  
'Even so this word will be mine to say, as long as  
I am alive and king over the oar-loving Phaiakians.

350 But let our guest, much though he longs for the homeward journey,  
still endure to wait till tomorrow, until I have raised all  
the contribution; but the men shall see to his convoy  
home, and I most of all; for mine is the power in this district.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
355 'O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people,  
if you urged me to stay here even for the length of a year,  
and still sped my conveyance home and gave me glorious  
presents, that would be what I wished, there would be much advantage  
in coming back with a fuller hand to my own dear country,  
360 and I would be more respected so and be more popular  
with all people who saw me make my return to Ithaka.'

Then Alkinoös answered him in turn and said to him:  
'Odysseus, we as we look upon you do not imagine  
that you are a deceptive or thievish man, the sort that the black earth  
365 breeds in great numbers, people who wander widely, making up  
lying stories, from which no one could learn anything. You have  
a grace upon your words, and there is sound sense within them,  
and expertly, as a singer would do, you have told the story  
of the dismal sorrows befallen yourself and all of the Argives.

370 But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer:  
Did you see any of your godlike companions, who once with you  
went to Ilion and there met their destiny? Here is

a night that is very long, it is endless. It is not time yet  
to sleep in the palace. But go on telling your wonderful story.

375 I myself could hold out until the bright dawn, if only

## The story resumed

you could bear to tell me, here in the palace, of your sufferings.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:

'O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people,

there is a time for many words, and a time for sleeping;

380 but if you insist on hearing me still, I would not begrudge you  
the tale of these happenings and others yet more pitiful  
to hear, the sorrows of my companions, who perished later,  
who escaped onslaught and cry of battle, but perished  
all for the sake of a vile woman, on the homeward journey.

385 'Now when chaste Persephone had scattered the female souls of the  
women, driving them off in every direction,  
there came the soul of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus,  
grieving, and the souls of the other men, who died with him  
and met their doom in the house of Aigisthos, were gathered around  
him.

390 He knew me at once, when he drank the dark blood, and fell to  
lamentation loud and shrill, and the tears came springing,  
and threw himself into my arms, meaning so to embrace me,  
but there was no force there any longer, nor any juice left  
now in his flexible limbs, as there had been in time past.

395 I broke into tears at the sight of him and my heart pitied him,  
and so I spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
"Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,  
what doom of death that lays men low has been your undoing?  
Was it with the ships, and did Poseidon, rousing a stormblast  
400 of battering winds that none would wish for, prove your undoing?  
Or was it on the dry land, did men embattled destroy you  
as you tried to cut out cattle and fleecy sheep from their holdings,  
or fighting against them for the sake of their city and women?"

'So I spoke, and he in turn said to me in answer:

405 "Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
not in the ships, nor did Poseidon, rousing a stormblast  
of battering winds that none would wish for, prove my destruction,  
nor on dry land did enemy men destroy me in battle;  
Aigisthos, working out my death and destruction, invited  
410 me to his house, and feasted me, and killed me there, with the help

of my sluttish wife, as one cuts down an ox at his manger.  
So I died a most pitiful death, and my other companions  
were killed around me without mercy, like pigs with shining  
tusks, in the house of a man rich and very powerful,

## The ghost of Agamemnon

- 415 for a wedding, or a festival, or a communal dinner.  
You have been present in your time at the slaughter of many  
men, killed singly, or in the strong encounters of battle;  
but beyond all others you would have been sorry at heart  
for this scene, how we lay sprawled by the mixing bowl and the loaded  
420 tables, all over the palace, and the whole floor was steaming  
with blood; and most pitiful was the voice I heard of Priam's  
daughter [Kassandra](#), killed by treacherous Klytaimestra  
over me; but I lifted my hands and with them beat on  
the ground as I died upon the sword, but the sluttish woman  
425 turned away from me and was so hard that her hands would not  
press shut my eyes and mouth though I was going to Hades'.  
So there is nothing more deadly or more vile than a woman  
who stores her mind with acts that are of such sort, as this one  
did when she thought of this act of dishonor, and plotted  
430 the murder of her lawful husband. See, I had been thinking  
that I would be welcome to my children and thralls of my household  
when I came home, but she with thoughts surpassingly grisly  
splashed the shame on herself and the rest of her sex, on women  
still to come, even on the one whose acts are virtuous."
- 435 'So he spoke, and I again said to him in answer: "Shame it is, how  
most terribly Zeus of the wide brows  
from the beginning has been hateful to the seed of Atreus  
through the schemes of women. Many of us died for the sake of Helen,  
and when you were far, Klytaimestra plotted treason against you."
- 440 'So I spoke, and he in turn said to me in answer: "So by this, do not be  
too easy even with your wife,  
nor give her an entire account of all you are sure of.  
Tell her part of it, but let the rest be hidden in silence.  
And yet you, Odysseus, will never be murdered by your wife.
- 445 The daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
is all too virtuous and her mind is stored with good thoughts.  
Ah well. She was only a young wife when we left her  
and went off to the fighting, and she had an infant child then  
at her breast. That child now must sit with the men and be counted.
- 450 Happy he! For his dear father will come back, and see him,

and he will fold his father in his arms, as is right. My wife never even let me feed my eyes with the sight of my own son, but before that I myself was killed by her.

## Interview with the ghost of Achilleus

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.

455 When you bring your ship in to your own dear country, do it secretly, not in the open. There is no trusting in women.

But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer; tell me if you happened to hear that my son was still living, whether perhaps in Orchomenos, or in sandy Pylos,

460 or perhaps with Menelaos in wide Sparta; for nowhere upon the earth has there been any death of noble Orestes.”

“So he spoke, and I again said to him in answer:

“Son of Atreus, why do you ask me that? I do not know if he is alive or dead. It is bad to babble emptily.”

465 ‘So we two stood there exchanging our sad words, grieving both together and shedding the big tears. After this, there came to us the soul of Peleus’ son, *Achilleus*, and the soul of Patroklos and the soul of stately Antilochos, and the soul of *Aias*, who for beauty and stature was greatest

470 of all the Danaans, next to the stately son of Peleus.

The soul of swift-footed Achilleus, scion of Aiakos, knew me, and full of lamentation he spoke to me in winged words:

“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, hard man, what made you think of this bigger endeavor, how could you endure to come down here to Hades’ place, where the senseless

475 dead men dwell, mere imitations of perished mortals?”

‘So he spoke, and I again said to him in answer:

“Son of Peleus, far the greatest of the Achaians, Achilleus, I came for the need to consult Teiresias, if he might tell me

480 some plan by which I might come back to rocky Ithaka; for I have not yet been near Achaian country, nor ever set foot on my land, but always I have troubles. Achilleus, no man before has been more blessed than you, nor ever will be. Before, when you were alive, we Argives honored you

485 as we did the gods, and now in this place you have great authority over the dead. Do not grieve, even in death, Achilleus.”

‘So I spoke, and he in turn said to me in answer:

“O shining Odysseus, never try to console me for dying.

I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another

490 man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on,  
than be a king over all the perished dead. But come now,  
tell me anything you have heard of my proud son, whether

## Memories of Troy

or not he went along to war to fight as a champion;  
and tell me anything you have heard about stately Peleus,  
495 whether he still keeps his position among the Myrmidon  
hordes, or whether in [Hellas](#) and [Phthia](#) they have diminished  
his state, because old age constrains his hands and feet, and I  
am no longer there under the light of the sun to help him,  
not the man I used to be once, when in the wide Troad  
500 I killed the best of their people, fighting for the Argives. If only  
for a little while I could come like that to the house of my father,  
my force and my invincible hands would terrify such men  
as use force on him and keep him away from his rightful honors.”  
‘So he spoke, and I again said to him in answer:  
505 “I have no report to give you of stately Peleus,  
but as for your beloved son [Neoptolemos](#), I will  
tell you, since you ask me to do it, all the true story;  
for I myself, in the hollow hull of a balanced ship, brought him  
over from [Skyros](#), to join the strong-greaved Achaians. Whenever  
510 we, around the city of Troy, talked over our counsels,  
he would always speak first, and never blunder. In speaking  
only godlike Nestor and I were better than he was.  
And when we Achaians fought in the Trojan plain, he never  
would hang back where there were plenty of other men, nor stay with  
515 the masses, but run far out in front, giving way to no man  
for fury, and many were those he killed in the terrible fighting.  
I could not tell over the number of all nor name all  
the people he killed as he fought for the Argives, but what a great man  
was one, the son of [Telephos](#) he slew with the brazen  
520 spear, the hero [Eurypylos](#), and many [Keteian](#)  
companions were killed about him, by reason of womanish presents.  
Next to great [Memnon](#), this was the finest man I ever  
saw. Again, when we who were best of the Argives entered  
the horse that Epeios made, and all the command was given  
525 to me, to keep close hidden inside, or sally out from it,  
the other leaders of the Danaans and men of counsel  
were wiping their tears away and the limbs were shaking under  
each man of them; but never at any time did I see him

losing his handsome color and going pale, or wiping  
530      the tears off his face, but rather he implored me to let him  
sally out of the horse; he kept feeling for his sword hilt

## The angry ghost of Aias

and spear weighted with bronze, full of evil thoughts for the Trojans.

But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam,

with his fair share and a princely prize of his own, he boarded

535 his ship, unscathed; he had not been hit by thrown and piercing  
bronze, nor stabbed in close-up combat, as often happens  
in fighting. The War God rages at all, and favors no man.”

‘So I spoke, and the soul of the swift-footed scion of [Aiakos](#)  
stalked away in long strides across the meadow of asphodel,

540 happy for what I had said of his son, and how he was famous.

‘Now the rest of the souls of the perished dead stood near me  
grieving, and each one spoke to me and told of his sorrows.

Only the soul of Telamonian Aias stood off  
at a distance from me, angry still over that decision

545 I won against him, when beside the ships we disputed  
our cases for the arms of Achilleus. His queenly mother  
set them as prize, and the sons of the Trojans, with Pallas Athene,  
judged; and I wish I had never won in a contest like this,  
so high a head has gone under the ground for the sake of that armor,

550 Aias, who for beauty and for achievement surpassed  
all the Danaans next to the stately son of Peleus.

So I spoke to him now in words of conciliation:

“Aias, son of stately [Telamon](#), could you then never  
even in death forget your anger against me, because of

555 that cursed armor? The gods made it to pain the Achaians,  
so great a bulwark were you, who were lost to them. We Achaians  
grieved for your death as incessantly as for Achilleus  
the son of Peleus at his death, and there is no other  
to blame, but Zeus; he, in his terrible hate for the army

560 of Danaan spearmen, visited this destruction upon you.

Come nearer, my lord, so you can hear what I say and listen  
to my story; suppress your anger and lordly spirit.”

‘So I spoke. He gave no answer, but went off after  
the other souls of the perished dead men, into the darkness.

565 There, despite his anger, he might have spoken, or I might  
have spoken to him, but the heart in my inward breast wanted  
still to see the souls of the other perished dead men.

‘There I saw Minos, the glorious son of Zeus, seated,  
holding a golden scepter and issuing judgments among  
570      the dead, who all around the great lord argued their cases,

## Heroes in torment—Herakles

some sitting and some standing, by the wide-gated house of Hades.

‘After him I was aware of gigantic Orion  
in the meadow of asphodel, rounding up and driving together  
wild animals he himself had killed in the lonely mountains,

575 holding in his hands a brazen club, forever unbroken.

‘And I saw [Tityos](#), Earth's glorious son, lying  
in the plain, and sprawled over nine acres. Two vultures,  
sitting one on either side, were tearing his liver,  
plunging inside the caul. With his hands he could not beat them  
580 away. He had manhandled Leto, the honored consort  
of Zeus, as she went through spacious [Panopeus](#), toward Pytho.

‘And I saw [Tantalos](#) also, suffering hard pains, standing  
in lake water that came up to his chin, and thirsty  
as he was, he tried to drink, but could capture nothing;  
585 for every time the old man, trying to drink, stooped over,  
the water would drain away and disappear, and the black earth  
showed at his feet, and the divinity dried it away. Over  
his head trees with lofty branches had fruit like a shower descending,  
pear trees and pomegranate trees and apple trees with fruit shining,

590 and figs that were sweet and olives ripened well, but each time  
the old man would straighten up and reach with his hands for them,  
the wind would toss them away toward the clouds overhanging.

‘Also I saw [Sisyphos](#). He was suffering strong pains,  
and with both arms embracing the monstrous stone, struggling  
595 with hands and feet alike, he would try to push the stone upward  
to the crest of the hill, but when it was on the point of going  
over the top, the force of gravity turned it backward,  
and the pitiless stone rolled back down to the level. He then  
tried once more to push it up, straining hard, and sweat ran  
600 all down his body, and over his head a cloud of dust rose.

‘After him I was aware of powerful Herakles;  
his image, that is, but he himself among the immortal  
gods enjoys their festivals, married to sweet-stepping  
Hebe, child of great Zeus and Hera of the golden sandals.

605 All around him was a clamor of the dead as of birds scattering  
scared in every direction; but he came on, like dark night,

holding his bow bare with an arrow laid on the bowstring,  
and forever looking, as one who shot, with terrible glances.  
There was a terrible belt crossed over his chest, and a golden

## Return to Circe's island

- 610 baldrick, with marvelous works of art that figured upon it,  
bears, and lions with glaring eyes, and boars of the forests,  
the battles and the quarrels, the murders and the manslaughters.  
May he who artfully designed them, and artfully put them  
upon that baldrick, never again do any designing.
- 615 He recognized me at once as soon as his eyes had seen me,  
and full of lamentation he spoke to me in winged words:  
“Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
unhappy man, are you too leading some wretched destiny  
such as I too pursued when I went still in the sunlight?
- 620 For I was son of Kronian Zeus, but I had an endless  
spell of misery. I was made bondman to one who was far worse  
than I, and he loaded my difficult labors on me. One time  
he sent me here to fetch the dog back, and thought there could be  
no other labor to be devised more difficult than that
- 625 one, but I brought the dog up and led him from the realm of Hades,  
and Hermes saw me on my way, with Pallas Athene.”  
‘So he spoke, and went back into the realm of Hades,  
but I stayed fast in place where I was, to see if some other  
one of the generation of heroes who died before me
- 630 would come; and I might have seen men earlier still, whom I wanted  
to see, [Perithoös](#) and Theseus, gods’ glorious children;  
but before that the hordes of the dead men gathered about me  
with inhuman clamor, and green fear took hold of me  
with the thought that proud Persephone might send up against me
- 635 some [gorgonish](#) head of a terrible monster up out of Hades’.  
So, going back on board my ship, I told my companions  
also to go aboard, and to cast off the stern cables;  
and quickly they went aboard the ship and sat to the oarlocks,  
and the swell of the current carried her down the Ocean river
- 640 with rowing at first, but after that on a fair wind following.

## Book XII



‘Now when our ship had left the stream of the Ocean river,  
and come back to the wide crossing of the sea's waves, and to the island  
of Aiaia, where lies the house of the early Dawn, her dancing  
spaces, and where Helios, the sun, makes his uprising,  
5 making this point we ran our ship on the sand and beached her,  
and we ourselves stepped out onto the break of the sea beach,  
and there we fell asleep and waited for the divine Dawn.

‘But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
then I sent my companions away to the house of Circe  
10 to bring back the body of Elpenor, who had died there.  
Then we cut logs, and where the extreme of the foreland jutted  
out, we buried him, sorrowful, shedding warm tears for him.  
But when the dead man had burned and the dead man's armor, piling  
the grave mound and pulling the gravestone to stand above it,  
15 we planted the well-shaped oar in the very top of the grave mound.

‘So we were busy each with our various work, nor was Circe  
unaware that we had come back from Hades’. Presently  
she came, attired, and her attendants following carried  
bread at her will and many meats and the shining red wine.  
20 Bright among goddesses she stood in our midst and addressed us:  
“Unhappy men, who went alive to the house of Hades,  
so dying twice, when all the rest of mankind die only  
once, come then eat what is there and drink your wine, staying  
here all the rest of the day, and then tomorrow, when dawn shows,

## Instructions from Circe

- 25      you shall sail, and I will show you the way and make plain  
all details, so that neither by land nor on the salt water  
you may suffer and come to grief by unhappy bad designing.”  
      “So she spoke, and the proud heart in us was persuaded.  
So for the whole length of the day until the sun's setting,  
30      we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.  
But when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over,  
the men lay down to sleep all by the ship's stern cables,  
but she, taking me by the hand, made me sit down away from  
my dear companions, and talked with me, and asked me the details  
35      of everything, and I recited all, just as it had happened.  
Then the queenly Circe spoke in words and addressed me:  
“So all that has been duly done. Listen now, I will tell you  
all, but the very god himself will make you remember.  
You will come first of all to the [Sirens](#), who are enchanters  
40      of all mankind and whoever comes their way; and that man  
who unsuspecting approaches them, and listens to the Sirens  
singing, has no prospect of coming home and delighting  
his wife and little children as they stand about him in greeting,  
but the Sirens by the melody of their singing enchant him.  
45      They sit in their meadow, but the beach before it is piled with  
boneheaps  
of men now rotted away, and the skins shrivel upon them.  
You must drive straight on past, but melt down sweet wax of honey  
and with it stop your companions' ears, so none can listen;  
the rest, that is, but if you yourself are wanting to hear them,  
50      then have them tie you hand and foot on the fast ship, standing  
upright against the mast with the ropes' ends lashed around it,  
so that you can have joy in hearing the song of the Sirens;  
but if you supplicate your men and implore them to set you  
free, then they must tie you fast with even more lashings.  
55      “Then, for the time when your companions have driven you past them,  
for that time I will no longer tell you in detail which way  
of the two your course must lie, but you yourself must consider  
this in your own mind. I will tell you the two ways of it.  
On one side there are overhanging rocks, and against them

60      crashes the heavy swell of dark-eyed Amphitrite.  
The blessed gods call these rocks the Rovers. By this way  
not even any flying thing, not even the tremulous

## The Sirens—*Skylla* and *Charybdis*

doves, which carry ambrosia to Zeus the father, can pass through,  
but every time the sheer rock catches away one even

65      of these; but the Father then adds another to keep the number  
right. No ship of men that came here ever has fled through,  
but the waves of the sea and storms of ravening fire carry  
away together the ship's timbers and the men's bodies.

That way the only seagoing ship to get through was *Argo*,  
70      who is in all men's minds, on her way home from *Aietes*;  
and even she would have been driven on the great rocks that time,  
but Hera saw her through, out of her great love for *Jason*.

“But of the two rocks, one reaches up into the wide heaven  
with a pointed peak, and a dark cloud stands always around it,  
75      and never at any time draws away from it, nor does the sunlight  
ever hold that peak, either in the early or the late summer,  
nor could any man who was mortal climb there, or stand mounted  
on the summit, not if he had twenty hands and twenty  
feet, for the rock goes sheerly up, as if it were polished.

80      Halfway up the cliff there is a cave, misty-looking  
and turned toward Erebos and the dark, the very direction  
from which, O shining Odysseus, you and your men will be steering  
your hollow ship; and from the hollow ship no vigorous  
young man with a bow could shoot to the hole in the cliffside.

85      In that cavern *Skylla* lives, whose howling is terror.  
Her voice indeed is only as loud as a new-born puppy  
could make, but she herself is an evil monster. No one,  
not even a god encountering her, could be glad at that sight.  
She has twelve feet, and all of them wave in the air. She has six

90      necks upon her, grown to great length, and upon each neck  
there is a horrible head, with teeth in it, set in three rows  
close together and stiff, full of black death. Her body  
from the waist down is holed up inside the hollow cavern,  
but she holds her heads poked out and away from the terrible hollow,  
95      and there she fishes, peering all over the cliffside, looking  
for dolphins or dogfish to catch or anything bigger,  
some sea monster, of whom Amphitrite keeps so many;  
never can sailors boast aloud that their ship has passed her

without any loss of men, for with each of her heads she snatches  
100 one man away and carries him off from the dark-prowed vessel.  
“The other cliff is lower; you will see it, Odysseus,

## Warning about the cattle of Helios

for they lie close together, you could even cast with an arrow across. There is a great fig tree grows there, dense with foliage, and under this shining [Charybdis](#) sucks down the black water.

105 For three times a day she flows it up, and three times she sucks it terribly down; may you not be there when she sucks down water, for not even the Earthshaker could rescue you out of that evil.

But sailing your ship swiftly drive her past and avoid her, and make for Skylla's rock instead, since it is far better

110 to mourn six friends lost out of your ship than the whole company.”  
“So she spoke, but I in turn said to her in answer:

“Come then, goddess, answer me truthfully this: is there some way for me to escape away from deadly Charybdis, but yet fight the other one off, when she attacks my companions?”

115 ‘So I spoke, and she, shining among goddesses, answered:

“Hardy man, your mind is full forever of fighting and battle work. Will you not give way even to the immortals? She is no mortal thing but a mischief immortal, dangerous difficult and bloodthirsty, and there is no fighting against her,

120 nor any force of defense. It is best to run away from her.

For if you arm for battle beside her rock and waste time there, I fear she will make another outrush and catch you with all her heads, and snatch away once more the same number of men. Drive by as hard as you can, but invoke [Kratais](#).

125 She is the mother of Skylla and bore this mischief for mortals, and she will stay her from making another sally against you.

“Then you will reach the island Thrinakia, where are pastured the cattle and the fat sheep of the sun god, Helios, seven herds of oxen, and as many beautiful sheepflocks,

130 and fifty to each herd. There is no giving birth among them, nor do they ever die away, and their shepherdesses are gods, nymphs with sweet hair, [Lampetia](#) and [Phaethousa](#), whom shining [Neaira](#) bore to Hyperion the sun god.

These, when their queenly mother had given them birth and reared them,

135 she settled in the island Thrinakia, far away, to live there and guard their father's sheep and his horn-curved cattle.

Then, if you keep your mind on homecoming and leave these  
unharmed,

you might all make your way to Ithaka, after much suffering;  
but if you do harm them, then I testify to the destruction

140      of your ship and your companions, but if you yourself get clear,

## Departure—the Sirens

you will come home in bad case with the loss of all your companions."

"So she spoke, and Dawn of the golden throne came on us.

She, shining among goddesses, went away, up the island.

Then, going back on board my ship, I told my companions

145 also to go aboard, and to cast off the stern cables,  
and quickly they went aboard the ship and sat to the oarlocks,  
and sitting well in order dashed the oars in the gray sea;  
but fair-haired Circe, the dread goddess who talks with mortals,  
sent us an excellent companion, a following wind, filling

150 the sails, to carry from astern the ship with the dark prow.  
We ourselves, over all the ship making fast the running gear,  
sat there, and let the wind and the steersman hold her steady.  
Then, sorrowful as I was, I spoke and told my companions:

"Friends, since it is not right for one or two of us only

155 to know the divinations that Circe, bright among goddesses,  
gave me, so I will tell you, and knowing all we may either  
die, or turn aside from death and escape destruction.

First of all she tells us to keep away from the magical  
Sirens and their singing and their flowery meadow, but only

160 I, she said, was to listen to them, but you must tie me  
hard in hurtful bonds, to hold me fast in position  
upright against the mast, with the ropes' ends fastened around it;  
but if I supplicate you and implore you to set me  
free, then you must tie me fast with even more lashings."

165 'So as I was telling all the details to my companions, meanwhile the  
well-made ship was coming rapidly closer  
to the Sirens' isle, for the harmless wind was driving her onward;  
but immediately then the breeze dropped, and a windless  
calm fell there, and some divinity stilled the tossing

170 waters. My companions stood up, and took the sails down,  
and stowed them away in the hollow hull, and took their places  
for rowing, and with their planed oarblades whitened the water.  
Then I, taking a great wheel of wax, with the sharp bronze  
cut a little piece off, and rubbed it together in my heavy

175 hands, and soon the wax grew softer, under the powerful  
stress of the sun, and the heat and light of Hyperion's lordling.

One after another, I stopped the ears of all my companions,  
and they then bound me hand and foot in the fast ship, standing  
upright against the mast with the ropes' ends lashed around it,

## Passage by Skylla

180 and sitting then to row they dashed their oars in the gray sea.  
But when we were as far from the land as a voice shouting  
carries, lightly plying, the swift ship as it drew nearer  
was seen by the Sirens, and they directed their sweet song toward us:  
“Come this way, honored Odysseus, great glory of the Achaians,  
185 and stay your ship, so that you can listen here to our singing;  
for no one else has ever sailed past this place in his black ship  
until he has listened to the honey-sweet voice that issues  
from our lips; then goes on, well pleased, knowing more than ever  
he did; for we know everything that the Argives and Trojans  
190 did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods’ despite.  
Over all the generous earth we know everything that happens.”  
‘So they sang, in sweet utterance, and the heart within me  
desired to listen, and I signaled my companions to set me  
free, nodding with my brows, but they leaned on and rowed hard,  
195 and Perimedes and Eurylochos, rising up, straightway  
fastened me with even more lashings and squeezed me tighter.  
But when they had rowed on past the Sirens, and we could no longer  
hear their voices and lost the sound of their singing, presently  
my eager companions took away from their ears the beeswax  
200 with which I had stopped them. Then they set me free from my  
lashings.  
‘But after we had left the island behind, the next thing  
we saw was smoke, and a heavy surf, and we heard it thundering.  
The men were terrified, and they let the oars fall out of  
their hands, and these banged all about in the wash. The ship stopped  
205 still, with the men no longer rowing to keep way on her.  
Then I going up and down the ship urged on my companions,  
standing beside each man and speaking to him in kind words:  
“Dear friends, surely we are not unlearned in evils.  
This is no greater evil now than it was when the Cyclops  
210 had us cooped in his hollow cave by force and violence,  
but even there, by my courage and counsel and my intelligence,  
we escaped away. I think that all this will be remembered  
some day too. Then do as I say, let us all be won over.  
Sit well, all of you, to your oarlocks, and dash your oars deep

215 into the breaking surf of the water, so in that way Zeus  
might grant that we get clear of this danger and flee away from it.  
For you, steersman, I have this order; so store it deeply  
in your mind, as you control the steering oar of this hollow

## **with the loss of six men**

ship; you must keep her clear from where the smoke and the breakers  
220 are, and make hard for the sea rock lest, without your knowing,  
she might drift that way, and you bring all of us into disaster."

'So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. I had not  
spoken yet of Skylla, a plague that could not be dealt with,  
for fear my companions might be terrified and give over  
225 their rowing, and take cover inside the ship. For my part,  
I let go from my mind the difficult instruction that Circe  
had given me, for she told me not to be armed for combat;  
but I put on my glorious armor and, taking up two long  
spears in my hands, I stood bestriding the vessel's foredeck  
230 at the prow, for I expected Skylla of the rocks to appear first  
from that direction, she who brought pain to my companions.  
I could not make her out anywhere, and my eyes grew weary  
from looking everywhere on the misty face of the sea rock.

'So we sailed up the narrow strait lamenting. On one side  
235 was Skylla, and on the other side was shining Charybdis,  
who made her terrible ebb and flow of the sea's water.  
When she vomited it up, like a caldron over a strong fire,  
the whole sea would boil up in turbulence, and the foam flying  
spattered the pinnacles of the rocks in either direction;

240 but when in turn again she sucked down the sea's salt water,  
the turbulence showed all the inner sea, and the rock around it  
groaned terribly, and the ground showed at the sea's bottom,  
black with sand; and green fear seized upon my companions.

We in fear of destruction kept our eyes on Charybdis,  
245 but meanwhile Skylla out of the hollow vessel snatched six  
of my companions, the best of them for strength and hands' work,  
and when I turned to look at the ship, with my other companions,  
I saw their feet and hands from below, already lifted  
high above me, and they cried out to me and called me

250 by name, the last time they ever did it, in heart's sorrow.  
And as a fisherman with a very long rod, on a jutting  
rock, will cast his treacherous bait for the little fishes,  
and sinks the horn of a field-ranging ox into the water,  
then hauls them up and throws them on the dry land, gasping

255 and struggling, so they gasped and struggled as they were hoisted up the cliff. Right in her doorway she ate them up. They were screaming and reaching out their hands to me in this horrid encounter.

## Landing on Thrinakia

That was the most pitiful scene that these eyes have looked on  
in my sufferings as I explored the routes over the water.

- 260    'Now when we had fled away from the rocks and dreaded Charybdis  
and Skylla, next we made our way to the excellent island  
of the god, where ranged the handsome wide-browed oxen, and many  
fat flocks of sheep, belonging to the Sun God, Hyperion.  
While I was on the black ship, still out on the open water,
- 265    I heard the lowing of the cattle as they were driven  
home, and the bleating of sheep, and my mind was struck by the saying  
of the blind prophet, Teiresias the Theban, and also  
Aiaian Circe. Both had told me many times over  
to avoid the island of Helios who brings joy to mortals.
- 270    Then sorrowful as I was I spoke and told my companions:  
"Listen to what I say, my companions, though you are suffering  
evils, while I tell you the prophecies of Teiresias  
and Aiaian Circe. Both have told me many times over  
to avoid the island of Helios who brings joy to mortals,
- 275    for there they spoke of the most dreadful disaster that waited  
for us. So drive the black ship onward, and pass the island."
- 'So I spoke, and the inward heart in them was broken.  
At once Eurylochos answered me with a bitter saying:  
"You are a hard man, Odysseus. Your force is greater,  
280    your limbs never wear out. You must be made all of iron,  
when you will not let your companions, worn with hard work and  
wanting  
sleep, set foot on this land, where if we did, on the seagirt  
island we could once more make ready a greedy dinner;  
but you force us to blunder along just as we are through the running  
285    night, driven from the island over the misty face of the water.  
In the nights the hard stormwinds arise, and they bring damage  
to ships. How could any of us escape sheer destruction,  
if suddenly there rises the blast of a storm from the bitter  
blowing of the South Wind or the West Wind, who beyond others  
290    hammer a ship apart, in despite of the gods, our masters?  
But now let us give way to black night's persuasion; let us  
make ready our evening meal, remaining close by our fast ship,

and at dawn we will go aboard and put forth onto the wide sea.”

‘So spoke Eurylochos, and my other companions assented.

295 I saw then what evil the divinity had in mind for us,

## and ordeal by hunger

and so I spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
“Eurylochos, I am only one man. You force me to it.  
But come then all of you, swear a strong oath to me, that if  
we come upon some herd of cattle or on some great flock  
300 of sheep, no one of you in evil and reckless action  
will slaughter any ox or sheep. No, rather than this, eat  
at your pleasure of the food immortal Circe provided.”  
‘So I spoke, and they all swore me the oath that I asked them.  
But after they had sworn me the oath and made an end of it,  
305 we beached the well-made ship inside of the hollow harbor,  
close to sweet water, and my companions disembarked also  
from the ship, and expertly made the evening meal ready.  
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
they remembered and they cried for their beloved companions  
310 whom Skylla had caught out of the hollow ship and eaten,  
and on their crying a quiet sleep descended; but after  
the third part of the night had come, and the star changes,  
Zeus the cloud gatherer let loose on us a gale that blustered  
in a supernatural storm, and huddled under the cloud scuds  
315 land alike and the great water. Night sprang from heaven.  
But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
we berthed our ship, dragging her into a hollow sea cave  
where the nymphs had their beautiful dancing places and sessions.  
Then I held an assembly and spoke my opinion before them:  
320 “Friends, since there is food and drink stored in the fast ship,  
let us then keep our hands off the cattle, for fear that something  
may befall us. These are the cattle and fat sheep of a dreaded  
god, Helios, who sees all things and listens to all things.”  
‘So I spoke, and the proud heart in them was persuaded.  
325 But the South Wind blew for a whole month long, nor did any other  
wind befall after that, but only the South and the East Wind.  
As long as they still had food to eat and red wine, the men kept  
their hands off the cattle, striving as they were for sustenance. Then,  
when  
all the provisions that had been in the ship had given  
330 out, they turned to hunting, forced to it, and went ranging

after fish and birds, anything that they could lay hands on,  
and with curved hooks, for the hunger was exhausting their stomachs.  
Then I went away along the island in order

## The cattle eaten

to pray to the gods, if any of them might show me some course  
335 to sail on, but when, crossing the isle, I had left my companions behind, I washed my hands, where there was a place sheltered from the wind, and prayed to all the gods whose hold is Olympos; but what they did was to shed a sweet sleep on my eyelids, and Eurylochos put an evil counsel before his companions:

340 "Listen to what I say, my companions, though you are suffering evils. All deaths are detestable for wretched mortals, but hunger is the sorriest way to die and encounter fate. Come then, let us cut out the best of Helios' cattle, and sacrifice them to the immortals who hold wide heaven,

345 and if we ever come back to Ithaka, land of our fathers, presently we will build a rich temple to the Sun God Helios Hyperion, and store it with dedications, many and good. But if, in anger over his high-horned cattle, he wishes to wreck our ship, and the rest of the gods stand by him,

350 I would far rather gulp the waves and lose my life in them once for all, than be pinched to death on this desolate island."

'So spoke Eurylochos, and the other companions assented. At once, cutting out from near at hand the best of Helios' cattle; for the handsome broad-faced horn-curved oxen

355 were pasturing there, not far from the dark-prowed ship; driving these, they stationed themselves around them, and made their prayers to the gods, pulling tender leaves from a deep-leaved oak tree; for they had no white barley left on the strong-benched vessel. When they had made their prayer and slaughtered the oxen and skinned them,

360 they cut away the meat from the thighs and wrapped them in fat, making a double fold, and laid shreds of flesh upon them; and since they had no wine to pour on the burning offerings, they made a libation of water, and roasted all of the entrails; but when they had burned the thigh pieces and tasted the vitals,

365 they cut all the remainder into pieces and spitted them.

'At that time the quiet sleep was lost from my eyelids, and I went back down to my fast ship and the sand of the seashore, but on my way, as I was close to the oar-swept vessel,

the pleasant savor of cooking meat came drifting around me,  
370 and I cried out my grief aloud to the gods immortal:  
“Father Zeus, and you other everlasting and blessed

## Portents—departure from Thrinakia

gods, with a pitiless sleep you lulled me, to my confusion,  
and my companions staying here dared a deed that was monstrous.”

“Lampetia of the light robes ran swift with the message  
375 to Hyperion the Sun God, that we had killed his cattle,  
and angered at the heart he spoke forth among the immortals:  
“Father Zeus, and you other everlasting and blessed  
gods, punish the companions of Odysseus, son of Laertes;  
for they outrageously killed my cattle, in whom I always  
380 delighted, on my way up into the starry heaven,  
or when I turned back again from heaven toward earth. Unless  
these are made to give me just recompense for my cattle,  
I will go down to Hades’ and give my light to the dead men.”

“Then in turn Zeus who gathers the clouds answered him:  
385 “Helios, shine on as you do, among the immortals  
and mortal men, all over the grain-giving earth. For my part  
I will strike these men’s fast ship midway on the open  
wine-blue sea with a shining bolt and dash it to pieces.”

“All this I heard afterward from fair-haired Kalypso,  
390 and she told me she herself had heard it from the guide, Hermes.  
“But when I came back again to the ship and the seashore,  
they all stood about and blamed each other, but we were not able  
to find any remedy, for the oxen were already dead. The next thing  
was that the gods began to show forth portents before us.

395 The skins crawled, and the meat that was stuck on the spits bellowed,  
both roast and raw, and the noise was like the lowing of cattle.  
“Six days thereafter my own eager companions feasted  
on the cattle of Helios the Sun God, cutting the best ones  
out; but when Zeus the son of Kronos established the seventh  
400 day, then at last the wind ceased from its stormy blowing,  
and presently we went aboard and put forth on the wide sea,  
and set the mast upright and hoisted the white sails on it.

“But after we had left the island and there was no more  
land in sight, but only the sky and the sea, then Kronian  
405 Zeus drew on a blue-black cloud, and settled it over  
the hollow ship, and the open sea was darkened beneath it;  
and she ran on, but not for a very long time, as suddenly

a screaming West Wind came upon us, stormily blowing,  
and the blast of the stormwind snapped both the forestays that were  
holding

## **Loss of the ship and crew**

- 410 the mast, and the mast went over backwards, and all the running gear collapsed in the wash; and at the stern of the ship the mast pole crashed down on the steersman's head and pounded to pieces all the bones of his head, so that he like a diver dropped from the high deck, and the proud life left his bones there.
- 415 Zeus with thunder and lightning together crashed on our vessel, and, struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus, she spun in a circle, and all was full of brimstone. My men were thrown in the water, and bobbing like sea crows they were washed away on the running waves all around the black ship, and the god took away their homecoming.
- 420 ‘But I went on my way through the vessel, to where the high seas had worked the keel free out of the hull, and the bare keel floated on the swell, which had broken the mast off at the keel; yet still there was a backstay made out of oxhide fastened to it. With this I lashed together both keel and mast, then
- 425 rode the two of them, while the deadly stormwinds carried me. ‘After this the West Wind ceased from its stormy blowing, and the South Wind came swiftly on, bringing to my spirit grief that I must measure the whole way back to Charybdis. All that night I was carried along, and with the sun rising
- 430 I came to the sea rock of Skylla, and dreaded Charybdis. At this time Charybdis sucked down the sea's salt water, but I reached high in the air above me, to where the tall fig tree grew, and caught hold of it and clung like a bat; there was no place where I could firmly brace my feet, or climb up it,
- 435 for the roots of it were far from me, and the branches hung out far, big and long branches that overshadowed Charybdis. Inexorably I hung on, waiting for her to vomit the keel and mast back up again. I longed for them, and they came late; at the time when a man leaves the law court, for dinner,
- 440 after judging the many disputes brought him by litigious young men; that was the time it took the timbers to appear from Charybdis. Then I let go my hold with hands and feet, and dropped off, and came crashing down between and missing the two long timbers, but I mounted these, and with both hands I paddled my way out.

445    But the Father of Gods and men did not let Skylla see me  
again, or I could not have escaped from sheer destruction.  
‘From there I was carried along nine days, and on the tenth night

## **Odysseus escapes to Kalypso's island**

the gods brought me to the island Ogygia, home of Kalypso  
with the lovely hair, a dreaded goddess who talks with mortals.  
450 She befriended me and took care of me. Why tell the rest of  
this story again, since yesterday in your house I told it  
to you and your majestic wife? It is hateful to me  
to tell a story over again, when it has been well told.'

## Book XIII



So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence,  
held in thrall by the story all through the shadowy chambers.  
Then Alkinoös answered him in turn and said to him:  
‘Odysseus, now that you have come to my house, bronze-founded  
5 with the high roof, I think you will not lose your homecoming,  
nor be driven back from it again, for all your sufferings.  
Now I lay this charge upon each man of you, such as  
here in my palace drink the gleaming wine of the princes  
always at my side, and hear the song of the singer.  
10 Clothing for our guest is stored away in the polished  
chest, and intricately wrought gold, and all those other  
gifts the Phaiakian men of counsel brought here to give him.  
Come, let us man by man each one of us give a great tripod  
and a caldron, and we will make it good to us by a collection  
15 among the people. It is hard for a single man to be generous.’  
So Alkinoös spoke, and his word pleased all the rest of them.  
They all went home to go to bed, each one to his own house.  
But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
they came in haste to the ship, and brought the lavish bronze with them,  
20 and Alkinoös, the hallowed prince, himself going on board,  
stowed it well away under the thwarts, so it would not hamper  
any of the crew as they rowed with their oars and sent the ship speedily  
on. Then all went to Alkinoös' house and made the feast ready.  
Alkinoös, the hallowed prince, sacrificed an ox for them

## Preparations for Odysseus' departure

25 to Zeus, dark-clouded son of Kronos, lord over all men.  
They burned the thigh pieces and enjoyed feasting on the glorious  
banquet, and among them Demodokos, the divine singer,  
sang his songs and was prized by the people. But now Odysseus  
turned his head again and again to look at the shining  
30 sun, to hasten its going down, since he was now eager  
to go; and as a man makes for his dinner, when all day  
long his wine-colored oxen have dragged the compact plow for him  
across the field, and the sun's setting is welcome for bringing  
the time to go to his dinner, and as he goes his knees fail him;  
35 thus welcome to Odysseus now was the sun going under.  
Now he spoke aloud to the oar-loving Phaiakians,  
addressing his words to Alkinoös beyond all others:  
'O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people,  
make libation and send me upon my way untroubled;  
40 and yourselves fare well, for all my heart desired is now made  
good, conveyance and loving gifts. May the sky gods make these  
prosper for me. May I return to my house and find there  
a blameless wife, and all who are dear to me unharmed. May you  
in turn, remaining here, bring comfort and cheer to your wedded  
45 wives and your children, and may the gods grant success in every  
endeavor, and no unhappiness be found in your people.'

So he spoke, and they all approved his word and encouraged  
convoy for the guest, for what he said was fair and orderly;  
then the hallowed prince Alkinoös spoke to his herald:

50 'Pontonoös, now mix a bowl of wine and serve it  
to all in the palace, so that, with a prayer to our father  
Zeus, we may send our guest on his way, back to his own country.'

So he spoke, and Pontonoös mixed the sweet wine and served it  
to all, standing beside each person. They poured a libation  
55 to all the blessed immortal gods who hold wide heaven  
from the chairs where they were sitting, but great Odysseus stood up  
and put the handled goblet into the hand of Arete,  
and spoke to her aloud and addressed her in winged words, saying:  
'Farewell to you, O queen, and for all time, until old age  
60 comes to you, and death, which befall all human creatures.'

Now I am on my way; but have joy here in your household,  
in your children and your people, and in your king, Alkinoös.'

So spoke great Odysseus, and strode out over the door sill,

## The Phaiakians carry Odysseus to Ithaka

and great Alkinoös sent his herald to go along with him  
65 and show him the way to the fast ship and the sand of the seashore.  
Also Arete sent her serving women with him. One  
carried a mantle, washed and clean, and a tunic. Another  
one she sent along with him to carry the well-made  
chest, and a third went along with them bearing food and red wine.  
70 But when they had come down to the sea, and where the ship was, the  
proud escorts promptly took over the gifts, and stowed them  
away in the hollow hull, and all the food and the drink, then  
spread out a coverlet for Odysseus, and linen, out on  
the deck, at the stern of the ship's hull, so that he could sleep there  
75 undisturbed, and he himself went aboard and lay down  
silently. They sat down each in his place at the oarlocks  
in order, and slipped the cable free from its hole in the stone post.  
They bent to their rowing, and with their oars tossed up the sea spray,  
and upon the eyes of Odysseus there fell a sleep, gentle,  
80 the sweetest kind of sleep with no awakening, most like  
death; while the ship, as in a field four stallions drawing  
a chariot all break together at the stroke of the whiplash,  
and lifting high their feet lightly beat out their path, so  
the stern of this ship would lift and the creaming wave behind her  
85 boiled amain in the thunderous crash of the sea. She ran on  
very steady and never wavering; even the falcon,  
that hawk that flies lightest of winged creatures, could not have paced  
her,  
so lightly did she run on her way and cut through the sea's waves.  
She carried a man with a mind like the gods for counsel, one whose  
90 spirit up to this time had endured much, suffering many  
pains: the wars of men, hard crossing of the big waters;  
but now he slept still, oblivious of all he had suffered.  
At the time when shines that brightest star, which beyond others  
comes with announcement of the light of the young Dawn goddess,  
95 then was the time the sea-faring ship put in to the island.  
There is a harbor of the Old Man of the Sea, Phorkys,  
in the countryside of Ithaka. There two precipitous  
promontories opposed jut out, to close in the harbor

and shelter it from the big waves made by the winds blowing  
100 so hard on the outside; inside, the well-benched vessels  
can lie without being tied up, once they have found their anchorage.

## **and leave him there asleep**

At the head of the harbor, there is an olive tree with spreading leaves, and nearby is a cave that is shaded, and pleasant, and sacred to the nymphs who are called the Nymphs of the Wellsprings,

- 105    Naiads. There are mixing bowls and handled jars inside it, all of stone, and there the bees deposit their honey. And therein also are looms that are made of stone, very long, where the nymphs weave their sea-purple webs, a wonder to look on; and there is water forever flowing. It has two entrances, 110    one of them facing the North Wind, where people can enter, but the one toward the South Wind has more divinity. That is the way of the immortals, and no men enter by that way.
- It was into this bay they rowed their ship. They knew of it beforehand.
- The ship, hard-driven, ran up onto the beach for as much as 115    half her length, such was the force the hands of the oarsmen gave her. They stepped from the strong-benched ship out onto the dry land, and first they lifted and carried Odysseus out of the hollow hull, along with his bed linen and shining coverlet, and set him down on the sand. He was still bound fast in sleep. Then 120    they lifted and carried out the possessions, those which the haughty Phaiakians, urged by great-hearted Athene, had given him, as he set out for home, and laid them next to the trunk of the olive, all in a pile and away from the road, lest some wayfarer might come before Odysseus awoke, and spoil his possessions.
- 125    Then they themselves turned back toward home. But the Earthshaker had not forgotten those threats he had once uttered at godlike Odysseus in the beginning, and he asked Zeus for counsel: ‘Father Zeus, no longer among the gods immortal shall I be honored, when there are mortals who do me no honor, 130    the Phaiakians, and yet these are of my own blood. See now, I had said to myself Odysseus would come home only after much suffering. I had not indeed taken his homecoming altogether away, since first you nodded your head and assented to it. But they carried him, asleep in the fast ship, over

135 the sea, and set him down in Ithaka, and gave him numberless gifts, as bronze, and gold abundant, and woven clothing, more than Odysseus could ever have taken from Troy, even if he had come home ungrieved and with his fair share of the plunder.'

Then in turn Zeus who gathers the clouds made answer:

## Poseidon turns their ship to stone

- 140    'What a thing to have said, Earthshaker of the wide strength.  
The gods do not hold you in dishonor. It would be a hard thing  
if we were to put any slight on the eldest and best among us.  
But if there is any man who, giving way to the violence  
and force in him, slighted you, it will be yours to punish him.
- 145    Now and always. Do as you will and as it pleases you.'
- Then in turn Poseidon shaker of the earth made answer:  
'I would act quickly, dark-clouded one, as you advise me,  
but always I have respect for your anger, and keep out of  
its way. This time, I wish to stun that beautiful vessel
- 150    of the Phaiakians out on the misty sea as it comes back  
from its journey, so that they may stop, and give over conveying  
people. And I would hide their city under a mountain.'
- Then in turn Zeus who gathers the clouds made answer:  
'Good brother, here is the way it seems to my mind best
- 155    to do. When all the people are watching her from the city  
as she comes in, then turn her into a rock that looks like  
a fast ship, close off shore, so that all people may wonder  
at her. But do not hide their city under a mountain.'
- When the shaker of the earth Poseidon heard him, he went off
- 160    striding to Scheria, where the Phaiakians are born and live. There  
he waited, and the sea-going ship came close in, lightly  
pursuing her way, and the Earthshaker came close up to her,  
and turned her into stone and rooted her there to the bottom  
with a flat stroke of his hand. And then he went away from her.
- 165    The Phaiakians of the long oars, the sea-famed people, now began  
talking to each other and spoke in winged words;  
and thus they would speak, each looking at the man next to him:  
'Ah me, who was it fastened our swift ship in the water  
as she came rowing in for home? Just now she could be seen plainly.'
- 170    Thus one or another spoke but they did not know what had happened.  
To them now Alkinoös spoke forth and addressed them:  
'Ah now, the prophecy of old is come to completion,  
that my father spoke, when he said Poseidon someday would be angry  
with us, because we are convoy without hurt to all men.'

175 He said that one day, as a well-made ship of Phaiakian  
men came back from a convoy on the misty face of the water,  
he would stun it, and pile a great mountain over our city, to hide it.  
So the old man spoke. Now all is being accomplished.

