

## The Iliad

Homer

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## Book One The Quarrel by the Ships

*[The invocation to the Muse; Agamemnon insults Apollo; Apollo sends the plague onto the army; the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon; Calchas indicates what must be done to appease Apollo; Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles; Achilles prays to Thetis for revenge; Achilles meets Thetis; Chryseis is returned to her father; Thetis visits Zeus; the gods converse about the matter on Olympus; the banquet of the gods.]*

Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles, son of Peleus—  
that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans  
to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls  
deep into Hades, leaving their dead bodies  
carrion food for dogs and birds—  
all in fulfilment of the will of Zeus.

Start at the point where Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
that king of men, quarrelled with noble Achilles.  
Which of the gods incited these two men to fight?

[10] That god was Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto.  
Angry with Agamemnon, he cast plague down  
onto the troops—deadly infectious evil.  
For Agamemnon had dishonoured the god's priest,  
Chryses, who'd come to the ships to find his daughter,  
Chryseis, bringing with him a huge ransom.  
In his hand he held up on a golden staff  
the scarf sacred to archer god Apollo.  
He begged Achaeans, above all the army's leaders,  
the two sons of Atreus:

[20] "Menelaus, Agamemnon, sons of Atreus,  
all you well-armed Achaeans, may the gods  
on Olympus grant you wipe out Priam's city,  
and then return home safe and sound.  
Release my dear child to me. Take this ransom.  
Honour Apollo, far-shooting son of Zeus."

All the Achaeans roared out their support:  
“Respect the priest. Take the generous ransom.”  
Displeased, Agamemnon dismissed Chryses roughly:

“Old man,  
don’t let me catch you by our hollow ships,  
[30] sneaking back here today or later on.  
Who cares about Apollo’s scarf and staff?  
I’ll not release the girl to you, no, not before  
she’s grown old with me in Argos, far from home,  
working the loom, sharing my bed. Go away.  
If you want to get home safely, don’t anger me.”

The old man, afraid, obeyed his words, walked off in silence,  
along the shore by the tumbling, crashing surf.  
Some distance off, he prayed to lord Apollo,  
Leto’s fair-haired child:

“God with the silver bow,  
[40] protector of Chryse, sacred Cilla,  
mighty lord of Tenedos, Sminthean Apollo,  
hear my prayer:\* If I’ve ever pleased you  
with a holy shrine, or burned bones for you—  
bulls and goats well wrapped in fat—  
grant me my prayer. Force the Danaans  
to pay full price for my tears with your arrows.”

So Chryses prayed. Phoebus Apollo heard him.  
He came down from Olympus top enraged,  
carrying on his shoulders bow and covered quiver,  
[50] his arrows rattling in anger against his arm.  
So the god swooped down, descending like the night.  
He sat some distance from the ships, shot off an arrow—  
the silver bow reverberating ominously.

First, the god massacred mules and swift-running dogs,

then loosed sharp arrows in among the troops themselves.  
Thick fires burned the corpses ceaselessly.

For nine days Apollo rained death down upon the troops.  
On the tenth, Achilles summoned an assembly.  
White-armed Hera put that thought into his mind,  
[60] concerned for the Danaans, seeing them die.  
The men gathered. The meeting came to order.  
Swift-footed Achilles rose to speak:

“Son of Atreus,  
I fear we’re being beaten back, forced home,  
if we aren’t all going to be destroyed right here,  
with war and plague killing off Achaeans.  
Come now, let’s ask some prophet, priest,  
interpreter of dreams—for dreams, too, come from Zeus—  
a man who might say why Apollo is so angry,  
whether he faults our prayers and offerings,  
[70] whether somehow he’ll welcome sacrificial smoke  
from perfect lambs and goats, then rouse himself  
and release us from this plague.”

Achilles spoke and took his seat.  
Then Calchas, Thestor’s son, stood up before them all,  
the most astute interpreter of birds, who understood  
present, future, past. His skill in prophecy,  
Apollo’s gift, had led Achaean ships to Troy.  
He addressed the troops, thinking of their common good:

“Achilles, friend of Zeus, you ask me to explain  
Apollo’s anger, the god who shoots from far.  
[80] And I will speak. But first you listen to me.  
Swear an oath that you will freely help me  
in word and deed. I think I may provoke  
someone who wields great power over Argives,  
a man who is obeyed by everyone.  
An angry king overpowers lesser men.

Even if that day his anger is suppressed,  
resentment lingers in his chest, until one day  
he acts on it. So speak. Will you protect me?"

In response to Calchas, swift-footed Achilles said:

[90] "Take courage. State what your powers tell you.  
By Apollo, whom Zeus loves, to whom you, Calchas,  
pray in prophesy to the Danaans, I swear this—  
while I live to look upon the light of day,  
no Achaean will raise violent hands against you,  
no, not even if you name Agamemnon,  
who claims he's by far the best Achaean."

Encouraged, the wise prophet then declared:

"Apollo does not fault us for prayers or offerings,  
but for his priest, disgraced by Agamemnon,  
[100] who did not free his daughter and take ransom.  
That's why the archer god has brought disaster,  
and will bring still more. He won't remove  
this wretched plague from the Danaans,  
until we hand back bright-eyed Chryseis,  
give her to her beloved father, freely,  
without ransom, and offer holy sacrifice  
at Chryse. If we will carry out all that,  
we may change Apollo's mind, appease him."

So he spoke and sat back down. Then, Atreus' son,  
[110] wide-ruling, mighty Agamemnon, stood up before them,  
incensed, spirit filled with huge black rage.  
Eyes blazing fire, he rounded first on Calchas:

"Prophet of evil, when have you ever said  
good things to me? You love to predict the worst,  
always the worst! You never show good news.  
Now, in prophecy to the Danaans,  
you say archer Apollo brings us pain  
because I was unwilling to accept

fine ransom for Chryses' daughter, Chryseis.  
[120] But I have a great desire to take her home.  
In fact, I want her more than Clytaemnestra,  
the wife I married. Chryseis is just as good  
in her shape, physique, intelligence, or work.  
Still, I'm prepared to give her back, if that's best.  
I want the people safe, not all killed off.  
But then you'll owe me another prize.  
I won't be the only Argive left without a gift.  
That would be entirely unfair to me.  
You all can see my spoils are going elsewhere."

[130] At that point, swift-footed Achilles answered the king:

"Noble son of Atreus, most acquisitive of men,  
how can brave Achaeans give you a prize now?  
There are none left for us to pass around.  
We've divided up what we allotted,  
loot from captured towns we devastated.  
For men to make a common pile again  
would be most unfair. Send the girl back now,  
as the god demands. Should Zeus ever grant  
we pillage Troy, a city rich in goods,  
[140] we'll give you three or four times as much."

Mighty Agamemnon then said in reply:

"Achilles, you're a fine man, like a god.  
But don't conceal what's in your heart.  
You'll not trick me or win me with your words.  
You intend to keep your prizes for yourself,  
while the army takes my trophy from me.  
That's why you tell me to give Chryseis back.  
Let Achaeans give me another prize,  
equal in value, something I'll enjoy.  
[150] If not, then I'll take a prize myself by force,  
something from you or Ajax or Odysseus.

The man I visit is going to be enraged.  
But let's postpone discussion of all this.  
Let's drag a black ship to the sacred sea,  
select a crew, load oxen on for sacrifice,  
and Chryseis, that fair-complexioned girl.  
Let's have as leader some wise counsellor—  
Idomeneus, Ajax, godlike Odysseus,  
or you, Peleus's son, most eminent of all,  
[160] so with a sacrifice we may appease  
the god who shoots from far away."

Scowling grimly, swift-footed Achilles interposed:  
"You insatiable creature, quite shameless.  
How can any Achaean obey you willingly—  
join a raiding party or keep fighting  
with full force against an enemy?  
I didn't come to battle over here  
because of Trojans. I have no fight with them.  
They never stole my bulls or horses  
[170] or razed my crops in fertile Phthia,  
where heroes grow. Many shady mountains  
and the roaring sea stand there between us.  
But you, great shameless man, we came with you,  
to please you, to win honour from the Trojans—  
for you, dog face, and for Menelaus.  
You don't consider this, don't think at all.  
You threaten now to confiscate the prize  
I worked so hard for, gift from Achaea's sons.  
When we Achaeans loot some well-built Trojan town,  
[180] my prizes never match the ones you get.  
The major share of war's fury rests on me.  
But when we hand around the battle spoils,  
you get much larger trophies. Worn out in war,  
I reach my ships with something fine but small.  
So I'll return home now to Phthia.  
It's far better to sail back in my curved ships.  
I don't fancy staying here unvalued,



to pile up riches, treasures just for you.”

To that, Agamemnon, king of men, shot back:

- [190] “Fly off home then, if that’s your heart’s desire.  
I’ll not beg you to stay on my account.  
I have others around to honour me,  
especially all-wise Zeus himself.  
Of all the kings Zeus cherishes, it’s you  
I hate the most. You love constant strife—  
war and combat. So what if you’re strong?  
Some god gave you that. So scurry off home.  
Take ships and friends. Go rule your Myrmidons.  
I don’t like you or care about your rage.
- [200] But I’ll make this threat: I’ll take your prize,  
fair-cheeked Briseis. I’ll fetch her in person.  
You’ll see just how much I’m the better man.  
And others will hate to speak to me as peers,  
in public claiming full equality with me.”

- As Agamemnon spoke, Peleus’ son, Achilles,  
was overwhelmed with anguish, heart torn two ways,  
debating in his shaggy chest what he should do:  
Should he draw out the sharp sword on his thigh,  
incite the crowd, kill Atreus’ son, or suppress his rage,  
[210] control his fury? As he argued in his mind and heart,  
he slid his huge sword part way from its sheath.  
At that moment, Athena came down from heaven.  
White-armed Hera sent her. She cherished both men,  
cared for them equally. Athena stood behind Achilles,  
grabbed him by his golden hair, invisible to all  
except Achilles. In astonishment he turned.  
At once he recognized Pallas Athena,  
the dreadful glitter in her eyes. Achilles spoke—  
his words had wings.

“Child of aegis-bearing Zeus,

[220] why have you come now?\* Do you wish to see  
how overbearing Agamemnon is?  
I'll tell you where all this is going to lead—  
that arrogance will soon cost him his life.”

Glittery-eyed Athena then spoke in reply:

“I came down from heaven to curb your passion,  
if you obey. White-armed Hera sent me.  
She loves you both alike, cares equally.  
Give up this quarrel. Don't draw your sword.  
Fight him with words, so he becomes disgraced.

[230] For I say to you, and this will happen,  
because of Agamemnon's arrogance  
some day gifts three times greater than this girl  
will be set down before you. Control yourself.  
Obey.”

Swift-footed Achilles answered Athena:  
“Goddess, men should follow your instructions,  
though angry in their hearts. It's better so.  
The person who's obedient to the gods,  
the gods attend to all the more.”

Obeying Athena's words,  
Achilles relaxed his huge fist on the silver hilt  
[240] and pushed the massive sword back in its scabbard.  
Athena then returned to heaven, home of Zeus,  
who bears the aegis, and the other gods.

Achilles turned again on Agamemnon, Atreus' son,  
with harsh abuse, his anger still unabated:

“You drunken sot, dog-eyed, deer-timid coward,  
you're never strong enough within yourself  
to arm for war alongside other comrades,  
or venture with Achaea's bravest on a raid.

To you that smells too much like death.  
[250] No. You'd much prefer to stroll around  
throughout the wide Achaean army,  
to grab gifts from a man who speaks against you.  
A king who gorges on his own people!  
You lord it over worthless men. If not,  
son of Atreus, this would be your last offence.  
I'll tell you, swear a great oath on this point,  
by this sceptre, which will never sprout  
leaves and shoots again, since first ripped away  
from its mountain stump, nor bloom any more,  
[260] now that bronze has sliced off leaf and bark.  
This sceptre Achaea's sons take in hand  
whenever they do justice in Zeus' name.  
An oath on this has power. On this I swear—  
the time will come when Achaea's sons  
all miss Achilles, a time when, in distress,  
you'll lack my help, a time when Hector,  
that man killer, destroys many warriors.  
Then grief will tear your hearts apart,  
because you shamed Achaea's finest man."

[270] So the son of Peleus spoke, throwing to the ground  
the sceptre with the golden studs. Then he sat down,  
directly facing furious Agamemnon.

Then Nestor stood up, clear, sweet orator from Pylos.  
Sweeter than honey the words flowed from his tongue.  
In his own lifetime two generations of mortal men  
had come and passed away, all those born and raised  
with him so long ago in sacred Pylos.  
Now he ruled a third generation of his people.  
Concerned about their common good, he said:

[280] "Alas, this is great sorrow for Achaeans.  
Priam and Priam's children will be glad,  
the hearts of other Trojans swell with joy,

should they find out about such quarrelling,  
a fight between you two, among Danaans  
the very best for counsel or combat.  
But listen. You are both younger men than I.  
And I've been colleague of better men than you,  
men who never showed me any disrespect,  
men whose like I have not seen again,  
[290] and never will—like Peirithous, Dryas,  
a shepherd to his people, Caeneus,  
Exadios, god-like Polyphemus,  
Theseus, son of Aegeus, all god-like men—  
the mightiest earthborn men, the strongest.  
And the enemies they fought against were strong,  
the most powerful of mountain centaurs.  
But they destroyed those creatures totally.  
Associate of theirs, I came from Pylos,  
a long way from that land, summoned personally.  
[300] I fought on my own behalf, by myself.  
No man alive on earth could now fight them.  
Yet they heard me and followed my advice.  
So listen, both of you. That's what's best now.  
Agamemnon, you're an excellent man,  
but do not take Briseis from Achilles.  
Let that pass. Achaea's sons gave her to him first.  
And you, Peleus' son, don't seek to fight the king,  
not as your enemy. The sceptre-bearing king,  
whose powerful authority comes from Zeus,  
[310] never shares honours equally. Achilles,  
you may be stronger, since your mother was divine,  
but he's more powerful, for he rules more men.  
But you, son of Atreus, check your anger.  
Set aside, I urge you, your rage against Achilles,  
who provides, in the middle of war's evils,  
a powerful defence for all Achaeans."

Mighty Agamemnon then replied to Nestor:

“Old man, everything you say is true enough.  
But this man wants to put the rest to shame,  
[320] rule all of us, lord it over everyone.  
But some, I think, will not obey him.  
So what if the gods, who live forever,  
made him a spearman? Is that some reason  
we should let him say such shameful things?”

Achilles, interrupting Agamemnon, shouted:

“I’d be called a coward, a nobody,  
if I held back from any action  
because of something you might say.  
Order other men about. Don’t tell me  
[330] what I should do. I’ll not obey you any more.  
But I will tell you this—remember it well—  
I’ll not raise my hand to fight about that girl,  
no, not against you or any other man.  
You Achaeans gave her to me, and now,  
you seize her back again. But you’ll not take  
another thing from my swift black ship—  
you’ll get nothing else with my consent.  
If you’d like to see what happens, just try.  
My spear will quickly drip with your dark blood.”

[340] Thus the pair of them continued arguing.  
Then they stood up, dissolving the assembly by the ships.  
Peleus’s son went back to his well-balanced ships and huts,  
along with Patroclus, Menoetius’ son, and friends.

Agamemnon dragged a swift ship down the shore,  
chose twenty sailors, loaded on the oxen,  
offerings for the god, and led on fair-cheeked Chryseis.  
Shrewd Odysseus shipped on as leader. All aboard,  
they set off, carving a pathway through the sea.

Atreus’ son ordered troops to cleanse themselves.

[350] The men bathed in the sea, washed off impurities.  
They then made sacrificial offerings to Apollo—  
hundreds of perfect bulls and goats—beside the restless sea.  
Savoury smells curled up amid the smoke high into heaven.

The men thus occupied, Agamemnon did not forget  
the challenge he'd made earlier to Achilles.  
He called his heralds, Talthybius and Eurybates:

“Go to Achilles’ tent, Peleus’s son,  
take fair-complexioned Briseis by the hand.  
Bring her to me. If he won’t surrender her,  
[360] I’ll come myself in force and take her.  
For him that will be a worse disaster.”

With these firm orders, he dismissed the men, who moved off,  
heavy hearted, along the shore of the restless sea.  
They reached the huts and ships of the Myrmidons.  
There they found Achilles seated by his hut  
and his black ship. As he saw them approach,  
Achilles felt no joy. The two heralds, afraid,  
just stood in silence, out of deference to the king.  
In his heart Achilles sensed their purpose. He called them.

[370] “Cheer up, heralds, messengers for gods and men.  
Come here. I don’t blame you, but Agamemnon.  
He sends you both here for the girl Briseis.  
Come, Patroclus, born from Zeus, fetch the girl.  
Give her to these two to take away.  
Let them both witness, before blessed gods,  
mortal men, and that unfeeling king,  
if ever there’s a need for me again  
to defend others from a shameful death.  
That man’s wits are foolish, disastrously so—  
[380] he’s not thinking about past or future,  
how Achaeans may fight safely by their ships.”

Patroclus did as his dear comrade had requested.  
He led out fair-cheeked Briseis from the hut  
and gave her up to be led off. The heralds went back,  
returning to Achaean ships, Briseis with them,  
but against her will.

Achilles then, in tears,  
withdrew from his companions, sat by the shore,  
staring at the wide grey seas. Stretching out his hands,  
he cried aloud, praying repeatedly to Thetis,  
his beloved mother.\*

[390] “Mother, since you gave me life—  
if only for a while—Olympian Zeus,  
high thunderer, should give me due honour.  
But he doesn’t grant me even slight respect.  
For wide-ruling Agamemnon, Atreus’ son,  
has shamed me, has taken away my prize,  
appropriated it for his own use.”

As he said this, he wept.  
His noble mother heard him from deep within the sea,  
where she sat by her old father. Quickly she rose up,  
moving above grey waters, like an ocean mist,  
[400] and settled down before him, as he wept. She stroked him,  
then said:

“My child, why these tears? What sorrows  
weigh down your heart? Tell me, so we’ll both know.  
Don’t hide from me what’s on your mind.”

With a deep groan, swift-footed Achilles then replied.

“You know. Why should I tell you what you know?  
We came to Thebe, Eëtion’s sacred city,  
sacked it, taking everything the city had.  
Achaëa’s sons apportioned it all fairly

- amongst themselves. Agamemnon's share  
[410] was fair-skinned Chryseis. Then Chryses arrived  
at the swift ships of bronze-armed Achaeans.  
Archer god Apollo's priest sought out his daughter.  
He brought with him an enormous ransom,  
carried in his hands the sacred golden staff  
with the shawl of archer god Apollo.  
He begged Achaeans, above all Atreus' two sons,  
the people's leaders. All Achaeans called on them  
to respect the priest, accept the splendid ransom.  
But that didn't please Agamemnon in his heart.  
[420] He sent him roughly off with harsh abusive orders  
The old man went away again, enraged.  
He prayed to Apollo, who loved him well.  
The god heard him and sent his deadly arrows  
against the Argives. The troops kept dying,  
one by one, as the god rained arrows down  
throughout the wide Achaean army.  
The prophet Calchas, understanding all,  
told us Apollo's will. At once I was the first  
to recommend we all appease the god.  
[430] But anger got control of Agamemnon.  
He stood up on the spot and made that threat  
which he's just carried out. So quick-eyed Achaeans  
are sending Chryseis in fast ships back to Chryse,  
transporting gifts for lord Apollo, and heralds came  
to take away Briseis from my huts,  
the girl who is my gift from Achaea's sons.  
So now, if you can, protect your son.  
Go to Mount Olympus, implore Zeus,  
if ever you in word or deed have pleased him.  
[440] For often I have heard you boast in father's house  
that you alone of all the deathless gods  
saved Zeus of the dark clouds from disgraceful ruin,  
when other Olympians came to tie him up,  
Hera, Pallas Athena, and Poseidon.  
But you, goddess, came and set him free,



by quickly calling up to high Olympus  
that hundred-handed monster gods call Briareos,  
and men all name Aigaion, a creature  
whose strength was greater than his father's.\*

[450] He sat down beside the son of Cronos,  
exulting in his glory. The sacred gods, afraid,  
stopped tying up Zeus. So sit down right by Zeus,  
clasp his knee, remind him of all that,  
so he'll want to help the Trojans somehow,  
corner Achaeans by the sea, by their ships' prows,  
have them destroyed, so they all enjoy their king,  
so the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon,  
himself may see his foolishness, dishonouring  
Achilles, the best of the Achaeans."

[460] Thetis, shedding tears, answered her son, Achilles:

"O my child, why did I rear you,  
since I brought you up to so much pain?  
Would you were safely by your ships dry-eyed.  
Your life is fated to be short—you'll not live long.  
Now, faced with a quick doom, you're in distress,  
more so than any other man. At home,  
I gave you life marked by an evil fate.  
But I'll tell these things to thunder-loving Zeus.  
I'll go myself to snow-topped Mount Olympus,

[470] to see if he will undertake all this.

Meanwhile, you should sit by your swift ships,  
angry at Achaeans. Take no part in war.  
For yesterday Zeus went to Oceanus,  
to banquet with the worthy Ethiopians.  
The gods all journeyed with him. In twelve days,  
when he returns and comes home to Olympus,  
I'll go to Zeus' bronze-floored house, clasp his knee.  
I think I'll get him to consent."

Thetis spoke.

Then she went away, leaving Achilles there,  
[480] angry at heart for lovely girdled Briseis,  
taken from him by force against his will.

Odysseus sailed to Chryse, bringing with him  
the sacrificial animals as sacred offerings.  
When they had sailed into deep anchorage,  
they took in the sails and stowed them in the ship.  
With forestays they soon set the mast down in its notch,  
then rowed the ship in to its mooring place.  
They threw out anchor stones, lashed stern cables,  
and clambered out into the ocean surf.  
[490] They brought off the offerings to archer god Apollo.  
Then Chryseis disembarked from the ocean ship.  
Resourceful Odysseus led her to the altar,  
placed her in her beloved father's hands, then said:

“Chryses, I have been sent by Agamemnon,  
ruler of men, to bring your daughter to you,  
and then, on behalf of the Danaans,  
to make an offering to lord Apollo—  
all these sacrificial beasts—to placate the god,  
who now inflicts such dismal evil on us.”

[500] After saying this, he handed the girl over.  
Chryses gave his daughter a joyful welcome back.  
And then around the well-built altar, they arranged  
the splendid sacrifice. They washed their hands,  
and picked up the barley grain for sprinkling.  
Raising his arms, Chryses prayed out loud on their behalf:

“Hear me, god of the silver bow, protector  
of Chryse, mighty lord of holy Cilla,  
sacred Tenedos. You heard me earlier,  
when I prayed to you. Just as you honoured me,  
[510] striking hard against Achaeans then, so now,  
grant me what I pray for—remove disaster,

this wretched evil, from the Danaans.”

So Chryses spoke. Phoebus Apollo heard him.  
Once they had prayed and scattered barley grain,  
they pulled back the heads of sacrificial beasts,  
slit their throats, flayed them, sliced the thigh bones out,  
and hid them in twin layers of fat, with raw meat on top.  
Old Chryses burned them on split wood, poured wine on them.  
Young men beside him held out five-pronged forks.

[520] Once the thighs were well burned, they sampled entrails,  
then sliced up all the rest, skewered the meat on spits,  
roasted it carefully, and drew off every piece.  
That work complete, they then prepared a meal and ate.  
No heart was left unsatisfied. All feasted equally.  
And when the men had had their fill of food and drink,  
young boys filled the mixing bowl with wine up to the brim,  
and served it, pouring libations into every cup.  
Then all day long young Achaean lads played music,  
singing to the god a lovely hymn of praise,

[530] honouring in dance and song the god who shoots from far.  
Hearing them, Apollo felt joy fill his heart. At sunset,  
as dusk came on, by the ship’s stern they went to sleep.  
But when early born, rose-fingered Dawn appeared,  
they set off, once more back to the wide Achaean camp.  
Far-shooting Apollo sent them favourable winds.  
They raised the mast and then the sails. The wind blew,  
filling out the body of the sail—on both sides of the prow  
the purple waves hissed loudly as the ship sped on its way,  
its motion carving a path through the ocean swell.

[540] When they reached the broad Achaean army,  
they hauled the black ship high up on the sand,  
pushed long props tight beneath it, then dispersed,  
each man returning to his own huts and ships.

Meanwhile, Achilles, divinely born son of Peleus,  
sat down in anger alongside his swift ships. Not once  
did he attend assembly where men win glory

or go out to fight. But he pined away at heart,  
remaining idle by his ships, yearning  
for the hue and cry and clash of battle.

[550] Twelve days later, the company of gods came back  
together to Olympus, with Zeus in the lead.  
Thetis did not forget the promise to her son.  
She rose up through the ocean waves at daybreak,  
then moved high up to great Olympus. She found Zeus,  
wide-seeing son of Cronos, some distance from the rest,  
seated on the highest peak of many-ridged Olympus.  
She sat down right in front of him. With her left hand,  
she clutched his knees, with her right she cupped his chin,  
in supplication to lord Zeus, son of Cronos:

[560] “Father Zeus, if, among the deathless gods,  
I’ve ever served you well in word or deed,  
then grant my prayer will be fulfilled.  
Bring honour to my son, who, of all men  
will be fate’s quickest victim. For just now,  
Agamemnon, king of men, has shamed him.  
He seized his prize, robbing him in person,  
and kept it for himself. But honour him,  
Zeus, all-wise Olympian. Give the Trojans  
the upper hand, until Achaeans respect my son,  
[570] until they multiply his honours.”

Thetis finished. Cloud gatherer Zeus did not respond.  
He sat a long time silent. Thetis held his knees,  
clinging close, repeating her request once more:

“Promise me truly, nod your head, or deny me—  
since there’s nothing here for you to fear—  
so I’ll clearly see how among the gods  
I enjoy the least respect of all.”

Cloud gatherer Zeus, greatly troubled, said:

“A nasty business.

What you say will set Hera against me.

[580] She provokes me so with her abuse. Even now,  
in the assembly of immortal gods,  
she’s always insulting me, accusing me  
of favouring the Trojans in the war.  
But go away for now, in case Hera catches on.  
I’ll take care of this, make sure it comes to pass.  
Come, to convince you, I’ll nod my head.  
Among gods that’s the strongest pledge I make.  
Once I nod my assent, nothing I say  
can be revoked, denied, or unfulfilled.”

[590] Zeus, son of Cronos, nodded his dark brows.  
The divine hair on the king of gods fell forward,  
down over his immortal head, shaking Olympus  
to its very base. The conference over, the two parted.  
Thetis plunged from bright Olympus back into the sea.

Zeus went inside his house. Their father present,  
all the gods at once stood up from their seats.  
No one dared stay put as he came in—all rose together.  
Zeus seated himself upon his throne. Looking at him,  
Hera sensed he’d made some deal with Thetis,  
[600] silver-footed daughter of the Old Man of the Sea.  
At once she spoke up accusingly:

“Which god has been scheming with you, you crafty one?  
You always love to work on things in secret,  
without involving me. You never want  
to tell me openly what you intend.”

The father of gods and men replied:

“Hera,  
don’t hope to understand my every plan.

Even for my own wife that's dangerous.  
What's appropriate for you to hear about,  
[610] no one, god or man, will know before you.  
But when I wish to hide my thoughts from gods,  
don't you go digging after them,  
or pestering me for every detail."

Ox-eyed queen Hera then replied to Zeus:

"Most dread son of Cronos, what are you saying?  
I have not been overzealous before now,  
in questioning you or seeking answers.  
Surely you're quite at liberty to plan  
anything you wish. But now, in my mind,  
[620] I've got this dreadful fear that Thetis,  
silver-footed daughter of the Old Man of the Sea,  
has won you over, for this morning early,  
she sat down beside you, held your knees.  
I think you surely nodded your agreement  
to honour Achilles, killing many soldiers,  
slaughtering them by the Achaean ships."

Zeus, the cloud gatherer, spoke out in response:

"My dear lady, you're always fancying things.  
Your attention picks up every detail.  
[630] But you can't do anything about it,  
except push yourself still further from my heart,  
making matters so much worse for you.  
If things are as they are, then that's the way  
I want them. So sit down quietly.  
Do as I say. If not, then all the gods  
here on Olympus won't be any help,  
when I reach out to set my hands on you,  
for they're invincible."

Zeus finished speaking.

Ox-eyed queen Hera was afraid—so she sat down,  
[640] silently suppressing what her heart desired.

In Zeus' home the Olympian gods began to quarrel.  
Then that famous artisan, Hephaestus, concerned  
about his mother, white-armed Hera, spoke to them:

“A troublesome matter this will prove—  
unendurable—if you two start fighting  
over mortal men like this, inciting gods to quarrel. .  
If we start bickering, we can't enjoy the meal,  
our excellent banquet. So I'm urging mother,  
though she's more than willing, to humour Zeus,  
[650] our dear father, so he won't get angry once again,  
disturb the feast for us. For if Zeus,  
the Olympian lord of lightning, was of a mind  
to hurl us from our seats, his strength's too great.  
But if you talk to him with soothing words,  
at once Olympian Zeus will treat us well.”

Hephaestus spoke, then stood up, passed a double goblet  
across to his dear mother, saying:

“Stay calm, mother, even though you are upset.  
If not, then, as beloved as you are,  
[660] I may see you beaten up before my eyes,  
with me incapable of helping out,  
though the sight would make me most unhappy.  
It's hard to take a stand opposing Zeus.  
Once, when I was eager to assist you,  
Zeus seized me by the feet and threw me out,  
down from heaven's heights. The entire day  
I fell and then, right at sunset, dropped  
on Lemnos, almost dead. After that fall,  
men of Sintes helped me to recover.”

[670] As he spoke, the white-armed goddess Hera smiled.  
She reached for her son's goblet. He poured the drink,

going from right to left, for all the other gods,  
drawing off sweet nectar from the mixing bowl.  
Then their laughter broke out irrepressibly,  
as the sacred gods saw Hephaestus bustling around,  
concerned about the feast. All that day they dined,  
until sunset. No one's heart went unsatisfied.  
All feasted equally. They heard exquisite music,  
from Apollo's lyre and the Muses' beautiful song  
[680] and counter-song. When the sun's bright light had set,  
the gods all went to their own homes. Hephaestus,  
the famous lame god, with his resourceful skill,  
had made each god a place to live. Olympian Zeus,  
god of lightning, went home to his own bed,  
where he usually reclined whenever sweet sleep  
came over him. He went inside and lay down there,  
with Hera of the golden throne stretched out beside him.



## Book Two

### Agamemnon's Dream and the Catalogue of Ships

*[Zeus sends a false dream to Agamemnon; Agamemnon reports the dream to his advisors and outlines a test of the army; Agamemnon urges his troops to go home; Odysseus restores order; Thersites insults Agamemnon; Odysseus deals with Thersites, reminds the men of Calchas' original prophecy; Nestor suggests a display of the troops; the Catalogue of Ships (list of the Achaean, Trojan, and allied forces)]*

Gods and warriors slept through the entire night.  
But sweet Sleep did not visit Zeus, tossing and turning  
over in his mind some way to honour Achilles,  
by slaughtering many soldiers by the Achaean ships.  
In Zeus' heart the best idea seemed to be  
to send out a wicked Dream to Agamemnon.  
Calling the Dream, Zeus said these winged words to him:

“Evil Dream, fly quickly to Achaea's men,  
[10] by their swift ships. Go to Agamemnon's hut,  
Atreus' son. Report my words precisely.  
Bid him quickly arm long-haired Achaean troops,  
for now they'll capture Troy, city of wide streets.  
Immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus  
no longer disagree about all this.  
Hera's entreaties have persuaded them.  
Trojans can expect more sorrows, more disasters.”

Zeus spoke. With these instructions, Dream set off,  
quickly reaching Achaea's fast ships and Atreus's son.  
He found Agamemnon resting in his hut,  
[20] wrapped up in the sweet divinity of Sleep.  
Dream stood above his head, looking just like Nestor,  
son of Neleus, of all the more senior men  
the one Agamemnon held in special honour.  
In that shape, divine Dream spoke to Agamemnon:

“You are sleeping, son of fiery Atreus,

tamer of horses. But a prudent man,  
one to whom people have given their trust,  
who has so many things to think about,  
shouldn't sleep all night. So pay attention.

[30] Hear what I have to say. I come to you  
as Zeus' messenger, with his orders.  
He's far off, but pities and cares for you.  
He bids you quickly arm long-haired Achaeans,  
for now you can take Troy, city of wide streets.  
The immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus  
no longer disagree about all this.  
Hera's entreaties have persuaded them.  
Trojans can expect from Zeus more sorrows,  
more disasters. Remember what I've said.

[40] Don't let forgetfulness seize your mind,  
when honey Sleep has loosed his sweet grip on you."

This said, Dream went off, leaving the king imagining things  
which would not come to pass. He thought he'd take Troy,  
Priam's city, that very day. Fool! He had no clue  
of what Zeus really meant, his plan to load on them,  
Trojans and Danaans both, still more suffering,  
more cries of sorrow, through war's brutality.

Agamemnon roused himself from sleep, the divine voice  
all round him still. He sat up, pulled on a supple tunic,  
[50] new and finely made. On top he threw a large cloak.  
He laced up lovely sandals over his sleek feet  
and slung a silver-studded sword around both shoulders.  
He took with him the royal staff of his ancestors,  
eternal and imperishable. Gripping this,  
he approached the ships of the bronze-armed Achaeans.

When goddess Dawn rose high up on Olympus,  
bringing light to Zeus and the immortals,  
Agamemnon bid the loud-voiced heralds summon  
all the long-haired Achaeans to assembly.

[60] Such a call went out. Men answered on the run.  
But first, Agamemnon convened a meeting  
of all his great-hearted senior counsellors.  
They met by Nestor's ships, king born on Pylos.  
To the assembled group Agamemnon then sketched out  
a plan he had conceived—a devious one.

“My friends, listen.  
A divine Dream has just come to me,  
through the sacred night, as I lay asleep,  
in form, size, and voice just like worthy Nestor.  
He stood above my head and spoke these words:

[70] ‘You are sleeping, son of fiery Atreus,  
tamer of horses. But a prudent man,  
one to whom people have given their trust,  
who has so many things to think about,  
shouldn't sleep all night. So pay attention.  
Hear what I have to say. I come to you  
as Zeus' messenger, with his orders.  
He's far off, but pities and cares for you.  
He bids you quickly arm long-haired Achaeans,  
for now you can take Troy, city of wide streets.

[80] Immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus  
no longer disagree about all this.  
Hera's entreaties have persuaded them.  
The Trojans can expect from Zeus more sorrows,  
more disasters. Remember what I've said.’

With that, Dream flew off, sweet Sleep released me.  
Come, then, let's get long-haired Achaeans  
somehow armed for battle. But first,  
it's only right I test the men, ordering them  
to go home in their ships with many oars.

[90] You hold them back with your commands,  
each one working from his own position.”

Agamemnon finished speaking and sat back down.  
Nestor stood up before them, king of sandy Pylos.  
With a wise sense of their common cause, he addressed them:

“My friends, chiefs and leaders of the Argives,  
if any other Achaeon had told us such a dream,  
we would declare it quite false, dismiss it.  
But now the man who has a claim to be  
the greatest of Achaeans has witnessed it.  
[100] So come, let’s find a way to arm Achaea’s sons.”

So Nestor spoke. Then he began to make his way back,  
leaving the council meeting. The others stood up,  
all sceptre-bearing kings, following Nestor’s lead,  
his people’s shepherd. Troops came streaming out to them.  
Just as dense clouds of bees pour out in endless swarms  
from hollow rocks, in clusters flying to spring flowers,  
charging off in all directions, so from ships and huts  
the many clans rushed out to meet, group after group.  
Among the troops Rumour blazed, Zeus’ messenger,  
[110] igniting them. The assembly was in uproar.

Beneath the men, as they sat amid the din, earth groaned.  
Nine heralds shouted out instructions, attempting  
to control the noise, so men could hear their leaders,  
god’s chosen ones. Gradually men settled down,  
kept quiet in their places. The noise subsided.  
King Agamemnon stood up, hands gripping his staff,  
one fashioned by Hephaestus’ careful craftsmanship.  
That god had given it to lord Zeus, son of Cronos.  
Later Zeus had presented it to Hermes,  
[120] the guide, killer of Argus. Hermes, in his turn,  
gave it to king Pelops, the chariot racer,  
who passed the staff to Atreus, the people’s leader.  
This man, as he lay dying, left it for Thyestes,  
who owned many flocks. Thyestes, in his turn,  
passed it onto Agamemnon, who held it  
as ruler of all Argos and many islands.

With this staff as his support, Agamemnon spoke:

- “You Danaan warriors, comrades,  
companions of Ares, god of war,  
[130] Zeus, son of Cronos, has entangled me  
in some really serious foolishness.  
Perverse Zeus! He promised me, he agreed—  
I’d have devastated well-built Troy  
before going home. Now he plans a cruel trick,  
tells me to return to Argos dishonoured,  
after I’ve lost so many warriors.  
This is apparently what high Zeus desires,  
he who has smashed so many city heights,  
and will destroy still more, such is his power,  
[140] the greatest power of all. This is a great disgrace,  
which people will learn about in years to come—  
how an Achaean force of such quality and size  
vainly sailed off to fight a lesser force,  
and failed to get what they set out to take.  
For if we Achaeans and the Trojans wished,  
in good faith, to draw up a treaty,  
to tally up the numbers on both sides,  
with Trojans counting each inhabitant of Troy,  
and if we Achaeans set ourselves in groups of ten,  
[150] then chose, for every group, a Trojan man  
to pour our wine, then of our groups of ten  
many would lack a man to act as steward.  
That, I tell you, indicates just how much  
Achaea’s sons outnumber Trojans,  
those who live in Troy. But all their allies,  
warrior spearmen from many cities,  
are a huge problem for me. They thwart my wish  
to smash down those sturdy walls of Troy.  
Nine of great Zeus’ years have rolled on past.  
[160] Ships’ planks have rotted, their ropes have frayed.  
Back home our wives and children wait for us.  
The work for which we came remains undone.

So come, let's all agree to what I say.  
Let's go back to our own dear country in our ships.  
For we'll not capture Troy with its broad streets."

So Agamemnon spoke. Among the soldiers,  
all those with no idea of what he'd planned,  
men's feelings quickened. The assembly was aroused.  
Just like huge ocean waves on the Icarian Sea,  
[170] when East Wind and South Wind rush down together  
from Father Zeus' clouds to whip up the sea,  
the whole assembly rippled, like a large grain field,  
undulating under the fury of the storm,  
as West Wind roars in with force, all ears of corn  
ducking down under the power of the gusts—  
that's how the shouting men stampeded to their ships.  
From underneath their feet a dust cloud rose.  
They yelled orders to each other to grab the ships,  
drag them to the sacred sea, clear out channels  
[180] for launching boats, knock out props from underneath,  
frantic to get home. Heaven echoed with the din.  
At that point, the Argives might well have gone back—  
contravening what Fate had proposed for them—  
if Hera had not spoken to Athena:

"Alas, unconquerable child of Zeus,  
who bears the aegis, the Argives will flee,  
go back home to their dear native land,  
cross the wide sea, abandoning Helen,  
an Argive woman, leaving in triumph  
[190] Priam and his Trojans. On her account,  
many Achaeans have perished here in Troy,  
far from the homes they love. So now, come on,  
go down to the bronze-clad Achaean troops,  
use your persuasive power to stop the men  
hauling their curved ships down into the sea."

So Hera spoke. Bright-eyed goddess Athena obeyed.

She sped off, raced down from Mount Olympus' crest,  
quickly reached Achaea's swift ships, rushing to the spot  
Odysseus, a man as wise as Zeus, was standing.

[200] He'd laid no hand on his fast, black, well-decked ship.  
His stout heart was filled with pain. Standing close to him,  
bright-eyed Athena spoke to him:

“Odysseus,  
divinely bred, Laertes' resourceful son,  
so you are going to fly back home,  
sail off to your own dear country.  
You'll leap into your ships with many oars,  
and leave in triumph Priam and the Trojans,  
abandoning Argive Helen, for whose sake  
so many Achaeans have died here in Troy,  
[210] far from the homes they love. But come now,  
move around among Achaean soldiers.  
Don't hesitate. Persuade each man to stop  
dragging the curved ships down into the sea.”

So Athena spoke. Odysseus knew her from her voice,  
as she talked. Then he ran, shrugging off his cloak—  
Eurybates, the herald, later picked it up,  
a man from Ithaca, aide to Odysseus.  
Odysseus went straight to Agamemnon, Atreus' son,  
took from him his imperishable ancestral staff.  
[220] Grasping this, he ran to the bronze-clad Achaeans' ships.  
When he came across some king or prominent leader,  
he'd confront him, telling him to hold his ground:

“Friend, it's not suitable for you to panic,  
as if you're worthless. Take your seat instead.  
Get other soldiers to remain in place.  
You've no clear sense of Agamemnon's plan.  
Right now he's testing all the army.  
Soon enough he'll punish Achaea's sons.  
Didn't we all hear what he said in council?

[230] In his rage he may harm Achaean troops—  
passions run high in kings whom Zeus supports.  
Their honour comes from Zeus the Counsellor,  
who loves them.”

By contrast, when Odysseus  
came across some common soldier yelling out,  
he’d beat him with the staff, admonishing him:

“My friend, take your place in silence. Stay put.  
Listen to what others say, your betters,  
you puny coward, useless in war or council.  
Achaeans can’t all rule here as kings.

[240] No good comes from having many leaders.  
Let there be one in charge, one ruler,  
who gets from crooked-minded Cronos’ son  
sceptre and laws, so he may rule his people.”

Odysseus moved throughout the army, calming things.  
From ships and huts, soldiers rushed to reassemble,  
echoing like waves of the roaring sea crashing on shore,  
as Ocean thunders on. Men sat calmly in their places.  
But a single man kept on yelling out abuse—  
scurrilous Thersites, expert in various insults,

[250] vulgar terms for inappropriate attacks on kings,  
whatever he thought would make the Argives laugh.  
Of all the men who came to Troy, he was the ugliest—  
bow legged, one crippled foot, rounded shoulders  
curving in toward his chest. On top, his pointed head  
sprouted thin, scraggly tufts of hair. Achilles hated him,  
as did Odysseus, too, both subject to his taunts.  
But now Agamemnon was the target of his gibes.  
The Achaeans, despising Thersites in their hearts,  
were furious at him. But he kept shouting out,

[260] aiming noisy insults right at Agamemnon:

“Son of Atreus, what’s your problem now?



What do you lack? Your huts are stuffed with bronze,  
plenty of choice women, too—all presents  
we Achaeans give you as our leader,  
whenever we ransack some city.

Or are you in need of still more gold,  
a ransom fetched by some horse-taming Trojan  
for his son tied up and delivered here  
by me or by some other Achaean?

[270] Or do you want a young girl to stash away,  
so you're the only one who gets to screw her?  
It's just not fair that you, our leader,  
have botched things up so badly for us,  
Achaea's sons. But you men, you soldiers,  
cowardly comrades, disgraceful people,  
you're Achaean women, not warriors.  
Let's sail home in our ships, leave this man,  
our king, in Troy here to enjoy his loot.  
That way he might come to recognize

[280] whether or not we're of some use to him.  
Now Agamemnon has even shamed Achilles,  
a much finer warrior than himself,  
stealing a prize, keeping it for his own use.  
Then there's Achilles, no heart's anger there,  
who lets it all just happen. If he didn't,  
this bullying of yours, son of Atreus,  
would be your last."

Thersites yelled out these insults  
right at Agamemnon, the people's shepherd,  
abusing him. Noble Odysseus stood up quickly,

[290] confronting Thersites. Scowling, he lashed out sternly:

"Shut up, chatterbox. You're a champion talker.  
But don't try to have it out with kings,  
all by yourself. Let me tell you something—  
of all those who came to Troy with Atreus' sons,  
you're the most disgraceful. So shut your mouth.

No more words from you abusing our kings,  
seeking to sneak back home. How this war will end,  
we've no idea—whether Achaea's sons  
will go back home successful or will fail.

- [300] You sit here, railing at Agamemnon,  
Atreus' son, leader of his people,  
because Danaan heroes have given him  
so many gifts—but that's a cheap insult.  
So I'll tell you how things are going to be.  
If I find you being so foolish any more,  
then let Odysseus' head no longer stay  
upon his shoulders, let him no longer  
be called the father of Telemachus,  
if I don't grab you, rip off all your clothes,  
[310] cloak and tunic, down to your cock and balls,  
and beat you back to the fast ships in tears,  
whipping you in shame from our assembly."

Saying this, Odysseus lashed out with the sceptre,  
hitting Thersites hard across his back and shoulders.  
He doubled up in pain, shedding many tears.  
In the middle of Thersites' back sprang up  
bloody welts beneath the golden sceptre.  
He sat down, afraid and hurt, peering around,  
like an idiot, and rubbing away his tears.

- [320] The soldiers, though discontent, laughed uproariously,  
saying to one another:

"Comrades,  
before now Odysseus has done good things  
thinking up fine plans and leading us in war.  
But that's the best thing he's done by far  
to help the Argives, shutting up that rabble-rouser.  
Thersites' bold spirit won't urge him on  
to trash our kings again with his abuse."

That's how the soldiers talked together. Then Odysseus,

destroyer of cities, rose up, grasping the sceptre.  
[330] At his side, bright-eyed Athena, looking like a herald,  
silenced troops, so Achaeans close by and far away  
could hear him and follow his advice. Odysseus,  
bearing in mind their common good, spoke out:

“Son of Atreus,  
now the Achaeans wish to disgrace you,  
their king, shame you before all mortal men.  
They’re refusing now to keep their promise,  
the one they all swore to while sailing here,  
still on their way from horse-breeding Argos,  
that oath that they’d return after we’d destroyed  
[340] Troy’s strong walls. Like widows or small children,  
they’re whining to each other to go home.  
But going back demoralized is bad.  
A man who spends one month aboard his ship,  
away from his wife, becomes downhearted  
when winter gusts and stormy seas confine him.  
This is now the ninth revolving year  
we’ve been waiting here, on this very spot.  
So I don’t think that badly of Achaeans  
in their frustration here by their curved ships.  
[350] Still, it’s shameful to go home with nothing.  
My friends, be patient, give us all more time,  
until Calchas’ prophecy comes true or not.  
We all have kept in mind what he foretold.  
You all are witnesses, the ones whom Fate  
has not yet visited to carry off in death.  
Not long ago, when our Achaean ships  
gathered at Aulis, bringing disaster  
for Priam and his Trojans, we sacrificed  
on holy altars placed around a spring  
[360] hundreds of perfect creatures to the gods,  
the immortals—underneath that tree,  
a lovely plane tree, where bright water flowed.  
And then a great omen appeared, a snake,

blood-red along its back, a dreadful sight,  
a thing sent out by Zeus into the daylight.\*  
Out from under the altar that snake slithered,  
darting for the plane tree, where there lay  
tiny, new-born sparrows, eight fledglings,  
huddled under foliage at the very top.

[370] The ninth one was the mother of the batch.

The serpent ate the infants, who screamed with fear.  
The mother fluttered around here and there,  
lamenting her dear chicks. The coiled serpent  
snatched the crying mother by the wing.  
Once the beast had gobbled up the sparrow  
and her chicks, the god who'd made the snake appear  
did something to it there for all to see.  
Crooked Cronos' son changed that snake to stone!  
We stood there astounded at what we'd seen—

[380] a horror desecrating the gods' sacrifice.

Calchas at once spoke out in prophecy:

'Long-haired Achaeans, why stand there so mute?  
Counsellor Zeus has made manifest to us  
a tremendous omen. It has come late,  
and will take many years to be fulfilled,  
but its fame will never die. Just as that snake  
swallowed the sparrow's brood, eight in all,  
with the mother who bore them the ninth one killed,  
so that's how long we'll fight them over there.

[390] In the tenth year we'll take Troy, wide streets and all.'

That's what Calchas said. Now it's coming true.  
So come on, all you well-armed Achaeans,  
let's stay, until we seize Priam's great city."

At this speech Argives gave out an enormous cheer.  
The ships on all sides resounded ominously,  
as Achaeans roared out their endorsement of his words.  
Then Nestor, the Geranian horseman, cried out:

- “Alas! In our assembly you’re all infants,  
silly children, with no sense of war’s events.
- [400] What will happen to our agreements,  
the oaths we made? Let fire consume  
our strategies, men’s plans, our treaties,  
ratified with wine and handshakes, those things  
we used to trust. For now we fight ourselves,  
arguing like this. We can’t find any remedy,  
though we’ve been sitting here for years.  
Son of Atreus, you must maintain with force  
your previous plan to lead the Argive troops  
directly to the harsh demands of war.
- [410] And let those one or two be damned,  
the men who don’t think like Achaeans,  
the few of them who yearn to go back home—  
something they’ll find impossible to do—  
before we learn the truth or falsehood  
of what was promised by aegis-bearing Zeus.  
For I assure you mighty Zeus nodded assent  
on that very day the Argives put to sea,  
bearing Troy’s destructive fate in their swift ships.  
On our right hand, Zeus hurled down lightning bolts,
- [420] signs manifesting his good will to us.  
So let no man run off to get back home—  
not before he’s had sex with some Trojan’s wife,  
payment for Helen’s miseries, her cries of pain.  
If any man is really keen to get back home,  
let him just set hand to his well-benched ship,  
he’ll come face to face, in plain view of all,  
with death, his fate. You, my lord, think carefully—  
think about what someone else suggests.  
Don’t simply throw out what I say to you.
- [430] Agamemnon, set men in groups by tribes and clans,  
so clans encourage clans, tribes bolster tribes.  
If you do that, if Achaeans all obey,  
you’ll then recognize who’s good and bad

among your leaders and your men. Ranged like that,  
the two groups will stand against each other.  
You'll then know whether failure to take Troy  
stems from divine will or craven soldiers  
or ineptitude in managing the war."

Mighty Agamemnon then answered Nestor:

- [440] "Old man, in our assembly once again  
you win out over all Achaea's sons.  
O Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo—  
if I only had ten such counsellors  
among Achaeans, king Priam's city  
would soon fall, be taken, sacked at our hands.  
But aegis-bearing Zeus, son of Cronos,  
keeps showering me with grievous troubles.  
He throws me into pointless bitter fights.  
So Achilles and I fought for that girl,  
[450] yelling at each other. The first fault was mine.  
But if we two agreed, were of one mind,  
then Troy's fate would be sealed without delay,  
without a moment's pause. But let's go off to eat,  
so we can resume the fight. Every one of you,  
get your spears and shields prepared for action.  
Feed your swift-footed horses properly.  
Inspect the chariots with a careful eye,  
so we can stand all day and battle Ares,  
hateful god of war. We'll get no respite,  
[460] not even for a moment, except at dusk,  
when nightfall separates the frenzied soldiers.  
Chest straps on our protective body shields  
will be soaked through with sweat. Around our spears  
hands will grow numb. Horses, too, will sweat,  
under the strain of hauling polished chariots.  
But if I see a man coming out to fight  
reluctantly, hanging back by our curved ships,  
he'll not escape being food for dogs and birds."

Argives answered Agamemnon with a mighty roar,  
[470] like waves by a steep cliff crashing on the rock face,  
lashed by South Wind's blasts, always foaming on the rock,  
whipped on by every wind gusting here and there.  
The men leapt up, moved off, scattering to ships,  
set fires by their huts, and each man ate his dinner.  
Every man then sacrificed to the immortal gods,  
praying to escape death and war's killing zone.  
Agamemnon, king of men, sacrificed an ox,  
a fat one, five years old, to Zeus, exalted son of Cronos.  
He summoned the best senior men of all Achaeans—  
[480] first, Nestor and Idomeneus, then both Ajaxes,  
then Diomedes, Tydeus' son. Seventh came Odysseus.  
Warrior Menelaus arrived without a summons,  
knowing in his heart all Agamemnon's worries.  
They stood by the ox, with barley grains for sprinkling.  
Then Agamemnon prayed on their behalf:

“Most powerful Zeus,  
exalted lord of thunder clouds, Zeus,  
who dwells in heaven, grant my prayer—  
May the sun not go down, nor darkness come,  
before I have cast down Priam's palace,  
[490] covered it with dust, destroyed its doors  
in all-consuming fire, and with my bronze sword  
sliced to shreds the tunic on Hector's chest.  
May many of his comrades lie beside him,  
face down on the ground, teeth grinding dirt.”

So he prayed. But Cronos' son did not grant his wish.  
Zeus took the offering but increased their suffering.