## Odysseus' wakening

- Come then, let us do as I say, let us all be won over.
- 180 Stop our conveying of every mortal who makes his arrival here at our city. We must dedicate also to Poseidon twelve bulls, chosen out of the herds. Then he might take pity on us, and not pile up a high mountain over our city.'
- So he spoke, and they were afraid and made the bulls ready.
- 185 So these leaders of the Phaiakians and men of counsel among their people made their prayer to the lord Poseidon, standing around the altar. But now great Odysseus wakened from sleep in his own fatherland, and he did not know it, having been long away, for the goddess, Pallas Athene,
- 190 daughter of Zeus, poured a mist over all, so she could make him unrecognizable and explain all the details to him, to have his wife not recognize him, nor his townspeople and friends, till he punished the suitors for their overbearing oppression. Therefore to the lord Odysseus she made everything look otherwise
- 195 than it was, the penetrating roads, the harbors where all could anchor, the rocks going straight up, and the trees tall growing. He sprang and stood upright and looked about at his native country, and groaned aloud and struck himself on both thighs with the flats of his hands, and spoke a word of lamentation:
- 200 'Ah me, what are the people whose land I have come to this time, and are they savage and violent, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly? And where shall I take all these many goods? Where shall I myself be driven? I wish I had stayed among the Phaiakians,
- 205 just where I was, and I would have visited some other powerful king, who then would have been my friend and seen to my journey. Now I do not know where to put all this, and I cannot leave it here, for fear it may become spoil for others.
- Shame on the leaders of the Phaiakians and their men of counsel,
- 210 for they were not altogether thoughtful, nor were they righteous, when they took me away here to another land; but they told me they would bring me to sunny Ithaka, and they did not do it. May Zeus of the suppliants punish them, for he oversees other men besides, and punishes anyone who transgresses.

215 But come, let me count my goods and find out whether they might not have gone taking some of it with them in the hollow vessel.'

So speaking, he counted up the surpassingly beautiful tripods

## Athene disguised tells him where he is

and caldrons, and the gold and all the fine woven clothing.  
There was nothing gone from all of this; but he in great sorrow  
220 crept over the beach of his own country beside the resounding  
sea, with much lamentation; but now Athene came near him,  
likening herself in form to a young man, a herdsman  
of sheep, a delicate boy, such as the children of kings are,  
and wearing a well-wrought shawl in a double fold over her shoulders.  
225 Under her shining feet she had sandals, and in her hand carried  
a spear. Odysseus, in joy at the sight, came up to meet her,  
and spoke aloud to her and addressed her in winged words, saying:  
'Dear friend, since you are the first I have met with in this country,  
I give you greeting. Do not cross me with evil purpose,  
230 but rescue these possessions and me. I make my prayer to you  
as to a god, and come to your dear knees as a suppliant.  
And tell me this and tell me truly, so that I may know it.  
What land is this, what neighborhood is it, what people live here?  
Is it some one of the sunny islands, or is it some foreland  
235 slanted out from the generous mainland into the salt sea?'

Then in turn the gray-eyed goddess Athene answered:  
'You are some innocent, O stranger, or else you have come from  
far away, if you ask about this land, for it is not  
so nameless as all that. There are indeed many who know it,  
240 whether among those who live toward the east and the sunrise,  
or those who live up and away toward the mist and darkness. See now,  
this is a rugged country and not for the driving of horses,  
but neither is it so unpleasant, though not widely shapen;  
for there is abundant grain for bread grown here, it produces  
245 wine, and there is always rain and the dew to make it  
fertile; it is good to feed goats and cattle; and timber  
is there of all sorts, and watering places good through the seasons;  
so that, stranger, the name of Ithaka has gone even  
to Troy, though they say that is very far from Achaian country.'

250 So she spoke, and resourceful great Odysseus was happy, rejoicing in  
the land of his fathers when Pallas Athene  
daughter of Zeus of the aegis told him the truth of it,  
and so he answered her again and addressed her in winged words;

but he did not tell her the truth, but checked that word from the outset,  
255 forever using to every advantage the mind that was in him:  
‘I heard the name of Ithaka when I was in wide Crete,

## He lies to her

far away, across the sea; now I myself have come here  
with these goods that you see, but leaving as much again to my  
children.

- I have fled, an exile, because I killed the son of Idomeneus,  
260    [Orsilochos](#), a man swift of foot, who in wide Crete surpassed  
all other mortal men for speed of his feet. I killed him  
because he tried to deprive me of all my share of the plunder  
from Troy, and for the sake of it my heart suffered many  
pains: the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters;  
265    for I would not do his father favor, and serve as his henchman  
in the land of Troy, but I led others, of my own following.  
I lay in wait for him with a friend by the road, and struck him  
with the bronze-headed spear as he came back from the fields. There  
was  
a very dark night spread over all the sky, nor did anyone  
270    see me, nor did anyone know of it when I stripped the life  
from him. But then, when I had cut him down with the sharp bronze,  
I went at once to a ship, and supplicated the lordly  
Phoenician men, and gave them spoil, to stay their eagerness,  
and asked them to carry me and to set me down in Pylos  
275    or shining Elis where the [Epeians](#) are lords; but it happened  
that the force of the wind beat them away from those places, greatly  
against their will; it was not as if they wished to deceive me.  
So, driven off those courses, we came in here, by night,  
and rowed her hastily into the harbor, nor was there any  
280    thought in us of the evening meal, much though we wanted it,  
but all of us came off the ship as we were, and lay down;  
then, weary as I was, the sweetness of sleep came upon me,  
while they, taking all the possessions out of the hollow hull, set them  
ashore on the sand, and close to the place where I was lying,  
285    and they, embarking, went on their way to strongly settled  
[Sidon](#); but I, grieving at the heart, was left behind here.'
- So he spoke. The goddess, gray-eyed Athene, smiled on him,  
and stroked him with her hand, and took on the shape of a woman  
both beautiful and tall, and well versed in glorious handiworks,  
290    and spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words, saying:

‘It would be a sharp one, and a stealthy one, who would ever get past  
you

in any contriving; even if it were a god against you.

You wretch, so devious, never weary of tricks, then you would not  
even in your own country give over your ways of deceiving

295      and your thievish tales. They are near to you in your very nature.

## Athene reveals herself

But come, let us talk no more of this, for you and I both know  
sharp practice, since you are far the best of all mortal  
men for counsel and stories, and I among all the divinities  
am famous for wit and sharpness; and yet you never recognized

- 300 Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, the one who is always  
standing beside you and guarding you in every endeavor.  
And it was I who made you loved by all the Phaiakians.  
And now again I am here, to help you in your devising  
of schemes, and to hide the possessions which the haughty Phaiakians  
305 bestowed—it was by my thought and counsel—on you, as you started  
for home, and tell you all the troubles you are destined to suffer  
in your well-wrought house; but you must, of necessity, endure  
all, and tell no one out of all the men and the women  
that you have come back from your wanderings, but you must endure  
310 much grief in silence, standing and facing men in their violence.'

- Then in turn resourceful Odysseus spoke to her in answer:  
'It is hard, O goddess, for even a man of good understanding  
to recognize you on meeting, for you take every shape upon you.  
But this I know well: there was a time when you were kind to me  
315 in the days when we sons of the Achaians were fighting in Troy land.  
But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam,  
and went away in our ships, and the god scattered the Achaians,  
I never saw you, daughter of Zeus, after that, nor did I  
know of your visiting my ship, to beat off some trouble  
320 from me, but always with my heart torn inside its coverings  
I wandered, until the gods set me free from unhappiness, until  
in the rich territory of the Phaiakian men you cheered me  
with words, then led me, yourself in person, into their city.  
And now I entreat you in the name of your father; for I do not think  
325 I have really come into sunny Ithaka, but have been driven  
off course to another country, and I think you are teasing me  
when you tell me I am, and saying it to beguile me; tell me  
if it is true that I have come back to my own dear country.'
- Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered him:  
330 'Always you are the same, and such is the mind within you,  
and so I cannot abandon you when you are unhappy,

because you are fluent, and reason closely, and keep your head always.  
Anyone else come home from wandering would have run happily  
off to see his children and wife in his halls; but it is not

## **and explains her absences**

- 335 your pleasure to investigate and ask questions, not till  
you have made trial of your wife; yet she, as always,  
sits there in your palace, and always with her the wretched  
nights, and the days also, waste her away with weeping.  
And I never did have any doubt, but in my heart always
- 340 knew how you would come home, having lost all of your companions.  
But, you see, I did not want to fight with my father's  
brother, Poseidon, who was holding a grudge against you  
in his heart, and because you blinded his dear son, hated you.  
Come, I will show you settled Ithaka, so you will believe me.
- 345 This is the harbor of the Old Man of the Sea, [Phorkys](#),  
and here at the head of the harbor is the olive tree with spreading  
leaves, and nearby is the cave that is shaded, and pleasant,  
and sacred to the nymphs who are called the Nymphs of the  
Wellsprings,
- Naiads. That is the wide over-arching cave, where often
- 350 you used to accomplish for the nymphs their complete hecatombs;  
and there is the mountain, Neritos, all covered with forest.'
- So speaking the goddess scattered the mist, and the land was visible.  
Long-suffering great Odysseus was gladdened then, rejoicing  
in the sight of his country, and kissed the grain-giving ground, then
- 355 raised his hands in the air and spoke to the nymphs, praying:  
'Naiad nymphs, O daughters of Zeus, I never suspected  
that I would see you again. Be welcome now to my gentle  
prayers, but I will also give you gifts, as I used to  
before, if Athene the Spoiler, Zeus' daughter, freely grants me
- 360 to go on living here myself, and sustains my dear son.'
- Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene said to him:  
'Never fear, let none of these matters trouble your mind. Rather  
let us hide these possessions without delay, deep in the inward  
part of the wonderful cave, so they will be kept safe for you.'
- 365 Then we shall make our plans how all may come out best for us.'
- So the goddess spoke, and went inside the shadowy  
cave, looking through it for hiding places. Meanwhile, Odysseus  
brought everything close up, gold, tireless bronze, clothing  
that had been made with care, given him by the Phaiakians,

370 and stowed it well away inside; and Pallas Athene,  
daughter of Zeus of the aegis, set a stone against the doorway.  
The two sat down against the trunk of the hallowed olive,

## Information and instructions

and plotted out the destruction of the overmastering suitors.

Their discourse was begun by the goddess gray-eyed Athene:

375    'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
consider how you can lay your hands on these shameless suitors,  
who for three years now have been as lords in your palace,  
and courting your godlike wife, and offering gifts to win her.

And she, though her heart forever grieves over your homecoming,  
380    holds out some hope for all, and makes promises to each man,  
sending them messages, but her mind has other intentions.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

'Surely I was on the point of perishing by an evil  
fate in my palace, like Atreus' son Agamemnon, unless  
385    you had told me, goddess, the very truth of all that has happened.  
Come then, weave the design, the way I shall take my vengeance  
upon them; stand beside me, inspire me with strength and courage,  
as when together we brought down Troy's shining coronal.  
For if in your fury, O gray-eyed goddess, you stood beside me,  
390    I would fight, lady and goddess, with your help against three hundred  
men if you, freely and in full heart, would help me.'

Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered:

'I will indeed be at your side, you will not be forgotten  
at the time when we two go to this work, and I look for endless  
395    ground to be spattered by the blood and brains of the suitors,  
these men who are eating all your substance away. But come now,  
let me make you so that no mortal can recognize you.  
For I will wither the handsome flesh that is on your flexible  
limbs, and ruin the brown hair on your head, and about you  
400    put on such a clout of cloth any man will loathe when he sees you  
wearing it; I will dim those eyes, that have been so handsome,  
so you will be unprepossessing to all the suitors  
and your wife and child, those whom you left behind in your palace.  
First of all, you are to make your way to the swineherd  
405    who is in charge of your pigs, but always his thoughts are kindly,  
and he is a friend to your son and to circumspect Penelope.  
You will find him posted beside his pigs, and these are herded  
near the Rock of the Raven and beside the spring [Arethousa](#),

to eat the acorns that stay their strength, and drink of the darkling  
410 water, for these are nourishing for pigs, and fatten them.  
There you shall wait, and stay with him, and ask him all questions,

## Odysseus transformed into an old tramp

while I go over to Sparta, the country of lovely women,  
and call back Telemachos, your own dear son, Odysseus,  
who went into spacious Lakedaimon to see Menelaos  
415 and ask him for news of you, and whether you were still living.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:  
'Why then did you not tell him, since in your mind you know all things?  
Was it so that he too wandering over the barren  
sea should suffer pains, while others ate up his substance?'

420 Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered:  
'Let him not be too much on your mind. It was I myself  
who saw him along on that journey, so he would win reputation  
by going there, and he has no hardship, but now is staying  
at his ease with the son of Atreus, and all abundance is by him.

425 It is true that the young men with their black ship are lying  
in wait for him to kill him before he reaches his country;  
but I think this will not happen, but that sooner the earth will cover  
some one of those suitors, who now are eating away your substance.'

So spoke Athene, and with her wand she tapped Odysseus,  
430 and withered the handsome flesh that was upon his flexible  
limbs, and ruined the brown hair on his head, and about him,  
to cover all his body, she put the skin of an ancient  
old man, and then she dimmed those eyes that had been so handsome.  
Then she put another vile rag on him, and a tunic,  
435 tattered, squalid, blackened with the foul smoke, and over it  
gave him the big hide of a fast-running deer, with the hairs rubbed  
off, to wear, and she gave him a staff, and an ugly wallet  
that was full of holes, with a twist of rope attached, to dangle it.

So they two consulted and went their ways. The goddess  
440 went to bright Lakedaimon to fetch the son of Odysseus.

## Book XIV



But Odysseus himself left the harbor and ascended a rugged path, through wooded country along the heights, where Athene had indicated the noble swineherd, who beyond others cared for the house properties acquired by noble Odysseus.

- 5     He found him sitting in front, on the porch, where the lofty enclosure had been built, in a place with a view on all sides, both large and handsome, cleared all about, and it was the swineherd himself who had built it, to hold the pigs of his absent master, far from his mistress and from aged Laertes. He made it
- 10    with stones from the field, and topped it off with shrubbery. Outside he had driven posts in a full circle, to close it on all sides, set close together and thick, the dark of the oak, split out from the logs. Inside the enclosure he made twelve pig pens next to each other, for his sows to sleep in, and in each of them
- 15    fifty pigs who sleep on the ground were confined. These were the breeding females, but the males lay outside, and these were fewer by far, for the godlike suitors kept diminishing their numbers by eating them, since the swineherd kept having to send them in the best of all the well-fattened porkers
- 20    at any time. Now, they numbered three hundred and sixty, and four dogs, who were like wild beasts, forever were lying by them. These the swineherd, leader of men, had raised up himself. Now he was fitting sandals to his feet, cutting out a well-colored piece of oxhide. Meanwhile, the other

## Odysseus finds Eumaios the swineherd

- 25    swineherds were out with the herded pigs one place or another, three of them, but the fourth he had sent off to the city to take a pig to the insolent suitors, since they so forced him, so they could sacrifice it and glut their appetites on it.
- Suddenly the wild-baying dogs caught sight of Odysseus.
- 30    They ran at him with a great outcry, and Odysseus prudently sat down on the ground, and the staff fell out of his hand. But there, beside his own steading, he might have endured a shameful mauling, but the swineherd, quick and light on his feet, came hurrying to him across the porch, and let fall from his hand the shoe he was holding.
- 35    He shouted at the dogs and scared them in every direction with volleyed showers of stones, and spoke then to his own master: ‘Old sir, the dogs were suddenly on you and would have savaged you badly; so you would have covered me with shame, but already there are other pains and sorrows the gods have bestowed upon me.
- 40    For here I sit, mourning and grieving away for a godlike master, and carefully raise his fattened pigs for others to eat, while he, in need of finding some sustenance, wanders some city or countryside of alien-speaking people; if he still is alive somewhere and looks on the sunlight.
- 45    Come, old sir, along to my shelter, so that you also first may be filled to contentment with food and wine, then tell me where you come from, and about the sorrows you have been suffering.’
- So spoke the noble swineherd and led the way to the shelter, and brought him in, and seated him on brushwood piled up
- 50    beneath, and spread over this the hide of a hairy wild goat from his own bed. This was great and thick, and Odysseus was happy at how he received him, and spoke a word and named him, saying: ‘May Zeus, stranger, and the other gods everlasting grant you all you desire the most, for you have received me heartily.’
- 55    Then, O swineherd [Eumaios](#), you said to him in answer: ‘Stranger, I have no right to deny the stranger, not even if one came to me who was meaner than you. All vagabonds and strangers are under Zeus, and the gift is a light and a dear one that comes from us, for that is the way of us who are servants
- 60    and forever filled with fear when they come under power of masters

who are new. The gods have stopped the homeward voyage of that one  
who cared greatly for me, and granted me such possessions  
as a good-natured lord grants to the thrall of his house; a home

## Hospitality of Eumaios

of his own, and a plot of land, and a wife much sought after,

65      when the man accomplishes much work and god speeds the labor as he has sped for me this labor to which I am given. So my lord would have done much for me if he had grown old here, but he perished, as I wish Helen's seed could all have perished, pitched away, for she has unstrung the knees of so many

70      men; for in Agamemnon's cause my master went also to Ilion, land of good horses, there to fight with the Trojans.'

He spoke, and pulled his tunic to with his belt, and went out swiftly to his pig pens where his herds of swine were penned in, and picked out a pair and brought them in and sacrificed them,

75      and singed them, and cut them into little pieces, and spitted them, then roasted all and brought and set it before Odysseus hot on the spits as it was, and sprinkled white barley over it, and mixed the wine, as sweet as honey, in a bowl of ivy, and himself sat down facing him, and urged him on, saying:

80      'Eat now, stranger, what we serving men are permitted to eat: young pigs, but the fattened swine are devoured by the suitors, who have no regard for anyone in their minds, no pity.

The blessed gods have no love for a pitiless action, but rather they reward justice and what men do that is lawful;

85      and though those are hateful and lawless men who land on an alien shore, and Zeus grants them spoil and plunder, when they have loaded their ships with it they set sail away for home, for even in the minds of these there is stored some fear, which is stronger than on these there falls strong fear of how they may be regarded.

But the suitors, you see, have heard some god-sent rumor, and they know

90      about the dismal death of our man, and they will not decently make their suit, nor go home to their own houses, but at their ease they forcibly eat up his property, and spare nothing.

For as many as are the nights and the days from Zeus, on not one of these do they dedicate only a single victim, nor only

95      two, and they violently draw the wine and waste it. See now, he had an endlessly abundant livelihood. Not one of the heroes over on the black mainland had so much, no one

here on Ithaka, no twenty men together had such quantity of substance as he. I will count it for you.

100    Twelve herds of cattle on the mainland. As many sheepflocks. As many troops of pigs and again as many wide goatflocks,

## **and his loyalty to Odysseus**

and friends over there, and his own herdsmen, pasture them for him.  
And here again, at the end of the island, eleven wide flocks  
of goats in all are pastured, good men have these in their keeping.

105 And day by day each of these people brings in for the suitors a sheep,  
and each brings in the fatted goat that seems finest,  
and I myself keep watch on these pigs and guard them, and I too  
choose with care the best of the pigs, and send it off to them.'

He spoke, and the other ate his meat and drank his wine, quietly,  
110 greedily and without speaking, and devised evils for the suitors; but  
when he had dined, and filled his desire with food, the other  
filled the cup in which he was drinking and handed it to him,  
all filled with wine, and he received it, and his heart was cheered  
and he spoke to him then and addressed him in winged words, saying:

115 'Dear friend, who is the man who bought you with his possessions and  
is so rich and powerful as you tell me? You say  
he was one who perished in Agamemnon's cause. Then tell me,  
and perhaps I might know him if he was such a man, for Zeus knows  
as do the other immortal gods, if I might have seen him

120 and have some report to give you. I have wandered to many places.'

Then the swineherd, leader of men, said to him in answer: 'Old sir,  
there is none who could come here, bringing a report  
of him, and persuade his wife and his dear son; and yet  
there are vain and vagabond men in need of sustenance

125 who tell lies, and are unwilling to give a true story; and any vagrant  
who makes his way to the land of Ithaka  
goes to my mistress and babbles his lies to her, and she then  
receives him well and entertains him and asks him everything,  
and as she mourns him the tears run down from her eyes, since this is

130 the right way for a wife when her husband is far and perished. So you  
too, old sir, might spin out a well-made story,  
if someone would give you a cloak or tunic to wear for it. But, for  
him, the dogs and the flying birds must by now have worried  
the skin away from his bones, and the soul has left them; or else

135 the fish have eaten him, out in the great sea, and his bones lie now on  
the mainland shore with the sand piled deeply upon them.  
So he has perished there, and sorrows are made for his dear ones

all hereafter, and me most of all, for never again now  
will I find again a lord as kind as he, wherever

140    I go; even if I could come back to my father and mother's

## Asked who he is, Odysseus

house, where first I was born, and they raised me when I was little. But  
I do not so much mourn for this, much though my longing  
is to behold them with these eyes and in my own country,  
but the longing is on me for Odysseus, and he is gone from me;

145 and even when he is not here, my friend, I feel some modesty about  
naming him, for in his heart he cared for me greatly  
and loved me. So I call him my master, though he is absent.'

Then long-suffering great Odysseus spoke to him in answer:

'Dear friend, since you are altogether full of denial,

150 you do not think he will come, and your heart is ever untrusting; but I  
will not speak in the same manner, but on my oath tell you  
Odysseus is on his way home. Let me have my reward for good news  
then, as soon as he is come back and enters his own house.

Give me fine clothing, a cloak and tunic to wear. Before that,

155 much as I stand in need of these, I will not accept them. For as I detest  
the doorways of Death I detest that man who  
under constraint of poverty babbles beguiling falsehoods.

Zeus be my witness, first of the gods, and the table of friendship,  
and the hearth of blameless Odysseus, to which I come as a suppliant,

160 all these things are being accomplished in the way I tell them.  
Sometime within this very year Odysseus will be here.

Either at the waning of the moon, or at its onset,  
he will come home and take his vengeance here upon any  
who deprives his wife and his glorious son of their due honor.'

165 Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer: 'Old sir, I will  
never pay you that gift for good news, nor will Odysseus come to this  
house again. Be easy

and drink your wine. We will think of other matters. Do not then  
keep on reminding me of this, for the heart within me

170 grieves whenever anyone speaks of my gracious master. So we will let  
your oath alone, but I hope that Odysseus  
will come back, as I wish, and as Penelope wishes,  
and Laertes the old man too, and godlike Telemachos.

But now I grieve unforgettingly for Telemachos, the son

175 born to Odysseus. The gods made him grow like a young tree, and I  
thought he would be among the men one not inferior

to his dear father, admirable for build and beauty;  
but some immortal upset the balanced mind within him,  
or else it was some man. He went after news of his father

## embarks on a false story

- 180 to Pylos the sacrosanct, and the haughty suitors are lying in wait for him as he comes home, to make Arkeisios' stock and seed perish all away and be nameless in Ithaka. Now we will let him be, however, whether they catch him or whether he escapes and the son of Kronos protects him.
- 185 But come now, aged sir, recite me the tale of your sorrows, and tell me this too, tell me truly, so that I may know it: What man are you and whence? Where is your city? Your parents? What kind of ship did you come here on? And how did the sailors bring you to Ithaka? What men do they claim that they are?
- 190 For I do not think you could have traveled on foot to this country.'
- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him: 'See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me. I only wish there were food enough for the time, for us two, and sweet wine for us here inside of the shelter, so that
- 195 we could feast quietly while others tended the work; then easily I could go on for the whole of a year, and still not finish the story of my heart's tribulations, all that hard work I have done in my time, because the gods willed it. I announce that my origin is from Crete, a spacious
- 200 land; I am son of a rich man, and there were many other sons who were born to him and reared in his palace. These were lawful sons by his wife, but a bought woman, a concubine, was my mother, yet I was favored with the legitimate sons by [Kastor, Hylakos'](#) son, whom I claim as father,
- 205 honored among the Cretans in the countryside as a god is, in those days, for wealth and power and glorious children. But then, you see, the death spirits caught and carried him from us to the house of Hades, and his overbearing sons divided the livelihood among them and cast lots for it. Little
- 210 enough, however, was what they gave me in goods and houses. But I took for myself a wife from people with many possessions, because of my courage, for I was no contemptible man, not one who fled from the fighting; but now all that has gone from me, but still, I think, if you look at the stubble you see what the corn was
- 215 like when it grew, but since then hardship enough has had me. Ares

and Athene endowed me with courage, that power  
that breaks men in battle. Whenever I detailed the best fighters  
to go into ambush, planning evil things for the enemy,

## **Odysseus claims to be a veteran of Troy**

the proud heart in me had no image of death before it,  
220   but far the first I would leap out and with my spear bring down that  
enemy man whose speed of foot failed him against me.  
Such was I in the fighting; but labor was never dear to me,  
nor care for my house, though that is what raises glorious children;  
but ships that are driven on by oars were dear to me always,  
225   and the wars, and throwing spears with polished hafts, and the arrows,  
gloomy things, which to other men are terrible, and yet  
those things were dear to me which surely some god had put there  
in my heart, for different men take joy in different actions.  
Before the sons of the Achaeans embarked for Troy, I was  
230   nine times a leader of men and went in fast-faring vessels against  
outland men, and much substance came my way, and from this  
I took out an abundance of things, but much I allotted  
again, and soon my house grew greater, and from that time on  
I went among the Cretans as one feared and respected.  
235   But when Zeus of the wide brows devised for us that hateful  
expedition, which unstrung the knees of so many  
men, they were urgent upon me and renowned Idomeneus  
to lead with the ships to Ilion, and there was no remedy,  
nor any refusing, for the hard speech of the people constrained us.  
240   Then for nine years we sons of the Achaeans fought there, and in the  
tenth we sacked the city of Priam, and went back  
homeward with our ships, and the god scattered the Achaeans.  
But for wretched me Zeus of the counsels devised more hardships;  
one month only I stayed, taking pleasure in my children  
245   and my wedded wife and my possessions, but then the spirit within me  
urged me to make an expedition to Egypt  
with ships well appointed and with my godlike companions.  
I appointed nine ships, and rapidly the people were gathered,  
and for six days then my eager companions continued  
250   feasting, but I provided them with abundant victims for sacrifice to the  
gods, and for themselves to make ready  
their feast. On the seventh day we went aboard and from wide Crete  
sailed on a North Wind that was favorable and fair. It was  
easy, like sailing downstream, so that never a single

255 one of my ships was hurt, and we, unharmed, without sickness, sat still, and let the wind and the steersmen hold them steady.  
On the fifth day we reached the abundant stream *Aigyptos*,

## **who came to grief in Egypt**

and I stayed my oarswept ships inside the Aigyptos River.  
Then I urged my eager companions to stay where they were, there  
260 close to the fleet, and to guard the ships, and was urgent with them to  
send look-outs to the watching places; but they, following  
their own impulse, and giving way to marauding violence,  
suddenly began plundering the Egyptians' beautiful  
fields, and carried off the women and innocent children,  
265 and killed the men, and soon the outcry came to the city. They heard  
the shouting, and at the time when dawn shows, they came  
on us, and all the plain was filled with horses and infantry  
and the glare of bronze, and Zeus who delights in thunder flung down  
a foul panic among my companions, and none was so hardy  
270 as to stand and fight, for the evils stood in a circle around them. There  
they killed many of us with the sharp bronze, and others  
they led away alive, to work for them in forced labor;  
but Zeus himself put this thought into my mind, as I will  
tell you, but how I wish I had died and met my destiny  
275 there in Egypt, for there was still more sorrow awaiting me. At once I  
put the well-wrought helm from my head, the great shield  
off my shoulders, and from my hand I let the spear drop,  
and went out into the way of the king and up to his chariot,  
and kissed his knees and clasped them; he rescued me and took pity  
280 and seated me in his chariot and took me, weeping, homeward with  
him; and indeed many swept in on me with ash spears  
straining to kill me, for they were all too angered, but the king  
held them off from me, and honored the anger of Zeus Protector  
of Strangers, who beyond others is outraged at evil dealings.  
285 There for seven years I stayed and gathered together much substance  
from the men of Egypt, for all gave to me;  
but when in the turning of time the eighth year had befallen me,  
then there came a Phoenician man, well skilled in beguilements,  
a gnawer at others' goods, and many were the hurts he inflicted  
290 on men, and by his wits talked me over, so I went with him to  
Phoenicia, where lay this man's house and possessions.  
There for the fulfillment of a year I stayed with him,  
but when the months and when the days had come to completion,

with the circling back of the year again, and the seasons came on,  
295    then he took me on his seafaring ship to Libya, with lying advices, that  
      with him we could win a cargo, but in fact

## He claims to have bad news

so he could sell me there and take the immense price for me.  
I went with him on his ship, forced to, although I suspected  
all, on a North Wind that was favorable and fair, above  
300 the middle of Crete, but Zeus was plotting these men's destruction. But  
after we had left Crete behind us, and there was no more  
land in sight, but only the sky and the sea, then Kronian  
Zeus drew on a blue-black cloud, and settled it over  
the hollow ship, and the open sea was darkened beneath it.

305 Zeus with thunder and lightning together crashed on our vessel, and,  
struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus, she spun in a circle,  
and all was full of brimstone. The men were thrown in the water,  
and bobbing like sea crows they were washed away on the running  
waves all around the black ship, and the god took away their  
homecoming.

310 But Zeus himself, though I had pain in my heart, then put into my  
hands the giant mast of the ship with dark prows,  
so that I still could escape the evil, and I embracing  
this was swept along before the destructive stormwinds.  
Nine days I was swept along, and on the tenth, in black night,

315 the great wave rolling washed me up on the shore of Thesprotia. There  
the king of the [Thesprotians](#), the hero [Pheidon](#),  
looked after me without price, for his own dear son had come on me  
when I was beaten by weariness and cold air, and lifted me  
up by the hands, and led me home to the house of his father,

320 and put a mantle and tunic about me to wear as clothing. It was there I  
had word of Odysseus, for this king told me  
he had feasted and friended him on his way back to his own country;  
and he showed me all the possessions gathered in by Odysseus,  
bronze and gold and difficulty wrought iron. Truly,

325 that would feed a succession of heirs to the tenth generation, such are  
the treasures stored for him in the house of the great king.  
But he said Odysseus had gone to [Dodona](#), to listen  
to the will of Zeus, out of the holy deep-leaved oak tree,  
for how he could come back to the rich countryside of Ithaka,

330 in secret or openly, having been by now long absent. And he swore to  
me in my presence, as he poured out a libation

in his house, that the ship was drawn down to the sea and the crew were  
ready  
to carry Odysseus back again to his own dear country;  
but before that he sent me off, for a ship of Thesprotian

## of Odysseus on his way home

- 335 men happened then to be sailing for Doulichion, rich in wheatfields; so he urged them to convey me there to the king *Akastos*, in a proper way, but their hearts were taken with a bad counsel concerning me, so I still should have the pain of affliction. So when the seafaring ship had gone far out from the mainland,
- 340 they presently devised the day of slavery for me. They took off me the mantle and tunic I wore as clothing, and then they put another vile rag on me, and a tunic, tattered, the one you yourself see with your eyes. At evening time they made their way off the fields of sunny Ithaka,
- 345 and there they tied me fast in the strong-benched ship, with a rope's end twisted and tightly about me, and themselves disembarking speedily took their evening meal on the sand of the seashore. But the very gods themselves untied the knots that were on me easily, and I, wrapping my head in a rag, climbed down
- 350 the polished plank that was there for loading, and let my chest into the sea, then struck out with both my arms, and thus swimming I very soon was out of the water and close to where they were. Then I went up, where there was a growth of flowering thicket, and lay there, cowering; they with outcry great and sorrowful
- 355 came back to search, but then it seemed there was no more profit in looking for me any longer, and so they went back, boarding their hollow ship again; but it was the gods who concealed me easily, and it was they who brought me here to the steading of an understanding man. So now, life is still my portion.'
- 360 Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer: 'O sorrowful stranger, truly you troubled the spirit in me, by telling me all these details, how you suffered and wandered; yet I think some part is in no true order, and you will not persuade me in your talk about Odysseus. Why should such a man as you are
- 365 lie recklessly to me? But I myself know the whole truth of what my lord's homecoming is, how all the gods hated him so much that they did not make him go down in the land of the Trojans, nor in the arms of his friends, after he had wound up the fighting. So all the Achaians would have heaped a grave mound over him,
- 370 and he would have won great fame for himself and his son hereafter.

But now ingloriously the stormwinds have caught and carried him.  
But I keep away and with my pigs, and I do not go now  
to the city, unless circumspect Penelope for some reason

## Eumaios is skeptical

asks me to go, when word comes in from one place or another;  
375 and there are those who sit beside me and question me over particulars, whether they are grieving for a lord long absent, or are happy at eating up his substance without recompense. But I have no liking for this inquiry and asking of questions, since that time an *Aitolian* man beguiled me by telling  
380 a story. This one had killed a man and wandered over much country. He came to my house and I entertained him fondly. He said he had seen him with Idomeneus, among the Cretan men, repairing his ships, for the stormwinds had smashed them, and he said he would be coming back, in the summer or autumn,  
385 bringing in many possessions, and with his godlike companions. You too, old man of many sorrows, since the spirit brought you here to me, do not try to please me nor spell me with lying words. It is not for that I will entertain and befriend you, but for fear of Zeus, the god of guests, and for my own pity.'

390 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him: 'Truly, the mind in you is something very suspicious. Not even with an oath can I bring you round, nor persuade you. Come now, we two shall make an agreement, and for the future the gods who hold Olympos shall be witnesses to both sides.

395 As your lord makes his homecoming into his palace here, you shall give me a tunic and mantle to wear, and send me on my way to Doulichion, where my heart has been desiring to go; but if your lord never comes in the way I tell you he will, set your serving men on me, and throw me over a high cliff,  
400 so the next vagabond will be careful, and not lie to you.'

Then in turn the glorious swineherd spoke to him in answer: 'That would be virtuous of me, my friend, and good reputation would be mine among men, for present time alike and hereafter, if first I led you into my shelter, there entertained you  
405 as guest, then murdered you and ravished the dear life from you. Then cheerfully I could go and pray to Zeus, son of Kronos. But now it is time for our dinner, and I hope my companions come in soon, so we can prepare a good dinner here in my shelter.'

So these two remained conversing this way together,

410 and the sows came up, and with them came the men who were swineherds, and they penned the sows for the night inside their accustomed places,

## **but entertains him well**

and an endless clamor went up from the crowding swine. Thereafter  
the glorious swineherd gave the word to his own companions:

‘Bring in the best of the pigs, to sacrifice for our stranger

415 guest from afar, and we ourselves shall enjoy it, we who long have  
endured this wretched work for the pigs with shining  
teeth, while others at no cost eat up what we have worked on.’

So he spoke, and with the pitiless bronze split kindling,  
and the men brought in a pig, five years old and a very fat one,

420 and made it stand in front of the fireplace, nor did the swineherd forget  
the immortal gods, for he had the uses of virtue;  
but he cut off hairs from the head of the white-toothed pig, and threw  
them

into the fire as dedication, and prayed to all the gods  
that Odysseus of the many designs should have his homecoming.

425 He hit the beast with a split of oak that he had lying by him. The  
breath went out of the pig; then they slaughtered him and singed him,  
then jointed the carcass, and the swineherd laid pieces of raw meat  
with offerings from all over the body upon the thick fat,  
and sprinkled these with meal of barley and threw them in the fire, then

430 they cut all the remainder into pieces and spitted them, and roasted all  
carefully and took off the pieces,  
and laid it all together on platters. The swineherd  
stood up to divide the portions, for he was fair minded,  
and separated all the meat into seven portions.

435 One he set aside, with a prayer, for the nymphs and Hermes, the son of  
[Maia](#), and the rest he distributed to each man,  
but gave Odysseus in honor the long cuts of the chine's portion  
of the white-toothed pig, and so exalted the heart of his master.  
Then resourceful Odysseus spoke to him and addressed him:

440 ‘I wish, Eumaios, you could be as dear to our father Zeus as to me,  
when I am so poor, but you grace me with good things.’

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:

‘Eat, my guest, strange man that you are, and take your pleasure  
of what is here now; the god will give you such, or will let it

445 be, as in his own mind he may wish. He can do anything.’

He spoke, and sacrificed first-offerings to the immortal gods, then

poured bright wine for Odysseus, sacker of cities,  
and put the cup in his hands, and sat down to his own portion.

## Odysseus hints for a mantle

Mesaulios served the bread to them, a man whom the swineherd

450 owned himself by himself and apart from his absent master, and independently of his mistress and aged Laertes, having bought him from the Taphians with his own possessions.

They put forth their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,

455 Mesaulios took the food away again, and they made haste to go to bed, filled with bread and meat to repletion.

A bad night came on, the dark of the moon, and Zeus rained all night long, and the West Wind blew big, always watery.

Odysseus spoke among them. He was trying it out on the swineherd,

460 to see if he might take off his mantle and give it him, or tell one of his men to do it, since he cared for him so greatly:

'Hear me now, Eumaios and all you other companions.

What I say will be a bit of boasting. The mad wine tells me to do it. Wine sets even a thoughtful man to singing,

465 or sets him into softly laughing, sets him to dancing. Sometimes it tosses out a word that was better unspoken.

But now I have broken into loud speech I will not suppress it.

I wish I were young again and the strength still steady within me, as when, under Troy, we formed an ambush detail and led it.

470 The leaders were Odysseus and Atreus' son, Menelaos, and I made a third leader with them, since they themselves asked me.

But when we had come underneath the city and the steep wall, we, all about the city in marshy ground and the dense growth of swamp grass and the reeds, and huddling under our armor,

475 lay there, and a bad night came on with a rush of the North Wind freezing, and from above came a fall of snow, chilling like frost, and on the shields' edges the ice formed,rimming them.

There all the other men were wearing both mantles and tunics, and they slept at ease, pulling their great shields over their shoulders,

480 but I, in my carelessness when I started with my companions, had left my mantle; I never thought I would be so cold, but went along with only my shield and my shining waist guard.

But when it was the third time of the night and after the star change, then I spoke to Odysseus, for he was lying next me,

485 nudging him with my elbow, and he listened at once. I said: “Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
I shall no longer be left among the living. The weather

## by telling a yarn about Troy

is too much for me. I have no mantle. The spirit made me silly, to go half-dressed, and now there is no escape for me."

490 So I spoke, and he immediately had an idea in his mind, such a man he was for counseling, as for fighting.

He spoke to me in a little voice and said a word to me:  
"Be quiet now, let no other of the Achaians hear you."

Then he propped his head on his elbow and spoke a word, out loud:

495 "Hear me, friends. In my sleep a divine dream came to me. We have come too far away from the ships. Now, would there be someone to tell Agamemnon, Atreus' son, shepherd of the people, so he might send more of the men by the ships to come here to us?"

So he spoke, and [Thoas](#) sprang up, the son of [Andraimon](#),

500 quickly, and took off and laid aside his red mantle, and went on the run for the ships, and I lay down in his clothes, happily, and rested until Dawn of the golden throne came.

I wish I were young like that and the strength still steady within me.

Some one of the swineherds in this house would give me a mantle,

505 both for love and out of respect for a strong warrior. Now they slight me because I wear vile clothing upon me.'

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:

'Old sir, that was a blameless fable the way you told it; and you have made no unprofitable speech, nor one that

510 missed the point, so you shall not lack for clothes, nor anything rightfully due the unhappy suppliant who approaches us.

For now, that is. You must flaunt your rags again in the morning.

There are not many extra mantles and extra tunics here to change into. There is only one set for each man.

515 When, however, the dear son of Odysseus comes back, he will give you a mantle and tunic to wear as clothing, and send you wherever your heart and spirit desire to be sent.'

So he spoke, and sprang up, and laid a bed for him next to the fire, and threw the fleeces of sheep and goats over it.

520 There Odysseus lay down, and he threw over him a mantle that was great and thick, which he kept by him as an extra covering to wrap in when winter weather came on and was too rigorous.

So there Odysseus went to bed and the young men beside him

lay down also to go to sleep. Only the swineherd  
525 did not please to leave his pigs, and go to bed indoors,

## **Eumaios sleeps with the pigs**

but made preparations as he went out; and Odysseus was happy that his livelihood was so well cared for while he was absent.

First the swineherd slung his sharp sword on his heavy shoulders,  
and put a very thick mantle about him, to keep the wind out,

530 and took up also the hairy skin of a great, well-conditioned goat, and took up a sharp javelin as a protection  
against men and dogs, and went to sleep where his pigs, with shining teeth, lay in the hollow of a rock, sheltered from the North Wind.

## Book XV



At this time, Pallas Athene made her way into wide-spaced Lakedaimon, to remind the shining son of great-hearted Odysseus of his journey home, and speed his homecoming. She found Telemachos there with the glorious son of Nestor,

5 sleeping in the forecourt of worshipful Menelaos. Indeed, the son of Nestor was held fast in the softening sleep, but the sweet sleep was not on Telemachos, wakeful through the immortal night, with anxious thoughts of his father. Gray-eyed Athene stood close by his head and addressed him:

10 ‘Telemachos, it no longer becomes you to stray off so far from home, leaving your possessions behind and men in your palace who are so overbearing. You must not let them divide up and eat up all your substance, and make your journey a vain one. So urge Menelaos of the great war cry with all speed to give you

15 conveyance, so you will find your stately mother is still there at home, since now her father and her brothers are urgent with her to marry Eurymachos. He is outdoing the rest of suitors in the giving of gifts, and has been piling up presents to win her. No property must go out of the house, unless you consent to it.

20 For you know what the mind is like in the breast of a woman. She wants to build up the household of the man who marries her, and of former children, and of her beloved and wedded husband, she has no remembrance, when he is dead, nor does she think of him. For yourself, when you come back, you should turn over everything

## Telemachos asks Menelaos

25 to whichever one of the serving women seems to be the best one,  
until the gods show who is to be your honored wife. Also  
you should put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.  
The best men of the suitors are lying in wait, on purpose,  
for you in the passage between rocky Samos and Ithaka,  
30 longing to kill you, before you come back to your own country.  
But I think they will not achieve it. Sooner the earth will close over  
some one of the suitors, they who are eating away your substance.  
But you must keep your well-made ship away from the islands,  
and sail with the night, and that one of the immortals who watches  
35 over you and guards you will send a following stern wind.  
But when you make land, at the first promontory on Ithaka,  
then speed your ship and all your companions along to the city,  
but you yourself go first of all to the swineherd, that man  
who is in charge of the pigs, and whose thoughts toward you are kindly.  
40 There spend the night, but speed the man along to the city  
to take your message to circumspect Penelope, saying  
that you are alive and safe, and you have come home from Pylos.'

So she spoke, and then went away, back to tall Olympos,  
and Telemachos wakened Nestor's son out of his sweet sleep,  
45 stirring him with a nudge of his heel, and spoke a word to him:  
'Wake, Peisistratos, son of Nestor, and bring your solid-hoofed  
horses under the yoke to harness, so we can start back.'

Peisistratos, the son of Nestor, said to him in answer:  
'Telemachos, though we long for the journey, surely we cannot  
50 drive through the dark of the night, but it will be daylight presently.  
But wait until the hero, the son of Atreus, spear-famed  
Menelaos, brings you his gifts to put in the chariot,  
and speaks to us, and with kind words sends us away on our journey.  
For a guest remembers all his days the man who received him  
55 as a host receives a guest, and gave him the gifts of friendship.'

So he spoke, and soon after Dawn of the golden throne came,  
and, rising up from his bed where he lay by sweet-haired Helen,  
Menelaos of the great war cry came and stood near them.  
As soon then as the dear son of Odysseus noted him,  
60 he made haste to slip the shimmering tunic over

his skin, and the hero threw a great mantle over his heavy shoulders, and went to the door, and stood by his host and addressed him,

## for permission to leave

he, Telemachos, the dear son of godlike Odysseus:  
‘Great Menelaos, son of Atreus, leader of the people,  
now send me on my way at last to my own dear country,  
for now the heart within me longs for the homeward journey.’

Then in turn Menelaos of the great war cry answered:  
‘Telemachos, I for my part never will long detain you  
here when you strain for home. I would disapprove of another  
70 hospitable man who was excessive in friendship,  
as of one excessive in hate. In all things balance is better.  
It is equally bad when one speeds on the guest unwilling  
to go, and when he holds back one who is hastening. Rather  
one should befriend the guest who is there, but speed him when he  
wishes.

75 Yet stay, until I can bring you fine gifts to put in your chariot,  
and you can look at them with your eyes, while I tell the women  
to prepare a dinner out of what we have here in abundance.  
For there is both honor and brilliance in it, and there also is profit,  
to dine, then go a long way over the endless earth. Therefore,  
80 if you wish to make a tour through Hellas and midmost Argos,  
and have me go myself with you, I will harness my horses  
and be your guide through the cities of men, and there will be no one  
who will send us away just as we are, but each one will give us  
one thing to carry away with us, some tripod or caldron  
85 well wrought in bronze, or a pair of mules, or a golden goblet.’

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
‘Great Menelaos, son of Atreus, leader of the people,  
I wish now to go back to our country, for I left behind me  
no one when I went, to look after my own possessions.

90 I must not, going in search of my godlike father, ruin  
myself, or have some stored-up treasure lost from my palace.’

But as soon as Menelaos of the great war cry had heard this,  
immediately he told his wife and all the maidservants  
to prepare a dinner out of what was there in abundance;  
95 and, risen from his bed, Eteoneus the son of Boethoös  
came to them, since he had his own dwelling not far from them.  
Menelaos of the great war cry told him to kindle

the fire and roast the meat, nor did the man disobey him.

Meanwhile he himself went into the fragrant chamber,

100      not alone, but Megapenthes and Helen went with him.

## Courtesies and gift-giving

- But when they came to the place where they had their treasures stored,  
the son of Atreus took up the goblet, handled on both sides,  
and told Megapenthes to carry the mixing bowl, that was made  
of silver; but Helen went to stand by the storing boxes,
- 105      where there were elaborately wrought robes. She herself had made  
them.
- And Helen, shining among women, lifted out one of them,  
that which was the loveliest in design and the largest  
and shone like a star. It lay beneath the others. She went on  
her way, further and out through the house, until she came to
- 110      Telemachos; then fair-haired Menelaos said to him:  
'Telemachos, may Zeus, loud-thundering husband of Hera,  
accomplish your homeward journey in the way that your heart desires it.  
Of all those gifts that lie stored away in my house I will give you  
the one which is most splendid and esteemed at the highest value.'
- 115      I will give you a fashioned mixing bowl. It is of silver,  
all but the edges, and these are finished in gold. This is  
the work of Hephaistos. The hero Phaidimos, the Sidonians'  
king, gave it to me, when his house took me in and sheltered me  
there, on my way home. I would give it to you for a present.'
- 120      So speaking, the hero, Atreus' son, put the handled goblet into his  
hands, and meanwhile strong Megapenthes carried  
out the mixing bowl gleaming with silver and set it  
before them. Helen of the fair cheeks stood by, holding  
the robe in her hands, and spoke to him and named him, saying:
- 125      'I too give you this gift, dear child: something to remember  
from Helen's hands, for your wife to wear at the lovely occasion  
of your marriage. Until that time let it lie away in your palace,  
in your dear mother's keeping; and I hope you come back rejoicing  
to your own strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers.'
- 130      So speaking, she put it in his hands, and he gladly received it. The hero  
Peisistratos took the presents and packed them into  
the carrying basket, and in his own mind admired everything.  
Fair-haired Menelaos led them back into his palace,  
and the two young men seated themselves on chairs and benches.
- 135      A maid-servant brought water for them and poured it from a splendid

and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin  
for them to wash, and she pulled a polished table before them.  
A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to them,  
adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions,

## A portent read by Helen

- 140 and the son of Boethoös carved the meat and served out the portions,  
while the son of glorious Menelaos poured the wine for them.  
They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.  
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
then Telemachos and the glorious son of Nestor
- 145 harnessed the horses and mounted up into the chariot bright with  
bronze, and drove them out the front door and the echoing portico.  
But fair-haired Menelaos the son of Atreus followed,  
bearing in his right hand a golden cup that was filled with  
wine as sweet as honey, so they could pour a libation
- 150 as they went. He stood before the chariot and spoke and pledged them:  
'Farewell, young men; give my greeting to the shepherd of the people,  
Nestor, for always he was kind to me like a father,  
when we sons of the Achaians were fighting in Troy land.'
- Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:
- 155 'Surely, illustrious sir, when we arrive we shall tell him  
all that you say, and I wish that even so I too, arriving  
in Ithaka, could find Odysseus there in our palace,  
and tell him I was returning from you, having had all loving  
treatment, and bringing many excellent treasures given me.'
- 160 As he spoke a bird flew by on the right, an eagle carrying in his talons  
a great white goose he had caught  
tame from the yard, and all of them, men and women, with stopped  
breath  
followed his flight; but the eagle, as he approached them,  
shot by on the right before the chariot, and they seeing
- 165 were filled with joy and the hearts in all of them were softened.  
First of them to speak was Peistratos, son of Nestor:  
'Menelaos, illustrious, leader of the people, tell us  
whether the god showed this sign for you, or was it for us two?'
- So he spoke, and warlike Menelaos was pondering
- 170 how to speak his thoughts the right way and give them an answer;  
but Helen of the light robes anticipated him, saying:  
'Hear me! I shall be your prophet, the way the immortals  
put it into my heart, and I think it will be accomplished.  
As this eagle came down from the mountain, where was his origin

175 and parentage, and caught the goose that was nursed in the household,  
so Odysseus, after wandering long and suffering  
much, will come home and take revenge; or he is already

## Return to Pylos—Nestor avoided

home, and making a plan of evil for all of the suitors.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:

180 'May Zeus, high thundering husband of Hera, so appoint it.

Then even at home I would make my prayers to you, as to a goddess.'

He spoke, and laid the lash on his horses, and they very quickly  
and with eager spirit dashed away to the plain, through the city.

All day long they shook the yoke they wore on their shoulders.

185 And the sun set, and all the journeying ways were darkened. They  
came to Pherai and reached the house of Diokles, who was  
son of Ortlochos, whom Alpheios once had childed.

There they slept the night and he gave them hospitality.

But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
190 they yoked the horses again and mounted the chariots bright with  
bronze, and drove them out the front door and the echoing portico,  
and he whipped them into a run and they winged their way unreluctant.  
Presently they approached the sheer citadel of Pylos,

and then Telemachos spoke a word to the son of Nestor:

195 'Son of Nestor, would you accept what I say and bring it  
to pass? For you and I can avow ourselves friends forever  
because of our fathers' love, and the two of us are the same age,  
and this journey of ours will add to the feeling we have for each other.

Then do not take me, illustrious, past my ship, but leave me

200 there, for fear the old man in his affection will keep me  
in his house longer than I wish. But I must make my way quickly.'

He spoke, and the son of Nestor pondered the thought within him,  
how he could fairly undertake this and see it accomplished.

In the division of his heart this way seemed best to him.

205 He turned the horses toward the fast ship and the sand of the seashore,  
and onto the stern of the ship unloaded the beautiful presents,  
the clothing and the gold, which Menelaos had given,  
and spoke, speeding him on his way, and addressed him in winged  
words:

'Go aboard now in haste, and urge on all your companions

210 to go, before I reach home and take the news to the old man.

For I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it,  
how overbearing his anger will be, and he will not let you

go, but will come himself to summon you, and I do not think he will go away without you. As it is, he will be very angry.'

215 So he spoke, and drove away his bright-maned horses back to the city of the Pylians, and reached his home quickly.

## Encounter with a fugitive

Telemachos then gave the sign and urged his companions:  
‘Put all running gear in order, friends, on the black ship,  
and let us ourselves go aboard, so we can get on with the journey.’

220 So he spoke, and they listened well to him and obeyed him, and quickly they went aboard the ship and sat to the oarlocks.  
So, while he was busy with prayer and sacrifice to Athene beside the stern of the ship, there came to him an outlander from Argos, where he had killed a man; now he was a fugitive.

225 He was a prophet, and by blood was of the stock of Melampous. Melampous once had lived in Pylos, mother of sheepflocks, a rich man among the Pylians, at home in his high house; but then he came to the land of other men, fleeing his country and great-hearted Neleus, the proudest of all men living,

230 who until a year was fulfilled kept much of his substance by force, for Melampous meanwhile in the halls of *Phylakos* was held in constraint of wearisome bondage, suffering strong pains for the sake of Neleus’ daughter, and the bitter infatuation which the goddess *Erilys*, wrecker of houses, inflicted upon him.

235 Yet he escaped death, and drove away the loud-lowning cattle from Phylake to Pylos, and achieved the unjust labor godlike Neleus imposed on him, and led back the lady to his brother’s house; but he himself went to the land of others, to horse-pasturing Argos, since now it was ordained for him

240 that he should live there and be lord over many Argives.  
And there he too married a wife and established a high-roofed house, and had children, *Mantios* and *Antiphates*, strong sons. Antiphates had a son; this was great-hearted *Oikles*.  
His son was *Amphiaraos*, leader of storming armies,

245 whom Zeus of the aegis loved in his heart, as did Apollo, with every favor, but he never came to the doorsill of old age, but perished in Thebes, because his wife had been bribed with presents. He in turn had sons, *Amphilochos* and *Alkmaion*.  
The children born to Mantios were *Polypheides* and *Kleitos*,

250 but Dawn of the golden throne carried *Kleitos* away, because of his beauty, so that he might dwell among the immortals; but Apollo made high-hearted Polypheides a prophet,

and far the best among mortals, after Amphiaraos  
had died. He, angered with his father, in [Hyperesia](#)  
255      lived and was lord, and there he was a prophet for all men.

## Theoklymenos the fugitive prophet

It was this man's son, by name [Theoklymenos](#), who now came to Telemachos and stood near, and there he found him pouring libation and praying beside his fast black vessel.

He came and spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words:

- 260    'Dear friend, since I have found you in this place, making sacrifice, I entreat you, first by these rites and spirit, then also by your own head and by your companions, who travel with you, tell me truly this thing that I ask you, and hold back nothing: What man are you and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?'  
265    Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer: 'Friend, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.  
Ithaka is my country, and Odysseus is my father, if ever he lived; but by now he must have died by a dismal death. So, taking my black ship and with my companions,  
270    I have come for news of my father who has been so long absent.'  
Then godlike Theoklymenos said to him in answer:  
'So I too am out of my country, because I have killed a man of my tribe, but he had many brothers and relatives in horse-pasturing Argos, with great power among the Achaians.  
275    Avoiding death at the hands of these men and black doom, I am a fugitive, since it is my fate to be a wanderer among men. Give me a place in your ship, since I have come to you as a suppliant, lest they kill me; for now I think they are after me.'  
Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
280    'I will not willingly thrust you away from my balanced ship. Come, then,  
with me. There you will be entertained, from what we have left.'  
So Telemachos spoke, and took the bronze spear from him, and laid it at length upon the deck of the oarswept vessel.  
Then he himself mounted on board the seagoing vessel  
285    and took his seat on the stern deck, and next him he seated Theoklymenos, and now the men cast off the stern cables. Telemachos then gave the sign and urged his companions to lay hold of the tackle, and they listened to his urging, and raising the mast pole made of fir they set it upright  
290    in the hollow hole in the box, and made it fast with forestays,

and with halyards strongly twisted of leather pulled up the white sails.  
The goddess gray-eyed Athene sent them a favoring stern wind  
blustering stormily through the bright air, so that with all speed  
the ship might run the whole of her course through the sea's salt water.

## taken on by Telemachos

- 295 They ran past *Krounai*, and past *Chalkis* on the fair waters.  
And the sun set, and all the journeying ways were darkened.  
Pressing on before the wind from Zeus, she ran past *Pheai*,  
and on past shining Elis, where the Epeians are lords; then  
Telemachos set her course over toward the Pointed Islands,  
300 as he pondered whether he would escape death, or be captured.
- But now in the shelter Odysseus and the noble swineherd  
were eating their evening meal, and the rest of the men with them.  
But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
Odysseus spoke to them, making trial of the swineherd, to see  
305 if he was truly his friend and would invite him to stay on  
in his steading as he was, or would urge him to go to the city:  
'Hear me now, Eumaios, and all you other companions.  
I am very eager to make my way at dawn to the city  
and beg there, so I will not wear you out, and your men. Only  
310 advise me well, and send a good guide to go along with me  
and see me there. Once in the town I must even go begging  
in my need, for someone to hand me a bit of bread or a cupful.  
Then I would go into the house of godlike Odysseus  
with a message for circumspect Penelope, to tell her;  
315 and I would mingle with the overbearing suitors, to see  
if they, who have good things in great numbers, would give me a  
dinner.  
Soon I would do good work for them, whatever they wanted.  
For I tell you this, listen to me and understand me:  
by grace of Hermes, the guide, who dispenses glory  
320 and beauty upon the endeavors of all men, I am such a one  
for work with my hands that no other man alive could compete  
with me for building a good fire, for splitting up kindling,  
for carving the meat or roasting the meat or filling the wine cups,  
for all such work as meaner men bestow on their betters.'
- 325 Then, deeply troubled, you said to him, O swineherd Eumaios: 'O my  
guest, what is this idea that has come now into  
your head? Are you utterly bent on achieving your own destruction  
there, if you mean to lose yourself in that swarm of suitors  
whose outrageous violence goes up into the iron

330 sky? For nothing like you are the serving men who work for them,  
but young men, and well dressed in mantles and tunics, always  
with neat oiled heads and handsome faces. These are the people  
who serve under the suitors, and their well-polished tables

## Life story of Eumaios

are heavily loaded with bread and meats and wine. No, rather  
335 stay here. There is none here who is annoyed by your presence,  
neither myself nor any companion whom I have with me.  
When, however, the dear son of Odysseus comes back,  
he will give you a mantle and tunic to wear as clothing,  
and send you wherever your heart and spirit desire to be sent.'

340 Then much-enduring great Odysseus said to him in answer: 'I wish,  
Eumaios, you could be as dear to our father  
Zeus as to me, since you stopped my wandering and my terrible  
sorrow. There is nothing worse for mortal men than the vagrant  
life, but still for the sake of the cursed stomach people  
345 endure hard sorrows, when roving and pain and grief befall them.  
But now, since you keep such a man as I am, and bid me stay here,  
come then, tell me about the mother of godlike Odysseus,  
and his father, whom when he went he left on the doorsill  
of old age. Are they still alive in the beams of the sunlight,  
350 or are they dead by now and gone to the house of Hades?'

The swineherd, leader of men, then said to him in answer:  
'So, my friend and guest, I will give you an accurate answer.  
Laertes is still alive, but all the time he is praying  
to Zeus that the spirit will leave his body in his own palace;  
355 for terribly he mourns over the son who is absent,  
and for his wedded virtuous wife, whose death has hurt him  
more than all else, and gave him to a green untimely  
old age. She died of grieving over her glorious son, by  
a dismal death; I hope that no friend who lives here with me  
360 dies such a death, nor any who does me the acts of friendship.  
Now while she was still alive, in spite of her grieving,  
it was my pleasure to try her out and to ask her questions,  
because she brought me up along with her stately daughter,  
*Ktimene* of the light robes, the youngest child. We two  
365 grew up together, and I was only a little less favored.  
But when we had both arrived at our lovely prime, they gave her  
away for marriage, in Same, and for her were given numberless  
gifts; but the lady gave me a mantle and tunic, excellent  
clothing she put upon me, and giving me sandals for my feet

370 sent me to the estate. From the heart she loved me dearly.  
Now I go lacking all these things, but the blessed immortals  
prosper all the work that I myself do abiding

## once a king's son

here, whence I eat and drink and give to people I honor;  
but there is no sweet occasion now to hear from my mistress  
375    in word or fact, since the evil has fallen upon our household,  
these overbearing men, and greatly the serving people  
miss the talk in their mistress' presence, the asking of questions  
and eating and drinking there, then something to take home with them  
to the country—which always warms the hearts of the serving people.'

380    Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him: 'You  
must have been very little then, O swineherd Eumaios,  
when you wandered far away from your own country and your parents.  
But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
Was there some storming of your wide-wayed city of people,  
385    where your father and the lady your mother lived, or were you  
caught alone beside your sheep and your cattle? And was it  
enemy men who carried you in their ships and sold you  
here in this man's house, being paid a fair price for you?'

The swineherd, leader of men, then said to him in answer:  
390    'My guest, since indeed you are asking me all these questions,  
listen in silence and take your pleasure, and sit there drinking  
your wine. These nights are endless, and a man can sleep through them,  
or he can enjoy listening to stories, and you have no need  
to go to bed before it is time. Too much sleep is only  
395    a bore. And of the others, any one whose heart and spirit  
urge him can go outside and sleep, and then, when the dawn shows,  
breakfast first, then go out to tend the swine of our master.  
But we two, sitting here in the shelter, eating and drinking,  
shall entertain each other remembering and retelling  
400    our sad sorrows. For afterwards a man who has suffered  
much and wandered much has pleasure out of his sorrows.  
So I will tell you now the answer to all your questions.  
There is an island, called [Syria](#), you may have heard of it,  
lying above Ortygia, where the sun makes his turnings;  
405    not so much a populous island, but a good one, good for  
cattle and good for sheep, full of vineyards, and wheat raising.  
No hunger ever comes on these people, nor any other  
hateful sickness, of such as befall wretched humanity;

but when the generations of men grow old in the city,  
410     Apollo of the silver bow, and Artemis with him,  
comes with a visitation of painless arrows, and kills them.

## Kidnapped by Phoenicians

There are two cities, and everything is divided between them,  
and over both of these cities there was one king, my father,  
[Ktesios, Ormenos'](#) son, in the likeness of the immortals.

- 415 ‘There came Phoenician men, famous seafarers, gnawers at other  
men's goods, with countless pretty things stored in their black ship.  
Now in my father's house there was a Phoenician woman,  
both beautiful and tall, and skilled in glorious handiwork,  
and yet these Phoenicians, subtle men in their talk, beguiled her.
- 420 First of all, when she went out washing, one of them lay with her  
in love's embrace by the hollow ship, which for female women  
is a heart's beguilement, even for the one who is a skilled worker.  
Then he asked her who and whence she was. She readily  
told them all about the high-roofed house of her father:
- 425 “I claim that I come from Sidon, rich in bronze; I am daughter  
of [Arybas](#), who has rivers of wealth, but men from Taphos,  
pirates, caught me and carried me away as I came back  
home from the fields, and carried me to this place and sold me  
here in this man's house, being paid a fair price for me.”
- 430 ‘Then the man who had lain with her secretly said to her: “Would you  
then be willing to go back home again with us,  
to see once more the high-roofed house of your father and mother  
and themselves too? For they are still alive, and called wealthy.”
- ‘Then in turn the woman answered them and said to them:  
435 “That also could be done if you, sailors, were willing  
to assure me by an oath that you would take me home safely.”
- ‘So she spoke, and all of them swore to this, as she asked them.  
But when they had sworn the oath, and made an end of their swearing,  
then once again the woman spoke to them and said to them:
- 440 “Silence, now. None of your companions must say anything  
to me, when he happens to meet me in the street, or else  
perhaps at the spring; somebody might go to the house and tell it  
to the old man, and he might be suspicious, and bind me  
in painful bondage, and plan destruction against the rest of you.
- 445 But keep the word in your hearts, and get on with buying your  
homeward  
cargo. But when your ship is loaded with goods, then let there

be someone sent to me at the house with word of it, quickly.  
For I will bring you gold, whatever I can lay my hand on.  
And there is another thing I would willingly give you, to pay for

## **and a treacherous nurse and sold**

450 my way home. I am nurse to the man's son in his place,  
such a cunning child, as he runs around outside. If I  
could take him aboard your ship, he would bring you a price beyond  
counting,  
wherever you might sell him among alien-speaking people."

'So she spoke, and went away back to the splendid palace,  
455 and they, with their hollow ship, for the whole of a year remaining  
in our country, traded and piled up much substance.  
But when at last their hollow ship was loaded for sailing,  
they sent their messenger, to bring the news to the woman.  
There came a knowledgeable man to the house of my father,  
460 with a golden necklace, and it was strung with pieces of amber.  
Now in the hall the serving women with the lady my mother  
were turning it in their hands and eying it and offering  
to buy it, and the man nodded silently to the woman, then  
after nodding to her he went away to the hollow  
465 ship, and she took my hand and led me out of the palace.  
There in the forecourt she came upon the cups and the tables  
of men who had been feasting, associates of my father,  
but these had gone to a session and debate of the people.  
She snatched three goblets and hid them in the fold of her bosom,  
470 and carried them off, and I in my innocence went with her.  
And the sun set, and all the journeying ways were darkened.  
Walking fast, we made our way to the glorious harbor,  
where lay the fast-running ship of the men from Phoenicia.  
They then putting out went over the ways of the water  
475 after taking us aboard, and Zeus sent a wind to follow.  
Thus it was that for six days, night and day, we sailed on,  
but when Zeus, son of Kronos, had brought on the seventh  
day, Artemis of the showering arrows struck down the woman,  
and she dropped with a splash, like a diving tern, in the hull's bilge.  
They then  
480 threw her overboard to be the spoil of the fishes  
and seals, while I was left alone, heart full of sorrow;  
and the wind and the current carried the men and brought them to  
Ithaka,

where Laertes bought me for himself with his own possessions.  
Thus it was that I came to set eyes on this country.'

485 In turn illustrious Odysseus gave him an answer: 'Eumaios, you have  
deeply stirred the spirit within me

## Arrival of Telemachos on Ithaka

by telling me all these things, the sorrows your heart has suffered.  
But beside the sorrow Zeus has placed some good for you, seeing  
that after much suffering you came into the house of a kindly

490 man, who, as he ought to do, provides you with victuals  
and drink, and the life you lead is a good one. But I come to you  
only after much wandering in the cities of people.'

So now these two were conversing thus with each other,  
then slept, but not for very much time, only for a little,

495 since soon the glorious dawn came on. Ashore, Telemachos'  
companions now loosened the sails, and took down the mast tree,  
easily, and rowed her in with oars to the mooring.

They threw over the anchor stones and made fast the stern cables,  
and themselves stepped out onto the break of the sea beach,

500 and then made ready their dinner, and mixed the bright wine with  
water.

But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
then the thoughtful Telemachos began their discourse:  
'The rest of you now take the black ship on to the city,  
while I go out to visit the estate and the herdsmen.

505 In the evening, when I have looked at the holdings, I will come back  
to town. I will set a good feast before you, meats and sweet-tasting  
wine, to be my thanks for sharing the journey with me.'

Then in turn godlike Theoklymenos said to him:  
'Where shall I go then, dear child? Of the men who are lords here  
510 in rocky Ithaka, who is there whose house I can visit?  
Or shall I go straight to the house where you live, and to your mother?'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Were things otherwise, indeed I would urge you to visit  
our house; we lack no means as hosts, and yet for yourself

515 it would be worse, for I shall be absent, nor will my mother  
see you; with suitors there in the house she does not often  
appear, but stays in the upper room and works at her weaving.

But I will indicate another man you could go to,  
Eurymachos, the glorious son of prudent Polybos,  
520 whom now the people of Ithaka look on as on divinity,  
since he is their best man by far, and is the most eager

to marry my mother and seize the rights and powers of Odysseus;  
but Zeus the Olympian, dwelling in the high air, knows whether  
the evil day will end him before he can make that marriage.'

525 As he spoke, a bird flew by on the right, a falcon,

## Theoklymenos reads a portent

swift messenger of Apollo, and in his claws he carried a pigeon and tore  
at it so that a shower of feathers  
drifted to the ground between the ship and Telemachos.

Theoklymenos called him away from his other companions  
and took him by the hand and spoke and named him, saying:  
'Telemachos, not without a god's will did this bird fly past you  
on the right, for I knew when I saw it that it was a portent.  
No other family shall be kinglier than yours in the country  
of Ithaka, but you shall have lordly power forever.'

530 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer: 'If only this  
word, stranger and guest, were brought to fulfillment,  
soon you would be aware of my love and many gifts given  
by me, so any man who met you would call you blessed.'

He spoke, and said a word to Peiraios, a faithful companion:  
535 'Peiraios, son of Klytios, in other ways also you follow  
my will, beyond the other friends who went with me to Pylos.  
So now too take this guest home to your house and give him  
his honor due and loving attention, until I come to you.'

So he spoke, and spear-famed Peiraios gave him an answer:  
545 'Telemachos, even if you were to stay out there for a long time,  
we shall lack no means as hosts to this man, and I shall look after him.'

So speaking he went aboard the ship and told his companions  
also to go aboard, and to cast off the stern cables,  
and quickly they went aboard the ships and sat to the oarlocks;  
550 but under his feet Telemachos bound on his fair sandals,  
and then caught up a powerful spear, edged with sharp bronze,  
from the ship's deck, but the other men cast off the stern cables,  
and pushed off and sailed away to the city, as they were asked to  
by Telemachos, beloved son of godlike Odysseus.

555 He stepped out, and his feet took him swiftly, until he came to  
the yard, where there were countless pigs, and near them always  
slept the noble swineherd, with kind thoughts for his masters.

## Book XVI



These two in the shelter, Odysseus and the noble  
swineherd, stirred the fire at dawn, and arranged their breakfast,  
and sent the herdsmen out with the pasturing pigs. At this time  
the clamorous dogs came fawning around Telemachos, nor did  
5 they bark at him as he came, and great Odysseus noticed  
that the dogs were fawning; above them he heard the loud noise of  
footsteps.  
Immediately he spoke in winged words to Eumaios:  
'Eumaios, someone is on his way here who is truly  
one of yours, or else well known, since the dogs are not barking  
10 but fawning about him, and I can hear the thud of his footsteps.'  
His whole word had not been spoken when his beloved  
son stood in the forecourt. Amazed, the swineherd started  
up, and the vessels, where he had been busily mixing  
the bright wine, fell from his hand. He came up to meet his master,  
15 and kissed his head, and kissed too his beautiful shining  
eyes, and both his hands, and the swelling tear fell from him.  
And as a father, with heart full of love, welcomes his only  
and grown son, for whose sake he has undergone many hardships  
when he comes back in the tenth year from a distant country,  
20 so now the noble swineherd, clinging fast to godlike  
Telemachos, kissed him even as if he had escaped dying,  
and in a burst of weeping he spoke to him in winged words:  
'You have come, Telemachos, sweet light; I thought I would never

## Telemachos finds Odysseus and Eumaios

see you again, when you had gone in the ship to Pylos.

25     But come now into the house, dear child, so that I can pleasure my heart with looking at you again when you are inside; for you do not come very often to the estate and the herdsmen, but you stay in town, since now it seems you are even minded to face the deadly company of the lordly suitors.'

30     Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer: 'So it shall be, my father; but it was for your sake I came here, to look upon you with my eyes, and to hear a word from you, whether my mother endures still in the halls, or whether some other man has married her, and the bed of Odysseus

35     lies forlorn of sleepers with spider webs grown upon it.'

Then in turn the swineherd, leader of men, said to him: 'All too much with enduring heart she does wait for him there in your own palace, and always with her the wretched nights and the days also waste her away with weeping.'

40     So he spoke, and took the bronze spear from him. Telemachos then went inside and stepped over the sill of stone, and his father Odysseus rose from his seat and yielded him place as he entered, but Telemachos from the other side checked him and said to him: 'No, sit, my friend, and we shall find us another seat, here

45     in our own shelter; the man is here who will lay it for us.'

He spoke, and Odysseus went back again and sat down. The swineherd

strewed green brushwood and fleeces on the ground for him. There the beloved son of Odysseus seated himself, and for them the swineherd brought and set beside them platters of roasted

50     meat, which they had left over when they were eating earlier; and hastily set bread by them, piling it in baskets, and mixed the wine, as sweet as honey, in a bowl of ivy.

He himself sat down across from godlike Odysseus.

They put forth their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.

55     But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking, then at last Telemachos questioned the noble swineherd: 'Father, where did this stranger come from? How did the sailors bring him to Ithaka? What men do they claim that they are?

For I do not think he could have traveled on foot to this country.'

60     Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer: 'So, my child,  
I will relate you the whole true story.  
He announces himself by birth to be one from spacious

## Troubles in Ithaka described

Crete, but his wanderings have wheeled him through many cities  
of mortal men, for so the divinity spun his thread for him,

65      and now this time he has fled away off a ship of Thesprotian  
men, and come to my steading. I put him into your hands now.  
Do with him as you will. He names himself your suppliant.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Eumaios, this word you spoke hurt my heart deeply. For how  
70      shall I take and entertain a stranger guest in my house?  
I myself am young and have no faith in my hands' strength  
to defend a man, if anyone else picks a quarrel with him;  
and my mother's heart is divided in her, and ponders two ways,  
whether to remain here with me, and look after the household,  
75      keep faith with her husband's bed, and regard the voice of the people,  
or go away at last with the best man of the Achaeans  
who pays her court in her palace, and brings her the most presents.  
But as for this stranger, since it is your house he has come to,  
I will give him a mantle and tunic to wear, fine clothing,  
80      and give him sandals for his feet, a sword with two edges,  
and send him wherever his heart and spirit desire to be sent.  
Or if you will, keep him here in your steading and look after him,  
and I will send the clothes out here, and all provisions  
to eat, so he will not be hard on you, nor on your companions;  
85      but I will not let him go down there and be where the suitors  
are, for their outrageousness is too strong, and I fear  
they may insult him, and that will be a hard sorrow upon me  
and a difficult one for even a strong man to deal with  
among too many of them, since they will be far the stronger.'

90      Then long-suffering great Odysseus spoke to him in answer: 'Dear  
friend, since in truth I am privileged to speak of this,  
you eat away the dear heart in me, as I listen  
to what you tell of the suitors and their reckless contrivings  
inside your palace, against your will, when you are such a one  
95      as you are. Tell me, are you willingly oppressed by them? Do the  
people  
hate you throughout this place, swayed by some impulse given  
from the gods? Do you find your brothers wanting? A man trusts

help from these in the fighting when a great quarrel arises.  
I wish that I were truly as young as I am in spirit,  
100      or a son of stately Odysseus were here, or he himself might  
come in from his wandering. There is time still for hope. If such

## Eumaios sent to Penelope

things could be, another could strike my head from my shoulders  
if I did not come as an evil thing to all those people  
as I entered the palace of Odysseus, the son of Laertes.

- 105 And if I, fighting alone, were subdued by all their number,  
then I would rather die, cut down in my own palace,  
than have to go on watching forever these shameful activities,  
guests being battered about, or to see them rudely mishandling  
the serving women all about the beautiful palace,  
110 to see them drawing the wine and eating up food in this utterly  
reckless way, without end, forever and always at it.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'So, my friend, I will tell you plainly the whole truth of it.  
It is not that all the people hate me, nor are they angry,

- 115 nor is it that I find brothers wanting, whom a man trusts for  
help in the fighting, whenever a great quarrel arises.  
For so it is that the son of Kronos made ours a single  
line. *Arkeisios* had only a single son, Laertes,  
and Laertes had only one son, Odysseus; Odysseus in turn  
120 left only one son, myself, in the halls, and got no profit  
of me, and my enemies are here in my house, beyond numbering.  
For all the greatest men who have the power in the islands,  
in Doulichion and Same and in wooded Zakynthos,  
and all who in rocky Ithaka are holders of lordships,

- 125 all these are after my mother for marriage, and wear my house out.  
And she does not refuse the hateful marriage, nor is she able  
to make an end of the matter; and these eating up my substance  
waste it away; and soon they will break me myself to pieces.  
Yet all these are things that are lying upon the gods' knees.

- 130 Father Eumaios, go quickly now, and tell the circumspect  
Penelope that I am safe and have come from Pylos.  
I myself will stay here. You go there quickly, and give this  
message to her alone, and let no other Achaian  
hear it; for there are many there who are plotting against me.'

- 135 Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer: 'I see, I  
understand; you speak to one who follows you.  
But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.

Shall I on the same errand go with the news to wretched  
Laertes, who while he so greatly grieved for Odysseus  
140      yet would look after his farm and with the thralls in his household

## Odysseus reveals himself

would eat and drink, whenever the spirit was urgent with him;  
but now, since you went away in the ship to Pylos,  
they say he has not eaten in this way, nor drunk anything,  
nor looked to his farm, but always in lamentation and mourning  
145      sits grieving, and the flesh on his bones is wasting from him.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Though it hurts the more, we shall let him be, for all our sorrow.  
For if it were somehow given to mortals to have their choosing  
in all things, we should choose my father's day of homecoming.

150      But you, when you have given your message, come back and do not  
go off to the estate to see him, but tell my mother  
to tell the servant who is housekeeper to go there swiftly  
and secretly, and she can give the news to the old man.'

He spoke, and started the swineherd, who in his hands took up  
155      his sandals and tied them on his feet to start for the city.

Nor was Athene unaware that Eumaios the swineherd  
had left the steading, but she came near, likened to a woman  
beautiful and tall, and skilled in glorious handiwork,  
and stood in the forecourt of the shelter, seen by Odysseus.

160      But Telemachos did not look her way nor did he perceive her;  
for the gods do not show themselves in this way to everyone;  
but Odysseus saw her and the dogs did; they were not barking,  
but cowered away, whimpering, to the other side of the shelter.  
She nodded to him with her brows, and noble Odysseus

165      saw her, and came from the house, outside the great wall of the  
courtyard,  
and stood in her presence. Then Athene spoke to him, saying:  
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
it is time now to tell your son the story; no longer  
hide it, so that, contriving death and doom for the suitors,

170      you two may go to the glorious city. I myself shall not  
be long absent from you in my eagerness for the fighting.'

So spoke Athene, and with her golden wand she tapped him.  
First she made the mantle and the tunic that covered  
his chest turn bright and clean; she increased his strength and stature.

175      His dark color came back to him again, his jaws firmed,

and the beard that grew about his chin turned black. Athene went away once more, having done her work, but Odysseus went back into the shelter. His beloved son was astonished and turned his eyes in the other direction, fearing this must be

## to Telemachos

- 180    a god, and spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
‘Suddenly you have changed, my friend, from what you were formerly;  
your skin is no longer as it was, you have other clothing.  
Surely you are one of the gods who hold the high heaven.  
Be gracious, then: so we shall give you favored offerings  
185    and golden gifts that have been well wrought. Only be merciful.’  
Then in turn long-suffering great Odysseus answered him:  
‘No, I am not a god. Why liken me to the immortals?  
But I am your father, for whose sake you are always grieving  
as you look for violence from others, and endure hardships.’  
190    So he spoke, and kissed his son, and the tears running down his cheeks  
splashed on the ground. Until now, he was always unyielding.  
But Telemachos, for he did not yet believe that this was  
his father, spoke to him once again in answer, saying:  
‘No, you are not Odysseus my father, but some divinity  
195    beguiles me, so that I must grieve the more, and be sorry.  
For no man who was mortal could ever have so contrived it  
by his own mind alone, not unless some immortal, descending  
on him in person, were lightly to make him a young or an old man.  
For even now you were an old man in unseemly clothing,  
200    but now you resemble one of the gods who hold wide heaven.’  
Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
‘Telemachos, it does not become you to wonder too much  
at your own father when he is here, nor doubt him. No other  
Odysseus than I will ever come back to you. But here I am,  
205    and I am as you see me, and after hardships and suffering  
much I have come, in the twentieth year, back to my own country.  
But here you see the work of Athene, the giver of plunder,  
who turns me into whatever she pleases, since she can do this;  
and now she will make me look like a beggar, but then the next time  
210    like a young man, and wearing splendid clothes on my body;  
and it is a light thing for the gods who hold wide heaven  
to glorify any mortal man, or else to degrade him.’  
So he spoke, and sat down again, but now Telemachos  
folded his great father in his arms and lamented,  
215    shedding tears, and desire for mourning rose in both of them;

and they cried shrill in a pulsing voice, even more than the outcry  
of birds, ospreys or vultures with hooked claws, whose children

## They make their plans

- were stolen away by the men of the fields, before their wings grew strong; such was their pitiful cry and the tears their eyes wept.
- 220 And now the light of the sun would have set on their crying, had not Telemachos spoken a quick word to his father:  
‘What kind of ship was it, father dear, in which the sailors brought you to Ithaka? What men do they claim that they are?  
For I do not think you could have traveled on foot to this country.’
- 225 Then long-suffering great Odysseus said to him in answer: ‘So, my child, I will tell you all the truth. The Phaiakians famed for seafaring brought me here, and they carry other people as well, whoever may come into their country.  
They brought me sleeping in their fast ship over the open
- 230 sea, and set me down in Ithaka, and gave me glorious gifts, abundant bronze and gold and woven apparel.  
All this, by the gods' grace, is lying stored in the caverns.  
But now I have come to this place by the advice by Athene,  
so we together can make our plans to slaughter our enemies.
- 235 Come then, tell me the number of suitors, and tell me about them, so I can know how many there are, and which men are of them;  
and then, when I have pondered it in my faultless mind, I can decide whether we two alone will be able to face them without any help, or whether we must go looking for others.’
- 240 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer: ‘Oh, father, I have always heard of your great fame, and how you were a fighting man with your hands, and prudent in counsel;  
but what you have spoken of is too big; I am awed; for it could not be that two men could fight against strong men in these numbers.
- 245 The suitors are no simple number of ten, nor twice that,  
but far more than that. Even now you shall hear the number of those that are here. From Doulichion there are two and fifty young men, choice men, and there are six thralls of their following;  
the number of men come from Same is four and twenty,
- 250 and from Zakynthos there are twenty sons of the Achaians.  
From Ithaka itself there are twelve, and all of their best men,  
and Medon the herald is with them, and the divine singer,  
and there are two henchmen with them, both skilled in carving. If we

set ourselves to fight against all who are in the palace,

255 I fear your revenge on their violence may be grim and bitter  
for us. Then, if you can think of anyone to stand by us

## **to deal with the suitors**

and with forthright spirit be our protector, speak of him to me.'

Then in turn long-suffering great Odysseus answered him:

'So, then, I will tell you. Hear me and understand me

260 and consider whether Athene with Zeus father helping will be enough for us, or whether I must think of some other helper.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

'Those indeed are two excellent helpers you name to me, even though they sit high away in the clouds, for they have power over others besides, over mortal men and the gods immortal.'

265 Then in turn long-suffering great Odysseus answered him:

'These are two who will not for a long time stay far off from the strong battle, at that time when the War God's decision is fought out in our halls between ourselves and the suitors.

270 But now, as for you, you must make your way, when dawn shows, back to our house, and be with the group of insolent suitors.

At a later time the swineherd shall take me to the city, and I shall look like a dismal vagabond, and an old man.

But if they maltreat me within the house, then let the dear heart

275 in you even endure it, though I suffer outrage, even if they drag me by the feet through the palace to throw me out of it, or pelt me with missiles; you must still look on and endure it; though indeed you may speak to them with soft words and entreat them to give over their mad behavior, but still they will never

280 listen to you, for the day of their destiny stands near them.

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.

When Athene, lady of many counsels, puts it into

my mind, I will nod my head to you, and when you perceive it, take all the warlike weapons which are stored in the great hall,

285 and carry them off and store them away in the inward corner of the high chamber; and when the suitors miss them and ask you about them, answer and beguile them with soft words, saying: "I stored them away out of the smoke, since they are no longer like what Odysseus left behind when he went to Troy land,

290 but are made foul, with all the smoke of the fire upon them.

Also, the son of Kronos put into my head this even

greater thought, that with the wine in you, you might stand up

and fight, and wound each other, and spoil the feast and the courting,  
since iron all of itself works on a man and attracts him.”

295     But leave behind, for you and me alone, a pair each

## Return of the suitors

of swords and spears, and a pair of oxhide shields, to take up  
in our hands, and wield them, and kill these men; and Zeus of the  
counsels

and Pallas Athene will be there to maze the wits in them.

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.

300 If truly you are my own son, and born of our own blood,  
then let nobody hear that Odysseus is in the palace;  
let not Laertes hear of it, neither let the swineherd;  
let no one in the household know, not even Penelope  
herself; you and I alone will judge the faith of the women,

305 and, besides these, we can make trial of the serving men, to see  
whether any of them is true to us and full of humility,  
or whether one cares nothing for you, and denies your greatness.'

Then in answer again his glorious son said to him:

'Father, I think you will learn what my spirit is like, when the time  
comes,

310 for the mood that is in my mind shows no slackening; only  
I think in what you propose there will be no profit for either  
of us, and I urge you to think well about it. You would  
be going about our holdings, testing and learning the nature  
of man after man, while they at their ease in the palace

315 overbearingly consume our goods, and spare nothing.  
And yet I do urge you to find out about the women,  
which of them care nothing for you, and which are innocent;  
but I myself would not wish that we should go out to the steadings  
to test the men, but this is a task to be left for later,

320 if truly you have been given some sign from Zeus of the aegis.'

Now as these two were conversing thus with each other,  
the well-made vessel which had carried Telemachos, together  
with his companions, from Pylos, now came in to Ithaka.

They, when they were inside the many-hollowed harbor,

325 hauled the black-hulled ship onto the dry land, high up,  
and their high-hearted henchmen carried their armor for them,  
and took the beautiful presents to the house of Klytios.

But they sent a herald on his way to the house of Odysseus  
to take a message to circumspect Penelope, saying

330 Telemachos was in the country now, but had told them to sail the ship back to the city, so the magnificent queen would not be terrified within her heart, and shed the soft tears.

## from their futile ambush

The two of them met, the herald and noble swineherd, going by reason of the same message, to report to the lady.

335 But when they had come to the house of the sacred king, the herald stood in the midst of the serving maids and delivered his message: 'Now, O queen, your beloved son is back in this country.'

But the swineherd stood very close to Penelope and told her all the message that her beloved son had entrusted

340 to him to tell, but when he had given her all the message, he went back to his pigs, leaving the palace and courtyard.

But the hearts of the suitors were disturbed and discouraged. They went

out of the palace and stood by the great wall of the courtyard, and there in front of the palace gates they held an assembly.

345 First of them to speak was Eurymachos, son of Polybos: 'Friends, this is a monstrous thing, this voyage made by Telemachos and insolently put through. We thought he would never achieve it. But come, let us drag a black ship, our best one, down to the water, and assemble sailors to row it, who can with all speed carry

350 the message to give to our others and tell them to come home quickly.'

He had not yet said all before [Amphinomos](#), turning from his place, saw the ship inside the depths of the harbor, and they had the oars now in their hands and were taking the sails down.

He laughed out sweetly and spoke a word then to his companions:

355 'We need send them no message now. Here they are, inside. Either some god told it to them, or they themselves saw the other ship pass by, and they were not able to catch her.'

He spoke, and they stood up and went down to the sand of the seashore,

and others hauled their black-hulled ship up onto the dry land,

360 and their high-hearted henchmen carried their armor for them.

They went in a throng to the assembly, nor did they suffer any of the young men or any of the elders to sit with them.

Thereupon Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, addressed them:

'It is shameful how the gods got this man clear of misfortune.

365 In the daytime we sat watchful along the windy headlands,

always succeeding each other, but when the sun set, we never lay through the night on the dry land, but always on the open water, cruising in a fast ship, we waited for the divine dawn, watching to ambush Telemachos, so that we could cut him

## **Antinoös' proposal to murder Telemachos**

370 off; but all the time some divinity brought him home. Therefore, we who are here must make our plans for the grim destruction of Telemachos, so he cannot escape us; since I have no thought we can get our present purpose accomplished while he is living. For he himself is understanding in thought and counsel,

375 and the people here no longer show us their entire favor. But come now, before he can gather the Achaians and bring them to assembly; for I think he will not let us go, but work out his anger, and stand up before them all and tell them how we designed his sudden murder, but we could not catch him;

380 and they will have no praise for us when they hear of our evil deeds, and I fear they will work some evil on us, and drive us from our own country, so we must make for another community; then let us surprise him and kill him, in the fields away from the city, or in the road, and ourselves seize his goods and possessions,

385 dividing them among ourselves fairly, but give his palace to his mother to keep and to the man who marries her. Or else, if what I say is not pleasing to you, but you are determined to have him go on living and keep his father's inheritance, then we must not go on gathering here and abundantly eating

390 away his fine substance, but from his own palace each man must strive to win her with gifts of courtship; she will then marry the man she is fated to have, and who brings her the greatest presents.'

So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence.

Now Amphinomos spoke forth and addressed them. He was

395 the shining son of Nisos, son of the lord Aretiades, and led those suitors who had come over from the abundant grasslands and grainlands of Doulichion, and pleased Penelope more than the others in talk, for he had good sense and discretion. He in kind intention toward all spoke forth and addressed them:

400 'Dear friends, I for my part would not be willing to murder Telemachos; it is terrible to kill one of royal blood; we should first have to ask the gods for their counsel. Then, if the ordinances of great Zeus approve of it, I myself would kill him and tell all others to do so;

405 but I say we must give it up, if the gods deny us.'

So Amphinomos spoke, and his word was acceptable to them. Then they stood up at once and went into the house of Odysseus, and entering they found their polished chairs, and were seated.

## vetoed by Amphinomos

But now circumspect Penelope thought of her next move,  
410 to show herself to her overbearingly violent suitors;  
for she had heard how they had planned her son's death in the palace.  
The herald, Medon, who overheard their planning, had told her.  
She went with her attendant women into the great hall.  
But when she, shining among women, came to the suitors,  
415 she stood by the pillar that supported the roof with its joinery,  
holding her shining veil in front of her face to shield it,  
and spoke a word of reproach to Antinoös, naming him:  
'Antinoös, violent man, deviser of evil: in Ithaka  
the common account says you are the best man among your age mates  
420 for speech and counsel. But you have never been such. Oh, boisterous  
creature, why do you weave a design of death and destruction  
for Telemachos, and take no heed of suppliants, over whom  
Zeus stands witness? It is not right to plan harm for each other.  
Do you not know how your father came here once, a fugitive  
425 in fear of the people? These were terribly angered with him,  
because he had thrown in his lot with the pirate Taphians  
and harried the Thesprotians, and these were friends of our people.  
They wanted to waste him away, to break the dear heart in him,  
to eat up his substance and abundant livelihood. Only  
430 Odysseus stayed their hand and held them, for all their fury.  
Now you eat up his house without payment, pay court to his wedded  
wife, try to murder his son, and do me great indignity.  
I tell you to stop it, and ask the others to do so likewise.'

Eurymachos the son of Polybos spoke then answering:

435 'Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
do not fear. Never let your heart be troubled for these things.  
The man is not living, nor will there be one, nor can there ever  
be one, who shall lay hands upon your son, Telemachos,  
as long as I am alive on earth and look on the daylight.

440 For I tell you this straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished:  
instantly his own black blood will stain my spear point.  
My own spear; since often Odysseus, sacker of cities,  
would seat me also upon his knees, and put pieces of roasted  
meat in my hands, and hold the red wine out to me. Therefore,

445 of all men Telemachos is the dearest to me  
by far, and I tell him to go in no fear of destruction  
from the suitors. But if it comes from the gods, there is no escaping it.'

## Return of Eumaios

So he spoke, encouraging her, but himself was planning  
the murder. She went back to the shining upper chamber

450 and wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until the gray-eyed  
goddess Athene drifted a sweet sleep over her eyelids.

With the evening, the noble swineherd came back to Odysseus  
and his son. Then they stood over the evening meal to prepare it,  
and dedicated a year-old sow; but meanwhile Athene

455 had come and stood close by Odysseus, son of Laertes,  
and tapped him with her wand and made him once more an old man,  
and put foul clothing upon his skin, for fear the swineherd  
might recognize him, face to face, and go with the message  
to circumspect Penelope, and not keep fast the secret.

460 Now Telemachos was the first who spoke a word to him: ‘So, noble  
Eumaios, you have come. And what was the rumor  
in the town? Are the haughty suitors now back from their ambush,  
or are they still lying in wait for me on my homeward journey?’

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:

465 ‘It was not on my mind to go down through the city, nor to ask,  
nor try to find out; rather the will was urgent within me  
to speak my message with all speed and be on my way back here.  
But one of your fellows as a swift messenger joined my company,  
the herald; he was the first who told the word to your mother.

470 But here is another thing I know; with my eyes I saw it.  
I was above the city, where the Hill of Hermes is, making  
my way along, when I saw a fast vessel coming into  
our harbor, making inshore, and many men were aboard her,  
and she was loaded with shields and leaf-headed spears. Then I thought

475 that these would be the men we mean, but I do not know it.’

So he spoke, and Telemachos, the hallowed prince, smiled  
as he caught his father's eye, but avoided the eyes of the swineherd.

They, when they had finished their work and got their feast ready,  
feasted, nor was any man's hunger denied a fair portion.

480 But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
they thought of going to bed, and accepted the gift of slumber.

## Book XVII



But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
Telemachos, beloved son of godlike Odysseus,  
then bound underneath his feet the beautiful sandals,  
and took up a powerful spear which fitted his hand's grip,  
5      on his way to the city, and going he spoke to his swineherd:  
‘Father, I am going to the city, so that my mother  
will see me, since as I suppose she will never give over  
that bitter lamentation of hers and her tearful crying  
until she sees me myself. But here is what I will tell you  
10     to do; take this unhappy stranger to the city, so that  
there he can beg his dinner, and any who will can give him  
his bit of bread and his cupful; it is not for me to put up with  
everybody, now when I have troubles on my mind. Therefore,  
even if the stranger is terribly angry, it will be only  
15     the worse for him. Speaking the truth is the way I like best.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
‘Dear friend, neither do I desire that he should detain me  
here; a beggar is better begging his dinner in the city  
than in the country. Whoever wants to will give me something;  
20     for I am no longer the right age to stay on the farms, the right age  
to carry out any task the foreman imposes on me.  
Go on then. This man, the one you have asked, will take me,  
as soon as I have warmed myself by the fire and there is some  
sunlight; these clothes are very poor, and I hope no morning

## Odysseus and Telemachos return separately

25     frost undoes me. They say it is very far to the city.'  
      So he spoke, but Telemachos strode out through the steading,  
      walking fast, and planning evil things for the suitors.  
      But when he had arrived at the well-settled house, he carried  
      his spear over to a tall column, and propped it against it,  
30     and he himself went inside, stepping over the stone threshold.  
      Far the first to see him was his nurse, Eurykleia,  
      as she spread the fleeces on the elaborate chairs. She burst out  
      in tears, and went straight to him, and around him the other  
      serving maids of patient-hearted Odysseus clustered,  
35     and made much of him, and kissed him on his head and his shoulders.  
      But now circumspect Penelope came down from her chamber,  
      looking like Artemis, or like golden Aphrodite,  
      and burst into tears, and threw her arms around her beloved  
      son, and kissed him on his head and both of his shining  
40     eyes, and tearfully spoke winged words and addressed him:  
      'You have come, Telemachos, sweet light, and I thought I would never  
      see you again, when you had gone in the ship to Pylos  
      secretly, and against my will, for news of the father  
      you love. But come now, tell me what sights you have been seeing.'

45     Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer: 'Mother, do not  
      stir up a scene of sorrow, nor trouble  
      my heart once more, now I have escaped from sheer destruction;  
      but go, wash with water and put clean clothing upon your body,  
      and going on to the upper story with your attendant  
50     women, vow to all the gods the service of complete  
      hecatombs, if Zeus grants requital for what is done to us.  
      But I will go to the place of meeting, so I can summon  
      my guest, who came along with me as I made my way here.  
      I sent him on ahead of me with my godlike companions,  
55     and told Peiraios to take him to his own house, and give him  
      forthright honor and entertainment, until my arrival.'

      So he spoke, and she had no winged words for an answer,  
      and she washed with water and put clean clothing upon her body,  
      and vowed to all the gods the service of complete hecatombs,  
60     if Zeus were to grant requital for what had been done to them.

Telemachos then went striding out through the palace, and left it,  
holding his spear, and a pair of light-footed dogs went with him.  
Athene drifted an enchantment of grace upon him,

## Telemachos fetches Theoklymenos

and all the people had their eyes on him as he came on.

65 Around him the haughty suitors clustered. They all were speaking him fair, but in the deep of their hearts were devising evils.

Telemachos himself avoided their crowding numbers, and where Mentor was sitting, and Antiphos and Halitherses, the men who from the first had been his father's companions,

70 there he went and sat down, and they questioned him about everything.