Once the men had prayed, scattering barley grain,  
they pulled back the beast's head, slit its throat, flayed it,  
sliced thigh bones out and hid them in twin layers of fat,  
[500] with raw meat on top. They cooked these on split wood,

then placed the innards on spits in Hephaestus' fire.  
When the wrapped-up thigh bones were completely cooked,  
and they'd tasted samples of the inner organs,  
they chopped up the rest, arranged the meat on spits,  
cooked it carefully, then drew it from the fire.  
This work finished, the men prepared a meal and ate.  
Each soldier's appetite was fully satisfied—  
all dined equally. When every man had eaten  
as much food and drink as anyone could wish,  
[510] Geranian horseman Nestor was the first to speak.

“Lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
king of men, let's end our discussions now  
and not postpone work given by the gods.  
Come, let heralds of bronze-clad Achaeans  
summon all the soldiers to assembly.  
Let's move together across the wide front,  
rouse Achaea's men with blood-lust for war.”

Agamemnon, king of men, agreed with Nestor.  
He ordered clear-voiced heralds immediately  
[520] to sound the battle call to long-haired Achaeans.  
The call went out. Troops assembled on the run.  
Around Agamemnon, kings nurtured by the gods  
rushed to establish order. With them strode Athena,  
her eyes glittering, holding up the aegis  
her priceless, ageless, eternal aegis,  
its hundred golden tassels quivering,  
each finely woven, valued at a hundred oxen.  
With this, she sped on through Achaean ranks,  
like lightning, firing soldiers' hearts for war.  
[530] As she passed, she roused in men that hot desire  
to fight, to kill. At once she made each man feel war  
far sweeter than returning home, finer than sailing  
in the hollow ships back to his dear native land.  
Just as an all-consuming fire burns through huge forests  
on a mountain top, and men far off can see its light,



so, as soldiers marched out, their glittering bronze  
blazed through the sky to heaven, an amazing sight.

As many birds in flight—geese, cranes, and long-necked swans—  
in an Asian meadow by the flowing river Caystrios,  
[540] fly here and there, proud of their strong wings, and call,  
as they settle, the meadow resounding with the noise,  
so the many groups of soldiers moved out then  
from ships and huts onto Scamander's plain.  
Under men's and horses' feet the earth rang ominously.  
Then they stood there, in that flowered meadow,  
by the Scamander, an immense array,  
as numerous as leaves and flowers in springtime.  
Like flies swarming around shepherds' pens in spring,  
when pails fill up with milk, so the Achaeans,  
[550] a huge long-haired host, marched out onto that plain  
against the Trojans, eager to destroy them.  
Just as goatherds sort out with ease the wandering beasts,  
all mixed up in the pasture, so through all the army,  
the leaders organized the troops for battle.  
Among them powerful Agamemnon roamed,  
eyes and head like Zeus, who loves the thunder,  
waist like Ares, god of war, chest like Poseidon.  
Just as in cattle herds the bull stands out above the rest,  
by far the most conspicuous amid the cows,  
[560] so on that day Zeus made Agamemnon stand  
pre-eminent among the troops, first of heroes.

Now, you Muses living on Olympus, tell me—  
for you are goddesses and know everything,  
while we hear only stories, knowing nothing certain—  
tell me the leaders of Danaans, the rulers.  
It would be impossible for me to tell  
the story of or name those in the common mass,  
not even with ten tongues, ten mouths, an untiring voice,  
a heart of bronze, unless the Olympian Muses,  
[570] daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, could sing of the men,

all those who came to Troy. But I shall list the leaders,  
commanders of the ships, and all the ships in full.

Peneleus, Leitus, and Arcesilaus  
led the Boeotians, with Clonius and Prothoenor.  
Their men came from Hyria, rocky Aulis,  
Schoenus, Scolus, mountainous Eteonus,  
Thespeia, Graia, spacious Mycalassus,  
men holding Harma, Eilesium, Erythrae;  
men holding Eleon, Hyle, Peteon,  
[580] Ocalea, the well-built fortress Medeon,  
Copae, Eutresis, Thisbe, city full of doves;  
men from Coronea, grassy Haliartus;  
men from Plataea, Glisas, those who held  
fortified Lower Thebe and sacred Onchestus,  
with Poseidon's splendid grove; men from Arne,  
land rich in grapes, Midea, sacred Nisa,  
and distant Anthedon. Fifty ships came with these men,  
each with one hundred and twenty young Boeotians.

Men from Aspledon and Minyan Orchomenus  
[590] were led by Ascalaphus and Ialmenus,  
Ares' sons. Astyoche bore them in Actor's house,  
Azeus' son, to mighty Ares. She, a modest virgin,  
went upstairs, where the god lay with her in secret.  
These men brought with them a fleet of thirty ships.

Schedius and Epistrophus, sons of Iphitus,  
the son of great-hearted Naubolus,  
commanded Phoceans—men from Cyparissus,  
rocky Pytho, holy Crisa, Daulis, and Panopeus;  
men from Anemorea and Hyampolis;  
[600] from around the sacred river Cephissus,  
from Lilaea, beside Cephissus' springs.  
Forty black ships these two leaders brought with them.  
Moving around, as soldiers armed themselves,  
they set Phocian ranks by the Boeotians, on their left.

The Locrians were led by swift Ajax, son of Oileus,  
the lesser Ajax, not the greater Ajax,  
son of Telamon, but a much smaller man.  
Though he was short and wore cloth armour,  
among all Hellenes and Achaeans he excelled  
[610] in fighting with his spear. Locrians came from Cynus,  
Opous, Calliarus, Bessa, Scarphe,  
lovely Aegeiae, Tarphe, Thronion,  
and from around the river Boagrius.  
Ajax brought forty black ships of Locrians  
living across from sacred Euboea.

Elephenor, offspring of Ares, son of Chalcodon,  
great-hearted leader, commanded the Abantes,  
who live to breathe war's fury, soldiers from Euboea,  
Chalcis, Eretria, wine-rich Histiaea, Cerinthus by the sea,  
[620] men from the steep fortress Dium, Carystus, and Styra.  
These swift Abantes came with Elephenor,  
their hair grown long behind, warrior spearmen,  
filled with fierce desire to tear apart their enemies,  
to pierce armed bodies with their long ash spears.  
Forty black ships came with Elephenor.

Soldiers came from that well-built fortress Athens,  
land of proud Erechtheus, whom Athena raised,  
after he was born out of the harvest land.  
She placed him in Athens, at her own rich shrine.  
[630] To him Athenian youth make sacrificial offerings,  
with bulls and rams as each year comes around.  
Menestheus, son of Peteos, led these men.  
In tactics no one alive on earth could match him  
for deploying chariots or shield-bearing men.  
Nestor, from a previous age, was his only rival.  
Menestheus brought with him fifty black ships.

From Salamis Ajax commanded twelve ships.

He organized his men in their positions,  
so they stood adjacent to Athenian ranks.

[640] Warriors from Argos, fortified Tiryns, Hermione,  
Asine, both with deep bays, Troezen, Eionae,  
vine-rich Epidaurus, Achaean youth from Aegina, Mases—  
all these were led by mighty fighter Diomedes,  
skilled in war cries, and by Sthenelus, dear son  
of famous Capaneus. There was a third leader,  
god-like Euryalus, Mecisteus' son, son of lord Talaus.  
But warlike Diomedes was the main commander.  
These men brought with them eighty black ships.

Troops from the strong fortress Mycenae, rich Corinth,  
[650] well-built Cleonae, Orneae, lovely Araethyrea,  
Sicyon, whose first king was Adrestus,  
with men from Hyperesia, lofty Gonoessa,  
Pellene, from Aegium, men from coastal regions  
and wide Helice—of these men Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus, led one hundred ships.  
The most troops came with him, the finest men by far.  
In their midst, Agamemnon put on a proud display,  
dressed in gleaming armour, prominent among all heroes.  
He was the best of all, because he had most men.

[660] Men from Lacedaemon, land of ravines, Pharis,  
Sparta, Messe, where doves congregate,  
men living in Bryseae, beautiful Augeiae,  
Amyclae, coastal Helos, men from Laäs,  
from around Oetylus—all these in sixty ships  
were led by powerful, warlike Menelaus,  
Agamemnon's brother. Among these warriors,  
as they armed themselves some distance off,  
Menelaus strode—confident, courageous—  
rousing his troops for war, his heart passionate  
[670] to avenge Helen's struggles, her cries of pain.

Men came from Pylos, lovely Arene, Thryum,  
 by Alpheus ford, well-built Aipy, Cyparisseis,  
 Amphigenea, Pteleum, Helos, Dorium,  
 where the Muses met the Thracian Thamyris,  
 and stopped his singing. He was coming back  
 from Oechalia, from the court of Eurytus the king.  
 He'd boasted his singing would surpass the Muses,  
 daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, should they compete.  
 In their anger the Muses mutilated Thamyris,  
 [680] taking away his godlike power of song,  
 and making him forget his skill in playing the lyre.  
 Geranian horseman Nestor led these men  
 in a flotilla of ninety hollow ships.

Men from Arcadia, from below steep mount Cyllene,  
 near Aepytus' tomb, where men excel in combat  
 hand to hand, troops from Pheneus, Orchomenus,  
 rich in flocks, Rhipe, Stratie, windy Enispe,  
 Tegea, lovely Mantinea, Stymphelus,  
 Parrhasia—mighty Agapenor led these men,  
 [690] Ancaeus' son, in sixty ships. Many Arcadians  
 came in every ship, skilled fighters. Agamemnon,  
 king of men, had himself provided well-decked ships  
 for them to sail across the wine-dark ocean,  
 for these men lacked expertise in matters of the sea.

Soldiers from Bouprasium, fair Elis, those parts  
 bounded by Hyrmine, coastal Myrsinus,  
 the rock of Olene, and Alesium—these troops  
 had four commanders, each with ten swift ships.  
 The many Epeians on board were commanded  
 [700] by Amphimachus, son of Cteatus, and Thalpius,  
 son of Eurytus, descended both from Actor.  
 Third leader was Diores, son of Amarynces.  
 Fourth was Polyxeinus, son of Agasthenes, Augeas' son.

Men from Doulichium, sacred Echinean islands,

living across the sea from Elis, were commanded  
by warlike Meges, son of Phyleus, the horseman,  
loved of Zeus. Phyleus, angry with his father,  
moved to Doulichium. Meges brought with him  
forty black ships in his flotilla.

Odysseus led on  
[710] the Cephalenians, soldiers from Ithaca,  
well wooded Neritum, Crocylea,  
rugged Aegilips, from Zacynthus, Samos,  
both those inhabiting the mainland  
and those from cities on the facing shore.  
Odysseus, as wise as Zeus, led these troops,  
who came with him in twelve black ships.

Thoas, son of Andraemon, led the Aetolians,  
men from Pleuron, Olenus, Pylene,  
coastal Chalcis, and rocky Calydon.  
[720] Proud king Oeneus had no living sons,  
and he himself was dead, as was fair-haired Meleager.  
Thus, Thoas ruled alone. He brought forty black ships.

Famous spearman Idomeneus led the Cretans  
from Cnossus, fortified Gortyn, Lyctus, Miletus,  
chalky Lycastus, Phaestus, Rhytium,  
both populous towns, with other warriors  
from Crete's one hundred cities. Idomeneus,  
famous for fighting with a spear, led these troops,  
along with Meriones, as skilled at killing men  
[730] as Ares, god of war. They brought eighty black ships.

Tlepolemus, son of Hercules, a huge brave man,  
led nine ships of courageous troops, men from Rhodes,  
split into three divisions—from Lindus, Ialysus,  
and chalky Cameirus—all led by Tlepolemus,  
famous spearman, born to Astyocheia  
and mighty Hercules, who'd taken her from Ephyra,

by the river Selleis, after razing many towns  
full of vital warriors. Once he'd grown up  
in their well-furnished home, Tlepolemus killed  
[740] his father's uncle, Licymnius, a well-loved old man,  
a great fighter, too. At once Tlepolemus built a fleet,  
assembled many men, and fled away. Other sons  
and grandsons of great Hercules had threatened him.  
He suffered badly, until he came to Rhodes,  
whose people live in three groups split by tribes.  
Zeus, who governs gods and men, loved them,  
and so the son of Cronos blessed them with great wealth.

Nireus brought three well-balanced ships from Syme.  
The son of Aglaea and lord Charopus,  
[750] the handsomest of all Danaans who sailed to Troy,  
after Achilles, who had no equal. But he was weak,  
because he had few troops.

Men from Nisyros,  
Crapathus, Casus, Cos, Eurypylus' city,  
the Calydnian islands had Pheidippus and Antiphus,  
sons of lord Thessalus, Hercules' son, as leaders.  
With them came thirty hollow ships.

All the troops from Pelasgian Argos, Alos,  
men living in Alope, Trachis, from Phthia,  
and Hellas, where lovely women live, men called  
[760] Myrmidons, Hellenes, Achaeans—these troops  
Achilles led in fifty ships. But their minds weren't set  
on the grim clash of war. They had no one to lead them.  
Godlike Achilles, swift of foot, sat by his ships,  
still angry over fair-complexioned Briseis, seized  
from Lyrnessus after heavy fighting.  
Achilles had laid waste Lyrnessus and Thebe's walls,  
overthrown the spearmen Mynes and Epistrophus,  
sons of lord Euenus, son of king Selepius.  
Because of her, Achilles sat still grieving.

[770] But soon enough he'd rouse himself again.

Troops from Phylace, flowering Pyrasus,  
shrine of Demeter, Iton, where flocks breed,  
Antrum by the sea, and grassy Pteleum—  
brave Protesilaus had led these men, while still alive.  
Now the black earth held him. In Phylace,  
he left behind a wife to tear her cheeks in grief,  
home half complete. Some Dardanian killed him,  
as he jumped on Trojan soil, the first on shore,  
far ahead of all Achaeans. His soldiers lamented

[780] the loss of their chief, but didn't lack a leader.

Warlike Podarces, son of Iphicles, led them—  
the man owned many flocks and was a young blood brother  
to Protesilaus. But that great-hearted warlike soldier  
was an older, better man. So these troops had a leader,  
though they missed the noble one they'd lost.  
Podarces brought forty black ships along with him.

Troops from Pherae by Lake Boebea, from Boebeis,  
Glaphyrae, well-built Iolcus—these came  
in eleven ships, commanded by Eumelus,

[790] Admetus' well-loved son, born to him by Alcestis,  
loveliest of Pelias' daughters.

Troops from Methone, Thaumacia, Meliboea,  
and rugged Olizon, were led by Philoctetes,  
the skilled archer, in seven ships, each with fifty men,  
expert archers. But Philoctetes stayed behind on Lemnos,  
the sacred island, in horrific pain, abandoned.

Achaea's sons had left him there in agony,  
wounded by a snake bite. He lay there in torment.  
But soon the Argives by their ships would have reason

[800] to remember him.\* These soldiers missed their chief,  
but were now led by Medon, Oileus' bastard son,  
whom Rhene bore to Oileus, destroyer of cities.  
So Medon was the one who set their ranks in order.



Men from Tricca, rocky Ithome, Oechalia,  
city of Eurytus, the Oechalian,  
were commanded by two sons of Asclepius,  
skilled healers, Podaleirus and Machaon.  
They brought thirty hollow ships with them.  
Troops from Ormenius, from the fount of Hyperea,  
[810] from Asterius, from Titanus with its white hilltops—  
these men were commanded by Eurypylus,  
fine son of Euaemon, in forty black ships.  
Men from Argissa, Gyrtone, Orthe, Elone,  
the white city Oloösson—these troops were led  
by Polypoetes, a steadfast soldier,  
son of Perithous, himself son to immortal Zeus.  
That famous lady Hippodameia bore  
Polypoetes to Perithous on that very day  
he took revenge out on those hairy monsters,  
[820] and beat them from mount Pelion towards the Aithices.  
But Polypoetes was not the sole commander.  
With him was Leonteus, a warlike man,  
son of proud-hearted Coronus, Caeneus' son.  
With them they brought forty black ships.

Gouneus brought twenty-two ships from Cyphus.  
With him sailed the Enienes and Peraebians,  
reliable fighting men from cold Dodona,  
who work by the lovely river Titaessus,  
which empties its beautiful, flowing waters  
[830] into the Peneus. These do not intermingle  
with the silver stream of the Peneus,  
but flow along on top of them, like oil.  
For the Titaessus is a branch of the river Styx,  
dread waters by which the most solemn oaths are sealed.

Prothous, son of Tenthredon, led the Magnetes,  
from the region round Peneus and mount Pelion,  
where leaves are always trembling in the wind.

With him swift Prothous brought forty black ships.

These men were leaders, rulers of the Danaans.

[840] Muse, tell me this—Which of them were the very best  
of those who came over with the sons of Atreus?

The best horses were those of Admetus, son of Pheres.  
Eumelus drove them. As fast as birds, they matched  
each other in colour, age, and height along the back.

Bred by Apollo of the silver bow in Perea,  
both mares, they carried terror with them.

Of the men, by far the best was Ajax, son of Telamon,  
but only while Achilles didn't join in battle.

For Achilles was the better man by far.

[850] The horses carrying Peleus' son, man without equal,  
were much better, too. But he stayed behind,  
by his curved seaworthy ships, still enraged  
at Agamemnon, Atreus' son, the people's shepherd.  
His soldiers amused themselves beside the breaking sea  
by throwing spears and discus or with archery.

Their horses stood near their chariots, browsing on lotus  
and parsley from the marsh. Their masters' chariots,  
fully covered, remained stationed in the huts.

Missing their warlike leader, these troops strolled

[860] here and there throughout the camp and did not fight.

The soldiers, like a fire consuming all the land,  
moved on out. Earth groaned under them, just as it does  
when Zeus, who loves thunder, in his anger lashes  
the land around Typhoeus, among the Arimi,  
where people say Typhoeus has his lair.

That's how the earth groaned loudly under marching feet.\*

Then wind-swift Iris came to Troy as messenger  
from aegis-bearing Zeus carrying grim news.

Trojans had summoned an assembly by Priam's palace gates.

[870] There all had gathered, young and old. Standing by Priam,

swift-footed Iris spoke, sounding like Polites, Priam's son.  
He'd been stationed as a scout—fully confident  
of his skill at running—at old Aesyetes' tomb,  
right at the top, waiting for the moment  
Achaeans moved out from their ships.  
Looking just like Polites, swift-footed Iris said:

“Priam, old man, you always love to talk  
about irrelevant things, as you did earlier  
in peacetime. But now this war continues  
[880] relentlessly. I've gone to battle many times.  
I've never seen an army like this one, so many men,  
as numerous as leaves or grains of sand,  
coming across the plain to assault our city.  
Hector, I call on you, on you above all, to follow  
my instructions—the numerous allies here  
in Priam's great city all speak different languages  
from far-scattered regions. So let each man  
issue orders to the ones he leads,  
let him now organize his countrymen,  
[890] then lead them out to battle.”

Iris spoke. Hector understood her words.  
Immediately he ended the assembly.  
Men rushed to arm themselves. They opened up the gates.  
Troops streamed out, infantry and horses. A huge din arose.  
In the plain, some distance off, a high hill stood by itself,  
right before the city. People call it Batieia,  
but the gods know it as the tomb of agile Myrine.  
Here the Trojans and their allies marshalled forces.

Hector of the flashing helmet, Priam's son,  
[900] led out the Trojans. With him marched in arms  
the largest contingent, the finest men by far,  
eager to get working with their spears.

Aeneas, Anchises' worthy son, led the Dardanians.

Goddess Aphrodite had borne him to Anchises.  
She had lain with him on the slopes of Ida.  
But Aeneas was not their sole commander.  
With him were Antenor's two sons, Archelochus  
and Acamas, extremely skilled in every form of war.

Men from Zeleia, on mount Ida's lowest slope,  
[910] wealthy Trojans, men who drink dark waters  
of the river Aesepus were led by Pandarus,  
Lycaon's worthy son, whom Apollo had taught archery.

Soldiers from Adresteia, Apaesus, Pityeia,  
steep Mount Tereia were commanded by Adrestus  
and Amphius in cloth armour, Merops' sons from Percote,  
who knew more of prophecy than anyone.  
He gave his children orders to stay away from war,  
which eats men up. They did not obey him.  
Deadly black fates had called them on to battle.

[920] Troops from Percote, Practius, Sestos, Abydos,  
holy Arisbe—these troops were led by Asius,  
son of Hyrtacus, an important ruler.  
Arius's huge, tawny horses brought him  
from Arisbe, from the river Selleïs.

Hippothous led tribes of spearmen from Pelasgia,  
fertile Larisa, along with Pylaeus, offshoots of Ares,  
sons of Pelasgian Lethus, Teutamus's son.

Acamas and warlike Peirous led the Thracians,  
those men bounded by the Hellespont's strong flow.

[930] Euphemus, son of god-nurtured Troezenus,  
son of Ceos, led Ciconian spearmen.

Pyraechmes led archers from Paeonia,  
from far off Amydon, by the Axios,

a broad flowing river, whose moving waters  
are the loveliest on earth.

Pylaemenes,  
a brave soldier, commanded Paphlagonians  
from Enetae, where herds of mules run wild,  
men from Cytorus, from around Sesamus,  
those with fine homes by the stream Parthenius,  
[940] from Cromna, Aegialus, high Erithini.

Odius and Epistrophus led the Halizoni  
from distant Alybe, where men mine silver.  
Chromis and prophet Ennomus led the Mysians.  
But Ennomus' great skill in prophecy  
did not allow him to evade his deadly fate.  
Swift Achilles, descendant of Aeacus, killed him  
in the river where he slaughtered other Trojans.  
Phorcys and noble Ascanius led up Phrygians  
from far-off Ascania, men keen for war.

[950] Mesthles and Antiphus commanded the Maeonians.  
Sons of Talaemenes, born to Gygaea,  
a water nymph, they led Maeonians  
from around the foot of Mount Tmolus.

Nastes led the Carians, men with a strange language,  
from Miletus, Phthires, with its wooded mountain,  
Maeander's waters and high peaks of Mount Mycale.  
Nastes and Amphimachus, noble sons of Nomion  
were their leaders. Nastes went to war carrying gold,  
like a girl. What a fool! His gold did not spare him  
[960] a wretched death. He died in the river,  
at the hand of swift Achilles, descended from Aeacus.  
Fiery Achilles carried off his gold.

Sarpedon and noble Glaucus commanded Lycians,  
from distant Lycia, by the swirling river Xanthus.

Book Three  
Paris, Menelaus, and Helen

*[The armies move together; Paris volunteers to fight Menelaus in single combat; both sides prepare make a truce; Iris visits Helen; Helen goes to the Scaean Gate, looks at the Achaean troops with Priam; Priam leaves Troy to visit the armies and administer the treaty oath; Agamemnon utters the prayer for the treaty; Paris and Menelaus fight in single combat; Aphrodite rescues Paris; Paris and Helen meet in Troy; Agamemnon demands compensation from the Trojans]*

Once troops had formed in ranks under their own leaders,  
Trojans marched out, clamouring like birds, like cranes  
screeching overhead, when winter's harsh storms drive them off,  
screaming as they move over the flowing Ocean,  
bearing death and destruction to the Pygmies,  
launching their savage attack on them at dawn.\*  
Achaeans came on in silence, breathing ferocity,  
determined to stand by each other in the fight.  
Just as South Wind spreads mist around the mountain peak,  
[10] something shepherds hate, but thieves prefer to night,  
for one can see only a stone's throw up ahead,  
so, as men marched, dense dust clouds rose from underfoot.  
They advanced at full speed out across the plain.  
The two armies moved in close towards each other.  
Then godlike Paris stepped out, as Trojan champion,  
on his shoulders a leopard skin. He had bow and sword.  
Brandishing two bronze-tipped spears, he challenged  
the best men in the whole Achaean force to fight—  
a single combat, to the death. War-loving Menelaus  
[20] noticed Alexander striding there, his troops  
bunched up in ranks behind him, and he rejoiced,  
like a famished lion finding a large carcass—  
antlered stag or wild goat—and devouring it at once,  
though fierce young hunters and swift dogs attack.\*  
So Menelaus was pleased to see Paris there,  
right before his eyes. Menelaus had in mind  
taking revenge on the man who'd injured him.

At once Menelaus jumped from his chariot,  
down to the ground, his weapons in his fists.  
[30] When godlike Alexander saw Menelaus there,  
among the fighters at the front, his heart sank.  
He moved back into the ranks, among his comrades,  
avoiding death. Just as a man stumbles on a snake  
in some mountainous ravine and gives way, jumping back,  
his limbs trembling, his cheeks pale, so godlike Paris,  
afraid of Atreus' son, slid back into proud Trojan ranks.  
Seeing this, Hector went at Alexander, insulting him:

“Despicable Paris, handsomest of men,  
but woman-mad seducer. How I wish  
[40] you never had been born or died unmarried.  
That's what I'd prefer, so much better  
than to live in shame, hated by others.  
Now long-haired Achaeans are mocking us,  
saying we've put forward as a champion  
one who looks good, but lacks a strong brave mind.  
Was this what you were like back on that day  
you gathered up your faithful comrades,  
sailed sea-worthy ships across the ocean,  
went out among a foreign people,  
[50] and carried back from that far-off land  
a lovely woman linked by marriage  
to warrior spearmen, thus bringing on  
great suffering for your father and your city,  
all your people—joy to your enemies  
and to yourself disgrace? And can you now  
not face Menelaus? If so, you'd learn  
the kind of man he is whose wife you took.  
You'd get no help then from your lyre, long hair,  
good looks—Aphrodite's gifts—once face down,  
[60] lying in the dirt. Trojans must be timid men.  
If not, for all the evil things you've done  
by now you'd wear a garment made of stones.”

To Hector godlike Alexander then replied:

“Hector, you’re right in what you say against me.  
Those complaints of yours are not unjustified.  
Your heart is tireless, like a wood-chopping axe  
wielded by a craftsman cutting timber for a ship.  
The axe makes his force stronger. Your mind’s like that—  
the spirit in your chest is fearless. But don’t blame me  
[70] for golden Aphrodite’s lovely gifts.  
Men can’t reject fine presents from the gods,  
those gifts they personally bestow on us,  
though no man would take them of his own free will.  
You want me now to go to battle.  
Get others to sit down—Trojans and Achaeans.  
Put me and war-loving Menelaus  
in their midst to fight it out for Helen,  
all her property. The one who triumphs,  
comes off victorious, the better man,  
[80] let him take all the goods and lead her home,  
as his wife. Let others swear a solemn oath,  
as friends, either to live on in fertile Troy  
or to return to horse-breeding Argos,  
land of the lovely women of Achaea.”

So Paris spoke. Hearing those words, Hector felt great joy.  
He went to the middle ground, between the armies,  
halted Trojan troops, grasping the centre of his spear shaft.  
The men sat. But long-haired Achaeans kept on shooting,  
attempting to hit Hector with rocks and arrows.  
[90] Then Agamemnon, king of men, roared out at them:

“Argives, Achaean lads, stop hurling things.  
Hector of the flashing helmet wants to talk to us.”

Once Agamemnon spoke, the men stopped fighting  
quickly falling silent. Hector then addressed both sides:



“You Trojans, you well-armed Achaeans,  
listen now to what Paris has to say,  
the man whose actions brought about our fight.  
He bids the other Trojans, all Achaeans,  
set their weapons on the fertile ground.

[100] He and war-loving Menelaus here  
will fight it out alone between the armies  
for Helen and for all her property.  
Whichever one comes out victorious,  
the stronger man, let him seize all the goods,  
and take the woman as his wife back home.  
Let others swear a solemn oath as friends.”

So Hector spoke. The soldiers all grew silent.  
Then Menelaus, loud in war, answered Hector:

“Listen now to me. More than anyone,  
[110] my heart has suffered pain. So now I think  
Argives and Trojans should part company,  
since you have suffered many hardships,  
thanks to the fight between myself and Paris,  
a fight that he began. Whichever one of us  
death takes, our fate, let that man perish.  
You others quickly go your separate ways.  
So bring two lambs here—white male, black female—  
for earth and sun. We’ll bring one more for Zeus.  
Lead out great Priam to administer the oath  
[120] in person, for his sons are over-proud,  
untrustworthy. No man should transgress  
by violence oaths sworn in Zeus’ name.  
Young men’s minds are fickle. An older man  
who joins them thinks of past and future,  
so with both groups things happen for the best.”

Achaeans and Trojans were elated, full of hope  
that wretched war would end. They pulled the chariots back  
into the ranks, climbed out, disarmed, and placed their weapons

next to each other on the ground, with little room  
[130] between both groups. Hector sent two heralds to the city,  
to fetch the lambs with speed and summon Priam.  
Agamemnon sent Talthybius to the hollow ships,  
instructing him to bring a sacrificial lamb.  
Talthybius obeyed god-like Agamemnon's orders.

Then Iris came as messenger to white-armed Helen  
taking on the image of her sister-in-law,  
wife of Antenor's son, fine Helicaon.  
Her name was Laodice, of all Priam's daughters  
the most beautiful. She found Helen in her room,  
[140] weaving a large cloth, a double purple cloak,  
creating pictures of the many battle scenes  
between horse-taming Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans,  
wars they suffered for her sake at the hands of Ares.  
Standing near by, swift-footed Iris said:

"Come here, dear girl,  
Look at the amazing things going on.  
Horse-taming Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans,  
men who earlier were fighting one another  
in wretched war out there on the plain,  
both keen for war's destruction, are sitting still.  
[150] Alexander and war-loving Menelaus  
are going to fight for you with their long spears.  
The man who triumphs will call you his dear wife."

With these words the goddess set in Helen's heart  
sweet longing for her former husband, city, parents.  
Covering herself with a white shawl, she left the house,  
shedding tears. She did not go alone, but took with her  
two attendants, Aethrae, daughter of Pittheus,  
and ox-eyed Clymene. They soon reached the Scaean Gates.  
Oucalegaon and Antenor, both prudent men,  
[160] elder statesmen, sat at the Scaean Gates,  
with Priam and his entourage—Panthous, Thymoetes,

Lampus, Clytius, and brave Hicataeon. Old men now,  
their fighting days were finished, but they all spoke well.  
They sat there, on the tower, these Trojan elders,  
like cicadas perched up on a forest branch, chirping  
soft, delicate sounds. Seeing Helen approach the tower,  
they commented softly to each other—their words had wings:

“There’s nothing shameful about the fact  
that Trojans and well-armed Achaeans  
[170] have endured great suffering a long time  
over such a woman—just like a goddess,  
immortal, awe-inspiring. She’s beautiful.  
But nonetheless let her go back with the ships  
Let her not stay here, a blight on us, our children.”

So they talked. Priam then called out to Helen.

“Come here, dear child. Sit down in front of me,  
so you can see your first husband, your friends,  
your relatives. As far as I’m concerned,  
it’s not your fault. For I blame the gods.  
[180] They drove me to wage this wretched war  
against Achaeans. Tell me, who’s that large man,  
over there, that impressive, strong Achaean?  
Others may be taller by a head than him,  
but I’ve never seen with my own eyes,  
such a striking man, so noble, so like a king.”

Then Helen, goddess among women, said to Priam:

“My dear father-in-law, whom I respect and honour,  
how I wish I’d chosen an evil death  
when I came here with your son, leaving behind  
[190] my married home, companions, darling child,  
and friends my age. But things didn’t work that way.  
So I weep all the time. But to answer you,  
that man is wide-ruling Agamemnon,

son of Atreus, a good king, fine fighter,  
and once he was my brother-in-law,  
if that life was ever real. I'm such a whore."

Priam gazed in wonder at Agamemnon, saying:

"Son of Atreus, blessed by the gods, fortune's child,  
divinely favoured, many long-haired Achaeans  
[200] serve under you. Once I went to Phrygia,  
that vine-rich land, where I saw Phrygian troops  
with all their horses, thousands of them,  
soldiers of Otreus, godlike Mygdon,  
camped by the banks of the Sangarius river.  
I was their ally, part of their army,  
the day the Amazons, men's peers in war,  
came on against them. But those forces then  
were fewer than these bright-eyed Achaeans."

The old man then spied Odysseus and asked:

[210] "Dear child, come tell me who this man is,  
shorter by a head than Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus. But he looks broader  
in his shoulders and his chest. His armour's stacked  
there on the fertile earth, but he strides on,  
marching through men's ranks just like a ram  
moving through large white multitudes of sheep.  
Yes, a woolly ram, that's what he seems to me."

Helen, child of Zeus, then answered Priam:

"That man is Laertes' son, crafty Odysseus,  
[220] raised in rocky Ithaca. He's well versed  
in all sorts of tricks, deceptive strategies."

At that point, wise Antenor said to Helen:

“Lady, what you say is true. Once lord Odysseus  
came here with war-loving Menelaus,  
as an ambassador in your affairs.  
I received them both in my residence  
and entertained them. I got to know them—  
from their appearance and their wise advice.  
When they mingled with us Trojans  
[230] in our meeting and Menelaus rose,  
his broad shoulders were higher than the other’s.  
But once they sat, Odysseus seemed more regal.  
When the time came for them to speak to us,  
setting out their thoughts quite formally,  
Menelaus spoke with fluency—few words,  
but very clear—no chatter, no digressions—  
although he was the younger of the two.  
But when wise Odysseus got up to speak,  
he just stood, eyes downcast, staring at the ground.  
[240] He didn’t move the sceptre to and fro,  
but gripped it tightly, like some ignoramus—  
a bumpkin or someone idiotic.  
But when that great voice issued from his chest,  
with words like winter snowflakes, no man alive  
could match Odysseus. We were no longer  
disconcerted at witnessing his style.”

Priam, the old man, saw a third figure, Ajax, and asked:

“Who is that other man? He’s over there—  
that huge, burly Achaean—his head and shoulders  
tower over the Achaeans.”

[250] Then Helen  
long-robed goddess among women, answered:

“That’s massive Ajax, Achaea’s bulwark.  
Across from him stands Idomeneus,  
surrounded by his Cretans, like a god.

Around him there stand the Cretan leaders.  
Often war-loving Menelaus welcomed him  
in our house, whenever he arrived from Crete.  
Now I see all the bright-eyed Achaeans  
whom I know well, whose names I could recite.

[260] But I can't see two of the men's leaders,  
Castor, tamer of horses, and Pollux,  
the fine boxer—they are both my brothers,  
whom my mother bore along with me.  
Either they did not come with the contingent  
from lovely Lacedaemon, or they sailed here  
in their seaworthy ships, but have no wish  
to join men's battles, fearing the disgrace,  
the many slurs, which are justly mine."

Helen spoke. But the life-nourishing earth  
[270] already held her brothers in Lacedaemon,  
in their own dear native land.

Through Troy,  
heralds brought offerings to seal the binding oaths,  
two lambs and in a goatskin sack some sparkling wine,  
fruit of the earth. Idaios, the herald, brought in  
the gleaming mixing bowl and golden cups.  
Standing close by Priam, he encouraged him.

"Son of Laomedon, the leading officers  
among horse-taming Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans  
are calling you to come down to the plain,  
[280] to administer their binding promises.

Paris and war-loving Menelaus  
are going to fight it out with their long spears  
over the woman. The man who wins,  
who comes off the victor, gets the woman  
and her property. The others will all swear  
an oath of friendship, a binding one—  
we will live in fertile Troy, they in Argos,

where horses breed, and in Achaea,  
land of lovely women.”

Idaios finished.

[290] The old man trembled, then ordered his attendants  
to prepare his chariot. They obeyed at once.  
Priam climbed in and pulled back on the reins.  
Antenor climbed in the fine chariot beside him.  
The two men led swift horses through the Scaean Gate,  
out to the plain. Once they reached the Trojans and Achaeans,  
they climbed out of the chariot onto fertile ground,  
in the space between the Trojan and Achaean troops.

At once, Agamemnon and crafty Odysseus  
stood up to greet them. Noble heralds fetched the offerings,  
[300] to ratify their solemn oaths pledged to the gods.  
They prepared wine in the mixing bowl, then poured water  
over the kings’ hands. Atreus’ son drew out the dagger  
which always hung beside his sword’s huge scabbard,  
then sliced hairs off lambs’ heads. Attendants passed these hairs  
among the leaders of the Trojans and Achaeans.  
Raising his hands, Agamemnon then intoned  
a mighty prayer on their behalf:

“Father Zeus,  
ruling from Mount Ida, most glorious,  
most powerful, and you, too, god of the sun,  
[310] who sees everything, hears everything,  
you rivers, earth, you gods below the earth,  
who punish the dead when men swear false oaths,  
you gods are witnesses. Keep this oath firm.  
If Alexander slays Menelaus,  
let him keep Helen, all her property.  
Let us return in our sea-worthy ships.  
But if fair-haired Menelaus kills Alexander,  
then let the Trojans hand back Helen,  
with all her property, and compensate  
[320] Achaeans with something suitable,

which future ages will remember.  
If Alexander's killed and Priam  
and Priam's children are unwilling  
to reimburse me, then I'll remain here,  
fight on until I'm fully satisfied,  
until I end this war appropriately."

So Agamemnon prayed. With his bronze dagger,  
he slit the lambs' throats, placed them on the ground,  
gasping in their death throes as their life ebbed out,  
[330] their spirit sliced away by Agamemnon's knife.  
Next from the mixing bowl, they drew off wine in cups,  
poured out libations to the deathless gods.  
Then Trojans and Achaeans all spoke out this prayer:

"Most powerful, mighty Zeus, and you others,  
you immortal gods, may you make sure  
the men who first violate these oaths  
will have their brains spill out onto the ground,  
just like this wine, they and their children.  
May their wives be carried off by other men."

[340] So they prayed. But the son of Cronos didn't grant their wish.  
Then Priam, descendant of Dardanus, addressed them all:

"Hear me, you Trojans, you well-armed Achaeans.  
I am returning now to windy Troy.  
I have no wish to see with my own eyes  
my dear son fight war-loving Menelaus.  
Zeus and other immortal gods know well  
which of them is fated to end up dead."

So Priam spoke. He placed the lambs in his chariot.  
The god-like man climbed in, held back the reins.  
[350] Antenor climbed in the fine chariot by Priam.  
Then both men set off, moving back toward Troy.



Then Hector, Priam's son, and lord Odysseus  
first measured out the ground, took lots, and shook them up  
in a bronze helmet, to see who'd throw his bronze spear first.  
Then every Trojan and Achaean held up his hands,  
praying to the gods:

“Father Zeus, ruling from Mount Ida,  
mighty, all-powerful, of these two men,  
let the one who brought this war to both sides  
be killed and then go down to Hades' house.  
[360] And grant our oath of friendship will hold firm.”

So they prayed. Hector of the flashing helmet  
turned his eyes to one side and shook out the lots.  
Alexander's token fell out immediately.  
The troops sat down in their respective places,  
by their high-stepping horses and their inlaid armour.  
Paris, husband to Helen with the lovely hair,  
hoisted his fine armour on his shoulders. On his shins,  
he clipped leg armour fitted with silver ankle clasps.  
Then he put around his chest the body armour  
[370] belonging to his brother Lycaon. It fit him well.  
On his shoulder he looped his bronze, silver-studded sword,  
his huge strong shield. On his handsome head he put  
a fine helmet with nodding horse-hair plumes on top,  
full of menace. Then he picked out a brave spear  
which fit his grip. Menelaus prepared himself as well.  
When the two men, standing on each side with their troops,  
had armed themselves, they strode out to the open space  
between the Trojans and Achaeans, staring ferociously.  
As horse-taming Trojans and well-armed Achaeans  
[380] gazed at the two men, they were overcome with wonder.  
The two men approached each other over measured ground,  
brandishing their spears in mutual fury.  
Alexander was the first to hurl his spear.  
It struck Menelaus' shield, a perfect circle,  
but the bronze did not break through, the point deflected

by the powerful shield. Then Menelaus, Atreus' son,  
threw in his turn. First he made this prayer to Zeus:

“Lord Zeus, grant I may be revenged on this man,  
who first committed crimes against me,  
[390] lord Alexander. Let him die at my hands,  
so generations of men yet to come  
will dread doing wrong to anyone  
who welcomes them into his home as friends.”

Menelaus then drew back his long-shadowed spear,  
and hurled it. It hit the son of Priam's shield,  
a perfect circle. The heavy spear pierced through it,  
went straight through the fine body armour, through the shirt  
which covered Alexander's naked flesh.

But Paris twisted to the side, evading a black fate.  
[400] Pulling out his silver-studded sword, the son of Atreus  
raised it and struck the crest of Paris' helmet.  
But the sword shattered into three or four pieces,  
falling from his hand. The son of Atreus, in vexation,  
looked up into wide heaven, crying out:

“Father Zeus,  
what god brings us more trouble than you do?  
I thought I was paying Alexander  
for his wickedness, but now my sword  
has shattered in my fist, while from my hand  
my spear has flown in vain. I haven't hit him.”

[410] As Menelaus said these words, he sprang forward,  
grabbing the horse hair crest on Paris' helmet,  
twisting him around. He began dragging Paris off,  
back in the direction of well-armed Achaeans.  
The fine leather strap stretched round Paris' soft neck,  
right below his chin, was strangling him to death.  
At that point Menelaus would have hauled back Paris  
and won unending fame, if Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter,

had not had sharp eyes. Her force broke the ox-hide strap,  
leaving Menelaus clutching in his massive hands  
[420] an empty helmet. Whipping it around, Menelaus  
hurled the helmet in among well-armed Achaeans.  
His loyal companions retrieved it. He charged back,  
with his bronze spear, intent on killing Alexander.  
But Aphrodite had snatched Paris up—for a god  
an easy feat—concealed him in a heavy mist,  
and placed him in his own sweetly scented bedroom.

Then Aphrodite went to summon Helen.  
She found her on the high tower, in a crowd  
among the Trojan women. She clutched Helen  
[430] by her perfumed dress, twitched it, then addressed her,  
in the form of an old woman, a wool carder,  
someone who used to live in Lacedaemon,  
producing fine wool, a woman Helen really liked.  
In this shape, divine Aphrodite spoke to Helen:

“Alexander is asking you to come back home.  
He’s in the bedroom, on the carved-out bed,  
his beauty and his garments glistening.  
You wouldn’t think he’s just come from some fight.  
He looks as if he’s going to a dance,  
[440] or if he’s sitting down right after dancing.”

Aphrodite spoke, stirring emotion in Helen’s heart.  
Noticing the goddess’ lovely neck, enticing breasts,  
her glittering eyes, Helen was astonished.

“Goddess, why do you wish to deceive me so?  
Are you going to take me still further off,  
to some well-populated city somewhere  
in Phrygia or beautiful Maeonia,  
because you’re in love with some mortal man  
and Menelaus has just beaten Paris  
[450] and wants to take me, a despised woman,

back home with him? Is that why you're here,  
you and that devious trickery of yours?  
Why don't you go with Paris by yourself,  
stop walking around here like a goddess,  
stop guiding your feet toward Olympus,  
and lead a miserable life with him,  
caring for him, until he makes you his wife  
or slave. I won't go to him in there—  
that would be shameful, serving him in bed.  
[460] Every Trojan woman would revile me afterwards.  
Besides, my heart is hurt enough already.”

Divine Aphrodite, angry at Helen, answered her:

“Don't provoke me, you obstinate girl.  
I might lose my temper, abandon you,  
and hate you just as much as I have loved you.  
I could make Trojans and Danaans hate you, too.  
Then you'd suffer death in misery.”

Aphrodite spoke. Helen, born from Zeus, was too afraid.  
She covered herself in her soft white linen shawl,  
[470] went off in silence, unnoticed by all the Trojan women.  
With goddess Aphrodite in the lead,  
they came to Alexander's lovely house.  
There the attendants quickly set about their work.  
Helen, goddess among women, went to her room upstairs,  
where laughter-loving goddess Aphrodite  
picked up a chair and carried it for Helen.  
She placed it facing Paris. Helen, child of Zeus,  
who bears the aegis, sat down. With eyes averted,  
she began to criticize her husband:

[480] “You've come back from the fight. How I wish  
you'd died there, killed by that strong warrior  
who was my husband once. You used to boast  
you were stronger than warlike Menelaus,

more strength in your hands, more power in your spear.  
So go now, challenge war-loving Menelaus  
to fight again in single combat.  
I'd suggest you stay away. Don't fight it out  
man to man with fair-haired Menelaus,  
without further thought. You might well die,  
[490] come to a quick end on his spear."

Replying to Helen, Paris said:

Wife,  
don't mock my courage with your insults.  
Yes, Menelaus has just defeated me,  
but with Athena's help. Next time I'll beat him.  
For we have gods on our side, too. But come,  
let's enjoy our love together on the bed.  
Never has desire so filled my mind as now,  
not even when I first took you away  
from lovely Lacedaemon, sailing off  
[500] in our sea-worthy ships, or when I lay with you  
in our lover's bed on the isle of Cranae.  
That's how sweet passion has seized hold of me,  
how much I want you now."

Paris finished speaking.

He led the way to bed. His wife went, too.  
The two lay down together on the bed.

Atreus' son paced through the crowd, like a wild beast,  
searching for some glimpse of godlike Alexander.  
But no Trojan nor any of their famous allies  
could reveal Alexander to warlike Menelaus.  
[510] If they'd seen him, they had no desire to hide him.  
For they all hated Paris, as they hated gloomy death.  
Agamemnon, king of men, addressed them:

"Listen to me, Trojans, Dardanians, allies—

victory clearly falls to war-loving Menelaus.  
So give back Argive Helen and her property,  
compensate us with a suitable amount,  
something future ages will all talk about.”

As he finished speaking, the other Achaeans cheered.

## Book Four The Armies Clash

*[The Council of the Gods on Olympus; Zeus sends Athena to break the truce; Athena persuades Pandarus to fire an arrow at Menelaus; Menelaus is wounded; Machaon tends to Menelaus; Agamemnon tours the battlefield rallying his troops; the battle starts again]*

The gods all sat assembled in the golden courtyard,  
with Zeus there, too. Gracious Hebe went among them,  
pouring nectar. They toasted each other in golden cups,  
as they looked out on Troy. Then Zeus, son of Cronos,  
wishing to irk Hera with a sarcastic speech,  
addressed them in deviously provoking words:

“Menelaus has two goddesses  
assisting him, Hera of Argos  
and Athena of Alalcomene.

[10] But they sit far away, looking on,  
enjoying themselves, while Aphrodite,  
who loves laughter, helps Paris all the time,  
protecting him from death. Now, for instance,  
she’s just rescued him from certain death.  
For war-loving Menelaus was the victor,  
no doubt of that. But why don’t we discuss  
how this warfare is going to finish up—  
whether we should re-ignite harsh combat,  
this horrific strife, or make both sides friends.

[20] If this second option pleases all of us,  
if we find it sweet, then king Priam’s city  
remains inhabited, and Menelaus  
takes Argive Helen home with him.”

Athena and Hera sat together muttering,  
plotting trouble for the Trojans. Angry at Zeus,  
her father, Athena sat there silently,  
so enraged she didn’t say a word. But Hera,

unable to contain her anger, burst out:

“Most fearful son of Cronos, what are you saying?

[30] How can you wish to undermine my efforts,  
prevent them from achieving anything?  
What about the sweat which dripped from me,  
as I worked so hard, wearing my horses out,  
gathering men to wipe out Priam and his children.  
Go ahead then. But all we other gods  
do not approve of what you’re doing.”

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus, irritated, said to her:

“Dear wife, what sort of crimes have Priam  
or Priam’s children committed against you,

[40] that you should be so vehemently keen  
to destroy that well-built city Ilion?  
If you went through its gates or its huge walls,  
you’d gorge on Priam and his children,  
other Trojans, too, swallow their flesh raw.  
That’s what you’d do to slake your anger.  
Do as you wish. We shouldn’t make this matter  
something you and I later squabble over,  
a source of major disagreements.  
But I’ll tell you this—keep it in mind.

[50] Whenever I get the urge to wipe out  
some city whose inhabitants you love,  
don’t try to thwart me. Let me have my way.  
I’ll give in to you freely, though unwillingly.  
For of all towns inhabited by earth’s peoples,  
under the sun, beneath the heavenly stars,  
sacred Ilion, with Priam and his people,  
expert spearmen, stands dearest in my heart.  
My altar there has always shared their feasts,  
with libations and sacrificial smoke,

[60] offerings we get as honours due to us.”



Ox-eyed Hera then said in reply to Zeus:

“The three cities I love the best by far  
are Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae,  
city of wide streets. Destroy them utterly,  
if you ever hate them in your heart.  
I won’t deny you or get in your way.  
If I tried disagreeing with such destruction,  
my hostile stance would be quite useless.  
For you are far more powerful than me.

[70] But my own work must not be wasted,  
worth nothing. I’m a god, the same race as you—  
I’m crooked-minded Cronos’ eldest daughter.  
Another thing—in addition to my birth—  
I’m called your wife, and you rule all immortals.  
In this matter, then, let’s both support  
each other’s wishes—you mine, I yours.  
Other gods will follow our example.  
Instruct Athena to go immediately  
where Trojans and Achaeans carry on  
[80] their bitter conflict. There she should try  
to get the Trojans to break their oaths first,  
by harming the glorious Achaeans.”

Hera spoke. The father of gods and men agreed.  
He spoke up to Athena—his words had wings.

“Go quickly to the Trojan and Achaean troops.  
Try to get the Trojans to break their oaths first,  
by injuring the glorious Achaeans.”

Zeus’ words stirred up Athena’s earlier desires.  
She darted from Olympus summit, sped off,  
[90] like a comet sent by crooked-minded Cronos’ son,  
a beacon for sailors and the wide race of men,  
showering sparks behind her as she flew.  
That’s how Pallas Athena shot to earth, then dropped

right down into the middle of the soldiers.  
Horse-taming Trojans looked on in amazement,  
well-armed Achaeans, too. As they saw her,  
each man said to the person next to him:

“There’s going to be more war, more wretched combat,  
or else great Zeus, who serves up war to men,  
[100] will make the troops on both sides friends.”

That’s what troops muttered, both Trojan and Achaean.  
Athena went down into the Trojan crowd,  
looking like Laodocus, Antenor’s son,  
a strong spearman, seeking godlike Pandarus.  
She met Pandarus, Lycaon’s powerful son,  
a fine man, standing there with his sturdy soldiers,  
shield-bearing troops who’d come from the river Aesopus.  
Standing near him, Athena spoke. Her words had wings:

“Fiery hearted son of Lycaon,  
[110] why not do as I suggest? Prepare yourself  
to shoot a swift arrow at Menelaus.  
You’d earn thanks and glory from all Trojans,  
most of all from prince Alexander.  
He’d be the very first to bring fine gifts,  
if he could see warlike Menelaus,  
son of Atreus, mounted on his bier,  
his bitter funeral pyre, killed by your arrow.  
So come, then, shoot an arrow at him—  
at splendid Menelaus. Promise Apollo,  
[120] illustrious archer born in Lycia,  
you’ll make fine sacrifice, some new-born lambs,  
once you get back to your city, holy Zeleia.”

Athena spoke and thus swayed his foolish wits.  
Pandarus took up his bow of polished horn,  
made from a nimble wild goat he himself once shot  
under the chest, as it leapt down from a rock.

He'd waited in an ambush and hit it in the front.  
The goat fell down onto the rocks, landing on its back.  
Horns on its head were sixteen palm widths long.  
[130] A man skilled in shaping horn had worked on them,  
to fit the horns together to create a bow.  
He'd polished it all over, adding gold caps  
snugly fitted on the tips. Pandarus stooped down,  
strung the bow, then set it on the ground.  
His brave companions held their shields before him,  
just in case Achaea's warlike sons attacked them,  
before he could shoot Menelaus, Atreus' warrior son.  
Then, removing the cover from his quiver,  
Pandarus took out an arrow, a fresh-winged courier  
[140] bearing dark agony. Next he quickly set  
the keen arrow on the string, swearing an oath  
to the archer god, Lycian-born Apollo,  
that he would make splendid sacrifice, first-born lambs,  
when he got back to his city, holy Zaleia.  
Gripping the arrow notch, the ox-gut bowstring,  
he pulled back, drawing the string right to his nipple,  
iron arrow head against the bow. Once he'd bent  
that great bow into a circle, the bow twanged,  
the string sang out, the sharp-pointed arrow flew away,  
[150] eager to bury itself in crowds of men.

But, Menelaus, the immortal sacred gods  
did not forget you.\* Athena, Zeus' daughter,  
goddess of war's spoils, was first to stand before you,  
to ward off the piercing arrow—she brushed it from your skin,  
just as a mother brushes a fly off her child  
while he lies sweetly sleeping. Athena led the arrow  
to the spot where the gold buckles on the belt  
rest on the joint in the double body armour.  
The keen arrow dug into the leather strap,  
[160] passed right through the finely decorated belt,  
through the richly embossed armour, the body mail,  
his most powerful guard, worn to protect his flesh,

by blocking spears and arrows. The arrow pierced it,  
going through that mail, and grazed the skin of Menelaus.  
Dark blood at once came flowing from the wound.  
Just as when some woman of Meonia or Caria  
stains white ivory with purple dye, making a cheek piece  
for a horse, and leaves it in her room—an object  
many riders covet for themselves, a king's treasure  
[170] with double value—horse's ornament and rider's glory—  
that's how, Menelaus, your strong thighs, shins and ankles  
were stained with your own blood below the wound.