Now Peiraios the famous spearman came near them, bringing the guest through the city to the assembly, nor did Telemachos stay for long far away from the guest, but came and stood by him.

First of the two to speak was Peiraios, who then said to him:

75 ‘Telemachos, have your women come to my house with all speed, so I can send back the gifts which Menelaos has given you.’

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

‘Peiraios, since we do not know how all this will come out, or whether the haughty suitors will kill me here in my palace

80 treacherously, and divide up all my father's possessions, I wish that you yourself, or one of these men, should keep them, and have the profit. But if I can plot their death and destruction, bring them to my house; and there will be gratitude shown on both sides.’

So he spoke, and led the long-suffering stranger back to  
85 his house. And when they had arrived at the well-settled palace, they laid down their mantles along the chairs and the benches, and stepped into the bathtubs, smooth-polished, and bathed there. Then, when the maids had bathed them and anointed them with oil, and put cloaks of thick fleece and tunics upon them, they went

90 forth from the bathing tubs, and took their places on settles. A maid servant brought water for them and poured it from a splendid and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin for them to wash, and she pulled a polished table before them.

A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to them,  
95 adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions. His mother sat opposite beside the pillar supporting the hall, sitting back on a chair and turning fine yarn on a distaff. They put forth their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.

100     But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
          it was circumspect Penelope who began their discourse:  
          ‘Telemachos, I will go back now to my upper chamber,  
          and lie down on my bed, which is made sorrowful, always

## **Penelope told of the travels**

disordered with the tears I have wept, ever since Odysseus  
went with the sons of Atreus to Troy; and you had no patience  
105 to tell me—before the haughty suitors arrive at our palace—  
any news you may have heard of your father's homecoming.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
'Then, my mother, I will tell you the whole true story.  
We went to Pylos, and to Nestor, shepherd of the people,  
110 and he, in his high house, gave me hospitality, and loving  
free attention, as a father would to his own beloved  
son, who was newly arrived from a long voyage elsewhere. So he  
freely took care of me, with his own glorious children.  
But he said he had heard nothing about enduring Odysseus,  
115 nor whether he was alive or dead, from any of the peoples  
of earth. He sent me to Atreus' son, spear-famed Menelaos,  
giving me passage with his own horses and compact chariot.  
There I saw Helen of Argos, for whose sake Argives and Trojans  
had undergone much hardship by the gods' will. Menelaos  
120 of the great war cry questioned me, when I came to him,  
and asked what need had brought me to glorious Lakedaimon;  
whereupon I told him the whole truth of my story,  
and he in turn spoke to me then and gave me an answer:  
"Oh, for shame, it was in the bed of a bold and strong man  
125 they wished to lie, they themselves being all unwarlike.  
As when a doe has brought her fawns to the lair of a lion,  
and put them there to sleep, they are newborn and still suckling,  
then wanders out into the foothills and the grassy corners,  
grazing there, but now the lion comes back to his own lair  
130 and visits a shameful destruction on both mother and children;  
so now Odysseus will visit shameful destruction on these men.  
O father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, I wish that  
as he was when, upon a time, in strong-founded Lesbos  
he stood up and wrestled Philomeleides from a challenge,  
135 and threw him strongly, so delighting all the Achaians;  
I wish that such an Odysseus would come now among the suitors.  
They all would find death was quick and marriage a painful matter.  
But for what you entreat me for and ask me about, I will not

turn away from the tale and speak idly, nor will I deceive you,  
140    but of what the ever-truthful Old Man of the Sea told me,  
I will tell you all without concealment, and hold back nothing.

## of Telemachos

He said he had seen him on an island, suffering strong pains  
in the palace of the nymph Kalypso, and she detains him,  
by constraint, and he cannot make his way to his country;

145 for he has not any ships by him, nor any companions  
who can convey him back across the sea's wide ridges.”  
So spoke Atreus' son, spear-famed Menelaos. After  
I had done all this I came back. The immortals gave me a following  
wind, and brought me quickly to the dear land of my fathers.’

150 So he spoke, and stirred the spirit within her. And now Theoklymenos,  
a godlike man, spoke to both of them:  
‘O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes,  
attend my word, because he does not understand clearly,  
but I shall prophesy truly to you, and hold back nothing.

155 Zeus be my witness, first of the gods, and the table of friendship,  
and the hearth of blameless Odysseus, to which I come as a suppliant,  
that Odysseus is already here in the land of his fathers,  
sitting still or advancing, learning of all these evil  
actions, and devising evils for all of the suitors.

160 Such was the bird sign I interpreted, and I told it  
to Telemachos, as I sat aboard the strong-benched vessel.’  
Then in turn circumspect Penelope answered him:  
‘If only this word, stranger and guest, were brought to fulfillment,  
soon you would be aware of my love and many gifts given

165 by me, so any man who met you would call you blessed.’  
So now these three were conversing thus with each other,  
but meanwhile before the palace of Odysseus the suitors  
amused themselves with discs and with light spears for throwing,  
on a leveled floor, unruly men, as they always had been.

170 But when it was time for dinner, and the sheep from the fields had  
been coming  
in from all sides, and the same men as usual drove them,  
then Medon spoke to the suitors. It was he among all the heralds  
whom they liked best, and he used to wait on them at their feasting:  
‘Young men, since you have all taken your pleasure in exercise,

175 go on into the house so we can make dinner ready.  
Nothing is any the worse when meals are taken in season.’

He spoke, and they stood up and went, and did as he told them;  
and they, when they had gone into the well-settled palace,  
laid their mantles down along the chairs and the benches,

## Eumaios and Odysseus meet Melanthios

- 180 and set about sacrificing great-sized sheep, and fat goats,  
and sacrificing an ox of the herd, and fattened porkers,  
as they prepared their feast. But Odysseus now and the noble  
swineherd were stirring themselves to go to town from the country.  
First of the two to speak was the swineherd, leader of people:
- 185 ‘Stranger, since then you are eager to go to the city  
today, as my master told you to do, though I could have wanted  
you rather to stay here and guard the steading—even so  
I go in awe of him and fear him, and any reproaches  
he might give me; a scolding comes hard from a master—so then,
- 190 let us be on our way, for most of the day is already  
gone. The evening is coming on. You may find it colder.’  
Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
‘I see, I understand. You speak to one who follows you.  
But let us be on our way. You be my guide on the journey.
- 195 Only give me some kind of cudgel, if you have any  
cut, to lean on. They say the road is very slippery.’  
He spoke, and over his shoulder slung the ugly wallet  
that was full of holes, with a twist of rope attached to dangle it.  
Eumaios gave him a walking stick that suited his fancy,
- 200 and the two of them went on, with the dogs and the herdsman staying  
behind to guard the farm. He led his lord to the city,  
looking as he did like a dismal vagabond and an old man,  
propping on a stick, and wore wretched clothing upon his body.
- Now as they went down over the stony road, and were coming  
205 close to the city, and had arrived at the fountain, sweet-running  
and made of stone; and there the townspeople went for their water;  
[Ithakos](#) had made this, and [Neritos](#), and [Polyktor](#);  
and around it was a grove of black poplars, trees that grow by  
water, all in a circle, and there was cold water pouring
- 210 down from the rock above; over it had been built an altar  
of the nymphs, and there all the wayfarers made their sacrifice;  
there [Melanthios](#), son of Dolios, came upon them  
as he drove his goats, the ones that were finest among his goatflocks,  
for the suitors' dinner, and two other herdsmen went along with him.
- 215 Seeing the two he spoke and named them, giving them curses

overbearing and shameful, and stirred the heart of Odysseus:  
‘See now how the rascal comes on leading a rascal  
about; like guides what is like itself, just as a god does.

## on their way to town

Where, you detestable swineherd, are you taking this wretched  
220 man, this bothersome beggar who spoils the fun of the feasting,  
the kind who stands and rubs his shoulders on many doorposts,  
begging only for handouts, never for swords or caldrons.  
If you would turn him over to me to keep my steading,  
then he could drink whey and build up a big leg muscle,  
225 sweeping my pens, and carrying green stuff in to the young goats.  
But since he has learned nothing but mischief, he will not be willing  
to go to work, but would rather go begging all through the district,  
asking for handouts and feeding up his bottomless belly.  
But I tell you this straight out and it will be a thing accomplished.  
230 If he ever comes near the house of godlike Odysseus,  
his ribs and head will feel the weight of plenty of footstools  
flung at him all over the house by the hands of heroes.'

So he spoke, and as he went by recklessly lashed out  
with his heel to the hip, but failed to knock him out of the pathway,  
235 for Odysseus stood it, unshaken, while he pondered within him  
whether to go for him with his cudgel, and take the life from him,  
or pick him up like a jug and break his head on the ground. Yet  
still he stood it, and kept it all inside him. The swineherd  
stared, and cursed him, and prayed aloud with his hands uplifted:

240 'Nymphs of the fountain, daughters of Zeus, if ever Odysseus  
burned for you the thigh pieces of lambs or goats, wrapping them  
in the rich fat, then grant me this favor I ask for, namely  
that the man himself will come home, with the divinity guiding him;  
so, Melanthios, he would send flying all those glories

245 you wear now in your insolence, forever loitering  
here in the town, while useless herdsmen ruin the sheepflocks.'

Then in turn Melanthios the goatherd answered him:  
'Shame on the speaking of this nasty-minded dog. Some day  
I will get him aboard a strong-benced ship, and take him  
250 far from Ithaka, where he could win me a good livelihood.  
If only Apollo, silver-bowed, would strike down Telemachos  
today in his halls, or he were killed by the suitors, as surely  
as Odysseus, far away, has lost his day of homecoming.'

So he spoke, and left them there, as they went on easily;

255 but he went forward, and quickly came to the house of his master.  
He went straight on inside, and sat down next to the suitors,  
opposite Eurymachos, whom he was fondest of. The servants

## The old dog Argos recognizes Odysseus

doing the dinner placed a portion of meat before him.  
A grave housekeeper brought the bread and set it down for him  
260 to eat. Odysseus, on his way with the noble swineherd,  
stood close in front of the house, and around them came the clamor  
of the hollow lyre, for Phemios had struck up the music  
to sing. Odysseus took the swineherd's hand, and said to him:  
'Eumaios, surely this is the handsome house of Odysseus.  
265 Easily it is singled out and seen among many,  
for one part is joined on to another, and the courtyard is worked on  
with wall and copings, and the doors have been well made, with double  
panels. Nobody could belittle this house. And also  
I realize that many men are holding a feast there,  
270 for the smell of the food comes to me, and there is the clamor  
of the lyre, which the gods made to be companion of feasting.'

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:  
'Easily you perceived it, nor are you otherwise without  
sense; but come, let us think out how we will act in these matters.  
275 Either you go on first into the well-settled palace,  
and go among the suitors, and leave me here on the outside;  
or if you will, stay here, while I go on ahead of you.  
But do not be slow, or someone here outside, seeing you,  
might strike you, or throw something. Here, I bid you be careful.'

280 Then much-enduring great Odysseus said to him in answer: 'I see, I  
understand; you speak to one who follows you.  
But you go on ahead, and I will stay here on the outside.  
I am not unfamiliar with blows, and things thrown at me.  
The spirit in me is enduring, since I have suffered much hardship  
285 on the waves and in the fighting; so let this adventure follow.  
Even so, there is no suppressing the ravenous belly,  
a cursed thing, which bestows many evils on men, seeing  
that even for its sake the strong-built ships are handled  
across the barren great sea, bringing misfortune to enemies.'

290 Now as these two were conversing thus with each other, a dog who  
was lying there raised his head and ears. This was  
[Argos](#), patient-hearted Odysseus' dog, whom he himself  
raised, but got no joy of him, since before that he went to sacred

Ilion. In the days before, the young men had taken him  
295 out to follow goats of the wild, and deer, and rabbits;  
but now he had been put aside, with his master absent,

## **but dies before revealing his identity**

and lay on the deep pile of dung, from the mules and oxen,  
which lay abundant before the gates, so that the servants  
of Odysseus could take it to his great estate, for manuring.

- 300    There the dog Argos lay in the dung, all covered with dog ticks.  
Now, as he perceived that Odysseus had come close to him,  
he wagged his tail, and laid both his ears back; only  
he now no longer had the strength to move any closer  
to his master, who, watching him from a distance, without Eumaios  
305   noticing, secretly wiped a tear away, and said to him:  
'Eumaios, this is amazing, this dog that lies on the dunghill.  
The shape of him is splendid, and yet I cannot be certain  
whether he had the running speed to go with this beauty,  
or is just one of the kind of table dog that gentlemen  
310   keep, and it is only for show that their masters care for them.'
- Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:  
'This, it is too true, is the dog of a man who perished  
far away. If he were such, in build and performance,  
as when Odysseus left him behind, when he went to Ilion,  
315   soon you could see his speed and his strength for yourself. Never  
could any wild animal, in the profound depths of the forest,  
escape, once he pursued. He was very clever at tracking.  
But now he is in bad times. His master, far from his country,  
has perished, and the women are careless, and do not look after him;  
320   and serving men, when their masters are no longer about, to make  
them  
work, are no longer willing to do their rightful duties.  
For Zeus of the wide brows takes away one half of the virtue  
from a man, once the day of slavery closes upon him.'
- So he spoke, and went into the strongly-settled palace,  
325   and strode straight on, to the great hall and the haughty suitors,  
But the doom of dark death now closed over the dog, Argos,  
when, after nineteen years had gone by, he had seen Odysseus.
- Godlike Telemachos was the first by far to notice  
the swineherd as he came into the house, and quickly he nodded  
330   to summon him over. The swineherd, looking about him, picked up  
a chair that was lying near where the carver sat, cutting

much meat for the suitors, as these feasted all through the palace.  
This he took and placed it by Telemachos' table  
facing him, then sat down there himself, and the herald  
335      took a portion, and served him, and passed him bread from the basket.

## Odysseus in his own house

Close after him Odysseus now came into the palace,  
looking as he did like a dismal vagabond and an old man,  
propping on a stick, and wore foul clothing upon his body.  
He sat down then on the ashwood threshold, inside the doorway,  
340 leaning against the doorpost of cypress wood, which the carpenter  
once had expertly planed, and drawn it true to a chalkline;  
but Telemachos spoke a word to the swineherd, calling him over,  
taking and giving him a whole loaf from the beautiful basket,  
with meat, as much food as both arms could hold in their compass:  
345 ‘Take all this and give it to the stranger, but also tell him  
to go about among the suitors, and beg from all of them.  
Modesty, for a man in need, is not a good quality.’  
So he spoke, and the swineherd went, when he heard his order.  
He came and stood close by Odysseus, and spoke in winged words:  
350 ‘Stranger, Telemachos gives you this, and also he tells you  
to go about among the suitors, and beg from all of them.  
He said that modesty, for a poor man, is no good quality.’  
Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
‘Lord Zeus, let Telemachos be one of the prosperous  
355 men; let everything befall him that his heart longs for.’  
He spoke, and with both hands accepting everything, laid it  
there in front of his feet, on top of the ugly wallet,  
and ate it, all the while the singer sang in the halls. Then,  
when he had eaten his dinner, and the divine singer was finished,  
360 the suitors raised their tumult along the halls; but Athene  
came then and stood close by Odysseus, son of Laertes,  
and stirred him to go collect his bits of bread from the suitors,  
and so learn which of them were fair, which unfair; but even  
so, she would not deliver any of them from disaster.  
365 He went on his way, from left to right, so to beg from each man,  
reaching his hand out always, as if for a long time he had been  
a beggar, and they took pity and gave, and they wondered at him;  
they asked each other what man he was, and where he came from.  
But now Melanthios, the goat-herding man, said to them:  
370 ‘Hear me now, you suitors of our glorious queen, concerning  
this stranger; for I have seen him before; know then

that it was the swineherd who guided him here, but I do not know  
clearly  
who the man is himself, or what race he claims to come of.'

## **begs from the suitors**

- So he spoke. Antinoös spoke then and scolded the swineherd:
- 375   ‘O most distinguished swineherd, why did you bring this fellow to the city? Do we not already have enough other vagabonds, and bothersome beggars to ruin our feasting? Or, now that men gather here to eat up your master's substance, is that not enough, but you had to invite this one in also?’
- 380   Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer: ‘Antinoös, though you are noble, this was not well spoken. For who goes visiting elsewhere so as to call in another stranger, unless he is one who works for the people, either a prophet, or a healer of sickness, or a skilled workman,
- 385   or inspired singer, one who can give delight by his singing? These are the men who all over the endless earth are invited. But nobody would ask in a beggar, one who would feed on himself. You, though, beyond all the other suitors, are heavy on the servants of Odysseus, and me most of all, but I
- 390   for my part do not care, while still circumspect Penelope lives in the palace, together with godlike Telemachos.’
- Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer: ‘Silence. Do not answer him at such length. Antinoös has made it his habit always to irritate others with hurtful words, and stir them up, and encourages others to do so.’
- 395   So he spoke, and then addressed his words to Antinoös: ‘Antinoös, as a father for his son you take good care of me, when you tell our stranger guest to get out of the palace, with a strict word. May this not be the end god makes of it.
- 400   Take and give. I do not begrudge you. I even urge you. And do not have any respect for my mother, nor yet for any thrall beside, who lives in the house of godlike Odysseus. But such is not the kind of intention you keep within you. You are more eager to eat, yourself, than to give to another.’
- 405   Then in turn Antinoös said to him in answer: ‘High-spoken intemperate Telemachos, what accusations you have made. If all the suitors would hand him this kind of present, the house would then do without him for the space of three months.’
- So he spoke, and picked up a footstool that lay by the table

410 and showed it. He had his shining feet on it as he feasted.  
But all the others gave to him, and they filled his wallet  
with bread and meat, and Odysseus was on the point of finishing

## Odysseus struck by Antinoös

his test of the Achaians, and getting back free to his doorsill;  
but now he stood by Antinoös, and spoke a word to him:

- 415   ‘Give, dear friend. You seem to me, of all the Achaians,  
not the worst, but the best. You look like a king. Therefore,  
you ought to give me a better present of food than the others  
have done, and I will sing your fame all over the endless  
earth, for I too once lived in my own house among people,
- 420   prospering in wealth, and often I gave to a wanderer  
according to what he was and wanted when he came to me;  
and I had serving men by thousands, and many another  
good thing, by which men live well and are called prosperous. Only  
Zeus, son of Kronos, spoiled it all—somehow he wished to—
- 425   when he put it into my head to go with the roving pirates  
to Egypt, a long voyage, so that I must be ruined.  
I stayed my oarswept ships inside the Aigyptos River.  
Then I urged my eager companions to stay where they were, there  
close to the fleet, and to guard the ships, and was urgent with them
- 430   to send lookouts to the watching places, but they following  
their own impulse, and giving way to marauding violence,  
suddenly began plundering the Egyptians' beautiful  
fields, and carried off the women and innocent children,  
and killed the men, and soon the outcry came to the city.
- 435   They heard the shouting, and at the time when dawn shows, they came  
on us, and all the plain was filled with horses and infantry  
and the glare of bronze; and Zeus who delights in the thunder flung  
down  
a foul panic among my companions, and none was so hardy  
as to stand and fight, for the evils stood in a circle around them.
- 440   There they killed many of us with the sharp bronze, and others  
they led away alive, to work for them in forced labor;  
but they gave me away, into Cyprus, to a stranger arriving,  
[Dmetor](#), Iasos' son, who was the strong king in Cyprus.  
From there I came here, where I am now, suffering hardships.’
- 445   Then Antinoös answered him in turn, and said to him: ‘What spirit  
brought this pain upon us, to spoil our feasting?  
Stand off, so, in the middle, and keep away from my table,

or otherwise you may find yourself in a sorry Cyprus  
or Egypt, you are so bold a one, and a shameless beggar.

450    You went the whole circle and stood by all, and they all gave to you

## **who is scolded by the others**

recklessly, for there is no holding back nor sparing  
of favors from another man's goods, since each has plenty.'

Now resourceful Odysseus spoke, as he drew back from him:  
'Shame; the wits in you, it is clear, do not match your outward  
455      beauty. You would not give a bit of salt to a servant  
in your own house, since now, sitting at another's, you could not  
take a bit of bread and give it to me. It is there in abundance.'

He spoke, and Antinoös in his heart grew still more angry.  
Looking at him from under his brows, he addressed him in winged  
words:

460      'Now I think that you can no longer make a respectable  
retreat out of the palace, since what you say is scurrilous.'

He spoke, and threw the footstool and hit him in the right shoulder  
near the base, in the back, but he stood up to it, steady  
as a rock, nor did the missile thrown by Antinoös shake him,

465      but he shook his head in silence, deeply devising evils.  
He went back to the sill and sat there, and spread out before him  
the wallet that was well filled, and spoke a word to the suitors:  
'You who are suitors of this most glorious queen, hear me  
while I speak out what the heart within my breast urges:

470      there is no grief that comes to the heart, nor yet any sorrow,  
when a man is hit, fighting in battle for the sake of his own  
possessions, either to guard his shining sheep or his cattle;  
but Antinoös struck me all because of my wretched belly,  
that cursed thing, who bestows many evils on men. Therefore,

475      if there are any gods or any furies for beggars,  
Antinoös may find his death before he is married.'

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, gave him an answer:  
'Go in peace, stranger, and sit down, or go away elsewhere,  
or else, for the way you talk, the young men might take you and drag  
you

480      by hand or foot through the house, and tear the skin on your body.'

So he spoke, but all the rest were wildly indignant,  
and this is the way one of these haughty young men would speak to  
him:

'Antinoös, you did badly to hit the unhappy vagabond:

a curse on you, if he turns out to be some god from heaven.

485 For the gods do take on all sorts of transformations, appearing as strangers from elsewhere, and thus they range at large through the cities,  
watching to see which men keep the laws, and which are violent.'

## Eumaios tells Penelope

So spoke the suitors, but he paid no attention to what they were saying.

But Telemachos sustained in his heart a great sorrow over  
490 the blow, but he did not let fall from his eyes any groundward tear, but shook his head in silence, deeply devising evils. But when circumspect Penelope heard that the stranger had been struck in her halls, she spoke to her serving women: ‘Thus, I pray, may the archer Apollo strike at the striker.’

495 Then the housekeeper, [Eurynome](#), spoke and answered: ‘If only some fulfillment befell our prayers. Then not one of these men would be alive to meet the Dawn in her splendor.’

Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer:  
‘Mother, they are all hateful, since all are devising evils,  
500 but Antinoös, beyond the rest, is like black death. Here is a stranger, some unfortunate man, who goes through our palace asking alms of the men, for his helplessness forces him to it. Then all the others gave and filled his bag, but this man struck him with a footstool at the base of the right shoulder.’

505 So Penelope, sitting up in her chamber, conversed with her serving women, while great Odysseus was eating his dinner. But now she summoned the noble swineherd to her, saying: ‘Go on your way now, noble Eumaios, and tell the stranger to come, so I can befriend him, and so I can ask him if he has somewhere heard any news of steadfast Odysseus or seen him in person. He seems like a man who has wandered widely.’

510 Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to her in answer:  
‘If only these Achaians, my queen, would let you have silence! Such stories he tells, he would charm out the dear heart within you.

515 Three nights I had him with me, and for three days I detained him in my shelter, for he came first to me. He had fled from a vessel; but he has not yet told the story of all his suffering. But as when a man looks to a singer, who has been given from the gods the skill with which he sings for delight of mortals,

520 and they are impassioned and strain to hear it when he sings to them, so he enchanted me in the halls as he sat beside me. He says that he is a friend by family of Odysseus,

with his home in Crete, where lives the generation of Minos,  
and from there he made his way to this place, suffering hardships,  
525      driven helpless along. He claims he has heard that Odysseus

## **about his unknown guest**

is near, in the rich country of the men of Thesprotia,  
and alive, and bringing many treasures back to his household.'

Then in turn circumspect Penelope said to him:

'Go now, call him here, so he can tell me directly,

530 and let these people sit by the doors and play their games, or else  
go and do it at home, whenever the spirit favors.

For their own properties are stored, unspoiled, in their houses,  
bread, and sweet wine, but this their own house-people eat. Meanwhile,  
they, day by day visiting our house, and always

535 dedicating our oxen, and our sheep and fat goats,  
hold their festival and recklessly drink up our shining  
wine; and most of it is used up, for there is no man here  
such as Odysseus was, to keep the plague from his household.

But if Odysseus could come, and return to the land of his fathers,  
540 soon, with his son, he could punish the violence of these people.'

She spoke, and Telemachos sneezed amain, and around him the  
palace

re-echoed terribly to the sound. Penelope, laughing,  
spoke presently to Eumaios and addressed him in winged words:

'Go, please, and summon the stranger into my presence. Do you  
545 not see how my son sneezed for everything I have spoken?

May it mean that death, accomplished in full, befall the suitors  
each and all, not one avoiding death and destruction.

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.

If I learn that everything he says is truthfully spoken,

550 I will give him beautiful clothing to wear, a tunic and mantle.'

So she spoke, and the swineherd went, when he heard what she told  
him,

and he came and stood close by Odysseus and spoke in winged words:

'Father and friend, circumspect Penelope, mother

of Telemachos, summons you, for her heart is urgent to find out  
555 from you about her husband, though she is suffering troubles.

And if she learns that all you say is truthfully spoken,

she will give you a tunic and mantle to wear, what you have need of  
most of all; and you, by begging your bread through the city,  
can keep your belly sustained; and he who will can give to you.'

560 Then in turn much-enduring great Odysseus answered him: ‘Eumaios,  
by and by I will tell everything truly  
to the daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope.  
For I know well about him, we have suffered the same sad story.

## Eumaios goes back

Only now I am afraid of this swarm of rough suitors,  
565   whose outrageous violence goes up into the iron  
sky. For even now, as I went through the house, doing  
no harm, and this man struck me and gave me over to suffering,  
Telemachos could not save me from this, nor could any other.  
Tell Penelope, therefore, for all her eagerness, to wait  
570   for me in the palace until the sun has set. Let her  
then question me about her husband's day of homecoming,  
giving me a seat close to the fire, since these are wretched  
clothes I have. You know this yourself; you are my first patron.'

So he spoke, and the swineherd went, when he heard what he told him.

575   But Penelope said to him as he stepped over the threshold:  
'You do not bring him, Eumaios? What is this vagabond thinking?  
Does he fear some indignity, or is he otherwise bashful  
about the house? A bashful vagabond makes a bad beggar.'

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to her in answer:

580   'He speaks within reason, as another man might think also,  
in keeping away from the violence of these insolent men. Therefore  
he tells you to wait until after the sun has gone down. For you  
yourself also, my queen, this way it will be much better:  
to talk in private to the stranger, and hear his story.'

585   Then in turn circumspect Penelope answered him: 'So it shall be. The  
stranger's thought is not without good sense,  
since never yet among mortal mankind have there been any  
men who have been so violent in their wild endeavors.'

So she instructed him, and the noble swineherd went back  
590   into the crowd of the suitors, when he had understood all of it.  
At once he spoke his winged words to Telemachos, leaning  
his head close to him, so that none of the others might hear him:  
'Dear child, I am going back to guard the pigs and that other  
livelihood that is yours and mine. Let all be in your charge  
595   here. First of all take care of yourself, and be very watchful  
against harm to you. There are many Achaeans who wish you evil.  
May Zeus destroy them before they can make any harm befall us.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

‘So it shall be, my father. Go, when you have had your supper;  
600     but come again in the morning, and bring us beautiful victims.  
I myself will see to things here, as will the immortals.’

So he spoke, and the other sat down again on a polished

## **leaving Odysseus in the palace**

chair. But when he had his fill of eating and drinking,  
he went on back to the pigs, and left the courts and the palace  
605     full of banqueters, who took their pleasure in singing  
and dancing. By now the later part of the day had come on.

## Book XVIII



And now there arrived a public beggar, who used to go begging through the town of Ithaka, known to fame for his ravenous belly and appetite for eating and drinking. There was no real strength in him, nor any force, but his build was big to look at.

- 5     He had the name *Arnaios*, for thus the lady his mother called him from birth, but all the young men used to call him *Iros*, because he would run and give messages when anyone told him. This man had come to chase Odysseus out of his own house and now he spoke, insulting him, and addressed him in winged words:
- 10    ‘Give way, old sir, from the forecourt, before you are taken and dragged out by the foot. Do you see how all of them are giving the signal and telling me to drag you. Still, I am ashamed to do it. So up, before it comes to a battle of hands between us.’
- Then looking at him darkly resourceful Odysseus answered:
- 15    ‘Strange man, I am doing you no harm, nor speaking any, nor am I jealous, if someone takes plenty and gives it to you. This doorsill is big enough for both of us, nor have you any need to be jealous of others. I think you are a vagabond as I am too. Prosperity is in the gods' giving.
- 20    Leave blows alone, do not press me too hard, or you may make me angry so that, old as I am, I may give you a bloody chest and mouth. Then I could have peace, and still more of it tomorrow, for I do not think you will make your way back here

## Odysseus challenged by the beggar Iros

a second time to the house of Odysseus, son of Laertes.'

25 Then in anger Iros the vagabond said to him: 'Shame on how the old hulk rolls along in his speech, like an old woman at the oven. I have some bad plans for him: hit him with both hands, and spatter all of the teeth out from his jaws on the ground, as if he were a wild pig rooting

30 the crops. Come, tuck up, so all these people can see us do battle. But how can you fight against a man who is younger?'

So, in front of the towering doors, and upon the threshold polished smooth, these two hurled jagged words at each other; and Antinoös, the sacred prince, stirred them on to battle,

35 and laughing sweetly he spoke aloud to the rest of the suitors: 'Friends, in the past nothing has ever happened to match this entertainment that the god has now brought to the palace; for the stranger and Iros are now making ready for battle with their fists. Come, let the rest of us speed the encounter.'

40 So he spoke, and the rest of them all sprang up, laughing, and gathered all in a group around the two ragged beggars.

It was Antinoös the son of Eupeithes who spoke to them: 'Listen to me, you haughty suitors, while I say something. Here are some goat paunches set on the fire; we filled them

45 with blood and fat, and set them there, to eat after supper. Whichever of these men wins the contest, and is proved better, let him come up, and help himself to whichever he likes best; and he shall always have dinner with us, nor shall we ever admit any other beggar to join us inside, and beg from us.'

50 So Antinoös spoke, and what he had said was pleasing. But now resourceful Odysseus, with crafty thoughts, said to him: 'Friends, it is not possible for a man who is older and worn with sorrow to fight with a younger man, but my villainous belly drives me to do it, and fall to his fists. Therefore,

55 come, swear me a strong oath all of you, that no one will take the side of Iros and lightheartedly strike me down with a heavy hand, and make me fall to his onset.'

So he spoke, and they all swore him the oath as he asked it. But when all had sworn the oath and made an end of their swearing,

60      the hallowed prince Telemachos now spoke out among them:  
‘Stranger, if your heart and spirit are urgent with you  
to defend yourself against this man, then fear no other

## The suitors have them fight

Achaian. The man who strikes you shall have to fight against numbers.

I myself am your host, with the assent of the two kings

65 Antinoös and Eurymachos, both men of prudence.'

So he spoke, and they all applauded him. But Odysseus girded up his rags about his body, displaying his thighs, splendid and large, and one could see the wide shoulders; his chest showed, and his ponderous arms; and also Athene

70 standing close beside the shepherd of the people magnified his limbs, and the suitors all in their insolence were astonished, and thus would one of them speak, looking over at his next neighbor: 'Iros will soon be Iros no more, with himself to thank for the evil. See what limbs the old man's rags have uncovered.'

75 So he spoke, and the heart in Iros was stirred with trouble, but even so the thralls girt him forcibly up, and dragged him there. He was frightened, and the flesh shook all over his body.

Antinoös scolded him with a word and spoke out and named him: 'I do not care if you live or die, you great ox, nor what happens

80 to you, when you are afraid of this man, and tremble before him, an old man, and worn with the sorrows that have come upon him. But I tell you this straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished.

If this man wins the fight with you, and is proved the better, I will throw you into a black ship, and send you across to the mainland,

85 to [Echetos](#), who preys on all men, and who is king there, and he with the pitiless bronze will cut off your nose and ears, and tear off your privates and give them raw for the dogs to feed on.'

So he spoke, and the trembling even more took hold of his limbs, but they pulled him on, and both men put their hands up.

90 At that time, much-enduring great Odysseus pondered whether to hit him so that the life would go out of him, as he went down, or only to stretch him out by hitting him lightly. And in the division of his heart this way seemed best to him, to hit him lightly, so the Achaians would not be suspicious.

95 They put up their hands, and Iros hit him on the right shoulder, but Odysseus struck the neck underneath the ear, and shattered the bones within, and the red blood came in his mouth, filling it. He dropped, bleating, in the dust, with teeth set in a grimace,

and kicking at the ground with his feet, and the haughty suitors  
100 held up their hands and died with laughing. Meanwhile, Odysseus  
dragged him by the foot through the porch, till he came to the courtyard

## and Iros is knocked out

and the portico doors, and propped him against the courtyard wall, sitting up, and stuck the staff in his hand, to hold it.

Then he spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words:

- 105    ‘Sit there now, and scare away the dogs and the stray pigs. But you must no longer try to be king of the strangers and beggars, being such a wretch, or you may win yourself still more evil.’

He spoke, and threw across his shoulders his ugly wallet that was full of holes, with a twist of rope attached to dangle it.

- 110    He went back to the sill again and sat down, but the others went inside again, laughing sweetly, and drank to him, saying: ‘May Zeus, stranger, and all the other immortals give you what you want most of all and what is dear to your spirit, for having stopped the wandering of this greedy creature

- 115    in our neighborhood. Soon we will take him across to the mainland, to Echetos, who preys on all men, and who is king there.’

So they spoke, and great Odysseus was pleased at the omen.

Now Antinoös set before him the great paunch pudding that was all filled with fat and blood. Amphinomos, taking

- 120    two loaves of bread out of the basket, set them before him, and drank his health in a golden cup and spoke to him, saying: ‘Your health, father and stranger; may prosperous days befall you hereafter; but now you are held in the grip of many misfortunes.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:

- 125    ‘Amphinomos, you seem to me very prudent, being the son of such a father, whose excellent fame I have heard of, *Nisos*, that is, of Doulichion, both strong and prosperous; they say you are his son, and you seem like a man well-spoken. So I will tell you, and you in turn understand and listen.

- 130    Of all creatures that breathe and walk on the earth there is nothing more helpless than a man is, of all that the earth fosters; for he thinks that he will never suffer misfortune in future days, while the gods grant him courage, and his knees have spring in them. But when the blessed gods bring sad days upon him,

- 135    against his will he must suffer it with enduring spirit. For the mind in men upon earth goes according to the fortunes the Father of Gods and Men, day by day, bestows upon them.

For I myself once promised to be a man of prosperity,  
but, giving way to force and violence, did many reckless  
140 things, because I relied on my father and brothers. Therefore,

## Athene inspires Penelope

let no man be altogether without the sense of righteousness,  
but take in silence the gifts of the gods, whatever they give him.  
Even so, now, I see the suitors, their reckless devisings,  
how they show no respect to the wife, and despoil the possessions  
145 of a man who, I think, will not for long be far from  
his country and friends. He is very close by. But I hope your destiny  
takes you home, out of his way. I hope you never will face him,  
at the time he comes back to the beloved land of his fathers.  
For I believe that, once he enters his halls, there will be  
150 a reckoning, not without blood, between that man and the suitors.'

So he spoke, and poured, and drank the honey-sweet wine, then  
put the cup back into the hands of the lord of the people;  
but the other went back across the room, heart saddened within him,  
shaking his head, for in his spirit he saw the evil,

155 but still could not escape his doom, for Athene had bound him  
fast, to be strongly killed by the hands and spear of Telemachos.  
He went back and sat down on the chair from which he had risen.

But now the goddess, gray-eyed Athene, put it in the mind  
of the daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
160 to show herself to the suitors, so that the might all the more  
open their hearts, and so that she might seem all the more precious  
in the eyes of her husband and son even than she had been before this.  
She laughed, in an idle way, and spoke to her nurse and named her:  
'Eurynome, my heart desires, though before it did not,

165 to show myself to the suitors, although I still hate them. Also,  
I would speak a word to my son, and that would be for the better,  
that he should not always go among the insolent suitors,  
who speak him well, but are plotting evil things for the future.'

Eurynome the housekeeper said to her in answer:  
170 'Now all this you have said, my child, was fair and orderly.  
Go then, and speak a word to your son, hide nothing. Only  
first you should wash your body and anoint your face. Do not  
go down with a face so ravaged all over by tears, as it now is,  
since nothing is gained by indiscriminate sorrowing always.

175 For now your son is come of age, and you know you always  
prayed the immortals, beyond all else, to see him bearded.'

Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer:  
‘Eurynome, though you care for me, do not speak of such matters  
as washing my body and anointing myself with unguents,

## to appear before the suitors

- 180 seeing that the gods, they who possess Olympos, ruined  
my glory, from that time when he went away in the hollow  
ships. But tell Autonoë and Hippodameia  
to come, so that they can stand at my side in the great hall.  
I will not go alone among men. I think that immodest.'
- 185 So she spoke, and the old woman went away through the palace, and  
brought the word to the women, and urged them to go to their mistress.  
Then the goddess gray-eyed Athene thought what to do next.  
She drifted a sweet sleep over Ikarios' daughter,  
and all her joints were relaxed so that she slumbered, reclining  
190 there on the couch. Meanwhile she, shining among goddesses,  
endowed her with gifts immortal, to make the Achaians admire her.  
First, for her beauty's sake, she freshened all her fine features  
with ambrosia, such as fair-garlanded Kythereia uses  
for salve, whenever she joins the lovely dance of the Graces.
- 195 She made her taller for the eye to behold, and thicker,  
and she made her whiter than sown ivory. After so doing,  
she, Athene, shining among goddesses, departed,  
and the white-armed handmaidens came running in from the great hall,  
with clamor, about Penelope, and the sweet sleep released her.
- 200 She rubbed her cheeks with both her hands and spoke aloud, saying:  
'That was a strange thing, that soft sleep that shrouded me.  
How I wish chaste Artemis would give me a death so  
soft, and now, so I would not go on in my heart grieving  
all my life, and longing for love of a husband excellent  
205 in every virtue, since he stood out among the Achaians.'
- So she spoke, and made her descent from her shining chamber,  
not all alone, since two handmaidens went to attend her.  
When she, shining among women, came near the suitors,  
she stood by the pillar that supported the roof with its joinery,
- 210 holding her shining veil in front of her face, to shield it,  
and a devoted attendant was stationed on either side of her.  
Their knees gave way, and the hearts in them were bemused with  
passion,  
and each one prayed for the privilege of lying beside her;  
but she spoke rather to her beloved son, Telemachos:

215 ‘Telemachos, your mind and thoughts are no longer steadfast.  
When you were a child still, you had better thoughts in mind. Now,  
when you are big, and come to the measure of maturity, and one

## Penelope hints at marriage

who saw you, some outsider, viewing your size and beauty,  
would say you were the son born of a prosperous man;

220    your thoughts are no longer righteous, nor your perception;  
such a thing has been done now, here in our palace, and you  
permitted our stranger guest to be so outrageously handled.  
How must it be now, if the stranger who sits in our household  
is to be made to suffer so from bitter brutality?

225    That must be your outrage and shame as people see it.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:

'My mother, I cannot complain of your anger. I myself  
notice all these things in my heart and know of them, better  
and worse alike, but before now I was only an infant;

230    but still I cannot see my way to the wise course always,  
for these men come from one place or another, and sit beside me  
with their evil thoughts, and distract me, and there are none here to help  
me.

Yet it was not by the will of the suitors that this struggle took place  
between Iros and the stranger, and he was stronger than Iros

235    in battle. O father Zeus, and Athene, and Apollo,  
if only in our house, in such a manner, the suitors  
could be defeated and bow their heads, some in the courtyard  
and some inside of the house, and the limbs be unstrung in each of  
them;

as now for Iros, as he sits over there by the courtyard

240    gates, lolling his head like a drunken man, and unable  
to stand upright on his feet again and make his way homeward  
to wherever he makes his home, since there is no strength in his body.'

So these two were conversing in this way with each other;  
but Eurymachos now spoke out and addressed Penelope:

245    'Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
if only all the Achaians in Iad Argos could see you,  
at dawn of day tomorrow there would be even more suitors  
come to feast in your house, since you surpass all women  
for beauty and stature and for the mind well balanced within you.'

250    Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer: 'Eurymachos, all my  
excellence, my beauty and figure,

were ruined by the immortals at that time when the Argives took ship  
for Ilion, and with them went my husband, Odysseus.

If he were to come back to me and take care of my life, then

255      my reputation would be more great and splendid. As it is

## **but also at presents**

now, I grieve; such evils the god has let loose upon me.  
When he went and left me behind in the land of his fathers,  
he took me by the right hand at the wrist, and then said to me:  
“Dear wife, since I do not think the strong-greaved Achaians  
260 will all come safely home from Troy without hurt, seeing  
that people say the Trojans are men who can fight in battle,  
that they are throwers of the spear, and shooters of arrows,  
and riders with fast-footed horses, who with the greatest  
speed settle the great and hateful issue of common battle,  
265 I do not know if the god will spare me, or if I must be lost  
there in Troy; here let everything be in your charge.  
You must take thought for my father and mother here in our palace,  
as you do now, or even more, since I shall be absent.  
But when you see our son grown up and bearded, then you may  
270 marry whatever man you please, forsaking your household.”  
So he spoke then; and now all this is being accomplished.  
And there will come that night when a hateful marriage is given  
to wretched me, for Zeus has taken my happiness from me.  
But this thing comes as a bitter distress to my heart and spirit:  
275 the behavior of these suitors is not as it was in time past  
when suitors desired to pay their court to a noble woman  
and daughter of a rich man, and rival each other. Such men  
themselves bring in their own cattle and fat sheep, to feast  
the family of the bride, and offer glorious presents.  
280 They do not eat up another's livelihood, without payment.’  
She spoke, and much-enduring great Odysseus was happy  
because she beguiled gifts out of them, and enchanted their spirits  
with blandishing words, while her own mind had other intentions.  
Then Antinoös the son of Eupeithes answered:  
285 ‘Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
whatever gift any Achaian wishes to bring here,  
take it; it is not honorable to refuse the giving.  
We will not go back to our own estates, nor will we go elsewhere,  
until you marry whichever Achaian you fancy.’  
290 So spoke Antinoös, and his word pleased the rest of them. Each man  
sent his herald off to bring back the presents.

Antinoös' herald brought in a great robe, beautiful  
and elaborate, and in it were twelve double pins, golden  
all through, and fitted with bars that opened and closed easily.

## Odysseus is scolded by Melantho

- 295    Eurymachos' man came back with an elaborate necklace  
      of gold, strung with bits of amber, and bright as sunshine.  
      Eurydamas' servants came back bringing a pair of earrings  
      with triple drops in mulberry clusters, and there was radiant  
      charm in them. From the house of the lord Peisandros, Polyktor's  
300    son, his servant brought a necklace, a wonderful offering.  
      Each of the Achaians brought a different beautiful  
      present; and she, shining among women, went back to her upper  
      room, and her maidservants carried the beautiful presents for her.  
      But now the suitors, turning to the dance and delightful  
305    song, took their pleasure and awaited the coming of evening,  
      and the black night came on as they were taking their pleasure.  
      Accordingly, they set up three cressets about the palace,  
      to give them light, and about them they laid piles of firewood  
      pieces, long dried and seasoned, but lately split with the brazen  
310    ax; and put kindling in with it, and the maids of enduring  
      Odysseus were ready to take turns keeping them burning,  
      when illustrious resourceful Odysseus himself spoke to them:  
      ‘You maids of Odysseus, whose master has long been absent,  
      go back into the house where the respected queen is,  
315    and in her presence turn your distaffs, and sit beside her  
      in the halls, and comfort her, or comb your wool in your hands there.  
      But I myself will provide the light for all of these people.  
      And even if they wish to keep at it until the high-throned  
      dawn, they will not wear me out. I am very enduring.’  
320    So he spoke, and they burst out laughing and looked at each other; but  
      Melantho of the lovely face shamefully scolded him.  
      Dolios was her father, but Penelope had taken  
      her in, and cared for her like a daughter, and cheered her with presents;  
      but even so her heart had no sorrow for Penelope,  
325    but she used to sleep with Eurymachos, and she was his sweetheart.  
      Now she spoke to Odysseus and gave him a scolding:  
      ‘Wretched stranger, you must be one whose wits are distracted,  
      when you will not go where the smith is at work, and sleep there,  
      or to some public gathering place, but staying here speak out  
330    boldly and at length among many men, and your spirit

knows no fear. The wine must have your brains; or else always  
you are such a man in your mind, a babbler of nonsense.  
Are you so brave because you beat the vagabond Iros?

## and taunted by Eurymachos

- Take care lest a better man than Iros stand up against you,  
335 one who can pummel you about the head with his heavy  
hands, beat you, draw blood, and chase you out of the palace.'
- Then looking at her darkly resourceful Odysseus answered:  
'I think I will go to Telemachos, you bitch, and tell him  
how you are talking, so that he will cut you to pieces.'
- 340 Speaking in words like this he fluttered the women. They went on their  
way back into the house, and the knees of each one  
went loose with fear. They thought he was speaking the truth. He then  
took his place by the burning cressets, and kept them lighted,  
looking after them all himself, but the heart within him  
345 was pondering other thoughts, which were not to go unaccomplished.
- But Athene did not altogether permit the haughty  
suitors to forgo their hard insolence, so that still more  
grief would invade the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes.  
Eurymachos, son of Polybos, began speaking among them,  
350 taunting Odysseus, and started up laughter among his companions:  
'Hear me, all you suitors of the glorious queen, hear me  
while I speak out what the heart within my breast urges.  
This man comes as gift of the gods to the house of Odysseus.  
It is my thought that he can give us illumination  
355 from his bald head, which has no hair, not even a little.'
- So he spoke, and addressed Odysseus, sacker of cities:  
'Stranger, if I were to take you up, would you be willing  
to work for me on my outer estate—I would give you adequate  
pay—assembling stones for fences, and growing the tall trees?
- 360 There I would provide you with an allowance of victuals,  
and give you shoes to wear on your feet, and clothing to put on.  
But since all the work you have learned is bad, you will not be willing  
to go off and work hard; no, you would rather beg where the people  
are, and so be able to feed that ravenous belly.'
- 365 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Eurymachos, I wish there could be a working contest  
between us, in the spring season when the days are lengthening,  
out in the meadow, with myself holding a well-curved sickle,  
and you one like it, so to test our endurance for labor,

370 without food, from dawn till dark, with plenty of grass for our mowing.

Or if it were oxen to be driven, those of the best sort,  
large ones and ruddy, both well fed with grass, of an equal

## Eurymachos throws a footstool at Odysseus

age and carrying power, and their strength is not contemptible,  
and there were four acres to plow, with the glebe giving to the  
plowshare.

- 375 There you would see if I could carve a continuous furrow.  
Or again, if this day the son of Kronos should bring on  
a battle, and I were given a great shield and two spears,  
and a helmet all of bronze well fitted over my temples,  
so you would see me taking my place as one of the foremost  
380 fighters, and you could not speak so in scorn of my belly.  
But now you are very insulting, and think to be short with me; also,  
as I suppose, you think you are a tall man and powerful,  
because you have dealings with few men and no brave ones; surely,  
if Odysseus were to come back to the land of his fathers,  
385 the gates of the house, although they are very wide, would suddenly  
be too narrow as you took flight to escape from the forecourt.'

He spoke, and the anger mounted in the heart of Eurymachos,  
and looking darkly at him he addressed him in winged words:  
'Wretch, I will do you an injury for the way you are talking,  
390 boldly and at length among many men, and your spirit  
knows no fear. The wine must have your brains; or else always  
you are such a man in your mind, a babbler of nonsense.  
Are you so brave because you defeated the vagabond Iros?'

- So he spoke, and caught up a footstool; but Odysseus  
395 crouched against the knees of Doulichian Amphinomos  
in fear of Eurymachos, who threw, and hit the cupbearer  
in the right hand. The pitcher fell to the ground, clashing,  
but the cupbearer fell on his back in the dust, groaning.  
But the suitors all through the shadowy halls were raising a tumult,  
400 and thus they would speak, each man looking at the man next him:  
'How I wish this stranger could have gone to perdition  
somewhere else, before he came here; he has raised such a tumult,  
and now we are fighting over beggars; there will be no pleasure  
in the stately feast at all, since vile things will be uppermost.'
- 405 Now the hallowed prince Telemachos spoke a word to them: 'Fools,  
you are out of your minds and no longer conceal inside you  
what you have eaten and drunk. It must be some god who troubles you.

You have feasted well; go to your homes and sleep, whenever,  
that is, anyone desires to go home; I drive away no man.'

410 So he spoke, and all of them bit their lips in amazement at  
Telemachos, and the daring way he had spoken to them.

## The suitors go home

Now they were addressed and spoken to by Amphinomos,  
the glorious son of Nisos, son of the lord Aretios:

‘Dear friends, no man must be angry, nor yet with violent  
415 answers attack what has been spoken in justice. And do not  
strike the stranger, as you have done, nor yet any other  
serving man who is in the house of godlike Odysseus.  
Come now, let the cupbearer pour wine in our goblets,  
so we can pour a libation and then retire to our houses;  
420 and in the halls of Odysseus we shall let Telemachos  
look after the stranger, since it is his house that he came to.’

So he spoke, and the word he spoke was pleasing to all of them.  
The hero [Moulios](#), the Doulichian herald, mixed them  
wine in the bowl. He was the henchman of Amphinomos.

425 He passed it around to all in order, and they, pouring  
a libation to the blessed gods, drank the honey-sweet wine.  
But when they had made libation and drunk as much as they wanted,  
then they went home to go to bed, each man to his own house.

## Book XIX



Now great Odysseus still remained in the hall, pondering how, with the help of Athene, he would murder the suitors. Presently he spoke in winged words to Telemachos:

‘Telemachos, we must have the weapons stored away inside  
5 the high chamber; and when the suitors miss them and ask you about them, answer and beguile them with soft words, saying: “I stored them away out of the smoke, since they are no longer like what Odysseus left behind when he went to Troy land, but are made foul, with all the smoke of the fire upon them.”

10 Also, some divinity put into my head this even greater thought, that with the wine in you, you might stand up and fight, and wound each other, and spoil the feast and the courting; since iron all of itself works on a man and attracts him.’

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father,  
15 and summoned out Eurykleia his nurse, and said to her: ‘Come, nurse, please detain the women inside the palace, while I put away my father’s beautiful armor in the inner room; it is carelessly laid in the house, and darkened with smoke, in my father’s absence, and I was a child all that time.

20 Now I would put it away, where smoke from the fire will not reach it.’

Then in turn Eurykleia his dear nurse said to him: ‘I only hope, my child, that you will assume such foresight in taking care of the house and protecting all our possessions. But tell me, who is it will go with you and hold the light for you?’

## **Odysseus and Telemachos remove the armor**

25     The maids would have given you light, but you would not let them come out.

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
‘This stranger will. I will not suffer a man who feeds from our stores, and does not work, even though he comes from far off.’

So he spoke, and she had no winged words for an answer.

30     Eurykleia barred the doors of the strong-built great hall.

The two men, Odysseus and his glorious son, sprang up and began carrying helmets, shields massive in the middle, and pointed spears, and before them Pallas Athene, holding a golden lamp, gave them splendid illumination.

35     Suddenly Telemachos spoke a word to his father:

‘Father, here is a great wonder that my eyes look on.  
Always it seems that the chamber walls, the handsome bases and roof timbers of fir and tall columns sustaining them, shine in my eyes as if a fire were blazing. There must be

40     surely a god here, one of those who hold the high heaven.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
‘Hush, and keep it in your own mind, and do not ask questions.  
For this is the very way of the gods, who hold Olympos.  
You should now go to bed, and I shall remain behind here,

45     so that I can continue to stir up the maids, and also  
your mother; and she in her sorrow will question me about everything.’

So he spoke, and Telemachos went out of the great hall to his own chamber to go to bed, with torches to light him to his bed, where he always lay when sweet sleep came on him.

50     There he lay this time also and waited for the divine Dawn, while great Odysseus still remained in the hall, pondering how, with the help of Athene, he would murder the suitors.

But now circumspect Penelope came down from her chamber, looking like Artemis or like golden Aphrodite.

55     They set a chair for her to sit on close by the fireplace. The chair was inlaid with ivory and silver; the craftsman [Ikmalios](#) had made it, and for the feet he had joined on a footstool, all of one piece with it; a great fleece was spread out over the chair, and upon it circumspect Penelope

60 took her place. Her white-armed handmaidens came from the palace. They cleared and carried away a great deal of food, with the tables and goblets, where the men in high spirits had been drinking, and shook the ash from the cressets onto the ground, then piled them

## Interview between Odysseus and Penelope

again with pieces of wood, to give them light, and to warm them.

65     Again for the second time Melantho scolded Odysseus:  
‘Stranger, do you mean to stay here all night and bother us  
by poking all over the house and spying upon the women?  
Take yourself out of the door, you wretch, and be well satisfied  
with your feast, or you may be forced to get out, with a torch thrown at  
you.’

70     Then looking darkly at her resourceful Odysseus said to her: ‘I  
wonder, why do you hold such an angry grudge against me?  
Is it because I am dirty, and wear foul clothing upon me,  
and go about as a public beggar? The need is on me,  
for such is the lot of vagabonds and men who are homeless.

75     I too was one who lived in my own house among people,  
prospering in wealth, and often I gave to a wanderer  
according to what he was and wanted when he came to me;  
and I had serving men by thousands, and many another  
good thing, by which men live well and are called prosperous, only

80     Zeus, son of Kronos, spoiled it all—somehow he wished to.  
So, woman, you should now beware lest you lose all of  
that glorious look with which you shine among the handmaidens.  
Beware of your mistress, who may grow angry with you and hate you.  
Or Odysseus may come back. There is still time for hope there.

85     And even if he has perished and will no longer come back,  
here is Telemachos, his son, by grace of Apollo  
grown such a man, and in his palace none of the women  
will be sinful and escape, since he is a child no longer.’

90     So he spoke, and circumspect Penelope heard him,  
and spoke to her maid servant by name and gave her a scolding:  
‘Always I know well what monstrous thing you are doing,  
you bold and shameless bitch; you will wipe it off on your own head.  
You understood all this very well, because you had heard it  
from me, how in my halls I intended to question the stranger  
95     about my husband; since I am troubled for him incessantly.’

So she spoke and addressed her housekeeper, Eurynome:  
‘Eurynome, bring up a chair and put a fleece on it,  
so that the stranger can be seated, and tell me his story,

and listen also to what I say. I wish to question him.'

100 So she spoke, and the servant quickly brought up and set down a well-polished chair, and laid a fleece across to cover it.

## **who tells her story**

On this, much-enduring great Odysseus was seated,  
and their discourse was begun by circumspect Penelope:  
‘Stranger, I myself first have a question to ask you.

105    What man are you and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

‘Lady, no mortal man on the endless earth could have cause  
to find fault with you; your fame goes up into the wide heaven,  
as of some king who, as a blameless man and god-fearing,

110    and ruling as lord over many powerful people,  
upholds the way of good government, and the black earth yields him  
barley and wheat, his trees are heavy with fruit, his sheepflocks  
continue to bear young, the sea gives him fish, because of  
his good leadership, and his people prosper under him.

115    Question me now here in your house about all other  
matters, but do not ask who I am, the name of my country,  
for fear you may increase in my heart its burden of sorrow  
as I think back; I am very full of grief, and I should not  
sit in the house of somebody else with my lamentation

120    and wailing. It is not good to go on mourning forever.  
Some one of your maids, or you yourself, might find fault with me  
and say I swam in tears because my brain drowned in liquor.’

Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:

‘Stranger, all of my excellence, my beauty and figure,  
125    were ruined by the immortals at that time when the Argives took ship  
for Ilion, and with them went my husband, Odysseus.  
If he were to come back to me and take care of my life, then  
my reputation would be more great and splendid. As it is  
now, I grieve; such evils the god has let loose upon me.

130    For all the greatest men who have the power in the islands,  
in Doulichion and Same and in wooded Zakynthos,  
and all who in rocky Ithaka are holders of lordships,  
all these are my suitors against my will, and they wear my house out.  
Therefore, I pay no attention to strangers, nor to suppliants,

135    nor yet to heralds, who are in the public service, but always  
I waste away at the inward heart, longing for Odysseus.  
These men try to hasten the marriage. I weave my own wiles.

First the divinity put the idea of the web in my mind,  
to set up a great loom in my palace, and set to weaving

140      a web of threads, long and fine. Then I said to them:

## Odysseus pretends

“Young men, my suitors now that the great Odysseus has perished,  
wait, though you are eager to marry me, until I finish  
this web, so that my weaving will not be useless and wasted.  
This is a shroud for the hero Laertes, for when the destructive  
145 doom of death which lays men low shall take him, lest any  
Achaian woman in this neighborhood hold it against me  
that a man of many conquests lies with no sheet to wind him.”  
So I spoke, and the proud heart in them was persuaded.  
Thereafter in the daytime I would weave at my great loom,  
150 but in the night I would have torches set by, and undo it.  
So for three years I was secret in my designs, convincing  
the Achaians, but when the fourth year came with the seasons returning,  
and the months faded, and many days had been brought to completion,  
then at last through my maidservants, those careless hussies,  
155 they learned, and came upon me and caught me, and gave me a  
scolding.  
So, against my will and by force, I had to finish it.  
Now I cannot escape from this marriage; I can no longer  
think of another plan; my parents are urgent with me  
to marry; my son is vexed as they eat away our livelihood;  
160 he sees it all; he is a grown man now, most able  
to care for the house, and it is to him Zeus grants this honor.  
But even so, tell me who you are, and the place where you come from.  
You were not born from any fabulous oak, or a boulder.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

165 ‘O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes,  
you will not stop asking me about my origin?  
Then I will tell you; but you will give me over to sorrows  
even more than I have; but such is the way of it, when one  
strays away from his own country as long as I have,  
170 wandering many cities of men and suffering hardships.  
Even so, I will tell you what you ask me and seek for.  
There is a land called Crete in the middle of the wine-blue water,  
a handsome country and fertile, seagirt, and there are many  
peoples in it, innumerable; there are ninety cities.

175 Language with language mix there together. There are Achaians,

there are great-hearted Eteokretans, there are Kydonians,  
and Dorians in three divisions, and noble Pelasgians;  
and there is Knossos, the great city, the place where Minos  
was king for nine-year periods, and conversed with great Zeus.

## to have entertained Odysseus in Crete

- 180 He was the father of my father, great-hearted Deukalion.  
Deukalion had two sons, myself and the lord Idomeneus,  
but Idomeneus had gone with the curved ships to Ilion  
along with the sons of Atreus. My glorious name was Aithon,  
and I was the younger born, but he was the elder and better.
- 185 It was there that I knew Odysseus and entertained him,  
for the force of the wind had caught him, as he was making for Ilion,  
and brought him to Crete, driving him off course past Maleia.  
He stopped at Amnisos, where there is a cave of Eileithyia,  
in difficult harbors, and barely he had escaped from the stormwind.
- 190 He went up to the town at once, and asked for Idomeneus,  
for he said he was his hereditary friend, and respected;  
but it was now the tenth or eleventh day since Idomeneus  
had gone away along with his curved ships for Ilion.  
But I took him back to my own house, and well entertained him
- 195 with proper hospitality, since there was abundance  
in the house, and for his other companions, who were his followers,  
I collected from the public and gave them barley, and shining  
wine, and cattle to dedicate, to content their spirits.  
There the noble Achaians stayed twelve days, for a mighty
- 200 North Wind contained them, such that a man could not stand upright  
and walk the earth. Some harsh divinity must have roused it.  
But on the thirteenth day the wind fell, and they put forth.'
- He knew how to say many false things that were like true sayings.  
As she listened her tears ran and her body was melted,
- 205 as the snow melts along the high places of the mountains  
when the West Wind has piled it there, but the South Wind melts it,  
and as it melts the rivers run full flood. It was even  
so that her beautiful cheeks were streaming tears, as Penelope  
wept for her man, who was sitting there by her side. But Odysseus
- 210 in his heart had pity for his wife as she mourned him,  
but his eyes stayed, as if they were made of horn or iron,  
steady under his lids. He hid his tears and deceived her.  
But when she had taken her pleasure of tearful lamentation,  
then she answered him once again and spoke and addressed him:
- 215 'Now, my friend, I think I will give you a test, to see if

it is true that there, and with his godlike companions,  
you entertained my husband, as you say you did, in your palace.  
Tell me what sort of clothing he wore on his body, and what sort

## He claims Odysseus is in Thesprotia

of man he was himself, and his companions, who followed him.'

220 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'Lady, it is difficult to tell you, with so much time between, for now it is the twentieth year since he was in that place and went away from my country. Still, I will tell you, in the way my heart imagines him.

225 Great Odysseus was wearing a woolen mantle of purple, with two folds, but the pin to it was golden and fashioned with double sheathes, and the front part of it was artfully done: a hound held in his forepaws a dappled fawn, preying on it as it struggled; and all admired it,

230 how, though they were golden, it preyed on the fawn and strangled it and the fawn struggled with his feet as he tried to escape him. I noticed also the shining tunic that he was wearing on his body. It was like the dried-out skin of an onion, so sheer it was and soft, and shining bright as the sun shines.

235 Many of the women were looking at it in admiration. But put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you. I do not know if this clothing Odysseus wore had come from his home, or if some companion gave it to him as he boarded his fast ship; or some friend abroad, since Odysseus had friendship

240 with many men. Indeed, there were few Achaians like him. I myself gave him a brazen sword and a double cloak of purple, a handsome thing, and a fringed tunic, and saw him off in the proper way on his strong-benched vessel. Also there was a herald, a little older than he was,

245 who went with him. I will describe to you what he looked like. He was round in the shoulders, black-complexioned, wooly-haired, and had the name [Eurybates](#). Odysseus prized him above his other companions, for their thoughts were in harmony.'

He spoke, and still more aroused in her the passion for weeping,  
250 as she recognized the certain proofs Odysseus had given. But when she had taken her pleasure of tearful lamentation, then once again she spoke to him and gave him an answer: 'Stranger, while before this you had my pity, you now shall be my friend and be respected here in my palace.

255 For I myself gave him this clothing, as you describe it.  
I folded it in my chamber, and I too attached the shining  
pin, to be his adornment; but I shall never welcome him

## and nearing home

home, come back again to the beloved land of his fathers.

It was on a bad day for him that Odysseus boarded

260 his hollow ship for that evil, not-to-be-mentioned Ilion.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

'O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes,

no longer waste your beautiful skin nor eat your heart out  
in lamentation for your husband. Yet I do not blame you.

265 For any woman mourns when she loses her wedded husband,  
with whom she has lain in love and borne children, even a lesser  
man than Odysseus. They say that he was like the immortals.

But now give over your lamentation, and mark what I tell you,  
for I say to you without deception, without concealment,

270 that I have heard of the present homecoming of Odysseus.

He is near, in the rich land of the men of Thesprotia,  
and alive, and bringing many treasures back to his household.

He collects this about the district. His eager companions  
were lost to him, with his hollow ship, on the wine-blue water

275 as he left the island of Thrinakia, for Zeus and Helios  
hated him, since his companions killed the cattle of Helios.

So they all perished in the wash of the great sea; only  
Odysseus, riding the keel, was cast ashore by the sea swell  
on the land of the Phaiakians, who are near the immortals;

280 and they honored him in their hearts as if he had been a divinity,  
and gave him much, and they themselves were willing to carry him  
home without harm. So Odysseus would have been home a long time  
before this, but in his mind he thought it more profitable  
to go about and visit much country, collecting possessions.

285 For Odysseus knew profitable ways beyond all other  
men who are mortal, no other man could rival him at it.  
So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me the story;  
and he swore to me in my presence, as he poured out a libation  
in his house, that the ship was drawn down to the sea, and the crew  
were ready

290 to carry Odysseus back again to his own dear country;  
but before that he sent me off, for a ship of Thesprotian  
men happened then to be sailing for Doulichion, rich in wheatfields.

And he showed me all the possessions gathered in by Odysseus;  
these would feed a succession of heirs to the tenth generation,  
295    so many treasures are stored for him in the house of the great king.

## Eurykleia is told

But he said Odysseus had gone to Dodona, to listen  
to the will of Zeus, out of the holy deep-leaved oak tree,  
for how he could come back to the rich countryside of Ithaka,  
in secret or openly, having been by now long absent.

- 300 So he is safe, as you see, and is now coming back. He is very  
close at hand, and will not for long be far from his country  
and his own people. I will swear you a firm oath to this.  
Zeus be my witness, first of the gods, and the table of friendship,  
and the hearth of blameless Odysseus, to which I come as a suppliant,  
305 all these things are being accomplished in the way I tell them.  
Some time within this very year Odysseus will be here,  
either at the waning of the moon or at its onset.'
- Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:  
'If only this word, stranger and guest, were brought to fulfillment,  
310 soon you would be aware of my love and many gifts given  
by me, so any man who met you would call you blessed.  
But here is the way I think in my mind, and the way it will happen.  
Odysseus will never come home again, nor will you be given  
conveyance, for there are none to give orders left in the household  
315 such as Odysseus was among men—if he ever existed—  
for receiving respected strangers and sending them off on their  
journeys.  
But come, handmaidens, give him a wash and spread a couch for him  
here, with bedding and coverlets and with shining blankets,  
so that he can keep warm as he waits for Dawn of the golden  
320 throne, and early tomorrow you shall give him a bath, anoint him,  
so that he can sit in the hall beside Telemachos  
and expect to dine there; and it will be the worse for any  
of those men who inflicts heart-wasting annoyance on him;  
he will accomplish nothing here for all his terrible  
325 spite; for how, my friend, will you learn if I in any way  
surpass the rest of women, in mind and thoughtful good sense,  
if you must attend, badly dressed and unwashed, the feasting  
in the palace? Human beings live for only a short time,  
and when a man is harsh himself, and his mind knows harsh thoughts,  
330 all men pray that sufferings will befall him hereafter

while he lives; and when he is dead all men make fun of him.  
But when a man is blameless himself, and his thoughts are blameless,  
the friends he has entertained carry his fame widely  
to all mankind, and many are they who call him excellent.'

## **to wash Odysseus' feet**

- 335 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, coverlets and shining rugs have been hateful to me ever since that time when I left the snowy mountains of Crete behind me, and went away on my long-oared vessel.
- 340 I will lie now as I have lain before through the sleepless nights; for many have been the nights when on an unpleasant couch I lay and awaited the throned Dawn in her splendor. Nor is there any desire in my heart for foot basins, to wash my feet, nor shall any woman lay hold of my feet, not one
- 345 of those such as do your work for you in your palace; not unless there is some aged and virtuous woman whose heart has had to endure as many troubles as mine has. If such a one were to touch my feet, I should not be angry.'
- Then in turn circumspect Penelope answered:
- 350 'Dear friend, never before has there been any man so thoughtful, among those friends from far places who have come to my palace as guests, so thoughtful and so well-considered is everything you say. I do have one old woman, whose thoughts are prudent, who was nurse to that unhappy man, and took good care of him.
- 355 She took him up in her hands when first his mother had borne him, and she shall wash your feet, though she has little strength for it. Come then, circumspect Eurykleia, rise up and wash the feet of one who is the same age as your master. Odysseus must by this time have just such hands and feet as you do,
- 360 for in misfortune mortal men grow old more suddenly.'
- So he spoke, and the old woman covered her face in her hands, and shed hot tears, and spoke to him in words of compassion: 'How helpless I am to help you, my child. Surely Zeus hated you beyond all other men, though you had a godly spirit;
- 365 for no man among mortals ever has burned so many thigh pieces to Zeus who delights in the thunder, nor given so many choice and grand sacrifices, as you prayed you might come to a sleek old age, and raise your glorious son to manhood. Now for you alone he took away your day of homecoming.
- 370 So it must be for him also that in the houses of far-off

friends, whose famous homes he enters, the women tease him,  
as now these sluts are all teasing you, stranger, and it is  
to avoid their abuse and shameful speaking you will not let them

## The scar of Odysseus

wash your feet. But circumspect Penelope, daughter  
375 of Ikarios told me to do it, nor am I unwilling.  
So I shall wash your feet, both for the sake of Penelope  
but also for yourself, since the heart is stirred within me  
by sorrows; but come, attend to me and the word I tell you.  
There have been many hard-traveling strangers who have come here,  
380 but I say I have never seen one as like as you are  
to Odysseus, both as to your feet, and voice and appearance.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:  
'So all say, old dame, who with their eyes have looked on  
the two of us. They say we two are very similar  
385 each to each, as you yourself have noticed and tell me.'

So he spoke, and the old woman took up the shining basin  
she used for foot washing, and poured in a great deal of water, the cold  
first, and then she added the hot to it. Now Odysseus  
was sitting close to the fire, but suddenly turned to the dark side;  
390 for presently he thought in his heart that, as she handled him,  
she might be aware of his scar, and all his story might come out.  
She came up close and washed her lord, and at once she recognized  
that scar, which once the boar with his white tusk had inflicted  
on him, when he went to [Parnassos](#), to Autolykos and his children.

395 This was his mother's noble father, who surpassed all men  
in thievery and the art of the oath, and the god Hermes  
himself had endowed him, for he had pleased him by burning the thigh  
bones  
of lambs and kids, and the god freely gave him his favor.  
Autolykos came once to the rich country of Ithaka,  
400 and found that a child there was newly born to his daughter;  
and, as he finished his evening meal, Eurykleia laid him  
upon his very knees, and spoke him a word and named him:  
'Autolykos, now find yourself that name you will bestow  
on your own child's dear child, for you have prayed much to have him.'

405 Then Autolykos spoke to her and gave her an answer: 'My son-in-law  
and daughter, give him the name I tell you;  
since I have come to this place distasteful to many, women  
and men alike on the prospering earth, so let him be given

the name Odysseus, that is distasteful. Then when he grows up,  
410 and comes to the great house of his mother's line, and Parnassos,  
where there are possessions that are called mine, I will give him

## and the story of his name

freely of these to make him happy, and send him back to you.'

This was why Odysseus came, so that he would give him  
glorious presents. Autolykos and the sons of Autolykos

415 greeted him with clasping of hands and words of endearment,  
and [Amphithea](#), his mother's mother, embraced Odysseus,  
and kissed his head and kissed too his beautiful shining  
eyes. Autolykos gave his glorious sons the order  
to make ready the dinner, and they listened to his urging.

420 Presently they brought in an ox, a male, five years old.  
They skinned the victim and put it in order, and butchered the carcass,  
and cut the meat expertly into small pieces, and spitted the morsels,  
and roasted all carefully, and shared out the portions.

So, for the whole length of the day until the sun's setting,

425 they feasted, nor was any man's hunger denied a fair portion;  
but when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over,  
then they went to their beds and took the blessing of slumber.

But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,  
they went out on their way to the hunt, the dogs and the people,  
430 these sons of Autolykos, and with them noble Odysseus  
went. They came to the steep mountain, mantled in forest,  
Parnassos, and soon they were up in the windy folds. At this time,  
the sun had just begun to strike on the plowlands, rising  
out of the quiet water and the deep stream of the Ocean.

435 The hunters came to a wooded valley, and on ahead of them  
ran the dogs, casting about for the tracks, and behind them  
the sons of Autolykos, and with them noble Odysseus  
went close behind the hounds, shaking his spear far-shadowing.  
Now there, inside that thick of the bush, was the lair of a great boar.

440 Neither could the force of wet-blown winds penetrate here,  
nor could the shining sun ever strike through with his rays, nor yet  
could the rain pass all the way through it, so close together  
it grew, with a fall of leaves drifted in dense profusion.  
The thudding made by the feet of men and dogs came to him  
445 as they closed on him in the hunt, and against them he from his  
woodlair  
bristled strongly his nape, and with fire from his eyes glaring

stood up to face them close. The first of all was Odysseus,  
who swept in, holding high in his heavy hand the long spear,  
and furious to stab, but too quick for him the boar drove  
450      over the knee, and with his tusk gashed much of the flesh,

## Eurykleia recognizes Odysseus

tearing sidewise, and did not reach the bone of the man. Now Odysseus stabbed at him, and hit him in the right shoulder, and straight on through him passed the point of the shining spearhead. He screamed and dropped in the dust, and the life spirit fluttered from him.

455     The dear sons of Autolykos were busy to tend him, and understandingly they bound up the wound of stately godlike Odysseus, and singing incantations over it stayed the black blood, and soon came back to the house of their loving father. Then Autolykos and the sons of Autolykos,

460     healing him well and giving him shining presents, sent him speedily back rejoicing to his own beloved country in Ithaka, and there his father and queenly mother were glad in his homecoming, and asked about all that had happened, and how he came by his wound, and he told well his story,

465     how in the hunt the boar with his white tusk had wounded him as he went up to Parnassos with the sons of Autolykos.

The old woman, holding him in the palms of her hands, recognized this scar as she handled it. She let his foot go, so that his leg, which was in the basin, fell free, and the bronze echoed.

470     The basin tipped over on one side, and the water spilled out on the floor. Pain and joy seized her at once, and both eyes filled with tears, and the springing voice was held within her. She took the beard of Odysseus in her hands and spoke to him: 'Then, dear child, you are really Odysseus. I did not know you before; not until I had touched my lord all over.'

She spoke, and turned her eyes toward Penelope, wishing to indicate to her her beloved husband's presence, but Penelope was not able to look that way, or perceive him, since Athene turned aside her perception. Odysseus

480     groped for her, and took her by the throat with his right hand, while with the other he pulled her closer to him, and said to her: 'Nurse, why are you trying to kill me? You yourself suckled me at your own breast; and now at last after suffering much, I have come, in the twentieth year, back to my own country.

485     But now that you have learned who I am, and the god put it into

your mind, hush, let nobody else in the palace know of it.  
For so I tell you straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished.  
If you do, and by my hands the god beats down the arrogant

## by his scar, but is silenced

suitors, nurse of mine though you are, I will not spare you  
490    when I kill the rest of the serving maids in my palace.'

Then in turn circumspect Eurykleia said to him:  
'My child, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier?  
You know what strength is steady in me, and it will not give way  
at all, but I shall hold as stubborn as stone or iron.

495    And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.  
If by your hands the god beats down the arrogant suitors,  
then I will give you the list of those women who in your palace  
have been mutinous against you, and tell you which are innocent.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:  
500    'Nurse, why should you tell me of them? There is no need to.  
I myself will properly study each and learn of  
each. Leave it to the gods and keep the story in silence.'

So he spoke, and the old woman went back through the hall, to fetch  
another basin, for all the water that had been there formerly  
505    was spilled. When she had washed him and anointed him with oil,  
Odysseus drew his chair closer to the fire, trying  
to keep warm, but hid the scar under his ragged clothing.  
Circumspect Penelope then began their talking:  
'Friend, I will stay here and talk to you, just for a little.

510    To be sure, it will soon be the time for sweet rest,  
for one delicious sleep takes hold of, although he may be  
sorrowful. The divinity gave me grief beyond measure.  
The day times I indulge in lamentation, mourning  
as I look to my own tasks and those of my maids in the palace.

515    But after the night comes and sleep has taken all others,  
I lie on my bed, and the sharp anxieties swarming  
thick and fast on my beating heart torment my sorrowing  
self. As when [Pandareos'](#) daughter, the greenwood nightingale,  
perching in the deep of the forest foliage sings out

520    her lovely song, when springtime has just begun; she, varying  
the manifold strains of her voice, pours out the melody, mourning  
[Itylos](#), son of the lord [Zethos](#), her own beloved  
child, whom she once killed with the bronze when the madness was on  
her;

so my mind is divided and starts one way, then another.

525 Shall I stay here by my son and keep all in order,  
my property, my serving maids, and my great high-roofed house,

## The dream of the geese

keep faith with my husband's bed and regard the voice of the people,  
or go away at last with the best of all those Achaians  
who court me here in the palace, with endless gifts to win me?

- 530 My son, while he was still a child and thoughtless, would not let me marry and leave the house of my husband; but now that he is grown a tall man and come to maturity's measure, he even prays me to go home out of the palace, fretting over the property, which the Achaian men are devouring.
- 535 But come, listen to a dream of mine and interpret it for me. I have twenty geese here about the house, and they feed on grains of wheat from the water trough. I love to watch them. But a great eagle with crooked beak came down from the mountain, and broke the necks of them all and killed them. So the whole twenty
- 540 lay dead about the house, but he soared high in the bright air. Then I began to weep—that was in my dream—and cried out aloud, and around me gathered the fair-haired Achaian women as I cried out sorrowing for my geese killed by the eagle. But he came back again and perched on the jut of the gabled
- 545 roof. He now had a human voice and spoke aloud to me: "Do not fear, O daughter of far-famed Ikarios. This is no dream, but a blessing real as day. You will see it done. The geese are the suitors, and I, the eagle, have been a bird of portent, but now I am your own husband, come home,
- 550 and I shall inflict shameless destruction on all the suitors." So he spoke; and then the honey-sweet sleep released me, and I looked about and saw the geese in my palace, feeding on their grains of wheat from the water trough, just as they had been.'
- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:
- 555 'Lady, it is impossible to read this dream and avoid it by turning another way, since Odysseus himself has told you its meaning, how it will end. The suitors' doom is evident for one and all. Not one will avoid his death and destruction.'
- Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:
- 560 'My friend, dreams are things hard to interpret, hopeless to puzzle out, and people find that not all of them end in anything. There are two gates through which the insubstantial dreams issue.

One pair of gates is made of horn, and one of ivory.  
Those of the dreams which issue through the gate of sown ivory,  
565      these are deceptive dreams, their message is never accomplished.

## The contest of the bow is proposed

But those that come into the open through the gates of the polished horn accomplish the truth for any mortal who sees them.

I do not think that this strange dream that I had came to me through this gate. My son and I would be glad if it did so.

570 And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.

This dawn will be a day of evil name, which will take me away from the house of Odysseus; for now I will set up a contest: those axes which, in his palace, he used to set up in order so that, twelve in all, they stood in a row, like timbers

575 to hold a ship. He would stand far off, and send a shaft through them.

Now I will set these up as a contest before my suitors, and the one who takes the bow in his hands, strings it with the greatest ease, and sends an arrow clean through all the twelve axes shall be the one I will go away with, forsaking this house

580 where I was a bride, a lovely place and full of good living.

I think that even in my dreams I shall never forget it.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, do not put off this contest in your house any longer.

585 Before these people can handle the well-wrought bow, and manage to hook the string and bend it, and send a shaft through the iron, Odysseus of the many designs will be back here with you.'

Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:

'If, my friend, you were willing to sit by me in my palace

590 and entertain me, no sleep would be drifted over my eyelids.

But it is in no way possible for people forever to go without sleep; and the immortals have given to mortals each his own due share all over the grain-giving corn land.

So I shall now go back again to my upper chamber,

595 and lie on my bed, which is made a sorrowful thing now, always disordered with the tears I have wept, ever since Odysseus went away to that evil, not-to-be-mentioned Ilion.

There I must lie; but you can sleep here in the house, either bedding down on the floor, or they can make a bed for you.'

600 So she spoke, and went back up to her shining chamber, not alone, since others, her women, went to attend her.

She went back to the upper story with her attendant women, and wept for Odysseus, her beloved husband, until gray-eyed Athene cast sweet slumber over her eyelids.

## Book XX



Then the noble Odysseus bedded down in the forecourt,  
and spread beneath him the raw hide of an ox, and uppermost  
many fleeces of sheep the Achaians had dedicated.

When he had lain down, Eurynome threw a blanket over him.

- 5      There, devising evils in his heart for the suitors,  
Odysseus lay awake; and out of the palace issued  
those women who in the past had been going to bed with the suitors,  
full of cheerful spirits and greeting each other with laughter.  
But the spirit deep in the heart of Odysseus was stirred by this,
- 10     and much he pondered in the division of mind and spirit,  
whether to spring on them and kill each one, or rather  
to let them lie this one more time with the insolent suitors,  
for the last and latest time; but the heart was growling within him.  
And as a bitch, facing an unknown man, stands over
- 15     her callow puppies, and growls and rages to fight, so Odysseus'  
heart was growling inside him as he looked on these wicked actions.  
He struck himself on the chest and spoke to his heart and scolded it:  
'Bear up, my heart. You have had worse to endure before this  
on that day when the irresistible Cyclops ate up
- 20     my strong companions, but you endured it until intelligence  
got you out of the cave, though you expected to perish.'
- So he spoke, addressing his own dear heart within him;  
and the heart in great obedience endured and stood it  
without complaint, but the man himself was twisting and turning.

## Athene comforts Odysseus

25 And as a man with a paunch pudding, that has been filled with blood and fat, tosses it back and forth over a blazing fire, and the pudding itself strains hard to be cooked quickly; so he was twisting and turning back and forth, meditating how, though he was alone against many, he could lay hands on

30 the shameless suitors. And at this time Athene, descending from the sky, came close to him, and wore the shape of a lady. She came and stood above his head, and spoke a word to him: 'Why are you wakeful now, O most wretched of all men? Here is your house, and here is your wife in the house, and here is

35 your son; and he is the kind of son any man would long for.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'Yes, O goddess, all you have said was fair and orderly; yet still, here is something the heart inside me is pondering, how, when I am alone against many, I can lay hands on

40 the shameless suitors. And they are always here in a body. And here is a still bigger problem that my heart is pondering. Even if, by grace of Zeus and yourself, I kill them, how shall I make my escape? It is what I would have you think on.'

Then in turn the goddess, gray-eyed Athene, said to him:

45 'Stubborn man! Anyone trusts even a lesser companion than I, who is mortal, and does not have so many ideas. But I am a god, and through it all I keep watch over you in every endeavor of yours. And now I tell you this plainly: even though there were fifty battalions of mortal people

50 standing around us, furious to kill in the spirit of battle, even so you could drive away their cattle and fat sheep. So let sleep take you now. There is annoyance in lying awake and on guard all night. You will soon be out of your troubles.'

So she spoke, and scattered slumber over his eyelids,

55 and she, shining among goddesses, went back to Olympos. But when the sleep had caught him, a relaxing sleep, slipping the cares from his mind, at that time his virtuous wife wakened in turn, and cried, sitting up in her soft bed. But after she had satisfied all her desire with weeping, then she,

60 shining among women, prayed first of all to Artemis:

‘Artemis, goddess and queen, daughter of Zeus, how I wish  
that with the cast of your arrow you could take the life from inside  
my heart, this moment, or that soon the stormwind would snatch me

## Sleepless night

away, and be gone, carrying me down misty pathways,  
65 and set me down where the recurrent Ocean empties  
his stream; as once the stormwinds carried away the daughters  
of Pandareos. The gods killed their parents, and they were left there  
orphaned in the palace, and radiant Aphrodite  
tended them and fed them with cheese, and sweet honey, and pleasant  
70 wine; and Hera granted to them, beyond all women,  
beauty and good sense, and chaste Artemis gave them stature,  
and Athene instructed them in glorious handiwork.  
But when bright Aphrodite had gone up to tall Olympos  
to request for these girls the achievement of blossoming marriage,  
75 from Zeus who rejoices in the thunder—and he well knows  
all things, the luck and the lucklessness of mortal people—  
meanwhile the seizing stormwinds carried away these maidens  
and gave them over into the care of the hateful Furies.  
So I wish that they who have their homes on Olympos  
80 would make me vanish, or sweet-haired Artemis strike me, so that  
I could meet the Odysseus I long for, even under the hateful  
earth, and not have to please the mind of an inferior  
husband. Yet the evil is endurable, when one  
cries through the days, with heart constantly troubled, yet still  
85 is taken by sleep in the nights; for sleep is oblivion of all  
things, both good and evil, when it has shrouded the eyelids.  
But now the god has sent the evil dreams thronging upon me.  
For on this very night there was one who lay by me, like him  
as he was when he went with the army, so that my own heart  
90 was happy. I thought it was no dream, but a waking vision.'

So she spoke, and Dawn of the golden throne came on her.  
Great Odysseus was aware of her voice crying,  
and pondered then, and it seemed to him in his mind that now  
she was standing by his head, and had recognized him already.

95 He rolled together the blanket and fleece, where he had been sleeping,  
and laid them down by the chair in the hall, and taking the oxhide  
out, laid it down, and prayed to Zeus, with his hands lifted:  
'Father Zeus, if willingly you gods led me over  
wet and dry to my land, after giving too much affliction,

100 let one of the waking people send me an omen from inside  
the house; and let Zeus also show me an outside portent.'  
So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus of the counsels heard him.

## Good omens in the morning

Immediately he sent his thunder from shining Olympos  
high above the clouds, and noble Odysseus was happy.

105    And from the house a mill woman sent him an omen.  
She was near by, where the shepherd of the host had set up  
his hand mills, and there twelve women in all had been bending  
to grind the wheat and the barley flour, men's marrow. The others,  
since they had finished grinding their wheat, by now were sleeping,

110    but this one had not ended her work, and she was the weakest.  
She stopped the mill and spoke aloud, a sign for her master:  
'Father Zeus, you who are lord of the gods and people,  
now you have thundered loud from the starry sky, although  
there is no cloud. You show this forth, a portent for someone.'

115    Grant now also for wretched me this prayer that I make you.  
On this day let the suitors take, for the last and latest  
time, their desirable feasting in the halls of Odysseus.  
For it is they who have broken my knees with heart-sore labor  
as I grind the meal for them. Let this be their final feasting.'

120    So she spoke, and great Odysseus welcomed the ominous speech, and  
the thunder of Zeus. He thought he would punish the sinners.  
The other serving women in the fine house of Odysseus  
had gathered, and were lighting the weariless fire on the fireplace.  
Telemachos, a man like a god, rose up from his bed

125    and put on his clothes, and slung a sharp sword over his shoulder.  
Underneath his shining feet he bound the fair sandals,  
and then caught up a powerful spear, edged with sharp bronze.  
He came and stood on the threshold and spoke now to Eurykleia:  
'Dear nurse, how have you treated the stranger-guest in our house?'

130    With food and a bed? Or has he been left to lie uncared-for?  
That is the way my mother is, though she is sensible.  
Impulsively she favors the wrong man, the worse one  
among mortals, and lets the better man go, unfavored.'

Then in turn circumspect Eurykleia said to him:

135    'Child, do not find fault with her this time. She is blameless.  
For he sat here and drank his wine, as he himself wanted,  
but he said he had no more hunger for food. She asked him.  
But afterward, when he was thinking of rest and sleep, then

she did tell the serving women to make up his bedding,  
140    but it was he, as one forever wretched and without  
fortune, who would not sleep in a bed, nor under blankets,

## Preparations for festival

but in the raw hide of an ox and under fleeces  
he slept in the forecourt, and we put a blanket over him.'

- So she spoke, and Telemachos went out through the palace,  
145 holding his spear, and a pair of light-footed dogs went with him.  
He went off to the assembly to join the strong-greaved Achaians.  
But Eurykleia, shining among women, the daughter  
of Ops, the son of Peisenor, gave orders to the maidservants:  
'To work. Some of you keep busy sweeping the palace,  
150 and freshen the floor with water, and lay the purple coverlets  
over the well-wrought chairs. Some others, wash all the tables  
thoroughly clear with sponges, and clean the wine bowls, also  
the wrought and double-handled drinking-cups; others, be off  
now to the spring to fetch the water, and come back quickly.  
155 For the suitors will not long be away from the palace,  
but will arrive very early, since this is a public festival.'
- So she spoke, and they listened well to her, and obeyed her,  
and twenty of them went on their way to the spring of dark water,  
while others, remaining in the house, did their work expertly.  
160 Then the haughty menservants came in, and these presently split the  
firewood well and expertly, and now the women  
came back from the spring, and next after them came in the swineherd  
driving in three porkers, which were the best in his keeping.  
These he left to graze inside the handsome enclosure,  
165 while he himself spoke to Odysseus in words of endearment:  
'Friend, have the Achaians been giving you more regard, or  
do they slight you still in the halls, as they did earlier?'  
Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'How I wish, Eumaios, the gods would punish the outrage  
170 these men do in the violence of their reckless designs, here in  
the house of another man. They have no gift of modesty.'  
Now as these two were conversing thus with each other,  
Melanthios, who was the herdsman of the goats, approached them,  
driving the goats that showed the best in all of his goatflocks  
175 to be the suitors' dinner. Two other herdsmen followed him.  
Melanthios tethered the goats under the echoing portico,  
and he himself now spoke to Odysseus, in terms of revilement:

‘Stranger, are you still to be here in the house, to pester  
the gentlemen with your begging? Will you not take yourself outside  
180 and elsewhere? I think that now you and I can no longer

## Arrival of Philoitios the cowherd

part, until we have tried our fists. There is nothing orderly about your begging. And other Achaians are feasting elsewhere.'

So he spoke. Resourceful Odysseus gave him no answer, but shook his head in silence, deeply devising evils.

185 The third man to come in was [Philoitios](#), leader of people, driving in for the suitors a barren cow, and fat goats.

The ferryman had brought these over; they give conveyance to people generally besides, whoever comes to them.

Philoitios tethered the beasts well under the echoing portico,

190 then went himself and stood close by the swineherd, and asked him: 'Who is this stranger, swineherd, newly arrived to visit

this house of ours? From what people does he claim origin?

Where is his ancestral place and the land of his fathers?

Unlucky man; he is like a king and a lord in appearance.

195 Yet it is true; the homeless men are those whom the gods hold in despite, when they spin misery even for princes.'

He spoke, and stood close by Odysseus, and offered his right hand, and spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words, saying:

'Welcome, father and stranger; may prosperous days befall you

200 hereafter; but now you are held in the grip of many misfortunes.

Father Zeus, no god beside is more baleful than you are.

You have no pity on men, once you yourself have created them; you bring them into misfortune and dismal sufferings.

It has come home to me, when I saw it. My eyes are tearful

205 as I remember Odysseus, since I think he too is wearing such rags upon him as this, and wandering among peoples if he is alive at all anywhere, and looks on the sunlight.

But if he is now dead and gone to the house of Hades,

I mourn then for blameless Odysseus, who when I was little

210 set me in charge of his oxen in the [Kephallenian](#) country.

Now these cattle are marvelously grown, nor could one better gather an increase of broad-faced cattle than as

these are bred. But other men tell me to drive them to them to eat, and they care nothing about the son in the palace,

215 nor tremble before the gods' regard; now they are grown eager to divide the possessions of the master, who has been absent

long. But here is a problem that the heart deep within me has long resolved. While the son is here, it would be cowardly to take my cattle with me and go to another district

## Philoitios found to be loyal

- 220 and alien men; and yet again it grows worse to stay here,  
as one set in charge of other men's cattle, and suffer hardships.  
And long ago I would have escaped from here, and gone to  
some other powerful king, since this is no longer endurable;  
yet still I think of that luckless man, how he may come back
- 225 and all throughout the house may cause the suitors to scatter.'
- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Oxherd, since you seem like neither a bad nor a senseless  
man—and I myself know what good sense is in you—  
so I will tell you this, and swear a great oath upon it.
- 230 Zeus be my witness, first of the gods, and the table of friendship,  
and the hearth of blameless Odysseus, to which I come as a suppliant;  
Odysseus will come home again, while you are still here  
in the house, and with your own eyes, if you desire to,  
you can watch him killing the suitors, who are supreme here.'
- 235 Then the herdsman of oxen spoke in turn and answered him: 'How I  
wish, my friend, that the son of Kronos would make good  
your saying; then you would see what kind of strength my hands have.'
- So Eumaios also prayed to all the divinities  
that they would grant the homecoming of thoughtful Odysseus.
- 240 Now as these men were conversing thus with each other, the suitors  
were compacting their plan of death and destruction  
for Telemachos, and a bird flew over them on the left side.  
This was a high-flown eagle, and carried a tremulous pigeon.  
Now it was Amphinomos who spoke forth and addressed them:
- 245 'O friends, this plan of ours to murder Telemachos will not  
ever be brought to completion; so let us think of our feasting.'
- So Amphinomos spoke, and his word was acceptable to them.  
They, when they had entered the house of godlike Odysseus,  
laid their mantles down along the chairs and the benches,
- 250 and set about sacrificing great-sized sheep, and fat goats,  
and sacrificing an ox of the herd, and fattened porkers.  
They roasted the vitals and distributed them, and they blended  
the wine in the mixing bowls, and the swineherd passed the wine cups  
about, and Philoitios, leader of men, served them the bread
- 255 in beautiful baskets, and Melanthios poured the wine for them.

They put forth their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.

Telemachos, his heart full of guile, seated Odysseus  
inside the well-constructed hall, and by the stone threshold,

## Arrival of the suitors

setting down a poor chair for him, and a little table,  
260 and set before him a portion of vitals, and poured wine for him:  
in a golden drinking cup, and then he spoke a word to him:  
'Take your place here and drink your wine in the men's company.  
I myself will defend you against the blows and the insults  
of all the suitors. This house does not belong to the people,

265 but it belongs to Odysseus; he acquired it; this makes it  
mine; and so, you suitors, hold back your spirit for insults  
and blows, or else there may be a quarrel and fight between us.'

So he spoke, and all of them bit their lips in amazement  
at Telemachos, and the daring way he had spoken to them.

270 Now Antinoös, the son of Eupeithes, said to them:  
'We Achaians must accept the word of Telemachos,  
though it is hard. Now he threatens us very strongly.  
Zeus, son of Kronos, stopped us; otherwise we should before now  
have put him down in his halls, though he is a lucid speaker.'

275 So spoke Antinoös, but the other paid no attention. The heralds came  
through the town driving the holy hecatomb  
of the gods, and the flowing-haired Achaians assembled under  
the shady grove of him who strikes from afar, Apollo.

When they had roasted and taken off the spits the outer  
280 meats, dividing shares they held their communal high feast.  
Then they who were working set down before Odysseus an equal  
portion, such as they got themselves, for this was the order  
of Telemachos, beloved son of godlike Odysseus.

And yet Athene would not altogether permit the arrogant  
285 suitors to keep from heart-hurting outrage, so to make greater  
the anguish in the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes.  
There was a man among the suitors versed in villainy;  
[Ktesippos](#) was his name, and he had his home in Same.  
He, in the confidence of his amazing possessions,  
290 courted the wife of Odysseus, who had been so long absent.  
This man now spoke forth among the insolent suitors:  
'Hear me now, you haughty suitors, while I say something.  
The stranger has had his share long since, and, as is proper,  
an equal one; for it is not well nor just to make light of

295 the guests of Telemachos, who come to him in his palace.  
Come, let me too give him a guest gift, so he can give it  
as prize to the woman who washes his feet, or to some other

## Violence of Ktesippos

one of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus.'

He spoke, and with his heavy hand he caught up an ox hoof  
300 that lay by in the basket, and threw it. Odysseus avoided  
this by an easy shift of his head. He smiled in his anger  
a very sardonic smile. The hoof hit the wall of the well-built  
house, and Telemachos spoke now and scolded Ktesippos:  
'Ktesippos, it was the better for your heart that it happened  
305 so; you missed the stranger, he avoided your missile.

I would have struck you with my sharp spear fair in the middle,  
and instead of your marriage your father would have been busy  
with your funeral here. Let none display any rudeness  
here in my house. I now notice all and know of it, better  
310 and worse alike, but before now I was only an infant.  
Even so, we have had to look on this and endure it  
all, the sheepflocks being slaughtered, the wine drunk up,  
and the food, since it is hard for one man to stand off many.  
Come then, no longer do me harm in your hostility.

315 But if you are determined to murder me with the sharp bronze,  
then that would be my wish also, since it would be far better  
than to have to go on watching forever these shameful activities,  
guests being battered about, or to see you rudely mishandling  
the serving women all about the beautiful palace.'