When Agamemnon saw dark blood flowing from the wound,  
that king of men shuddered. And Menelaus,  
who loved war, shuddered, too. But when he saw  
barbs of the arrow head, its binding, still outside,  
not underneath the skin, his spirits rose, and courage  
flowed back into his chest. Mighty Agamemnon,  
taking Menelaus by the hand, with a bitter groan,  
[180] spoke to his companions, all grieving with him:

“Dear brother, that oath I swore to was your death—  
letting you step forward to fight Trojans,  
as Achaea's champion. For now the Trojans  
have shot you, walking roughshod on their oaths,  
that treaty they swore to in good faith. But still,  
the oath, lambs' blood, unmixed libations,  
handshakes, things in which we placed our trust—  
all these will not go in vain. For if Zeus,  
the Olympian, does not fulfil them now,  
[190] later on he will. Trojans will pay much—  
with their heads, their wives, their children.  
I know in my mind and heart that day will come  
when holy Troy, Priam, and his people,  
fine spearmen, will be annihilated,  
when high-ruling Zeus, son of Cronos,  
who dwells in the sky, angry at their lies,  
will shake his dark aegis against them all.

These things will be fulfilled. But, Menelaus,  
I'll be in dreadful pain on your account,  
[200] if you die, if Fate now ends your life,  
if I return to arid Argos totally disgraced.  
For Achaeans immediately will think of home,  
leaving Priam and his Trojans here in triumph,  
abandoning Helen, an Argive woman.  
Your bones will lie rotting here in Trojan soil,  
recalling the work we failed to finish.  
Then some arrogant Trojan, leaping up  
onto the tomb of famous Menelaus,  
will shout:

'May Agamemnon's anger  
[210] always end like this. His Achaean army  
he brought here in vain. He returned home,  
back to his native land in empty ships,  
abandoning courageous Menelaus.'

That's what he'll say. Before that day  
I hope the broad earth will lie over me!"

Then Menelaus, to cheer up Agamemnon, said:

"Take courage. Don't upset Achaeans.  
This sharp arrow is not a fatal hit.  
My gleaming belt protected me on top,  
[220] as did my body chain mail underneath,  
forged in bronze."

Mighty Agamemnon answered:

"My dear Menelaus, I hope that's true.  
But a healer must inspect your wound,  
apply his medicine to relieve black pain."

Agamemnon ordered Talthibius, his godlike herald:

“Talthybius, as quickly as you can,  
get Machaon here, son of Asclepius,  
healer without equal, to look over  
warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
[230] shot by someone’s arrow, a skilled archer,  
Trojan or Lycian—to his glory and our grief.”

Once he heard the order, Talthybius obeyed.  
He set off among bronze-clad Achaeans,  
seeking heroic Machaon. He saw him there,  
standing among the ranks of his strong warriors,  
shield-bearing men who’d come with him from Tricca,  
land where horses breed. Standing close to him,  
Talthybius spoke. His words had wings.

“Son of Asclepius, rouse yourself.  
[240] For mighty Agamemnon calls for you  
to look at warrior Menelaus, Achaea’s leader,  
shot by someone’s arrow, a skilled archer,  
Trojan or Lycian—to his glory and our grief.”

At Talthybius’ words Machaon’s spirits  
were stirred up in his chest. They set off together,  
through the wide Achaean army’s crowded ranks.  
They came where wounded fair-haired Menelaus lay.  
Around him all the noblest men had gathered in a circle.  
Machaon, godlike man, strode into the middle,  
[250] drew the arrow from the belt without delay,  
twisting back the sharp barbs as he pulled the arrow out.  
He undid the finely decorated belt and armour,  
then, under that, the chain mail forged in bronze.  
Next, he inspected the wound the keen arrow made,  
sucked out the blood, then skilfully applied his potions,  
soothing medicines which Cheiron gave his father.\*

While the Achaeans were looking after Menelaus,

lord of the loud war shout, Trojan ranks advanced,  
shields ready, once more armed with all their weapons,  
[260] fully charged with passionate desire for battle.  
Then you'd not have seen lord Agamemnon sleeping,  
hiding, or not keen to fight. Quite the reverse,  
he was moving out to combat, to man-ennobling war.  
He left his horses and ornate bronze chariot  
with his aide Eurymedon, son of Ptolemaeus,  
son of Peiraeus, who held the panting horses at a distance.  
For Agamemnon had ordered him repeatedly  
to keep the horses ready for the time his limbs  
grew tired from moving through so many soldiers.  
[270] He went around on foot, inspecting warrior ranks.  
When he saw Danaans coming up with horses,  
he'd approach them, shouting words of encouragement:

“Argives, don't lose your warlike spirit.  
Father Zeus will never help those liars.  
By attacking us, these Trojans were the first  
to violate their oaths. Vultures will gnaw away  
their tender flesh, while we lead off their wives  
and their dear delicate children to our ships,  
when we've destroyed their city.”

[280] But when Agamemnon saw soldiers holding back  
from hateful war, he'd lash out at them in anger:

“You cowards, worthless Argives, aren't you ashamed?  
What are you doing just standing here,  
like dazed fawns exhausted after running  
over a large plain, now motionless,  
hearts drained of spirit—that's how you stand,  
in a trance, not marching up to battle.  
Are you waiting for Trojans to come closer,  
up to the fine sterns of our ships beached here,  
[290] on the grey sea shore, so you can see  
if the hand of Cronos' son will shield you?”

In this way, Agamemnon moved around the army,  
exerting his authority throughout the ranks.  
Going past crowds of men, he met the troops from Crete,  
as they armed themselves around Idomeneus,  
their fiery-hearted leader at the front,  
fierce as a wild boar. In the rear, Meriones  
roused the ranks for action. Looking at these two,  
Agamemnon, king of men, rejoiced. He spoke out,  
[300] talking straight to Idomeneus in a friendly tone:

“Idomeneus, above all Danaans,  
with their swift horses, I value you in war,  
in all other things, and at banquets,  
when Achaea’s finest prepare gleaming wine,  
the kind reserved for kings, in mixing bowls.  
Other long-haired Achaeans drink their portion,  
the amount allotted to them, but your cup  
always stands full of wine, as does mine,  
so you can drink any time your heart desires.  
[310] Set off to battle, then—show you’re a man,  
the fine man you claimed to be before.”

Idomeneus, Cretan leader, answered Agamemnon:

“Son of Atreus, indeed I’ll prove myself  
a loyal comrade to you, as I promised  
that first time long ago. But you should rouse  
other long-haired Achaean men to action,  
so we may fight at once, without delay.  
Since Trojans have broken their sworn promises,  
death and sorrow will come to them at last,  
[320] for they attacked us first, breaking their oaths.”

At these words, the son of Atreus felt joy fill his heart.  
Then he moved off. As he continued on his way,  
he met both men called Ajax, arming themselves



among the hordes of troops, with crowds of men on foot.  
Just as a goatherd high on a lookout sees a cloud  
coming down across the sea, driven by West Wind's force—  
something which at a distance seems pitch black  
as it moves across the sea, driving a huge storm,  
and, shuddering at the sight, he takes his flocks  
[330] into a cave—that's how the dense ranks of young men,  
gods' favourites, marched around both Ajaxes,  
ready for war, all dressed in black, with shields and spears.  
Seeing them, powerful Agamemnon felt great joy—  
he shouted out to them in words with wings:

“You two Ajaxes,  
leaders of the Argives armed in bronze,  
for you I have no orders. It's not right  
for me to urge you forward—both of you  
are rousing men to fight with all their force.  
By Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo,  
[340] I wish such spirit would fill each man's chest.  
Then king Priam's city would soon fall,  
we'd capture it, destroy it utterly.”

With these words, he left them there, going on to others.  
He met Nestor, clear-voiced orator from Pylos,  
setting his troops in order, urging them to fight  
under huge Pelagon, Alastor, Chromius,  
Haemon, and mighty Bias, his people's shepherd.  
Nestor set horses, chariots, and charioteers in front.  
In the rear, he placed his many brave foot soldiers,  
[350] a battle wall. In the middle he placed his poorer troops,  
to force them to keep fighting on against their will.  
First, he told the charioteers to control their horses,  
to avoid confusing the entire battle line:

“In your eagerness to engage the Trojans,  
don't any of you charge ahead of others,  
trusting in your strength and horsemanship.

And don't lag behind. That will hurt our charge.  
Any man whose chariot confronts an enemy's  
should thrust with his spear at him from there.  
[360] That's the most effective tactic, the way  
men wiped out city strongholds long ago—  
their chests full of that style and spirit."

Thus that old man, skilled in war's traditions, roused his men.  
Seeing him, mighty Agamemnon was elated.  
He spoke to Nestor. His words had wings.

"Old man,  
how I wish the power in those knees of yours  
could match the spirit in your chest, your strength  
remain unbowed. But old age, our common enemy,  
has worn you down. If only that had happened  
[370] to some other man and left you in place,  
among the ranks of younger warriors."

To these words Geranian horseman Nestor said:

"Son of Atreus, yes, indeed, I wish  
I were the man I used to be back then,  
when I cut down lord Ereuthalion.  
But gods don't give men everything at once.  
Then I was young. Now old age follows me.  
But I'll be with my horsemen, advising them,  
giving them their orders, an old man's right.  
[380] Fighting with spears is for the younger men  
born after me, men who rely on strength."

Nestor spoke. Filled with joy, Atreus' son moved on.  
Next, he came upon Menestheus, Peteos' son,  
a charioteer, standing still among Athenians,  
famous for their battle cries. Close by them,  
resourceful Odysseus stood among his troops,  
Cephalenian soldiers, powerful fighting men.

These men had not yet heard the call to battle.  
For the armies of horse-taming Trojans  
[390] and Achaeans had only just begun to march  
against each other. So Odysseus' soldiers  
stood waiting for the rest of the Achaeans  
to charge against the Trojans and begin the fight.  
Seeing this, Agamemnon, king of men, spoke out,  
rebuking them. His words had wings.

“Son of Peteos, god-given king, and you,  
Odysseus, skilled in sly deception,  
crafty minded, why are you holding back,  
standing apart? Are you waiting for the rest?  
[400] By rights you two should be with those in front,  
sharing the heat of battle. At banquets,  
when we Achaeans feast our senior men,  
you hear me call your name out first.  
Then you like to have roast meat and cups of wine,  
honey sweet, to your heart's content.  
But now you'd be quite happy looking on  
if ten Achaean groups were fighting here  
with ruthless bronze before your very eyes.”

Resourceful Odysseus, scowling grimly, then replied:

[410] “Son of Atreus, how can you say such things?  
How can you claim I'm hanging back from battle  
each time we Achaeans rouse ourselves for war  
against horse-taming Trojans? If you want,  
if it's of interest to you, then you'll see  
Telemachus' dear father battling  
horse-taming Trojans at the very front.  
What you've been saying is clearly nonsense.”

Mighty Agamemnon saw the anger in Odysseus.  
He smiled at him and took back what he'd just said:

[420] “Odysseus, you resourceful man,  
divinely born son of Laertes,  
I’m not finding serious fault with you.  
I’m issuing no orders to you.  
I know that spirit in your loyal chest  
is well disposed. We both are of one mind.  
If I’ve said something bad we’ll make it good.  
May the gods bring all of this to nothing.”

With these words, Agamemnon left Odysseus there,  
moving on to other men. He met Diomedes,  
[430] Tydeus’ high-spirited son, standing by his horses  
and his well-made chariot. Beside him stood Sthenelus,  
son of Capaneus. Seeing them, Agamemnon  
spoke out in rebuke. His words had wings.

“Alas, Diomedes,  
son of fiery-hearted, horse-taming Tydeus,  
why are you hiding, just watching battle lanes?  
Tydeus was not a man to shirk like this.  
He fought his enemies in front of his companions.  
That’s what they say, those who saw him work.  
I never saw him for myself. People claim  
[440] he ranked above the rest. Once he came to Mycenae  
as a peaceful guest with godlike Polyneices,  
mustering men to assault the sacred walls of Thebes.  
They begged us to give them worthy comrades.  
Mycenaeans, willing to comply, agreed.  
But then Zeus later changed their minds,  
revealing an unlucky omen to them.  
So Tydeus and Polyneices left.  
On their way, they reached the river Asopus,  
its lush grassy meadows full of reeds.  
[450] Sent by Achaeans as envoy to Thebes,  
Tydeus went there. He found Cadmeans  
feasting in large numbers in the palace,  
home of great Eteocles.\* Though a stranger,

all by himself in that Cadmean crowd,  
chariot fighter Tydeus was not afraid.  
He challenged them in various contests.  
Athena helped, so he won them all with ease.  
Horse-breaking Cadmeans were upset with him.  
They organized a strong ambush against him  
[460] as he returned—fifty young men, with two leaders,  
that godlike hero Maeon, Haemon's son,  
and warlike Polyphontes, son of Autophonos.  
But these men came to fatal shameful ends.  
For Tydeus killed them, all but one.  
He let Maeon go home, sent him away,  
in obedience to an omen from the gods.  
That's the man Aetolian Tydeus was.  
But his son is a lesser man than he,  
though better when it comes to talking.”

[470] Mighty Diomedes did not reply to Agamemnon's words,  
shamed at the rebuke from a king whom he respected.  
But Sthenelus, son of famous Capaneus, answered:

“Son of Atreus, don't spread lies. You know the truth.  
We claim we're far better than our fathers.  
We captured Thebes, city of seven gates,  
leading smaller forces over stronger walls,  
trusting signs sent by the gods and Zeus' aid.  
The others died through their own foolishness.  
So don't give our fathers honours high as mine.”

[480] Powerful Diomedes, frowning, spoke to Sthenelus:

“My friend. Stay quiet. Follow my advice.  
For I'm not hurt that Agamemnon,  
the army's shepherd, urges armed Achaeans  
on to battle. For he will get the glory,  
if Achaeans annihilate the Trojans  
and capture sacred Ilion. And he'll get

great sorrow, if Achaeans are wiped out.  
But come, let's get our two minds working  
to rouse our spirits for this coming fight."

[490] Diomedes spoke. Then with his weapons he jumped  
from his chariot down to the ground. Around his chest  
the bronze rang fearfully, as he moved into action,  
a sound to make even brave warriors afraid.

Just as thundering ocean surf crashes on the sand,  
wave after wave, driven by the West Wind's power,  
one wave rising at sea, then booming down on shore,  
arching in crests and crashing down among the rocks,  
spewing salt foam, so then Danaan ranks,  
row after row, moved out, spirits firmly set on war.

[500] Each leader issued his own orders to his men.  
The rest marched on in silence. You'd never think  
such a huge army could move out with its voice  
buried in those chests, in silent fear of their commanders.  
As they marched, the polished armour on them glittered.

As for the Trojans, they were like thousands of ewes  
standing in a rich man's farm, bleating constantly,  
waiting for someone to come and collect white milk,  
as they hear lambs call. Just like that, the din rose up  
throughout the widespread Trojan force. They shared no words—

[510] they had no common language, but mixtures of tongues,  
with men from many lands. Ares urged the Trojans on,  
while bright-eyed Athena kept rousing the Achaeans.  
With them came Terror, Fear, and tireless Strife,  
sister and companion of man-destroying Ares—  
at first small in stature, she later grows enormous,  
head reaching heaven, as she strides across the earth.  
Strife went through crowds of soldiers, casting hatred  
on both sides equally, multiplying human miseries.

When the two armies came to one common ground,

[520] they smashed into each other—shields, spears, fierce angry men  
encased in bronze. Studded shields bashed one another.  
A huge din arose—human cries of grief and triumph,  
those killing and those killed. Earth flowed with blood.  
Just as streams swollen with melting snows pour out,  
flow downhill into a pool, and meet some torrent  
from a great spring in a hollow gully there,  
and the shepherd in the distant hills hears the roar—  
so the shouts and turmoil resounded then from warriors,  
as they collided.

Antilochus was the first to kill a man—  
[530] a well-armed Trojan warrior, Echepolus,  
son of Thalysius, a courageous man,  
who fought in the front ranks. He hit his helmet crest,  
topped with horsehair plumes, spearing his forehead.  
The bronze point smashed straight through the frontal bone.  
Darkness hid his eyes and he collapsed, like a tower,  
falling down into that frenzied battle. As he fell,  
powerful Elephenor, son of Chalcodon,  
courageous leader of the Abantes, seized his feet,  
and started pulling him beyond the range of weapons,  
[540] eager to strip him of his armour quickly.  
But Elephenor's attempt did not go on for long.  
Great-hearted Agenor saw him drag the dead man.  
He stabbed Elephenor with his bronze spear,  
right in his exposed side, where his shield left him  
vulnerable as he bent down. His limbs gave way,  
as his spirit left him. Over his dead body,  
Trojans and Achaeans kept fighting grimly on,  
attacking like wolves, man whirling against man.

Then Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Simoeisius,  
[550] Anthemion's son, a fine young warrior.  
He was born on the banks of the river Simoeis,  
while his mother was coming down Mount Ida,  
accompanying her parents to watch their flocks.

That's why the people called him Simoeisius.  
But he did not repay his fond parents for raising him.  
His life was cut short on great Ajax's deadly spear.  
As he was moving forward with the men in front,  
Ajax struck him in the chest, by the right nipple.  
The bronze spear went clean through his shoulder.

[560] He collapsed in the dust, like a poplar tree,  
one growing in a large well-watered meadow,  
from whose smooth trunk the branches grow up to the top,  
until a chariot builder's bright axe topples it,  
bends the wood, to make wheel rims for a splendid chariot,  
letting the wood season by the riverbank.  
That's how godlike Ajax chopped down Simoeisius,  
son of Anthemion.

Then Antiphus, Priam's son,  
with his shining helmet, hurled his sharp spear at Ajax  
through a crowd of men. He missed Ajax, but hit Leucus,  
[570] a brave companion of Odysseus, in the groin,  
as he was dragging Simoeisius away.  
His hands let go. He fell down on the corpse.  
Enraged at Leucus' slaughter, Odysseus strode up,  
through the front ranks, armed in gleaming bronze. Going in close,  
he took his stand. Looking round, he hurled his glittering spear.  
As he threw, Trojans moved back, but the spear found a mark.  
It hit Democoön, Priam's bastard son, who'd come  
from Abydos, where he bred horses for their speed.  
Angry for his friend, Odysseus speared him in the temple.  
[580] The sharp bronze pressed on through the other side,  
coming out his forehead. Darkness fell on his eyes,  
and he collapsed with a crash. The armour on him echoed.

Trojans in the front ranks, among them noble Hector,  
backed away. Raising a huge shout, the Argives  
hailed off the corpses and charged ahead much further.

Looking down from Pergamus, Apollo grew annoyed.



He called out to the Trojans, shouting:

“Charge ahead, you horse-taming Trojans.  
Don’t make Argives happy. Their skin’s not made  
[590] of stone or iron. Once you strike at them  
it can’t stop flesh-ripping bronze. And Achilles,  
son of lovely Thetis, isn’t in this fight.  
He’s sitting by his ships, nursing his anger.”

So the fearsome god spoke out from the city.  
Athena Tritogeneia, mighty Zeus’ daughter,  
rushed among Achaeans, urging companies on,  
if she saw men holding back, hesitant to fight.\*

Death then came to Diores, son of Amarynceus.  
He was hit by a jagged rock on his right shin,  
[600] beside the ankle. It was thrown by Peirous,  
son of Imbrasmus, captain of the Thracians,  
who’d come from Aenus. The cruel rock crushed both tendons  
and the bone. He fell onto his back down in the dust.  
There he reached out with both hands for his companions.  
His spirit left his body with each gasp he took.  
Peirous, who’d thrown the rock, ran up and speared his gut.  
His bowels spilled out onto the ground. Darkness hid his eyes.

As Peirous moved off, Thoas, an Aetolian, hit him,  
his spear striking him above the nipple. The bronze spear point  
[610] bit into his lungs. Thoas moved in to close quarters,  
pulled the heavy spear out from his chest, drew his sharp sword,  
then drove it straight into the middle of his belly,  
destroying Peirous’ life. But Thoas couldn’t strip  
the armour off. For Peirous’ companions,  
Thracian men whose hair is piled atop their heads,  
rallied round, holding out long spears, forcing Thoas  
away from them. Thoas was big, strong, and brave,  
but he fell back, shaken. And so those two warriors  
lay stretched out in the dirt beside each other—

[620] one Thracian chief, one captain of bronze-clad Epeians.  
And many other men lay dead around them.

At that point, no man who joined in the battle there  
could take it lightly, not even one who strolled unhurt  
through the middle of the fight, untouched by that sharp bronze,  
with Pallas Athena escorting him by hand,  
shielding him from flying weapons. For on that day,  
many Trojans and Achaeans lay there side by side,  
stretched out together, face down in the dust.

## Book Five Diomedes Goes to Battle

*[Athena inspires Diomedes with special powers; Athena takes Ares from the battle; Achaean leaders kill many Trojans; Diomedes' special glory on the field; Pandarus hits Diomedes with an arrow; Athena restores Diomedes, who continues his battle frenzy; Aeneas and Pandarus move out against Diomedes; Diomedes kills Pandarus, wounds Aeneas; Aphrodite saves Aeneas; Sthenelus captures Aeneas' horses; Diomedes attacks and wounds Aphrodite, who returns to Olympus; Diomedes threatens Apollo; Apollo heals Aeneas; Sarpedon complains to Hector; the battle continues; Sarpedon kills Tlepolemus, but is wounded; Athena and Hera go down to the battlefield; Athena and Diomedes attack and wound Ares; Ares returns to Olympus]*

Then Pallas Athena gave Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
strength and courage, so among all Argives,  
he'd stand out and win heroic glory.  
She made his helmet blaze with tireless flames,  
his shield as well—like a late star in summer  
which shines especially bright, newly risen from its bath  
in Ocean's streams. Around his head and shoulders  
the goddess put a fiery glow, then drove him forward,  
right into the middle of the strife, the killing zone,  
where most warriors fight.

[10] Among the Trojans

was a rich and honourable man called Dares,  
priest of Hephaestus. He had two sons—Phegeus  
and Idaios—both very skilled in all aspects of war.  
Moving forward in their chariot to the front,  
these two charged Diomedes, who was on foot,  
staying on the ground. When they were at close range,  
Phegeus was the first to hurl his long-shadowed spear.  
The spear point flew by Diomedes' left shoulder—  
it missed him. Tydeus' son then threw his spear.

[20] The weapon did not leave his hand and miss the target.

It hit Phegeus right between the nipples  
and knocked him from his splendid chariot.  
Idaios jumped out and ran off from his horses.

He didn't dare protect his slaughtered brother's corpse.  
Even so, he wouldn't have escaped black doom,  
but Hephaestus saved him with a dark cloud cover,  
so his aged father wouldn't waste away with grief.  
Tydeus' son, great Diomedes, drove the horses off,  
then gave them to his comrades to take back to the ships.  
[30] When great-hearted Trojans saw those two sons of Dares—  
one shunning battle, one dead beside his chariot—  
all their hearts were stirred.

Then Athena, eyes glittering,  
took her brother, headstrong Ares, by the hand,  
and said to him:

“Ares, Ares, insatiable man-killer,  
destroyer of cities, why don't we leave  
Trojans and Achaeans to fight it out?  
Father Zeus will make one group victorious.  
Let's withdraw, avoiding Zeus' anger.”

With these words, she led headstrong Ares from the battle,  
[40] then sat him down by Scamander river bank.

Danaans then began to push the Trojans back.  
Each leader killed his enemy. First, Agamemnon,  
king of men, threw huge Odios, chief of the Halizoni,  
from his chariot. His spear first struck him in the back,  
between the shoulder blades, as he turned to flee.  
It drove clean through his chest. Odios pitched forward  
with a thud, his armour rattling round him as he fell.  
Idomeneus slaughtered Phaestus, son of Borus,  
a Meonian, who'd come from fertile Tarne.  
[50] With his long spear, skilful Idomeneus struck him  
in his right shoulder, as he climbed in his chariot.  
Dreadful darkness came and gathered Phaestus in.  
Those attending Idomeneus stripped the armour.  
Then with his sharp spear Menelaus, son of Atreus,

killed Scamandrius, son of Strophius, a huntsman.  
Artemis herself had taught him how to shoot  
every animal raised in the mountain forests.  
But archer Artemis was no help to him then,  
no more than was his expertise in archery,  
[60] at which he'd been pre-eminent in former times.  
For fine spearman Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
caught him as he ran away in front of him,  
hitting him in the back between his shoulder blades,  
forcing the spear right through Scamandrius' chest.  
He fell head first. His armour rattled round him.

Meriones then killed Phereclus, son of Tecton,  
Harmon's son, whose hands could make fine objects of all sorts.  
Pallas Athena had a special love for him.  
He was the one who'd made well-balanced ships  
[70] for Paris at the start of all the trouble,  
bringing disaster on the Trojans and on Paris, too,  
for he was ignorant of what gods had decreed.  
Meriones went after Phereclus as he ran off,  
hurled his spear straight into his right buttock.  
The spear point pushed on through, below the bone,  
piercing his bladder. He fell down on his knees,  
screaming. Then death carried him into its shadows.

Then Meges killed Pedaeus, Antenor's bastard son.  
Theano had raised him with all care, loving him  
[80] as one of her own children, to please her husband.  
That famous spearman Meges, son of Phyleus,  
coming up close, drove a sharp spear in his neck,  
into the nape behind his head. The bronze point,  
slicing under his tongue, smashed through his teeth.  
He fell into the dust, jaws locked on the cold bronze.

Eurypylus, Euaemon's son, killed lord Hypsenor,  
son of proud Dolopion, Scamander's priest,  
a man honoured by his people as a god.

Eurypylus, Euaemon's splendid son, caught him  
[90] as he ran off in front of him. Going quickly after him,  
Eurypylus struck at Hypsenor's shoulder—  
his sharp sword sliced off Hypsenor's brawny arm.  
The bloody limb fell on the ground. Then death's black night,  
all-powerful fate, moved in and stole away his sight.

Thus these men kept toiling in the battle frenzy.  
As for Diomedes, you couldn't tell where he belonged,  
whether among the Trojans or Achaeans.  
For he rushed across the plain like a swollen river,  
like a swift winter torrent bursting dikes—  
[100] no dam put in its wway can hold it back,  
no barrier of fruitful vineyards check its current,  
as all at once it floods when storms from Zeus roar down.  
It knocks aside all fine things built by farmers,  
hard-working men. That's how the son of Tydeus  
drove the dense ranks of Trojans into mass confusion.  
For all their numbers they could not contain him.

Lycaon's fine son saw Diomedes moving fast  
along the plain, pushing Trojan ranks in front of him,  
in complete disorder. He quickly bent his bow,  
[110] taking aim at Diomedes. He shot an arrow  
and hit him on his sculpted body armour,  
in the right shoulder. The sharp arrow went in there,  
kept going, and splattered blood down on the curving metal.  
At this Lycaon's noble son gave out a noisy shout:

“Come on, you brave horse-lashing Trojans.  
For the finest of Achaeans has been hurt.  
I don't think he'll long survive my arrow's force,  
if Apollo, son of Zeus, really was the one  
who put it in my heart to leave Lycia.”

[120] That's what Lycaon's son cried out, boasting aloud.  
But his sharp arrow hadn't killed Diomedes,

who moved back to stand beside his chariot and horses.  
He called to Sthenelus, son of Capaneus.

“My friend, son of Capaneus, come on,  
get down from the chariot, so you can pull  
this sharp arrow from my shoulder for me.”

Diomedes spoke. Sthenelus jumped down on the ground.  
Standing beside him, he pulled out the sharp arrow  
stuck in his shoulder. Blood seeped through the woven shirt.

[130] Diomedes, expert in war cries, then spoke this prayer:

“Hear me, Athena, unwearied daughter  
of aegis-bearing Zeus. If you’ve ever  
loved my father, stood by his side  
in murderous combat, be my friend now.  
Grant that I kill this man, that I come  
a spear’s throw from the one who hit me  
unexpectedly and now boasts about it,  
saying I won’t see daylight for much longer.”

As Diomedes prayed, Pallas Athena heard.

[140] She put fresh strength into his legs and upper arms.  
Standing close by, she spoke. Her words had wings.

“Take courage, Diomedes, in this fight with Trojans.  
I’ve put your father’s strength into your chest,  
that shield-bearing horseman’s fearless power.  
And I’ve removed the filter from your eyes  
which covered them before, so now,  
you’ll easily distinguish gods from men.  
If a god comes here and stands against you,  
don’t offer to fight any deathless one,

[150] except for Aphrodite, Zeus’ daughter.  
If she fights, cut her with your sharp bronze.”

Bright-eyed Athena left. Diomedes charged off,

joining at once those soldiers fighting in the front,  
his spirit on fire to battle Trojans, seized by frenzy  
three times greater than before. He was like a lion  
slightly hurt by a shepherd guarding his sheep flock  
out in the wilds, when it jumps the wall into the pen.  
But he's not killed it. The wound rouses the beast's strength.  
The shepherd can't keep the charging lion from his sheep,  
[160] who, left unguarded, panic. Huddled in a mass,  
they crowd in on one another. So the lion,  
in his hot rage, leaps over the wide sheep-fold wall.  
That's how strong Diomedes went to fight the Trojans  
in his angry fury.

First he killed Astynous,  
and then Hypeiron, a shepherd of his people.  
His bronze spear hit one right above the nipple.  
His huge sword struck the other on the collar,  
by the shoulder, slicing through the shoulder bone,  
severing it from Hypeiron's neck and back.  
[170] He left them there, to chase Abas and Polyidus,  
sons of old Eurydamas, interpreter of dreams.  
The old man didn't visit them to explain their dreams,  
for mighty Diomedes slaughtered both of them.  
Then Diomedes went after Xanthus and Thoön,  
two sons of Phaenops, both of whom he loved.  
Worn down by sad old age, he'd have no other child,  
no person to inherit all his property.  
Diomedes killed them, took the life they loved,  
leaving bitter grief and anguish for their father,  
[180] who wouldn't welcome them back home from war alive.  
His next of kin thus divided up his assets.  
Diomedes then challenged two sons of Priam,  
son of Dardanus, both in a single chariot—  
Echemmon and Chromius. Just as a lion  
leaps onto cattle and snaps necks on the cows,  
some heifer grazing in the bushes, so Tydeus's son  
knocked them out of their chariot viciously,



against their will. Then he stripped their armour.  
His companions took the horses to the ships.

[190] Aeneas saw Diomedes cutting his way  
through ranks of soldiers. He charged on through the fight,  
the clash of spears, looking for Pandarus.  
He met Lycaon's son, a fine and powerful man.  
Standing close by, Aeneas said to him:

“Pandarus,  
where's your bow, your feathered arrows,  
your reputation as a splendid archer?  
No man can match your expertise in that.  
No one in Lycia can claim to be your better.  
Come, raise your hands in prayer to Zeus,  
[200] then shoot an arrow at that man, whose force  
now dominates the field, hurting Trojans badly,  
hacking limbs from many fine young men,  
unless, of course, it is some angry god,  
displeased with Trojans' sacrificial gifts.  
It's hard to stand against a raging god.”

To Aeneas Lycaon's fine son then replied:

“Aeneas, counsellor to bronze-armed Trojans,  
from all I see, I think that man must be  
the warlike son of Tydeus. I know him  
[210] by his shield, the visor on his helmet,  
and by looking at his horses. I'm not sure  
he's not a god. But if he's the man  
I think he is, the fierce son of Tydeus,  
he could not be charging at us in this way  
without help from some god beside him,  
an immortal with a covering cloud  
around his shoulders, the god who pushed aside  
that sharp arrow which struck Diomedes.  
For I've already shot an arrow at him,

[220] hit his shoulder through that moulded armour.

I thought I'd shipped him straight to Hades.

But I didn't kill him. The man must be  
some angry god. But we've no horses here,  
no chariot for me to chase him in.

In storage in Lycaon's house somewhere  
there are eleven chariots, new ones, too.  
They're beautiful and made just recently,  
but covered up with drapes. Beside each one  
stand pairs of horses, munching wheat and barley.

[230] When I was coming here, old soldier Lycaon,  
in his well-built home, gave me much advice.

He told me to take chariots and horses  
when I lead Trojans into the hot heart of war.  
But I didn't follow his advice. If I had,  
things would have been much better for me.  
But I worried about the horses—they'd lack forage  
with so many men all crammed together,  
and they were used to eating very well.  
I left them and came to Troy to fight on foot,

[240] relying on my expertise in archery.

But that skill is apparently of little use.  
For already I've hit two of their best men,  
Tydeus' son and the son of Atreus.  
I've drawn blood from both of them, it's true,  
but that just made them much more dangerous.  
It was a evil time, that day I took  
my curved bow off its peg to lead my Lycians  
to lovely Troy, a favour for prince Hector.  
If I get home and see with my own eyes

[250] my native land, my wife, my large and lofty home,  
let someone chop my head off on the spot,  
if I don't smash this bow with my own hands  
and throw the pieces in the blazing fire.  
For me it's been completely useless."

Aeneas, leader of the Trojans, then replied:

“Don’t talk like that. Things won’t change at all  
until the two of us go out to challenge  
Diomedes with a chariot and horses,  
until we confront him with our weapons.

[260] Come, get in my chariot. Then you’ll see  
how good these horses are from Tros’ stock,  
skilled in rapid movement on the plain,  
in all directions, in pursuit or in retreat.  
This pair will take us safely to the city,  
should Zeus give victory to Diomedes.  
Let’s go. Take the whip and glistening reins.  
I’ll leave you the horses, so I can fight.  
Or if you fight him, I’ll control the horses.”

Lycaon’s fine son then said in reply:

[270] “Aeneas, you should take the reins yourself,  
guide your own horses—for they will pull  
your curving chariot that much better  
with a driver they’re accustomed to,  
if we must flee Tydeus’ son this time.  
If they miss your voice, they may shy or panic,  
or refuse to charge straight into battle.  
Then the son of great-hearted Tydeus  
in his attack may kill us both, and lead  
these swift horses off. You drive the chariot,  
[280] guide your horses. I’ll do battle with him—  
my spear will give him a sharp welcome.”

They finished talking, climbed up together, and set off,  
riding out in a fine chariot, both keen to kill,  
driving the swift horses against Tydeus’ son.  
Seeing them coming, Sthenelus, Capaneus’ brave son,  
at once spoke up to Diomedes—his words had wings.

“Diomedes, son of Tydeus, my heart’s

true friend, I see two men approaching,  
eager to attack you, two powerful men,  
[290] an outstanding team. One's Pandarus,  
the skilful archer, who boasts he's Lycaon's son.  
The other is Aeneas, proud Anchises' son,  
that's his claim. His mother's Aphrodite.  
So come, let's retire with the horses,  
in case our quick charge through front lines  
ends up costing you your precious life."

Strong Diomedes, with a scowl, answered Sthenelus:

"Don't talk of moving back. For I know well  
you won't persuade me. By birth it's not in me  
[300] to shirk war or seek refuge. My spirit's strong.  
Nor am I keen to climb up in the chariot.  
I'll go to fight them as I am, on foot.  
Pallas Athena does not allow me  
to withdraw in fear. Their horses may be fast,  
but they'll not carry them both back again,  
away from us, even if one escapes.  
But I will tell you this—keep it in mind—  
if Athena, that clever schemer, gives me  
great glory and I do kill them both,  
[310] then you must hold our swift horses here,  
tying these reins up to the chariot rail.  
Remember to run down Aeneas' team,  
then drive those horses from the Trojans  
to well-armed Achaeans. For those horses  
come from the stock that wide-seeing Zeus  
gave Tros, payment for Ganymede, his son.\*  
They're the finest horses under the sun,  
beneath the light of day. Anchises,  
king of men, got some of that line by stealth,  
[320] putting his mares into Laomedon's herd  
without his knowledge. Six of those horses  
became the breeding stock on his estate.

He kept four of them in his own stable  
and gave Aeneas two, horses so fierce,  
they scatter men before them. If we can,  
we'll catch these two, win ourselves great glory."

As they talked to each other of their strategy,  
the fast horses quickly brought the two men closer.  
Lycaon's worthy son spoke first, shouting out:

[330] "Great spirited, warlike son of Tydeus,  
that noble man, I see that my sharp arrow,  
a bitter shaft, did not destroy you.  
So now I'll try to hit you with my spear."

He spoke, balanced his long-shadowed spear, and threw it.  
The spear hit the son of Tydeus on his shield.  
The bronze point pierced it, but stopped at the body armour.  
Seeing that, Lycaon's fine son let out a mighty cheer:

"You're hit, right in the ribs. You won't last long.  
I think you've given me a glorious triumph."

[340] Unperturbed, powerful Diomedes said to him:

"You're wrong. You haven't hit me. In my view,  
this matter won't end for the two of you,  
until one of you falls dead, and his blood  
satisfies in full hard warlike Ares."

That said, he threw his spear. Athena guided it  
straight to Pandarus' nose, directly by the eyes.  
It smashed through his white teeth. The tireless bronze  
sliced through his tongue at its root, coming out his chin,  
right at the tip. Pandarus fell from the chariot,  
[350] his brightly shining armour rattling round him.  
The swiftly running horses swerved aside.  
Then and there his life-force, his spirit, left him.

Aeneas then leapt down with his long spear and shield,  
fearing Achaeans would somehow haul away the corpse.  
He made a stand by Pandarus, like a lion,  
confident of its strength. He held his spear in front,  
his round shield, too, with fearful shouts, fiercely eager  
to kill anyone who came up to confront him.  
The son of Tydeus picked up a stone, a massive rock  
[360] which no two men now alive could lift. He threw it  
all by himself with ease. It hit Aeneas' hip,  
where thigh meets pelvis, what people call the hip joint.  
The boulder smashed the socket and both tendons round it.  
The rough edges on the rock scraped off his skin.  
Falling to his knees, warlike Aeneas stayed down,  
supporting himself with his strong hand on the ground.  
Black night came down and covered both his eyes.  
Aeneas, king of men, would have perished there,  
if Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter, hadn't seen him right away.  
[370] She was his mother—she'd conceived him with Anchises,  
while he was tending cattle. Wrapping her white arms  
around the son she loved, she hid him in the folds  
of her bright gown, to ward off any spears,  
should some Danaan driving with swift horses  
hurl a spear into his chest and take his life.  
She then began to carry her dear son from the fight.

Meanwhile, Sthenelus, son of Capaneus,  
did not forget what Diomedes, skilled in war cries,  
told him. He pulled his sure-footed horses to one side,  
[380] beyond the fight, tying the reins onto the rail,  
and then went after those fine-maned horses of Aeneas.  
He drove the animals away from Trojan lines  
towards well-armed Achaeans. There he gave them  
to his dear companion Deïpylus, whom he esteemed  
above all others the same age as himself,  
since they both thought alike. He instructed him  
to take them to the hollow ships. Then brave Sthenelus  
climbed back into his chariot, grabbed the shining reins,

and raced the strong horses back, keen to rejoin Diomedes.

[390] But Diomedes with his ruthless bronze had gone  
to run down Aphrodite—knowing she was not a god  
who could do much in battle, not one of those  
who control men's wars. She was no Athena,  
no goddess Strife, who destroys whole cities.  
He chased her through the crowded battle zone.  
When he met her, great-hearted Tydeus' son  
charged, lunging with his sharp spear at Aphrodite.  
His weapon wounded her slim wrist, piercing the skin  
above her hand, right through her godlike robe,

[400] a garment the Graces had made for her themselves.\*  
Immortal divine fluid then flowed out, ichor,  
which circulates only in the blessed gods.  
They don't eat food or drink down gleaming wine.  
Hence, they lack blood, and men call them immortal.  
Aphrodite screamed wildly and let go of her son.  
But Phoebus Apollo caught him in his hands,  
then shielded him with a dark cloud, just in case  
some fast-riding Danaan threw a spear into his chest  
and took away his life. Then Diomedes,  
expert in war cries, shouted loudly:

[410] "Daughter of Zeus,  
leave war and fights alone. Isn't it enough  
for you to fool around with feeble women?  
If you start loitering on the battlefield,  
I think the war will make you shake with terror,  
even though you learn about it from a distance."

Diomedes spoke. Aphrodite left in agony,  
distressed and fearful. Wind-swift Iris came to her,  
led her off, out of the crowd, moaning in pain,  
her fair skin stained and wounded. She came across

[420] fierce Ares, seated on the left flank of the fight,  
his spear and his fast horses resting on a cloud.

Falling on her knees, she implored her dear brother,  
pleading hard for his golden-bridled horses:

“Dear brother, save me. Give me your horses,  
so I may go back up to Mount Olympus,  
the immortals’ home. My wound pains me a lot.  
A mortal man inflicted this wound on me,  
Tydeus’ son, who’d now fight Father Zeus himself.”

At this, Ares gave her his golden-bridled horses.  
[430] She climbed up in the chariot, her fond heart suffering.  
Getting in beside her, Iris picked up the reins,  
then lashed the horses forward. They flew on willingly.  
At once they reached the gods’ home, steep Olympus.  
There wind-swift Iris stopped the horses, untied them  
from the chariot, and gave them heavenly fodder.  
Aphrodite threw herself into her mother’s lap,  
divine Dione, who took her daughter in her arms,  
caressed her with her hand, then said:

“My dear child,  
which of the heavenly gods has done this,  
[440] acted so brazenly against you, as if  
you’d done something evil in broad daylight?”

Laughter-loving Aphrodite answered her:

“Proud Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
wounded me, for I was carrying off  
Aeneas, my dear son, away from battle.  
Of all men, he’s the one I love the most.  
Now grim war is not just Trojans and Achaeans,  
for Danaans fight against immortals, too.”

Dione, queen among the goddesses, replied:

[450] “Be brave, my child, hold on, though you’re in pain.



Many of us living on Olympus  
have been hurt by men in our attempts  
to bring harsh troubles on each other.  
Ares suffered, too, when mighty Otus  
and Ephialtes, children of Aloëus,  
tied him up in powerful manacles,  
then kept him prisoner in a brass jar  
for thirteen months. Ares would've died there,  
with all his war-lust, if their step-mother,  
[460] fair Eëriboea, had not told Hermes.  
He stole Ares secretly. Ares was exhausted.  
That harsh imprisonment was breaking him.  
Hera suffered, as well, when Hercules,  
the powerful son of Amphitryon,  
hit her right breast with a three-barbed arrow.  
She was wracked by pain beyond all cure.  
With them huge Hades also suffered  
from a sharp arrow, when this same man,  
this Hercules, a son of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
[470] shot him in Pylos, among the corpses there,  
inflicting pain. Hades went straight to Zeus  
at home on Olympus—his heart enraged,  
in agony, the arrow buried deep  
in his strong shoulder. He was incensed.  
Paeëon healed him with pain-killing herbs  
smeared on the wound, for Hades was immortal.  
What a wretch he was, that Hercules,  
a trouble maker. He didn't hesitate  
to commit bad acts with that bow of his  
[480] against the gods who dwell on Mount Olympus.  
But Athena, the bright-eyed goddess,  
prompted Tydeus' son to go at you.  
Still, he's a fool for not remembering  
the man who fights wars against immortals  
does not live long. His children have no chance  
to prattle to their father at his knee,  
once he comes home from war's grim butchery.

Diomedes is surely powerful—  
but he should take care. A greater power than you  
[490] may come against him. Then Aegialeia,  
wise daughter of Adrestus, brave wife  
of horse-taming Diomedes, with cries of sorrow  
will rouse all her dear household from their sleep,  
lamenting the husband whom she married,  
the best of the Achaeans.”

As she said this,  
with her hand Dione cleaned away the ichor  
on Aphrodite’s wrist, healing the hand,  
curing Aphrodite of her pain. Looking on,  
Athena and Hera teased Zeus, son of Cronos:

[500] “Father Zeus, you won’t get angry with me  
for what I say, will you? Aphrodite,  
trying to coax some new Achaean woman  
into running off with one of those Trojans  
she loves so much, must have been caressing  
some well-dressed Achaean lady and scratched  
her delicate hand on a golden brooch.”

When they spoke, the father of gods and men smiled,  
called for golden Aphrodite, and then said to her:

“My child, this warfare is not your business.  
[510] You should concern yourself with your own work—  
love, especially erotic love in marriage.  
Swift Ares and Athena will take care of this.”

As the gods talked the matter over with each other,  
Diomedes, expert at war cries, sought out Aeneas.  
Though he knew Apollo himself was shielding him,  
he had no fear at all of that great god, pushing on  
to kill Aeneas, then strip his fine armour from him.  
Three times he charged forward, in a frenzy for the kill.

Three times Apollo pushed back his shining shield.  
[520] But when for the fourth time he came on like a god,  
Apollo, the far shooter, in a terrifying voice, cried out:

“Take care, son of Tydeus. Go back.  
Don’t think you’re equal to the gods.  
The race of men who walk upon the ground  
can never match the race of deathless gods.”

At these words, the son of Tydeus drew back somewhat,  
avoiding the anger of Apollo, the far shooter.  
Apollo put Aeneas some distance from the fight,  
on sacred Pergamus, where his temple stood.  
[530] There, in the large shrine, Leto and Artemis,  
the archer goddess, healed Aeneas, restoring him  
to his former power and magnificence.  
Apollo of the silver bow then made an image,  
a copy of Aeneas, with matching armour,  
around which Trojans and brave Achaeans fought,  
hacking away at ox-hide covering their chests,  
at the round shields or smaller shields with fringes.  
Phoebus Apollo then called to foolhardy Ares:

“Ares, Ares, you bloodstained man-killer,  
[540] can’t you return to Diomedes  
and remove him from the battle? Right now,  
he’d stand and fight with Father Zeus himself.  
First, he wounded Aphrodite on the wrist,  
fighting at close quarters. Then he flung himself,  
like some god, at me.”

After saying this,  
Apollo took a seat high up on Pergamus.  
Murderous Ares went in among the Trojan ranks,  
inspiring the troops. In the shape of Acamas,  
Thracian leader, he yelled at Priam’s royal sons:

[550] “You sons of Priam, that god-nurtured king,  
why are you still allowing the Achaeans  
to keep slaughtering your troops? Are you waiting  
until they fight by the well-built city gates?  
There lies great-hearted Anchises’ son,  
Aeneas, whom we honour as we do prince Hector.  
Come, let’s save our brave comrade from the battle roar.”

Ares’ words gave each man courage and blood-zest for war.  
Then Sarpedon spoke to Hector, bitterly complaining:

“Hector, where’s that courage you used to have?  
[560] You kept claiming you could guard the city  
on your own, without your people or your allies,  
using your own family and relatives.  
Looking round now, I can’t see them here,  
any of them. They’ve all taken refuge,  
like dogs around a lion. Those of us  
who’ve come as allies, we do all the fighting.  
I marched here as an ally, travelling far,  
for Lycia is a long, long way from here,  
by the swirling river Xanthus, where I left  
[570] my dear wife, my infant son, much property,  
something poor men covet. But for all that,  
I urge my Lycian troops to action,  
I stand and fight all comers on my own,  
when I’ve nothing for the enemy to take.  
But you stand around, without urging men  
to fight back or defend their wives. Watch out.  
You may become a prize yourself—a trophy  
for your enemies. You’ll be like a fish  
snared in the meshes of a fatal net.  
[580] They’ll quickly smash your well-built city.  
You should be thinking of this day and night,  
imploring leaders of your famous allies  
to hold on staunchly, thus preventing them  
from mounting any serious complaints.”

Sarpedon's speech stung Hector's heart. Fully armed,  
he quickly jumped down from his chariot to the ground.  
Waving two sharp spears, he roamed through all the army,  
rousing men to fight, steeling hearts for dreadful war.  
Troops rallied once more and turned to face Achaeans.

[590] Argives, too, stood firm. The men did not withdraw.  
As on the sacred threshing floor wind blows the chaff,  
while men stand winnowing the crop, when Demeter,  
with her golden hair, separates the grain from chaff  
in the rushing breeze, and piles of chaff grow whiter,  
so then Achaean troops grew white, covered with dust  
stirred up by horses' hooves. It coloured the sky bronze.  
So the chariots came on to battle once again,  
wheeled round by drivers' strong ferocious hands.  
Headstrong Ares assisted Trojans in the battle,  
[600] concealing them in darkness, roaming everywhere,  
carrying out his orders from Phoebus Apollo,  
god with the golden sword, who'd told him to arouse  
the Trojans' spirits when he saw Pallas Athena  
leave the fighting, for she was helping the Danaans.

Apollo then sent Aeneas from his costly shrine,  
putting fighting strength into this warrior's heart,  
his people's shepherd. Aeneas rejoined his friends,  
who were overjoyed to see him safe and sound—alive—  
approaching with brave spirits. They didn't question him.  
[610] They had too much other work at hand to do.  
For Apollo, god with the silver bow, and Ares,  
the man killer, along with insatiable Strife,  
had stirred things up there on the battlefield.

Then the two Ajaxes, Odysseus, and Diomedes  
roused Danaans, urging them to battle.  
They did not fear the Trojans' powerful attack  
and stood their ground like clouds set in place by Zeus,  
son of Cronos, above a range of mountain peaks

on a windless day, quite motionless, while the force  
[620] of North Wind and other raging blasts is sound asleep.  
When these storm winds blow, they scatter shadowy clouds.  
That's the way Danaans held their positions then,  
without flinching, without fear. The son of Atreus  
moved through the troops and gave out many orders.

“My friends, be men. Let courage fill your hearts.  
In the heat of battle remember honour,  
each man's reputation. When men recall  
their honour, more troops are saved than slaughtered.  
Those who run away lose life and fame.”

[630] Agamemnon spoke, then quickly hurled his spear.  
He hit a good fighting man, comrade to Aeneas,  
great-hearted Deïcoön, son of Pergasus,  
whom Trojans honoured as they did king Priam's sons,  
for he was quick to take his place among the best,  
the men who do their fighting at the very front.  
Mighty Agamemnon's spear struck against his shield,  
but the shield could not hold out—the bronze went through,  
piercing Deïcoön's belt and sinking in his gut.  
He fell with a thud, his armour rattling round him.

[640] Then Aeneas killed two of the best Danaans,  
Crethon and Orsilochus, whose father lived  
in well-built Phere, a man of property,  
descended from the river Alpheus, whose broad streams  
flow through Pylian land. The river bore Orsilochus,  
king of many men, and Orsilochus fathered  
great-hearted Diocles, to whom were born twin sons,  
Crethon and Orsilochus, experts in all aspects of war.  
These two, once grown, came with Argives in black ships  
to Troy, city rich in horses, to win honour

[650] for Agamemnon and Menelaus, sons of Atreus.  
Death's final moment took them in. As two lions,  
cared for by their mother in a deep thick forest

on a mountain peak, steal stout sheep and cattle  
and plunder people's farmsteads, until they perish,  
killed by sharp bronze in the hands of men, so these two died,  
cut down by Aeneas. They fell like lofty pines.

War-loving Menelaus felt pity for these two,  
seeing them die. He made his way through the men's front ranks,  
armed in glittering bronze, brandishing his spear.

[660] Ares stirred his battle spirit, planning his death  
at Aeneas' hand. But then Antilochus,  
son of great-hearted Nestor, saw Menelaus.  
He hurried through the foremost ranks, in his concern  
for this shepherd of the people, that if he came to grief,  
all their efforts would be completely futile.  
Menelaus and Aeneas, now faced each other,  
with eager hands and spears, ready to begin the fight.  
But when Antilochus stood by Menelaus,  
Aeneas, though a swift fighter, started to withdraw,  
[670] seeing these two men standing their ground together.  
So Menelaus and Antilochus dragged the corpses  
of Crethon and Orsilochus to Achaean troops,  
placed the two dead heroes in the hands of friends,  
then turned back to fight with those in the front ranks.

Antilochus and Menelaus then killed Pylaemenes,  
a man like Ares, leader of the Paphlagonians,  
great-hearted, shield-bearing men. The son of Atreus,  
famous spearman Menelaus, struck him,  
as he stood up in his chariot, hitting him  
[680] right on his collar bone. Antilochus hit Mydon,  
Atymnius' noble son, the attendant driver,  
as he was wheeling his sure-footed horses round.  
He struck him with a rock square on the elbow.  
The reins, decorated with rich ivory,  
fell from his hands down onto the dusty ground.  
Antilochus sprang out and with his sword struck Mydon  
on the temple. Gasping with pain, Mydon pitched over,

and tumbled from the well-made chariot headfirst,  
his head and shoulders disappearing in the dirt.  
[690] For some time he stayed stuck, buried in deep sand,  
until his horses kicked him flat, level with the dust,  
stamping him into the ground, as Antilochus  
whipped them on, leading them back to Achaean troops.

Hector saw this from the lines. He ran against them,  
shouting wildly, with strong Trojan soldiers in support.  
Leading these men came Ares along with fearful Strife,  
bringing war's pitiless and murderous confusion.  
Ares worked with a huge spear in his hands, moving round,  
sometimes behind Hector, sometimes in front of him.

[700] When Diomedes, skilled in war cries, noticed Ares,  
he shuddered—just a man crossing a large plain  
stops at a raging river rushing to the sea,  
looks helplessly at swirling foam, and moves away—  
so Tydeus' son backed off then, saying to his men:

“My friends, we're so amazed prince Hector  
is such a spearman, so courageous, warlike.  
But he's always got some god beside him,  
to ward off destruction. Right now, it's Ares  
he's has with him, looking like a mortal man.  
[710] Stay turned towards the Trojans, but fall back.  
Don't try to fight it out with gods.”

Diomedes spoke. Trojans then approached much closer.  
Hector killed two men, keen warriors—Menesthes  
and Anchialus—both riding in a single chariot.  
Seeing them fall, great Telamonian Ajax felt pity.  
He approached, stood firm, then threw his shining spear.  
The spear struck Amphion, son of Selagus,  
who owned much property in Paesus, with many crops.  
Fate led him to become allied with Priam and his sons.  
[720] Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Amphion in the belt.



The long-shadowed spear struck hard, low in his gut.  
He collapsed with a crash. Noble Ajax ran up  
to strip the armour off, but Trojans showered him  
with bright, sharp spears. His shield took many hits.  
Pushing his heel into the corpse he pulled out his bronze spear,  
but the hail of weapons stopped him stripping off  
Amphion's fine armour from his shoulders.  
He feared the fierce brave Trojans standing by the corpse,  
for many spearmen crowded him and forced him back.  
[730] And Ajax, for all his massive size and strength,  
for all his courage, had to withdraw, shaken.

As these men toiled in frantic battle, powerful fate  
drove strong, brave Tlepolemus, son of Hercules,  
against godlike Sarpedon. These two men approached,  
facing each other at close quarters, son and grandson  
of cloud-gathering Zeus. Tlepolemus called out first:

“Sarpedon, counsellor to the Lycians,  
what forces you to cower down right here,  
quite ignorant in battle? Those who say  
[740] you're aegis-bearing Zeus' son are liars.  
You're far inferior to those men born of Zeus  
in times long past. Consider mighty Hercules,  
my father. He was quite different, they say—  
steadfast, brave, his spirit like a lion.  
He came here once for Laomedon's horses.  
With fewer men and only six ships, he sacked  
the Trojan city and emptied all its streets.\*  
But you've a paltry spirit, your troops  
are withering away. And it's impossible  
[750] you'll help the Trojans by coming here  
from Lycia, even if you're powerful.  
I'll kill you, and you'll pass through Hades' gate.”

Sarpedon, Lycian leader, then said in reply:

“Yes, Tlepolemus, Hercules did destroy  
sacred Ilion, but through the foolishness  
of the city’s king, high-born Laomedon,  
who tricked the man who’d worked so well for him.  
He didn’t offer Hercules the horses  
he’d come so far to get. As for you,  
[760] I’ll now see to your death, that fatal blackness.  
You’ll give me great glory, and your life  
you’ll give to famous horseman Hades.”

Sarpedon spoke. Tlepolemus raised his ash spear high.  
Then two long spears flew from their hands together.  
Sarpedon’s spear hit Tlepolemus right in the neck.  
The cruel point kept going. Dark night covered up his eyes.  
Tlepolemus’ long spear struck Sarpedon in his left thigh.  
Its bloodthirsty point pierced him, aiming for the bone.  
On this occasion, Father Zeus held off his fate.  
[770] His brave companions carried off godlike Sarpedon,  
pulled down by the long spear’s weight, as it dragged behind.  
No one thought to pull the ash spear from his leg,  
so he could walk. They were in such a rush to shift him.

On the opposing side, well-armed Achaeans  
carried Tlepolemus away from battle.  
Godlike Odysseus noticed them, his spirit steady,  
but his fond heart was burning, as he turned over  
in his mind, whether to chase after that son of Zeus,  
loud thunderer, or stay to kill more Lycians.  
[780] But Fate did not decree that brave Odysseus  
should kill Zeus’ mighty son with his sharp bronze.  
Athena turned his heart against that Lycian crowd.  
So he killed Coeranus, Alastor, Chromius,  
Alcandrus, Halius, Noëmon, and Prytanis.  
Lord Odysseus would have killed still more Lycians,  
if Hector of the flashing helmet had not seen him,  
then gone through the ranks in front, armed in shining bronze,  
terrifying Danaans. Sarpedon, son of Zeus,

was glad to see him coming. He implored Hector:

[790] “Son of Priam, don’t let me lie here,  
a trophy for Danaans. Rescue me.  
Let me remain forever in your city,  
since it seems I’ll not be going home  
to cheer up my dear wife and infant son.”

Hector of the flashing helmet made no reply.  
He charged on, eager to force the Argives quickly back,  
to massacre large numbers of their soldiers.  
God-like Sarpedon’s noble comrades placed him  
by a fine oak tree, sacred to aegis-bearing Zeus.

[800] Pelagon, his strong, well-loved attendant, then pushed  
the ash spear straight out through his thigh. Sarpedon fainted.  
A mist fell, clouding his eyes, but soon he breathed again.  
North Wind’s breeze revived him, blowing air into his heart,  
as his spirit panted, gasping his life away.

Argives weren’t driven back to their black ships by Ares  
or by bronze-armed Hector. Nor did they wheel about  
to battle Trojans face to face. They kept moving back,  
once they realized Ares was with the Trojans.

Among the Argives, who were the first and last men killed  
[810] by Hector, son of Priam, and brazen Ares?  
They were godlike Teuthras, Orestes the charioteer,  
Trechus, an Aetolian spearman, Oenomaus,  
Helenus, son of Oenops, and Oresbius,  
with his glittering belt, a man who lived in Hyle  
and kept himself preoccupied with wealth  
along the shores of lake Cephisia. Beside him  
lived even more Boeotians, owners of rich lands.

White-armed goddess Hera saw Argives being slaughtered  
in the thick of battle. She spoke out to Athena.

[820] “Alas, Athena, child of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
tireless one, we’ve made an empty promise  
to Menelaus, that he’d wipe out Troy,  
that well-built city, before going home,  
if we let murderous Ares rage on like this.  
Come, let’s both recall our fighting power.”

Athena, the bright-eyed goddess, agreed with Hera’s words.  
So that revered goddess Hera, daughter of great Cronos,  
went to prepare her horses with their golden bridles.  
Then Hebe quickly checked the chariot’s curved wheels,  
[830] bronze with eight spokes each, on axles made of iron,  
wheel rims made out of imperishable gold,  
edged with tires of close-fitted bronze, an amazing sight.  
Silver axle boxes revolve on either side.  
The body of the chariot has gold and silver strips.  
Two rails run round it. The pole is made of silver.  
On its end Hebe tied the cross-piece, lovely gold,  
then fixed the golden collar straps. Hera, keen for war,  
led her swift-footed horses out into their yoke.  
Then Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
[840] threw on her father’s porch the embroidered gown  
which she had made herself with her own hands.  
She then put on the robe of cloud-gatherer Zeus  
and armed herself with weapons for that wretched war.  
She slung across her shoulders the fearsome tasselled aegis,  
its borders woven with Fear, Strife, Force, terrorizing Panic,  
with the chilling, horrifying and monstrous Gorgon’s head—  
the horrifying emblem of aegis-bearing Zeus.  
On her head she placed a double-ridged gold helmet,  
men from a hundred cities etched upon its four-part crest.  
[850] She set foot in her blazing chariot, grasping  
her huge, strong, heavy spear, with which she kills men,  
heroes who annoy her, goddess with a mighty father.  
Hera quickly lashed the horses with her whip.  
The gates of heaven scraped open on their own.  
The Seasons supervise them, for they’re in charge

of great heavenly Olympus, opening up  
the dense packed clouds or closing them again.  
Through these gates the goddesses led out their horses,  
Hera lashing them ahead. They met the son of Cronos,  
[860] sitting some distance from the other gods,  
on the highest crest of many-ridged Olympus.  
Hera, white-armed goddess, reined in the horses,  
then spoke to Zeus, most high son of Cronos:

“Father Zeus, aren’t you angry with Ares  
for killing off those warriors? He’s wiped out  
so many Achaean men, good ones, too,  
and so rashly. It’s not right. It pains me.  
Meanwhile, Aphrodite and Apollo,  
with his silver bow, are enjoying themselves,  
[870] happy about this madman they’ve unleashed,  
who has no sense of what’s appropriate.  
Father Zeus, would I annoy you very much  
if I hurt Ares and chased him from this fight?”

Cloud gatherer Zeus smiled and then said in reply:

“All right, then, do that. But set Athena,  
goddess of the battle spoils, against him.  
For she’s the one who’s most accustomed  
to inflicting nasty pains on Ares.”

White-armed goddess Hera agreed with what Zeus said.  
[880] She whipped the horses on. They flew off willingly,  
mid-way between the starry heaven and earth.  
As far as a man on a height can see in the distant haze  
as he looks out across the wine-dark sea, that’s how far  
gods’ snorting horses vault in just one stride.  
When they came to Troy’s two flowing rivers,  
where the Simoeis and the Scamander meet,  
white-armed goddess Hera stopped the horses,  
loosed them from the chariot and hid them in thick cloud.

Simoeis produced ambrosia for them to eat.

[890] The goddesses moved stealthily, like wild pigeons,  
eager to assist the Argive troops. They reached that place  
where most of the bravest men were fighting, in a crowd  
by mighty Diomedes, tamer of horses,  
like lions who eat raw meat or wild boars whose strength  
is not easily exhausted. In that place Hera,  
white-armed goddess, stood up, looking just like Stentor,  
a great-hearted, loud-throated man, whose voice could shout  
with the strength of fifty men. Hera cried out:

“Shame on you, you Argive warriors.

[900] You’re a disgrace, good only for display.  
When lord Achilles used to go to battle,  
the Trojans didn’t dare to venture out  
beyond the Dardanian gates. They feared  
his mighty spear. But now they’re fighting  
well outside the city, by our hollow ships.”

With these words, she roused each man’s heart and spirit.  
Bright-eyed Athena quickly moved to Diomedes.  
She found that king beside his chariot and horses,  
recovering from the wound from Pandarus’ arrow.

[910] The sweat under the wide strap of his round shield  
was bothering him. The chafing made his arms grow tired.  
He was lifting up the strap, wiping off dark blood.  
Setting her hand on the chariot yoke, the goddess said:

“Tydeus had a son not much like his father.  
He may have been short, but he was a fighter.  
When I would not allow him into battle  
or to display himself, that time he came  
to Thebes alone, far from his Achaeans,  
in the middle of all those Cadmeans,

[920] I told him to be quiet at the palace feast.  
But he possessed a powerful spirit  
always active in him. So he challenged

Cadmean young men and beat them easily.  
That's how much I helped him. Now I stand here,  
beside you, taking care of you, your friend.  
And I'm telling you to fight the Trojans.  
But you're either weary after so much action,  
your limbs worn out, or fear has made you timid.  
If so, then you're no son of Tydeus,  
[930] the son of warlike Oeneus."

In answer to Athena, mighty Diomedes said:

"I recognize you, goddess daughter  
of aegis-bearing Zeus. I'll speak to you  
quite openly, concealing nothing. It's not  
that fear has made me hesitant or anxious.  
But I'm remembering your own instructions,  
what you laid down. You told me not to fight  
face to face with any immortal god,  
unless Zeus' daughter Aphrodite  
[940] should come to battle. With my sharp bronze,  
I was to wound her. I've pulled myself back,  
and told the other Argives to stay here  
since I see Ares dominates the fight."

Bright-eyed goddess Athena answered him:

"Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
you fill my heart with joy. Don't fear Ares  
or any other immortal deity.  
For I'll give you all the help you need.  
But come, first let your sure-footed horses  
[950] charge at Ares. Hit him up close. Have no fear  
of headstrong Ares, that madman, born evil,  
that fickle god. Just now he gave his word  
to me and Hera too that he would fight  
the Trojans and assist the Argives. But now,  
he's forgotten that and helps the Trojans."

Saying this, Athena grabbed Sthenelus' hand  
and hauled him from the chariot to the ground.  
He jumped up at once. The goddess climbed up eagerly  
beside lord Diomedes in the chariot.

[960] The oaken axle groaned aloud, weighed down,  
bearing the fearful goddess and the finest man.  
Pallas Athena took up the reins and whip.  
First, she led the sure-footed horses against Ares.  
He was removing armour from huge Periphas,  
Ochesius' fine son, by far the best of the Aetolians.  
Blood-stained Ares was stripping him of all his weapons.  
Then Athena put Hades' helmet on her head,  
so she was invisible to mighty Ares.  
But man-killing Ares did see Diomedes.

[970] He let the body of huge Periphas lie there,  
where he'd first killed him and ripped out his spirit.  
He strode straight up to horse-taming Diomedes.  
When the two came to close quarters and faced each other,  
Ares thrust his bronze spear first, over the yoke  
and horses' reins, eager to take Diomedes' life.  
Athena, bright-eyed goddess, hands gripping the reins,  
shoved the spear aside, so its thrust was harmless,  
above the chariot. Diomedes, skilled in war cries,  
then made the second thrust with his bronze spear.

[980] Pallas Athena guided the weapon right to Ares' gut,  
the lower part where his waist band went around him.  
Diomedes wounded Ares, piercing his fair skin,  
then pulled back on his spear. Brazen Ares roared  
as loud as the screams of nine or ten thousand men  
when they clash in war. Fear seized Achaeans—Trojans, too.  
They shuddered. That's how strong that cry sounded  
as it came from Ares, insatiable for war.  
Just as a dark mist moves upward from the clouds,  
when in hot weather a strong wind arises,

[990] so brazen Ares looked to Tydeus' son, Diomedes,  
as the god at once soared up into the clouds,



ascending to wide heaven. Ares, in a rush,  
went to the gods' home, steep Olympus, sat by Zeus,  
distressed at heart. He showed Zeus where he'd been wounded,  
dripping with immortal blood, then made his complaint.  
His words had wings.

"Father Zeus,  
aren't you incensed at this barbarity?  
We gods are always suffering dreadfully  
at each other's hands, when we bring men help.

[1000] We all lay the blame for this on you.  
For you gave birth to that insane young girl,  
your destructive daughter, always busy  
with some nastiness. All the other gods,  
all those on Mount Olympus, do what you say.  
And each of us is subject to your will.  
But you never punish her in word or deed.  
You do nothing, because you gave birth to her  
yourself, to Athena, your vicious daughter.\*  
Just now she urged proud Diomedes,  
[1010] son of Tydeus, to charge insanely  
against deathless gods. First he attacked  
Aphrodite and struck her on the wrist.  
Then he charged me, even me, like a god.  
But my quick feet took me away. If not,  
I'd be in lasting pain with the fearful dead,  
or have barely lived, wounded by bronze spears."

Scowling at him, cloud-gatherer Zeus replied:

"You hypocrite, don't sit there whining at me.  
Among the gods who live on Mount Olympus,  
[1020] you're the one I hate the most. For you love war,  
constant strife and battle. Your mother, Hera,  
has an implacable, unyielding spirit.  
It's hard for me to control how she reacts  
to what I say. You're suffering because of her,

through her conniving, that's what I think.  
But I'll leave you in pain no longer.  
You're my child—your mother and I made you.  
But if you'd been born from any other god,  
by now you'd be lower than the sons  
[1030] of Ouranos—you're so destructive.”

Zeus spoke. He instructed Paeëon to heal Ares.  
Paeëon cured him by spreading pain-killing herbs,  
for Ares wasn't born to die. Just as fig juice  
added quickly to white milk clots it at once,  
as it's stirred, that's how fast headstrong Ares healed.  
Hebe washed him and clothed him in fine garments.  
He sat beside Zeus, son of Cronos, enjoying his splendour.

Athena of Alalcomenae and Argive Hera  
returned once more to mighty Zeus' house,  
now they'd stopped man-killing Ares'

## Book Six Hector and Andromache

*[The battle continues; Menelaus captures Adrestus; Agamemnon refuses ransom; Helenus gives advice to Hector; Glaucus and Diomedes prepare to fight; Glaucus tells the story of Bellerophon; Glaucus and Diomedes exchange armour in friendship; Hector goes to Troy, talks with his mother; Hector talks to Paris and Helen; Hector goes home, talks to his housekeeper; Hector meets Andromache and Astyanax; Hector prays for his son's future; Paris rejoins Hector at the gates]*

Now the grim war between Trojans and Achaeans  
was left to run its course. The battle raged,  
this way and that, across the entire plain,  
as warriors hurled bronze-tipped spears at one another,  
between the Simoeis and Xanthus rivers.

Ajax, son of Telamon, Achaea's tower of strength,  
was the first to break through ranks of Trojans,  
punching out some breathing room for his companions.  
He hit Acamas, son of Eussorus, a strong brave soldier,  
[10] best of the Thracians. Ajax's spear struck him first  
on the peak of his horse-plumed helmet. The sharp bronze  
drove right into his forehead—dead in the centre—  
straight through bone into the brain. Darkness fell on his eyes.

Diomedes, expert in war cries, killed Axylus,  
son of Teuthras, a rich man, from well-built Arisbe.  
People really loved him, for he lived beside a road  
and welcomed all passers-by into his home.  
But not one of those men he'd entertained now stood  
in front of him, protecting him from wretched death.  
[20] Diomedes took the lives of two men—Axylus  
and his attendant charioteer, Calesius.  
So both men went down into the underworld.

Euryalus killed Dresus and Opheltius,  
then charged after Aesepus and Pedasus,

whom the naiad nymph Abarbarea bore  
to noble Boucolion, son of high-born Laomedon,  
his eldest son. His mother bore Pedasus in secre  
Bucolion had had sex with the nymph  
while tending to his flock. She became pregnant,  
[30] then gave birth to two twin sons. Euryalus,  
son of Mecistus, slaughtered both of them,  
destroying their strength and splendid bodies.  
Then he stripped the armour from their shoulders.

Next, fierce warrior Polypoetes killed Astyalus.  
With his bronze spear Odysseus killed Pidytes from Percote.  
Teucer slaughtered lord Aretaon, and Antilochus,  
Nestor's son, with his glittering spear killed Ableros.  
Agamemnon, king of men, killed Elatus,  
who lived in lofty Pedasus, beside the banks  
[40] of the fair-flowing river Satnioeis.  
Heroic Leitus knocked down Phylacus, as he was fleeing.  
And Eurypylus then slaughtered Melanthus.

Menelaus, skilled in war cries, took Adrestus still alive.  
His horses had panicked and bolted off across the plain.  
They charged into a tamarisk bush and snapped the pole  
on the curved chariot, right at the very end.  
The horses then ran off towards the city, where others,  
panic stricken, were headed, too. Adrestus  
rolled out of the chariot beside the wheel,  
[50] face down in the dirt. Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
stood there over him, holding his long-shadowed spear.  
Adrestus clutched Menelaus by the knees and begged:

“Take me alive, son of Atreus—you’ll get  
good ransom. My father is a wealthy man,  
owns lots of things—bronze, silver, well-worked iron.  
So he’ll give you a splendid ransom,  
if he learns I’m by Achaean ships, alive.”

Adrestus pleaded. Menelaus' heart in his chest was moved.  
He was about to hand Adrestus to his attendant,  
[60] to take back captive to the fast Achaean ships.  
But then Agamemnon came running up to him,  
sharply criticizing Menelaus:

“Menelaus, you soft-hearted man,  
why are you sparing men's lives like this?  
In your own home, Trojans treated you  
exceptionally well, did they not?  
So don't let any one of them evade  
a terrible destruction at our hands—  
not even the young child still carried  
[70] in his mother's belly. Let no one escape.  
Let everyone in Troy be slaughtered,  
without pity, without leaving any trace.”

With these words, by this appeal to justice,  
he changed his brother's mind. So Menelaus  
shoved heroic Adrestus away from him.  
Mighty Agamemnon then speared him in the side.  
Adrestus fell onto his back. The son of Atreus  
placed his heel on his chest and pulled the ash spear out.

Then Nestor addressed the Argives, shouting:

“My friends,  
[80] Danaan heroes, comrades of Ares,  
let no one lag behind to pick up loot,  
seeking to reach our ships with all you can.  
Let's kill the enemy instead. Later,  
with the corpses on the plain, you'll have time  
to strip off bodies of the slaughtered men.”

With this Nestor stirred each man's strength and spirit.  
Then Achaeans, filled with love of war, would once more  
have beaten Trojans, broken by cowardice,

back in flight to Troy, if Helenus, a son of Priam,  
[90] by far the best at reading omens, had not spoken out.  
Standing by Hector and Aeneas, Helenus said:

“Aeneas, Hector, among Trojans and Lycians,  
the main weight falls particularly on you,  
for you are, in all attacks, the best at fighting,  
at strategy. Make a stand right here.  
Rally the men before the city gates.  
Move around through the entire army,  
before men run and fall into their women’s arms.  
How that would make our enemies rejoice!

[100] Then, once you’ve restored the spirits  
in all our ranks, we’ll stand right here  
and fight Danaans, no matter how hard pressed.  
For then we’ll have no other option.  
And you, Hector, go into the city.  
Speak to our mother, yours and mine.  
Tell her to assemble the old women  
at the temple of bright-eyed Athena,  
on the city heights. She should take the key,  
open the doors of the sacred building,

[110] then place in the lap of the goddess there,  
fair-haired Athena, the garment she thinks  
loveliest, the greatest in the palace,  
the one she likes far above the others.  
Tell her to promise Athena she’ll give  
twelve heifers in a temple sacrifice,  
yearlings, as yet untouched by any goad,  
if she will pity Troy, pity the wives  
and Trojan children, if she will keep  
Tydeus’ son away from sacred Ilion,

[120] that fierce spearman, that mighty warrior,  
who makes men afraid—in my opinion,  
the most powerful of all Achaeans.  
We didn’t fear Achilles, chief of men,  
like this, although they say a goddess

was his mother. But this man's fighting rage  
has no equal. We can't match his power."

Helenus spoke. Hector was convinced by his advice.  
At once he jumped down from his chariot to the ground,  
clutching his weapons. Brandishing two sharp spears,  
[130] he moved through all the army, urging men to fight,  
rousing their spirits for the harsh brutality of war.  
So men wheeled around and faced Achaean soldiers.  
Argives then drew back and stopped the slaughter,  
thinking that one of the immortal gods had come,  
descending from star-lit heaven to help the Trojans,  
enabling them to turn themselves around and fight.  
Hector issued orders to the Trojans, shouting:

"You proud Trojans, wide-renowned allies,  
friends, be men, summon up your fighting strength,  
[140] while I go to Troy in person, to instruct  
the old men of the council and our wives  
to pray to the gods and promise sacrifice."

With these words, Hector of the shining helmet moved away.  
As he went, black leather running round the outer edge  
on his studded shield struck his neck and ankles.

Then Glaucus, son of Hippolochus, and Diomedes  
moved out together between the armies, keen to fight.  
When they'd come to close quarters, facing one another,  
Diomedes, expert in war cries, was the first to speak:

[150] "Who are you, my dear man, among mortal men?  
For I've never clapped eyes on you before  
in those fights where men win glory.  
But now you've stepped out well beyond the ranks,  
showing more courage here than anyone,  
standing up to my long-shadowed spear.  
Men who face me end up with grieving parents.

If you're one of the immortal gods  
come down from heaven, I won't fight you.  
Even mighty Lycurgus, son of Dryas,  
[160] did not live long, once he started battling  
heavenly gods. He was the one who chased  
attendants of the frenzied Dionysus,  
forcing them to run by sacred Nysa.  
They all threw their holy wands onto the ground,  
as murderous Lycurgus with his ox whip  
kept beating them. Even Dionysus,  
terrified, jumped in the ocean waves.  
Thetis embraced him, as he shook with fear,  
intimidated by Lycurgus' threats.  
[170] He angered the gods, who live without a care,  
so the son of Cronos blinded him.  
He didn't live much longer, not once he'd made  
all the deathless gods displeased with him.  
So I don't want to battle sacred gods.  
But if you're a mortal man, someone  
who eats earth's fruit, come closer to me,  
so you can meet your death more quickly."

Glaucus, fine son of Hippolochus, replied:

"Son of Tydeus, great-hearted Diomedes,  
[180] why ask me about my ancestry?  
Generations of men are like the leaves.  
In winter, winds blow them down to earth,  
but then, when spring season comes again,  
the budding wood grows more. And so with men—  
one generation grows, another dies away.  
But if you wish to learn about my family,  
so you're familiar with my lineage,  
well, many people know the details.  
There is a city in a part of Argos,  
[190] land where horses breed—it's called Ephyra.  
There Sisyphus lived, craftiest man ever born,



Sisyphus, Aeolus' son. He had a son,  
Glaucus, father of handsome Bellerophon.  
The gods made Bellerophon so beautiful  
and gave him the best qualities of men.  
But Proetus, in his heart, plotted against him,  
driving him from Argos, being much stronger,  
for Zeus had given royal power to Proetus.  
Now, Proetus' wife, lady Anteia,  
[200] desperate to have sex with Bellerophon,  
wanted him to lie with her in secret.  
But fiery Bellerophon refused,  
for he possessed an honourable heart.  
So Anteia made up lies, telling Proetus,  
the king,

‘You'll be murdered, Proetus,  
unless you assassinate Bellerophon,  
who wants to have sex with me against my will.’

Proetus was overcome with anger  
at what he'd heard, but was reluctant  
[210] to kill Bellerophon—in his heart  
he shrank from such an evil act.  
He sent Bellerophon to Lycia,  
with a lethal message, coded symbols  
written on a folded tablet. These told  
many lies about Bellerophon.\*  
Proetus told him to give the message  
to his father-in-law, so he'd be killed.  
Bellerophon went off to Lycia,  
under safe conduct from the gods.  
[220] In Lycia he reached the river Xanthus,  
and was honoured fully by the Lycian king,  
with nine days of welcome entertainment,  
nine sacrificial oxen. The tenth day,  
when rose-fingered early Dawn appeared,  
the Lycian king questioned Bellerophon,

asking to see the message he had brought  
from Proetus, his son-in-law.  
Once he'd received the evil message  
from his son-in-law, he told Bellerophon,  
[230] first of all, to kill the Chimera,  
an invincible inhuman monster,  
but divine in origin. Its front part was a lion,  
its rear a snake's tail, and in between a goat.  
She breathed deadly rage in searing fire.  
But Bellerophon killed the Chimera,  
putting his trust in omens from the gods.  
Next, he battled the Solymi, the worst fight,  
they say, he ever had with mortal beings.  
Then, third, he massacred the Amazons,  
[240] women who rival men. The king planned  
one more devious evil trick against him,  
as he was returning from the Amazons.  
He set Lycia's best men in ambush.  
But not a single one of them came back—  
worthy Bellerophon had killed them all.  
Then the king knew he must be divinely born.  
So he kept him with him there in Lycia,  
gave him his daughter's hand in marriage,  
and half the honours in the entire kingdom.  
[250] The Lycians then gave him an estate  
far better than the rest, rich in vineyards,  
wheat-growing farmland, for him to keep.  
The king's daughter bore him three children—  
Isander, Hippolochus, and Laodamia.  
Counsellor Zeus then had sex with the girl.  
She bore great Sarpedon, bronze-armed warrior.  
But then Bellerophon angered all the gods.  
He wandered out alone on the Aleian plain—  
depressed in spirit, roaming there and shunning all.  
[260] Ares, insatiable in war, killed his son Isander,  
while he was fighting the famous Solymi.  
Artemis, goddess with the golden reins,

in anger killed the daughter of Bellerophon.  
My father was Hippolochus. I claim  
my descent from him. He sent me to Troy,  
telling me repeatedly to strive always  
to be the best, to outdo other warriors,  
so I do not shame my father's family,  
the finest men by far in Ephyra,  
[270] in spacious Lycia. That's my lineage,  
the blood ancestry I claim as mine."

Glaucus spoke. Diomedes, skilled at war cries, rejoiced.  
He jabbed his spear into the life-giving earth,  
and then spoke to that shepherd of his people as a friend:

"In that case, you're an old friend of my father.  
For Oeneus once entertained Bellerophon,  
that worthy man, for twenty days at home.  
The two of them exchanged fine presents.  
Oeneus gave a shining purple belt,  
[280] Bellerophon a gold two-handled cup,  
which I left in my house when I came here.  
I have no memory of Tydeus,  
for he died while far away from me,  
killed at Thebes with the Achaean army.  
Now I'll be your kind host in middle Argos,  
you'll be mine in Lycia, when I visit you.  
Let's make sure we avoid each other's spears,  
even in the thick of all the fighting.  
For there are many famous Trojans and allies  
[290] for me to kill, any warrior the gods provide,  
whom I can run after and catch on foot.  
For you there are many Argives to destroy,  
all you can manage. So let's trade armour.  
Then those warriors here will all recognize  
that we acknowledge our father's bonds as friends."

With these words, the two men jumped out of their chariots,

clasped hands and pledged their mutual friendship.  
Then Zeus, son of Cronos, stole Glaucus' wits,  
for he gave Tydeus' son his golden armour,  
[300] worth one hundred oxen, exchanging that  
for armour made of bronze, worth only nine.

Meanwhile, Hector reached the Scaean Gates and oak tree.  
The Trojans' wives and daughters ran up round him,  
asking after children, brothers, relatives, and husbands.  
Addressing each of them in turn, he ordered them  
to pray to all the gods. For many were to face great grief.  
He came to Priam's splendid palace, with porticos  
of well-ground stone. It had fifty private bed rooms,  
all of polished rock, built close to one another,  
[310] where Priam's sons slept with the wives they married.  
On the opposite side, within the courtyard,  
were twelve roofed rooms, all made of polished stone,  
for Priam's daughters, built near one another,  
where Priam's sons-in-law slept with their married wives.  
It was here Hector's gracious mother, Hecuba,  
met him, as she was going to the palace,  
with Laodice, loveliest of all her daughters.  
Taking his hand, she spoke to Hector:

“My child,  
why have you left hard battle to come here?  
[320] The sons of Achaea—may gods curse them!—  
press us hard, eager to fight around our city.  
Your spirit has led you here to lift your hands  
in prayers to Zeus from our city heights.  
But wait. I can fetch some sweet wine for you,  
so you can start by pouring a libation  
to Father Zeus and other deathless gods.  
Then you may enjoy some, too, if you'll drink.  
Wine restores strength well in a weary man,  
and you've grown tired guarding your own family.”

[330] Great Hector of the shining helmet then replied:

“My dear mother, don’t bring me some sweet wine,  
for you’ll weaken me. I’ll lose my battle strength.  
And I’m ashamed to offer up to Zeus  
libations of bright wine with unwashed hands.  
It’s not at all appropriate for a man  
spattered with blood and dirt to offer prayers  
to the son of Cronos, lord of the black clouds.  
But you must go to Athena’s temple,  
goddess of battle spoils, with burnt offerings.

[340] First assemble the old women all together,  
then place in Athena’s lap, that fair-haired goddess,  
the garment which you think is loveliest,  
the very finest you keep here at home,  
the one you like far better than the rest.  
You must promise you will give Athena  
twelve heifers in a temple sacrifice,  
yearlings, as yet untouched by any goad,  
if she will pity Troy, pity the wives  
and Trojan children, if she will keep

[350] Tydeus’ son away from sacred Ilion,  
that fierce spearman, that mighty warrior,  
who makes men so afraid. You must leave now—  
go straight to the temple of Athena,  
goddess of battle spoils. I’ll find Paris  
and call him back, if he will to listen to me.  
If only the earth would open under him,  
swallow him up! Olympian Zeus raised him  
as trouble for the Trojans, for brave Priam,  
for his children. If I could see Paris die,

[360] heading down to Hades, then I could say  
my heart’s sorrows were over and forgotten.”

Hector spoke. His mother went into the house,  
calling her attendants, who brought together  
the matrons from the city. Then she went down

into the sweet-smelling room which stored their gowns,  
 fine embroidered work of women from Sidonia,  
 which godlike Paris brought with him from Sidon,  
 when he sailed across the broad sea, on that voyage  
 where he carried high-born Helen off. Hecuba took out  
 [370] one of the gowns, the finest embroidery, the largest.  
 Glittering like a star, it lay at the bottom of the chest.  
 Taking that as Athena's gift, she walked away.  
 The old ladies followed her. At Athena's temple  
 fair-cheeked Theano, daughter of Cisseus,  
 wife of horse-taming Antenor, let them in.  
 Trojans had appointed her Athena's priestess.  
 All the women raised their hands, praying to Athena,  
 while Theano took that lovely robe and placed it  
 in Athena's lap, the goddess with the lovely hair,  
 [380] then spoke out this prayer to great Zeus' daughter:

“Blessed Athena, sacred goddess,  
 defender of our city, break the spear  
 of Diomedes. Let him fall face down  
 before the Scaean Gates. If so, right now  
 we'll sacrifice twelve heifers in your temple,  
 beasts untouched by any goad, if you'll pity  
 our city, Trojans' wives and children.”

The women prayed. But Pallas Athena refused their prayer.

As they made their plea to great Zeus' daughter,  
 [390] Hector went to the fine house of Alexander.  
 He'd built it himself with fertile Troy's best craftsmen.  
 They'd made a bedroom, living quarters, and a yard  
 close to Priam and to Hector, on the city height.  
 Hector, loved by Zeus, went in the house, holding his spear,  
 sixteen feet long, bronze point glittering in front of him,  
 a gold band running round it. He met Alexander,  
 busy in his room with his fine weapons—shield  
 and body armour—polishing his curving bow.

Argive Helen sat there, too, with her attendant ladies,  
[400] directing servants in their famous handicrafts.  
Seeing Paris, Hector spoke some sharp words to him:

“Paris, you’re a worthless man.  
It’s quite wrong of you to nurse that anger  
in your heart, while men are being destroyed,  
fighting right by the city, its steep walls.  
It’s because of you the sounds of warfare  
catch fire round our city. You would fight  
any man you saw avoiding battle,  
fleeing war’s brutality. So up with you,  
[410] or soon our city will go up in smoke,  
with fire consuming everything.”

Godlike Alexander then replied:

“Hector, your rebuke is not unfair—  
it’s reasonable. So I’ll speak plainly.  
Listen and remember what I’m saying.  
I’m not sitting in my bedroom here  
out of spite or anger with the Trojans.  
I want to grieve. Just now my wife urged me,  
using gentle words, to rouse myself to fight.  
And personally I think that would be best.  
[420] Winning shifts from one man to another.  
Now, wait here, while I put on my armour.  
Or go, and I’ll come later, catch up with you.”

Hector of the shining helmet did not answer.  
So Helen spoke to Hector with these soothing words:

“O Hector, you’re my brother, and me,  
I’m a horrible, conniving bitch.  
I wish that on that day my mother bore me  
some evil wind had come, carried me away,  
and swept me off, up into the mountains,

[430] or to the waves of the tumbling, crashing sea.

Then I would've died before this happened.

But since gods have ordained these evil things,

I wish I'd been wife to a better man,

someone sensitive to others' insults,

with feeling for his many shameful acts.

This husband of mine has no sense now

and won't acquire any in the future.

I expect he'll get from that what he deserves.

But come in, sit on this chair, my brother,

[440] since this trouble really weighs upon your mind—

all because I was a bitch—because of that

and Paris' folly, Zeus gives us an evil fate,

so we may be subjects for men's songs

in human generations yet to come.”

Great Hector of the shining helmet answered Helen:

“Don't ask me to sit down, Helen. You're kind,

but you won't persuade me. For my heart's on fire

to help Trojans, who really miss me when I'm gone.

But you must rouse Paris, and he should hurry,

[450] so he can catch me here in the city.

I'm going home, to visit my dear wife

and infant son, for I've no idea

if I'll be coming back to them again,

or if the gods will kill me at Achaean hands.”

Saying this, Hector of the shining helmet went away.

Soon afterwards he reached his well-built house.

He didn't find white-armed Andromache at home,

for she'd left with the infant child, going to the walls

with a finely dressed attendant, in tears, lamenting.

[460] When Hector didn't meet his fair wife in the house,

he went and, standing in the doorway, asked his servant:

“Woman, tell me the truth. Where's Andromache?



At one of my sisters? With a well-dressed wife  
of one of my brothers? Or is she at Athena's temple,  
where the other fine-haired Trojan women  
are praying to that fearful goddess?"

His busy housekeeper then answered him:

"Hector, you asked me to tell you the truth.  
She didn't go to one of your sisters,  
[470] or one of your brothers' well-dressed wives,  
nor did she go to Athena's temple,  
where other fine-haired Trojan women  
are praying to that fearful goddess.  
No. She went to Ilion's great tower,  
for she'd heard the Trojans were hard pressed,  
the power of Achaeans was so great.  
So she's hurrying off up to the walls,  
like someone in a fit. A nurse went, too,  
carrying the child."

Once the housekeeper spoke,  
[480] Hector left the house by the same route he'd come,  
through the well-built streets, across the mighty city,  
and reached the Scaean Gates, beyond which he'd go  
out onto the plain. There his wife ran up to meet him,  
Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eëtion,  
who'd included a large dowry with her.  
Eëtion had lived below forested Mount Placus,  
in Thebe, king of the Cilician people. She'd become  
married wife to Hector of the shining helmet.  
Now she met him there. With her came the nurse,  
[490] holding at her breast their happy infant child,  
well-loved son of Hector, like a beautiful star.  
Hector had named him Scamandrius, but others  
called him Astyanax, lord of the city,  
because Hector was Troy's only guardian.  
Hector looked at his son in silence, with a smile.

Andromache stood close to him, weeping.  
Taking Hector by the hand, she spoke to him.

“My dear husband, your warlike spirit  
will be your death. You’ve no compassion  
[500] for your infant child, for me, your sad wife,  
who before long will be your widow.  
For soon the Achaeans will attack you,  
all together, and cut you down. As for me,  
it would be better, if I’m to lose you,  
to be buried in the ground. For then I’ll have  
no other comfort, once you meet your death,  
except my sorrow. I have no father,  
no dear mother. For lord Achilles killed  
my father, when he wiped out Thebe,  
[510] city with high gates, slaying Eëtion.  
But he didn’t strip his corpse—his heart  
felt too much shame for that. So he burned him  
in his finely decorated armour  
and raised a burial mound above the ashes.  
Mountain nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
planted elm trees all around his body.  
I had seven brothers in my home.  
All went down to Hades in a single day,  
for swift-footed lord Achilles killed them all,  
[520] while they were guarding their shambling oxen  
and their white shining sheep. As for my mother,  
who ruled wooded Thebe-under-Placus,  
he brought her here with all his other spoils.  
Then he released her for a massive ransom.  
But archer goddess Artemis then killed her  
in her father’s house. So, Hector, you are now  
my father, noble mother, brother,  
and my protecting husband. So pity me.  
Stay here in this tower. Don’t orphan your child  
[530] and make me a widow. Place men by the fig tree,  
for there the city is most vulnerable,

the wall most easily scaled. Three times  
their best men have come there to attack,  
led by the two Ajaxes, the sons of Atreus,  
famous Idomeneus, and Diomedes,  
Tydeus' courageous son, incited to it  
by someone well versed in prophecy  
or by their own hearts' inclination."

Great Hector of the shining helmet answered her:

"Wife,

- [540] all this concerns me, too. But I'd be disgraced,  
dreadfully shamed among Trojan men  
and Trojan women in their trailing gowns,  
if I should, like a coward, slink away from war.  
My heart will never prompt me to do that,  
for I have learned always to be brave,  
to fight alongside Trojans at the front,  
striving to win fame for father and myself.  
My heart and mind know well the day is coming  
when sacred Ilion will be destroyed,
- [550] along with Priam of the fine ash spear  
and Priam's people. But what pains me most  
about these future sorrows is not so much  
the Trojans, Hecuba, or king Priam,  
or even my many noble brothers,  
who'll fall down in the dust, slaughtered  
by their enemies. My pain focuses on you,  
when one of those bronze-clad Achaeans  
leads you off in tears, ends your days of freedom.  
If then you come to Argos as a slave,
- [560] working the loom for some other woman,  
fetching water from Hypereia or Messeis,  
against your will, forced by powerful Fate,  
then someone seeing you as you weep  
may well say:

‘That woman is Hector’s wife.  
He was the finest warrior in battle  
of all horse-taming Trojans in that war  
when they fought for Troy.’

Someone will say that,  
and it will bring still more grief to you,  
to be without a man like that to save you  
[570] from days of servitude. May I lie dead,  
hidden deep under a burial mound,  
before I hear about your screaming,  
as you are dragged away.”

With these words,  
glorious Hector stretched his hands out for his son.  
The boy immediately shrank back against the breast  
of the finely girdled nurse, crying out in terror  
to see his own dear father, scared at the sight of bronze,  
the horse-hair plume nodding fearfully from his helmet top.  
The child’s loving father laughed, his noble mother, too.  
[580] Glorious Hector pulled the glittering helmet off  
and set it on the ground. Then he kissed his dear son  
and held him in his arms. He prayed aloud to Zeus  
and the rest of the immortals.

“Zeus, all you other gods,  
grant that this child, my son, may become,  
like me, pre-eminent among the Trojans,  
as strong and brave as me. Grant that he may rule  
Troy with strength. May people someday say,  
as he returns from war, ‘This man is far better  
than his father.’ May he carry back  
[590] bloody spoils from his slaughtered enemy,  
making his mother’s heart rejoice.”

He placed his son in the hands of his dear wife.  
She embraced the child on her sweet breast, smiling

through her tears. Observing her, Hector felt compassion.  
He took her hand, then spoke to her.

“My dearest wife,  
don’t let your heart be sad on my account.  
No man will throw me down to Hades  
before my destined time. I tell you this—  
no one escapes his fate, not the coward,  
[600] nor the brave man, from the moment of his birth.  
So you should go into the house, keep busy  
with your proper work, with your loom and wool,  
telling your servants to set about their tasks.  
War will be every man’s concern, especially mine,  
of all those who live in Troy.”

Having said these words,  
glorious Hector took his plumed helmet in his hands.  
His beloved wife went home, often looking back,  
as she went, crying bitterly. She quickly reached  
the spacious home of Hector, killer of men.  
[610] Inside she met her many servants and bid them all lament.  
So they mourned for Hector in his own house,  
though he was still alive—they thought he’d not come back,  
he’d not escape the battle fury of Achaean hands.

Paris did not wait for long in his high-roofed home.  
Once he’d pulled on his famous armour, ornate bronze,  
he hurried off on foot quickly through the city.  
Just as some stalled stallion, well fed in the barn,  
breaks his restraints, then gallops at top speed  
across the plain, off to bathe in a fair-flowing river,  
[620] something he does habitually, proud of his strength,  
holding his head high, mane streaming on his shoulders,  
legs carrying him swiftly to the grazing mares—  
that’s how Paris, son of Priam, hurried then,  
rushing down from the heights of Pergamus,  
gleaming like a ray of sunshine in his armour,

laughing with joy as his feet carried him so fast.  
He soon met his brother Hector, turning away  
from where he'd had his conversation with his wife.  
Godlike Paris was the first to speak:

[630] "My dear brother, you're in a hurry.  
I'm holding you back with my delay,  
not coming as quickly as you asked."

Hector of the shining helmet answered Paris:

"Brother, no one could justly criticize  
your work in battle, for you fight bravely.  
But you deliberately hold yourself back  
and do not wish to fight. It pains my heart,  
when I hear shameful things about you  
from Trojans, who are suffering much distress  
[640] because of you. But let's be on our way.  
We'll sort all this out later, if Zeus ever grants  
we arrange in place inside our homes  
bowls of wine to celebrate our freedom,  
in thanks to the eternal, heavenly gods,  
once we have driven away from Troy  
all these well-armed Achaeans."

## Book Seven Hector and Ajax

*[Hector and Paris leave Troy, rejoin the fighting; Athena and Apollo plan to halt the battle; Helenus suggests Hector issue a challenge for single combat; Hector issues his challenge; no one responds; Nestor shames the Achaeans; Achaeans draw lots to see who will fight Hector; Ajax's lot falls out; Ajax's shield is described; Ajax and Hector fight; heralds intervene to stop them; Nestor suggests collecting the dead and building a defensive wall and ditch; in Troy Antenor suggests the return of Helen; Paris refuses but offers to return all the goods he took away; Idaios goes to the Argives to suggest a truce to bury the dead, repeats Paris' offer; the Achaeans refuse the offer; the armies collect and cremate the dead; the Achaeans build the wall; Poseidon objects to Zeus; both sides feast after the funeral rites]*

After glorious Hector had talked with Paris,  
he and his brother hurried through the gates,  
both of them with hearts on fire to fight in battle.  
Just as some god sends a breeze to sailors in distress,  
when they work themselves too hard rowing out at sea,  
bodies broken with fatigue at their polished oars—  
that's how these two looked to the long-suffering Trojans.

Paris then killed Menesthius, king Areithous' son.  
He lived in Arne, born from Areithous,  
[10] a mace fighter, and ox-eyed Phylomedusa.  
Hector hit Eioneus with his sharp spear  
in the neck, just under his bronze helmet rim.  
His legs collapsed. Glaucus, son of Hippolochus,  
leader of Lycians, amid the battle din,  
struck Iphinous, son of Dexius, in the shoulder,  
just as he was jumping in behind fast horses.  
He fell out of his chariot down on the ground.  
Then his limbs went limp and lifeless.

When goddess Athena with her glittering eyes  
[20] saw Argives being slaughtered in the battle frenzy,  
she rushed down from Olympus heights to sacred Ilion.  
Apollo, keeping watch from Pergamus,

came to confront her.\* He wanted victory  
for Trojans. The two met one another by the oak tree.  
Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, addressed Athena first:

“Daughter of great-hearted Zeus, why has your spirit  
pushed you so eagerly down from Olympus?  
You want to change the tide of battle,  
giving victory to the Danaans.

[30] You don’t pity Trojans as they’re butchered.  
But it would be much better if you’d follow  
what I say—let’s put an end to battle  
and the killing, for today. They’ll fight again,  
later on, until they reach their goal in Troy,  
since the demolition of that city  
is what you goddesses desire in your hearts.”

Bright-eyed Athena then said to Apollo:

“God who works from far away, I agree—  
that’s what I myself intended, coming  
[40] from Olympus down to mingle here  
with Trojans and Achaeans. How will you get  
these troops to end this present battle?”

Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, answered Athena:

“Let’s rouse the powerful fighting spirit  
of horse-taming Hector, so he challenges  
one of the Danaans to fight him alone,  
in a grim single combat, one on one.  
Bronze-armed Achaeans, in admiration,  
may incite someone to fight lord Hector.”

[50] Apollo spoke, and bright-eyed Athena then agreed.  
Helenus, Priam’s much-loved son, in his heart  
well understood the scheme the gods had planned.  
So he went to Hector, stood by him, and said:



“Hector, son of Priam, wise as Zeus,  
why not be persuaded by what I suggest,  
since I’m your brother? Let other Trojans  
and Achaeans sit. You should challenge  
the best of the Achaeans to fight you,  
a personal single combat, a grim fight.  
[60] I’ve heard the voices of eternal gods—  
now is not your fated time to die.”

Helenus spoke. Hector was elated with the plan.  
He went into the middle of the Trojan ranks  
gripping the centre of his spear and pushed men back.  
The men sat down. Agamemnon, on his side,  
got well-armed Achaeans to stop fighting, too.  
Athena, with Apollo of the silver bow,  
perched in the lofty oak tree sacred to Zeus,  
who bears the aegis, looking like two vultures,  
[70] set to enjoy the unfolding human action.  
Ranks of men were closely packed, bristling with shields,  
with spears and helmets. As West Wind, when it starts to blow,  
ruffles the sea, and waters under it grow black—  
that’s what ranks of Trojans and Achaeans looked like  
out there on the plain. Hector then addressed both armies:

“Listen to me, you Trojans, you well-armed Achaeans,  
so I may speak what my heart prompts.  
High-ruling son of Cronos has quashed our pact,  
intending to bring both of us bad things,  
[80] until you capture well-built Troy or else  
are conquered beside your seaworthy ships.  
Achaean’s finest men are here among you.  
Let the one whose heart now drives him  
to fight with me step out as champion,  
your representative against lord Hector.  
That’s what I propose—let Zeus be my witness.  
If your man kills me with his sharpened bronze,

let him strip my armour, take it away,  
off to your hollow ships, but give my body  
[90] back to my house, so Trojans and their wives  
may give me ritual burning once I'm dead.  
If I kill your champion, if Apollo  
grants me that triumph, I'll strip his armour,  
take it to sacred Ilion and hang it  
in the temple of Apollo, the far shooter.  
I'll give up the body to be taken back  
to well-decked ships, so long-haired Achaeans  
can bury him and build his funeral mound  
on the banks of the broad Hellespont.  
[100] Then people born in years to come who sail  
their ships with many oars on the wine-dark sea  
will say,

‘This is the funeral mound of some man  
who died long ago, the best of warriors,  
killed by glorious Hector.’

That's what they'll say.  
And then my glory will never fade away.”

Hector finished. The Achaeans all grew silent,  
ashamed to duck the challenge, afraid to answer it.  
At last Menelaus, sick at heart, stood up to speak,  
reproaching them with bitter words of shame:

[110] “Alas, you boasters, you're Achaean women,  
not men. This shame will mean total disgrace,  
unless some Danaan now stands up to Hector.  
All of you sitting here, without heart,  
disgraced like this, may all of you dissolve,  
disintegrate to earth and water.  
I'll personally take up arms myself.  
I'll fight Hector. The rope that's tied  
to victory comes from heaven above,

from the hands of the immortal gods.”

[120] This said, Menelaus pulled his fine armour on.

And then, Menelaus, they would’ve seen you die  
at Hector’s hands—he was by far the stronger man—  
if wide-ruling Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
king of the Achaeans, had not hurried up,  
grabbed you by your right hand, and said these words:

“Lord Menelaus, have you lost your mind?  
There’s no need for you to act so foolishly.  
Be patient, even though you’re disappointed.  
Don’t volunteer from mere love of battle

[130] to fight someone better than yourself,  
for Hector, son of Priam, is a man  
whom other men avoid. Even Achilles,  
a far better man than you, was hesitant  
to meet Hector in fights where men win fame.  
So go now, sit down with your companions.  
Achaeans will send out another man  
as champion against Hector. Though he’s fearless,  
with boundless appetite for battle,  
I think he’ll be content to take a rest,  
[140] if he survives this combat, this grim fight.”

Agamemnon’s prudent speech changed his brother’s mind.  
Menelaus was convinced, and his attendants  
gladly pulled the armour off his shoulders.  
Then Nestor, standing up before the Argives, said:

“Alas, what great sorrow for Achaea!  
Old horseman Peleus would cry with grief,  
noble counsellor of the Myrmidons.  
When I was in his house, he loved to talk with me,  
asking questions about men’s families,

[150] the ancestry of all Achaeans. If he knew  
these warriors were all afraid of Hector,

he'd keep lifting up his dear hands in prayer  
to the immortal gods that his spirit  
leave his body and go down to Hades' home.  
By father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo,  
would I were as young as when the Pylian  
and Arcadian spearmen gathered to fight  
by the walls of Pheia, beside the banks  
of the fast-flowing river Celadon.

[160] Ereuthalion then stepped forward  
as their champion, a godlike soldier,  
wearing on his shoulders the armour  
of king Areithous—that noble Areithous,  
whom men and well-dressed women gave  
the name of Mace-man, because he fought,  
not with long spear or bow, but with an iron mace.  
With that he smashed down ranks of warriors.  
Lycurgus killed him, not in a fair fight,  
but by a trick, in a narrow place,

[170] where the iron mace could not protect him  
from destruction. Lycurgus anticipated  
Areithous' blow and struck him first,  
a spear thrust in the belly. He fell down,  
dropping to the ground upon his back.  
Lycurgus then stripped off the armour  
which brazen Ares had given Areithous.  
Lycurgus himself wore it in later fights.  
And then, when he'd grown old in his own home,  
he gave the armour to Ereuthalion,

[180] his loyal attendant, who wore it as his own.  
That's the armour he had on at that time,  
when he challenged all our finest men.  
They held back, afraid, not daring to accept.  
But my spirit, full of fighting confidence,  
incited me to take him on in battle.  
By birth I was the youngest of them all.  
I fought him, and Athena gave me glory.  
I killed their biggest and most powerful man,

left his huge body sprawling on the ground.  
[190] Would I were that young now, my strength as firm.  
Hector of the shining helmet would soon have  
a man to fight. But now you warriors here,  
although the finest of Achaean men,  
aren't keen at all to face up to Hector."