320 So he spoke, and all of them stayed stricken to silence. At last  
Agelaos, son of [Damastor](#), spoke forth among them:

'Dear friends, no man must be angry, nor yet with violent  
answers attack what has been spoken in justice. And do not  
strike the stranger, as you have done, nor yet any other

325 serving man who is in the house of godlike Odysseus.  
But, to Telemachos and his mother, I offer gentle  
advice, if this might be pleasing to the hearts of both of them.  
As long as the spirits in the hearts of you both were hopeful  
that Odysseus of the many designs would have his homecoming,

330 then no one could blame you for waiting for him, and holding  
the suitors off in the palace, since that was the better way for you  
in case Odysseus did come home and return to his palace.  
But now it has become evident that he never will come back.

335 Come then; sit beside your mother and give her this counsel,  
to marry the one who is the best man and brings the most numerous  
gifts. So you can be happy, control your father's inheritance,

## Hysteria of the suitors—prophecies by Theoklymenos

and eat and drink, while she looks after the house of another.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:

'But, by Zeus, Agelaos, I swear, and by the sufferings

340 of my father, who has died or is driven far from Ithaka,  
I do not delay my mother's marriage; rather I urge her  
to marry the one she wants, and I offer them countless presents.  
But I am ashamed to drive her unwilling out of the palace  
with a strict word. May this not be the end god makes of it.'

345 So spoke Telemachos. In the suitors Pallas Athene stirred up  
uncontrollable laughter, and addled their thinking.  
Now they laughed with jaws that were no longer their own.  
The meat they ate was a mess of blood, their eyes were bursting  
full of tears, and their laughter sounded like lamentation.

350 Godlike Theoklymenos now spoke out among them:  
'Poor wretches, what evil has come on you? Your heads and faces  
and the knees underneath you are shrouded in night and darkness;  
a sound of wailing has broken out, your cheeks are covered  
with tears, and the walls bleed, and the fine supporting pillars.

355 All the forecourt is huddled with ghosts, the yard is full of them  
as they flock down to the underworld and the darkness. The sun  
has perished out of the sky, and a foul mist has come over.'

So he spoke, and all of them laughed happily at him.

Eurymachos, son of Polybos, began speaking among them:

360 'This stranger newly come from elsewhere has lost his senses.  
Come, young men, and give him an escort out of the palace  
to get to the marketplace, since everything here is darkness.'

Then in turn godlike Theoklymenos answered:

'Eurymachos, I do not want you to give me an escort.

365 I have eyes and I have ears, and I have both my feet,  
and a mind inside my breast which is not without understanding.  
These will take me outside the house, since I see the evil  
coming upon you, and not one of the suitors avoiding  
this will escape; for in the house of godlike Odysseus

370 you are outrageous to men, and all your designs are reckless.'

So he spoke, and walked out of the well-settled palace,  
and made his way to Peiraios, who hospitably received him.

But the suitors now were glancing one at another, trying  
to tease Telemachos about his guests, and laughing over them;  
375      and thus would go the word of one of the arrogant young men:

## The suitors tease Telemachos

'No one has worse luck with his guests than you, Telemachos.  
Here, for one, somebody brought you in this vagabond  
who wants his food and his wine, who does not know how to do any  
work, who has no strength, but is just a weight on the good land.

380 And now this other one stood up and began to prophesy.  
If you would listen to what I say, it would be far better.  
Let us put these guests in a vessel with many oarlocks  
and take them to the [Sicilians](#). There they would fetch a good price.'

So spoke the suitors, but Telemachos paid no attention,  
385 but looked across at his father silently, always waiting  
for the time when he would lay his hands on the shameless suitors.

The daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
had taken her beautiful chair and set it just outside the door,  
and listened to every word the men in the hall were saying.

390 For these were laughing aloud as they prepared a dinner  
that was sweet and staying, for they had made a very big sacrifice;  
but there could not be a meal that was more unpleasant than this one,  
such was to be the attack that the powerful man and the goddess  
would make on them. For they had first begun the wrongdoing.

## Book XXI



But now the goddess, gray-eyed Athene, put it in the mind  
of the daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
to set the bow before the suitors, and the gray iron,  
in the house of Odysseus: the contest, the beginning of the slaughter.

- 5     So she ascended the high staircase of her own house,  
and in her solid hand took up the beautiful, brazen  
and artfully curved key, with an ivory handle upon it.  
With her attendant women she went to the inmost recess  
of the chamber. There were stored away the master's possessions.
- 10    Bronze was there, and gold, and difficulty wrought iron,  
and there the backstrung bow was stored away, and the quiver  
to hold the arrows. There were many painful shafts inside it.  
These were gifts from a friend whom he met in Lakedaimon,  
Iphitos, son of Eurytos, one like the immortal
- 15    gods. These two, in [Messene](#), had encountered each other  
in the house of wise Ortlochos, at the time when Odysseus  
went there on an errand enjoined by the whole community.  
For men of Messene had come in ships with many oarlocks  
and lifted three hundred sheep from Ithaka, also the herdsmen
- 20    with them, so Odysseus traveled far on the embassy  
while still a boy, sent by his father and the rest of the elders.  
[Iphitos](#) was there in search of his horses, twelve mares  
he had lost; hard-working mule colts were with them, nursing.  
These mares presently were to mean his doom and murder,

## **Penelope fetches the bow of Odysseus**

25 at the time when he came to the son of Zeus, strong-hearted,  
the man called Herakles, guilty of monstrous actions,  
who killed Iphitos while he was a guest in his household;  
hard man, without shame for the watchful gods, nor the table  
he had set for Iphitos, his guest; and when he had killed him  
30 he kept the strong-footed horses for himself in his palace.  
In search of his mares, Iphitos met Odysseus, and gave him  
the bow, which once the great Eurytos had carried, and left it  
afterward to his son when he had died in his high house.  
Odysseus gave him in turn a sharp sword and a strong spear,  
35 to begin their considerate friendship, but these two never  
entertained each other; before that, the son of Zeus killed  
Iphitos, son of Eurytos, one like the immortal  
gods, who gave Odysseus the bow. But Odysseus never  
took it with him when he went to war on the black ships,  
40 but always it was stored away in his halls, in memory  
of a dear friend; but he carried it at home in his country.

When she, shining among women, had come to the chamber,  
and had come up to the oaken threshold, which the carpenter  
once had expertly planed and drawn it true to a chalkline,  
45 and fitted the door posts to it and joined on the shining door leaves,  
first she quickly set the fastening free of the hook, then  
she inserted the key and knocked the bolt upward, pushing  
the key straight in, and the door bellowed aloud, as a bull  
does, when he feeds in his pasture; such was the noise the splendid  
50 doors made, struck with the key, and now they quickly spread open.  
Then she went up to the high platform, where there were standing  
chests, and in these were stored fragrant pieces of clothing.  
From there she reached, and took the bow from its peg, where it hung,  
in its own case, a shining thing that covered it. Thereupon  
55 she sat down, and laid the bow on her dear knees, while she  
took her lord's bow out of its case, all the while weeping  
aloud. But when she had sated herself with tears and crying,  
she went on her way to the hall to be with the lordly suitors,  
bearing in her hand the backstrung bow, and the quiver  
60 to hold the arrows, with many sorrowful shafts inside it.

Her serving women carried the box for her, and there lay  
much iron and bronze, prizes that had been won by the master.  
When she, shining among women, came near the suitors,

## **and promises marriage to the best archer**

she stood by the pillar that supported the roof with its joinery,  
65 holding her shining veil in front of her face, to shield it,  
and a devoted attendant was stationed on either side of her.  
Now at once she spoke and addressed a word to the suitors:  
'Hear me now, you haughty suitors, who have been using  
this house for your incessant eating and drinking, though it  
70 belongs to a man who has been gone for a long time; never  
have you been able to bring any other saying before me,  
but only your desire to make me your wife and marry me.  
But come, you suitors, since here is a prize set out before you;  
for I shall bring you the great bow of godlike Odysseus.  
75 And the one who takes the bow in his hands, strings it with the greatest  
ease, and sends an arrow clean through all the twelve axes,  
shall be the one I go away with, forsaking this house  
where I was a bride, a lovely place and full of good living.  
I think that even in my dreams I shall never forget it.'

80 So she spoke, and told the noble swineherd, Eumaios, to put the bow  
and the gray iron in front of the suitors.  
Eumaios accepted it, in tears, and put them before them,  
and the oxherd also wept, when he saw the bow of his master,  
but Antinoös scolded the two of them, and spoke out and named them:  
85 'You foolish countrymen, who never think of tomorrow,  
poor wretches, why are you streaming tears, and troubling the lady  
now, and stirring her heart, when she has enough already  
of sadness her heart rests on, now she has lost a dear husband.  
Go and sit in silence and eat, or else take your crying  
90 out of the door and begone, but leave the bow where you put it,  
a prize for the suitors to strive for; a terrible one; I do not think  
that this well-polished bow can ever be strung easily.  
There is no man among the lot of us who is such a one  
as Odysseus used to be. I myself have seen him,  
95 and I remember well, though I was still young and childish.'

So he spoke, but the spirit inside his heart was hopeful  
that he would be able to string the bow and shoot through the iron;  
but he was to be the first to get a taste of the arrow  
from the hands of blameless Odysseus, to whom he now paid no

attention

- 100 as he sat in Odysseus' halls and encouraged all his companions.  
Now the hallowed prince, Telemachos, spoke his word to them:  
'Ah, how Zeus, the son of Kronos, has made me witless.'

## Telemachos sets up the axes

My own beloved mother, though she is sensible, tells me  
that she will forsake this house and go away with another;

105 and then, in the witlessness of my heart, I laugh and enjoy it.  
But come, you suitors, since here is a prize set out before you,  
a woman; there is none like her in all the Achaian country,  
neither in sacred Pylos nor Argos nor in Mykene,  
nor here in Ithaka itself, nor on the dark mainland.

110 You yourselves also know this; then why should I praise my mother?  
But come, no longer drag things out with delays, nor turn back  
still from the stringing of the bow, so that we may see it.  
I myself am also willing to attempt the bow. Then,  
if I can put the string on it and shoot through the iron,

115 my queenly mother would not go off with another, and leave me  
sorrowing here in the house; since I would still be found here  
as one now able to take up his father's glorious prizes.'

He spoke, and sprang upright, laying aside from his shoulders  
the red cloak, and from his shoulders too took off the sharp sword.

120 He began by setting up the axes, digging  
one long trench for them all, and drawing it true to a chalkline,  
and stamped down the earth around them; wonder seized the onlookers  
at how orderly he set them up. He never had seen them  
before. He went then and tried the bow, standing on the threshold.

125 Three times he made it vibrate, straining to bend it, and three times  
he gave over the effort, yet in his heart was hopeful  
of hooking the string to the bow and sending a shaft through the iron.  
And now, pulling the bow for the fourth time, he would have strung it,  
but Odysseus stopped him, though he was eager, making a signal

130 with his head. The hallowed prince, Telemachos, said to them:  
'Shame on me. I must be then a coward and weakling,  
or else I am still young, and my hands have yet no confidence  
to defend myself against a man who has started a quarrel.  
Come then, you who in your strength are greater than I am,  
135 make your attempts on the bow, and let us finish the contest.'

So he spoke, and put the bow from him, leaning it  
on the ground, and against the compacted and polished door leaves,  
and in the same place leaned the swift shaft against the fine handle,

and went back and sat in the chair from which he had risen.

140 Now Antinoös the son of Eupeithes said to them:

‘Take your turns in order from left to right, my companions

## but fails with the bow

all, beginning from the place where the wine is served out.'

So spoke Antinoös, and his word was pleasing to all of them.

[Leodes](#) was the first to arise: the son of [Oinops](#),

145 who was a diviner among them, and sat always in the corner beside the fine mixing bowl. To him alone their excesses were hateful, and he disapproved of all of the suitors.  
He was the first to take up the bow and the swift arrow now. He went then and tried the bow, standing on the threshold,  
150 and could not string it; before that he ruined his soft, uncalloused hands, pulling at the string, and now he spoke to the suitors:  
'Friends, I cannot string this; let one of the others take it.  
Here is a bow such that it will sunder many of the princes from life and soul, since truly it is far better to die  
155 than go on living and fail of that for whose sake we forever keep on gathering here, all our days in expectation.  
Now a man may be hopeful and in his heart desirous of marrying Penelope, the wife of Odysseus.  
But when the bow has been attempted, and all is made plain,

160 then one must court some other fair-robed Achaian woman, and strive to win her with gifts of courtship; she will then marry the man she is fated to have and who brings her the greatest presents.'

So he spoke, and put the bow from him, leaning it on the ground, and against the compacted and polished door leaves,  
165 and in the same place leaned the swift shaft against the fine handle, and went back and sat in the chair from which he had risen.  
But now Antinoös scolded him, and spoke out and named him:  
'Leodes, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier?  
A terrible and shameful word. I am outraged to hear it;

170 if this is to be such a bow that will sunder the princes from life and soul, because you are unable to string it.  
You were not such a one, when the lady your mother bore you, as ever to be able to manage the bow and the arrows.  
But presently the other lordly suitors will string it.'

175 So he spoke, and now urged Melanthios the goatherd: 'Come now, Melanthios, light us a fire inside the palace, and set beside it a great chair with fleeces upon it,

and bring out from the inside stores a great wheel of tallow,  
so that we young men, having heated the bow and rubbed it  
180      with fat, can then attempt to bend it, and finish the contest.'

## The suitors fail

So he spoke, and Melanthios quickly kindled the weariless fire, and brought out the chair, and laid the fleeces upon it, and brought out from the inside stores a great wheel of tallow. The young men heated the bow and tried it, but were not able  
185 to string it. They were not nearly strong enough. All this time Antinoös still held back, as did godlike Eurymachos, those lords of the suitors, out and away the best men among them.

Two men, the oxherd and the swineherd of godlike Odysseus, went out of the house, in company keeping close together,  
190 and great Odysseus himself came from the house to join them. But after they were out of the way of the doors and the courtyard, Odysseus spoke to the two of them in words of endearment: 'Oxherd, and you too, swineherd, shall I say something to you, or keep it hidden within? My spirit tells me to speak out.

195 What sort of fight would you put up in defense of Odysseus, if he were to come suddenly, so, with the god leading him? Would you fight for the suitors, or would you fight for Odysseus? Tell me what your heart and spirit would have you answer.'

Then the herdsman of oxen spoke in turn and answered him:

200 'Father Zeus, if you would achieve this prayer I ask for, that the man himself would come home with the divinity guiding him, then you yourself would see what kind of strength my hands have.'

So Eumaios also prayed to all the divinities that they would grant the homecoming of thoughtful Odysseus.

205 But when Odysseus had recognized the infallible temper of these men, then he spoke to them again and answered them: 'I am he. I am here in my house. After many sufferings I have come home in the twentieth year to the land of my fathers. And now I see that of all my men it was only you two

210 who wanted me to come; I have not heard one of the others praying that I should return again and come to my own house.

Therefore I will tell you the truth, and so it shall be;

if by my hand the god overmasters the lordly suitors, then I shall get wives for you both, and grant you possessions

215 and houses built next to mine, and think of you in the future always as companions of Telemachos, and his brothers.

But come now, let me show you a proof that shall be manifest,  
so that you may know me for sure and trust my identity;  
that scar, which once the boar with his white tooth inflicted

## **Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaios**

- 220    on me, when I went to Parnassos with the sons of Autolykos.'  
      So he spoke, and pushed back the rags that covered his great scar.  
When these two had examined it and recognized everything,  
they burst out weeping and threw their arms around wise Odysseus,  
and made much of him, and kissed him on his head and his shoulders,
- 225    and so Odysseus also kissed their heads and hands. Now  
the sun would have gone down while they were still thus clamoring,  
had not Odysseus stayed them from it and said a word to them:  
'Now stop your lamentation and wailing, or someone may come out  
from the hall and see us, and tell about it inside. So rather
- 230    let us go in severally, not all together,  
I first, you after me, but let us have this as a signal  
arranged; for all the others there, who are lordly suitors,  
will not say that you can give me the bow and the quiver;  
but you must carry the bow through the house, noble Eumaios,
- 235    and put it into my hands, and then you must tell the women  
to bar the tightly fitted doors that close the hall; tell them,  
if any of them hears from inside the crash and the outcry,  
of men who are caught within our toils, that they must not peep in  
from outside, but simply sit still at their work, in silence.
- 240    Noble Philoitos, your task is to make fast the courtyard  
door with the bolt, and tie the fastening quickly upon it.'
- So he spoke, and went into the established palace,  
and went back and sat in the chair from which he had risen,  
and after him the two thralls of godlike Odysseus entered.
- 245    Eurymachos by now had taken the bow, and handled it, turning it  
round and round by the blaze of the fire, but even  
so he could not string it, and his proud heart was harrowed.  
Deeply vexed he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:  
'Oh, my sorrow. Here is a grief beyond all others;
- 250    it is not so much the marriage I grieve for, for all my chagrin.  
There are many Achaian women besides, some of them close by  
in seagirt Ithaka, and some in the rest of the cities;  
but it is the thought, if this is true, that we come so far short  
of godlike Odysseus in strength, so that we cannot even
- 255    string his bow. A shame for men unborn to be told of.'

Then in turn Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, answered:  
‘It will not happen that way, Eurymachos. You yourself know this.  
Now there is a holy feast in the community

## Odysseus asks for a try at the bow

for the god. Who could string bows then? Put it away now  
260 for our good time; but we shall leave all the axes standing  
where they are. I do not believe anyone will come in  
and steal them away from the halls of Odysseus, son of Laertes.  
Come, let the wine steward pour a round of wine in the goblets,  
so we can make a libation and put away the curved bow;  
265 then at dawn instruct Melanthios, who is the goatherd,  
to bring in goats, those far the best in all of his goatflocks,  
so that, dedicating the thighs to the glorious archer  
Apollo, we can attempt the bow and finish the contest.'

So spoke Antinoös, and his word was pleasing to all of them.

270 The heralds poured water over their hands to wash with,  
and the young men filled the mixing bowls with wine for their drinking,  
and passed to all, after they had offered a drink in the goblets.  
But when they had poured, and drunk, each as much as he wanted,  
resourceful Odysseus spoke to them in crafty intention:

275 'Hear me now, you who are suitors of our glorious queen,  
while I speak out what the heart within my breast urges.  
Above all I entreat Eurymachos and the godlike  
Antinoös, since what he said also was fair and orderly.  
Let the bow be for the time, give it over to the divinities,

280 and tomorrow the god will give success to whomever he wishes;  
but come now, give me the well-polished bow, so that among you  
I may try out my strength and hands, to see if I still have  
force in my flexible limbs as there has been in time past,  
or whether my wandering and lack of good care have ruined me.'

285 So he spoke, but all of them were wildly indignant, and feared that he  
might take the well-polished bow and string it.  
Now Antinoös scolded him and spoke out and named him:  
'Ah, wretched stranger, you have no sense, not even a little.  
Is it not enough that you dine in peace, among us, who are violent

290 men, and are deprived of no fair portion, but listen  
to our conversation and what we say? But there is no other  
vagabond and newcomer who is allowed to hear us  
talk. The honeyed wine has hurt you, as it has distracted  
others as well, who gulp it down without drinking in season.'

295 It was wine also that drove the Centaur, famous [Eurytion](#),  
distracted in the palace of great-hearted Peirithoös  
when he visited the [Lapiths](#). His brain went wild with drinking,

## Objections from the suitors

and in his fury he did much harm in the house of Peirithoös.

Grief and rage then seized the heroes, they sprang up and dragged him  
300 through the forecourt and outside, with the pitiless bronze severing  
his ears and nose; and he, having had his brains bewildered,  
knew what a disaster his unstable spirit had got him.

Since his time there has been a feud between men and Centaurs,  
and he was the first who found his own evil in heavy drinking.

305 So I announce great trouble for you as well, if ever  
you string this bow; you will meet no kind of courtesy  
in our group, but we shall put you into a black ship  
and take you over to King Echetos, one who mutilates  
all men; there you will lose everything; sit and be quiet  
310 and drink your wine, nor quarrel with men who are younger than you  
are.'

Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:  
'Antinoös, it is neither fair nor just to browbeat  
any guest of Telemachos who comes to visit him.

315 Do you imagine that if this stranger, in the confidence  
of hands and strength, should string the great bow of Odysseus,  
that he would take me home with him and make me his wife? No,  
he himself has no such thought in the heart within him.  
Let none of you be sorrowful at heart in his feasting  
here, for such a reason. There is no likelihood of it.'

320 And now Eurymachos, the son of Polybos, answered:  
'Daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope,  
we do not think he will take you away. That is not likely.  
But we are ashamed to face the talk of the men and the women,  
for fear some other Achaian, who is meaner than we are,  
325 might say: "Far baser men are courting the wife of a stately  
man. They are not even able to string his bow. Then  
another, some beggar man, came wandering in from somewhere,  
and easily strung the bow, and sent a shaft through the iron."  
So they will speak; and that would be a disgrace on all of us.'

330 Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:  
'Eurymachos, there can be no glory among our people  
in any case, for those who eat away and dishonor

the house of a great man. Why be concerned over reproaches?  
But this stranger is a very big man, and he is built strongly,  
335      and also he claims to be the son of a noble father.

## Penelope sent away

Come then, give him the polished bow. Let us see what happens.  
For I tell you this straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished.  
If he can string the bow, and Apollo gives him that glory,  
I will give him fine clothing to wear, a mantle and tunic,  
340 and give him a sharp javelin, to keep men and dogs off,  
and give him sandals for his feet, a sword with two edges,  
and send him wherever his heart and spirit desire to be sent.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to her in answer:  
'My mother, no Achaian man has more authority  
345 over this bow than I, to give or withhold, at my pleasure;  
not one of those who are lords here in rocky Ithaka,  
not one of those in the islands off horse-pasturing Elis;  
no one can force me against my will; if I want, I can give it  
to the stranger as an outright gift, to take away with him.  
350 Go therefore back into the house, and take up your own work,  
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens  
ply their work also. The men shall have the bow in their keeping,  
all men, but I most of all. For mine is the power in this household.'

Penelope went back inside the house, in amazement,  
355 for she laid the serious words of her son deep away in her spirit;  
and she went back to the upper story with her attendant  
women, and wept for Odysseus, her beloved husband, until  
gray-eyed Athene cast sweet slumber over her eyelids.

Now the noble swineherd took the curved bow and carried it;  
360 but all the suitors in the palace cried out against him,  
and thus would go the word of one of these arrogant young men:  
'Where are you carrying the bow, you sorry and shiftless  
swineherd? Those swift dogs that you raised yourself will feed on you  
beside your pigs, forsaken by men, if only Apollo  
365 and the rest of the immortal gods are propitious toward us.'

They spoke, and he took the bow and put it back where it had been,  
in fear, since many men were shouting at him in the palace,  
but from the other side Telemachos spoke and threatened him:  
'Keep on with the bow, old fellow. You cannot do what everyone  
370 tells you. Take care, or, younger though I am, I might chase you  
out to the fields with a shower of stones. I am stronger than you are.'

I only wish I were as much stronger, and more of a fighter  
with my hands, than all these suitors who are here in my household.  
So I could hatefully speed any man of them on his journey

## Odysseus easily strings the bow

375 out of our house, where they are contriving evils against us.'  
So he spoke, and all the suitors laughed happily at him,  
and all gave over their bitter rage against Telemachos.  
The swineherd took up the bow and carried it through the palace,  
and stood beside the wise Odysseus, and handed it to him.

380 Then he called aside the nurse Eurykleia, and told her:  
'Circumspect Eurykleia, Telemachos wants you  
to bar the tightly fitted doors that close the house; and then,  
if any of you hear from inside the crash and the outcry  
of men who are caught within our toils, you must not peep in  
385 from outside, but simply sit still at your work, in silence.'

So he spoke, and she had no winged words for an answer.  
Eurykleia barred the doors of the strong-built great hall.  
Philoitios sprang to his feet and went silently outside  
the house, and then he closed the doors of the well-made courtyard.

390 Lying beneath the portico was a fiber cable  
for an oar-driven ship; with that he made fast the doors, and himself  
went in, and sat again on the chair from which he had risen,  
looking toward Odysseus, who by now was handling the bow, turning it  
all up and down, and testing it from one side and another

395 to see if worms had eaten the horn in the master's absence.  
And thus would one of them say as he looked across at the next man:  
'This man is an admirer of bows, or one who steals them.  
Now either he has such things lying back away in his own house,  
or else he is studying to make one, the way he turns it

400 this way and that, our vagabond who is versed in villainies.'

And thus would speak another one of these arrogant young men:  
'How I wish his share of good fortune were of the same measure  
as is the degree of his power ever to get this bow strung.'

So the suitors talked, but now resourceful Odysseus,  
405 once he had taken up the great bow and looked it all over,  
as when a man, who well understands the lyre and singing,  
easily, holding it on either side, pulls the strongly twisted  
cord of sheep's gut, so as to slip it over a new peg,  
so, without any strain, Odysseus strung the great bow.

410 Then plucking it in his right hand he tested the bowstring,

and it gave him back an excellent sound like the voice of a swallow.  
A great sorrow fell now upon the suitors, and all their color  
was changed, and Zeus showing forth his portents thundered mightily.

## **Odysseus shoots through the axes**

Hearing this, long-suffering great Odysseus was happy  
415    that the son of devious-devising Kronos had sent him a portent.  
He chose out a swift arrow that lay beside him uncovered  
on the table, but the others were still stored up inside the hollow  
quiver, and presently the Achaians must learn their nature.  
Taking the string and the head grooves he drew to the middle  
420    grip, and from the very chair where he sat, bending the bow  
before him, let the arrow fly, nor missed any axes  
from the first handle on, but the bronze-weighted arrow passed through  
all, and out the other end. He spoke to Telemachos:  
‘Telemachos, your guest that sits in your halls does not then  
425    fail you; I missed no part of the mark, nor have I made much  
work of stringing the bow; the strength is still sound within me,  
and not as the suitors said in their scorn, making little of me.  
Now is the time for their dinner to be served the Achaians  
in the daylight, then follow with other entertainment,  
430    the dance and the lyre; for these things come at the end of the  
feasting.’

He spoke, and nodded to him with his brows, and Telemachos,  
dear son of godlike Odysseus, put his sharp sword about him  
and closed his own hand over his spear, and took his position  
close beside him and next the chair, all armed in bright bronze.

## Book XXII



Now resourceful Odysseus stripped his rags from him, and sprang up atop the great threshold, holding his bow and the quiver filled with arrows, and scattered out the swift shafts before him on the ground next his feet, and spoke his word to the suitors:

5     ‘Here is a task that has been achieved, without any deception. Now I shall shoot at another mark, one that no man yet has struck, if I can hit it and Apollo grants me the glory.’

He spoke, and steered a bitter arrow against Antinoös. He was on the point of lifting up a fine two-handled

10    goblet of gold, and had it in his hands, and was moving it so as to drink of the wine, and in his heart there was no thought of death. For who would think that one man, alone in a company of many men at their feasting, though he were a very strong one, would ever inflict death upon him and dark doom? But Odysseus,

15    aiming at this man, struck him in the throat with an arrow, and clean through the soft part of the neck the point was driven. He slumped away to one side, and out of his stricken hand fell the goblet, and up and through his nostrils there burst a thick jet of mortal blood, and with a thrust of his foot he kicked back

20    the table from him, so that all the good food was scattered on the ground, bread and baked meats together; but all the suitors clamored about the house when they saw that the man was fallen, sprang up from their seats and ranged about the room, throwing their glances every way all along the well-built walls,

## Odysseus reveals himself

- 25      but there was never a shield there nor any strong spear for them.  
But they scolded Odysseus in words full of anger, saying:  
‘Stranger, it is badly done to hit men. You will never  
achieve any more trials. Now your sudden destruction is certain,  
for now you have struck down the man who was far the greatest  
30      of the youth of Ithaka. For that the vultures shall eat you.’  
Each spoke at random, for they thought he had not intended  
to kill the man, poor fools, and they had not yet realized  
how over all of them the terms of death were now hanging.  
But looking darkly upon them resourceful Odysseus answered:  
35      ‘You dogs, you never thought that I would any more come back  
from the land of Troy, and because of that you despoiled my household,  
and forcibly took my serving women to sleep beside you,  
and sought to win my wife while I was still alive, fearing  
neither the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven,  
40      nor any resentment sprung from men to be yours in the future.  
Now upon all of you the terms of destruction are fastened.’  
So he spoke, and the green fear took hold of all of them,  
and each man looked about him for a way to escape sheer death.  
Only Eurymachos spoke up and gave him an answer:  
45      ‘If in truth you are Odysseus of Ithaka, come home,  
what you have said is fair about all the wickedness done you  
by the Achaians, much in your house and much in the country.  
But now the man is down who was responsible for all  
this, Antinoös. It was he who pushed this action,  
50      not so much that he wanted the marriage, or cared for it,  
but with other things in mind, which the son of Kronos would not  
grant him: to lie in wait for your son and kill him, and then  
be king himself in the district of strong-founded Ithaka.  
Now he has perished by his own fate. Then spare your own  
55      people, and afterward we will make public reparation  
for all that has been eaten and drunk in your halls, setting  
each upon himself an assessment of twenty oxen.  
We will pay it back in bronze and gold to you, until your heart  
is softened. Till then, we cannot blame you for being angry.’  
60      Then looking darkly at him resourceful Odysseus answered:

‘Eurymachos, if you gave me all your father's possessions,  
all that you have now, and what you could add from elsewhere,  
even so, I would not stay my hands from the slaughter,

## The battle begins

until I had taken revenge for all the suitors' transgression.

65 Now the choice has been set before you, either to fight me or run, if any of you can escape death and its spirits.

But I think not one man will escape from sheer destruction.'

So he spoke, and the others' knees, and the heart within them, went slack, but Eurymachos cried a second time, to the suitors:

70 'Dear friends, now this man will not restrain his invincible hands, but since he has got the polished bow and the quiver, he will shoot at us from the smooth threshold, until he has killed us one and all. Then let us all remember our warcraft.

Draw your swords and hold the table before you, to ward off

75 the arrows of sudden death; let us all make a rush against him together, and try to push him back from the doors and the threshold, and go through the town. So the hue and cry could be most quickly raised, and perhaps this man will now have shot for the last time.'

So he spoke aloud, and drew from his side the sharp sword, 80 brazen, and edged on either side, and made a rush at him, crying his terrible cry. At the same time, noble Odysseus shot an arrow, and struck him in the chest, by the nipple, and the speeding arrow fixed in his liver, and his sword tumbled out of his hand on the floor, as he, sprawling over the table, 85 doubled and fell, and on the floor the good food was scattered, and the two-handled goblet. He struck the ground with his forehead in his paroxysm of pain, and kicking with both feet rattled the chair, and over his eyes the death mist drifted.

Amphinomos, springing forward to face glorious Odysseus, 90 made a rush against him, and drew his sharp sword, thinking he might be forced to give way from the doors; but now Telemachos was too quick with a cast of the brazen spear from behind him between the shoulders, and drove it through to the chest beyond it. He fell, thunderously, and took the earth full on his forehead.

95 Telemachos sprang away, and left behind the far-shadowing spear where it was in Amphinomos, turning back, for fear that as he pulled out the far-shadowing spear, some other Achaian might drive at him in an outrush, or else strike him from close up. He went on the run, and very soon he reached his dear father,

100 and stood there close beside him and addressed him in winged words:  
‘Father, now I will go and bring you a shield, and two spears,  
and a helmet all of bronze fitting close to your temples.

## The battle continues

I too will go and put on armor, and give the swineherd  
and oxherd more to wear. It is better for us to be armored.'

105 Then in turn resourceful Odysseus spoke to him in answer: 'Run and  
fetch them, while I have arrows still to defend me,  
or else, while I am alone, they might force me from the doorway.'

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father,  
and went on his way to the inner room, where glorious armor

110 was stored away, and took from inside four shields, and eight spears,  
and four helmets plated with bronze and crested with horsehair,  
and carried them back, and very soon he reached his dear father.

He was the first of all to put the bronze armor upon him,  
and in the same way the two serving men put on their magnificent

115 arms, and stood beside the wise, resourceful Odysseus.

Odysseus, while he still had arrows left to defend him,  
kept aiming at the suitors in his house; and every  
time he hit his man, and they dropped one after another.

But when there were no more arrows left for the king's archery,

120 he set the bow so it leaned against a pillar sustaining  
the strong-built palace, there by the shining walls, then himself  
threw across his shoulders the shield of the fourfold oxhide.

Over his mighty head he set the well-fashioned helmet,  
with the horsehair crest, and the plumes nodded terribly above it.

125 Then he caught up two powerful spears edged with the bright bronze.

There was a side door in the strongly-constructed wall, and also,  
next the edge of the threshold into the well-made palace,  
a way through the alley, with the door leaves fitting it closely.

Odysseus told the noble swineherd to take a position

130 near this, and watch it. Only one at a time could attack there.

Agelaos cried aloud to all of the suitors:

'Dear friends, could not one man slip away, through the side door,  
and tell the people? So the hue and cry could be most quickly  
raised, and perhaps this man will now have shot for the last time.'

135 Then in turn Melanthios the goatherd answered him: 'It cannot be,  
illustrious Agelaos. The fine doors  
to the court are terribly close, the mouth of the alley is difficult  
to force; one man could hold against all, if he were a fighter.'

140     Come rather, let me bring you arms from inside the chamber  
          to arm you in; for there, I believe, and in no other  
          place, Odysseus and his glorious son have hidden them.'

## Melanthios brings arms to the suitors

So Melanthios the goatherd spoke, and climbed through  
to Odysseus' inner chambers by the vents in the great hall.  
From there he took out a dozen heavy shields, and as many  
145      spears, and as many brazen helmets crested with horsehair,  
and went on his way, and quickly handed them to the suitors.  
Then the knees of Odysseus went slack, and the heart within him,  
as he saw them putting the armor about them, and shaking  
the long spears in their hands; he thought it was monstrous  
150      treason, and he spoke now in winged words to Telemachos:  
'Telemachos, some one of the women here in the palace,  
or Melanthios, has made an evil attack upon us.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'Father, it was my own mistake, and there is no other  
155      to blame. I left the door of the chamber, which can close tightly,  
open at an angle. One of these men was a better observer  
than I. Go now, noble Eumaios, and close the chamber  
door, and see if it is one of the women doing this,  
or Melanthios, son of Dolios, which is what I think.'

160      Now as these two were conversing thus with each other, Melanthios  
the goatherd went back into the chamber  
to bring more splendid armor, but the noble swineherd sighted him.  
Quickly he spoke a word to Odysseus standing close by him:  
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
165      there is that deadly man again, the one we suspected,  
on his way into the chamber. Now give me your true instructions,  
whether, if I prove stronger than he is, I am to kill him,  
or bring him back here to you, so he can pay for the many  
transgressions, all that he has devised in your house against you.'

170      Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Telemachos and I will hold off the haughty suitors,  
for all their fury, here inside the palace; you two  
twist the feet of Melanthios and his arms behind him,  
put him away in the chamber and fasten boards behind him,  
175      then make him secure with a braided rope, and hoist him upward  
along the high column, till you fetch him up to the roof beams.  
Thus, while he still stays alive, he will suffer harsh torment.'

So he spoke, and they listened well to him and obeyed him.  
They went into the chamber. He was there, but he did not see them.  
180 Now, he was searching out weapons, deep in the back of the chamber,

## Melanthios tied up

and they stood there waiting for him behind the columns, on either side, until Melanthios the herdsman of goats came over the sill. In one hand he was holding a splendid helmet, and in the other the ancient shield, all fouled with mildew,

185     of the hero Laertes, which he had carried when he was a young man. It had been lying there, and the stitches were gone on the handstraps. Now they sprang out and seized him, caught hold of his hair and dragged him in, and threw him down on the floor, there in his anguish of heart, and in the hurtful bond they securely fastened

190     his feet and arms, twisted all the way back, obeying the orders given by great, enduring Odysseus, the son of Laertes. Then they made him secure with a braided rope, and hoisted him high on the column, until they fetched him up to the roof beams. Then you spoke and jeered at him, O swineherd Eumaios:

195     ‘Now the whole night long, Melanthios, you shall keep watch wakefully, laid, as you deserve, to rest on a soft bed, well aware of the young Dawn throned in gold as she rises up from the Ocean rivers, at the time when you used to drive in goats to the palace, so as to make a feast for the suitors.’

200     So they left him there, trussed up in his horrible bindings. The herdsmen closed the shining door, and put on their armor, and went and stood beside the wise, resourceful Odysseus. There both sides stood, breathing valor, the four men holding the threshold, but inside the house were many and brave men.

205     Now to these men came the daughter of Zeus, Athene, likening herself in voice and appearance to Mentor. Odysseus was happy when he saw her, and hailed her, saying: ‘Mentor, help me from hurt, and remember me, your companion and friend, who have done you much good. We two grew up together.’

210     He spoke so, but thought it was Athene, leader of armies. On the other side in the palace the suitors cried out against her, and first to threaten was Agelaos, son of Damastor; ‘Mentor, never let Odysseus by talking persuade you to fight against the suitors and defend him. Consider

215     what we propose to do, and I think it will be accomplished.

When we kill these men, the son and the father, you too shall be killed in their company, for what you are trying to do here in the palace. You shall pay for it with your own head.

## Athene helps Odysseus and his party

220     But when with the bronze we have taken away the lives of all of you,  
all the possessions which are yours, both here and elsewhere,  
we shall count in with those of Odysseus, nor will we suffer  
your sons to go on living here in your halls, nor your daughters  
and loving wife to go about in the town of Ithaka.'

225     He spoke, and Athene in her heart grew still more angry,  
and she scolded Odysseus in words full of anger, saying:  
'No longer, Odysseus, are the strength and valor still steady  
within you, as when, for the sake of white-armed, illustrious  
Helen, you fought nine years with the Trojans, ever relentless;  
and many men you killed there in the dreaded encounter,  
230     and by your counsel the wide-wayed city of Priam was taken.  
How is it now, when you have come back to your own possessions  
and house, you complain, instead of standing up to the suitors?  
Come here, friend, and watch me at work, and standing beside me  
see what kind of man is Mentor the son of [Alkimos](#),  
235     and how against your enemies he repays your kindness.'

She spoke, but did not yet altogether turn the victory  
their way. She still was putting to proof the strength and courage  
alike of Odysseus and his glorious son; and she now,  
likening herself to a swallow in their sight, shot up  
240     high aloft, and perched on a beam of the smoky palace.  
Now Agelaos, son of Damastor, urged on the suitors,  
with [Demoptolemos](#), Amphimedon, and Peisandros  
the son of Polyktor, Eurynomos, and the wise Polybos.  
For these in warcraft were by far the best of the suitors  
245     who still were alive and fighting for their lives; but others  
had already fallen before the bow and the showering arrows.  
To these Agelaos spoke, directing his words to all of them:  
'Dear friends, now this man will have to stay his invincible  
hands, since Mentor, after doing some empty boasting,  
250     has gone, and these are left alone in the front doorway.

Now, do not all of you throw your long spears at the same time  
at him, but let us six throw first with our spears, and it may be  
Zeus will grant that we strike Odysseus and win the glory.  
We care nothing about the others, once this man has fallen.'

255 So he spoke, and all six aimed their spears, as he told them, and threw,  
but Athene made vain all their casts, so that  
one man threw his spear against the pillar sustaining

## Defeat and death of all the suitors

the strong-built palace, another into the door, close-fitted.  
One ash spear heavy with bronze was driven into the side wall.

260    But then, after they had avoided the spears of the suitors,  
much-enduring great Odysseus began speaking to them:  
'Dear friends, now I would say it was the time for our turn  
to throw our spears into the midst of the suitors, furious  
as they are to kill us, and add to former evils committed.'

265   So he spoke, and they all aimed their sharp spears and threw them  
straight ahead. Demoptolemos was killed by Odysseus,  
*Euryades* by Telemachos, *Elatos* by the swineherd,  
Peisandros by Philoitos, the herdsman of oxen.  
But when all these had fallen, and bit with their teeth the great earth,

270   the suitors drew away into the corner of the palace,  
and the others rushed, and plucked their spears from the fallen bodies.  
Once again the suitors aimed at them with their sharp spears,  
and threw, but Athene made vain most of their casts, so that  
one man threw his spear against the pillar sustaining

275   the strong-built palace, another into the door, close-fitted.  
One ash spear heavy with bronze was driven into the side wall.  
But Amphimedon struck Telemachos on the wrist, with a glancing  
blow, and the bronze ripped the outermost skin; and also  
Ktesippos with his long spear hit Eumaios over

280   the shield, and scratched his shoulder, but the spear flew over, and  
landed  
void. Then the company of wise, devious-devising  
Odysseus threw their spears into the mass of the suitors.  
This time Odysseus, stormer of cities, struck down Eurydamas;  
Telemachos hit Amphimedon; the swineherd, Polybos.

285   Then Philoitos, herdsman of oxen, struck Ktesippos  
full in the chest, and spoke a word of vaunting over him:  
'O son of *Polytherses*, lover of mockery, never  
speak loud and all at random in your recklessness. Rather  
leave all speech to the gods, since they are far stronger than you are.'

290   Here is your guest gift, in exchange for that hoof you formerly  
gave to godlike Odysseus, as he went about through the palace.'

So spoke the herdsman of horn-curved oxen; but now Odysseus

stabbed [Agelaos](#), son of Damastor, from close, with the long spear,  
while Telemachos stabbed Leokritos, son of Euenor,

295      in the midmost belly with the spear, and drove the bronze clean  
through.

## End of the battle

He fell then headlong, and took the earth full on his forehead.  
And now Athene waved the aegis, that blights humanity,  
from high aloft on the roof, and all their wits were bewildered;  
and they stampeded about the hall, like a herd of cattle  
300 set upon and driven wild by the darting horse fly  
in the spring season, at the time when the days grow longer;  
but the other men, who were like hook-clawed, beak-bent vultures,  
descending from the mountains to pounce upon the lesser birds;  
and these on the plain, shrinking away from the clouds, speed off,  
305 but the vultures plunge on them and destroy them, nor is there any  
defense, nor any escape, and men are glad for the hunting;  
so these men, sweeping about the palace, struck down  
the suitors, one man after another; the floor was smoking  
with blood, and the horrible cries rose up as their heads were broken.

310 Leodes rushed in and caught the knees of Odysseus, and spoke to him  
in winged words and in supplication:  
'I am at your knees, Odysseus. Respect me, have mercy;  
for I claim that never in your halls did I say or do anything  
wrong to any one of the women, but always was trying  
315 to stop any one of the other suitors who acted in that way.  
But they would not listen to me and keep their hands off evil.  
So by their own recklessness they have found a shameful  
death, but I was their diviner, and I did nothing;  
but I must fall, since there is no gratitude for past favors.'

320 Then looking darkly at him spoke resourceful Odysseus: 'If you claim  
to be the diviner among these people,  
many a time you must have prayed in my palace, asking  
that the completion of my sweet homecoming be far off  
from me, that my dear wife would go off with you, and bear you  
325 children. So you cannot escape from sorry destruction.'

So he spoke, and in his heavy hand caught up a sword  
that was lying there on the ground where Agelaos had dropped it  
when he was killed. With this he cut through the neck at the middle,  
and the head of Leodes dropped in the dust while he was still speaking.

330 Phemios the singer, the son of [Terpias](#), still was skulking away from  
death. He had been singing among the suitors

under compulsion, and stood with the clear-toned lyre in his hands by the side door, and his heart was pondering one of two courses: either to slip out of the hall to the altar of mighty

## The singer and herald spared

- 335    Zeus of the court, and crouch at the structure, where once Odysseus and Laertes had burned up the thighs of many oxen, or rush up and make entreaty at the knees of Odysseus. Then in the division of his heart this way seemed best to him, to seize hold of the knees of Odysseus, son of Laertes.
- 340    Thereupon he laid the hollowed lyre on the ground, between the mixing bowl and the chair with its nails of silver, but he himself rushed in and caught the knees of Odysseus, and spoke to him in winged words and in supplication: 'I am at your knees, Odysseus. Respect me, have mercy.'
- 345    You will be sorry in time to come if you kill the singer of songs. I sing to the gods and to human people, and I am taught by myself, but the god has inspired in me the song-ways of every kind. I am such a one as can sing before you as to a god. Then do not be furious to behead me.
- 350    Telemachos too, your own dear son, would tell you, as I do, that it was against my will, and with no desire on my part, that I served the suitors here in your house and sang at their feasting. They were too many and too strong, and they forced me to do it.'
- So he spoke, and the hallowed prince Telemachos heard him.
- 355    Quickly then he spoke to his father, who stood close by him: 'Hold fast. Do not strike this man with the bronze. He is innocent. And let us spare Medon our herald, a man who has always taken care of me when I was a child in your palace; unless, that is, Philoitios or the swineherd has killed him,
- 360    or unless he came in your way as you stormed through the palace.'
- So he spoke, and Medon, a man of prudent thoughts, heard him; for he had hidden under a chair, and put on about him the hide of an ox, freshly skinned, so avoiding black death. He came out quickly from under the chair, and took off the oxhide,
- 365    and then rushed in and caught hold of the knees of Telemachos, and spoke to him in winged words and in supplication: 'Here I am, dear friend. Hold fast, and speak to your father, before—since he is so strong—he destroys me with the tearing bronze, in anger over the suitors, who kept ruining
- 370    his goods in his palace and, like fools, paid you no honor.'

Then resourceful Odysseus smiled upon him and answered:  
‘Do not fear. Telemachos has saved you and kept you  
alive, so you may know in your heart, and say to another,

## Eurykleia summoned

that good dealing is better by far than evil dealing.

375    But go out now from the palace and sit outside, away from the slaughter, in the courtyard, you and the versatile singer, so that I can do in the house the work that I have to.'

So he spoke, and the two went away, outside the palace, and sat down both together beside the altar of mighty

380    Zeus, looking all about them, still thinking they would be murdered.

Odysseus looked about his own house, to see if any man still was left alive, escaping the black destruction; but he saw them, one and all in their numbers, lying fallen in their blood and in the dust, like fish whom the fishermen

385    have taken in their net with many holes, and dragged out onto the hollow beach from the gray sea, and all of them lie piled on the sand, needing the restless salt water; but Helios, the shining Sun, bakes the life out of them.

Like these, the suitors now were lying piled on each other.

390    Then at last resourceful Odysseus said to Telemachos: 'Telemachos, come now, summon in the nurse, Eurykleia, so that I can say what is on my mind to say to her.'

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father. He opened the door and called out to the nurse, Eurykleia:

395    'Rise and come here, aged woman, you who watch over all that the serving women do here in our palace. Come here. My father calls you. He has something to tell you.'

So he spoke, and she had no winged words for an answer, but she opened the doors of the strong-built great hall, and went

400    on inside, but Telemachos went ahead, leading her. There she found Odysseus among the slaughtered dead men, spattered over with gore and battle filth, like a lion who has been feeding on an ox of the fields, and goes off covered with blood, all his chest and his flanks on either

405    side bloody, a terrible thing to look in the face; so now Odysseus' feet and the hands above them were spattered. She, when she saw the dead men and the endless blood, began then to raise the cry of triumph, having seen it was monstrous work, but Odysseus checked her and held her, for all her eagerness,

410 and spoke to her and addressed her in winged words, saying:  
‘Keep your joy in your heart, old dame; stop, do not raise up  
the cry. It is not piety to glory so over slain men.