Old man Nestor shamed them. Nine men in all stood up.  
First to rise, well before the rest, was Agamemnon,  
king of men. Strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
jumped up after him. Next came the two Ajaxes,  
men clothed in an impetuous ferocity.  
[200] Then Idomeneus, his comrade Meriones,  
and Eurypylus, Eumaeon's fine son, then Thoas,  
son of Andraemon, then lord Odysseus.  
They were all willing volunteers to fight with Hector.  
Geranian horseman Nestor spoke out once again:

"To choose, you must cast lots. Shake them well.  
The chosen man will greatly benefit  
well-armed Achaeans and his own heart, too—  
if he comes away from this grim fight,  
this dangerous combat."

Nestor spoke. The nine men  
[210] marked their lots and threw them in Agamemnon's helmet.  
Troops held up their hands, praying to the gods, saying,  
as they gazed up at wide heaven:

"Father Zeus,  
let the choice fall on Ajax, or Tydeus' son,  
or on Mycenae's king, rich in gold."

Geranian horseman Nestor shook the helmet.  
From it fell out the very lot men were hoping for,  
the one for Ajax. A herald carried round the lot,  
showing it to all the best Achaeans in the throng,

moving from left to right. But no one took it.  
[220] Each man declined. But when, in passing through the crowd,  
the herald came to the one who'd scratched his mark  
upon the lot and thrown it in the helmet,  
noble Ajax held out his hand. Approaching Ajax,  
the herald dropped the token in his palm.  
Ajax looked at the mark and saw that it was his.  
His heart was happy. Throwing the lot down on the ground  
beside his feet, he said:

“Friends, this marker here  
belongs to me. And I'm happy in my heart,  
for I think I'll overcome lord Hector.  
[230] But come, while I put on my battle armour,  
you should pray to lord Zeus, son of Cronos,  
but silently, so Trojans don't find out—  
or do it aloud, since we fear no one.  
No man is going to force me to move off  
through his power or will, if I don't consent,  
or through his fighting skill. For I was born  
and raised in Salamis, so I'm no novice.”

Ajax spoke. Men prayed to lord Zeus, son of Cronos.  
Gazing up to heaven, they uttered words like these:

[240] “Father Zeus, ruling from Mount Ida,  
most glorious one, most powerful—  
grant Ajax victory, the winner's triumph.  
But if you love Hector and look out for him,  
grant them both equal strength, equal glory.”

So men prayed. Ajax armed himself in glittering bronze.  
When all his armour was in place around his body,  
he moved forward, like some gigantic Ares  
when he sets off to battle among warriors  
whom Zeus, son of Cronos, has stirred up for war,  
[250] to fight with that war frenzy which consumes men's hearts.

That's how huge Ajax, bulwark of Achaeans,  
came up then, a grim smile on his face, moving his feet  
with giant strides. He clutched a long-shadowed spear.  
When Argives looked at him, they felt great joy,  
while the limbs of all the Trojans shook with fear.  
Even in Hector's chest the heart beat rapidly.  
But there was nothing he could do to pull back now,  
retreat into the ranks. For he had made the challenge,  
made it eagerly. Ajax approached bearing his shield.  
[260] It was like a tower made of bronze, with seven layers,  
each one of ox-hide, a weapon made by Tychius,  
the best of leather workers, who lived in Hyle.  
He'd made the glittering shield for Ajax from the hides  
of seven well-fed bulls. On top of these, he'd set  
an eighth layer made of bronze. Telamonian Ajax  
carried this shield in front of him. He came up,  
stood quite close to Hector, then spoke out grimly:

“Hector, now you'll come to recognize,  
one against one, just what the finest men  
[270] are like among Danaans, not counting  
Achilles, breaker of men, with his lion's heart.  
He now lies by his curved sea-worthy ships,  
angry at Agamemnon, his people's shepherd.  
But there are lots of us who'll stand against you.  
So come on then. Let's start this fight.”

Great Hector of the shining helmet then replied:

“Noble Ajax, son of Telamon,  
leader of your people. Don't play with me,  
as if I were a witless child or woman  
[280] who knows nothing of what war requires.  
For I understand well how to fight,  
how to kill men. I know how to shift  
my tanned leather shield to right or left,  
to me a crucial skill in fighting battles.

I know how to charge into the frenzy  
of fast chariots, and I know how to dance  
to Ares' tune in the grim killing zone.  
I don't want to hit you with a sneaky shot,  
not a man like you, but in open combat,  
if I can manage it."

- [290] Once Hector spoke,  
he balanced his long-shadowed spear and hurled it.  
He hit Ajax's fearful seven-layered shield  
on the outer covering of bronze, its eighth layer.  
The tireless spear tore its way through six layers.  
But it stopped at the seventh. Then noble Ajax,  
in his turn, threw his long-shadowed spear at Hector.  
His spear hit the even circle of Hector's shield,  
broke through the glittering shield, and forced its way  
through the breast plate and tunic covering his ribs.
- [300] Hector twisted to one side, evading a black fate.  
The two men then both pulled the long spears from their shields  
and charged each other, like flesh-eating lions  
or savage boars, whose strength is inexhaustible.  
With his spear Hector struck the centre of Ajax's shield,  
but the bronze did not break through—its point bent aside.  
Then Ajax charged ahead and speared Hector's shield,  
breaking clean through and striking Hector as he lunged.  
Its motion slashed at Hector's neck. Dark blood seeped out.  
But Hector of the shining helmet didn't stop the fight.
- [310] He stepped back, picked up in his powerful hand a rock  
lying there on the plain, a huge black jagged stone.  
With this he hit Ajax's seven-layered shield  
on its central boss, making the bronze ring out.  
Then Ajax, in his turn, seized a much bigger stone,  
swung it round and threw it with tremendous force.  
The rock, like a millstone, hit Hector's shield and smashed it.  
Strength drained from Hector's limbs. He was thrown on his back,  
with his shield pressing him on top, weighing him down.  
At once Apollo raised him up. Now they would've fought



[320] hand to hand with swords, if heralds, those messengers  
of gods and men, had not stepped in, one from Trojans,  
one from bronze-clad Achaeans—two trusted men,  
Talthybius and Idaios. They held out their staffs,  
symbols of their herald's office, between the two.  
Then herald Idaios, a wise prudent man, spoke out:

“You dear lads, fight no more. End this combat.  
Cloud-gatherer Zeus cares for you both.  
You're both fine fighters. We all know that.  
But night already is approaching.

[330] And it's good to be persuaded by the night.”

Telamonian Ajax then said in reply:

“Idaios, tell Hector here to give the word.  
For he was keen to challenge our best men.  
Let him speak first. I'll gladly follow what he says.”

Great Hector of the shining helmet answered Ajax:

“Ajax, god has given you size, power,  
judgment, and you're the strongest with the spear,  
among Achaeans. For today let's end  
our battle combat. We'll fight once again,  
[340] later on, until god decides between us,  
awarding one of us the victory.  
For night already is approaching,  
and it's good to be persuaded by the night.  
So you can bring joy to all Achaeans  
by their ships, especially your clansmen,  
your companions. And I can bring joy  
to the mighty city of king Priam,  
to Trojans and women in their trailing gowns.  
They'll gather in holy processions now,  
[350] giving thanks on my behalf in prayer.  
But come, let's exchange noteworthy presents

with each other, so Trojans and Achaeans  
may say, ‘These men fought in murderous war  
but were reconciled and parted friends.’”

This said, Hector gave Ajax a silver-studded sword,  
along with a scabbard and a well-cut sword belt.  
Ajax gave Hector a shining purple belt.  
Then they parted, Ajax going to Achaean troops,  
Hector rejoining Trojans, who were overjoyed  
[360] to see him return alive, safe and sound,  
surviving Ajax’s fury, his unconquerable hands.  
They’d given up all hope for Hector’s safety.  
Now they took him back with them into the city.

Well-armed Achaeans, for their part, led Ajax,  
elated by his victory, to lord Agamemnon.  
When they all came inside the son of Atreus’ hut,  
Agamemnon, king of men, sacrificed an ox,  
a male five years old, to the exalted son of Cronos.  
They flayed the beast, prepared and carved it up,  
[370] chopping it skilfully into tiny pieces.  
They skewered these on spits, cooked them carefully,  
and drew them off. This done, they prepared a meal and ate.  
No one went unsatisfied. All feasted equally.  
Wide-ruling Agamemnon, heroic son of Atreus,  
acknowledged Ajax with the whole back cut of meat.  
When everyone had had his fill of food and drink,  
old Nestor spoke up first, outlining for them  
a plan he had. Earlier his advice had seemed the best.  
Keeping in mind their common good, he said:

[380] “Son of Atreus, you other Argive leaders,  
many long-haired Achaeans have been killed.  
Fierce Ares has scattered their dark blood  
beside the fair-flowing Scamander river.  
Their souls have departed down to Hades.  
So tomorrow you should call a halt.

Stop Achaeans fighting. We should all assemble,  
then carry off the bodies of the dead  
with mules and oxen. Then we'll burn them  
a short distance from our ships, so each of us,  
[390] when we return, may carry back the bones.  
Let's set up one single common funeral mound  
close by the fire and angled on the plain.  
Then with all speed from that mound we'll build  
some high walls with turrets, to guard us and our ships.  
In those walls we'll construct tight-fitting gates,  
so there's a path to drive our chariots through.  
Outside we'll dig a deep trench close beside it,  
to enclose the walls and hold out chariots—  
soldiers, too, if those impetuous Trojans  
[400] should ever drive us back in battle.”

So Nestor spoke. All the kings approved his plan.

Meanwhile the Trojans were meeting on the city heights,  
by Priam's palace doors—they were confused and fearful.  
Antenor, a wise counselor, was the first to speak:

“Listen to me, you Trojans, Dardan allies,  
so I may say what the heart in my chest prompts.  
Come now, let's give back Argive Helen  
and her possessions to the sons of Atreus  
for them to keep. We've broken the truce  
[410] and are fighting once again, so I don't see  
how things will work out very well for us,  
unless we carry out what I propose.”

Antenor spoke, then sat down. Before them all,  
lord Alexander, husband of fair-haired Helen,  
stood up to reply. His words had wings:

“Antenor,  
I'm not pleased with what you've said.

You know very well how to think up  
some alternative, some better plan.  
But if you truly mean what you've just said,  
[420] the gods themselves have muddled up your wits.  
Now I'll speak to horse-taming Trojans.  
I flatly refuse. I won't give up my wife.  
But I will surrender all the goods  
I carried back from Argos to our home.  
I'm willing to give up all of it,  
even to add to it things of my own."

Paris spoke, then sat back down. Priam stood up,  
descendant of Dardanus, wise as the gods.  
Thinking of their common cause, he spoke out:

[430] "Listen to me, Trojans, Dardan allies,  
so I may state what the heart in my chest prompts.  
You should prepare your dinner and then eat,  
here in the city, as before. But remember—  
keep sentries posted. Each man should stay awake.  
Tomorrow morning Idaios should go  
to the hollow ships, to tell the sons of Atreus,  
both Agamemnon and Menelaus,  
what Alexander has just now proposed,  
the very man whose cause launched this dispute.  
[440] Idaios should propose this wise suggestion—  
if they'll consent to postpone grim warfare,  
so we can burn our dead, we'll fight later,  
until god adjudicates between us  
and awards one side the victory."

They heard what Priam said and readily agreed.  
Throughout the army, in the ranks, they ate their dinner.

At dawn Idaios went out to the hollow ships.  
There he found Danaans, companions of Ares,  
assembled by the stern of Agamemnon's ship.

[450] The loud-voiced herald, standing in their midst, spoke out:

“Son of Atreus, other Achaean leaders,  
Priam and other noble Trojans asked me  
to tell you what Alexander has proposed,  
if that meets with your approval, an offer  
you will want to hear. That man began our strife.  
All the property which Paris brought here  
in his hollow ships to Troy—how I wish  
he’d died before that day!—he’ll hand over  
and add more goods from his own home.

[460] But he says he’ll not return that noble lady,  
wife of Menelaus, though the Trojans wish  
he’d do that. There’s more. My orders tell me  
to speak to you to see if you are willing  
to put a stop to the harsh clash of war,  
until such time as we have burned our dead.  
We will fight later, until god chooses  
between us, makes one of us the victors.”

Idaios spoke. They all remained silent, speechless.  
At last Diomedes, skilled at war shouts, cried out:

[470] “Let no man now accept Alexander’s stuff,  
nor Helen. For it’s quite clear, even to a fool,  
the Trojans are tied down to lethal fate.”

Diomedes spoke. All Achaea’s sons roared out,  
approving what horse-taming Diomedes said.  
Mighty Agamemnon then addressed Idaios:

“Idaios, you yourself have heard our answer,  
what Achaeans think of what you offer.  
And I agree with them. But I don’t object  
to burning corpses, for when men die,  
[480] one should not deny the bodies of the dead  
a swift propitiation in the flames.

So let Zeus, Hera's loud-thundering husband,  
stand as witness here to our pledged word."

Saying this, Agamemnon held up his sceptre,  
invoking all the gods. Idaios then returned,  
going back to sacred Ilion. There the Trojans  
and Dardanians were seated in a meeting,  
a general assembly, awaiting his return.  
He came, stood in their midst, and delivered his report.

[490] Then they quickly organized two working parties—  
some to gather bodies, others to get firewood.

Argives also moved swiftly from their well-decked ships.  
Some hurried to bring in the dead, others to find wood.  
Just as the sun began to shine down on the fields,  
rising from the gently flowing Ocean depths,  
climbing in the sky, the two groups met each other.  
At that point it was hard to recognize each dead man.  
They washed blood off with water and piled them onto carts,  
shedding hot tears. Great Priam did not permit

[500] his Trojans to lament. So they heaped the corpses  
on the pyre in silence, hearts full of anguish.  
Once they'd burned the bodies, they went back to sacred Troy.  
Opposite them, in the same way, well-armed Achaeans  
heaped their dead up on a pyre, sick at heart, burned them,  
and then returned back to their hollow ships.

Next day, just before dawn, still at night, in half light,  
a chosen group of Achaeans was awake around the pyre.  
Beside it, on an angle, they made a common grave,  
back from the plain. From that mound they built a wall,  
[510] with high towers, to defend them and their ships.  
Inside the rampart they set close-fitting gates,  
to make a passage so chariots could pass through.  
Outside the wall they dug a big ditch, wide and deep,  
close to the rampart, setting stakes down in the trench.

As long-haired Achaeans worked, gods sitting beside Zeus,  
lord of lightning, gazed down on the huge construction,  
the project undertaken by bronze-armed Achaeans.  
Earthshaker Poseidon was the first to speak:

“Father Zeus, will any mortal man  
[520] on boundless earth, after this event,  
inform gods of his plans, of his intentions?  
Don’t you see that long-haired Achaeans  
have built a new wall to protect their ships,  
dug a ditch around it, and yet have made  
no splendid sacrifice to us, the gods?  
The fame of this wall will reach everywhere,  
as far as light of dawn. People will forget  
that wall which Phoebus Apollo and myself  
worked hard to build for heroic Laomedon.”\*

[530] Cloud-gatherer Zeus, quite irked, answered Poseidon:

“Such talk from you, mighty Earthshaker, is silly.  
Another god might well fear this design,  
some god with a far less powerful hand,  
a weaker spirit than your own. Your fame  
will reach as far as the shining light of dawn.  
Come now, when the long-haired Achaeans leave,  
sailing their ships to their dear native land,  
you can smash their wall, take it out to sea,  
bury the great shore under sand, and so erase  
[540] that great Achaean wall completely.”

As the gods discussed these things amongst themselves,  
the sun went down and Achaeans finished working.  
They slaughtered oxen by their huts and ate their dinner.  
Many ships had come, bringing wine from Lemnos,  
sent by Jason’s son Euneus—born to Jason,  
his people’s shepherd, from Hypsipyle.  
Euneus had donated wine, a thousand measures,

to go to Agamemnon and Menelaus.  
From these ships long-haired Achaeans bought their wine.  
[550] Some bartered with bronze, some with shiny iron,  
others with hides, live oxen, or with slaves.  
And then the men prepared a sumptuous banquet.  
Long-haired Achaeans feasted all night long,  
as did Trojans and their allies in the city,  
while throughout the night, Counsellor Zeus,  
thundering ominously, plotted bad things for them.  
Pale fear gripped men. They kept pouring wine from goblets  
onto the ground. No one dared to drink before he made  
an offering to Zeus, almighty son of Cronos.  
Then they went to bed, to receive the gift of sleep.



Book Eight  
The Trojans Have Success

*[At a council on Olympus, Zeus decides to favour the Trojans, leaves for Ida, and holds up the golden scales; Diomedes comes to Nestor's help; Diomedes confronts Hector; Zeus stops Diomedes with a lightning bolt; Hera tries to get Poseidon to plot against Zeus; Agamemnon's speech to rally the troops; Zeus sends an omen to encourage the Argives; the Argives rally; Teucer's success against the Trojans; Hector wounds Teucer, drives him from the battle; Hera and Athena set out to help the Achaeans; Zeus sends Iris to stop them; Hector's speech to his troops the night before the big battle; Trojans sacrifice to the gods]*

As Dawn first spread her yellow robe across the earth,  
thunder-loving Zeus summoned an assembly of the gods  
on the highest crest of many-ridged Olympus.  
Zeus himself addressed them. The other deities,  
those ranked below him, listened carefully.

“Hear me, all you gods and goddesses,  
I’ll speak what the spirit in my chest prompts.  
And let no female god, no male one either,  
seek to thwart my plan. Let’s get agreement  
[10] from all of you to end this matter quickly.  
If I see any of you breaking ranks of gods,  
keen to assist the Trojans or Danaans,  
that god I’ll beat up ignominiously  
and send back to Olympus. Or I’ll seize him  
and pitch him into black Tartarus, way down,  
into the deepest pit below the earth,  
where the gates are iron, the threshold bronze,  
as far below Hades as heaven lies  
above the earth. Then he’ll acknowledge  
[20] just how strong I am, the strongest of all gods.  
Come on, try it—then everyone will know.  
Take a golden cord, hang it from heaven.  
Let gods and goddesses, all together,  
grab hold of one end of it and pull.

You'd not drag Zeus, the highest counsellor,  
down from heaven to the ground, never,  
no matter how hard you tried to do it.  
But when I wished to pull in earnest,  
I'd yank up earth itself, the sea as well.  
[30] I'd loop that cord round some Olympian peak  
and hang it in mid-air—the whole of it.  
I'm that much stronger than the gods and men.”

Zeus finished. All the gods were speechless, shocked  
at what Zeus had said, at the power of his tone.  
At last Athena, the bright-eyed goddess, spoke up:

“Son of Cronos, you're the father of us all,  
highest ruling force. We well know your strength.  
It's invincible. Still, we're sorry for the troops,  
Danaan spearmen dying, suffering dreadful fates.  
[40] But we'll stand apart from battle, as you wish,  
although we'll give the Argives our advice,  
help them, to prevent destruction of them all,  
just to answer your displeasure.”

Cloud-gatherer Zeus, smiling at Athena, said:

“My dear child Tritogeneia, have no fears.  
I wasn't speaking all that seriously.  
I want to treat you in a friendly way.”

Zeus harnessed his two horses, swift-flying animals,  
with hooves of bronze and flowing golden manes.  
[50] He encased his body all in gold, took up his whip,  
a gold one, finely crafted, climbed in his chariot,  
then lashed the horses onward. They flew off eagerly.  
Midway between the earth and starry heaven,  
Zeus reached Mount Ida with its many springs,  
mother of wild beasts. He reached Gargaros,  
site of his grove and temple, fragrant with sacrifice.

There, the father of gods and men reined in his horses,  
untied them from the chariot, and hid them in thick cloud.  
Then he sat on the mountain peak, proud and splendid,  
[60] gazing down on the Trojan city, the Achaean ships.

Long-haired Achaeans gulped a quick meal by their huts.  
Then they armed themselves. On the other side, in town,  
Trojans, too, prepared for war, fewer in number,  
but keen to fight on in the killing zone, a grim necessity,  
for wives and children. They threw open all the gates.  
The army streamed out, foot soldiers and charioteers,  
making a huge din. As the two groups moved out  
to the same spot, they crashed together, smashing shields  
and spears, the battle frenzy of bronze-armed warriors.  
[70] Embossed shields collided one against the other,  
a tremendous noise. Screams of pain and triumph  
came from soldiers—those killing, those being killed—  
and the earth was saturated with their blood.

In early morning, as that sacred day grew stronger,  
weapons hurled by both sides grimly took their toll—  
men kept on dying. But when the sun was at its height,  
Father Zeus set up his golden balance, placed on it  
two fatal destinies, one for horse-taming Trojans,  
one for bronze-armed Achaeans. Gripping the scales,  
[80] he raised them by the centre. One scale sank down,  
the one which held the Achaeans' fate that day—  
it moved down towards the all-sustaining earth,  
while the Trojans' fate rose up toward wide heaven.  
From Mount Ida, Zeus sent out a loud thunder clap  
and hurled a lighting bolt down on Achaean troops.  
Men looked and were astounded. Pale fear gripped them all.  
At that, Idomeneus did not dare to stand his ground,  
nor did Agamemnon, nor the two men named Ajax,  
companions of the war god Ares. Only Nestor,  
[90] the Geranian, guardian of Achaeans,  
kept his place, but not because he wanted to.

One of his horses had been hurt, hit by an arrow  
on its head, right on top, that spot where on a horse  
hairs start to grow out from the skull, a deadly place.  
The arrow had been loosed by Alexander,  
lovely Helen's mate. The beast reared up in agony,  
as the arrow pierced its brain. Skewered by the shaft,  
the beast's convulsions confused the other horses.  
While old Nestor with his sword was hacking feverishly  
[100] to cut the traces holding the animal in place,  
Hector's fast horses came through the fighting men,  
bearing Hector with them and their bold charioteer.  
Nestor would have died right there, if Diomedes,  
skilled in war cries, hadn't seen him right away.  
He let out a loud shout to Odysseus, urging him  
to come to Nestor's help.

"Noble Odysseus, Laertes' son,  
you resourceful man, why move away,  
turning your back on all these flying weapons,  
like a coward? Watch someone doesn't spear you  
[110] right in the back as you run off. Come on,  
let's save old man Nestor from wild Hector."

Diomedes' words missed godlike, firm Odysseus,  
who moved off to the Achaeans' hollow ships.  
Diomedes, though left alone, charged straight ahead,  
back into the fight. He made a stand right there,  
in front of old Nestor's chariot, calling out to Nestor,  
son of Neleus—his words had wings.

"Old man, in this fight  
these young men are pressing you too hard.  
Your strength is waning. Old age weighs you down.  
[120] Your attendant's weak, your horses slow.  
So come on, climb up into my chariot.  
You'll see how these Trojan horses do,  
experts in moving to and fro across the plain,

in pursuit or flight. I took them from Aeneas.  
These horses would fill any man with terror.  
So turn your team over to subordinates.  
With my two let's charge against the Trojans.  
Let Hector see how my hand wields a spear."

Geranian horseman Nestor followed this suggestion.

- [130] At once, the two strong officers, Sthelenus  
and noble Eurymedon, took Nestor's horses.  
The two men climbed up in Diomedes' chariot.  
Nestor grabbed the shining reins and lashed the horses.  
They closed in on Hector quickly. Then he, in turn,  
eager to fight, charged them impetuously.  
The son of Tydeus threw his spear at Hector.  
He missed, but struck Hector's companion charioteer,  
Eniopeus, son of proud Thebaios, in the chest,  
right by the nipple, as Eniopeus held the reins.
- [140] He tumbled from the chariot. The swift horses swerved.  
Then strength and spirit left him as he lay there.  
Savage grief seized Hector for his charioteer,  
but he left him lying there, for all the pain he felt  
for his companion. He went to find a substitute,  
a second driver full of courage. Before long,  
those horses had another charioteer,  
for Hector soon ran into Archeptolemos,  
son of Iphitus, and placed him in the chariot  
behind swift horses, then handed him the reins.

- [150] At that point irrevocable disaster might have struck  
the people all penned up in Troy like sheep,  
if the father of gods and men hadn't kept sharp watch.  
Sounding a dreadful thunder clap, he loosed his lightning,  
a dazzling fiery bolt which hit the ground  
immediately in front of Diomedes' horses.  
A dreadful flash came from the blazing sulphur.  
In terror, both horses reared up in their harnesses.  
Nestor let the shining reins drop from his hands.

Feeling fear inside his chest, he cried:

“Son of Tydeus,  
[160] wheel your sure-footed horses round. Go back.  
Don’t you see Zeus is not protecting you?  
Today the son of Cronos grants Hector glory.  
Tomorrow he’ll give victory to us,  
if that’s his will. No man stops Zeus’ plans,  
no one, not even the mightiest warrior.  
Zeus’ force is more powerful by far.”

Diomedes, expert in war cries, then replied:

“Everything you say, old man, is true enough.  
But this brings fearful pain into my heart and chest.  
[170] For Hector then will speak out in Troy.  
He’ll say,

‘The son of Tydeus, in fear of me,  
scurried off, back to his ships.’

That’s what he’ll boast.  
Then let the wide earth open up for me.”

Geranian horseman Nestor answered Diomedes:

“Son of fiery-hearted Tydeus, why talk like that?  
Even if he slanders you and calls you coward,  
he’ll not convince the Trojans or Dardanians,  
or Trojan wives, married partners of brave men  
you’ve thrown into the dirt, still in their prime.”

[180] With these words he turned the sure-footed horses back,  
fleeing through the battle zone. Hector and the Trojans,  
with a shout, threw volleys of lethal weapons at them.  
Hector with his glittering helmet then yelled out:

“Son of Tydeus,  
fast-riding Danaans at their banquets  
have awarded you a place of honour,  
with lots of meat, a wine cup always full.  
Now they’re ashamed of you. You’ve turned out  
no better than a woman. Run off then,  
you coward girl. I’ll not back away,  
[190] let you climb our walls, or take our women.  
Before that happens, I’ll send you to your death.”

At Hector’s words, the son of Tydeus was torn two ways,  
debating whether to wheel the horses round and fight,  
face Hector man to man. Three times he thought it through  
in his mind and heart, and three times Counsellor Zeus  
pealed thunder from Mount Ida, signalling to Trojans  
that victory now would shift to them. Then Hector,  
with a great shout, cried out to his Trojan warriors:

“You Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians—  
[200] soldiers who fight in the killing zone—  
my friends, be men. Summon your warlike spirit.  
I see the son of Cronos grants us victory,  
great glory, a disaster for Danaans.  
What fools they were to build this feeble wall,  
a puny hazard—it will not check me,  
my warlike spirit. As for the trench they dug,  
my horses will jump over that with ease.  
When I reach their hollow ships, don’t forget the fire,  
which wipes out everything I’ll burn their fleet,  
[210] slaughter them, those Argives by their ships,  
as they suffocate, choking on the smoke.”

And Hector urged his horses on, saying these words:

“Xanthus, and you Podargus, Aithus,  
noble Lampus! Now’s the time to pay me back  
for all my care, all the sweet grain you’ve had

from Andromache, great Eëtion's daughter,  
for the wine she's mixed for you to drink,  
whenever you desired. She took care of you,  
even before me, her own fine husband.

[220] Come on then, go after them with speed,  
so we may capture Nestor's shield, whose fame  
extends right up to heaven—it's all gold—  
the shield itself, cross braces, too.  
From horse-taming Diomedes' shoulders  
we'll strip the decorated body armour,  
a work created by Hephaestus.  
I think if we could capture these two things,  
Achaeans would climb aboard their ships tonight."

So Hector bragged. That made queen Hera angry.

[230] She shook with fury, sitting on her throne,  
making high Olympus tremble. Then she spoke out  
to great god Poseidon:

"Alas, great Earthshaker,  
don't you feel any anguish in your heart,  
as Danaans are destroyed? After all,  
they bring you presents, many pleasing gifts,  
to Helice and Aegae. Don't you want them to win?  
Now, if all those of us who protect Danaans  
were to agree to drive the Trojans back,  
we'd leave wide-seeing Zeus up there by himself,

[240] sulking where he sits alone on Ida"

Mighty Earthshaker Poseidon, very angry,  
answered Hera:

"Hera, you fearless talker,  
What are you saying? That's not what I want,  
the rest of us to war on Zeus, son of Cronos.  
For he is much more powerful than us."



As the two gods talked together in this way,  
 horses and shield-bearing troops were jammed together,  
 crammed into the space encircled by the ditch,  
 from ships to wall, pinned down there by Hector, Priam's son,  
 [250] like swift Ares, now that Zeus was giving him the glory.  
 And then he would've burned those well-balanced ships  
 with searing fire on the spot, if queen Hera  
 had not set a plan in Agamemnon's mind  
 to rouse Achaeans with all speed on his own.  
 He strode through Achaean huts and ships,  
 holding a huge purple cloak in his large fists.  
 He took up a position by Odysseus' ship,  
 a black vessel, broad in the beam, whose place,  
 in the middle of the row, allowed his voice  
 [260] to reach both ends of the line, from the huts of Ajax,  
 son of Telamon, to those belonging to Achilles,  
 for these two men had placed their balanced ships  
 at either end, relying on their courage and strong hands.\*  
 Agamemnon, from that spot, then shouted out,  
 making himself heard to all Danaans:

"You Argives! What a shameful bunch of men!  
 Splendid to look at, but a sour disgrace!  
 What's happened to our sworn oaths, when we claimed  
 we were the best, the bravest? Idle boasters!  
 [270] In Lemnos, as you stuffed yourselves with meat  
 from straight-horned cattle and drank bowls of wine,  
 foaming to the brim, you talked of how you'd stand,  
 each and every one of you, firm in battle  
 against a hundred or two hundred Trojans.  
 Now we're matched by Hector, just one man,  
 who'll quickly set our ships alight with fire.  
 Father Zeus, have you ever so deluded  
 a high-minded king and stolen his glory?  
 While sailing well-decked ships to this disaster,  
 [280] I say I never overlooked your lovely altars.  
 On every one I burned fat and thighs of oxen—

I was so keen to conquer Troy, its well-made walls.  
But Zeus, grant me now at least this prayer—  
let us get out of here alive, in safety.  
Don't let Trojans kill Achaeans off like this.”

As Agamemnon spoke, tears streaming down his face  
Father Zeus pitied him and nodded his assent—  
the army would be saved and not demolished.  
At once Zeus sent the surest of all bird omens,  
[290] an eagle, gripping in its talons a young fawn,  
child of some swift deer. The eagle released the fawn,  
dropping it right beside that splendid altar  
where Achaeans sacrificed to all-knowing Zeus.  
Seeing that Zeus had sent the bird, men resumed the fight,  
attacking Trojans eagerly, their battle spirits roused.

Then none of those many Danaans there could claim  
he was quicker with his horses than Diomedes,  
driving them ahead and charging through the ditch,  
to confront their enemies face to face and fight.  
[300] Well ahead of all the rest, Diomedes killed his man,  
a well-armed Trojan, Agelaus, son of Phradmon.  
He'd turned his team around to get away.  
But once he showed his back, Diomedes speared him  
between his shoulder blades, driving through his chest.  
He fell from the chariot, armour rattling round him.  
After Diomedes, the sons of Atreus came charging in,  
Agamemnon and Menelaus, and after them  
both Ajaxes, encased in war's ferocity,  
followed by Idomeneus and his attendant,  
[310] Meriones, the equal of man-killing Ares.  
Then came Eurypylus, brave son of Euaemon.  
Ninth came Teucer, stretching his curved bow.  
He stood beneath the shield of Ajax, son of Telamon.  
As Ajax cautiously pulled his shield aside,  
Teucer would peer out quickly, shoot off an arrow,  
hit someone in the crowd, dropping that soldier

right where he stood, ending his life—then he'd duck back,  
crouching down by Ajax, like a child beside its mother.  
Ajax would then conceal him with his shining shield.

[320] Who were the first Trojans skilful Teucer killed?  
Orsilochus died first, then Ormenus, Ophelestes,  
Daitor, Chromius, godlike Lycophontes,  
Amopaon, son of Polyaimon, and Melanippus—  
all these Teucer dropped one by one on fertile earth.  
Watching him cause havoc with his bow in Trojan ranks,  
Agamemnon, king of men, was overjoyed.  
He went up, stood beside him, then spoke out:

“Teucer, son of Telamon, master of your people,  
my dear comrade, keep on shooting as you're doing.

[330] You'll be a saving light to the Danaans,  
and to your father Telamon, who raised you,  
took care of you, a bastard, in his own home.  
Though he's far off, cover him with glory now.  
For I'll tell you something—and this will happen—  
if Athena and aegis-bearing Zeus permit me  
to devastate that well-built city Ilion,  
you'll be the first to take the prize of honour,  
after me, of course—a tripod, two horses,  
their chariot as well, or some woman  
[340] to climb up into your bed with you.”

Skilful Teucer then replied to Agamemnon:

“Mighty son of Atreus, why urge me on?  
I'm eager to continue shooting.  
Since we first drove them back to Ilion,  
I've not stopped fighting as hard as I know how,  
cutting men down with my bow and killing them.  
I've shot off eight long-barbed arrows. Each one  
has sunk itself deep inside a soldier's flesh,  
some strong, swift warrior. But this man,

[350] Hector, I can't hit. He's like some crazy dog.”

With that, Teucer launched another arrow from his bowstring,  
directly facing Hector, eager to hit him.

The arrow missed, but struck handsome Gorgythion,  
son of Priam, in the chest, a man whose mother,  
lovely Castianeira, divinely beautiful,  
went from Aisyme to become a wife to Priam.  
Just as the head on a garden poppy leans aslant,  
loaded down with heavy seed and spring rain showers,  
so Gorgythion's head sagged under his helmet's weight.

[360] Teucer loosed yet another arrow from his bowstring,  
straight at Hector, his spirit still keen to hit him.  
Again he missed, for Apollo deflected it.  
But the arrow did hit Archeptolemos,  
Hector's bold driver, as he was coming to the fight.  
It struck him in the chest, right by the nipple.  
He fell from the chariot. The fast horses swerved.  
Then and there his strength and spirit abandoned him.  
In his heart Hector felt sharp pain for his charioteer,  
but he left him there, though grieving for his comrade.

[370] He called out to his brother Cebriones,  
who was near by, to take up the chariot reins.  
Cebriones heard him and willingly agreed.  
Hector jumped down from his glittering chariot  
with a fearful yell. Picking up a boulder  
lying on the ground, he went straight at Teucer,  
his heart aroused to hit him with it. At that moment,  
Teucer had just taken a sharp arrow from his quiver,  
set it on the bowstring, and was drawing back the bow,  
once again desperately eager to hit Hector.

[380] But Hector struck him with that jagged rock  
right on the shoulder, where collar bones divide  
neck from chest, an especially vulnerable spot.  
The rock broke the bowstring and numbed his hands and wrists.  
Teucer fell forward on his knees and stayed there,  
letting his bow fall from his hand. Seeing his brother down,  
Ajax quickly hurried up and straddled Teucer,

covering him with his shield. Two loyal attendants,  
Mecisteus, son of Echios, and noble Alastor,  
hoisted Teucer up—he was groaning heavily—  
[390] then took him with them back to the hollow ships.

Once more Olympian Zeus put force into the Trojans.  
They drove Achaeans back, right back to their deep trench,  
Hector at the front, proudly showing off his strength.  
Just as some hunting dog in a swift-footed chase  
gets a grip on a wild boar or lion from the back,  
on the flank or rump, and watches that beast's every move,  
that's how Hector harried the long-haired Achaeans,  
always killing off the stragglers as they fled.  
By the time Achaeans had rushed through the stakes,  
[400] as they crossed the ditch, many had died at Trojan hands.  
At last they halted by the ships and stayed there,  
calling out to one another. Raising their hands,  
each man prayed fervently to all the gods.  
Hector drove his fine-maned horses back and forth,  
his eyes glaring like a Gorgon or man-killing Ares.

Seeing all this, white-armed Hera pitied the Achaeans.  
She quickly spoke these winged words to Athena:

“Alas, child of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
Achaeans are being massacred. It's their last stand.  
[410] Aren't we concerned about them any more,  
as their evil fate accomplishes its purpose?  
They're being destroyed by one man's charging frenzy.  
Hector, son of Priam, is on a rampage.  
He can't be stopped. He's already done great harm.”

Bright-eyed goddess Athena answered Hera:

“I wish Hector somehow would lose his strength  
and die, killed in his own native land  
at Argive hands. But my father, too,

is in a rage, destruction on his mind.

[420] What a wretch he is, always in the way,  
wrecking my plans. He does not remember  
how many times I saved Hercules, his son,  
worn down by work he got from Eurystheus.  
If I'd had the foresight to anticipate  
what Zeus is doing now when Eurystheus  
sent Hercules down to the house of Hades,  
the Gate Keeper, to fetch back from Erebus  
Hades' dreadful hound, he'd never have escaped  
the deep rushing waters of the river Styx.

[430] Now Zeus dislikes me. He's carrying out  
what Thetis wants. She kissed his knee, cupped his chin,  
begged him to grant due honour to Achilles,  
destroyer of cities. But the day will come  
when Zeus calls me dear bright eyes once more.  
Now harness your sure-footed horses for us,  
while I go to aegis-bearing Zeus' home  
and arm myself with weapons for this battle,  
so I may see whether this son of Priam,  
this Hector of the shining helmet, is pleased

[440] when we two show up in the battle lanes,  
or whether some Trojan will make a meal  
for dogs and birds with flesh and body fat,  
as he falls there beside Achaean ships."

Athena finished. White-armed Hera agreed with her.  
Then Hera, honoured goddess, great Cronos' daughter,  
went off and started harnessing her horses  
with their golden headpieces. Meanwhile, Athena,  
daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, threw her dress  
down on the floor of her father's house, a soft robe,

[450] richly embroidered, which she'd made with her own hands.  
She pulled on the tunic of cloud-gatherer Zeus  
and armed herself with weapons for destructive war.  
Then she stepped up into the flaming chariot,  
grasping the huge thick strong spear she used to break

heroic warrior ranks which had provoked her,  
making the daughter of a mighty father angry.  
Hera immediately whipped the horses forward.  
With a groan, the gates of heaven opened on their own,  
those gates which the Seasons, custodians of Olympus  
[460] and great heaven, too, look after, pushing open  
the heavy cloud, then pushing it shut once more.  
Through these gates the goddesses lashed on their horses.

Father Zeus noticed them from Ida. In a huge rage,  
he sent down gold-winged Iris with a message for them.

“Off with you, swift Iris. Turn them back again.  
Don’t permit them to come into my presence.  
For if we come to blows, then we’ll have trouble.  
But I do say this—and it will surely happen—  
I’ll cripple their fast horses in their traces,  
[470] throw them from the chariot, smash it in pieces.  
Ten revolving years won’t be sufficient  
to cure the wounds my lightning will inflict,  
so the bright-eyed goddess knows what it means  
to fight against her father. As for Hera,  
I’m not so angry or upset with her,  
for no matter what I say, she undermines it.”

Zeus spoke. Then Iris, swift as a storm, rushed off,  
taking his message. She came down from Mount Ida  
and made for high Olympus. She met the goddesses  
[480] at the outer gate of many-ridged Olympus.  
She stopped them and reported Zeus’ message:

“Where are you rushing off? Have you lost your wits?  
The son of Cronos has forbidden anyone  
to assist the Argives. And he’s made this threat—  
which he intends to carry out—he’ll maim  
your swift horses in their traces, throw you both  
out of the chariot, smash it in pieces.

Ten revolving years won't be sufficient  
to cure the wounds his lightning will inflict,  
[490] so that you'll understand, bright-eyed goddess,  
what it means to fight against your father.  
With Hera's he's not so angry or upset.  
For no matter what he says, she undermines it.  
But as for you, you shameless schemer,  
are you daring to fight Zeus with one large spear?"

Having said this, swift-footed Iris went away.  
Hera then said to Athena:

"What a mess,  
child of aegis-bearing Zeus! I'm not keen,  
not now, that two of us should take on Zeus  
[500] for the sake of mortal men. Let some die  
and others live, as chance will work it out.  
Let Zeus judge between Trojans and Achaeans,  
as his heart desires. That's how it should be."

With these words, she turned her sure-footed horses back.  
The Seasons unyoked the horses with the lovely manes,  
led them to their heavenly stalls, and leaned the chariot  
against the courtyard's luminescent inner wall.  
The goddesses then sat down on their golden thrones,  
among the other gods, with anger in their hearts.  
[510] Father Zeus drove his fine-wheeled chariot and horses  
from Ida to Olympus, to the place where gods  
were all assembled. The famous Earthshaker,  
Poseidon, loosed his horses from their harness for him,  
put the chariot on its stand, and covered it with cloth.  
Then wide-seeing Zeus himself sat on his golden throne.  
Underneath his feet great Olympus trembled.  
Athena and Hera were sitting by themselves,  
away from Zeus, not saying anything to him  
or asking questions. Knowing what was in their hearts,  
Zeus spoke:



[520] “Why are you so irritated,  
Hera and Athena? Surely you’re not tired  
from those fights where men win glory,  
exhausted after killing off the Trojans,  
for whom you feel such deadly hatred  
Be that as it may, such is my power,  
the strength in my own hands, it’s impossible  
for all the Olympian gods combined  
to turn me from my purposes. As for you,  
you both were trembling in your shining limbs

[530] even before you looked on any fight  
or witnessed first-hand war’s destructiveness.  
But I’ll tell you what would’ve taken place—  
neither of you would’ve come back to Olympus,  
the immortals’ home, riding in your chariot.  
My lightning would have blasted both of you.”

Zeus finished speaking. Hera and Athena muttered,  
sitting together, plotting trouble for the Trojans.  
Athena sat in silence, not saying anything,  
angry with her father, consumed with rage.

[540] But Hera couldn’t hold the fury in her chest. She said:

“Dread son of Cronos, what are you saying?  
We know well enough how strong you are—  
invincible. But nonetheless, we pity  
Danaan spearmen who are being destroyed,  
suffering a dreadful fate. But we’ll hold back,  
refrain from fighting, if that’s your order.  
We’ll provide useful advice to Argives,  
so they don’t all die from your displeasure.”

In response to Hera, cloud-gatherer Zeus then said:

[550] “Ox-eyed queen Hera, if you’re so inclined,  
tomorrow morning you can witness

the exalted son of Cronos, as he kills  
many Achaean spearmen in their army.  
For warlike Hector won't stop fighting,  
until beside the ships he stirs to action  
swift Achilles, son of Peleus, on that day  
they fight with bloody desperation  
by the ships' sterns—they'll be battling over  
the body of Patroclus. That's been decreed.

[560] I don't care at all if this annoys you.

Even if you descend to the lowest place  
beneath the earth and sea, where Iapetus  
and Cronos live, where they get no pleasure  
in any sunlight from Hyperion,  
or any breeze, in the depths of Tartarus—  
even if you went as far away as that  
in your wandering, I'd still pay no attention  
to your displeasure. For you've no rival  
when it comes to behaving like a bitch.”\*

[570] Zeus spoke. White-armed Hera didn't answer him.

Now the sun's bright light sank down into the ocean,  
dragging black night over fertile crop lands.  
The end of daylight made the Trojans sorrowful,  
but Achaeans welcomed the arrival of black night,  
something they'd been praying for constantly.

Then glorious Hector assembled all the Trojans  
some distance from the ships, by the swirling river,  
in open ground where there were no corpses in plain view.  
Jumping from their chariots to the ground, warriors

[580] listened for what Hector, loved by Zeus, would say.

In his hand, he gripped a spear eighteen feet long,  
its bronze point glittering there in front of them,  
a golden ring around it. Leaning on this spear,  
Hector then addressed his Trojans:

“Listen to me,  
you Trojans, Dardanians, you allies.  
Just now I stated we’d go back to Troy today,  
once we’d destroyed the ships and slaughtered  
all Achaeans. But darkness intervened.  
That’s the only thing that spared the Argives  
[590] and saved their ships beached onshore. Come then,  
let’s do what black night demands—prepare a meal.  
So from your chariots take out of harness  
those horses with their lovely manes, feed them,  
then quickly bring here from the city  
cattle and stout sheep. Bring sweet wine as well,  
and bread from your own homes. Get lots of wood,  
so all night long, until first light of dawn,  
we can burn many fires, lighting up the sky.  
Some time in the night, long-haired Achaeans  
[600] may make their move to get away by sea.  
We must not let them embark easily,  
without a fight. Let some of them be hit,  
take something home they need to nurse with care—  
an arrow wound, a slash from some sharp spear  
as they jump in their ships—so someone else  
will think twice about bringing wretched war  
upon horse-taming Trojans. Let the call go out  
from heralds, whom Zeus loves, through all the city,  
for growing boys and grey-haired men to camp  
[610] up on the city’s walls, built by the gods.  
Let each grown woman get ready a large fire  
in her home. Let all keep a sharp lookout,  
to stop a group from entering our city  
while the army is elsewhere. Do all this,  
you great-hearted Trojans, just as I’ve said.  
That’s all I have to tell you at this time.  
I’ve more orders for horse-taming Trojans  
for tomorrow. I hope and pray to Zeus,  
to other gods as well, I’ll drive away  
[620] these death-infected dogs, conducted here

in their black ships by mortal fates. Right now,  
let's watch out for ourselves tonight. At dawn,  
let's arm ourselves with weapons and re-ignite  
this bitter warfare by the hollow ships.  
Then I'll know if mighty Diomedes,  
son of Tydeus, will repel me from the ships,  
or whether with my bronze I'll slaughter him  
and take away the spoils all stained with blood.  
Tomorrow he'll understand how good he is,  
[630] whether he can stand against my spear,  
as it comes after him. I think he'll fall.  
He'll be among the first men speared to death,  
with many of his comrades round him,  
at tomorrow's sunrise. I wish I were as sure  
I were immortal, ageless for all time,  
that I'd be worshiped as Athena is,  
and Apollo, too, as I am that this day  
will bring destruction to the Argives."

Hector finished speaking. Trojans gave a shout.  
[640] They untied their sweaty horses from their yokes,  
tethered them with straps, each by its chariot.  
From the city they soon brought cattle and stout sheep,  
sweet wine and bread from home. They gathered piles of wood  
and made perfect sacrificial offerings to the gods.  
From the plain, the wind carried the sweet-smelling smoke  
right up to heaven. But the blessed gods weren't willing  
to accept it, for sacred Ilion, and Priam,  
and Priam's people, rich in sheep, did not please them.  
So all night long men sat there in the battle lanes,  
[650] with high expectations, burning many fires.  
Just as those times when the stars shine bright in heaven,  
clustered around the glowing moon, with no wind at all,  
and every peak and jutting headland, every forest glade  
is clearly visible, when every star shines out,  
and the shepherd's heart rejoices—that's the way  
the many Trojan fires looked, as they burned there

in front of Ilion, between the river Xanthus  
and the ships, a thousand fires burning on the plain.  
By each sat fifty men in the glow of firelight.  
[660] Horses munched on wheat and barley, standing there  
by their chariots, awaiting the regal splendour of the dawn.

## Book Nine Peace Offerings to Achilles

*[The Argives in despair; Agamemnon proposes they go home; Diomedes responds, rebuking Agamemnon; Nestor proposes a reconciliation with Achilles; Agamemnon agrees, outlines his offer; Phoenix, Odysseus, and Ajax go to Achilles with the offer; he welcomes them with a meal; Odysseus outlines Agamemnon's offer; Achilles refuses; Phoenix urges Achilles to accept, tells the story of Meleager; Achilles refuses Phoenix; Ajax speaks last; Achilles makes a slight concession; the envoys return with Achilles' answer; Achaeans retire for the night.]*

Meanwhile, as the Trojans maintained their careful watch,  
Panic, chilling Fear's dread comrade, gripped Achaeans,  
their best men suffering unendurable anguish.  
Just like those times two winds blow in from Thrace—  
North Wind and West Wind suddenly spring up  
and lash the fish-filled seas—black waves at once rise up,  
then fling seaweed in piles along the shoreline—  
so spirits in Achaean chests were now cast down.  
Atreus' son, heart overwhelmed with painful sorrow,  
[10] went to give out orders for clear-voiced heralds  
to summon all the warriors to assembly,  
calling them one by one, not with a general shout.  
He himself, with his heralds, carried out the task.  
The counsellors sat heart sick. Agamemnon stood,  
his face shedding tears like a black water spring  
whose dark stream flows down a sheer rock precipice.  
With a sigh, Agamemnon addressed the Argives:

“My friends, leaders, Argive counsellors,  
Zeus, son of Cronos, has snared me badly  
[20] in grievous folly. Deceptive god,  
he promised me—he nodded his assent—  
that I'd lay waste to well-built Ilion,  
before I went back home. Now he tricks me  
He's devised a cruel deceit for me,

telling me to return to Argos in disgrace,  
after the deaths of so many warriors.  
That's what now delights all-powerful Zeus,  
who has hurled down so many lofty towns,  
and who'll still demolish many more—  
[30] such is his power, irresistible.  
But come, let's all follow what I propose—  
let's sail back to our dear native land.  
For we're never going to capture Troy.”

He finished. All those there stayed silent, stunned.  
Achaean's sons just sat there, speechless with grief.  
At last Diomedes, skilled in battle cries, spoke out:

“Son of Atreus, I'll be the first to challenge  
your foolishness, as is my right, my lord,  
in our assembly. So don't be angry.  
[40] First of all, you slighted my bravery  
in front of all Danaans, when you claimed  
I was no soldier, an unwarlike man.  
Achaeans, young and old, all know this.  
The son of crooked-minded Cronos gave you  
a two-edged gift—he gave you honour  
to govern all men with your sceptre,  
but he didn't give the strongest power,  
courage. My misguided king, do you think  
Achaean's sons are really fearful cowards,  
[50] as you state? If your heart wishes to go home,  
then go. The road lies there in front of you.  
The many ships which sailed here with you  
from Mycenae stand ready by the sea.  
But the rest of the long-haired Achaeans  
will stay here, until we demolish Troy.  
If they flee back to their dear native land  
in their ships, too, then Sthenelus and I  
will fight on to our goal, to take Ilion.  
For the gods were with us when we came.”

[60] With a roar, all Achaea's sons endorsed his words,  
pleased with the speech made by horse-taming Diomedes.  
Then horseman Nestor, standing up before them, said:

“Son of Tydeus, you're excellent in battle  
and the best Achaean of your age in council.  
No Achaean will fault what you've just said  
or oppose it. But your speech is incomplete.  
You are still young—you might well be my son,  
my youngest born. Still, you spoke sensibly,  
in what you said to the Achaean king.

[70] For you spoke justly and kept to the point.  
But come, I can claim to be your senior,  
so I shall explain this matter fully.  
Let no one take issue now with what I say,  
not even mighty Agamemnon.  
Any man who's keen on civil war  
is an evil outlaw, without a heart,  
without a home. So for the time being,  
now that night has come, let's do what we must.  
Let's get dinner ready, something to eat.

[80] And let's have sentries camp beside that trench  
we dug outside the wall. I'm saying young men  
should do this. Then, issue your instructions,  
son of Atreus, for you are chief king here.  
Prepare a meal for senior counsellors—  
that's the right and proper thing to do.  
You've got lots of wine stockpiled in your huts,  
which Achaea's sons bring here every day  
over the wide sea from Thrace—you've got  
all you need to show such hospitality,

[90] for you are ruler over many men.  
Once many people have assembled there,  
you should follow whoever offers you  
the best advice. All we Achaeans need  
good practical advice, especially now,



when enemies are burning many fires  
right beside our ships. Who finds that pleasant?  
This night saves our army or destroys it.”

Nestor spoke. Those present listened carefully,  
then followed what he’d said. Armed sentinels went out,  
[100] led by Thrasymedes, Nestor’s son, his people’s shepherd,  
with Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, strong fighters,  
and Meriones, Aphareus, and Deïpyrus,  
along with noble Lycomedes, Creion’s son.  
These seven were captains of the sentinels.  
A hundred young men, all armed with their long spears,  
went with each of them. They marched off and took positions  
half way between the ditch and wall. Then the men lit fires  
and prepared their meals. Atreus’ son led his advisors  
to his hut and gave all of them a generous meal.  
[110] They ate the food prepared and set before them,  
and each man ate and drank to his full heart’s content.  
Old Nestor, whose previous advice had seemed the best,  
was the first to begin explaining what he thought.  
Keeping in mind their common good, he spoke out:

“Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,  
king of men, I’ll begin and end my speech  
with you, for you are lord of many men.  
Zeus gave you sceptre and laws to rule them.  
Thus, you, above all, should speak and listen,  
[120] then act upon what other men may say,  
if their spirit prompts them to speak well.  
You’ll get the credit for what they begin.  
So I’ll say what seems to me the best advice.  
No one else has set out a better scheme  
than the one which I’ve been mulling over  
a long time now, ever since you, my lord,  
made Achilles angry by taking back  
that young girl Briseis from his hut,  
against my judgment. Repeatedly,

[130] I urged you not to do it. But then you,  
surrendering to your arrogant spirit,  
shamed our strongest man, honoured by the gods.  
You still have that prize you took. So now let's think  
how we may make amends, win him back with gifts  
and gracious speeches, and be friends once more."

Agamemnon, king of men, then answered Nestor:

"Old man, you expose my folly justly.  
I was deluded. I don't deny that.  
The man whom Zeus loves in his heart is worth  
[140] whole armies. And this man Zeus now honours  
by destroying an army of Achaeans.  
Since my delusion made me follow  
my mistaken feelings, I'm now willing  
to make amends, to give in recompense  
immense treasures. I'll list these rich gifts  
in presence of you all—seven tripods  
which fire has not yet touched, ten gold talents,  
twenty shining cauldrons, twelve strong horse  
whose speed has triumphed and earned them prizes.  
[150] A man who has as much as I have won  
from racing these sure-footed animals  
would not be poor, or lack possessions,  
or need precious gold. And then I'll give him  
seven women of Lesbos, skilled in crafts,  
whom I chose for myself when he captured  
well-built Lesbos. They surpass all women  
for their beauty. These I shall present to him.  
With them the one I seized from him, Briseis,  
daughter of Briseus. I'll solemnly swear  
[160] I never once went up into her bed  
or had sex with her, as is men's custom,  
where men and women are concerned.  
All these things he will receive immediately.  
If gods grant we destroy Priam's great city,

when we Achaeans allocate the spoils,  
let him come and load his ship with gold,  
with bronze, as much as he desires. He may choose  
twenty Trojan women for himself,  
the loveliest after Argive Helen.

[170] If we get back to the rich land of Argos,  
he can then become my son-in-law.  
I'll honour him just as I do Orestes,  
my son, whom I dearly love. He's being raised  
in great prosperity. In my well-built home,  
I have three daughters—Chrysothemis,  
Iphianessa and Laodice.  
He can take whichever one he chooses  
back home as his wife to Peleus' house  
and pay no bridal gift. I'll give much more

[180] to bring about our reconciliation,  
a dowry bigger than any man so far  
has ever handed over with his daughter.  
I'll give him seven populous cities,  
Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,  
holy Pherae, fertile Antheia,  
lovely Aepea, and vine-rich Pedasus,  
all near the sea, beside sandy Pylos.  
People living in these places own a lot,  
many sheep and cattle. They will honour him

[190] and give him gifts, as if he were a god.  
Under his laws and sceptre they'll do well.  
I shall give all this if he will abate  
his anger. Let him concede. Only Hades  
is totally relentless and unyielding.  
That's why of all the gods, he's the one  
men hate the most. And let him acknowledge  
my authority, for I'm the greater king.  
In age I can claim to be his senior."

Geranian horseman Nestor then said in reply:

- [200] “Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,  
king of men, the gifts you’re offering  
to lord Achilles can’t be criticized.  
But come, let’s send out hand-picked men  
to go with all speed to Achilles’ hut,  
Peleus’ son. And may those I select  
agree to do it. First, let Phoenix,  
whom Zeus loves, be leader, then great Ajax,  
and lord Odysseus. Let herald Odios  
accompany them, along with Eurybates.
- [210] Bring some water for our hands. Let’s observe  
a holy silence, so we may pray to Zeus,  
son of Cronos, to take pity on us.”

- Nestor spoke. All present approved of what he’d said.  
Attendants then poured water on their hands.  
Young men filled mixing bowls with wine up to the brim  
and passed them round. With every cup they made libations.  
Once they’d made offerings and drunk their fill of wine,  
they left the hut of Agamemnon, son of Atreus.  
Geranian horseman Nestor, looking at each man,
- [220] especially at Odysseus, kept encouraging them  
to persuade Achilles, Peleus’ excellent son.

- Along the shore of the tumbling, crashing sea,  
the envoys made their way, offering up their prayers  
to world-circling Earthshaker Poseidon to help them  
more easily convince the great heart of Achilles.  
They came to the ships and huts of the Myrmidons.  
There they found Achilles. He was easing his spirit  
with a tuneful finely decorated lyre.  
It had a silver cross-piece. He’d seized it as a prize
- [230] when he’d destroyed the city of Eëtion.  
With the lyre he was bringing pleasure to his heart,  
singing about the celebrated deeds of men.  
Patroclus, his sole companion, sat there facing him,  
waiting in silence until Achilles finished singing.

The envoys approached, lord Odysseus in the lead.  
They stood in front of him. In astonishment,  
Achilles got up off his chair and stood up quickly,  
still holding the lyre. Patroclus did the same,  
standing up as soon as he saw the embassy.  
Swift-footed Achilles greeted them and said:

[240] “Welcome.  
My dear friends have come. I must be needed.  
Among Achaeans you’re the men I love the most,  
even in my anger.”

With these words,  
lord Achilles conducted them inside his hut  
and seated them on chairs covered with purple rugs.  
Moving up close to Patroclus, Achilles said:

“Son of Menoetius, set out for us  
a larger wine bowl, and mix stronger wine.  
Prepare a cup for everyone. These men,  
[250] my closest friends, are under my own roof.”

Achilles spoke. Patroclus obeyed his dear companion.  
Then in the firelight he set down a large chopping block,  
placed on it slabs of mutton, goat, and the chine  
of a plump hog, swimming in fat. Achilles carved,  
while Automedon held the meat. He sliced up  
small pieces, then got them ready on the spits.  
The son of Menoetius, godlike man, stoked the fire,  
a huge one. Once the blaze died down and flames subsided,  
Patroclus spread the glowing embers, laid the spits  
[260] lengthwise on top, setting them in place on stones  
and sprinkling on the sacred salt. When the meat was cooked,  
he laid it out on platters. Patroclus took the bread,  
then passed it in fine baskets round the table.  
Achilles served the meat and sat down by the wall,  
directly opposite godlike Odysseus.

Achilles told Patroclus, his companion,  
to sacrifice to all the gods. Patroclus threw the offerings  
into the fire. Then each man helped himself,  
eating the food prepared and set before him.  
[270] They all ate and drank to their full heart's content.  
Then Ajax gave a nod to Phoenix. Seeing that,  
lord Odysseus filled up his cup with wine  
and proposed a toast:

“Good health, Achilles.  
We have not had to go without our share  
of feasts, either in Agamemnon's hut,  
Atreus' son, or here, for you've prepared  
a richly satisfying meal. But now  
our business is not pleasant banqueting.  
For we are staring at a great disaster.  
[280] And, my lord, we are afraid, in a quandary,  
whether we can save our well-decked ships,  
or whether they will be destroyed, unless  
you put on your warlike power once again.  
For haughty Trojans and their famous allies  
have camped close to the ships and barricade  
and lit many fires throughout their army.  
They claim nothing can prevent them now  
from attacking our black ships. And Zeus,  
son of Cronos, has sent them his signal,  
[290] on their right a lightning flash. Hector,  
exulting hugely in his power,  
in a terrifying manic frenzy,  
puts his faith in Zeus, fears neither man nor god.  
A killing passion now possesses him.  
He prays for holy dawn to come quickly,  
vowing he'll hack apart the high sterns  
of our ships, burn them in destructive fire,  
and by those very ships kill the Achaeans  
driven out in desperation by the smoke.  
[300] I have a dreadful fear deep in my heart

that the gods will make good all his boasting,  
seal our fate, to perish here in Troy,  
far away from Argos, where horses breed.  
So rouse yourself, late though it may be,  
if you've a mind to save Achaeans  
from their suffering at this Trojan onslaught.  
If not, you'll suffer future agonies.  
You won't find any cure for such despair.  
Before that happens, you should think about  
[310] how to help Argives at this evil hour.  
My friend, that day your father, Peleus,  
sent you off, away from Phthia,  
to join Agamemnon, didn't he say this,

'My son, Athena and Hera will give you  
power, if they so wish, but you must check  
that overbearing spirit in your chest.  
It's better to show good will, to give up  
malicious quarrelling. Then Achaeans,  
young and old, will respect you all the more'?

[320] That's what your old father said, advice  
which you've forgotten. So even now  
you should stop, cease this heart-corroding rage.  
For if you will mitigate your anger,  
Agamemnon will give you worthy gifts.  
If you will hear the list, then I'll repeat  
what Agamemnon has promised to you.  
All gifts are in his huts—seven tripods  
which fire has not yet touched, ten gold talents,  
twenty shining cauldrons, twelve strong horses  
[330] whose speed has triumphed, earned them prizes—  
a man who's won as much as Agamemnon  
from racing these sure-footed animals  
would not be poor or lack possessions  
or precious gold. Then he will add to this  
seven women of Lesbos, skilled in crafts,

whom he chose for himself when you captured  
 well-built Lesbos. They surpass all women  
 for their beauty. These he will present to you,  
 with them the one he seized from you, Briseis,  
 [340] daughter of Briseus. He'll solemnly swear  
 he never once went up into her bed  
 or had sex with her, as is men's custom,  
 where men and women are concerned.  
 All these things you will receive immediately.  
 If gods grant that we destroy Priam's great city,  
 when we Achaeans allocate the spoils,  
 you may come and load your ship with gold,  
 with bronze, as much as you desire. You may choose  
 twenty Trojan women for yourself,  
 [350] the loveliest after Argive Helen.  
 If we get back to the rich land of Argos,  
 you can then become his son-in-law.  
 He'll honour you just as he does Orestes,  
 his son, whom he dearly loves. He's being raised  
 in great prosperity. In his well-built home  
 he has three daughters—Chrysothemis,  
 Iphianessa, and Laodice.  
 You can take whichever one you choose  
 back home as your wife to Peleus' house  
 [360] and pay no bridal gift. He'll give much more  
 to bring about your reconciliation,  
 a dowry bigger than any man so far  
 has ever handed over with his daughter.  
 He'll give you seven populous cities,  
 Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,  
 holy Pherae, fertile Antheia,  
 lovely Aepea, and vine-rich Pedasus,  
 all near the sea, beside sandy Pylos.  
 People living in these places possess  
 [370] many sheep and cattle and will honour you  
 and give you gifts, as if you were a god.  
 Under your laws and sceptre they'll do well.



He will give all this, if you will abate  
your anger. But if your heart still resents  
Atreus' son and his gifts, then take pity  
on all Achaeans, our exhausted soldiers.  
They will pay you honours like a god.  
Among them you'll earn enormous glory,  
for now you might kill Hector, who may well  
[380] approach you—he's so obsessed with slaughter,  
he thinks there's not a warrior his equal  
among Danaans brought here in our ships."

Swift-footed Achilles then answered Odysseus:

"Divinely born son of Laertes,  
resourceful Odysseus. I must be blunt  
about what I think, where all this will lead,  
so you do not sit there and, one by one,  
try to entice me with sweet promises.  
I hate like the gates of Hell any man  
[390] who says one thing while thinking something else  
which stays hidden in his mind. So I'll declare  
what, in my view, it's best for me to say—  
I don't believe that Agamemnon,  
Atreus' son, or any other Argive  
will persuade me, for no thanks are given  
to the man who always fights without rest  
against the enemy. Whether one fights  
or stays behind, the shares are still the same  
Coward and brave man both get equal honour.  
[400] Death treats idle and active men alike.  
I've won nothing for all I've suffered,  
battling on, pain in my heart, with my life  
always under threat. Just as a bird  
takes scraps of food, whatever she can find,  
to her fledglings, but herself eats little,  
so have I lain without sleep many nights,  
persevered through bloody days of fighting,

in battling men in wars about their wives.

With ships, I've seized twelve towns and killed their men.

[410] On land, in the area of fertile Troy,  
I claim eleven more. From all these  
I took fine treasure, lots of it, brought it  
to Agamemnon, Atreus' son—I gave it  
all to him. He stayed back, at the swift ships.  
He shared very little of what he got,  
keeping most of it for his own use.  
He gave prizes to the best of men, the kings,  
and they hung on to them. From me alone  
he stole away a prize, a woman I love.

[420] Let him have his pleasure in bed with her.  
Why must Argives fight against the Trojans?  
Why did Atreus' son collect an army  
and lead it here if not for fair-haired Helen?  
Are Atreus' sons the only mortal men  
who love their wives? Every good and prudent man  
loves his wife and cares for her, as my heart  
loved that girl, though captured with my spear.  
Since he's taken my prize out of my hands  
and cheated me, let him not try to take

[430] another thing from me. I know him too well.  
He'll never persuade me to agree.  
But, Odysseus, let him rely on you  
and other kings as well to save his ships  
from fiery destruction. He has done much  
without me already. He's built a wall,  
constructed a large wide ditch around it,  
and fixed stakes inside. But for all these things,  
he's not been able to check the power  
of man-killing Hector. When I fought  
[440] beside Achaeans, Hector wasn't eager  
to push the battle far from his own walls.  
He came out only to the Scaean Gates  
and to the oak tree. Once he met me there  
alone. He barely got away from my attack.

But now I don't want to fight lord Hector.  
 Tomorrow I'll make holy sacrifice  
 to Zeus, to all the gods, and load my ships,  
 once I've dragged them down into the sea.  
 You'll see, if you wish, if you're interested,  
 [450] tomorrow my ships will be sailing off,  
 on the fish-filled Hellespont, men rowing  
 with great eagerness. And if Poseidon,  
 famous Earthshaker, gives us fair sailing,  
 in three days I'll reach fertile Phthia.  
 There I own many things I left behind  
 when I made this disastrous trip to Troy.  
 I'll take back from here more gold, red bronze,  
 fair women, and grey iron—all I captured.  
 But mighty Agamemnon, Atreus' son,  
 [460] in his arrogance, seized back from me  
 the prize which he awarded. Tell him that.  
 Repeat in public everything I say,  
 so other Achaeans will grow angry,  
 if he, still clothed in shamelessness, hopes  
 at any time to deceive some Argive.  
 Cur that he is, he doesn't dare confront me  
 face to face. I'll discuss no plans with him,  
 no actions. He cheated me, betrayed me.  
 His words will cheat no more. To hell with him!  
 [470] Let him march to his death by his own road,  
 for Counsellor Zeus has stolen his wits.  
 I hate his gifts. And he's not worth a damn.  
 Not even if he gave me ten times, no,  
 twenty times more than all he owns right now,  
 or will possess in future, not even  
 all the wealth amassed in Orchomenus,  
 or Egyptian Thebes, where huge treasures sit  
 piled up in houses—that city of gates,  
 one hundred of them, through each can ride  
 [480] two hundred men, horses and chariots  
 all together—not even if he gave me

gifts as numerous as grains of sand  
 beside the sea or particles of dust,  
 not for all that would Agamemnon win  
 my heart, not until he satisfies me  
 in full for all my heartfelt bitter pain.  
 I'll never take as wife any daughter  
 of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
 not even if her beauty rivals that  
 [490] of golden Aphrodite, or her skill  
 in crafts equals bright-eyed Athena's.  
 I will not marry her. Let him select  
 another Achaean, someone like himself,  
 a more prestigious king than me. For me,  
 if the gods keep me safe and I get home,  
 Peleus himself will find me a wife.  
 There are plenty of Achaean women  
 in Hellas and in Phthia—daughters of lords,  
 men who govern cities. From them I'll choose  
 [500] the one I want to make my cherished wife.  
 My heart has often felt a strong desire  
 to take a woman there as my own wife,  
 someone suitable for marriage, to enjoy  
 the riches which old Peleus has acquired.  
 Life is worth more to me than all the wealth  
 they say was stored in well-built Ilion  
 some time ago, when they were still at peace,  
 before the sons of Achaea came here,  
 more than all the treasures of the archer,  
 [510] Phoebus Apollo, stacked on the stone floor  
 in rocky Pytho. Men can steal cattle,  
 fat sheep, get tripods, herds of sorrel horses.  
 But no man gets his life back, not by theft  
 or plunder, once it has flown out from him,  
 passed beyond the barrier of his teeth.  
 My goddess mother, silver-footed Thetis,  
 has said two fates may bring about my death.  
 If I remain here, continuing the fight

against the Trojans' city, that means  
[520] I won't be going home, but my glory  
will never die. But if I go back home,  
my fame will die, although my life will last  
a long time—death will not end it quickly.  
And so I encourage all the rest of you  
to sail back home. You'll not attain your goal,  
steep Ilion, because far-seeing Zeus  
shields that city with his hand. Its people  
have confidence in that. Thus, you should go.  
Report this message to Achaean leaders—  
[530] that's the privilege of senior men—  
their minds must come up with some better plan  
to save the Achaean fleet and army  
beside the hollow ships. The one they've got  
won't work, since anger still keeps me away.  
Let Phoenix stay here with me, sleep here,  
so tomorrow he may join our voyage  
to his dear native land, if that's his wish.  
For I will not take him back by force."

Achilles spoke. Astounded by his speech, they all sat there,  
[540] in silence, stunned by the sheer force of his refusal.  
After a pause, old horseman Phoenix spoke:

"Glorious Achilles, if your mind  
is really set on going back, if you  
are totally unwilling to protect  
our swift ships from destructive fire,  
because that anger has consumed your heart,  
how can I remain here, dear lad, alone,  
away from you? Old horseman Peleus  
sent me with you, on that day he shipped you  
[550] from Phthia to join Agamemnon.  
You were young, knowing nothing about war,  
which levels men, or about public debates,  
where men acquire distinction. So Peleus

sent me to teach you all these things,  
 so you could speak and carry out great actions.  
 Given all this, dear lad, how can I wish  
 to be alone and separated from you?  
 No, not even if god himself promised  
 to cast off my old age, to make me young,  
 [560] the man I was when I first left Hellas,  
 land of beautiful women, running off  
 from my angry father, Amyntor,  
 Ormenus' son. He was incensed with me  
 about his fair-haired mistress. He loved her,  
 thus dishonouring his wife, my mother,  
 who begged me constantly—on her knees—  
 to have sex with that mistress, so she'd hate  
 my father. I obeyed, did what she asked.  
 My father soon found out what I had done—  
 [570] he cursed me many times repeatedly,  
 praying to dread Furies that no dear son  
 born from me would ever sit upon his knees.  
 The gods made sure his curses took effect,  
 underworld Zeus and dread Persephone.  
 I planned to murder him with my sharp bronze.  
 Some god checked my anger, putting in my heart  
 what men would say, their great contempt—  
 how among all Achaeans I'd be called  
 the man who'd slaughtered his own father.  
 [580] My heart no longer felt the slightest wish  
 to stay in my father's house with him so angry.  
 My friends and relatives who lived around me  
 begged me repeatedly to stay right there.  
 And then they butchered many well-fed sheep,  
 shuffling cattle with crumpled horns, and laid out  
 many hogs, swimming in fat, to be singed  
 in Hephaestus' flames. They drank many jugs  
 of the old man's wine. For nine nights,  
 they kept watch over me throughout the night,  
 [590] taking turns as guards. Fires always burned,

one underneath the enclosed portico,  
another in the hallway right outside  
my bedroom doors. Ten nights later, as night fell,  
I broke through the tight-closed bedroom doors,  
went out, and jumped with ease across the wall  
around the outer court, without being seen  
by men and women checking up on me.  
I ran away through all of spacious Hellas,  
then came a suppliant to fertile Phthia,  
[600] where flocks are bred, to king Peleus.  
He received me hospitably, loved me,  
as a father dearly loves his only son,  
heir to all his goods. He made me wealthy,  
assigning me to govern many people.  
I lived in the borderlands of Phthia,  
reigning as king over the Dolopes.  
And I was the one, godlike Achilles,  
who raised you up to be the man you are.  
You would refuse to attend a banquet  
[610] with anyone or eat in your own home,  
unless I set you on my knees, fed you,  
cut the meat, and held the wine cup for you.  
Often you soaked the tunic on my chest,  
slobbering your wine, a helpless baby.  
I've gone through a lot for you, worked hard,  
bearing in mind that gods had taken care  
I'd never have some children of my own.  
Godlike Achilles, I made you my son,  
so that if I ever met disaster,  
[620] you'd protect me. So, Achilles, subdue  
your giant passion. It's not right for you  
to have an unyielding heart. Gods themselves  
are flexible, and they have more honour  
than we possess, more power, too. Men pray  
when they go wrong or make mistakes,  
propitiating gods with offerings,  
gentle prayers, libations, and sacrifice.

Prayers are the daughters of almighty Zeus.  
Lame, wrinkled, cross-eyed, they try to follow  
[630] behind Folly, who, because she's strong and quick,  
runs far in front of them, appearing  
all over the world, bringing harm to men.  
Far behind, Prayers carry on their healing.  
If a man honours these daughters of Zeus  
as they come near, they will help him greatly,  
paying attention to him as he prays.  
If someone spurns them, rudely rejecting them,  
they go to Zeus, son of Cronos, begging  
for Folly to pursue that man, who then  
[640] harms himself and suffers punishment.  
For that reason, Achilles, you should give  
Zeus' daughters your respect. They have changed  
the minds of other men, even great ones.  
If Agamemnon were not bringing gifts—  
and naming more to come—but persisting,  
inflexibly angry, I wouldn't tell you  
to cast aside your rage and help the Argives,  
no matter how painful their distress.  
But he's giving plenty now, more later.  
[650] He has sent out his greatest warriors,  
selected from the whole Achaean army,  
your finest friends among the Argives.  
Don't show contempt for what they have to say  
or insult their coming here. Up to now,  
your resentment has been justified.  
But we learn this from previous actions  
of heroic men—when furious anger  
came over some of them, they were swayed  
by gifts and by persuasive speeches.  
[660] I recall an old tale from long ago.  
Since you are all my friends, I'll tell it.  
The Curetes and staunch Aetolians  
were fighting and killing one another,  
around Calydon, with the Aetolians



- defending Calydon and the Curetes  
eager to destroy the place in war.  
Golden-throned Artemis had driven them to fight,  
in her rage that Oeneus hadn't given her  
a harvest-offering, first fruits of his orchard.
- [670] Other gods had received their sacrifices,  
but he'd failed to offer anything to her,  
a daughter of great Zeus. He forgot, or else  
grew careless, a lapse within his foolish heart.  
The archer goddess, in her rage, incited  
a savage white-tusked wild boar against him.  
This beast from the gods reached Oeneus' orchard  
and was causing serious damage there,  
knocking tall plants to the ground, entire trees,  
including roots and flowering apples.
- [680] Meleager, Oeneus' son, killed the beast.  
First he gathered huntsmen and hunting dogs  
from many cities, for a small group  
could not subdue such an enormous boar.  
It had killed many men and sent them off  
to their funeral pyres in agony.  
Artemis began a war about this beast,  
that battle between the Curetes  
and the Aetolians, courageous men  
fighting for the boar's head and bristly hide.
- [690] So long as war-loving Meleager  
was in the fight, the Curetes did not do well.  
For all their numbers, they could not hold  
their ground outside the city walls.  
But then anger swept through Meleager,  
just as it forcibly swells up in chests  
of other men, including wise ones, too.  
His heart was angry with his dear mother,  
Althea. So he stayed home with his wife,  
Cleopatra, the attractive daughter
- [700] of the lady with the lovely ankles,  
Maripessa, daughter of Euenus

and Ides, strongest of all men then alive.  
He was the one who took his bow to make  
a stand against a god, Phoebus Apollo,  
fighting for the girl with lovely ankles.  
Cleopatra's father and noble mother  
at home called her by the name Alcyone.  
Her mother shared the same fate as that bird,  
the mournful halcyon, for she cried  
[710] when Apollo, the far shooter, seized her.  
Beside this Cleopatra Meleager lay,  
brooding on the rage that pained his heart,  
infuriated by his mother's curses.  
In her grief over her brothers' killing,  
she prayed to the gods, beating fertile earth  
with her hands over and over, kneeling down,  
her breasts wet from crying, begging Hades  
and fearful Persephone to kill her son.\*  
The night-walking Furies, with their stone hearts,  
[720] listened to her prayers from Erebus.  
Then around the gates of Calydon  
the battle din grew loud, war's turmoil.  
The gates were being demolished. The old men  
of the Aetolians begged Meleager  
to come to their assistance. They sent  
their gods' most important holy priests.  
They promised him great gifts, telling him  
he could take for himself, from anywhere  
on the richest plain of lovely Calydon  
[730] fifty acres of the finest farm land,  
half for a vineyard and half for farming,  
open fields for ploughing. Oeneus,  
the old horseman, kept imploring him,  
standing at the threshold of his high room,  
beating on the firmly bolted doors,  
begging his son. His sisters and his mother  
often entreated him. But he refused.  
His companions, those most faithful to him,

his closest friends of all, added their prayers.  
[740] But they could not overcome those passions  
in his chest, not until his own room  
was under fierce attack, once the Curetes  
had scaled the tower and begun to burn  
that great city. Then his lovely wife,  
in her grief, implored Meleager,  
telling him the evils which can overtake  
men whose town is violently seized—  
how men are butchered and the city burned,  
with women and children seized by strangers.  
[750] Once he'd heard of these disasters, his heart stirred.  
He went outside, put his shining armour  
around his body—and thus averted  
a disastrous day for the Aetolians,  
by following his heart. But the Aetolians  
did not give him the many splendid gifts,  
although he'd saved them from catastrophe.  
My friend, don't think like Meleager.  
Don't let some god make you choose that way.  
Once the ships catch fire, it will be harder  
[760] to defend them. So accept the gifts.  
Achaeans are honouring you like a god.  
If you return to man-killing battle  
without the gifts, you'll never get such honour,  
even though you may push the conflict back."

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

"Phoenix, dear old father, noble lord,  
I don't need such honours, for I possess  
honour in the will of Zeus. That will keep  
me here beside my own hollow ships,  
[770] so long as there is breath within my body,  
strength in my limbs. But I'll say this to you—  
bear it in mind—do not confuse my heart  
with these laments, these speeches of distress,

all serving that heroic son of Atreus.  
You should not love him, in case I hate you,  
who are now my friend. You would be noble  
to join with me, and so injure the man  
who injures me. Be equal king with me.  
Take half my honours. These men report back.  
[780] You stay here. Sleep in your soft bed. At dawn,  
we shall consider whether to go back  
to our own land, or whether to remain.”

Achilles spoke. His eyebrows gave a silent signal  
to Patroclus to set a firm bed out for Phoenix,  
so the others would quickly think of leaving.  
But Ajax, godlike son of Telamon, spoke up:

“Noble son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus,  
let’s be off. I don’t think we’ll bring this talk  
to a successful end, not on this trip.  
[790] We must report this news, though it’s not good,  
to the Danaans waiting to receive it.  
For Achilles has turned his great spirit  
into something savage in his chest.  
He’s cruel and doesn’t care for friendship  
of his comrades, how we honoured him  
above all others there beside the ships.  
He has no pity. Any man accepts  
reparations for a murdered son or brother.  
The man who killed them pays a large amount  
[800] to stay there in his own community.  
The other man’s angry heart and spirit  
are checked, once he takes the compensation.  
But with you, gods have put inside your chest  
unchanging evil passions, and all this  
over a single girl. Now we are offering  
seven of the best we have and much more.  
You should turn your passion into kindness,  
the hospitality of your own house.

For we are guests here under your own roof,  
[810] chosen from the Argive host. We believe  
that we, of all Achaeans, are the ones  
most dear to you, your closest friends,  
far more so than all the others.”

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

“Ajax, noble son of Telamon, your people’s leader,  
everything you say matches what I feel.  
But my heart chokes with rage when I recall  
how that son of Atreus behaved towards me  
with contempt, as if he were dishonouring  
[820] some vagrant. But you’d better go, take back  
this message—I shall not concern myself  
with bloody war until lord Hector,  
murderous son of Priam, comes against  
the huts and sea ships of the Myrmidons,  
killing Achaean soldiers as he goes,  
until he starts to burn our ships with fire.  
I think that Hector will be held in check  
around my hut, around my own black ship,  
for all his eagerness to battle on.”

[830] So Achilles spoke. The men each took a goblet  
with two handles, gave offerings, and went back to the ships,  
with Odysseus in the lead. Patroclus ordered  
his companions and the women slaves to set up  
a sturdy bed without delay for Phoenix.  
They obeyed his orders and prepared a bed,  
with sheepskin fleece and rug and fine linen sheets.  
The old man lay down, to stay till morning.  
Achilles slept in a corner of the well-built hut.  
Beside him lay a woman he’d seized from Lesbos,  
[840] fair Diomedes, one of Phorbas’ daughters.  
Patroclus slept opposite Achilles. Beside him  
lay lovely Iphigenia, whom Achilles gave him

after capturing steep Scyros, Enyeus' city.

The others reached the huts of Atreus' son.

Achaea's sons stood up and welcomed them with toasts  
in golden cups, one after another, asking questions.

The first to speak was Agamemnon, king of men:

“So come, tell me, famous Odysseus,  
great glory of Achaeans, does he wish  
[850] to protect our ships from all-destroying fire,  
or does he refuse, his mighty spirit  
still gripped with anger.”

Lord Odysseus,  
who had endured much, replied:

“King of men,  
mighty Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
that man's unwilling to let go his rage.  
He's full of anger, more so now than ever.  
He despises you, your gifts, and tells you  
to sort out for yourself with the Argives  
how you may save Achaean ships and men.  
[860] As for him, he made this threat—at first light  
of dawn, he'll drag his trim balanced ships  
down to the sea. He said he would encourage  
others to sail home, for you'll not attain  
your goal of lofty Ilion, since Zeus,  
whose gaze ranges far and wide, holds his hand  
over Troy, whose people now have confidence.  
That's what he said. The others who went with me  
will confirm this for you—Ajax and two heralds,  
both prudent men. Old Phoenix stayed there,  
[870] to go to sleep, as Achilles told him,  
so that he may go away with him  
in his ships back to their dear native land,  
if he wants, for he won't take him by force.”

Odysseus spoke. They all were silent and disheartened,  
especially by the force with which Achilles had refused.  
Achaëa's sons sat a long time speechless, troubled.  
At last, Diomedes, skilled in war cries, spoke:

“Mighty Agamemnon, king of men,  
you should not have begged noble Peleus' son,  
[880] offering countless gifts. At the best of times,  
he's a proud man. Now you've encouraged him  
to be prouder still. Let's leave him alone,  
whether he goes or stays. For he'll fight  
when the spirit in his chest moves him,  
or when god drives him to it. But come on,  
let's all follow what I now propose.  
We've had our fill of food and wine. So now,  
you should get some sleep, for strength and stamina.  
When fair rosy-fingered Dawn appears,  
[890] you should range your army—men and horses—  
before the ships, then rouse their spirits,  
with you fighting at the front in person.”

All the kings applauded horse-taming Diomedes.  
They poured libations. Then each man went to his hut,  
where he lay down and stretched out to take the gift of sleep.

## Book Ten A Night Raid

*[Agamemnon's worries about the state of his army; he and Menelaus set off to summon the chief leaders; at the meeting Nestor suggests someone spy out the Trojan position; Diomedes volunteers but asks for a second man; Diomedes selects Odysseus to go with him; Hector calls for a volunteer to spy out the Achaean ships, promises Achilles' horses and chariot; Dolon volunteers and set off; Odysseus and Diomedes catch and interrogate Dolon; Diomedes kills Dolon; Odysseus and Diomedes attack the Thracian camp, kill many men, and take the horses of king Rhesus; Odysseus and Diomedes return in triumph to the ships]*

By their ships, Achaea's most important leaders  
slept through the night, overpowered by soft sleep,  
all except Agamemnon, son of Atreus. Sweet slumber  
did not embrace this shepherd of his people,  
for his mind was disturbed with many worries.  
Just as when Zeus, husband of fair-haired Hera,  
flashes lightning to announce a massive rain storm,  
an immense downpour of hail or snow, when fields  
are sprinkled white, or to foretell some bitter warfare,  
[10] the gaping jaws of battle—in just that way then  
the groans reverberated in Agamemnon's chest,  
deep in his heart, making his whole body tremble.  
Every time he looked out on the Trojan plain  
he was overcome at the sight of countless fires  
burning in front of Ilion, at the sound of flutes,  
pipes, the loud noise all those soldiers made. Looking back  
at the Achaean army and the ships, he tugged  
many tufts of hair out of his scalp, roots and all,  
praying to high Zeus above, his brave heart groaning.  
[20] To him the best plan seemed to be to go to Nestor,  
son of Neleus, before seeing anybody else,  
to check if he could come up with some good advice,  
some plan to save all the Danaans. So he got up,  
slipped a tunic on over his chest, laced up  
fine sandals over his sleek feet, and then put on  
a tawny lion's skin, large and fiery red,



extending to his feet. Then he got his spear.

Menelaus, too, was troubled with anxieties.

No sleep sat on his eyelids either. He was afraid

[30] Argives would be hurt, those who on his account  
had crossed wide seas to Troy, planning to make war.  
He covered his broad back with a spotted leopard skin,  
picked up his bronze helmet, set it on his head,  
then picked a spear up in his powerful fist.  
Next he went to rouse his brother, commander  
of the Argives, who worshiped him just like a god.  
Menelaus found him putting his fine armour on  
by his ship's stern. Agamemnon welcomed him,  
as he approached. Menelaus, skilled in war cries,  
spoke first:

[40] "Brother, you're arming yourself. Why?  
Are you going to encourage some companion  
to scout the Trojans out? I really doubt  
that anyone will do that for you,  
set off to spy against a hostile force  
under the cover of immortal night.  
Such work would require a courageous heart."

Mighty Agamemnon answered Menelaus:

"You and I, lord Menelaus, need advice,  
some shrewd plan to protect or save the Argives,  
[50] together with their ships. Zeus' mind has changed.  
His heart prefers Hector's sacrifices  
more than ours. For I've never witnessed yet,  
nor heard anyone report, how one man  
made so much havoc in a single day,  
as Hector, Zeus' friend, has brought upon us,  
Achaean's sons, all by himself. He's not a god,  
nor even a god's son. But he's damaged  
Argives in a major way, with actions

they'll remember for many years to come.  
[60] That's how badly Hector's harmed Achaeans.  
But, come, why don't you run quickly by the ships  
to summon Ajax and Idomeneus.  
I'll go for godlike Nestor, to rouse him,  
see if he wants to check our watchmen  
and tell that strong contingent what to do.  
They'll attend to him ahead of anyone,  
because his son is captain of the sentries,  
along with Meriones, an officer  
of Idomeneus. We entrusted them,  
[70] above all others, with this special work."

Menelaus, expert at war cries, then replied:

"How do you want me to carry out  
your orders? Shall I stay there with them,  
wait for you to come, or hurry back to you,  
once I've told them your instructions?"

Agamemnon, king of men, answered Menelaus:

"Stay there, in case we somehow miss each other  
as we go, for there are many pathway  
through the camp. But make sure you call out  
[80] each place you pass, telling troops to stay awake.  
Call each soldier by his father's name,  
complimenting all of them. Don't make a show  
of your own proud heart. We must work hard, too—  
that's what Zeus charged us with when we were born,  
a heavy burden of responsibility."

Agamemnon spoke, sending his brother off  
with detailed orders. Then he set out to find Nestor,  
shepherd of his people. He came across him  
beside his hut and his black ship, on a soft bed.  
[90] His fine armour lay there with him—shield, two spears,

his glittering helmet, and that shining belt  
which the old man strapped around him every time  
he armed himself to lead his troops in battles  
which destroy men's lives. Nestor made no concessions  
to the infirmities of age. Sitting up there,  
head resting on his arm, he spoke to Agamemnon,  
questioning him:

“Why are you alone like this,  
wandering among the ships throughout the camp  
in the pitch dark night, while others sleep?  
[100] What are you looking for? A mule? Some comrade?  
Tell me. Don't approach in silence. What do you need?”

Agamemnon, king of men, replied:

“O Nestor,  
son of Neleus, great glory of Achaeans.  
You should recognize me—Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus, the one whom Zeus  
always loads with miserable fortune,  
more so than other men, so long as breath  
stays in my chest and movement in my limbs.  
I'm wandering like this because sweet sleep  
[110] won't sit upon my eyelids. Instead, this war,  
this danger to Achaeans, has me worried.  
I'm dreadfully afraid for the Danaans.  
My spirit isn't resolute. It wavers.  
My heart's about to burst outside my chest.  
My fine limbs tremble. If you want some action,  
since sleep hasn't come to you here either,  
go with me. We'll walk down to the sentries  
and check if they're exhausted and asleep,  
worn out, forgetting to maintain a watch.  
[120] Hostile troops are camped close by. We don't know  
if somehow they may be keen to fight at night.”

Geranian horseman Nestor then said in reply:

“Glorious son of Atreus, king of men,  
Agamemnon—Counsellor Zeus won’t fulfil  
all the things that Hector has in mind,  
all his present hopes. In my opinion,  
Hector will be struggling with more troubles  
than you face, if Achilles changes his fond heart  
from its hard anger. Yes, I’ll come with you.

[130] And let’s get other leaders stirring also—  
Tydeus’ son, famous for his spear,  
Odysseus, swift Ajax, and Phyleus’ brave son.  
Someone should go summon two more men,  
godlike Ajax and lord Idomeneus.  
Their ships aren’t near here—they’re a long way off.  
But I have some harsh words for Menelaus,  
although he’s a friend and I respect him.  
I won’t hide that, even if I anger you.  
For he’s still sleeping, leaving you alone  
[140] to do the work. Right now he should be active,  
working on all the finest men, begging them  
to help us. The need confronting us is urgent.”

Agamemnon, king of men, replied to Nestor:

“Old man, at other times I’d urge you on  
to criticize him, for often he holds back,  
reluctant to carry out the heavy tasks,  
not because he’s lazy or soft in the head,  
but because he’s looking for my signal,  
waiting for me to make a move. But this time,  
[150] he was up and roaming well ahead of me.  
He came to see me. I sent him off  
to summon those very men you mention.  
Let’s go. We’ll find them right before the gates,  
where I ordered them to meet the sentries.”

Geranian horseman Nestor then replied:

“If that’s the case, none of the Argives  
will say bad things of him or disobey,  
when he stirs them on or issues orders.”

With these words, Nestor put a tunic on his chest,  
[160] laced lovely sandals over his sleek feet. Around him  
he buckled on a purple cloak in a double fold,  
one thickly lined with wool. Selecting a strong spear  
with a sharp bronze point, he set off on his way  
down to the bronze-clad Achaeans’ ships. The first person  
Geranian horseman Nestor roused from sleep  
was Odysseus, equal to the gods for wise advice.  
Nestor called out to him. His voice entered  
Odysseus’ mind at once. He came out of his hut,  
then questioned Nestor:

“What are you doing here,  
[170] going around alone like this among the ships,  
in the immortal night? Is there something urgent?”

Geranian horseman Nestor answered Odysseus:

“Divinely bred son of Laertes,  
resourceful Odysseus, don’t be angry.  
Achaeans are experiencing much suffering.  
But come now, so we may rouse another man  
someone who should be there when we discuss  
our plans, whether we should flee or battle on.”

Nestor finished speaking. Resourceful Odysseus  
[180] went into his hut, then slung across his shoulder  
his finely decorated shield and set off with them,  
to find noble Diomedes, son of Tydeus.  
They came across him with his weapons outside his hut.  
His comrades were asleep around him, their shields

under their heads, spears driven upright in the ground  
by the butt spike. Their bronze spear points glittered  
like Father Zeus' lightning. Diomedes slept  
with the hide of a field ox spread out under him  
and a bright rug underneath his head. Approaching him,  
[190] Geranian horseman Nestor shoved him with his foot,  
waking him up. Nestor then said teasingly:

“Wake up, son of Tydeus. Why sleep  
all night long? Aren't you aware that Trojans  
are encamped here on the edges of the plain,  
near the ships, only a short distance off?”

Nestor spoke. Diomedes woke up quickly,  
then answered him—his words had wings:

“Old man,  
you're a hard one. You never stop working.  
What about Achaea's other sons,  
[200] the younger ones? Can't each of them go round  
waking up the kings? You old man,  
we can't do anything to check you.”

Geranian horseman Nestor answered Diomedes:

“My friend, everything you say is true enough  
I have excellent sons and many soldiers.  
Any of them could go round with orders.  
But Achaeans here are in their greatest need.  
For now things stand upon a razor's edge—  
miserable destruction for Achaeans  
[210] or their salvation. You're a younger man,  
so if you feel compassion for me,  
set off and wake up Meges and swift Ajax.”

Nestor spoke. Diomedes threw a lion's skin  
around his shoulders, a huge red pelt which reached his feet.

Then Diomedes grabbed a spear and went away.  
He woke those warriors and brought them back with him.  
When they joined up with the company of sentries,  
they did not find the captains of the watchmen sleeping.  
They were all sitting with their weapons, wide awake.

[220] Just as dogs maintain a tired watch over their sheep  
in some farm yard, when they hear a savage beast,  
who's just moved down from wooded hills, men and dogs  
raising a din around it, so those dogs get no rest,  
that's how sweet sleep had left those sentries' eyelids,  
as they kept guard that wretched night, always turning  
towards the plain, in case they heard the Trojans coming.  
Old man Nestor was pleased to see them. He called out,  
speaking winged words of encouragement.

“That's the way, dear friends, to keep good watch.

[230] Don't let sleep seize on any one of you,  
so we don't bring pleasure to our enemies.”

With these words, Nestor hurried through the ditch. Argive kings,  
those who'd been called to council, accompanied him.  
Meriones went, as did Thrasymedes, too,  
Nestor's noble son, who'd been asked to join the group.  
They went through the scooped-out ditch. Then in an open spot  
they sat down where there seemed to be no corpses,  
no bodies of the slain. It was where fearful Hector  
turned back from killing Argives, once night hid everything.

[240] Sitting down there, they talked to one another.  
Then Geranian horseman Nestor began to speak.

“My friends, is there some man confident enough  
of his own daring spirit to venture out  
among stout-hearted Trojans, to see  
if he can trap an enemy soldier,  
some straggler, or catch wind of some report  
of what the Trojans say among themselves,  
whether they are keen to stay beside the ships,

away from home, or to go back to the city,  
[250] now that they have beaten the Achaeans?  
A man who could find out these things,  
return to us unharmed, would be famous  
among all men living under heaven,  
and get rich gifts, as well. For our best men,  
those commanding every ship, will give him  
a black sheep with suckling lamb. Compared to that,  
there's no possession finer. At banquets  
and our drinking parties, he'll be always there."

Nestor spoke. The others were quiet, saying nothing.  
[260] Then Diomedes, expert in war cries, spoke up:

"Nestor, my heart and my proud spirit prompt me  
to infiltrate the hostile Trojans' camp,  
which stands close by. But another man  
should come with me. Things would go much better.  
We'd have more confidence. When two set out,  
one may see something good before the other.  
A man alone might notice it, but his mind  
is less perceptive, less resourceful, than two."

Diomedes spoke. Many men wished to volunteer.  
[270] The two Ajaxes, attendants of the war god Ares,  
were willing, Meriones, too. And Nestor's son  
was really eager. Famous spearman Menelaus,  
son of Atreus, was ready, and brave Odysseus  
was keen to steal into the Trojan army,  
for the spirit in his chest was always daring.  
Then, Agamemnon, king of men, spoke up:

"Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
you delight my heart. But you must choose  
the other man. Take the one you want,  
[280] the best of those in view. Many are keen.  
Don't reject the better man, following



a sense of duty in your mind, taking  
someone less worthy as your comrade,  
thinking only of his birth. Don't do that,  
even if the second is the greater king."

Agamemnon spoke, afraid for fair-haired Menelaus.  
Diomedes, skilled in war cries, spoke to them again:

"If you bid me choose a comrade for myself,  
how could I reject godlike Odysseus,  
[290] his heart and daring spirit always keen  
for every challenge? Pallas Athena loves him.  
With Odysseus at my side, we'd both return,  
even from blazing fire. For he knows,  
better than other men, how to use his mind."

Odysseus, that long-suffering, godlike man, replied:

"Son of Tydeus, don't over-praise me,  
or censure me. You're speaking to the Argives,  
who know everything about me. Let's go.  
Night is passing quickly. Dawn approaches.  
[300] The stars have shifted forward. Most of the night  
has passed, two thirds of it, with one third left."

This said, the two men pulled on fearful armour.  
Warlike Thrasymedes gave a two-edged sword  
to the son of Tydeus, for he'd left his own  
beside the ships, and a shield as well. On his head he put  
a helmet made of leather, without crest or plume,  
what people call a skull-cap. It protected heads  
of brave young men. Meriones gave Odysseus  
bow, quiver, and a sword. On his head Odysseus set  
[310] a hide cap, on the inside skilfully reinforced  
with leather thongs. Outside, wild boars' white teeth  
were placed here and there, strategically and well.  
In between these layers was a piece of felt.

This cap had once been stolen by Autolycus,  
from Amyntor, Ormenus' son. He'd broken in  
his well-built home in Eleon. Some time later,  
Autolycus gave it to Amphidamas of Cythera,  
to take back home to Scandeia. Amphidamas  
then gave the cap to Molus, as a present  
[320] for his hospitality. Molus later gave it  
to his son Meriones. And now it sat there,  
covering Odysseus' head.\*

The two men,  
having put their fearful armour on, set off,  
leaving behind there all the most important chiefs.  
On their right, close to the path, Pallas Athena  
sent them a heron. In the darkness of the night  
they didn't see it with their eyes, but they heard its cry.  
Odysseus was pleased with this omen of the bird.  
He prayed then to Athena:

"Child of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
[330] untiring goddess, hear me. You've always stood  
beside me in all sorts of troubles.  
I don't move without you watching me.  
But now especially be my friend, Athena.  
Grant that we two come back to the ships  
covered in glory, after doing something great,  
something the Trojans will regret."

Then noble Diomedes, skilled in war cries, prayed:

"Child of Zeus, invincible goddess, hear me.  
Stand by me as you did my father,  
[340] lord Tydeus, at Thebes, that time he went  
as messenger, sent there by Achaeans.  
He'd left bronze-clad Achaeans at the Asopus,  
taking peace proposals to Cadmeans.  
On his way back, he did some fearful things,

with keen support from you, divine goddess.  
Be willing now to stand by me like that,  
protect me, and I'll sacrifice to you  
an unbroken yearling ox with a broad head  
which no man yet has put beneath the yoke.  
[350] I'll make that sacrifice to you, and more—  
on that beast I'll plate both horns with gold."

So they prayed, and Pallas Athena heard them.  
Their prayers to the daughter of great Zeus complete,  
they continued on their way, like two lions,  
in the darkness of night, through the slaughter,  
through corpses, armour, through black pools of blood.

For his part,  
Hector did not let his proud Trojans go to sleep.  
He called their finest men together, all the ones  
who commanded Trojans troops, with all their rulers.  
[360] To those assembled, he laid out a shrewd idea:

"Is there someone who'll undertake for me  
an exploit, who'll do it for a worthy gift?  
I guarantee he'll get a fine reward.  
I'll give a chariot and two strong-necked horses,  
the finest ones there are by those fast ships  
of the Achaeans, to any man who dares,  
who's fit to seize the glory for himself,  
by approaching close to those swift ships,  
to find out whether they're being guarded,  
[370] as before, or whether those men, beaten  
at our hands, plan among themselves to flee,  
and no longer wish to keep alert at night,  
exhausted by their desperate efforts."

Hector finished. They all sat there in silence,  
saying nothing. Now, among the Trojans  
was a man called Dolon, son of Eumedes,

a sacred herald, a man rich in gold and bronze.

Dolon wasn't much to look at, but he ran fast.

He was the only male child, with five sisters.

[380] At that point he spoke up to Hector and the Trojans:

“Hector, my heart and my proud spirit prompt me

to volunteer to sneak up to those fast ships

and find out what I can. Come, raise your sceptre,

swear to me that you'll give me those horses

and that chariot decorated all in bronze

which carry the fine son of Peleus.

I'll not be a useless scout or disappoint you.

I'll go straight through the army, till I reach

Agamemnon's ship, where their best men

[390] must be in council talking of their plans,

whether to flee or to continue fighting.”

Dolon spoke. Holding up his sceptre, Hector swore

“Let Zeus himself, Hera's loud-thundering husband,

be my witness, that no other Trojan

will be carried by those horses. I affirm

that you will glory in them all your life.”

Hector spoke. He'd sworn an empty oath, but Dolon

was encouraged. At once, he slung across his shoulder

his curved bow, then threw a grey wolf skin on it.

[400] On his head he set a cap of marten skin,

grabbed a sharp spear, and set off, going from the camp

towards the ships. He would not be coming back,

bringing Hector information from the ships.

But when he left the crowd of men and horses,

he went eagerly along the path. As he moved,

noble Odysseus saw him and said to Diomedes:

“Diomedes, someone's coming from the camp.

I don't know if he's going to scout our ships

or strip some dead man's corpse. Let's let him  
[410] at first get past us on the plain, just a bit.  
Then we can go after him and catch him fast.  
If his feet outrun ours, we'll keep following him  
and chase him from his camp towards our ships.  
Keep brandishing your spear behind him,  
so he doesn't make it to the city."

After these words, the two men lay down beside the road,  
among the corpses. Dolon ran past them quickly,  
quite unaware. When he'd gone about as far  
as mules plough in a single day—and in deep fields  
[420] they outwork oxen pulling double-jointed ploughs—  
the two men ran after him. When he heard their noise,  
Dolon stopped, hoping in his heart they were comrades  
coming from the Trojans to get him to turn back,  
Hector having changed the orders. But when they came  
within the distance of a spear throw or even less,  
he saw that they were enemies and started running,  
to get away as quickly as his legs could carry him.  
They set off chasing him with speed. Just as when two dogs,  
skilled hunting hounds with sharp fangs, harass some doe  
[430] or hare relentlessly across a wooded country,  
the prey screaming as it runs, that's how Tydeus' son  
and Odysseus, destroyer of cities, pursued him,  
keeping Dolon from his people with their constant chase.  
When Dolon was about to run into the sentries  
in his flight towards the ships, at that point  
Athena put fighting power into Tydeus' son,  
so no bronze-clad Achaean could make the boast  
that he'd hit Dolon first and that Diomedes  
had come up later. Springing forward with his spear,  
powerful Diomedes yelled:

[440] "Stop!  
Or I'll hit you with my spear. I don't think  
you'll long escape complete destruction at my hands."

Diomedes shouted this, then threw the spear,  
deliberately missing Dolon. The polished spear point  
sailed over his right shoulder, then stuck in the ground.  
Dolon just stood there terrified, stammering, pale with fear—  
his teeth were chattering in his mouth. The two men ran up,  
panting, and grabbed his hands. Dolon began to cry and beg:

“Take me alive, and I’ll ransom myself.  
[450] At home there is bronze, gold, well-wrought iron.  
My father will give lots of it to you—  
an immense ransom—if he once finds out  
I’m at Achaean ships and still alive.”

Crafty Odysseus smiled at him and said:

“Don’t worry. Don’t let death weigh down your heart.  
Come now, tell me—and be sure to speak the truth.  
Why are you going like this to the ships alone,  
away from your army in the dead of night,  
when other warriors are fast asleep?  
[460] Are you going to strip some dead man’s body,  
or has Hector sent you out as a spy,  
to learn something about the hollow ships?  
Or did your own spirit prompt you to this?”

Dolon answered Odysseus, his limbs trembling.

“Hector led my mind astray with foolish hopes,  
lots of them. He promised he’d give me  
the sure-footed horses of Achilles,  
Peleus’ excellent son, and his chariot  
with its bronze decoration. He told me  
[470] to venture out into the swift dark night,  
get close to hostile troops, and then find out  
if they were guarding their swift ships as before,  
or whether, now we have defeated them,

they were planning flight among themselves,  
unwilling to keep up watch at night,  
exhausted by their desperate efforts.”

Shrewd Odysseus, still smiling, then continued:

“Your heart has been ambitious for big gifts.  
Those horses of warrior Achilles,  
[480] descendant of Aeacus, are hard to manage  
or control for any mortal person,  
except Achilles, son of an immortal mother.  
Tell me, now, and be sure to speak the truth.  
When you came here, where did you leave Hector,  
shepherd to his people? Where’s his armour?  
Where are his horses? How are the sentries  
of the other Trojans set? Where are they sleeping?  
Tell me what they talk of amongst themselves,  
whether they’re keen to stay beside the ships,  
[490] quite far from home, or whether they’ll return  
to the city, with Achaeans beaten.”

Dolon, son of Eumedes, answered Odysseus:

“I’ll answer you in this quite truthfully.  
Right now Hector is with his advisors,  
holding a council meeting by the tomb  
of godlike Ilus, some distance from the noise.  
As for the guards you asked about, noble sir,  
there’s nothing special to protect the troops,  
or keep lookout. By all Trojan watch fires,  
[500] as necessity requires, there are men  
who stay awake, calling to each other,  
to keep up their guard. But the allied force,  
which comes from many lands, is sleeping.  
They leave it to Trojans to stay on watch,  
for their wives and children aren’t close by.”

Crafty Odysseus, with a smile, then asked Dolon:

“Now, those allies—are they intermingled  
with horse-taming Trojans where they sleep  
or separate from them? Tell me. I need to know.”