## Punishment of the faithless maids

- These were destroyed by the doom of the gods and their own hard actions,  
for these men paid no attention at all to any man on earth  
415 who came their way, no matter if he were base or noble.  
So by their own recklessness they have found a shameful death. Now assemble here the women who are in the palace, both those who have done me no honor, and those who are innocent.'
- Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to him in answer:  
420 'So, my child, I will tell you the whole truth of the matter. You have fifty serving women here in your palace, and these I have taught to work at their own tasks, the carding of wool, and how to endure their own slavery. Of these fifty, twelve in all have taken to immorality.  
425 They pay no attention to me, or even to Penelope. Telemachos is but lately come of age, and his mother would not let him be in charge of the serving women. But come, let me go up to the shining upper chamber and tell your wife. Some god has sent down a sleep upon her.'
- 430 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'Do not waken her yet, but tell those women who have been shameful in their devisings to come here to my presence.'
- So he spoke, and the old woman went through the palace, bringing the message to the women and urging them onward.  
435 But Odysseus, calling Telemachos and the oxherd and swineherd to him, spoke to them in winged words, saying: 'Begin the work of carrying out the bodies, and tell the women to help, and after that to wash the beautiful chairs and tables clean, with water and porous sponges.  
440 Then, after you have got all the house back in good order, lead all these maidservants out of the well-built palace between the round-house and the unfaulted wall of the courtyard, and hew them with the thin edge of the sword, until you have taken the lives from all, and they forget Aphrodite, the goddess  
445 they had with them when they lay secretly with the suitors.'
- So he spoke, and the women all in a huddle came out, with terrible cries of sorrow, and the big tears falling.

First they carried away the bodies of all the dead men,  
and laid them under the portico of the well-built courtyard,  
450      stacking them on each other. Odysseus himself directed them

## and Melanthios

and hurried them on. They carried the bodies out. They had to. Then, after they had done this, the women washed the beautiful chairs and tables clean, with water and porous sponges.

After this Telemachos, the oxherd and the swineherd,

455 scraped out the floor of the strongly constructed house, with shovels, and the women carried the scrapings way, and piled them outside.

But after they had got all the house back in good order, leading the maidservants out of the well-built palace, between the round-house and the unfaulted wall of the courtyard,

460 they penned them in a strait place from which there was no escaping. Now the thoughtful Telemachos began speaking among them:

'I would not take away the lives of these creatures by any clean death, for they have showered abuse on the head of my mother, and on my own head too, and they have slept with the suitors.'

465 So he spoke, and taking the cable of a dark-prowed ship, fastened it to the tall pillar, and fetched it about the round-house; and like thrushes, who spread their wings, or pigeons, who have flown into a snare set up for them in a thicket, trying to find a resting place, but the sleep given them was hateful;

470 so their heads were all in a line, and each had her neck caught fast in a noose, so that their death would be most pitiful. They struggled with their feet for a little, not for very long.

They took Melanthios along the porch and the courtyard.

They cut off, with the pitiless bronze, his nose and his ears,

475 tore off his private parts and gave them to the dogs to feed on raw, and lopped off his hands and feet, in fury of anger.

Then, after they had washed their own hands and feet clean, they went into the house of Odysseus. Their work was ended.

But Odysseus said to the beloved nurse, Eurykleia:

480 'Bring me brimstone, old dame, the cure of evils, and bring me fire, so I can sulphur the hall, and tell Penelope to come here now, together with her attendant women, and tell all the serving maids to come here to the palace.'

485 Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to him in answer: 'All this you have said, my child, was fair and orderly.

But come now, let me bring you out a mantle and tunic,

and do not stand thus here in the hall, with your broad shoulders covered over with rags as they are. That would be scandalous.'

490 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

## **Odysseus cleans the palace**

‘Before all this, let me have the fire in my palace.’

He spoke, and the dear nurse Eurykleia did not disobey him. She brought him out the fire and brimstone; and then Odysseus cleaned his palace, house and courtyard alike, with sulphur.

495 The old woman went off through the fine house of Odysseus, to take the message to the women and tell them to gather.

They came from the main house, and in their hands held torches, and all the serving women clung to Odysseus, and greeted him, and made much of him, and kissed him on his head and his shoulders

500 and hands, admiring him, and sweet longing for lamentation and tears took hold of him. He recognized all these women.

## Book XXIII



The old woman, laughing loudly, went to the upper chamber  
to tell her mistress that her beloved husband was inside  
the house. Her knees moved swiftly, but her feet were tottering.  
She stood above Penelope's head and spoke a word to her:

- 5      'Wake, Penelope, dear child, so that, with your own eyes, you can see  
what all your days you have been longing for.  
Odysseus is here, he is in the house, though late in his coming;  
and he has killed the haughty suitors, who were afflicting  
his house, and using force on his son, and eating his property.'
- 10     Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer: 'Dear nurse, the gods  
have driven you crazy. They are both able to change a very sensible  
person into a senseless  
one, and to set the light-wit on the way of discretion.  
They have set you awry; before now your thoughts were orderly.'
- 15     Why do you insult me when my heart is heavy with sorrows, by  
talking in this wild way, and wakening me from a happy  
sleep, which had come and covered my eyes, and held them fastened?  
For I have not had such a sleep as this one, since the time  
when Odysseus went to that evil, not-to-be-mentioned Ilion.
- 20     But go down now, and take yourself back into the palace. If any of  
those other women, who are here with me,  
had come with a message like yours, and wakened me from my  
slumber,  
I would have sent her back on her way to the hall in a hateful  
fashion for doing it. It shall be your age that saves you.'

## **Penelope comes down to Odysseus**

- 25 Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to her in answer: ‘I am not insulting you, dear child. It is all true. Odysseus is here, he is in the house, just as I tell you.  
He is that stranger-guest, whom all in the house were abusing.  
Telemachos has known that he was here for a long time,  
30 but he was discreet, and did not betray the plans of his father, so he might punish these overbearing men for their violence.’  
So she spoke, and Penelope in her joy sprang up  
from the bed, and embraced the old woman, her eyes streaming  
tears, and she spoke to her and addressed her in winged words:  
35 ‘Come, dear nurse, and give me a true account of the matter, whether he really has come back to his house, as you tell me,  
to lay his hands on the shameless suitors, though he was only  
one, and they were always lying in wait, in a body!’  
Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to her in answer:  
40 ‘I did not see, I was not told, but I heard the outcry of them being killed; we, hidden away in the strong-built storerooms,  
sat there terrified, and the closed doors held us prisoner,  
until from inside the great hall your son Telemachos  
summoned me, because his father told him to do it.  
45 There I found Odysseus standing among the dead men he had killed,  
and they covered the hardened earth, lying  
piled on each other around him. You would have been cheered to see  
him,  
spattered over with gore and battle filth, like a lion.  
Now they lie all together, by the doors of the courtyard,  
50 while he is burning a great fire, and cleaning the beautiful house with  
brimstone. He has sent me on to summon you.  
Come with me then, so that both of you can turn your dear hearts  
the way of happiness, since you have had so much to suffer,  
but now at last what long you prayed for has been accomplished.  
55 He has come back and is here at his hearth, alive, and has found you  
and his son in the palace, and has taken revenge on the suitors  
here in his house, for all the evils that they have done him.’  
Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer:  
‘Dear nurse, do not yet laugh aloud in triumph. You know

60 how welcome he would be if he appeared in the palace: to all, but above all to me and the son we gave birth to.  
No, but this story is not true as you tell it; rather,

## **but will not speak to him**

some one of the immortals has killed the haughty suitors  
in anger over their wicked deeds and heart-hurting violence;  
65 for these men paid no attention at all to any man on earth who came  
their way, no matter if he were base or noble.

So they suffered for their own recklessness. But Odysseus  
has lost his homecoming and lost his life, far from Achaia.'

Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to her in answer:

70 'My child, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier? Though  
your husband is here beside the hearth, you would never  
say he would come home. Your heart was always mistrustful.  
But here is another proof that is very clear. I will tell you.  
That scar, which once the boar with his white teeth inflicted.

75 I recognized it while I was washing his feet, and I wanted to tell you  
about it, but he stopped my mouth with his hands, would not  
let me speak, for his mind sought every advantage. Come then,  
follow me, and I will hazard my life upon it.

Kill me by the most pitiful death, if I am deceiving you.'

80 Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer: 'Dear nurse, it would be  
hard for you to baffle the purposes of the everlasting gods, although you  
are very clever.

Still, I will go to see my son, so that I can look on  
these men who courted me lying dead, and the man who killed them.'

85 She spoke, and came down from the chamber, her heart pondering  
much, whether to keep away and question her dear husband, or to go up  
to him and kiss his head, taking his hands.

But then, when she came in and stepped over the stone threshold,  
she sat across from him in the firelight, facing Odysseus,

90 by the opposite wall, while he was seated by the tall pillar, looking  
downward, and waiting to find out if his majestic  
wife would have anything to say to him, now that she saw him.

She sat a long time in silence, and her heart was wondering.

Sometimes she would look at him, with her eyes full upon him,

95 and again would fail to know him in the foul clothing he wore.  
Telemachos spoke to her and called her by name and scolded her:

'My mother, my harsh mother with the hard heart inside you,  
why do you withdraw so from my father, and do not

sit beside him and ask him questions and find out about him?

- 100 No other woman, with spirit as stubborn as yours, would keep back as you are doing from her husband who, after much suffering,

## Plans to deceive the people

came at last in the twentieth year back to his own country.  
But always you have a heart that is harder than stone within you.'

Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:

- 105 'My child, the spirit that is in me is full of wonderment, and I cannot find anything to say to him, nor question him, nor look him straight in the face. But if he is truly Odysseus, and he has come home, then we shall find other ways, and better, to recognize each other, for we have signs that we know of between the two of us only, but they are secret from others.'

So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus smiled, and presently spoke in winged words to Telemachos:  
'Telemachos, leave your mother to examine me in the palace as she will, and presently she will understand better;

- 115 but now that I am dirty and wear foul clothing upon me, she dislikes me for that, and says I am not her husband.  
But let us make our plans how all will come out best for us.  
For when one has killed only one man in a community, and then there are not many avengers to follow, even
- 120 so, he flees into exile, leaving kinsmen and country. But we have killed what held the city together, the finest young men in Ithaka. It is what I would have you consider.'

Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'You must look to this yourself, dear father; for they say

125 you have the best mind among men for craft, and there is no other man among mortal men who can contend with you.  
We shall follow you eagerly; I think that we shall not come short in warcraft, in so far as the strength stays with us.'

- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
130 'So I will tell you the way of it, how it seems best to me. First, all go and wash, and put your tunics upon you, and tell the women in the palace to choose out their clothing.  
Then let the inspired singer take his clear-sounding lyre, and give us the lead for festive dance, so that anyone
- 135 who is outside, some one of the neighbors, or a person going along the street, who hears us, will think we are having a wedding.  
Let no rumor go abroad in the town that the suitors

have been murdered, until such time as we can make our way  
out to our estate with its many trees, and once there

140      see what profitable plan the Olympian shows us.'

## Odysseus reproaches Penelope

So he spoke, and they listened well to him and obeyed him. First they went and washed, and put their tunics upon them, and the women arrayed themselves in their finery, while the inspired singer took up his hollowed lyre and stirred up within them  
145 the impulse for the sweetness of song and the stately dancing. Now the great house resounded aloud to the thud of their footsteps, as the men celebrated there, and the fair-girdled women; and thus would a person speak outside the house who heard them: ‘Surely now someone has married our much-sought-after  
150 queen; hard-hearted, she had no patience to keep the great house for her own wedded lord to the end, till he came back to her.’  
So would a person speak, but they did not know what had happened. Now the housekeeper Eurynome bathed great-hearted Odysseus in his own house, and anointed him with olive oil,  
155 and threw a beautiful mantle and a tunic about him; and over his head Athene suffused great beauty, to make him taller to behold and thicker, and on his head she arranged the curling locks that hung down like hyacinthine petals. And as when a master craftsman overlays gold on silver,  
160 and he is one who was taught by Hephaistos and Pallas Athene in art complete, and grace is on every work he finishes; so Athene gilded with grace his head and his shoulders. Then, looking like an immortal, he strode forth from the bath, and came back then and sat on the chair from which he had risen,  
165 opposite his wife, and now he spoke to her, saying: ‘You are so strange. The gods, who have their homes on Olympos, have made your heart more stubborn than for the rest of womankind. No other woman, with spirit as stubborn as yours, would keep back as you are doing from her husband who, after much suffering,  
170 came at last in the twentieth year back to his own country. Come then, nurse, make me up a bed, so that I can use it here; for this woman has a heart of iron within her.’  
Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer:  
‘You are so strange. I am not being proud, nor indifferent,  
175 nor puzzled beyond need, but I know very well what you looked like when you went in the ship with the sweeping oars, from Ithaka.

Come then, Eurykleia, and make up a firm bed for him  
outside the well-fashioned chamber: that very bed that he himself  
built. Put the firm bed here outside for him, and cover it

## **She tricks him into betraying himself,**

- 180 over with fleeces and blankets, and with shining coverlets.'
- So she spoke to her husband, trying him out, but Odysseus spoke in anger to his virtuous-minded lady:
- 'What you have said, dear lady, has hurt my heart deeply. What man has put my bed in another place? But it would be difficult
- 185 for even a very expert one, unless a god, coming to help in person, were easily to change its position.
- But there is no mortal man alive, no strong man, who lightly could move the weight elsewhere. There is one particular feature in the bed's construction. I myself, no other man, made it.
- 190 There was the bole of an olive tree with long leaves growing strongly in the courtyard, and it was thick, like a column.
- I laid down my chamber around this, and built it, until I finished it, with close-set stones, and roofed it well over, and added the compacted doors, fitting closely together.
- 195 Then I cut away the foliage of the long-leaved olive, and trimmed the trunk from the roots up, planing it with a brazen adze, well and expertly, and trued it straight to a chalkline, making a bed post of it, and bored all holes with an auger.
- I began with this and built my bed, until it was finished,
- 200 and decorated it with gold and silver and ivory. Then I lashed it with thongs of oxhide, dyed bright with purple.
- There is its character, as I tell you; but I do not know now, dear lady, whether my bed is still in place, or if some man has cut underneath the stump of the olive, and moved it elsewhere.'
- 205 So he spoke, and her knees and the heart within her went slack as she recognized the clear proofs that Odysseus had given; but then she burst into tears and ran straight to him, throwing her arms around the neck of Odysseus, and kissed his head, saying:
- 'Do not be angry with me, Odysseus, since, beyond other men,
- 210 you have the most understanding. The gods granted us misery, in jealousy over the thought that we two, always together, should enjoy our youth, and then come to the threshold of old age.
- Then do not now be angry with me nor blame me, because I did not greet you, as I do now, at first when I saw you.
- 215 For always the spirit deep in my very heart was fearful that some one

of mortal men would come my way and deceive me  
with words. For there are many who scheme for wicked advantage.  
For neither would the daughter born to Zeus, Helen of Argos,

## **then embraces him**

have lain in love with an outlander from another country,  
220 if she had known that the warlike sons of the Achaians would bring  
her home again to the beloved land of her fathers.  
It was a god who stirred her to do the shameful thing she  
did, and never before had she had in her heart this terrible  
wildness, out of which came suffering to us also.  
225 But now, since you have given me accurate proof describing our bed,  
which no other mortal man beside has ever seen,  
but only you and I, and there is one serving woman,  
*Aktor*'s daughter, whom my father gave me when I came here,  
who used to guard the doors for us in our well-built chamber;  
230 so you persuade my heart, though it has been very stubborn.'  
She spoke, and still more roused in him the passion for weeping.  
He wept as he held his lovely wife, whose thoughts were virtuous.  
And as when the land appears welcome to men who are swimming,  
after Poseidon has smashed their strong-built ship on the open  
235 water, pounding it with the weight of wind and the heavy seas, and  
only a few escape the gray water landward  
by swimming, with a thick scurf of salt coated upon them,  
and gladly they set foot on the shore, escaping the evil;  
so welcome was her husband to her as she looked upon him,  
240 and she could not let him go from the embrace of her white arms. Now  
Dawn of the rosy fingers would have dawned on their weeping,  
had not the gray-eyed goddess Athene planned it otherwise.  
She held the long night back at the outward edge, she detained  
Dawn of the golden throne by the Ocean, and would not let her  
245 harness her fast-footed horses who bring the daylight to people:  
*Lampos* and *Phaethon*, the Dawn's horses, who carry her.  
Then resourceful Odysseus spoke to his wife, saying:  
'Dear wife, we have not yet come to the limit of all our  
trials. There is unmeasured labor left for the future,  
250 both difficult and great, and all of it I must accomplish. So the soul of  
Teiresias prophesied to me, on that day  
when I went down inside the house of Hades, seeking  
to learn about homecoming, for myself and for my companions.  
But come, my wife, let us go to bed, so that at long last

255 we can enjoy the sweetness of slumber, sleeping together.'

Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer: 'You shall have your going to bed whenever the spirit

## Penelope and Odysseus reunited

desires it, now that the gods have brought about your homecoming  
to your own strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers.

260 But since the gods put this into your mind, and you understand it, tell  
me what this trial is, since I think I shall hear of it  
later; so it will be none the worse if I now hear of it.'

Then in turn resourceful Odysseus said to her in answer:

'You are so strange. Why do you urge me on and tell me

265 to speak of it? Yet I will tell you, concealing nothing. Your heart will  
have no joy in this; and I myself am not  
happy, since he told me to go among many cities  
of men, taking my well-shaped oar in my hands and bearing it,  
until I come where there are men living who know nothing

270 of the sea, and who eat food that is not mixed with salt, who never  
have known ships whose cheeks are painted purple, who never  
have known well-shaped oars, which act for ships as wings do.  
And then he told me a very clear proof. I will not conceal it.

When, as I walk, some other wayfarer happens to meet me,

275 and says I carry a winnow fan on my bright shoulder, then I must plant  
my well-shaped oar in the ground, and render  
ceremonious sacrifice to the lord Poseidon,  
one ram and one bull, and a mounter of sows, a boar pig,  
and make my way home again, and render holy hecatombs

280 to the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven, all of them in order.  
Death will come to me from the sea, in  
some altogether unwarlike way, and it will end me  
in the ebbing time of a sleek old age. My people  
about me will prosper. All this he told me would be accomplished.'

285 Circumspect Penelope said to him in answer: 'If the gods are  
accomplishing a more prosperous old age, then there is hope that you  
shall have an escape from your troubles.'

Now as these two were conversing thus with each other,  
meanwhile the nurse and Eurynome were making the bed up

290 with soft coverings, under the light of their flaring torches. Then when  
they had worked and presently had a firm bed made,  
the old woman went away back to bed in her own place,  
while Eurynome, as mistress of the chamber, guided them

on their way to the bed, and her hands held the torch for them.

295 When she had brought them to the chamber she went back. They then  
gladly went together to bed, and their old ritual.

## He tells his story

At this time Telemachos and the oxherd and swineherd stopped the beat of their feet in the dance, and stopped the women, and they themselves went to bed in the shadowy palace.

- 300 When Penelope and Odysseus had enjoyed their lovemaking, they took their pleasure in talking, each one telling his story. She, shining among women, told of all she had endured in the palace, as she watched the suitors, a ravening company, who on her account were slaughtering many oxen
- 305 and fat sheep, and much wine was being drawn from the wine jars. But shining Odysseus told of all the cares he inflicted on other men, and told too of all that in his misery he had toiled through. She listened to him with delight, nor did any sleep fall upon her eyes until he had told her everything.
- 310 He began with how he had beaten the Kikonians, and then gone to the rich country of the men who feed on the lotus. He told all that the Cyclops had done, and how he took vengeance on him for his strong companions he had eaten, and showed no pity. How he came to Aiolos, who generously received him
- 315 and gave him passage, but it was not fated for him to come back yet to his country, so the stormwinds caught and carried him out again on the sea where the fish swarm, groaning heavily; and how he came to Telepylos of the Laistrygones, and these men had destroyed his ships and strong-greaved companions
- 320 [all; but Odysseus only got away with his black ship]. He told her of the guile and the many devices of Circe, and how he had gone into the moldering home of Hades, there to consult the soul of Theban Teiresias, going in his ship with many benches, and there saw all his companions,
- 325 and his mother, who had borne him and nursed him when he was little. He told how he had heard the song of the echoing Sirens, and made his way to the [Roving Rocks](#) and dreaded Charybdis and Skylla, whom no men ever yet have escaped without damage. He told how his companions ate the cattle of Helios,
- 330 then told how Zeus who thunders on high had struck his fast ship with the smoky thunderbolt, and all his noble companions perished alike, only he escaped the evil death spirits;

and how he came to the island Ogygia and the nymph Kalypso  
who detained him with her, desiring that he should be her husband,  
335      in her hollow caverns, and she took care of him and told him

## Odysseus goes to see his father

that she would make him ageless all his days, and immortal, but never so could she persuade the heart that was in him;  
then how, after much suffering, he reached the Phaiakians,  
who honored him in their hearts as if he were a god, and sent him  
340 back, by ship, to the beloved land of his fathers, bestowing bronze and gold in abundance on him, and clothing.  
And this was the last word he spoke to her, when the sweet sleep came to relax his limbs and slip the cares from his spirit.

Then the goddess gray-eyed Athene thought what to do next.

345 As soon as she thought the heart of Odysseus had full contentment of the pleasure of resting in bed beside his wife, and of sleeping, immediately she stirred from Ocean the golden-throned early Dawn, to shine her light upon men, and Odysseus rose up from his soft bed, and spoke then to his wife, telling her:

350 ‘Dear wife, we both have had our full share of numerous trials now; yours have been here as you cried over my much-longed-for homecoming, while as for me, Zeus and the other gods held me back from my own country, as I was striving to reach it.

But now that we two have come to our desired bed together,

355 you look after my possessions which are in the palace, but as for my flocks, which the overbearing suitors have ruined, many I shall restore by raiding, others the Achaians shall give me, until they have filled up all of my sheepfolds.

But now I shall go to our estate with its many orchards,

360 to see my noble father who has grieved for me constantly. But I tell you this, my wife, though you have your own understanding. Presently, when the sun rises, there will be a rumor about the men who courted you, whom I killed in our palace.

Then go to the upper chamber with your attendant women,

365 and sit still, looking at no one, and do not ask any questions.’

He spoke, and put his splendid armor over his shoulders, and wakened Telemachos and the oxherd and the swineherd, and told all to take up in their hands their warlike weapons; nor did they disobey him, but armed themselves in the bronze, then

370 opened the doors and went outside, and Odysseus led them. By now the light was over the earth, but Athene, hiding

these men in darkness, guided them quickly out of the city.

## Book XXIV



Hermes of [Kyllene](#) summoned the souls of the suitors  
to come forth, and in his hands he was holding the beautiful  
golden staff, with which he mazes the eyes of those mortals  
whose eyes he would maze, or wakes again the sleepers. Herding  
5 them on with this, he led them along, and they followed, gibbering.  
And as when bats in the depth of an awful cave flutter  
and gibber, when one of them has fallen out of his place in  
the chain that the bats have formed by holding one on another;  
so, gibbering, they went their way together, and Hermes  
10 the kindly healer led them along down moldering pathways.  
They went along, and passed the Ocean stream, and the White Rock,  
and passed the gates of Helios the Sun, and the country  
of dreams, and presently arrived in the meadow of asphodel.  
This is the dwelling place of souls, images of dead men.  
15 There they found the soul of Achilleus, the son of Peleus, the soul of  
Patroklos, and the soul of stately Antilochos,  
and the soul of Aias, who for beauty and stature was greatest  
of all the Danaans, next to the blameless son of Peleus.  
So these were gathered around Achilleus, and now came to them  
20 the soul of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, sorrowing,  
and around him were gathered the souls of those others, who with him  
also died and met their fate in the house of Aigisthos.  
First of these two to speak was the soul of the son of Peleus:  
'Son of Atreus, we thought that all your days you were favored

## Conversation of Achilleus

- 25 beyond all other heroes by Zeus who delights in the thunder,  
because you were lord over numerous people, and strong ones,  
in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaians suffered hardships.  
And yet it was to you that the destructive doom spirit  
would come too early; but no man who is born escapes her.
- 30 How I wish that, enjoying that high place of your power,  
you could have met death and destiny in the land of the Trojans.  
So all the Achaians would have made a mound to cover you,  
and you would have won great glory for your son hereafter.  
In truth you were ordained to die by a death most pitiful.'
- 35 The soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, answered: 'O happy son of  
Peleus, Achilleus, like the immortals,  
who died in Troy, far away from Argos, and around you others  
were killed, Trojans and the best men among the Achaians,  
as they fought over you; and you in the turning dust lay
- 40 mightily in your might, your horsemanship all forgotten.  
We fought on for the whole day long, nor would we ever  
have stopped fighting, if Zeus had not stopped us with a whirlstorm.  
But when we had carried you to the ships, away from the fighting,  
we laid you out on a litter, and anointed your handsome body
- 45 with warm water and with unguents, and by you the Danaans  
shed many hot tears, and cut their hair short for you; and also  
your mother, hearing the news, came out of the sea, with immortal  
sea girls beside her. Immortal crying arose and spread over  
the great sea, and trembling seized hold of all the Achaians.
- 50 And now they would have started away, and gone on the hollow  
ships, had not a man of much ancient wisdom halted them,  
Nestor, whose advice had also shown best before this.  
He in kind intention toward all spoke forth and addressed them:  
"Hold fast, Argives; do not run away, O young Achaians."
- 55 It is his mother coming out of the sea with immortal  
sea girls beside her, to be with her son, who has perished."  
‘So he spoke, and the great-hearted Achaians stayed from  
their panic. Around you stood the daughters of the Sea's Ancient,  
mourning piteously, with immortal clothing upon them.
- 60 And all the nine Muses in sweet antiphonal singing

mourned you, nor would you then have seen any one of the Argives  
not in tears, so much did the singing Muse stir them.  
For ten and seven days, alike in the day and the night time,

## and Agamemnon in Hades

we wailed for you, both mortal people and the immortals.

65     On the eighteenth day we gave you to the fire, and around you slaughtered a great number of fat sheep and horn-curved cattle. You were burned in the clothing of the gods, and abundant ointment and sweet honey, while many Achaian heroes moved in armor about the pyre where you were burning,

70     with horses and on foot, and a great clamoring rose up. But after the flame of Hephaistos had consumed you utterly, then at dawn we gathered your white bones, Achilleus, together with unmixed wine and unguents. Your mother gave you a golden jar with handles. She said that it was a present

75     from [Dionysos](#), and was the work of renowned Hephaistos. In this your white bones are laid away, O shining Achilleus, mixed with the bones of the dead Patroklos, son of [Menoitios](#), and apart from those of Antilochos, whom you prized above all the rest of your companions after the death of Patroklos.

80     Around them then, we, the chosen host of the Argive spearmen, piled up a grave mound that was both great and perfect, on a jutting promontory there by the wide [Hellespont](#), so that it can be seen afar from out on the water by men now alive and those to be born in the future.

85     Then your mother, asking the gods for the gift of beautiful prizes, set them in the field for the best of the Achaians. I in my time have attended the funerals of many heroes, at those times when, because a king has perished, the young men gird themselves for sport and set up the prizes;

90     but these your heart would have admired beyond any others, such beautiful prizes as were set up by the goddess, silver-footed [Thetis](#), for your sake. You were very dear to the gods. So, even now you have died, you have not lost your name, but always in the sight of all mankind your fame shall be great, Achilleus;

95     but what pleasure was there for me when I had wound up the fighting? In my homecoming Zeus devised my dismal destruction, to be killed by the hands of my cursed wife, and Aigisthos.'

Now as the spirits were conversing thus with each other, there came approaching them the courier Argeiphontes,

100 leading down the souls of the suitors killed by Odysseus.  
These two in wonderment went up to them as they saw them,  
and the soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, recognized

## The ghost of the suitor Amphimedon

glorious Amphimedon, the dear son of Melaneus,  
who, in his home in Ithaka, had once been his guest-friend.

105 First of the two to speak was the soul of Agamemnon:  
'Amphimedon, what befell you that you came under the dark earth,  
all of you choice young men, of the same age, nor could one, gathering  
the best men out of all a city have chosen otherwise.  
Was it with the ships, and did Poseidon, rousing a stormblast  
110 of battering winds and waves towering prove your undoing?  
Or was it on the dry land, did men embattled destroy you  
as you tried to cut out cattle and fleecy sheep from their holdings,  
or fighting against them, for the sake of their city and women?  
Tell me what I ask. I claim that I am your guest-friend.

115 Or do you not remember when I came into your house there,  
together with godlike Menelaos, to rouse up Odysseus  
so he would go to Ilion on the well-benched vessels  
with us? And we were a whole month crossing over the wide sea,  
having hardly persuaded Odysseus, sacker of cities.'

120 Then in turn the soul of Amphimedon answered him, saying: 'Son of  
Atreus, most lordly and king of man, Agamemnon,  
I remember it all, illustrious, as you tell it.  
I will tell you well and truthfully the entire story  
of how our wretched end came in death, how it was accomplished.

125 We were courting the wife of Odysseus, who had been long gone.  
She would not refuse the hateful marriage, nor would she bring it  
about, but she was planning our death and black destruction  
with this other stratagem of her heart's devising.  
She set up a great loom in her palace, and set to weaving  
130 a web of threads long and fine. Then she said to us:  
"Young men, my suitors now that the great Odysseus has perished,  
wait, though you are eager to marry me, until I finish  
this web, so that my weaving will not be useless and wasted.  
This is a shroud for the hero Laertes, for when the destructive  
135 doom of death, which lays men low, shall take him, lest any  
Achaian woman in this neighborhood hold it against me  
that a man of many conquests lies with no sheet to wind him."  
So she spoke, and the proud heart in us was persuaded.

Thereafter in the daytime she would weave at her great loom,  
140    but in the night she would have torches set by, and undo it.  
So for three years she was secret in her design, convincing

## tells of their slaughter

the Achaians, but when the fourth year came, with the seasons returning,  
and the months waned, and many days had been brought to completion,  
one of her women, who knew the whole of the story, told us,  
145 and we found her in the act of undoing her glorious weaving.  
So, against her will and by force, she had to finish it.  
Then she displayed the great piece of weaving that she had woven.  
She had washed it, and it shone like the sun or the moon. At that time  
an evil spirit, coming from somewhere, brought back Odysseus  
150 to the remote part of his estate, where his swineherd was living.  
At that time the dear son of godlike Odysseus came over  
from sandy Pylos, voyaging in his black ship. These two,  
after compacting their plot of a foul death for the suitors,  
made their way to the glorious town. In fact Odysseus  
155 came afterwards; Telemachos led the way, and the swineherd  
brought in Odysseus, wearing sorry clothing upon him,  
in the likeness of a wretched vagabond, an old man  
leaning on a stick, and poor was the clothing he had upon him.  
Not one of us, even of the older ones, was able  
160 to recognize who he was when he appeared so suddenly,  
but we treated him rudely with evil words and with blows. Odysseus,  
nevertheless, endured for the time with steadfast spirit  
to be pelted with missiles and harshly spoken to in his own palace;  
but then, when the purpose of aegis-bearing Zeus had stirred him,  
165 he, with Telemachos, took away the glorious armor,  
and stowed it away in the chamber, closing the doors upon it.  
Then, in the craftiness of his mind, he urged his lady  
to set the bow and the gray iron in front of the suitors,  
the contest for us ill-fated men, the start of our slaughter.  
170 Not one of us was able to hook the string on the powerful  
bow, but all of us were found far too weak for it;  
but when the great bow was given into the hands of Odysseus,  
then all of us spoke out and threatened the man, telling him  
not to give the bow, however much he might argue.  
175 Only Telemachos urged him on and told him to give it.  
Then much-enduring Odysseus, in his hand accepting it,

easily strung the bow, and sent a shaft through the iron.

He stood on the threshold, and scattered out the swift shafts before him,  
glaring terribly, and struck down the king Antinoös.

180 Then he shot his baneful arrows into the others,

## Odysseus finds his father

aiming straight at them, and they dropped one after another.  
It could be seen then that some one of the gods was helping him,  
for these men, chasing us through the house in their strength and fury,  
killed us, one man after another; the floor was smoking

185 with blood, and the horrible cries rose up as our heads were broken.  
So, Agamemnon, we were destroyed, and still at this moment  
our bodies are lying uncared-for in the halls of Odysseus;  
for our people in the house of each man know nothing of this,  
they who would have washed away from our wounds the black blood,  
190 and laid us out and mourned us; for this is the right of the perished.'

The soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, answered him:  
'O fortunate son of Laertes, Odysseus of many devices,  
surely you won yourself a wife endowed with great virtue.  
How good was proved the heart that is in blameless Penelope,

195 Ikarios' daughter, and how well she remembered Odysseus,  
her wedded husband. Thereby the fame of her virtue shall never  
die away, but the immortals will make for the people  
of earth a thing of grace in the song for prudent Penelope.  
Not so did the daughter of [Tyndareos](#) fashion her evil

200 deeds, when she killed her wedded lord, and a song of loathing  
will be hers among men, to make evil the reputation  
of womankind, even for one whose acts are virtuous.'

So these two were conversing each with the other, standing  
in the gates of Hades, underneath the earth's secret places.

205 The others went from the city, and presently came to the country place  
of Laertes, handsomely cultivated. Laertes  
himself had reclaimed it, after he spent much labor upon it.  
There was his house, and all around the house ran a shelter,  
in which the slaves, who worked at his pleasure under compulsion,

210 would take their meals, and sit, and pass the night. There was also  
an old Sicilian woman there, who duly looked after  
the old man out on the estate, far away from the city.

There Odysseus spoke a word to his son and his servants:  
'Go now, all of you, inside the strong-fashioned building,

215 and sacrifice the best of all the pigs for our dinner  
presently; but I myself will make trial of my father,

to see whether he will know me and his eyes recognize me,  
or fail to know me, with all this time that has grown upon me.'

So he spoke, and gave his thralls their weapons of warfare,

## Laertes on his farm

220 and they went quickly on their way to the house; but Odysseus went closer to the abundant orchard, searching. He did not find either Dolios, as he came into the great orchard, nor any of his thralls, nor his sons, for all these had gone off to gather stones and make them into a wall retaining  
225 the orchard, and the old man had guided them on their errand; but he did find his father alone in the well-worked orchard, spading out a plant, and he had a squalid tunic upon him, patched together and ugly, and on his legs he had oxhide gaiters fastened and patched together, to prevent scratching,  
230 and gloves on his hands because of the bushes, and he was wearing a cap of goatskin on his head, to increase his misery. Now when much-enduring great Odysseus observed him, with great misery in his heart, and oppressed by old age, he stood underneath a towering pear tree and shed tears for him,  
235 and deliberated then in his heart and his spirit whether to embrace his father and kiss him and tell him everything, how he was come again to his own dear country, or question him first about everything, and make trial of him. In the division of his heart this way seemed best to him,  
240 first to make trial of him and speak in words of mockery. With this in mind, noble Odysseus came straight up to him. He was digging around a plant with his head held downward, and now his glorious son stood near, and spoke to him, saying: 'Old sir, there is in you no lack of expertness in tending  
245 your orchard; everything is well cared for, and there is never a plant, neither fig tree nor yet grapevine nor olive nor pear tree nor leek bed uncared for in your garden. But I will also tell you this; do not take it as cause for anger. You yourself are ill cared for; together with dismal  
250 old age, which is yours, you are squalid and wear foul clothing upon you. It is not for your laziness that your lord does not take care of you, nor is your stature and beauty, as I see it, such as ought to belong to a slave. You look like a man who is royal, and such a one as who, after he has bathed and eaten,

255 should sleep on a soft bed; for such is the right of the elders.  
But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
What man's thrall are you? Whose orchard are you laboring?  
And tell me this and tell me truly, so that I may know

## Recognition of Odysseus

whether this is really Ithaka I have come to, as that man  
260 told me just now as I encountered him on my way here:  
not a very sensible man, for he had no patience  
to tell me all or listen to what I said, when I asked him  
about my friend from abroad, whether he still lives and is somewhere  
here, or is dead now and down in the house of Hades.

265 And I tell you this; listen to me and understand me.  
Once I entertained a friend in my own dear country,  
when he came to our house, nor has any man been dearer  
to me, among all those who have come from afar to my palace.  
He announced that he was by birth a man of Ithaka,  
270 and said that his father was Laertes, son of Arkeisios.  
I took him into my own house and well entertained him  
with proper hospitality, since there was abundance  
in the house, and gave him presents of friendship, as was becoming.  
I gave him seven talents of well-wrought gold, and I gave him  
275 a mixing bowl made all of silver, with flowers wrought on it,  
and twelve mantles to be worn single, as many blankets,  
as many handsome cloaks, also the same number of tunics,  
and aside from these four comely women, whose skill in handiwork  
was without fault; and he could choose the ones that he wanted.'

280 Then his father, shedding tears, said to him in answer: 'Friend, this  
land that you have reached is the one you were seeking;  
but violent and reckless men are in control of it,  
and the grace of those countless gifts you gave is all gone for nothing.  
If you had found him yet alive in the land of Ithaka,

285 he would have sent you along with gifts in return, and given  
good entertainment, as is right for him who has given.  
But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
How many years is it since you entertained that unhappy  
guest of yours, my son—did he ever live?—an ill-starred

290 man, one whom, far from his country and his own people,  
the fish have eaten in the great sea, or else on the dry land  
he has been spoil for wild beasts and for birds; and his mother  
and father, whose child he was, did not give him his rites nor mourn  
him,

nor yet did his bountiful wife, circumspect Penelope,  
wail for her husband on his bier, as would have been fitting,  
nor close his eyes; for that is the right of those who have perished.  
But tell me this too, tell me truly, so that I may know it.

295

## by Laertes his father

What man are you and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?  
Where is your swift ship standing now, that brought you to this place,  
and your godlike companions? Or did you come as a passenger  
in someone else's ship, and they let you off, and went on?’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.  
I am from [Alybas](#), where I live in a famous dwelling,  
305 and am the son of [Apheidas](#), son of the lord [Polypemon](#).  
My own name is [Eperitos](#); now the divinity  
drove me here on my way against my will, from [Sikania](#).  
And my ship stands nearby, off the country, away from the city.  
But as for Odysseus, this is by now the fifth year since  
310 he went from there, and took his departure out of my country.  
Unhappy man. Indeed, the bird signs were good at his going.  
They were on his right; and I too rejoiced as I sent him  
off, and he rejoiced as he went. My heart was still hopeful  
that we would meet in friendship and give glorious presents.'

315 He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Laertes. In both hands he caught up the grimy dust and poured it over his face and grizzled head, groaning incessantly.  
The spirit rose up in Odysseus, and now in his nostrils there was a shock of bitter force as he looked on his father.  
320 He sprang to him and embraced and kissed and then said to him:  
'Father, I am he, the man whom you ask about. I am here, come back in the twentieth year to the land of my father.  
But stay now from your weeping, shedding of tears, and outcry,  
for I tell you this straight out; the need for haste is upon us.  
325 I have killed the suitors who were in our palace, avenging all their heart-hurting outrage and their evil devisings.'

Then in turn Laertes answered him and said to him:  
'If in truth you are Odysseus, my son, who have come back here, give me some unmistakable sign, so that I can believe you.'  
330 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him: 'First, then, look with your eyes upon this scar and know it.  
The wild boar inflicted it with his white tusk, on Parnassos, when I went there; for you and my queenly mother had sent me

to Autolykos, my mother's dear father, so I could be given

335 those gifts, which he promised me and consented to when he came to us.

Or come then, let me tell you of the trees in the well-worked

## Reunion of Odysseus

- orchard, which you gave me once. I asked you of each one,  
when I was a child, following you through the garden. We went  
among the trees, and you named them all and told me what each one  
340 was, and you gave me thirteen pear trees, and ten apple trees,  
and forty fig trees; and so also you named the fifty  
vines you would give. Each of them bore regularly, for there were  
grapes at every stage upon them, whenever the seasons  
of Zeus came down from the sky upon them, to make them heavy.'
- 345 He spoke, and Laertes' knees and the heart within him went slack, as  
he recognized the clear proofs that Odysseus had given.  
He threw his arms around his dear son, and much-enduring  
great Odysseus held him close, for his spirit was fainting.  
But when he had got his breath back again, and the spirit gathered  
350 into his heart, once more he said to him, answering:  
'Father Zeus, there are gods indeed upon tall Olympos,  
if truly the suitors have had to pay for their reckless violence.  
But now I am terribly afraid in my heart that speedily  
the men of Ithaka may come against us here, and send out  
355 messages everywhere to the Kephallenian cities.'
- Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:  
'Never fear, let these concerns not trouble your thinking;  
but let us go to the house which lies here next to the orchard,  
for there I sent Telemachos on ahead, with the oxherd  
360 and the swineherd, so that they could most quickly prepare our  
dinner.'
- So he spoke, and the two went into the handsome dwelling;  
and when they had come into the well-established dwelling place,  
there they found Telemachos, and the oxherd and swineherd,  
cutting up a great deal of meat, and mixing the bright wine.
- 365 Meanwhile the Sicilian serving maid bathed great-hearted Laertes in  
his house, and anointed him with olive oil,  
then threw a handsome mantle about him. Also, Athene,  
standing by the shepherd of the people, filled his limbs out,  
and made him taller and thicker to behold than he had been.
- 370 He stepped forth from the bath, and his son looked on in amazement  
as he saw him looking like one of the immortal gods to encounter.

So he spoke to him and addressed him in winged words, saying:  
‘Father, surely some one of the gods who are everlasting  
has made you better to look upon for beauty and stature.’

375 Then in turn the thoughtful Laertes said to him in answer:

## with Dolios and his sons

'O father Zeus, Athene and Apollo, if only as I was when, lord of the Kephallenians, I took

Nerikos, the strong-founded citadel on the mainland

cape; if only I could have been such yesterday in the palace,

380 with armor upon my shoulders, to stand beside you and fight off  
the suitors' attack; so I would have unstrung the knees of many  
there in the hall, and your heart within you would have been  
gladdened.'

Now these two were thus conversing one with the other.

And all, when they had finished their work and made ready their dinner,

385 took their places in order on chairs and along the benches.

Then they were putting their hands to the dinner, and now there drew  
near

the aged Dolios, and the old man's sons were with him,  
coming from their toilsome work, for their mother had called them.

This was the old Sicilian woman, who had raised them, and carefully

390 looked after the old man, now that great age had seized him.

These, when they saw Odysseus and recognized his identity,  
stood still in the hall in astonishment; but Odysseus

had words of conciliation for them, and so he addressed them:

'Sit to dinner with us, old man, and let be your wonder;

395 for a long time now we have been eager to put our hands to  
food, but we waited for you in the halls, ever expecting you.'

So he spoke, and Dolios, opening his arms wide, ran straight  
to him, and took Odysseus' hand at the wrist, and kissed it,  
and spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words, saying:

400 'Dear master, since you have come back to us, who wanted you  
but expected you no more—but the very gods have brought you  
back—we heartily welcome you; may the gods give you blessings.  
And tell me this and tell me truly, so that I may know it.

Does circumspect Penelope know all the truth of this

405 and that you have come back, or shall we send her a messenger?'

Then in turn resourceful Odysseus said to him in answer:

'She already knows, old man. Why should you trouble to do this?'

He spoke, and Dolios sat down again on the polished  
chair; so too, around great Odysseus, the sons of Dolios

410    came to speak to him in welcome, and shake hands with him,  
and then went back in order to sit by their father, Dolios.

So these were busy in the hall preparing their dinner;  
but Rumor, a messenger, went swiftly through all the city,

## The kinsmen of the suitors

crying aloud the terrible death and doom of the suitors;  
415 and the people as they heard it came, from their several places,  
to gather, with groaning and outcry, before the house of Odysseus.  
They carried the corpses out of the house, and each one buried  
his own, and sent back all who had come from the other cities,  
giving them in charge of fishermen to take in their fast ships.  
420 They themselves, sorrowful at heart, gathered in assembly.  
But when they were all assembled and in one place together,  
Eupeithes stood up and addressed them, since unforgettable  
sorrow was stored away in his heart for the sake of Antinoös,  
his son, who was the first to be killed by noble Odysseus.  
425 For his sake weeping tears he now stood forth and addressed them:  
'Friends, this man's will worked great evil upon the Achaians.  
First he took many excellent men away in the vessels  
with him, and lost the hollow ships, and lost all the people,  
and then returning killed the best men of the Kephallenians.  
430 Come then, before he can make his way quickly over to Pylos,  
or else to shining Elis, where the Epeians are lords, let us  
go, or else we shall then be shamed forever; all this  
shall be a disgrace, even for the men hereafter to hear of,  
if we do not take revenge on the murderers of our brothers  
435 and sons; for there would be no pleasure in my heart to go on  
living, but I would wish to die and be with the perished.  
So let us go, before they cross the sea, and escape us.'

He spoke, weeping, and pity took hold of all the Achaians.  
But now Medon arrived, and with him the inspired singer,  
440 from the palace of Odysseus, since now the sleep had left them;  
they stood in their midst, and amazement seized upon each man of  
them.

Then Medon, full of prudent thoughts, spoke forth and addressed them:  
'Hear me now, you men of Ithaka; for Odysseus  
devised what he did, not without the consent of immortal  
445 gods. I myself saw an immortal god who was standing  
beside Odysseus. In every way it resembled Mentor.  
An immortal god was seen, at one time in front of Odysseus  
urging him on, and then next time he would rout the suitors,

and dash about the hall, while they fell one after another.'

450 So he spoke, and the green fear took hold of all of them. Now Halitherses, Mastor's son, an aged warrior, spoke to them. He alone saw what was before and behind him.

## assemble and plan revenge

Now in kind intention toward all he spoke forth and addressed them:  
‘Hear me now, you men of Ithaka; hear what I tell you.

455 It is by your own weakness, dear friends, that these things have happened.

You would not listen to me, nor to Mentor, shepherd of the people, when we told you to make your sons give over their senseless mood; for they, in their evil recklessness, did a great wrong in showing no respect to the wife, despoiling the possessions,

460 of a lordly man. They thought that he never would be coming home. Now let it be thus. Hear me, and do as I tell you.

Let us not go there. He who does might incur some evil.’

So he spoke, but more than half who were there sprang up with a great cry—though others stayed where they were assembled—

465 since Halitherses' speech did not please their hearts, but they listened to Eupeithes, and now suddenly they ran for their armor.

Now they, when in the shining bronze they had shrouded their bodies, assembled all in a body in front of the spacious city.

Eupeithes was their leader in their foolishness. He thought

470 he would avenge the slaughter of his son, but he was not ever to come back, but must himself encounter his death there.

Now Athene spoke a word to Zeus, son of Kronos:

‘Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty, tell me what I ask. What does your mind have hidden within it?’

475 Will you first inflict evil fighting upon them, and terrible strife, or will you establish friendship between the two factions?’

Then Zeus the gatherer of the clouds said to her in answer:

‘My child, why do you ask and question me in these matters?’

For was not this your own intention, as you have counseled it,

480 how Odysseus should make his way back, and punish those others?

Do as you will; but I will tell you how it is proper.

Now that noble Odysseus has punished the suitors, let them make their oaths of faith and friendship, and let him be king always; and let us make them forget the death of their brothers

485 and sons, and let them be friends with each other, as in the time past, and let them have prosperity and peace in abundance.’

So he spoke, and stirred on Athene, who was eager before this,

and she went in a flash of speed down the pinnacles of Olympos.

When the men had put away their desire for delicious feasting,  
490 much-enduring great Odysseus began speaking among them:  
'Let someone go out now and see if they are approaching.'