[510] Dolon, son of Eumedes, answered Odysseus:

“I can reveal the truth of this as well.  
By the sea lie Carians, Paeonians,  
with their curved bows, Lelegians, Caucones,  
god-like Pelasgians. Around Thymbre  
are positioned Lycians, Mysians,  
impetuous fighters, and the Phrygians,  
who fight on horseback, and from Maeonia  
there are charioteers. But why ask me details  
of these matters? If you’re keen to infiltrate

[520] the Trojan army, over there are Thracians,  
fresh troops, new arrivals, furthest distant  
from the rest, among them their king Rhesus,  
son of Eioneus. His horses are the best,  
the finest and largest ones I’ve ever seen,  
whiter than snow, as fast as the winds.  
His chariot is finely built—with gold  
and silver. He came here with his armour—  
an amazing sight—huge and made of gold.  
It’s not appropriate for mortal men

[530] to wear such armour, only deathless gods.  
But take me now to your fast ships, or else  
tie me up, leave me here in painful fetters,  
so you can go and check my story out,  
see whether I have told the truth or not.”

Mighty Diomedes scowled at Dolon and said:

“Don’t fill your heart with thoughts you’ll get away,  
Dolon, even though your news is good.



You've fallen in our hands. Now, if we  
released you or set you free for ransom,  
[540] you'd come back to the swift Achaean ships,  
either to spy or fight us openly.  
But if my hands subdue you and you die,  
you'll pose no problems for the Argives later."

As Diomedes finished, Dolon was intending  
to cup his chin with his strong hand in supplication.  
But with his sword Diomedes jumped at him,  
slashed him across the middle of his neck, slicing  
through both tendons. Dolon's head rolled in the dust,  
as he was speaking. They stripped the cap of marten skin,  
[550] then took the wolf hide, long spear, and his curved bow.  
Lord Odysseus held these objects high above him  
for Athena, goddess of battle spoils, and prayed:

"Goddess, these are for you, to bring you joy.  
We invoke you first of all immortal gods  
living on Olympus. Send us on again  
to where Thracians sleep and to those horses."

So Odysseus prayed. He lifted the loot up high,  
placed it on a tamarisk bush, then set there  
a clear marker, grabbing up reeds and branches  
[560] of tamarisk in full bloom, so they wouldn't miss  
finding the spoils in the dark night, when they returned.  
The two proceeded on through weapons and black blood.  
They quickly reached the camp of Thracian soldiers.  
The men were sleeping, worn out by their hard work.  
Their lovely armour lay on the ground beside them,  
properly arranged in triple rows. Beside each man  
stood his yoked horses. In the middle Rhesus slept,  
close by him his swift horses, tethered with their straps  
to the chariot's top rail. Odysseus saw him first.  
He pointed him out to Diomedes.

[570] “There’s our man,  
Diomedes. And these are the horses  
which Dolon told us of, the man we killed.  
Come now, let’s see that mighty strength of yours.  
It’s not right for you to stand there idly  
with your weapons. So loose those horses.  
Or else kill the men, while I take care of them.”

Odysseus spoke. Athena with her glittering eyes  
breathed fighting power into Diomedes.  
Moving around everywhere, he began the killing.

[580] Agonizing groans came from those his sword then butchered.  
The earth grew soggy with their blood. Just as a lion  
comes across an unguarded flock of sheep or goats  
and leaps on them, heart thirsting for the kill,  
so Tydeus’ son went at those Thracian soldiers,  
until he’d slaughtered twelve. Whenever Diomedes  
stood over some man he’d just killed with his sword,  
crafty Odysseus, from behind, would grab his feet  
and drag the body clear. For his mind was planning  
how he might steal the fine-maned horses easily,

[590] if he didn’t frighten them by forcing them to step  
on dead men’s bodies, for they were not used to that.  
Tydeus’ son came across the king, the thirteenth man  
whose sweet life he had taken. Rhesus lay there,  
in his last gasp. A bad dream had stood beside his head  
that night, a device sent by Athena—and that dream  
was the son of Tydeus. Meanwhile, bold Odysseus  
untied the sure-footed horses, roped them together,  
and drove them from the camp, prodding with his bow,  
for he’d forgotten to pick up the shining whip

[600] from the ornate chariot. Then he gave a whistle,  
to signal noble Diomedes. But he just stayed there,  
wondering how he could do something really bold.  
Should he take away the chariot, which contained  
the king’s finely decorated armour, pull it  
by the pole, or lift it up above his head

and carry it like that? Or should he take the lives  
of still more Thracians? While Diomedes turned over  
these matters in his mind, Athena came, stood by him,  
then said to noble Diomedes:

“Think of going back,  
[610] to the hollow ships, son of great-hearted Tydeus,  
in case you get driven there in quick retreat,  
if some other god wakes up the Trojans.”

She spoke. He recognized the goddess by her voice.  
He quickly climbed up on one of the horses.  
Odysseus smacked them with his bow. They raced ahead,  
in a rush to reach the swift Achaean ships.

But Apollo of the silver bow had not been  
unvigilant, once he'd perceived Athena  
taking care of Tydeus' son. Angry with her,  
[620] he went down into that huge crowd of Trojans  
and woke up Hippocoön, a Thracian counsellor,  
one of noble Rhesus' family. Roused from sleep  
he saw that where the horses stood was empty,  
the fearful carnage with men gasping in their death throes.  
He screamed in grief, crying out for his companion,  
calling him by name. Trojans created a commotion,  
totally confused, as they rushed in all at once,  
to gaze astonished at the terrible destruction  
those two men did before returning to the hollow ships.

[630] When the pair came to where they'd slaughtered Hector's spy,  
Odysseus, dear to Zeus, pulled their swift horses up.  
The son of Tydeus jumped down onto the ground,  
handed over to Odysseus their bloodstained spoils,  
then got back on his horse. They whipped the horses on,  
racing willingly towards the hollow ships  
with eager hearts. Nestor was the first to hear them.  
He spoke up:

“Friends, Argive leaders and counsellors—  
my spirit prompts me to speak. But will I say  
something true or false? A sound beats in my ear,  
[640] fast-moving horses’ hooves. Perhaps, as we speak,  
Odysseus and mighty Diomedes are driving  
sure-footed horses back from Trojans. But I fear,  
in my anxious heart, that Achaea’s best  
are in trouble from pursuing Trojan forces.”

Before Nestor could finish, the two men arrived.  
They dismounted and were welcomed joyfully.  
Men shook their hands, with warm congratulations.  
Geranian horseman Nestor was the first with questions:

“Renowned Odysseus, great glory of Achaeans,  
[650] tell me how you two obtained these horses.  
Did you sneak into that crowd of Trojans?  
Or did you meet some god who gave them to you?  
They’re astonishing, like rays of the sun.  
I’m always going in among the Trojans,  
and I claim I don’t mangle by the ships,  
although I’m an old man for a warrior.  
But I’ve never seen, never imagined  
horses like these. I think some god met you  
and gave them to you. For cloud-gathering Zeus  
[660] loves both of you, as does bright-eyed Athena,  
daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus.”

Odysseus grinned at Nestor and answered him:

“O Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory  
of Achaeans, if a god wanted to,  
he’d easily give even better horses,  
for gods are much more powerful than us.  
But these horses which you ask about,  
old man, are from Thrace, new arrivals.

Brave Diomedes killed their master,  
[670] along with all twelve of his companions,  
their finest men. There was a thirteenth killed,  
a spy we captured near the ships, sent there  
by Hector and the other haughty Trojans,  
to scout around our camp.”\*

Odysseus finished. Then he laughed with triumph,  
driving the sure-footed horses past the ditch.  
Other Achaeans came after him, rejoicing.  
When they reached Diomedes’ well-constructed hut,  
they tethered the horses with cut straps in the stall  
[680] where Diomedes’ own swift horses stood, munching  
their sweet grain. Odysseus put the bloodstained loot  
from Dolon into his ship’s stern, until they’d made  
an offering to Athena. Then the two men waded  
into the sea, washed off their legs and necks and thighs,  
removing all the sweat. Once the surf had taken  
layers of sweat from off their skin and their hearts  
had been refreshed, they stepped in shining tubs and bathed.  
They washed, rubbing lots of smooth oil on themselves,  
then sat down to eat. From the brimming wine bowl  
they drew off sweet wine and poured libations to Athena.

## Book Eleven The Achaeans Face Disaster

*[The description of Agamemnon's armour as he prepares for battle; the battle resumes; Agamemnon's exploits on the battlefield; the Trojans are pushed back close to the city; Zeus sends Hector a message; Agamemnon is wounded, has to withdraw from the battle; Hector re-enters the battle, kills many Achaeans; Diomedes and Odysseus make a stand against the Trojans; Diomedes is wounded by Paris; Odysseus is left alone; Odysseus is wounded; Menelaus and Ajax come to help Odysseus; Machaon is wounded, taken from the battle by Nestor; Hector moves against Ajax; Ajax is forced to retreat; Eurypylus is wounded; Achilles sends Patroclus to find out news of the battle; Patroclus visits Nestor and Machaon; Nestor's long speech about his youthful fighting; Nestor questions Patroclus about Achilles; Patroclus meets Eurypylus, takes him to his hut, gives him medicines]*

As Dawn rose from her bed beside lord Tithonus  
 bringing light to immortal gods and men alike,  
 Zeus sent Strife down to the fast Achaean ship  
 the savage goddess, carrying the sign of war.  
 She stood by Odysseus' broad-beamed black ship  
 in the middle of the line, so she could be heard  
 in both directions, from the huts of Ajax,  
 son of Telamon, to those of Achilles,  
 whose well-balanced ships were drawn up at the ends,  
 [10] for these men trusted courage and their own strong hands.  
 Standing there, the goddess screamed out a piercing call,  
 a dreadful sound. In the heart of each Achaean,  
 she put strength for war, for unrelenting combat.  
 To men war then became sweeter than sailing back,  
 going home in their hollow ships to their dear native land.  
 The son of Atreus shouted to his Argives  
 to get their armour on. He pulled on his shining bronze.  
 First on his legs he set his shin guards—beautifully made,  
 fitted with silver ankle clasps. Then he put  
 [20] a breast plate round his chest, something he'd received  
 as a gift of hospitality from Cinyras,  
 who'd learned in Cyprus the great news that Achaeans  
 were intending to set sail in their ships for Troy.

So to please the king, Cinyras gave the breastplate  
to Agamemnon. On it were ten metal strips,  
each dark blue, twelve of gold, and twenty made of tin.  
On each side, three enameled snakes coiled to the neck,  
like rainbows which the son of Cronos sets in clouds,  
prophetic omens for mortal men. On his shoulder,  
[30] he slung his sword studded with shining gold.  
The scabbard was silver, fitted with golden straps.  
Then he picked up his richly decorated shield,  
which covered his whole body, a beautiful work,  
with ten bronze circles, twenty bosses of white tin,  
and in the centre a boss of blue enamel.  
On that shield, as crowning symbol, stood the Gorgon,  
a ferocious face with a horrifying stare.  
Terror and Panic were placed on either side.  
On the shield's silver strap writhed an enamel snake,  
[40] its three heads intertwined, all growing from one neck.  
On his head Agamemnon placed his helmet,  
with four bosses, a double ridge, and horsehair plume,  
which nodded menacingly on top. He took two strong spears,  
sharp ones with bronze points, whose glitter shone from him  
right up to heaven. Athena and Hera gave  
peals of thunder overhead, paying tribute to him,  
Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, rich in gold.  
Then each man told his charioteer to curb his horses  
and line up in good formation at the ditch's edge,  
[50] while they marched ahead on foot in all their armour,  
moving fast, shouting bravely in the early dawn.  
They arranged their ranks on the far side of the ditch,  
well beyond the chariots following at some distance.  
Then Cronos' son brought them confusing signs of trouble,  
sending down from high in heaven a rain of blood  
dripping from the sky, for his intention was  
to hurl the heads of many brave men down to Hades.  
On the opposite side, by the high ground on the plain,  
Trojans gathered round Hector, fine Polydamas,  
[60] Aeneas, whom Trojan people honoured like a god,

and three sons of Antenor—Polybus, Agenor,  
 godlike man, and youthful Acamas, who seemed  
 like one of the immortals. In the front ranks,  
 Hector carried his shield, an even perfect circle.  
 As some ominous star now suddenly appears,  
 shining through the clouds, and then disappears again  
 into the cloud cover, that's how Hector looked,  
 as he showed up in front, then in the rear,  
 issuing orders. All in shining bronze, he flashed  
 [70] like lightning from Father Zeus, who holds the aegis.  
 Then, just as reapers work in some rich man's fields,  
 arranged in rows facing each other, cutting the crop,  
 wheat or barley, scything handfuls thick and fast,  
 that's how Trojans and Achaeans went at each other,  
 slicing men down. No one thought of lethal flight.  
 The sides were matched in fury equally—they fought  
 like wolves ripping at each other. Looking on, Strife,  
 goddess who brings much sorrow, was delighted.  
 She was the only god present at this battle.  
 [80] The others were far off, sitting at their ease,  
 in their own homes on many-ridged Olympus,  
 where a fine house had been built for each of them.  
 All blamed the son of Cronos, lord of the dark cloud,  
 because he planned to give glory to the Trojans.  
 But Father Zeus was not concerned on their account.  
 Withdrawing some distance from them, he sat apart,  
 exultant, glorious. He looked out at Troy,  
 at the Achaean ships, at the flashing bronze,  
 at warriors killing, and at warriors being killed.  
 [90] Throughout the early morning, as that sacred day  
 grew stronger, weapons thrown by both sides  
 took their grim toll—men kept on falling.  
 But at the hour a woodcutter prepares his meal  
 in some mountain glade, when his arms are tired  
 cutting big trees, when weariness comes in his heart  
 and sweet appetite for food overtakes his mind,  
 that's when Danaans, calling to each other in the ranks,



courageously broke through. The first to kill a man  
 was Agamemnon. He slaughtered Bienor,  
 [100] shepherd of his people, and his companion, too,  
 Oileus, the charioteer, who'd jumped down  
 from the chariot to challenge Agamemnon.  
 He'd charged straight at him, but his forehead took a blow  
 from a sharp spear. The rimmed helmet made of heavy bronze  
 didn't stop the spear, which smashed through it, through the bone,  
 and splattered his brain inside the entire helmet.  
 That stopped his bloodthirsty charge. Agamemnon,  
 king of men, stripped off their tunics and left them there,  
 their white skin showing. Then he moved on to butcher  
 [110] Isus and Antiphus, two of Priam's sons—  
 one was a bastard, the other one legitimate—  
 both travelling in a single chariot. The bastard,  
 Isus, held the reins, and renowned Antiphus  
 stood beside him as the fighting man. These two men  
 Achilles had once tied up with willow shoots,  
 when he'd captured them while they were herding sheep  
 along Mount Ida's lower slopes. He'd let them go  
 for ransom. But this time, wide-ruling Agamemnon,  
 son of Atreus, with his spear struck Isus in the chest,  
 [120] above the nipple, and his sword sliced Antiphus  
 right by his ear, throwing him out of the chariot.  
 He quickly stripped off their fine armour. He knew them,  
 for he'd noticed them before by the fast ships,  
 when swift-footed Achilles led them in from Ida.  
 Just as a lion chews up with ease the tender offspring  
 of some nimble deer, when he comes in their den—  
 his strong teeth seize them and rip out their tender life—  
 and the mother, even close by, cannot help them,  
 for a fearful trembling panic seizes her, so she runs fast,  
 [130] bolting in a lather through dense foliage and trees,  
 from that mighty beast's attack—in just that way,  
 no Trojan then could save these two from slaughter,  
 for they were running off in flight from Argives.  
 Next, Agamemnon battled brave Hippolochus

- and Peisander, sons of fiery-hearted Antimachus,  
a man who'd received much gold from Alexander,  
a splendid gift, so he'd agree not to hand back  
Helen to fair-haired Menelaus. This man had two sons.  
Mighty Agamemnon now caught them, both riding  
[140] in one chariot, attempting to control their horses.  
The shining reins had fallen from the driver's hands,  
panicking the horses. The son of Atreus jumped out  
and faced them like a lion. From the chariot  
the two warriors appealed to Agamemnon:  
"Take us alive, son of Atreus. You'll get  
a worthy ransom. There are many treasures  
in Antimachus' homes—bronze and gold  
and well-worked iron. Our father will be glad  
to give a massive ransom from all that,  
[150] if he learns we're at Achaean ships alive."  
The men said this in tears, addressing the king  
with tender words. But the reply they heard was harsh.  
"If you're the two sons of Antimachus,  
that hot-hearted man who, when Menelaus came  
as envoy once to the assembled Trojans  
with godlike Odysseus, urged the Trojans  
to kill Menelaus, to stop him going back  
to the Achaeans, now you'll pay the price  
for those shameful actions of your father."  
[160] Agamemnon spoke. Then he struck Peisander.  
He knocked him from the chariot to the earth  
with a spear thrust to his chest. He crashed on the ground  
and lay there motionless. Hipplochus jumped out.  
But Agamemnon killed him on the ground.  
His sword sliced away his arms and slashed his head off.  
Then he set the head rolling through the crowd,  
like some round stone. Leaving the bodies there, he charged  
into the line where soldiers' ranks were most confused,  
leading other well-armed Achaeans with him.  
[170] Their men on foot cut down soldiers compelled to flee.  
Chariots went at chariots. On the plain, dust clouds arose

from underneath, kicked up by thundering horses' hooves.  
Men butchered men with bronze. Mighty Agamemnon  
surged on ahead, always killing as he moved,  
shouting out instructions to the Argives.  
Just as destructive fire strikes thick woodland scrub,  
driven in all directions by the swirling wind,  
burning thickets to their roots, so they disappear,  
swallowed up in the inferno's fiery rush,  
[180] that's how the heads of Trojans fell, as they ran off,  
brought down by Agamemnon, son of Atreus.  
Many strong-necked horses in the battle lanes  
rattled past with empty chariots, missing their drivers,  
excellent charioteers now lying on the ground,  
far more friendly to the vultures than their wives.  
Zeus pulled Hector back from the flying weapons,  
dust, slaughter, blood, and noise, but Agamemnon,  
bellowing orders to his Danaans, still pursued.  
Trojans rushed back across the middle of the plain,  
[190] past the tomb of ancient Ilus, son of Dardanus,  
even past the fig tree, desperate to reach the city.  
But with his invincible blood-spattered hands,  
Agamemnon kept up his pursuit relentlessly.  
When Trojans reached the Scaean Gates and oak tree,  
they stopped there, to wait for their remaining men.  
But they were still in flight across the middle of the plain,  
like cows scattered by a lion coming at them  
in the dead of night—a general stampede,  
but clearly grim destruction for one of them,  
[200] whose neck the lion first seizes in strong teeth,  
breaks it, then gorges on the blood and all the innards—  
that's how mighty Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
harassed Trojans, always killing off the stragglers,  
as they fled back. Many men collapsed face down,  
or on their backs, at the hands of Atreus' son,  
as with his spear he raged up and down the field.  
But just as Agamemnon was about to reach  
the steep walls of the city, the father of gods and men

came down from heaven, sat on the peaks of Ida,  
[210] with its many springs, holding a thunderbolt.  
He sent off gold-winged Iris with a message:  
“Go, swift Iris, and tell Hector this—  
as long as he sees Agamemnon,  
that shepherd of his people, rampaging  
at the front, slicing down rows of men,  
he must restrain himself, tell other troops  
to fight the enemy in the killing zone.  
But when Agamemnon, hit by a spear  
or wounded with an arrow, mounts his chariot,  
[220] then I’ll give Hector power to kill and kill,  
until he moves up to the well-decked ships,  
at sunset, when sacred darkness comes.”  
Zeus finished. Wind-swift Iris obeyed, going down  
from Ida to sacred Ilion. She found Hector,  
wise Priam’s noble son, standing with his horses,  
in his well-made chariot. Coming close beside him,  
swift-footed Iris spoke:  
“Hector, son of Priam,  
like the gods for your wise counsel, Father Zeus  
has sent me to give you these instructions—  
[230] for as long as you see Agamemnon,  
that shepherd of his people, rampaging  
at the front, slicing down rows of men,  
you must restrain yourself. Tell other troops  
to fight the enemy in the killing zone.  
But when Agamemnon, hit by a spear  
or wounded with an arrow, mounts his chariot,  
then Zeus will give you power to kill and kill,  
until you move up to the well-decked ships,  
at sunset, when sacred darkness comes.”  
[240] After saying this, swift-footed Iris sped away.  
With his weapons Hector jumped out of his chariot  
down to the ground. Brandishing his sharp spear, he moved  
all through the army, urging men to battle on,  
encouraging their spirits for the dreadful fight.

The troops rallied and stood up against Achaeans.  
 Opposing them, the Argives reinforced their ranks.  
 Agamemnon was among them, first to charge ahead,  
 eager to fight well out in front of everyone.  
 Tell me now, you Muses inhabiting Olympus,  
 [250] who was the first to come against Agamemnon—  
 one of the Trojans or one of their famous allies?  
 It was Iphidamas, son of Antenor,  
 a fine large man, raised in the fertile land of Thrace,  
 which nurtures flocks. His mother was lovely Theano.  
 Cisseus, his mother's father, raised him in his house  
 when he was very young. Once Iphidamas had reached  
 the age when younger men seek glory, Cisseus tried  
 to keep him there, marrying him to his own daughter.  
 But he'd left his bridal chamber to chase after fame  
 [260] against Achaeans, taking with him twelve beaked ships,  
 which followed him. He'd left these well-balanced ships  
 at Percote, then come on foot to Ilion.  
 Now he moved out to face Atreus' son Agamemnon.  
 When the two were close, within each other's range,  
 Agamemnon threw and missed—his spear turned aside.  
 But Iphidamas struck Agamemnon in his belt,  
 just below the breast plate, thrusting with all his force,  
 trusting his strong hands. But he didn't penetrate  
 the gleaming belt, for the spear hit the silver first,  
 [270] then bent aside, like lead. Wide-ruling Agamemnon  
 grabbed the spear in his fists and yanked it towards him  
 with the fury of a lion, pulling it away,  
 right out of Iphidamas' hands. Then he hit him,  
 his sword slashing through his neck—his limbs collapsed,  
 and Iphidamas fell there into a bronze sleep,  
 unhappy man, far from the wife he'd married,  
 to help his fellow citizens, far from that lady  
 from whom he'd had no favours, though for bride price  
 he'd offered much. First, he'd given a hundred cattle  
 [280] and promised a thousand goats and sheep combined,  
 taken from the immense numbers in his flocks.

But then Agamemnon, son of Atreus, killed him,  
 stripped him, and went off through the Achaean throng,  
 carrying his armour.  
 When Coön noticed this,  
 an eminent man, Antenor's eldest son,  
 his eyes darkened with grief for his fallen brother.  
 He moved out of lord Agamemnon's line of sight,  
 to one side, then struck his forearm with his spear,  
 just below the elbow. Coön's shining spear point  
 [290] sliced straight through. Agamemnon, king of men, shuddered,  
 but didn't stop the fight or pull back from battle.  
 He charged at Coön, holding up his battered spear.  
 Coön was frantically dragging his blood brother,  
 Iphidamas, out by the feet, crying for help  
 to all the finest men. Agamemnon struck him  
 with his bronze-tipped spear shaft below his embossed shield,  
 as he was pulling Iphidamas out from the crowd.  
 Coön's limbs gave way. Agamemnon stood over him,  
 then hacked off his head, so it fell on Iphidamas.  
 [300] Thus, Antenor's sons came to their fatal end  
 at king Agamemnon's hands and went down to Hades.  
 While the warm blood was still flowing from his wound,  
 Agamemnon strode around the other ranks,  
 with spear and sword and massive rocks. But once that wound  
 began to dry and blood stopped flowing, then sharp pain  
 started to curb Agamemnon's fighting spirit.  
 Just as a sharp spasm seizes women giving birth,  
 a piercing labour pain sent by the Eilithyiae,  
 Hera's daughters, who control keen pangs of childbirth,  
 [310] that's how sharp pain sapped Agamemnon's fighting strength.  
 He climbed into his chariot and told his driver  
 to go back to the hollow ships. His heart was heavy.  
 He gave a piercing shout, calling his Danaans:  
 "Friends, leaders, rulers of Argives,  
 it's up to you now to guard our seagoing ships  
 in this dangerous war. For Counsellor Zeus  
 won't let me fight these Trojans all day long."

- Agamemnon spoke. His charioteer lashed the horses  
with the lovely manes toward the hollow ships.
- [320] The horses flew on willingly, chests flecked with foam,  
their underbellies caked with dust, as they took  
the exhausted king away and left the battle.  
When Hector saw Agamemnon going back,  
he gave a loud shout to the Lycians and Trojans:  
“Trojans, Lycians, Dardan spearmen,  
be men, my friends, call on your fighting strength.  
Their best man is leaving. Zeus, son of Cronos,  
gives me glory. Drive your sure-footed horses  
straight at those strong Danaans, so you can seize  
an even greater glory.”
- [330] Hector spoke.  
In every man he stirred up the spirit of war.  
Just as a hunter urges on his white-fanged hounds,  
to chase a lion or wild boar, that’s how Hector,  
son of Priam, like that man-destroyer Ares,  
urged his great-hearted Trojans on against Achaeans.  
He himself moved with those in front, fully confident,  
falling on the enemy like a furious storm  
swooping down to lash the purple ocean.  
Who were the first, who were the last men slaughtered
- [340] by Hector, son of Priam, once Zeus gave him glory?  
First was Asaeus, then Autonous, Opites,  
and Dolops, son of Clytius, then Opheltius,  
Agelaus, Aesymnus, Orus, and Hipponous,  
a strong fighter. Hector killed these Danaan leaders.  
Then he went after common soldiers. Like West Wind,  
when it demolishes white South Wind’s clouds,  
striking them with heavy squalls, while many waves roll on,  
massive and swollen, scattering spray high in the air,  
under the howling of the veering wind storm—
- [350] that’s how thick and fast Hector destroyed those men.  
At that very moment, disaster would have struck,  
inflicting on Achaeans irreparable damage—  
they’d have been routed and fallen on their ships,

if Odysseus had not called out to Diomedes:  
“Son of Tydeus, what’s the matter with us?  
Have we no memory of our warlike courage?  
Come here, friend, stand by me. We’ll be disgraced,  
if Hector of the gleaming helmet takes the ships.”  
Powerful Diomedes then answered Odysseus:

- [360] “I’ll stay and stand up to their attack.  
But we won’t enjoy this fight for very long,  
since cloud-gatherer Zeus would sooner give  
the victory to Trojans rather than to us.”  
Diomedes spoke. With his spear, he hit Thymbraeus  
in his left nipple, tossing him from his chariot to the ground.  
Odysseus struck Molion, godlike attendant  
to lord Thymbraeus. They left the two men there,  
for their fighting days were done, and charged to battle,  
creating havoc. Just as two furious wild boars  
[370] fall on the dogs chasing after them, that’s how  
Diomedes and Odysseus turned back again  
to slaughter Trojans. So Achaeans got welcome relief  
in their flight from godlike Hector.  
The two warriors  
then seized a chariot with two men, their people’s finest,  
two sons of Merops from Percote, a man skilled,  
above all others, in prophecy. He wouldn’t let his sons  
go off to war’s destruction. But they did not obey.  
For Fates lured them on to the darkness of their deaths.  
That famous spearman Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
[380] stole their living spirit and stripped their lovely armour.  
Odysseus then killed Hippodamus and Hypeirochus.  
Gazing down from Ida, the son of Cronos made the fight  
an equal combat, so on both sides men killed each other.  
With his spear, Tydeus’ son wounded brave Agastrophus,  
son of Paeon, on the hip. There were no horses ready,  
close at hand for his escape, a fatal blunder.  
His attendant was holding them some distance off,  
while he went on foot through those fighting at the front,  
until lord Diomedes robbed him of his life.



- [390] Hector kept a sharp watch on those men. With a shout,  
 he went after them, taking ranks of Trojans with him.  
 Brave Diomedes, skilled at war cries, noticed this.  
 He shuddered and said to Odysseus, who was close by:  
 “Mighty Hector’s lethal wave engulfs us.  
 Let’s make a stand, stay here, and beat him back.”  
 Diomedes spoke. He drew back his long-shadowed spear,  
 then hurled it unerringly. The spear hit Hector,  
 on the head, catching his helmet at the very top.  
 Bronze deflected bronze—the spear missed his splendid skin,  
 [400] prevented by the triple layers on the helmet,  
 which he’d been given by Apollo. Jumping back,  
 Hector quickly rejoined the massed ranks of his troops.  
 He fell on his knee and stayed there, holding himself up  
 with his strong hand on the ground. Black night hid his eyes.  
 But as the son of Tydeus rushed in to retrieve his spear  
 from where it hit the earth among the front-line fighters,  
 Hector revived. He leapt into his chariot once more,  
 drove back into the crowd, eluding his black fate.  
 Brandishing his spear, powerful Diomedes yelled:  
 [410] “You dog—once more you’re evading death for now.  
 But you’ve narrowly escaped disaster.  
 Phoebus Apollo has saved you once again.  
 No doubt you always pray to him, every time  
 you go into the sound of thudding spears.  
 Next time we meet, I’ll surely finish you  
 if some god is there to help me out, as well.  
 But now I’ll attack the rest, any man  
 I chance to meet.”  
 Diomedes spoke.  
 Then he stripped the armour off the son of Paeon,  
 [420] a famous spearman. But fair-haired Helen’s husband,  
 Alexander, now aimed his bow at Diomedes,  
 his people’s shepherd, leaning against a gravestone,  
 part of the funeral mound men had built for Ilus,  
 son of Dardanus, an elder of the people long ago.  
 Diomedes was stripping the gleaming breast plate

- off the chest of strong Agastrophus, taking, too,  
the shield from off his shoulders and his heavy helmet.  
Alexander drew back on the centre of the bow.  
He shot. The arrow did not leave his hand and miss.
- [430] It hit Diomedes' foot, the right one, on the top—  
it passed through and drove into the ground. Laughing aloud,  
Paris jumped from his cover, shouting out this boast:  
“You're hit. My arrow wasn't wasted.  
I wish I'd got you low down in the gut,  
taken your life. That way, there'd be some relief  
for Trojans from the misery you bring.  
Right now they shake with fear in front of you,  
like bleating goats confronted by a lion.”  
Without a sign of fear, strong Diomedes then replied:
- [440] “You useless archer, brave only with your bow,  
seducer, if you stepped out to face me  
with real weapons, that bow and clutch of arrows  
would be no use to you. So now you've grazed me  
on my foot, and you boast like this. It's nothing—  
like some blow from a woman or witless child.  
A weapon from a coward has no bite at all.  
But from me, it's different, even a slight hit.  
My spear is sharp. The man it hits, it kills.  
His wife tears at her cheeks, his children then
- [450] are orphans. Earth is blood-soaked where he rots,  
with vultures instead of women round him.”  
Diomedes spoke. Famous spearman Odysseus  
came up and made a stand before him. He sat down  
behind Odysseus and pulled the arrow from his foot.  
Sharp pain shot through his flesh. Then he got in his chariot,  
took the reins, and with a heavy heart went to the hollow ships.  
Now famous spearman Odysseus was left alone,  
no Achaean there beside him, for fear gripped them all.  
Greatly troubled, he spoke to his proud heart:
- [460] “Here's trouble. What's going to happen to me?  
If I run away from this crowd in fear,  
I'll be badly shamed. But to be trapped here,

all alone, that could be worse. For Cronos' son  
has made the rest of the Danaans flee.

But why's my fond heart arguing all this?

I know that those who leave the war are cowards.

The man who wants to fight courageously  
must stand his ground with force, whether he's hit,  
or whether his blows strike the other man."

[470] While in his mind and heart he turned this over,  
ranks of shield-bearing Trojans advanced against him,  
encircling him. But this only brought them trouble.  
As when young men and hunting dogs harass a boar,  
the beast charges from dense foliage on every side,  
whetting white teeth on its curving jaws, and they dodge  
all round it, to the sound of champing tusks,  
hunters and dogs standing firm, for all their fear—  
that's how Trojans then kept going at Odysseus,  
whom Zeus loved. First he wounded fine Deïopites

[480] above his shoulder, lunging at him with his sharp spear.  
Then he killed Thoön, Ennomus, and Chersidamas,  
whom Odysseus speared as he jumped from his chariot.  
He hit him in the groin below his shield. As he fell,  
he clawed handfuls of dust. Odysseus left these men,  
then with his spear struck Charops, son of Hippiasus,  
blood brother of rich Socus. That god-like man  
came up, stood close to him, and cried:

"Renowned Odysseus,  
your store of tricks, of suffering, is infinite.

Today you'll boast you killed both sons of Hippiasus,

[490] slaughtered two men and stripped away their armour,  
or else you'll lose your life, hit by my spear."

Saying this, Socus struck the even circle of Odysseus' shield.

The strong spear punctured the bright shield, forcing its way  
through the finely decorated breastplate, slicing off  
the flesh along his ribs. But Pallas Athena  
stopped it from sinking into any vital organ.

Odysseus knew the spear had not hit a fatal spot.

He drew back and spoke to Socus:

- “You poor man,  
now’s the moment grim death surely takes you.  
[500] Yes, you’ve prevented me from fighting Trojans,  
but I promise here this very day you’ll meet  
the fatal darkness of your death, killed on my spear.  
I’ll get the glory. You’ll give your life to horseman Hades.”  
Odysseus spoke. Turning round, Socus began to run.  
But Odysseus hit him as he was moving off,  
spearing him in the back between the shoulder blades,  
driving the spear clean through his chest. He fell with a thud.  
Lord Odysseus cried out in triumph:  
“Ah, Socus,  
son of fierce horse-taming Hippasus,  
[510] Death’s final end was quick—no escape for you.  
Unhappy man, you’ll not have your father  
or your noble mother close your eyes in death.  
Flesh-eating birds will now rip you apart,  
spreading their thick wings all over you.  
But if I die, god-like Achaeans will provide  
a proper burial for me.”  
With these words,  
Odysseus pulled Socus’ strong spear out of his flesh  
and removed it from his shield. But as he drew it out,  
he began to bleed. Odysseus grew concerned.  
[520] When great-hearted Trojans saw blood on Odysseus,  
they shouted through the ranks and rushed him all at once.  
Odysseus stepped back, calling out to his companions.  
Three times he yelled, as loud as any man can shout.  
Three times warlike Menelaus heard him call.  
He quickly spoke to Ajax, who stood close by.  
“Ajax, divinely born son of Telamon,  
leader of your people, I’ve just heard  
a voice call—it belonged to brave Odysseus.  
It sounds as if Trojans have him cut off,  
[530] caught him on his own in the killing zone.  
Let’s go to that crowd. We’d better save him.  
I’m afraid that he’s in trouble. He’s a fine man—

he'd be a great loss to the Danaans."

Saying this, Menelaus led on. Ajax, that godlike man,  
 went with him. They found Odysseus, whom Zeus loved,  
 encircled by Trojans, like red mountain jackals  
 surrounding a horned stag wounded by an arrow  
 from some man's bow—its legs enable it to flee,  
 for while its warm blood flows, its limbs have power—  
 [540] but as soon as that sharp arrow's drained its strength,  
 in some forest shade, wild mountain carnivores attack,  
 but should some god then lead a hungry lion there,  
 the jackals scatter, and the lion eats the stag—  
 that's the way resourceful fierce Odysseus was attacked  
 by many daring Trojans. The single warrior,  
 wielding his spear, held at bay his pitiless fate.  
 Then Ajax approached, carrying his towering shield.  
 He made a stand beside Odysseus. Trojans scattered  
 in all directions. Taking Odysseus by the hand,  
 [550] warlike Menelaus led him from the crowd,  
 until his attendant could bring up his chariot.  
 Ajax then charged the Trojans. He killed Doryclus,  
 one of Priam's bastard sons. Then he hit Pandocus,  
 Lysander, Pyrasus, and Pylantes. As some river,  
 a mountain torrent in full winter flood, crashes down  
 onto the plain, gaining its power from Zeus' storms,  
 sweeping up many withered oaks and pine trees,  
 throwing piles of mud into the sea—that's how  
 glorious Ajax then charged out onto the plain,  
 [560] creating havoc, slaughtering men and horses.  
 Hector did not notice Ajax, for he was fighting  
 on the far left of the battle, by Scamander's banks,  
 where the slaughter was most fierce. A constant din arose  
 around great Nestor and warlike Idomeneus.  
 Hector was in the crowd there with them, grimly killing  
 with chariot and spear, decimating young men's ranks.  
 But the brave Achaeans would not have given way,  
 if Alexander, fair-haired Helen's husband,  
 had not stopped Machaon, shepherd of his people,

[570] as he was proving himself among the very best.  
Alexander's arrow, with a triple barb,  
hit Machaon's right shoulder. Then Achaeans,  
who breathe fighting spirit, feared for Machaon—  
they thought he might be captured, should the battle change.  
At that point Idomeneus spoke to Nestor:  
"Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory  
of Achaeans, come, climb up into my chariot.  
Let Machaon get in there beside you.  
Drive those sure-footed horses to the ships,  
[580] and quickly, too. Machaon's a healer  
and so worth more than other men, with skill  
to cut out arrows and use healing potions."  
He finished. Geranian horseman Nestor heard him.  
He climbed into the chariot. Machaon got in beside him,  
son of that excellent healer Asclepius.  
Nestor whipped the horses. They dashed off willingly,  
their spirits happy to be heading for the hollow ships.  
Then Cebriones noticed Trojans were being driven back.  
Going up to Hector, he spoke to him:  
"Hector,  
[590] here the two of us mingle with Danaans,  
but on the outskirts of this hard-fought battle.  
Other Trojans, both men and horses,  
are being driven back in great confusion,  
routed by Ajax, son of Telamon.  
I know him well. He carries a huge shield  
around his shoulders. Let's get our horses  
and drive there in our chariot—that's where  
most of those fighting with horses or on foot  
are slaughtering each other, where men fight  
[600] with most intensity. The noise never stops."  
Saying this, Cebriones urged on their horses  
with the lovely manes, cracking his whip over them.  
Obeying the lash, they took the fast chariot at top speed  
in the direction of the Trojans and Achaeans,  
trampling on shields and corpses as they galloped on.

The axle was completely spattered underneath,  
as were the rails behind, with gobs of blood thrown up  
from horses' hooves and chariot wheels. Hector pushed on,  
eager to join the throngs of men, to jump into the fight,  
[610] to smash that group to pieces. He made Danaans  
totally confused—his spear hardly seemed to pause.  
He ranged up and down Achaean soldiers' ranks  
with spear and sword and massive rocks. But he kept away  
from any fight with Ajax, son of Telamon.  
Then Father Zeus, enthroned on high, put fear in Ajax.  
He stood bewildered, shifted his seven-layered shield  
onto his back, turned, looked round at throngs of Trojans,  
like some wild beast, then backed off step by step, retreating,  
but often turning back. Just as a tawny lion  
[620] is driven from a farmyard holding cattle  
by dogs and farmers, who keep watch all night long  
to stop it tearing some well-fed cow to pieces,  
but the beast, ravenous for meat, keeps charging in,  
without success, for a storm of spears rains down on him,  
thrown by eager hands, followed then by burning sticks,  
which, for all his fierce desire, make him afraid,  
so, at dawn, he slinks away in bitter disappointment—  
that's how Ajax most unwillingly retreated then,  
away from Trojans, his spirit in distress.  
[630] He was very much afraid for the Achaean ships.  
Just as when some donkey taken past a cornfield—  
a stubborn beast on whose sides many sticks are broken—  
bolts from boys tending it and goes to munch deep corn,  
while boys beat it with sticks—although their strength is small,  
at last they drive it out, once it's had its fill—  
that's how proud Trojans and allies from many lands  
then pushed back great Ajax, son of Telamon,  
their spears always jabbing at the centre of his shield.  
From time to time, remembering his warlike spirit,  
[640] Ajax would turn again, holding off the ranks  
of horse-taming Trojans. Then he'd turn back to retreat.  
But he blocked the way to the swift ships for all of them.

He stood alone between the Trojans and Achaeans,  
 fighting furiously. Some spears hurled by brave hands  
 flew swiftly forward, then stuck in his great shield,  
 and many stood upright in the space between them,  
 impaled in earth, still eager to devour his flesh.  
 When Eurypylus, fine son of Euaemon,  
 saw Ajax being attacked by this hail of spears,  
 [650] he went and stood by him. He hurled his shining spear  
 and hit Apisaon, son of Phausius,  
 a shepherd to his people, below his diaphragm,  
 in the liver. His legs gave way. Eurypylus rushed up  
 to strip armour from his shoulders, but he was seen  
 by godlike Alexander, as he was pulling off  
 the armour from Apisaon. So Paris grabbed his bow,  
 aimed at Eurypylus, then shot an arrow in his leg,  
 his right thigh. The arrow shaft snapped off.  
 His thigh was crippled. So Eurypylus moved back  
 [660] among his comrades and thus escaped destruction.  
 But he shouted far and wide, calling to Danaans:  
 “Friends, leaders and rulers of the Argives,  
 rally your ranks. Save Ajax from a brutal death.  
 He’s being attacked with spears, and I don’t think  
 he’s able to get out of this grim fight.  
 Come, stand by great Ajax, son of Telamon!”  
 Eurypylus yelled this out as he lay wounded.  
 Men closed their ranks around him, leaning their shields  
 against their shoulders with their spears extended.  
 [670] Ajax came to meet them. When he reached his comrades,  
 he turned around and stood his ground once more.  
 Thus these soldiers went at the fight like a raging fire,  
 as Neleus’ horses carried Nestor from the fight.  
 Swift-footed Achilles, looking on, noticed Nestor.  
 Achilles stood by the stern of his broad-beamed ship,  
 watching the harsh work of battle, the pitiful retreat.  
 At once he spoke out to Patroclus, his companion,  
 calling him beside the ship. From inside the hut  
 Patroclus heard him. He came out, looking like Ares.



[680] This moment marked the start of his final rush to death.

Patroclus, Menoetius' fine son, was the first to speak:

"Why did you summon me, Achilles?

Is there something you need me to carry out?"

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

"Fine son of Menoetius, joy of my heart,

I think the time has come for the Achaeans

to stand around my knees in supplication,

for their needs have now become unbearable.

But Patroclus, dear to Zeus, go now—

[690] ask Nestor who that wounded person is

he's taking from the battle. From the back,

he looked exactly like Machaon,

son of Asclepius. But I didn't see

his face, for the horses passed me quickly

in their haste to gallop on."

Achilles spoke.

Patroclus then obeyed his dear companion.

He went on the run through Achaean huts and ships.

When the others reached the huts of Nestor, Neleus' son,

they stepped out on the fertile earth. Then Eurymedon,

[700] Nestor's aide, unharnessed horses from the chariot.

The two men let the sweat dry on their tunics,

standing in the seashore breeze. They went inside the hut

and sat down on some chairs. Fair-haired Hecamede

made them a soothing drink. Old Nestor had taken her

from Tenedos, when Achilles ransacked the place.

Daughter of great-hearted Arsinous, she'd been chosen

for him by Achaeans, because he excelled them all

in giving wise advice. First, she pushed out in front of them

a well-polished table with feet of blue enamel.

[710] Then she set there a bronze basket holding onions,

to spice up their drink, with pale honey and bread

made of sacred barley. Beside these she set a cup,

a magnificent work Nestor had brought from home,

studded with gold. There were four handles on it,

around each one a pair of golden doves was feeding.  
Below were two supports. When that cup was full,  
another man could hardly lift it from the table,  
but, old as he was, Nestor picked it up with ease.  
In this cup Hecamede, looking like a goddess,  
[720] made a soothing drink for them from Pramnian wine.  
In it with a bronze grater she shredded goat's cheese,  
then shook white barley grain on top. When she'd prepared it,  
she invited them to drink. The two men drank  
and quenched their parching thirst. They started talking,  
enjoying each other's pleasant conversation.  
Then Patroclus stood in the doorway, like some god.  
Seeing him, old Nestor leapt up from his shining chair,  
took him by the hand and invited him to sit.  
Patroclus declined, staying where he was. He said:

[730] "Old man, divinely bred, I can't sit down.  
You'll not talk me into it. The man who sent me  
is honourable but quick to take offence.  
I'm here to learn the name of that wounded man  
you drove in with. But I see him for myself.  
I know Machaon, his people's shepherd.  
Now I'll go back and tell this to Achilles.  
You know well enough, divinely bred old man,  
what he's like—not someone to take lightly.  
He'd be quick to blame an innocent man."

[740] Geranian horseman Nestor then said to Patroclus:  
"Why is Achilles showing pity now  
for Achaea's sons, those men hurt with spears  
and arrows? He knows nothing of our trouble,  
the great suffering which afflicts the army.  
For our best men lie injured at the ships,  
crippled by arrows, spears, and swords.  
Strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus, is hurt,  
as is Odysseus, famous for his spear,  
Agamemnon and Eurypylus as well,  
[750] with an arrow in his thigh. This man here,

hurt with an arrow from some bowstring,  
 I've just brought in from battle. Achilles is brave,  
 but shows no pity, feels nothing for Danaans.  
 Is he waiting till our fast ships by the sea  
 are set on fire with all-consuming flames,  
 and Achaeans, powerless to stop it,  
 are slaughtered one by one? My strength now  
 in my supple limbs is not what it used to be.  
 I wish I were as young, my strength as firm,  
 [760] as when the Eleans and our people  
 went to war for stolen cattle, when I killed  
 Itymoneus, brave son of Hypeirochus,  
 a man from Elis, as I was driving off  
 what we'd seized in reparation. He was fighting  
 for his cattle. In the foremost ranks,  
 a spear from my hand struck him. He collapsed.  
 His country people ran away, and so we seized  
 a huge amount of plunder from that plain—  
 fifty herds of cattle, as many flocks of sheep,  
 [770] fifty droves of pigs, fifty herds of wandering goats,  
 one hundred fifty horses, all chestnut mares,  
 many with foals still standing under them.  
 At night we drove these to the citadel  
 of Neleus' city, Pylos. Neleus rejoiced,  
 glad at heart, because I'd shared in so much loot,  
 though I was just a young man going to war.  
 Next day at dawn, heralds proclaimed out loud  
 that all those to whom Elis stood in debt  
 should meet together. The leading men of Pylos  
 [780] thus gathered to appropriate the spoils,  
 for Epeians were in debt to many men.  
 Those of us in Pylos were few and weak.  
 Mighty Hercules had come some years before  
 and sapped our strength by killing our best men.\*  
 Neleus once had twelve worthy sons—  
 I'm the only one remaining. The others  
 were all wiped out. Bronze-armed Epeians

at that point took advantage of us,  
committing evil and aggressive acts.  
[790] From that plunder old Neleus selected  
a herd of cattle, a large flock of sheep,  
taking three hundred of them with their shepherds.  
Holy Elis owed him an enormous debt—  
four prize-winning horses with their chariot,  
which had come to Elis to compete, intent  
on racing for a tripod. But Augeias,  
king of men, kept the horses there in Elis.  
He sent their driver back, grieving for his team.  
Old Neleus was angry with Augeias  
[800] for what he'd said and done. That's why he took  
so much booty for himself. The rest he gave  
to be distributed among the people  
in equal shares, so no one would object.  
We allocated each and every bit  
and sacrificed to all the city gods.  
On the third day Epeians came in force,  
all together, with their sure-footed horses,  
at top speed, lots of them. Among them came  
the two Moliones, fully armed, still young,  
[810] not knowing much of serious warfare.  
Now, there's a certain city Thryoessa,  
far off on a steep hill by the Alpheius,  
at the very end of sandy Pylos.  
Desperately eager to destroy this place,  
they pitched their forces round it in a siege.  
But once Epeians crossed the entire plain,  
Athena came speeding from Olympus  
down to us at night. She brought a message—  
we should arm ourselves. She mustered a force  
[820] of volunteers in Pylos, all keen for war.  
Neleus would not let me take up arms.  
He hid my horses—he thought I was ignorant  
of anything to do with war. But even so,  
though I fought on foot, I made my mark

among our charioteers. For Athena  
 planned the battle out in just that way.  
 There is a river Minyeïus, which meets the sea  
 near Arene. The Pylian horsemen  
 waited there till dawn while squads of men on foot  
 [830] came streaming in. We moved out quickly  
 with our weapons, all together. At noon  
 we reached the holy river Alpheius.  
 We sacrificed fine beasts to Zeus almighty,  
 a bull to Poseidon, and one to Alpheius.  
 To Athena with the glittering eyes we offered  
 a cow from our own herd. Then we had dinner  
 at our positions there throughout the camp.  
 We went to sleep, each man with his weapons,  
 along the river bank. The brave Epeians  
 [840] were encircling the city, hearts set on razing it.  
 Before they managed that, they saw a fight,  
 a major battle. For when the sun appeared  
 above the earth, we sacrificed to Zeus  
 and to Athena, then started our attack.  
 When Pylians and Epeians began the battle,  
 I was the first to kill a man and seize  
 his sure-footed horses. That man was Mulius,  
 a spear fighter, son-in-law to Augeias.  
 He'd taken as his wife fair-haired Agamede,  
 [850] the eldest daughter, who knew all medicines  
 this wide earth provides. As he came against me,  
 I struck him with my bronze-tipped spear. He fell  
 into the dust. I jumped in his chariot,  
 taking my place among the foremost fighters.  
 Stout-hearted Epeians saw the man go down,  
 leader of their horsemen, their best fighting man.  
 They ran away in all directions. I pursued,  
 going after them like some black whirlwind.  
 I captured fifty chariots. In every one  
 [860] two warriors bit the dust, slain by my spear.  
 And I'd have slaughtered both the Molines,

Actor's descendants, but their father,  
the wide-ruling shaker of the earth, Poseidon,  
with a thick concealing mist let them escape.  
Then Zeus put great power into Pylians.  
We pursued Epeians over that wide plain,  
killing them and gathering their fine weapons,  
until we pushed our horses into Bouprasion,  
a wheat-rich region, to the rock of Olene,  
[870] the place which people call Alesium hill.  
There Athena turned our soldiers back.  
I killed the final warrior and left him there.  
Achaeans quickly led their fast horses back  
from Bouprasion to Pylos, all of them  
paying tribute among all the gods to Zeus,  
and among all men to Nestor. That's how  
I once used to be, when I was a man  
among the men. But what of Achilles?  
His courage will profit no one but himself.  
[880] I think he might bitterly regret all this,  
once our army is destroyed. O my friend,  
that day Menoetius sent you from Phthia  
in Agamemnon's cause, he gave you orders.  
Both lord Odysseus and myself were present.  
We heard all he said to you there in his house.  
We'd come to the well-built home of Peleus,  
mustering men across fertile Achaea.  
And we found warrior Menoetius and yourself,  
together with Achilles. In the courtyard,  
[890] old horseman Peleus was burning thigh bones  
rolled in fat to thunder-loving Zeus.  
He held a golden cup, poured gleaming wine,  
libations, on the flaming sacrifice.  
The two of you were busy with the ox meat.  
We two stood in the doorway. Achilles  
jumped up in great surprise, took our hands,  
brought us inside, inviting us to sit.  
Then we received fine hospitality,

the sort appropriate for strangers. Later,  
[900] when we'd had our fill of food and drink,  
I began to speak, asking you to come with us.  
You were really eager. Both older men  
gave you instructions about many things.  
Old Peleus ordered his son Achilles  
always to be the best, to stand pre-eminent,  
above all other men. Menoetius, son of Actor,  
told you:

'My son, Achilles is by birth  
a finer man than you. But you are older.  
In strength he is by far your better,  
[910] but it's up to you to give shrewd advice,  
prudent counsel, and direction to him.  
He'll comply, for that works to his benefit.'  
That's what the old man said. But you forget.  
Even now, if you'd speak to fierce Achilles,  
you might persuade him. Who knows? Some god  
might help you shift his spirit with your words.  
A friend's persuasion is an excellent thing.  
But if his heart knows of some prophecy  
that he's avoiding, something from Zeus  
[920] his mother's mentioned to him, then at least  
let him send you to war, in command  
of other Myrmidons—it may well be  
you'll prove a saving light to the Danaans.  
Let him also give you his fine armour  
to carry into battle, so Trojans may confuse  
the two of you and thus refrain from fighting.  
Achaean's warrior sons are tired out.  
They might gain a breathing space, something rare  
in warfare. Your troops are fresh. They might drive  
[930] Trojans worn out with fighting to the city,  
far from our ships and huts."

Nestor finished speaking.