## Final battle

- He spoke, and Dolios' son went out, as Odysseus told him.  
He went and stood on the threshold and saw them all drawing closer.  
Now presently he spoke in winged words to Odysseus:
- 495    'Here they are, coming close to us, so let us arm quickly.'
- So he spoke, and they sprang up and put on their armor,  
Odysseus with his three, and the six sons of Dolios;  
and with them Dolios and Laertes put on their armor,  
gray though they were, but they were fighters perforce. And now,
- 500    when all of them in shining bronze had shrouded their bodies,  
they opened the doors, and went outside, and Odysseus led them.
- But now came their way the daughter of Zeus, Athene,  
likening herself in appearance and voice to Mentor.  
Seeing her, much-enduring great Odysseus was happy,
- 505    and presently he spoke to his dear son, Telemachos:  
'Telemachos, now yourself being present, where men do battle,  
and the bravest are singled out from the rest, you must be certain  
not to shame the blood of your fathers, for we in time past  
all across the world have surpassed in manhood and valor.'
- 510    Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer: 'You will see,  
dear father, if you wish, that as far as my will goes,  
I will not shame my blood that comes from you, which you speak of.'
- So he spoke, and Laertes also rejoiced, and said to them:  
'What day is this for me, dear gods? I am very happy.
- 515    My son and my son's son are contending over their courage.'
- Then standing close beside him gray-eyed Athene said to him:  
'Son of Arkeisios, far dearest of all my companions,  
make your prayer to the gray-eyed girl and to Zeus her father,  
then quickly balance your far-shadowing spear, and throw it.'
- 520    So Pallas Athene spoke, and breathed into him enormous strength,  
and, making his prayer then to the daughter of great Zeus,  
he quickly balanced his far-shadowing spear, and threw it,  
and struck Eupeithes on the brazen side of his helmet,  
nor could the helm hold off the spear, but the bronze smashed clean  
through.
- 525    He fell, thunderously, and his armor clattered upon him.  
Odysseus and his glorious son fell upon their front fighters,

and began to strike with swords and stab with spears leaf-headed.  
And now they would have killed them all, and given none of them  
homecoming, had not Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis,

## **Reconciliation by Athene**

- 530     cried out in a great voice and held back all the company:  
‘Hold back, men of Ithaka, from the wearisome fighting,  
so that most soon, and without blood, you can settle everything.’  
    So spoke Athene, and the green fear took hold of them,  
and in their terror they let fall from their hands their weapons,  
535     which fell all on the ground at the cry of the goddess speaking.  
Striving to save their lives, they turned in flight toward the city.  
With a terrible cry, much-enduring Odysseus, gathering  
himself together, made a swoop, like a high-flown eagle.  
But the son of Kronos then threw down a smoky thunderbolt,  
540     which fell in front of the gray-eyed daughter of the great father.  
Then the gray-eyed goddess Athene said to Odysseus:  
‘Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
hold hard, stop this quarrel in closing combat, for fear  
Zeus of the wide brows, son of Kronos, may be angry with you.’  
545     So spoke Athene, and with happy heart he obeyed her. And pledges for  
the days to come, sworn to by both sides,  
were settled by Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis,  
who had likened herself in appearance and voice to Mentor.

## Glossary

NOTE. In the spelling of names, I have followed the same practice as in my translation of the *Iliad*. Mostly, I have simply transliterated the Greek, as for instance *Agelaos*, not *Agelaus*. In some cases, however, I have made exceptions and followed familiar usage; and sometimes I have simply translated (*Dawn*, *Graces*). The exceptions to my normal practice are: Achaians, Apollo, Argives, Athens, Circe, Crete, Cyclopes, Cyprus, Danaans, Dawn, Dorians, Egypt, Elysian Field, Graces, Hades, Helen, Hermes, Jason, Lotus-Eaters, Ocean, Penelope, Phoenicia and Phoenicians, Priam, Roving Rocks, Sicilians, Sirens, Thrace, Trojans, Troy.

This glossary is not an index, but gives at least one reference for each name. Reference are to book and line.

- Achai'ans:** The most general term for “Greeks,” including the people of Ithaka, i.90; ii.7, etc.
- A'cheron:** River in the land of the dead, x.514.
- Achil'leus:** The great hero of the *Iliad*, whose ghost talked to Odysseus, xi.467, etc.
- Adres'te:** Handmaid of Helen, iv.122.
- Agamem'non:** Leader of the expedition against Troy, murdered by Aigisthos, i.30; iii.143, etc.
- Agela'os:** Son of Damastor, a suitor, xx.321, etc.; killed by Odysseus, xxii.293.
- Aiai'a:** Circe's island, x.135.
- Ai'akos:** Father of Peleus, grandfather of Achilleus, xi.471, 538.
- Ai'as:** (1) Son of Telamon, who quarreled with Odysseus over the armor of Achilleus, xi.469, etc.; (2) son of Oïleus, drowned by Poseidon, iv.499-510.
- Aie'tes:** Brother of Circe, x.137; xii.70.
- Ai'gai:** City in Achaia, favored by Poseidon, v.381.
- Aigis'thos:** Son of Thyestes, lover of Klytaimestra and murderer of Agamemnon, killed by Orestes, i.29; iii.194, etc.
- Aigyp'tios:** Elder of Ithaka, father of Eurynomos, ii.15.

- Aigy'ptos:** The river of Egypt, the Nile, xiv.257.
- Aio'lia:** The island of Aiolos (1), x.1.
- Ai'olos:** (1) Mortal king in charge of the winds, x.1; (2) father of Kretheus, xi.237.
- Ai'son:** Son of Tyro and Kretheus, xi.259.
- Aithio'pians:** The Ethiopians, a distant people visited by Poseidon, i.22; v.282, etc.
- Ai'thon:** Name assumed by Odysseus in conversation with Penelope, xix.183.
- Aito'lia:** Country in central Greece, xiv.379.
- Akas'tos:** A king in western Greece, xiv.336.
- Akro'neos:** A Phaiakian, viii.111.
- Ak'toris:** Maid of Penelope, xxiii.228.
- Alek'tor:** A Spartan, whose daughter married Megapenthes, iv.10.
- Alkan'dre:** Lady of Thebes in Egypt, wife of Polybos (2), iv.126.
- Al'kimos:** Father of Mentor, xxii.234.
- Alki'noös:** King of the Phaiakians, vi.12; vii.185, etc.
- Alkip'pe:** Handmaid of Helen, iv.124.
- Alkmai'on:** Son of Amphiaraos, xv.248.
- Alkme'ne:** Mother of Herakles, ii.120; xi.266.
- Alo'eus:** Husband of Iphimedea, putative father of Otos and Ephialtes, xi.305.
- Alphei'os:** River in the western Peloponnese, iii.489.
- A'lybas:** City of unknown location from which Odysseus pretended to have come, xxiv.304.
- Amni'sos:** A place in Crete, xix.188.
- Amphi'ulos:** A Phaiakian, winner in jumping, viii.114; 128.
- Amphiara'os:** Son of Oikles and grandfather of Theoklymenos. He was one of the seven against Thebes, xv.244-247.
- Amphi'lochos:** Son of Amphiaraos, xv.248.
- Amphi'medon:** One of the suitors, xxii.242; killed by Telemachos, xxii.284; his ghost told the ghost of Agamemnon about the slaughter of the suitors, xxiv.103.
- Amphi'nomos:** One of the suitors, xvi.351; son of Nisos, from Doulichion, best of the suitors and best liked by Penelope, xvi.394; befriended Odysseus and was warned by him, xviii. 119-150; killed by Telemachos, xxii.89-94.
- Amphi'on:** (1) Son of Antiope, and builder, with his brother Zethos, of Thebes, xi.262; (2) lord of Minyan Orchomenos, xi.283.

- Amphi'thea:** Grandmother of Odysseus, xix.416.
- Amphitri'te:** Queen of the sea, iii.91, etc.
- Amphi'tryon:** Husband of Alkmene, putative father of Herakles, xi.266.
- Amytha'on:** Son of Kretheus and Tyro, xi.259.
- Anabasi'neos:** A Phaiakian, viii.113.
- Anchi'ulos:** (1) Father of Mentes, i.180; (2) a Phaiakian, viii.112.
- Andrai'mon:** Father of Thoas, xiv.499.
- Antiklei'a:** Mother of Odysseus, xi.85.
- Anti'klos:** One of the Achaians in the Wooden Horse, iv.286.
- Anti'lochos:** Son of Nestor, killed at Troy by Memnon, iii.112; iv.187, etc.
- Anti'noös:** Son of Eupeithes, one of the two leading suitors, i.383; ii.84, etc.; struck Odysseus with footstool, xvii.462; first to be killed, by Odysseus, xxii.8.
- Anti'ope:** Daughter of Asopos, mother of Amphion and Zethos, xi.260.
- Anti'phates:** (1) King of the Laistrygones, x.107; (2) father of Oïkles, xv.242.
- An'tiphos:** (1) Companion of Odysseus, killed by the Cyclops, ii.17; (2) an elder of Ithaka, xvii.68.
- Apeir'e:** The home of Eurymedousa, vii.8.
- Aphei'das:** Pretended name of Odysseus' father in his conversation with Laertes, xxiv.305.
- Aphrodi'te:** Daughter of Zeus, goddess of love and beauty, iv.14, etc. In the *Odyssey* (though not in the *Iliad*) she is the wife of Hephaistos, viii.267, etc.
- Apol'lo:** Or Phoibos Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, iii.279, etc. He plays no major part in the *Odyssey*, but the day when the suitors are killed is a festival day for him, xx.278. His arrows, like those of Artemis, bring sudden and painless death, iii.280, etc.
- Ar'es:** Son of Zeus, god of war, lover of Aphrodite, viii.267, etc.
- Are'te:** Wife of Alkinoös, queen of the Phaiakians, vii.54, etc.
- Arethou'sa:** A spring on Ithaka, xiii.408.
- Are'tos:** Son of Nestor, iii.414.
- Argeïphon'tes:** "The slayer of Argos," an epithet of Hermes, i.38; v.43, etc.
- Ar'gives:** The Greeks who went to Troy, i.61, etc.; also, the people of Mykene or Sparta, iii.309, etc.
- Ar'go:** The ship of the Argonauts, xii.69.
- Ar'gos:** The dog of Odysseus, xvii.292.
- Ar'gos:** City or district in the northeast Peloponnese, or simply "Greece," i.344, iii.251, etc.
- Ariad'ne:** Daughter of Minos, killed by Artemis. Her ghost was seen by

- Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.321.
- Arkei'sios:** Father of Laertes, xvi.118, etc.
- Arnai'os:** The true name of Iros, xviii.5.
- Arta'kie:** A spring on Lamos, x.108.
- Ar'temis:** Daughter of Zeus and Leto, sister of Apollo, vi.102, etc. Her arrows, like those of Apollo, bring sudden and painless death, xv.410, etc.
- Aso'pos:** A river and river god in Boiotia, father of Antiope, xi.260
- A'rybas:** A lord of Sidon, father of Eumaios' nurse, xv.426.
- Asphal'ion:** Henchman of Menelaos, iv.216.
- As'teris:** A little island off Ithaka, iv.846.
- Athe'ne:** Or Pallas Athene, goddess, daughter of Zeus, i.44, etc.
- Ath'ens:** The famous city in east-central Greece, iii.278.
- At'las:** Titan, father of Kalypso, i.52.
- At'reus:** Father of Agamemnon and Menelaos, i.35, etc.
- Atryto'ne:** Epithet of Athene, iv.762.
- Auto'lykos:** Father of Antikleia, so grandfather of Odysseus, xi.85; xix.394, etc.
- Auto'noë:** Handmaid of Penelope, xviii.182.
- Bo'ëthoös:** Father of Eteoneus, iv.31.
- Boö'tes:** The constellation of that name, v.272.
- Chal'kis:** A place on the west coast of Greece, opposite Ithaka, xv.295.
- Charyb'dis:** A monster of the coast in the form of a great whirlpool, xii.104, etc.
- Chi'os:** A large island off the coast of Asia Minor, iii.170.
- Chlo'ris:** Wife of Neleus and mother of Nestor, whose ghost Odysseus saw in the land of the dead, xi.281.
- Chro'mios:** Son of Neleus and Chloris, brother of Nestor, xi.286.
- Cir'ce:** The goddess and enchantress of Aiaia, Book x throughout, also viii.448; ix.31, etc.
- Crete:** Large island, domain of Idomeneus, iii.191, etc. Pretended home of Odysseus in various lying stories, xiii.256; xiv.199; xix.172.
- Cyclo'pes:** A monstrous people encountered by Odysseus and his men, ix.106, etc. In the singular, the Cyclops means Polyphemos, i.69; ii.19, etc.
- Cy'prus:** Large island in the easternmost Mediterranean, iv.83, etc.
- Damas'tor:** Father of Agelaos, xx.321.

- Dan'aans:** The Greeks who went to Troy, i.350, etc.
- Dawn:** Properly Eos, the goddess whose rising brings the day, ii.1; v.1, etc. Wife of Tithonos, v.1; mother of the killer of Antilochos (presumably Memnon), iv.188; in love with Orion, v.121; carried off Kleitos, xv.250.
- Deï'phobos:** Son of Priam, husband of Helen at the time of the fall of Troy, iv.276; viii.518.
- De'los:** Island in the Aigaian Sea, sacred to Apollo, vi.162.
- Deme'ter:** Sister of Zeus, who loved Iasion, v.125.
- Demo'dokos:** The blind singer of the Phaiakians, viii.44, etc.
- Demopto'lemos:** Suitor killed by Odysseus, xxii.242; 266.
- Deuka'lion:** King in Crete, father of Idomeneus, xix.180.
- Di'a:** An island in the Aigaian, xi.325.
- Dio'kles:** Lord of Pherai, iii.488; xv.186.
- Diome'des:** Son of Tydeus, a great hero of the *Iliad*, iii.180.
- Diony'sos:** God of wine, xxiv.75; accuser of Ariadne, xi.325.
- Dme'tor:** Son of Iasos (2), king of Cyprus, xvii.443.
- Dodo'na:** Site of an oracle of Zeus in northwestern Greece, xiv.327; xix.296.
- Do'lios:** An old servant, specially attached to Penelope, iv.735; works on the estate with Laertes, xxiv.222; father of Melanthios, xvii.212; of Melantho, xviii.322.
- Dor'iants:** Presumably, the “conquerors,” located by Odysseus in Crete, xix.177.
- Douli'chion:** A large, but not positively identified, island in the domain of Odysseus, i.246, etc. (In the *Iliad*, it is in the domain of Meges.)
- Dy'mas:** A Phaiakian, father of Nausikaa's best friend, vi.22.
- Echene'os:** Aged Phaiakian counselor, vii.155; xi.342.
- Eche'phron:** A son of Nestor, iii.413.
- E'chetos:** A cruel king somewhere in western Greece, xviii.85; xxi.308.
- E'gypt:** The country, iii.300; iv.351, etc.
- Eido'thea:** Sea nymph, daughter of Proteus, iv.365.
- Eileithyi'a:** The goddess of childbirth, xix.188.
- E'latos:** A suitor, killed by Eumaios, xxii.267.
- Elat'reus:** A Phaiakian, viii.111.
- E'lis:** City and district of the western Peloponnese, opposite Ithaka, iv.635, etc.
- Elpe'nor:** Companion of Odysseus, killed by accidentally falling from the roof, x.552; Odysseus talked with his ghost, xi.51.

- Ely'sian Field:** The far fortunate place where Menelaos is ultimately to find his home, iv.563.
- E'nipeus:** A river in Thessaly, loved by Tyro, xi.238.
- Epei'ans:** People of Elis, xiii.275, etc.
- Epei'os:** The builder of the Wooden Horse, viii.493; xi.524.
- Eper'itos:** Name assumed by Odysseus when he talked with Laertes, xxiv.306.
- Ephial'tes:** Son of Poseidon and Iphimedea, brother of Otos, gigantic child killed by Apollo, xi.308.
- E'phyre:** Place of unknown location, apparently in Western Greece, i.259; ii.328.
- Epikas'te:** More familiarly known as Iokaste, the wife and mother of Oidipodes, xi.271.
- E'rebos:** The dark place of the dead, x.528.
- Erech'theus:** Hero of Athens, vii.81.
- Erem'boi:** An unidentified people visited by Menelaos during his wanderings, iv.84.
- Eret'meus:** A Phaiakian, viii.112.
- Eriphy'le:** Wife of Amphiaraos, who caused his death, xi.326.
- Eryman'thos:** A mountain in the northwest Peloponnese, vi.104.
- Eri'nys:** Fury, or a goddess of curses, xv.234.
- Eteo'neus:** Henchman of Menelaos, iv.22.
- Eteokre'tans:** A people of Crete, thought to mean "True-Cretans," xix.176.
- Euan'thes:** Father of Maron, ix.197.
- Euboi'a:** A large island east of central Greece, iii.175; vii.321.
- Eue'nor:** Father of Leokritos, ii.242, etc.
- Eumai'os:** The noble swineherd of Odysseus, xiv.55, etc.
- Eume'los:** Lord of Pherai, husband of Iphthime, thus brother-in-law of Penelope, iv.798.
- Eupei'thes:** Father of Antinoös, i.383, etc.; killed by Laertes in the final battle, xxiv.523.
- Eury'ades:** Suitor, killed by Telemachos, xxii.267.
- Eury'ulos:** A young Phaiakian, rude to Odysseus, viii.158, etc.
- Eury'bates:** The herald of Odysseus, xix.247.
- Eury'damas:** A suitor, xviii.297; killed by Odysseus, xxii.283.
- Eury'dike:** Daughter of Klymenos, wife of Nestor, iii.451.
- Euryklei'a:** The old nurse of Odysseus and of Telemachos, i.428, etc.
- Eury'lochos:** Second in command of Odysseus' fleet, x.205, etc.; a relative of Odysseus, though sometimes at odds with him, x.441.

**Eury'machos:** Son of Polybos (1). One of the two leading suitors, i.399; ii.177, etc.; attacked Odysseus, xviii.394; killed by Odysseus, xxii.79.

**Eury'medon:** King of the giants, father of Periboia, vii.58.

**Eurymedou'sa:** Nurse of Nausikaa, vii.8.

**Eu'rymos:** Father of Telemos, ix.509.

**Eury'nome:** Housekeeper and nurse of Penelope, xvii.495, etc.

**Eury'nomos:** Suitor, son of Aigyptios, ii.21; xxii.242.

**Eury'pylos:** Leader of the Keteians, killed at Troy by Neoptolemos, xi.520.

**Eury'tion:** A drunken centaur, xxi.295.

**Eu'rytos:** Father of Iphitos, archer, king of Oichalia, killed by Apollo, viii.224, etc.

**Gai'a:** Mother of Tityos, vii.324.

**Gerais'tos:** Promontory on the island of Euboia, iii.178.

**Gere'nian:** Epithet of Nestor, iii.68, etc.

**Gor'gon:** A staring monster, xi.635.

**Gor'tys:** A place in Crete, iii.294.

**Gra'ces:** Properly, the Charites, goddesses of beauty, vi.18, etc.

**Gy'rai:** A rocky island in the Aigaian Sea, iv.501.

**Ha'des:** Properly Aïdes, lord of the dead, iv.834; xi.47, etc.

**Ha'lios:** A son of Alkinoös, viii.119.

**Halither'ses:** An Ithakan, gifted in prophecy, favorable to Odysseus, ii.157; xxiv.451, etc.

**He'be:** Daughter of Zeus and Hera, bride of Herakles after his immortalization, xi.604.

**He'len:** Wife of Menelaos, the cause of the war, iv.12, etc.

**He'lios:** The sun god, i.8, etc. Odysseus' men slaughtered some of his cattle, xii.260-390.

**Hel'las:** A name for the country of Achilleus (as in the *Iliad*) xi.496; more widely, apparently as “Greece” generally, i.344, etc.

**Hel'lespont:** The strait (Dardanelles) by Troy, xxiv.82.

**Hephais'tos:** The immortal artificer, iv.617, etc.; in the *Odyssey* (not in the *Iliad*) married to Aphrodite, who played him false with Ares (according to the song of Demodokos), viii.266-366.

**He'ra:** Wife of Zeus, queen of the gods, iv.513.

**Her'akles:** Or Hercules, son of Alkmene and Zeus, xi.268; a great archer, xiii.224; killer of Iphitos, xxi.26; immortalized and married to Hebe, xi.601-604.

- Her'mes:** Often called Argeiphontes, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of Zeus, i.38, etc.
- Hermi'one:** Daughter of Menelaos and Helen, iv.14.
- Hippodamei'a:** Handmaid of Penelope, xviii.182.
- Hip'potas:** Father of Aiolos (1), x.2.
- Hy'lakos:** Father of Kastor (2), xiv.204.
- Hyperei'a:** Former home of the Phaiakians, near the Cyclopes, vi.4.
- Hypere'sia:** City in Achaia, home of Polypheides, xv.254.
- Hyperi'on:** (1) Epithet of Helios, i.24, etc.; (2) father of Helios, xii.176.
- Iar'danos:** River in Crete, iii.292.
- Ias'ion:** Hero beloved by Demeter, v.126.
- I'asos:** (1) Father of Amphion (2), xi.283; (2) father of Dmetor, xvii.443.
- Ido'meneus:** Lord of Crete, a great hero of the *Iliad*, iii.191; xiii.259, etc.
- Ika'rios:** The father of Penelope, i.328, etc.
- Ikma'lios:** Artificer, who made Penelope's chair, xix.57.
- I'lios:** The city of Troy, ii.18, etc.
- I'los:** Son of Mermeros, apparently king of Ephyra, i.259.
- I'no:** Also called Leukothea, daughter of Kadmos, once mortal, now a sea goddess, v.333; 461.
- Iol'kos:** Place in Thessaly, home of Pelias, xi.257.
- I'phikles:** Lord of Phylake, captor of Melampous, xi.290.
- Imphimedei'a:** Mother of Otos and Ephialtes, xi.305.
- I'phitos:** Son of Eurytos, friend of the young Odysseus, foully murdered by Herakles, giver of the great bow to Odysseus, xxi.11-41.
- Iphthi'me:** Wife of Eumelos and sister of Penelope, to whom she appeared in a dream, iv.797.
- I'ros:** The name Arnaios commonly went by; the beggar who fought with Odysseus, xviii.1-107; so named after the goddess Iris, who otherwise does not appear in the *Odyssey*, xviii.6.
- Is'maros:** Thracian home of the Kikonians, ix.40.
- I'thaka:** Island off the west coast of Greece, i.18, etc., home of Odysseus; its position described, ix.21-26.
- I'thakos:** Builder of a well on Ithaka, xvii.207.
- I'tylos:** Son of Zethos (2) and “the nightingale,” daughter of Pandareos (presumably Prokne), killed by his mother, xix.523.
- Ja'son:** Master of the ship Argo, xii.72.

- Kadmei'ans:** The people of Thebes (2), xi.276.
- Kad'mos:** Founder of Thebes (2), father of Ino, v.333.
- Kalyp'so:** Goddess-nymph, daughter of Atlas, i.14; 52; befriended and lived with Odysseus, v.14-268, etc.
- Kassan'dra:** Daughter of Priam, captive mistress of Agamemnon, murdered with him, xi.422.
- Kas'tor:** (1) Son of Leda and Tyndareos, brother of Polydeukes, semi-immortalized by Zeus, xi.298-304; (2) son of Hylakos, pretended father of Odysseus in his story as told to Eumaios, xiv.204.
- Kauko'nes:** A people, presumably near Pylos. Athene, disguised as Mentor, announces that she will visit them, iii.366. Apparently, therefore, they are not the same as the people in the *Iliad* mentioned at *Iliad* X.429 and XX.329.
- Kephallen'ians:** People of Kephallenia or, especially in Book xxiv, of the whole community of islands, xx.210; xxiv.355; 377; 429.
- Ketei'ans:** The people of Eurypylos, xi.520.
- Kiko'nians:** The Thracians of Ismaros, raided by Odysseus, ix.39-61.
- Kimmer'ians:** A people near the land of the dead, xi.14. In historical times, the name applies to a non-Greek people of the Black Sea who raided Asia Minor in the seventh century B.C.
- Klei'tos:** Son of Mantios, snatched away by the Dawn, xv.250.
- Kly'mene:** Heroine seen by Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.326.
- Kly'menos:** Father of Eurydike, iii.452.
- Klytaimes'tra:** Agamemnon's wife, who took Aigisthos as a lover, iii.265-272; accomplice in Agamemnon's murder, and murdered Kassandra, xi.421-434.
- Kly'tios:** Father of Peiraios, xv.540.
- Klytöne'os:** A son of Alkinoös, viii.119.
- Knos'sos:** A city in Crete, xix.178.
- Koky'tos:** A river in the land of the dead, x.513.
- Kratai'is:** Mother of Skylla, xii.124.
- Krei'on:** Father of Megara, xi.269.
- Kre'theus:** Son of Aiolos (2), husband of Tyro, father of Aison, Pheres, and Amythaon, xi.258, etc.
- Kro'nos:** Father of Zeus, i.386, etc.
- Kro'unoi:** A place on the western coast of Greece, opposite Ithaka, xv.295.
- Kte'sios:** Father of Eumaios, xv.414.
- Ktesip'pos:** A violent suitor, who threw a cow's hoof at Odysseus, xx.288-303; killed by Philoitios, xxii.285.

- Kti'mene:** The sister of Odysseus, xv.363.
- Kydo'nians:** A people of Crete, iii.292; xix.176.
- Kylle'ne:** Mountain in Arkadia, the home of Hermes, xxiv.1.
- Kythe'ra:** Island off the southern tip of Greece, ix.81.
- Kytherei'a:** Aphrodite, the lady of Kythera, viii.288; xviii.193.
- Laer'kes:** Goldsmith in Pylos, iii.425.
- Laer'tes:** Son of Arkeisios, father of Odysseus, i.189, etc. Rejuvenated by Athene, fights in the last battle, xxiv. 513-525.
- Laistry'gones:** A giant cannibal people encountered by Odysseus and his men, x.80-132.
- Lakedai'mon:** The country of Sparta, domain of Menelaos, iii.326, etc.
- La'mos:** The city of the Laistrygones, x.81.
- Lampe'tia:** Nymph, daughter of Helios and Neaira, who tended her father's cattle, xii.132; 374.
- Lam'pos:** One of the Dawn's horses, xxiii.246.
- Lao'damas:** Favorite son of Alkinoös, vii. 170; viii.117, etc.
- La'pithai:** The people of Peirithoös, xxi.297.
- Le'da:** Wife of Tyndareos, mother of Kastor and Polydeukes, xi.298.
- Lem'nos:** Island in the northern Aigaian, favored by Hephaistos, viii.283, etc.
- Leo'des:** A weak and well-meaning suitor, with prophetic skill, xxi.144, etc.; killed by Odysseus while begging for mercy, xxii. 310-329.
- Leo'kritos:** A suitor, ii.242; killed by Telemachos, xxii.294.
- Les'bos:** Island off Asia Minor, where Odysseus wrestled with Philomeleides, iv.342, etc.
- Le'to:** Mother (by Zeus) of Artemis and Apollo, vi.106, etc.; Tityos tormented after death for assaulting her, xi.580.
- Leuko'thea:** Ino's name as a divinity, v.333.
- Lib'ya:** The Greek name for Africa, iv.85; xiv,295.
- Lotus-Eaters:** Mysterious people visited by Odysseus and his men, ix.82-104.
- Mai'a:** Mother of Hermes, xiv.436, etc.
- Mai'ra:** Heroine seen by Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.326.
- Malei'a:** Southeastern cape on the mainland of Greece, iii.288, etc.
- Man'tios:** Son of Melampous, grandfather of Theoklymenos, xv.242.
- Ma'rathon:** District near Athens, favored by Athene (also, site of the subsequent battle), vii.80.
- Ma'ron:** Priest of Apollo at Ismaros, ix.197.
- Mas'tor:** Father of Halitherses, ii.157; xxiv.451.

- Me'don:** Herald of Odysseus in Ithaka, loyal to Penelope and Telemachos, iv.677, etc.; spared by Odysseus after the slaughter, xxii.361.
- Megapen'thes:** Son of Menelaos and a slave girl, iv.11; xv.100, etc.
- Me'gara:** Daughter of Kreion, wife of Herakles, xi.269.
- Melam'pous:** A famous soothsayer, xi.291; xv.256.
- Mel'aneus:** Father of Amphimedon, xxiv.103.
- Melan'thios:** Son of Dolios, goatherd who sided with the suitors and insulted and kicked Odysseus, xvii.212, etc.; aided the suitors in their battle, xxii.135; mutilated by Telemachos and the herdsmen, xxii.474.
- Melan'tho:** Daughter of Dolios, favored but treacherous maid of Penelope, xviii.321; xix.65.
- Mem'non:** Son of the Dawn, see iii.112 (where, however, he is not named); handsomest of men, xi.522.
- Menela'os:** Husband of Helen, great hero of the *Iliad*, iv.2, etc.
- Menoi'tios:** Father of Patroklos, xxiv.77.
- Men'tes:** Name assumed by Athene on her first visit to Telemachos, i.105, etc.
- Men'tor:** Ithakan friend of Odysseus, to whom he entrusted his household when he went to Troy, ii.225, etc.; frequently impersonated by Athene, ii.268; xxii.206; xxiv.548, etc.
- Mer'meros:** Father of Illos, i.259.
- Mesaul'ios:** Thrall of Eumaios, xiv.449.
- Messe'ne:** Territory in southwestern Greece, xxi.15.
- Mi'mas:** A mountainous promontory of Asia Minor, opposite Chios, iii.172.
- Mi'nos:** Son of Zeus and king of Crete, xix.178; judge in the land of the dead, xi.568; father of Ariadne, xi.322.
- Min'yan:** Name applied to Orchomenos, xi.284.
- Mou'lios:** Doulichian herald attached to Amphinomos, xviii.423.
- Myke'ne:** (1) a fabulous heroine of the past, ii.120; (2) the city of Agamemnon, iii.304.
- Myr'midons:** The people of Achilleus and Neoptolemos, iii.188, etc.
- Nau'bolos:** Father of Euryalos, viii.115.
- Nausi'kaa:** Daughter of Alkinoös and Arete, who befriended Odysseus, vi.17, etc.
- Nausi'thoös:** Founder of the Phaiakian settlement on Scheria, vi.7; son of Poseidon and father of Rhexenor and Alkinoös, vii. 56-63.
- Nau'teus:** A Phaiakian, viii.112.

- Neai'ra:** Wife of Helios, mother of Phaethousa and Lampetia, xii.133.
- Ne'leus:** Father of Nestor, former king in Pylos, iii.409, etc.
- Neopto'lemos:** Son of Achilleus, xi.506.
- Ne'rikos:** Place (on Leukas) once taken by Laertes, xxiv.378.
- Ne'ritos:** (1) Mountain of Ithaka, xiii.351; (2) builder of a well on Ithaka, xvii.207.
- Nes'tor:** The old hero of the *Iliad*, king in Pylos, i.284; iii.17, etc.
- Ni'sos:** King in Doulichion, father of Amphinomos, xviii.127, etc.
- Noë'mon:** Ithakan friend of Telemachos, who lent him his ship, ii.386; iv.630.
- Ocean:** Or Oke'anos, the waters surrounding the world and the god of those waters, iv.567; x.139; xi.639, etc.
- Odys'seus:** The hero, first mentioned by name, i.21; son of Laertes, iv.555, etc.; and of Antikleia, xi.85.
- Ogy'gia:** Kalypso's island, i.85, etc.
- Oidi'podes:** Or Oedipus, hero of Thebes (1), xi.271 (in Homer, strictly, Oidipodes).
- Oī'kles:** Father of Amphiaraos, xv.243.
- Oi'nops:** Father of Leodes, xxi.144.
- Oky'alos:** A Phaiakian, viii.111.
- Olym'pos:** The home of the gods, i.102, etc.; described, vi.42.
- One'tor:** Father of Phrontis, iii.282.
- Ops:** Father of Eurykleia, i.429.
- Orcho'menos:** Minyan city in Boiotia, xi.284.
- Ores'tes:** The son of Agamemnon, who avenged him, i.30; 298; iii.306, etc.
- Ori'on:** A hero loved by the Dawn, killed by Artemis, v.121; his ghost seen by Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.572; as a constellation, v.274.
- Or'menos:** Father of Ktesios, xv.414.
- Orsi'lochos:** Son of Idomeneus, in a story told by Odysseus, xiii.260.
- Orti'lochos:** Father of Diokles, iii.489; host to Odysseus in Messene, xxi.16.
- Orty'gia:** A place of uncertain location, where Artemis killed Orion, v.123; a place (the same?) "where the sun makes his turnings," near the Homeric Syria, xv.404.
- Os'sa:** A mountain in Thessaly, xi.315.
- O'tos:** Son of Poseidon and Iphimedea, brother of Ephialtes, gigantic child killed by Apollo, xi.308.

- Paië'on:** The god of medicine, iv.232.
- Pal'las:** Epithet of Athene, i.125, etc.
- Pandar'eos:** Father of “the nightingale,” xix.518; his daughters carried away by the stormwinds, xx.66.
- Pan'opeus:** A city in Phokis, xi.581.
- Paph'os:** A place on Cyprus, favored by Aphrodite, viii.362.
- Parnas'sos:** A great mountain in central Greece, xix.394, etc.
- Patrok'los:** Companion of Achilleus, a great hero of the *Iliad*, iii.110, etc.
- Peirai'os:** Man of Ithaka, friend and companion of Telemachos, xv.540, etc.
- Peiri'thoös:** Hero of former times, friend of Theseus, xi.631; king of the Lapiths, who punished Eurytion, xxi.296.
- Peisan'dros:** Son of Polyktor, a suitor, xviii.299; killed by Philoitios, xxii.268.
- Peise'nor:** (1) Herald in Ithaka, ii.37; (2) father of Ops, grandfather of Eurykleia, i.429, etc.
- Peisis'tratos:** Son of Nestor, greets Telemachos and Athene, iii.36; accompanies Telemachos to Sparta, iii.482, etc.
- Pelas'gians:** A mysterious people, variously located in the *Iliad*; in the *Odyssey*, they are found in Crete, xix.177.
- Pe'leus:** Father of Achilleus, v.310, etc.
- Pe'lias:** Son of Tyro and Poseidon, king in Iolkos, xi.256.
- Pe'lion:** A mountain in Thessaly, xi.316.
- Pene'lope:** Daughter of Ikarios, wife of Odysseus, i.223, etc.
- Periboi'a:** Daughter of Eurymedon, mother, by Poseidon, of Nausithoös, vii.57.
- Perikly'menos:** Son of Neleus and Chloris, brother of Nestor, xi.286.
- Perime'des:** A companion of Odysseus, xi.23; etc.
- Pe'ro:** Daughter of Neleus and Chloris, a great beauty, xi.287.
- Per'se:** Nymph, daughter of Ocean, x.139.
- Perse'phone:** Goddess, wife of Hades, queen over the dead, x.491, xi.47, etc.
- Per'seus:** Son of Nestor, iii.414 (not to be confused with the gorgon slayer).
- Pha'ethon:** One of the Dawn's horses, xxiii.246.
- Phaethou'sa:** Nymph, daughter of Helios and Neaira, who tended her father's cattle, xii.132.
- Phaia'kians:** The people of Alkinoös, v.35, etc.
- Phai'dimos:** King of the Sidonians, friend of Menelaos, iv.617.
- Phaid'rā:** Heroine seen by Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.321.
- Phais'tos:** City in Crete, iii.296.
- Pha'ros:** Island off Egypt where Menelaos captured Proteus, iv.355.
- Phe'ai:** A place on the mainland opposite Ithaka, xv.297.

- Phei'don:** King of Thesprotia, xiv.316.
- Phe'mios:** Son of Terpias, the singer who sang for the suitors, i.154, etc.; his life spared by Odysseus, xxii.331.
- Phe'rai:** (1) A place in Thessaly, the home of Eumelos, iv. 798; (2) a place between Pylos and Sparta, the home of Diokles, iii.488.
- Phe'res:** Son of Kretheus and Tyro, xi.259.
- Phloi'tios:** The oxherd who remained loyal to Odysseus, xx.185, etc.
- Philokte'tes:** A great hero and master Bowman of the Trojan War, iii.190; viii.219.
- Philomele'ides:** A wrestler of Lesbos, thrown by Odysseus, iv.343.
- Phoeni'cia, Phoeni'cians:** A nation and its people, noted as seafarers, traders, and slave traders, living on the Syrian coast, iv.83; xiv.288, etc.
- Phoi'bos:** Epithet of Apollo, iii.279, etc.
- Phor'kys:** An old man of the sea, xiii.345; father of Thoö'sa, i.72.
- Phron'ios:** Father of Noëmon, ii.386, etc.
- Phron'tis:** Son of Onetor, the steersman of Menelaos, iii.282.
- Phthi'a:** The home of Achilleus, xi.496.
- Phy'lake:** The home of Iphikles, xi. 290; xv.236.
- Phy'lakos:** A hero, possibly the same person as Iphikles, who imprisoned Melampous, xv.231.
- Phy'lo:** Handmaid of Helen, iv.125.
- Pie'ria:** Mountainous district near Mount Olympos, v.50.
- Plei'ades:** The constellation, v.272.
- Poi'as:** Father of Philoktetes, iii.190.
- Poli'tes:** A companion of Odysseus, x.224.
- Pol'ybos:** (1) Father of Eurymachos, i.399; (2) man of Egyptian Thebes, visited by Menelaos and Helen, iv.126; (3) craftsman, who made a ball used by the Phaiakians, viii.373; (4) suitor, xxii.243; killed by Eumaios, xxii.284.
- Polydam'na:** Egyptian lady, wife of Thon, who gave Helen a tranquilizing drug, iv.228.
- Polydeu'kes:** Son of Leda and Tyndareos, brother of Kastor (1), semi-immortalized by Zeus, xi.298-304.
- Polykas'te:** Youngest daughter of Nestor, who gave Telemachos a bath, iii.464.
- Polyk'tor:** (1) Builder of a well on Ithaka, xvii.207; (2) father of Peisandros, xviii.299.
- Polyne'os:** Father of Amphialos, viii.114.
- Polype'mon:** Father of Apheidas, xxiv.305.

**Polyphei'des:** Son of Mantios, a prophet, father of Theoklymenos, xv.249-256.

**Polyphe'mos:** Greatest of the Cyclopes, son of Poseidon, blinded by Odysseus, i.70; ix.403, etc.

**Polyther'ses:** Father of Ktesippos, xxii.287.

**Pon'teus:** A Phaiakian, viii.113.

**Ponto'noös:** Herald of Alkinoös, vii.182, etc.

**Posei'don:** Brother of Zeus, lord of the sea, enemy of Odysseus, i.20, etc.; father of Polyphemos, i.68-73, etc.

**Pramnei'an wine:** A wine used medicinally, origin unknown, x.235.

**Pri'am:** King of Troy, iii.107, etc.

**Prok'ris:** Heroine seen by Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.321.

**Pro'reus:** A Phaiakian, viii.113.

**Pro'teus:** The old man of the sea, iv.365-570.

**Prym'neus:** A Phaiakian, i.112.

**Psy'rios:** Island off Chios, iii.171.

**Py'los:** The city of Nestor on the southwest coast of Greece, i.93, etc.

**Pyriphle'gethon:** A river in the land of the dead, x.513.

**Py'tho:** Apollo's sanctuary on the slopes of Mount Parnassos, viii.80; xi.581.

**Rhadaman'thys:** Presumably king in the Elysian Field, iv.564.

**Rhei'thon:** Harbor on Ithaka, i.186.

**Rhexe'nor:** Son of Nausithoös, father of Arete, vii.63.

**Roving Rocks:** Located near the Sirens, xii.61; xxiii.327.

**Salmo'neus:** Father of Tyro, xi.236.

**Sam'e or Samos:** Large island (later Kephallenia), next to Ithaka and in the domain of Odysseus, i.246, etc.

**Sche'ria:** The land of the Phaiakians, v.34, etc.

**Sicilian:** Used of a people referred to as dealing in slaves, xx.383; provenence of Laertes' slave woman, xxiv.211, etc. (actually, the word is Si'kelos, which in Greek elsewhere refers to a native people in Sicily, or Sike'lia).

**Si'don, Sidon'ia:** City of the Phoenicians, xiii.286, etc.

**Sika'nia:** A place referred to by Odysseus, perhaps to be identified with Sicily, xxiv.307.

**Sin'tians:** Friends of Hephaistos in Lemnos, who spoke an uncouth language, viii.294.

**Si'rens:** Singing, dangerous creatures of the sea, xii.39, etc.

- Sis'yphos:** Hero tormented in the land of the dead, condemned to roll a stone forever uphill, xi.593.
- Skyl'la:** A man-eating monster who preyed on Odysseus' men, xii.85; 245, etc.
- Sky'ros:** Island from which Odysseus brought Neoptolemos to Troy, xi.509.
- So'lymoi:** A people visited by Poseidon, v.283.
- Sou'nion:** A sea cape of Attika, near Athens, iii.278.
- Spar'ta:** The city of Menelaos, i.93, etc.
- Stra'tios:** A son of Nestor, iii.413.
- Styx:** The river or waterfall by which the gods swear, v.185; located in the land of the dead, x.514.
- Sy'ria:** An island of uncertain location, the original home of Eumaios, xv.403.
- Tan'talos:** Hero tormented in the land of the dead, xi.582.
- Taph'ians:** A people, not certainly located, on or near the western coast of Greece, i.105; xiv.452.
- Taÿ'getos:** A mountain range in Lakedaimon, vi.103.
- Teire'sias:** Theban seer, who retained his powers even in the land of the dead, x.492, etc.; consulted by Odysseus and foretells his future, xi.90-137.
- Tek'ton:** Father of Polyneos, viii.114.
- Te'lamon:** The father of Aias (1), xi.553.
- Tele'machos:** The thoughtful son of Odysseus and Penelope, i.113, etc.
- Te'lemos:** Prophet of the Cyclopes, ix.509.
- Te'lephos:** Father of Eurypylos, xi.519.
- Tele'pylos:** City of the Laistrygones, x.82.
- Te'mese:** Place alleged to be her destination by Athene disguised as Mentes, i.184.
- Te'nedos:** Island off Asia Minor, near Troy, iii.159.
- Ter'pias:** Father of Phemios, xxii.330 (but the form of his name is uncertain).
- Thebes:** (1) City of Egypt, iv.127; (2) city of the Kadmeians in Boiotia, xv.247, etc.
- The'mis:** Goddess of what is right and proper, who supervises the assemblies of men, ii.68.
- Theokly'menos:** A man of prophetic family, fugitive from Argos, befriended by Telemachos, xv.223, etc. (first named, xv.256).
- The'seus:** Great hero of Athens, who carried Ariadne away from Crete,

xi.322, etc.

**Thespro'tians:** A people of the northwest mainland, xiv.315, etc.

**The'tis:** Nereid, married to Peleus, mother of Achilleus, xxiv.91.

**Tho'as:** Son of Andraimon, hero at Troy, xiv.499.

**Thon:** Egyptian, husband of Polydamna, iv.228.

**Tho'ön:** A Phaiakian, viii.113.

**Thoö'sa:** A nymph, daughter of Phorkys, mother of Polyphemos, i.71.

**Thrace:** Territory north of Greece, favored home of Ares, viii.361.

**Thrsyme'des:** Son of Nestor, iii.39, etc.

**Thrina'kia:** The island of Helios, where his sacred cattle were pastured, xi.107; xii.127, etc.

**Thyes'tes:** Father of Aigisthos, iv.517.

**Titho'nos:** The husband of the Dawn, v.1.

**Ti'tyos:** A hero tormented in the land of the dead, xi.576; mentioned, vii.324.

**Tritogenei'a:** A name for Athene, iii, 378.

**Tro'jans:** The people of Troy, i.237, etc.

**Troy:** The domain of Priam, whose city was Ilion, i.2, etc.

**Ty'deus:** Father of Diomedes, iii.167, etc.

**Tynda'reos:** Father of Kastor and Polydeukes, xi.298; of Klytaimestra, xxiv.199.

**Ty'ro:** A fabulous queen, ii.120; her ghost talked with Odysseus in the land of the dead, xi.235.

**Zakyn'thos:** Large island, part of the domain of Odysseus, i.246, etc.

**Ze'thos:** (1) Son of Antiope, and builder, with his brother Amphion, of Thebes, xi.262; (2) father of Itylos, xix.523.

**Zeus:** Son of Kronos, most powerful of the gods, i.10, etc.

## About the Author

**Richmond Lattimore** was born in 1906. He was considered one of the leading translators of Greek classical literature. He died in 1984.

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<sup>1</sup> It may seem unreasonable to distinguish the Great Wanderings (Troy to Kalypso's island) from the Homecoming (Kalypso's island to Ithaka). The reason for the distinction is Homer's way of recounting these two stages. The Great Wanderings are told by Odysseus in the first person; the Homecoming by the poet in his own person. This makes a great difference. For instance, when Odysseus is made to report divine intervention unseen by him, he has to find a plausible explanation (xii.389-390); when the poet tells the story in his own person, he can do as he pleases. Thus the change of technique, if nothing else, puts the two stages of wandering on different levels.

<sup>2</sup> See D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford, 1955), p. 53; for a contrary view, G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 358-360.

<sup>3</sup> I believe in one poet. There may have been more. Having said so much, I shall henceforth speak of “the poet.” There may, indeed there must, be interpolated lines and passages. I do not know which ones they are.

<sup>4</sup> By the *Nostoi* I mean, not the post-Homeric poem called *Nostoi* or returns, but the underlying material, traces of which are to be found in the *Odyssey* itself.

<sup>5</sup> Menelaos speaks in the same vein, iv.332-345.

<sup>6</sup> iii.180-192. It is interesting that for all these heroes, except Nestor, later variants had them either not reach home at all (Neoptolemos) or else wander after their homecomings. Both Diomedes and Idomeneus barely escaped the fate of Agamemnon. For Neoptolemos, see Pindar, *Sixth Paean*; for Idomeneus, see the late compilation of Apollodorus, edited and translated by J. A. Frazer (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1921), vol. ii, p. 249, and for Philoctetes, p. 257. For Diomedes, see the material in H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York, 1959), p. 237.

<sup>7</sup> According to Nestor, Odysseus set off in his company, but then turned back with some others (who? how many?) to rejoin Agamemnon (iii.162-164). Odysseus says nothing about this; in his own story he simply sets off from Ilion by himself, with his own contingent. There is no outright contradiction; there is certainly a gap.

<sup>8</sup> Hephaistos in the *Iliad* also has automatons; see *Iliad* XVIII. 372-377; 417-420. But Hephaistos is a god, and the Phaiakians are mortal men.

<sup>9</sup> For the Cyclopes, see Hesiod, *Theogony*, 139-146; see further the brief and clear account of Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Conveniently summarized by Frazer in an appendix to his translation of Apollodorus (cited above, note 6), vol. ii, pp. 404-455.

<sup>11</sup> We may instance the wraths, against Odysseus or other Achaian heroes, of Helios, i.9; xii.376; of Zeus and Helios, xix.276; of Zeus, iii.132, 152, 160, 288; ix.38, 552-555; xii.415; of Athene, i.327; iii.135; iv.502; v.108.

<sup>12</sup> See Kirk, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>13</sup> See W. W. Hyde, *Ancient Greek Mariners* (New York, 1947), pp. 72-96. This is an excellent concise account of identifications, ancient and modern, made for sites and landmarks in the *Odyssey*. It needs, however, to be brought up to date.

<sup>14</sup> For Sicily, see Thucydides vi.2.1; for Korkyra, i.25.4.

<sup>15</sup> See Baedeker's *Southern Italy* (1912), p. 410.

<sup>16</sup> See Baedeker's *Greece* (1909), p. 262.

<sup>17</sup> See J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas* (London, 1964), pp. 179-181.

<sup>18</sup> See the chapter by F. H. Stubbings, in Wace and Stubbings, *Companion to Homer* (London and New York, 1962), pp. 398-421.

<sup>19</sup> “You will find where Odysseus wandered,” said the Alexandrian geographer Eratosthenes, “when you find the cobbler who stitched the bag of the winds.” See Strabo, *Geography* i.2.15.

<sup>20</sup> For a recent statement and defense of this view, see G. deF. Lord, *Homeric Renaissance* (New Haven, 1956).

<sup>21</sup> See, for one instance out of many, xxii.413-416.

<sup>22</sup> See Page, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-130 and, in particular pp. 112-114.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Kirk, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>24</sup> For a contrary view see, for instance, D. B. Monro, *Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford, 1901), vol. 2, pp. 290-291. Monro comments on the “marked falling-off in the character of the chief actor.”

<sup>25</sup> This is the view of Page, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>26</sup> Contrast the story told by Odysseus to Eumaios about warriors on night picket duty before Troy, xiv.462-502. The chilliness of the task is emphasized.

<sup>27</sup> On this subject see Kirk, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-297.

<sup>28</sup> The words of Hektor to Andromache, *Iliad* VI.490-493 are repeated twice in the *Odyssey* (i.356-359; xxi. 350-353), and the last line and a half at xi.352-353; but the “fighting” of the *Iliad* passage is changed each time.