His words stirred up the heart inside Patroclus' chest.  
He went off on the run along the line of ships,  
towards Achilles, descendant of Aeacus.  
But as Patroclus ran by lord Odysseus' ships,  
right where they held assemblies and judicial court,  
where they'd built their altars to the gods as well,  
he met Eurypylus, royal son of Euaemon,  
limping from the battle, his thigh wounded by an arrow.  
[940] Down his head and shoulders ran rivulets of sweat.  
Black blood seeped from his nasty wound. But his spirit  
was still strong. Seeing him, Menoetius' worthy son  
felt compassion. He spoke winged words of sympathy:  
"You leaders, you rulers of Achaeans,  
it seems to be your destiny to feed the dogs  
with your white flesh at Troy, far from your friends,  
far from your native land. But come now,  
Eurypylus, you royal warrior, tell me  
whether Achaeans will manage to contain  
[950] warlike Hector, or whether they'll all die,  
slaughtered here on Hector's spear."  
Wise Eurypylus then said in answer to Patroclus:  
"Lord Patroclus, there's no longer anything  
can save Achaeans, who'll fall back to their black ships.  
All those who were our finest fighters  
are lying by the ships, hurt or wounded  
at Trojan hands, whose strength keeps growing.  
But take me safely back to my black ship,  
cut the arrow from my thigh, and with warm water  
[960] wash away the black blood there, then rub on  
fine soothing medication, whose use, they say,

Achilles taught you, an art he learned  
from Cheiron, most righteous of the Centaurs.  
Of our healers, Podalierius and Machaon,  
one, I believe, lies wounded in our huts,  
himself requiring some worthy healer,  
the other's out there on the plains, holding off



the fighting spirit of the Trojans.”

Menoetius’ fine son then said to Eurypylus:

[970] “How can you get this cure? What can we do,  
noble Eurypylus? I’m on my way  
to inform warlike Achilles of the news  
which Geranian Nestor, Achaea’s guardian,  
asked me to report. But I won’t leave you  
in such suffering.”

When Patroclus had finished,  
he put his arm around Eurypylus’ chest, then took  
that shepherd of his people to his hut. Seeing them,  
an aide put down some ox hides. Settling him there,  
with a knife Patroclus cut out the arrow, razor sharp,  
[980] from his thigh, and washed the blood off with warm water.  
He put some bitter root onto his hands and rubbed it in,  
something to relieve the hurt, remove all pain.  
The wound then dried, and blood stopped flowing.

Book Twelve  
The Fight at the Barricade

*[The battle continues at the wall, with Achaeans hemmed in; Polydamas advises Hector to leave the chariots behind; Trojans organize themselves into five companies for the assault; two Lapith spearmen guard the Achaean gate; Trojans receive a bad omen; Polydamas advises Hector not to attack the wall; Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus about their warrior code; Sarpedon assaults the wall; Menestheus asks for help from Ajax and Teucer; Ajax responds; Glaucus is wounded; Hector demolishes the doors in the gate; the Trojans breach the wall; Achaeans retreat to their ships]*

And so, as Patroclus, Menoetius' fine son, looked after  
wounded Eurypylus in his hut, Trojans and Achaeans  
kept fighting on in clusters. The Danaan ditch  
and the high broad wall weren't going to hold out long.  
They'd built the wall, then dug the ditch around it,  
to protect the ships and guard the ample plunder  
stored inside. But they'd built it without sanction  
from immortal gods—they'd made no splendid offering,  
no sacrifices to the gods, asking them to keep  
[10] their swift ships safe, so the wall soon fell apart.  
As long as Hector lived and Achilles' anger  
did not relent and Priam's city wasn't captured,  
the huge Achaean wall remained intact.  
But after so many of the finest Trojans died,  
many Achaeans, too, though many did survive,  
in the war's tenth year, Priam's city was destroyed.  
When Achaeans sailed back to their dear native land,  
then Poseidon and Apollo planned to erase that wall,  
by stirring up the raging power of all rivers  
[20] flowing from Mount Ida to the sea—Rhesus,  
Heptaporus, Caresus, Rhodius, Granicus,  
Aesepus, the sacred Scamander and Simoeis,  
where many ox-hide shields and helmets had fallen  
in the dust, along with a race of people half-divine.  
Phoebus Apollo merged the mouths of all these rivers,  
then for nine days drove the flood against the rampart.

Zeus brought constant rain to wash the wall away  
into the sea more quickly. And Poseidon, too,  
the Earthshaker himself, holding his trident,  
[30] led the work, his waves eroding all foundations,  
wood and stone Achaeans had worked so hard to set there.  
He smoothed the shores of the fast-flowing Hellespont,  
covering huge beaches once again with sand. The wall gone,  
he changed the rivers, so they flowed on as before,  
their lovely waters in their customary channels.  
All this Apollo and Poseidon would do later on.

But then the din of war raged round the sturdy wall.  
The battered timbers on the tower rattled.  
Argives, broken by Zeus' whip, were all hemmed in  
[40] beside their hollow ships, held back by fear of Hector,  
whose powerful presence scared them, for, as before,  
he battled like a whirlwind. Just as some wild boar  
or lion faced with dogs and huntsmen keeps turning,  
confident of his strength, and men form in a line,  
preparing to go against the beast, hurling spears  
in volleys from their hands—still it doesn't tremble,  
show any fear in its brave heart, but its courage  
kills the beast—repeatedly it whirls itself around,  
threatening the ranks of men—that's how Hector then  
[50] moved through the troops, urging men to attack the ditch  
and charge across it. But his swift-footed horses balked,  
standing at the very edge, neighing loudly,  
terrified because the trench was wide to cross.  
They couldn't easily jump over it or get through.  
On both sides there were steep banks along its length,  
with many large sharp stakes driven in the upper edge,  
set there by Achaea's sons as a protection  
against their enemies. There was no easy way  
horses pulling chariots with wheels could move across.  
[60] Even men on foot weren't confident about it.  
Then Polydamas, coming up beside bold Hector, said:

“Hector, you other leaders, you allies,  
 it’s foolish to think of driving our swift horses  
 through this trench. It’s difficult to get across,  
 with those sharpened stakes projecting from it,  
 right by the Achaean wall. There’s no way  
 any charioteer could get down and fight.  
 There’s not much room. I think we’d get badly hurt.  
 If high-thundering Zeus intends to help the Trojans  
 [70] and harm Achaeans, wipe them out completely,  
 I’d prefer that happened right away,  
 so Achaeans all die here, far from Argos,  
 unremembered. But if they turn us back,  
 drive us from the ships, and trap us in the trench,  
 and if Achaeans then reorganize,  
 I don’t think any of us will get back  
 to our city with the news. But come,  
 let’s all agree to what I now propose—  
 attendants should hold the horses at the ditch.  
 [8] 0We’ll arm ourselves with heavy weapons,  
 then all follow Hector bunched up tightly.  
 Achaeans will not push us back, if it’s true  
 they’re already headed for destruction.”

What Polydamas had just proposed pleased Hector.  
 With his weapons, he jumped from his chariot to the ground.  
 The other Trojans did not hesitate. Seeing him do that,  
 they leapt quickly from their chariots and left them there.  
 Each man told his charioteer to keep the horses  
 in good order by the ditch. The men broke up in groups  
 [90] and organized themselves to form five companies,  
 with each one following its own leadership.  
 Some went with Hector and worthy Polydamas.  
 They were the best and most numerous, especially keen  
 to breach the wall and fight on at the hollow ships.  
 Cebriones went with them as third commander.  
 Paris led the second group, along with Agenor  
 and Alcathous. Helenus and godlike Deiphobus,

two sons of Priam, led the third contingent,  
with a third commander, warlike Asius,  
[100] son of Hyrtacus, whose huge horses had carried him  
all the way from Arisbe by the Selleïs river.  
The fourth group of warriors was headed by Aeneas,  
Anchises' brave son, with Archelochus  
and Acamas, two sons of Antenor, well skilled  
in all the elements of war. The famous allies  
Sarpedon led. He'd chosen to command with him  
Glaucus and warlike Asteropaeus, for they seemed  
clearly the best of all the others, after himself,  
for among them all he was pre-eminent.  
[110] These men linked themselves with sturdy bull's hide shields,  
then in their eagerness made straight for the Danaans.  
They thought no one could stop them, as they charged the ships.

Other Trojans and their famous allies followed  
what excellent Polydamas had said to them,  
but Asius, son of Hyrtacus, leader of men,  
did not want to leave his horses or their driver,  
the attendant charioteer. He brought them with him  
as he went for the ships. The fool! He would not escape  
his grim fate and come back from the ships to windy Troy,  
[120] proudly boasting of his chariot and horses.  
Before that happened an unwelcome fate took him  
on the spear of Deucalion's proud son, Idomeneus.  
Asius moved off to the left of the line of ships,  
where Achaeans used to pass with horse and chariot  
when returning from the plain. That's where he drove  
his chariot and team. He found the gates unbarred—  
men had drawn the long bolt and were holding them ajar,  
just in case they might save one of their companions  
escaping from the battle to the ships. At those gates  
[130] Asius firmly aimed his horses. His men followed,  
shouting loudly. They thought Achaeans could hold out  
no longer, that they'd be assaulting the black ships.  
How wrong they were! For at the gates they found two men,

two of the finest—proud-hearted sons of Lapith spearmen.  
 One was powerful Polypoetes, son of Peirithous,  
 the other Leonteus, a warrior like man-killing Ares.  
 These two made their stand before the lofty gate,  
 like two high-topped mountain oak trees which defy  
 wind and rain each and every day, anchored there  
 [140] by huge extensive roots—just like that, these two men,  
 trusting the power in their arms, held their position,  
 as great Asius approached. They did not run off.  
 Holding bull's hide shields up high, with loud shouts,  
 Asius' men came straight for the well-built wall,  
 behind lord Asius, Iamenus, Orestes,  
 Adamas, Asius' son, Thoön, and Oenomaus.

Up to now, the two Lapiths had been urging  
 well-armed Achaeans from inside the rampart  
 to defend their ships. But when they noticed Trojans  
 [150] charging the wall and Danaans running off and shouting,  
 the two men hurried out to fight beyond the gates.  
 Like wild mountain boars taking on a confused mob  
 of men and dogs attacking them—the beasts charge sideways,  
 shattering trees around them, ripping out the roots,  
 gnashing their teeth noisily, till someone  
 hits them with his spear and takes away their lives—  
 that's how the shining bronze sounded on these two,  
 as they moved out against the flying weapons.  
 But they fought bravely, relying on their strength  
 [160] and on those troops standing on the wall above them,  
 who kept throwing rocks down from the sturdy tower,  
 defending themselves, their huts, their well-built ships.  
 Stones fell to earth like snowflakes which some strong wind  
 pushing shadowy clouds drives downward in a storm,  
 so they strike the fertile earth, that's how thick and fast  
 flying weapons rained down then from Trojans and Achaeans.  
 Helmets and bossed shields rang out as they were hit  
 with rocks the size of millstones. Then Asius,  
 son of Hyrtacus, groaned in vexation, struck his thigh,

and cried out:

[170] “Father Zeus, how you love to lie!  
I didn’t think these warrior Achaeans  
could withstand the force of our all-powerful hands.  
But they’re like yellow-banded wasps or bees  
who’ve made their home by some rough road  
and won’t leave their hollow house, but stay there,  
guarding their offspring from the hunting men.  
That’s how these men refuse to yield the gate,  
though there’s just two of them, until they kill us  
or are killed themselves.”

Asius complained,  
[180] but his words did not win over Zeus’ mind,  
for in his heart he wished to give Hector glory.

Other troops were battling on at other gates.  
It would be hard for me to report all these events,  
even if I were a god. For by that stone wall  
blazing fires broke out everywhere. Though in distress,  
Achaeans had no choice but to defend their ships—  
gods helping Danaans in the fight were sad at heart.

The two Lapiths now began to kill in earnest.  
Powerful Polypoetes, son of Peirithous,  
[190] with his spear struck Damasus through his cheek piece.  
The bronze helmet didn’t stop the spear—its bronze point  
tore straight through his skull, splattering his brains  
all through his helmet. That checked his fighting fury.  
Then he slaughtered Pylon, as well as Ormenus.  
With his spear, Leonteus, Ares’ assistant, hit  
Hippomachus, son of Antimachus, in his belt.  
Then, pulling out his sharp sword from its scabbard,  
he charged the Trojan mass, struck Antiphates,  
hitting him at close range first. So he lay there,  
[200] on his back, motionless. Leonteus then struck down

in quick succession Menon, Iamenus, and Orestes—  
all these lay prone there, on the all-nourishing earth.

While the two Lapiths were stripping shining armour  
from the dead, young troops with Polydamas and Hector,  
the most numerous and bravest of the men,  
the ones most keen to breach the wall and burn the ships,  
still stood along the ditch in some perplexity.  
For as they'd assembled, eager to cross the trench,  
a bird had gone above them, a high-flying eagle,  
[210] moving past the left flank of the troops, gripping  
in its talons a huge blood-red snake, still alive,  
still struggling. It hadn't lost its will to fight.  
Doubling up, it struck the bird that clutched it  
beside the neck. The eagle, stung with pain,  
let the snake fall down onto the ground, dropping it  
right in the middle of the crowd. Then with a cry,  
it flew off downwind. Seeing that writhing snake,  
lying there in their midst, Trojans shuddered. It was a sign,  
a powerful omen, from aegis-bearing Zeus.  
[220] Polydamas then approached bold Hector and spoke out:

“Hector, you're always taking me to task,  
though I give good advice in our assemblies.  
For you maintain it's not appropriate  
that someone else speak out against you,  
either in a council meeting or in war,  
for he should always back your leadership.  
But now I'm going to say what seems to me  
the best course we should take. Let's not advance  
to fight Danaans by their ships. In my view,  
[230] this is how all this will end. If that omen  
was sent to Trojans keen to cross the ditch,  
a high-flying eagle on our army's left  
holding in its talons a blood-red snake,  
still living, which it let drop before it reached  
its nest, thus failing in its purpose,



to bring that snake back for its offspring,  
then, like that bird, if we, with our great strength,  
breach the gates and the Achaean wall,  
and if Achaeans then retreat, we'll come back  
[240] from the ships by this same route in disarray,  
leaving behind many Trojans slaughtered  
by Achaean bronze, as they defend their ships.  
That's how a prophet would interpret this,  
someone who in his heart knew the truth of signs  
and in whom the people placed their trust."

Hector with his gleaming helmet scowled and said:

"Polydamas, I don't like what you've just said.  
You know how to offer better comments.  
But if you're serious in what you say,  
[250] the gods themselves must have destroyed your wits.  
You're telling me to set aside the plans  
of thunder-loving Zeus, what he promised,  
what he himself agreed to. You tell me  
to put my faith in long-winged birds. I don't care,  
or even notice, whether they fly off  
to the right, towards Dawn's rising sun,  
or to the left, towards the evening gloom.  
Let's put our trust in great Zeus' counsel,  
for he rules all mortals, all immortals.  
[260] One omen is best—fight for your country.  
Why are you afraid of war, of battle?  
Even if the others are all slaughtered  
by Achaean ships, you need have no fear  
that you'll be killed. Your heart is neither brave  
nor warlike. But if you hold back from war,  
or with your words convince some other man  
to turn away from battle, then you'll die,  
struck by my spear."

Hector finished speaking.

Then he led his troops away. They followed him,  
[270] making a huge noise. Thunder-loving Zeus then sent  
gusting storm winds down from Ida, driving dust  
straight at the ships, to disorient Achaeans  
and give glory to Hector and the Trojans.  
Trusting Zeus' sign and their own power, they tried  
to force the great Achaean wall, dragging down  
the tower's supporting beams, smashing parapets,  
prying up projecting columns Achaeans had first put  
into the earth to shore up their wall's foundations.  
They dragged these back, hoping to undermine the wall.  
[280] But even now Danaans did not back away.  
They repaired the parapets with leather hides,  
then hurled out weapons from there across the rampart  
at the attacking Trojans.

The two Ajaxes  
moved back and forth along the wall, urging men on,  
firing up the fighting spirit in Achaeans.  
To some men they called out words of encouragement.  
Others, the ones they saw clearly moving off,  
back from the fight, they taunted with abuse.

"Friends, whether you're an Achaean leader,  
[290] or average, or one of the worst—for men  
are not all equal when it comes to battle—  
there's enough work here for everyone,  
as you yourselves well know. So let no one here  
turn back towards the ships, now you've heard  
from your commander. Keep pushing forward,  
keep shouting to each other, so that Zeus,  
Olympian lord of lightning, may grant  
we beat off this attack, repel the Trojans,  
and drive them to their city."

Shouting words like these,  
[300] the Ajaxes incited the Achaeans to fight on.

As snowflakes on a winter's day fall thick and fast,  
when Counsellor Zeus begins to snow, to demonstrate  
to men his weapons—first he calms the winds,  
then snows steadily, till he's completely covered  
high mountain peaks, jutting headlands, grassy meadows,  
fertile farms of men, shedding snow on harbours,  
inlets of the blue-grey sea, where waves roll in  
to push back snow, while, from above, all the rest  
is covered over, when Zeus storms with heavy snow—  
[310] that's how thick the stones fell then on both sides,  
some thrown on Trojans, some from Trojans on Achaeans.  
The noise reverberated all along the wall.

At that point, glorious Hector and the Trojans  
would not have crashed the gates or long bolts in the wall,  
if Counsellor Zeus had not stirred his son Sarpedon  
against Achaeans, like a lion going at short-horn cattle.  
Sarpedon held his round shield in front of him,  
forged by a smith of beautifully hammered bronze,  
the inside formed of leather stitched in layers,  
[320] held in place with golden wires encircling the rim.  
Holding this shield before him, brandishing two spears,  
he hurried forward like a mountain lion  
long ravenous for meat, whose bold spirit pushes him  
to go even into the protected sheep fold  
to attack the flock, and even if he comes across  
herdsmen with dogs and spears guarding sheep inside,  
he won't leave that fold without making an attempt,  
so he springs on one, seizes it, or is hit himself  
in the first rush, by a spear from some swift hand—  
[330] that's how godlike Sarpedon's spirit drove him then  
to assault the wall, break down the parapets.  
He called to Glaucus, Hippolochus' son:

“Glaucus,  
why are we two awarded special honours,  
with pride of place, the finest cuts of meat,

our wine cups always full in Lycia,  
where all our people look on us as gods?  
Why do we possess so much fine property,  
by the river Xanthus, beside its banks,  
rich vineyards and wheat-bearing ploughland?

[340] It's so we'll stand in the Lycian front ranks  
and meet head on the blazing fires of battle,  
so then some well-armed Lycian will say,

'They're not unworthy, those men who rule Lycia,  
those kings of ours. It's true they eat plump sheep  
and drink the best sweet wines—but they are strong,  
fine men, who fight in Lycians' front ranks.'

Ah my friend, if we could escape this war,  
and live forever, without growing old,  
if we were ageless, then I'd not fight on  
[350] in the foremost ranks, nor would I send you  
to those wars where men win glory. But now,  
a thousand shapes of fatal death confront us,  
which no mortal man can flee from or avoid.  
So let's go forward, to give the glory  
to another man or win it for ourselves."

Sarpedon spoke. Without making any move  
Glaucus agreed. They marched on straight ahead,  
leading their large company of Lycians.  
Seeing their advance, Menestheus, son of Peteos,  
[360] shuddered, for they were aiming at his part of the wall,  
bringing destruction with them. He looked around  
at the Achaean tower, hoping he might see  
some leader to protect his comrades from disaster.  
He saw both Ajaxes, so keen for war, standing there.  
Nearby was Teucer, who'd just come from his huts.  
But there was no way they'd hear him if he shouted—  
the noise was too intense. The din of smashed-in shields,  
gates, and horsehair helmets—that sound reached heaven.

The doors were now all barred. Men stood outside them,  
[370] trying to knock them down by force to pass on through.  
Menestheus quickly sent herald Thoötes to Ajax:

“Noble Thoötes, run and call Ajax—  
or rather both of them, if that’s possible—  
that would be the best solution. Here we face  
complete destruction any minute now.  
Lycian leaders are pressing us so hard,  
the ones who previously in bloody fights  
have demonstrated their ferocity.  
But if they’re having trouble where they are,  
[380] with fights breaking out, let mighty Ajax,  
son of Telamon, come by himself—  
and with him that expert archer Teucer.”

Menestheus finished. Thoötes heard him and obeyed.  
He ran along the bronze-clad Achaeans’ barricade,  
then came and, standing by both Ajaxes, spoke up at once:

“You Ajaxes, leaders of bronze-armed Achaeans,  
the son of Peteos, raised by gods, is calling you  
to go to him and help relieve the battle strain,  
if only for a while. And he’d prefer  
[390] you both come. That would be the best solution.  
There they face immediate destruction.  
Lycian leaders are pressing them so hard,  
the ones who previously in bloody fights  
have demonstrated their ferocity.  
But if you’re having trouble where you are,  
with fights erupting, then let mighty Ajax,  
son of Telamon, come by himself—  
and with him that expert archer Teucer.”

Thoötes finished. Great Telamonian Ajax then agreed.  
[400] At once he spoke winged words to Oïlean Ajax:

“Ajax, you and powerful Lycomedes,  
you both stay here, stand firm. Rouse Danaans  
to battle hard. I’ll go over there,  
deal with that fight, and come back quickly,  
once I’ve helped them out as best I can.”

That said, Telamonian Ajax left. With him  
went Teucer, his brother, both from the same father.  
Pandion also went, carrying Teucer’s curving bow.  
Moving along the wall the three men reached the place  
[410] where stout-hearted Menestheus stood. Here they found  
soldiers hard pressed in the fight. The Lycians,  
led on by powerful commanders, their kings,  
were climbing up the parapets like some black whirlwind.  
Ajax and the others jumped right into the fight.  
The noise grew more intense.

Ajax, son of Telamon,  
was the first to kill a man, brave Epicles,  
companion of Sarpedon. Ajax hit him  
with a massive jagged rock lying inside the wall,  
near the top. No man now alive could heft that stone  
[420] in his two hands, not even someone young and strong,  
but Ajax raised it high, then hurled it, smashing  
the man’s four-ridged helmet and completely crushing  
his entire skull. Epicles fell, like a diver,  
from that high tower, and his spirit left his bones.  
Teucer struck mighty Glaucus, son of Hippolochus,  
with an arrow shot from high up on the wall,  
as Glaucus was moving up. He hit him on the arm,  
on a part he saw exposed. That stopped Glaucus’ charge.  
He climbed back down the wall, but stealthily,  
[430] so no Achaean man could see that he’d been hit  
and boast aloud about it. Sarpedon was upset  
at Glaucus’ departure, when he noticed it,  
but he did not neglect to keep up the attack.  
He lunged at Alcmaon, Thestor’s son, speared him well,

then yanked his spear back, which pulled Alcmaon with it.  
He fell forward—his finely decorated armour,  
all of bronze, echoed as he crashed onto the ground.  
With his strong hands, Sarpedon grabbed the parapet and pulled.  
The whole construction fell apart, breaching the wall,  
[440] creating a passage through for many men.

Ajax and Teucer now advanced together  
to attack Sarpedon. Teucer hit him with an arrow  
on the gleaming strap around his chest which held  
his protective shield. But Zeus defended his own son  
from deadly fates to make sure he'd not be destroyed  
by the ships' sterns. Ajax then jumped in, striking his shield.  
The point did not pass through, but its momentum  
knocked Sarpedon back in the middle of his charge.  
Sarpedon withdrew a little from the parapet,  
[450] but did not retreat completely, for his heart  
was set on seizing glory. So he called out,  
rallying his godlike Lycians:

“You Lycians,  
Why is your fighting spirit lessening?  
It's hard for me, although I'm powerful,  
to breach this wall alone and carve a pathway  
to the ships. So come, battle on with me.  
The more men there are, the better the work done.”

Sarpedon called. Fearing the censure of their leader,  
troops made a heavy push around their counsellor king.  
[460] On the other side, the Argives reinforced their ranks  
inside the wall. For both sides a major fight ensued.  
Lycians, though strong, could not break the Danaan wall  
and cut their way through to the ships. Danaan spearmen  
could not push the Lycians back, repel them from the wall,  
now they'd reached it. As two men with measuring rods  
quarrel over survey markers in a common field,  
striving for a fair division in some narrow place,

that's how the parapet kept these troops apart.  
High on the wall they hacked each other's armour—  
[470] leather bucklers and large round shields across their chests,  
quivering targets. Many men were wounded,  
flesh slashed with pitiless bronze, those who turned aside  
and left their backs exposed while fighting and those  
hit right through their shields. Everywhere along the wall,  
along the parapet, men's blood was spattered  
from Trojans and Achaeans. But even so,  
Trojans could not dislodge Achaeans from the wall.  
Just as an industrious and honest woman  
holds her scales, a weight on one side, wool on the other,  
[480] until they balance, so she can glean a pittance  
for her children, that's how evenly the battle raged,  
until Zeus gave glory above all other men  
to Hector, son of Priam, who was the first man  
to jump inside that wall of the Achaeans.  
He raised a resounding yell, crying to his Trojans:

“Drive forward, you horse-taming Trojans.  
Breach that Argive wall. Then burn the ships  
with a huge fire.”

With these words, he drove them on.  
Their ears all caught his call. Hurling themselves at the wall  
[490] in a dense mass, gripping sharp spears, they began to climb.  
Hector picked up a rock lying before the gates,  
thick at its base but tapering sharply on the top.  
Two of the best working men now living  
could not lever that stone out of the ground easily  
into their cart, but Hector carried it with ease alone.  
Crooked-minded Cronos' son made it light for him.  
Just as a shepherd has no trouble carrying  
a ram's fleece in one hand, hardly noticing the weight,  
so Hector lifted up that rock, then carried it  
[500] straight to the doors guarding the strongly fitted gates,  
high double doors with two cross pieces holding them inside



secured with a single bolt. Hector moved up closer,  
planted himself before the doors, his legs wide apart  
to throw with greater force, then hurled that rock  
right at the centre of the doors. He smashed both hinges.  
The stone's momentum took it clear through the doors.  
The gates groaned loudly. The bolts were sheared right off.  
The impact of that boulder shattered all the planks.  
Glorious Hector, his face like night's swift darkness,  
[510] leapt inside. The bronze which covered his whole body  
was a terrifying glitter. In his hand he held two spears.  
Once he'd jumped inside the gates, no one moving out  
to stop him could hold him back, except the gods.  
From his eyes fire blazed. Wheeling through the throng,  
he shouted to his Trojans to climb the wall.  
His men responded to his call. Some scaled the wall,  
others came pouring through the hole made in the gates.  
Danaans were driven back among their hollow ships  
in a rout, and the noisy tumult never stopped.

Book Thirteen  
The Trojans Attack the Ships

*[Zeus turns away from the battle; Poseidon secretly helps the Achaeans, talks to the two Ajaxes and other warriors; Hector keeps advancing until stopped by close-packed Achaeans; Poseidon talks with Idomeneus; Idomeneus and Meriones meet at the huts, then return to battle; Idomeneus' exploits in the fight; Aeneas moves against him; Menelaus on the battle field; Polydamas gives advice to Hector; Hector insults Paris; Ajax and Hector exchange boasts; the armies resume the fight.]*

Thus Zeus brought Hector and the Trojans to the ships.  
Then he left the soldiers there to carry on their strife,  
their wretched endless war. He turned his shining gaze  
away from them, looking far off into the distance,  
at the land of Thracian horsemen, Mysians,  
men who fight hand to hand, proud Hippemolgi,  
who drink mare's milk, to the most righteous men of all,  
the Abii. Zeus no longer turned his radiant eyes  
toward Troy, for in his heart he did not believe  
[10] a single one of the immortal gods would move  
to give assistance to the Trojans or Danaans.

But mighty Earthshaker Poseidon was keeping watch.  
High on the tallest crest of wooded Samothrace  
he sat looking down upon the war going on.  
From that point, Mount Ida was clearly visible,  
Priam's city, too, and the Achaean ships.  
He'd come up from the sea and seated himself there,  
pitying Achaeans, as Trojans beat them back,  
and nursing a powerful anger against Zeus.  
[20] Poseidon came down quickly from that rocky peak,  
moving swiftly on his feet. Mountain peaks and woods  
trembled under Poseidon's immortal stride.  
He took three paces—with the fourth he reached his goal,  
Aegae, where his famous palace had been built  
of eternal gold and marble deep within the sea.  
Going inside, he harnessed to his chariot

swift bronze-hooved horses with flowing golden manes.  
Dressed in gold, he took his well-made golden whip,  
climbed in the chariot, then set off across the waves.  
[30] From the depths, sea creatures played around him everywhere,  
acknowledging their king. The joyful ocean parted.  
He sped on quickly, keeping the bronze axle dry.  
The prancing horses carried him to the Achaean ships.

Half-way between Tenedos and rocky Imbros,  
a wide cavern sits deep within the sea. In that spot,  
Earthshaker Poseidon reined in his horses,  
freed them from the chariot, and threw down ambrosia,  
food for them to eat. Around their feet he placed  
golden hobbles which they could not slip or break,  
[40] so they'd remain secure there till their lord's return.  
Then Poseidon moved on to the Achaean camp.

At that point, Trojans, like some fire or windstorm,  
marched behind Hector, son of Priam, in a mass,  
shouting and screaming with excitement, hoping  
to seize Achaean ships and kill the best men there.  
But Poseidon, who encircles and shakes the earth,  
roused the Argives, once he'd moved up from the sea.  
Taking on the shape and tireless voice of Calchas,  
he first spoke to the Ajaxes, both keen to fight.

[50] "You Ajaxes, you must save Achaean troops.  
Think of your fighting power, not cold flight.  
In other places, I don't fear the Trojans,  
whose powerful arms have brought hordes of them  
across our wall. For well-armed Achaeans  
will check them all. But I fear them here,  
where we may experience disaster,  
because of Hector, who leads their charge.  
He's like a man possessed, a blazing fire,  
as if he were a son of mighty Zeus.

[60] But perhaps some god will inspire the hearts

in both your chests, so you two can stand firm.  
You could get other men to do the same.  
Hector may be keen, but you could push him  
back from our swift ships, even if Zeus himself  
is driving him ahead.”

Poseidon finished speaking.  
Then, the shaker and encircler of the earth  
touched both men with his staff, infusing them  
with power, strengthening their legs and upper arms.  
Then Poseidon left. Just as a swift-winged hawk  
[70] takes off while hovering above some high sheer rock,  
swooping down over the plain to hunt another bird—  
that how Earthshaker Poseidon went off then.  
Swift Ajax, son of Oïleus, was the first  
to recognize the god. At once he spoke to Ajax,  
son of Telamon:

“Ajax, one of the gods  
dwelling on Olympus, in a prophet’s shape,  
tells us both to fight on by the ships.  
For that man was no prophet Calchas,  
who reads our omens. It was easy for me,  
[80] as he went away, to see that from the back  
by the markings on his feet and legs.  
Besides, it’s easy to recognize the gods.  
So now the spirit here in my own chest  
is even keener than before to fight.  
My upper arms have lots of energy.  
I feel it also in my lower limbs.”

Telamonian Ajax then answered Oïlean Ajax:

“I’m ready to wrap my conquering hands  
around my spear. My fighting power grows.  
[90] My feet can now move fast. So I’m eager  
to meet Hector, son of Priam, one on one—

the man whose fury so desires this fight.”

As the two Ajaxes talked like this to one another,  
relishing the warlike spirit the god had put  
into their hearts, the Encircler of the Earth  
was encouraging Achaeans at the rear,  
those whose spirits were recovering by the swift ships,  
their limbs exhausted from their anguishing ordeals,  
their hearts weighed down with sorrow at the sight  
[100] of Trojan soldiers coming over their great wall.  
When they saw that, their eyes shed tears—they thought  
they’d not escape destruction. Earthshaker Poseidon  
moved round with ease, bringing strength into the ranks.  
He moved first to encourage Teucer and Leïtus,  
then brave Peneleous, Thoas, Deïpyrus,  
then Meriones and Antilochus, both skilled  
in war shouts. He spoke to them—his words had wings:

“Shame on you Argives, nothing but young boys!  
I’m counting on your strength to save our ships.  
[110] If you’re holding back in this grim fight,  
then now’s the day the Trojans overcome us.  
Alas! What my eyes witness here astounds me,  
a dreadful thing I never thought would happen—  
Trojans moving up to our own ships,  
men who previously were shy, like deer,  
which in the woods are prey to jackals,  
wolves, and leopards, as they wander round,  
alone and frightened, with no will to fight.  
Before now, Trojans never wished to stand  
[120] confronting the fierce fighting power  
of Achaean arms, not even for a moment.  
But now, far from their city, they fight here,  
right by our hollow ships. And the reason’s this—  
our leadership’s been bad, our army slack.  
For those who quarrel with our general  
won’t protect our fast-moving ships from harm,

and so are being cut down among them there.  
But even if wide-ruling Agamemnon,  
heroic son of Atreus, is to blame,  
[130] if he really is the reason for all this,  
because he treated swift Achilles badly,  
in this battle we must hold back nothing.  
Let's fix all this—and quickly. In their hearts  
fine men can change. It's bad if you restrain  
your fighting spirit any longer,  
especially you, the best of all our troops.  
Myself, I wouldn't argue with a man  
not keen to fight because he is a coward.  
But in you my heart is disappointed.  
[140] Friends, by this hanging back you'll help to make  
an even worse disaster. Let each of you  
feel shame and indignation in his heart.  
A great battle has just started. Hector,  
skilled at war cries, is fighting by our ships.  
His force has smashed our gates, our long bolts, too.”

By rousing men this way, Earthshaker Poseidon  
pushed Achaeans into action. Round both Ajaxes  
soldiers made a stand and strongly held their ground.  
If Ares had come there, he would have approved of them,  
[150] as would Athena, who inspires men in war.  
Those known for their great bravery did not back off.  
They fought lord Hector and the Trojans spear for spear,  
shield with layered shield, in close-packed formation,  
shields linked together and helmet touching helmet,  
troops shoulder to shoulder. As men moved their heads,  
horsehair crests on shining helmet ridges touched—  
that's how densely packed they stood in that formation.  
Their strong hands held the spears out so they overlapped.  
Their minds were firm and fully ready for the fight.

[160] The Trojans came on in a mass, led by Hector,  
always charging forward, like a rolling boulder,

which some river in a winter flood dislodges  
 from a cliff beside its banks, its great flood eroding  
 what supports that lethal stone. In its fall, it bounces—  
 woods crash underneath it, as it accelerates  
 in a straight line, unimpeded—then it hits the plain,  
 where, for all its impetus, its motion stops.

That's how Hector threatened then to smash his way  
 with ease down to the sea, to Achaea's huts and ships.

[170] But when he ran into the tight-packed lines of men,  
 he came close but was held in check. Achaea's sons  
 faced up to him with swords, with double-bladed spears,  
 and pushed him back. Shaken, Hector had to give ground.  
 He let out a piercing shout, calling to his Trojans:

"Trojans, Lycians, you Dardan spearmen,  
 hold your place. Achaeans won't keep me back,  
 not for long. Even though they've set themselves  
 in a defensive wall, I think they will retreat  
 before my spear, if the greatest of the gods,

[180] Hera's loud-thundering mate, inspires me."

Saying this, Hector gave heart and spirit to each man.  
 Deïphobus, son of Priam, moved out before them,  
 full of ambitious hopes. Holding his round shield  
 in front of him, he stepped lightly forward,  
 under cover of that shield. Then Meriones  
 after taking aim, threw his shining spear at him.  
 He didn't miss. He struck that round leather shield.  
 But the spear did not break through. Before it could,  
 it snapped off at the socket. Then Deïphobus,

[190] his heart afraid of warlike Meriones' spear,  
 held his leather shield at arm's length away from him.  
 But Meriones had withdrawn into the group  
 of his companions, upset at his double loss—  
 the victory and the spear which he'd just shattered.  
 He set off for the Achaean huts and ships,  
 to fetch another spear he'd left inside his hut.

The others kept on fighting. The din was constant.  
 The first to kill a man was Teucer, son of Telamon.  
 He slew Imbrius, a spearman, son of Mentor,  
 [200] who owned many horses. He'd lived in Pedaeum  
 before Achaea's sons arrived. He married  
 one of Priam's bastard daughters, Medesicaste.  
 When the curved ships of the Danaans came to Troy,  
 he went back. The people there thought much of him.  
 He lived with Priam, who honoured him as well,  
 as if he were his child. But the son of Telamon  
 with a long spear thrust hit Imbrius below the ear.  
 Teucer pulled the weapon back. Imbrius collapsed.  
 Just as an ash tree growing on a mountain top,  
 [210] visible from every side, is chopped down by bronze,  
 its foliage crashing to the ground—that's how he fell.  
 His armour, finely decorated bronze, rang out,  
 reverberating round him. Teucer then jumped out,  
 eager to strip away his armour, but as he charged,  
 Hector threw a shining spear at him. Teucer,  
 seeing it coming, safely dodged the bronze spear point.  
 But Hector's spear hit Amphinachus, son of Cteatus,  
 Actor's son, in the chest, as he was coming up,  
 about to join the battle. He fell with a crash,  
 [220] his armour echoing around him. Hector ran up,  
 eager to tug away the helmet tightly bound  
 around the temples of brave Amphinachus.  
 But with his bright spear Ajax lunged at Hector,  
 as he came forward. He didn't touch his flesh,  
 for Hector was encased in terrifying bronze.  
 But Ajax struck the central boss on Hector's shield,  
 and his great power pushed him back. Hector withdrew  
 and left the corpses, so Achaeans dragged them off.  
 Amphinachus was carried back to the Achaean troops  
 [230] by Stichius and by noble Menestheus,  
 who led Athenian troops. The two Ajaxes,  
 still full of battle rage, hauled Imbrius away.



As two lions snatch a goat from sharp-toothed hounds,  
then take it in their jaws off through thick underbrush,  
holding it well off the ground, that's how both Ajaxes  
held Imbrius up. They stripped off his armour.  
In his anger at the killing of Amphimachus,  
Oïlean Ajax hacked through the tender neck,  
then, with a swing of his body, threw away the head,  
[240] like some ball, into the crowd. It fell into the dust,  
right at Hector's feet.

At that point, Poseidon,  
angry that his grandson Amphimachus had died  
in that harsh fight, went through Achaea's huts and ships,  
rousing Achaeans, planning trouble for the Trojans.  
He met the famous spearman Idomeneus  
coming from a comrade who'd just left the fight.  
A sharp bronze blow had struck him in the knee.  
His companions brought him in. Idomeneus,  
having issued his instructions to the healers,  
[250] was going to his hut, still eager to fight on.  
The mighty Earthshaker spoke to him, making his voice  
sound like Thoas, son of Andraemon, who ruled  
Aetolians all through Pleuron and steep Calydon,  
honoured by his people like a god:

“Idomeneus,  
Cretan counsellor, what's happened to those threats  
Achaea's sons once made against the Trojans?”

Idomeneus, Cretan leader, then said in reply:

“As far as I know, Thoas, no one's to blame.  
For all of us are very skilled in fighting,  
[260] and no one is timid here or frightened,  
or, gripped by doubts, holds back from evil war.  
Somehow it must please Cronos' mighty son  
that Achaeans perish now without a name,

far from Argos. But Thoas, in times past,  
you were a man who always stood his ground  
and encouraged other men to do the same,  
if you saw someone shirking. Don't stop now.  
Issue your instructions to each man."

Earthshaker Poseidon then replied:

"Idomeneus,  
[270] may the man who will not fight today,  
and willingly, never return from Troy.  
May he become a toy for dogs to play with.  
But get your armour and then come with me.  
If we're to work well, we must work together,  
although we're only two. For courage  
of the highest sort comes when men combine,  
even among men worth very little,  
and we two know how to battle with the best."

Having said this, Poseidon went away, a god  
[280] among the toiling men, and Idomeneus  
went into his well-made hut, strapped fine armour  
round his body, took two spears and then strode out,  
looking like a lightning bolt which Cronos' son  
grips in his hand and hurls down from bright Olympus,  
revealing in its dazzling flash a sign for mortal men,  
that's how, as he moved, bronze glinted on his chest.

Meriones, his brave attendant, met him  
close by the hut. He'd come in search of a bronze spear.  
Strong Idomeneus said to him:

"Meriones,  
[290] swift-footed son of Molus, the companion  
I cherish most, why have you come here,  
leaving the war and giving up the fight?  
Have you been hurt? Or wounded by a spear?"

Are you in pain? Or have you come with news?  
Me, I don't want to stay here in my hut.  
I want to fight."

Wise Meriones then replied:

"Idomeneus, counsellor of bronze-armed Cretans,  
I've come to get a spear, if by any chance  
there's one left in your huts. The one I had  
[300] shattered in pieces when I hit the shield  
of that arrogant fighter Deiphobus."

To this, Idomeneus, Cretan leader, then replied:

"Spears? As many as you want—in my hut  
twenty-one stand against the sunny wall,  
Trojans spears I take from warriors I kill.  
I never think of fighting hostile troops  
from far away—that's why I've got there  
brightly shining spears and embossed shields,  
with helmets, too, and body armour."

[310] Wise Meriones then answered Idomeneus:

"In my hut, too, and in my black ship,  
there's lots of Trojan loot. But it's not close—  
too inconvenient. For I can claim  
I don't neglect my fighting prowess.  
Whenever battles start, I stand and fight  
with men in front, in those encounters  
where men win glory. Other Achaeans  
might not know my fighting quality, but you,  
I think you've seen it for yourself."

[320] Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, answered Meriones:

"I know your courage. Why talk that way?"

If by the ships right now we were naming  
the best men for an ambush, where one sees  
a warrior's courage most conspicuously,  
where cowards and brave men truly show themselves—  
for a coward's colour always changes,  
the man's so nervous he just can't sit still,  
shifting around, resting first on one foot,  
then another, heart pounding in his chest,  
[330] his mind preoccupied with thoughts of death,  
and his teeth keep chattering in his mouth,  
while a brave man's colour never changes,  
he feels no great fear as he takes his place  
in the group selected for the ambush,  
no—he prays the killing will soon start.  
In such a scene no one could challenge you,  
or fault your battle rage or your strong arms.  
For if, in the middle of the fighting,  
some flying weapon hit you, or you were stabbed,  
[340] that weapon wouldn't strike your neck or body  
in the back. No, you'd be hit in front,  
in chest or stomach, as you charged ahead,  
getting your joy from fighting at the front.  
But let's not chat about this any longer,  
standing here as if we were young children.  
That could make some people very angry.  
Go in my hut. Get yourself a heavy spear.”

Idomeneus finished. Then Meriones,  
like swift Ares, quickly took a bronze spear from the hut.  
[350] Filled with an urge to fight, he went with Idomeneus.  
Just as man-killing Ares sets off to battle  
accompanied by his son Terror, just as strong,  
as fearless, who makes any man afraid,  
no matter how courageous he may be—the two of them  
setting out from Thrace, having armed themselves to fight  
Ephyreans or brave Phlegians, giving glory  
to one of them, without listening to either side—

that's how Meriones and Idomeneus,  
leaders of men, set off to battle, fully armed  
[360] in glittering bronze. Meriones was the first to speak:

“Son of Deucalion, where do you think  
we should rejoin the fight? On the right side  
of the whole army, the middle, or the left?  
To my mind, this last place is the one  
where long-haired Achaeans stand most in need.”

Cretan leader Idomeneus answered Meriones:

“In the middle there are other men  
to shore up the troops—the two Ajaxes,  
Teucer, too, the best Achaean archer,  
[370] good in hand-to-hand combat as well.  
Those warriors will give Hector, Priam's son,  
all he can handle, even if he's keen  
to fight and really strong. He'll find it hard,  
though in full battle frenzy, to overcome  
their spirit, their all-powerful hands,  
and then burn the fleet, unless Zeus himself,  
son of Cronos, hurls a flaming firebrand  
on our swift ships. That son of Telamon,  
great Ajax, will not yield to any mortal man  
[380] who eats Demeter's grain, who can be smashed  
by massive rocks or bronze. He'd not give way  
in a stand-up fight, not even to Achilles,  
who destroys ranks of men and is so fast—  
in running no one can beat Achilles.  
No, we should move toward the army's left,  
as you say, find out as soon as possible  
if we'll win glory or give it to another.”

Idomeneus spoke. Like swift Ares, Meriones  
led the way until they reached the army,  
[390] where Idomeneus had instructed him to go.

When Trojans saw mighty Idomeneus,  
like some flame, and his attendant Meriones  
in his richly shining armour, they called out  
to each other in the crowd, then made a massive charge.

By the ships' sterns both sides met in frantic battle.  
Just as keen winds sometimes whip up gusts of air,  
when dirt lies heavy on the roads, and stir up  
all the dust into huge clouds—that's how this fight  
gathered momentum then. In that crowd, men's hearts  
[400] were set to slaughter one another with sharp bronze.  
That man-destroying combat bristled with long spears  
gripped by men to hack each other's flesh apart.  
As troops moved up tightly bunched, men's eyes went blind  
in the blaze of glittering bronze, glaring helmets,  
finely polished body armour, gleaming shields.  
It would take a hard man to find joy in the sight  
of all that suffering and show no trace of sorrow.

Then two mighty sons of Cronos, at cross purposes,  
made painful trouble for those mortal warriors.  
[410] Zeus wanted victory for Hector and his Trojans,  
to give swift Achilles glory—not that he wished  
Achaea's army to be totally destroyed  
in front of Troy, but he did want to honour Thetis,  
and her great-hearted son, as well, Achilles.  
But Poseidon moved around among the Argives,  
urging action, coming out in secret from the sea,  
angry that Trojans were destroying Achaeans,  
and incensed at Zeus. Both gods had a common father—  
the same family, too—but Zeus was older and more wise.  
[420] So Poseidon avoided giving any overt help.  
He did his work in secret through the army,  
in human form, urging men to fight. So these two  
looped the cords of powerful war and deadly strife  
around both contending armies, then pulled them taut,  
a knot no one could undo or slip away from,

a knot that broke the limbs of many fighting men.

Idomeneus, though old enough to have grey hair,  
called out to the Danaans and then charged the Trojans,  
driving them away. He killed Othryoneus,  
[430] a man from Cabetes, who now lived in Troy.  
He'd come recently, responding to the news of war.  
He'd asked to marry Cassandra, most beautiful  
of Priam's daughters, without paying a bride price.  
Instead he'd promised a great action, saying he'd drive  
Achaea's sons from Troy. Old Priam had agreed,  
promising he'd give her to him. Othryoneus,  
trusting the king's promises, went off to fight.  
Aiming his shining spear at him, Idomeneus threw.  
The spear struck him as he was striding forward.  
[440] The bronze breastplate he was wearing didn't help him—  
the spear lodged in his gut. He fell down with a crash.  
Then Idomeneus cried out in triumph:

“Othryoneus,  
of all mortal men I'd consider you  
the happiest, if you'd accomplished  
all those things you promised Dardan Priam,  
so he'd give you his daughter. But come,  
we'll make you the same proposition—  
and we'll deliver. We'll give you the loveliest  
of Agamemnon's daughters, bring her here  
[450] from Argos, so you can wed her, if you,  
for your part, will join us to destroy  
the well-built city Ilion. So let's go.  
We can arrange the marriage contract  
by our seaworthy ships. We'll be generous  
about your marriage price.”

As he said this,  
warrior Idomeneus dragged him by the feet  
through lines of fighting men. But Asius then stepped up

to guard Othryoneus. He was on foot,  
 going before his horses, which his charioteer  
 [460] kept so close they breathed on Asius' shoulders.  
 He'd set his heart on hitting Idomeneus.  
 But Idomeneus was too quick for him.  
 He hit Asius with a spear below his chin,  
 forcing the bronze straight through his neck. Asius fell.  
 Just as a mountain oak, poplar, or tall pine falls,  
 cut down by working men with freshly sharpened axes,  
 to make timbers for some ship, that how Asius lay,  
 stretched out there before his chariot and horses,  
 gagging, his fingers clawing at the bloody dust.  
 [470] His charioteer, scared out of whatever wits he'd had,  
 didn't think of wheeling round his horses to escape  
 his enemies' hands. Taking aim, bold Antilochus  
 speared him in the stomach. The bronze breastplate he wore  
 was no protection. The spear struck in his stomach.  
 He fell out of the well-made chariot gasping.  
 Antilochus, brave Nestor's son, then drove the horses  
 from the Trojans over to well-armed Achaeans.

Grieving the loss of Asius, Deïphobus  
 came up to Idomeneus and hurled his polished spear.  
 [480] Idomeneus, seeing him clearly, dodged the spear,  
 covering himself with the round shield he carried,  
 one made of bull's hide and shining bronze in rings,  
 with two cross braces fitted on. Idomeneus  
 crouched down underneath this shield. The flying bronze  
 grazed the metal with a rasping sound. But that throw  
 from the strong arm of Deïphobus wasn't wasted.  
 His spear hit Hypsenor, son of Hippasus,  
 his people's shepherd, low down in the liver.  
 His legs collapsed. Deïphobus gave a noisy shout,  
 boasting aloud about his triumph:

[490] "Now Asius  
 is avenged! As he goes down to Hades,



the mighty gatekeeper, his heart, I think,  
will be pleased I've given him an escort."

Deiphobus spoke. His boast depressed the Argives,  
and gave special pain to warlike Antilochus.  
Despite his sorrow, Antilochus did not forget  
his comrade. He came running up and stood over him,  
with his shield above his body. Two loyal companions,  
Mecistus, son of Echius, and Alastor, bent down,  
[500] then carried Hypsenor groaning to the hollow ships.

Idomeneus did not relent his fighting frenzy.  
He kept on trying to wrap some Trojan soldier  
in death's dark night or to fall himself, defending  
Achaeans from disaster. He killed Alcathous,  
dear warrior son of divinely bred Aesyetes,  
Anchises' son-in-law. He'd married Hippodamia,  
eldest of the daughters. Her mother and father  
had set their heart's love on her when she was at home.  
She surpassed all girls her age in beauty, work,  
[510] good sense. That's why the very finest man in Troy  
had married her. Now at Idomeneus' hands  
Poseidon slaughtered Alcathous. The god cast a spell—  
he covered his bright eyes and froze his glistening limbs,  
so he couldn't flee or dodge the spear, but stood there,  
motionless, like a pillar or some high leafy tree.  
Warrior Idomeneus hit him with his spear  
square in the chest, shattering the bronze breastplate,  
which earlier had kept his skin untouched by death.  
But now it cracked aloud as the spear ripped through.  
[520] He fell with a crash, the spear stuck in his chest.  
The power of his heart beat made that spear shaft quiver,  
right to the butt, until great Ares stilled its force.  
Idomeneus then spoke out, boasting aloud  
about his triumph:

"Deiphobus,

since you like to brag this way, my friend,  
shall we now call it even, three men killed  
a fair exchange for one? Why don't you step out—  
face me here, so you can see for yourself  
what kind of child of Zeus confronts you.

[530] Zeus first fathered Minos to rule Crete.

Minos then fathered worthy Deucalion.  
Deucalion fathered me, a king ruling  
many men in spacious Crete. Now my ships  
have brought me here as a destroying force,  
against you, your father, and other Trojans.”

Idomeneus spoke. Deïphobus was of two minds—  
should he step back and pick out a companion  
from stout-hearted Trojans, or should he try to fight  
all on his own? As he thought about his options,

[540] he thought his best plan was to find Aeneas.

He met him standing at the back, among the crowd,  
for Aeneas, who excelled among the warriors,  
always resented Priam for not showing him  
enough respect. Deïphobus approached Aeneas,  
then spoke to him—his words had wings.

“Aeneas, Trojan counsellor,  
now you must defend your brother-in-law,  
if you feel any grief. It's urgent.  
Come with me and fight for Alcathous,  
who was your sister's husband. He raised you

[550] as an infant in his home. Now Idomeneus,  
that celebrated spearman, has just killed him.”

Deïphobus finished. His words stirred the heart  
in Aeneas' chest. He strode off to face Idomeneus,  
fiercely eager for this fight. But no fear gripped  
Idomeneus, as if he were some pampered child.  
He stood his ground. Just as a wild mountain boar,  
trusting its own strength, stands firm against a mob,

a crowd of men who chase it in some lonely place,  
with hair bristling along its back, its eyes lit up,  
[560] like fire, gnashing its teeth ferociously, eager  
to toss dogs and men aside—that's just the way  
the famous spearman Idomeneus stood then,  
without backing off, as swift Aeneas came at him.  
He called out to the companions he could see,  
Ascalaphus, Aphareus, Deïpyrus, Meriones,  
Antilochus—all famous for their war shouts.  
Idomeneus yelled, urging them to help him—  
his words had wings:

“My friends—over here!  
I'm alone, so bring some help. I'm worried.  
[570] Aeneas, who moves fast, is coming at me.  
He's powerful at killing men in battle.  
He's also in the flower of his youth,  
when strength is at its peak. Were I his age  
and both of us had equal courage,  
he or I would soon win a huge victory.”

Idomeneus finished. All his companions,  
united by a common spirit, came at his call.  
They stood beside him as a unit, sloping their shields  
down from their shoulders. On his side, Aeneas  
[580] called out to those companions he'd caught sight of—  
Deïphobus, Paris, and Agenor—leaders,  
just as he was, of those Trojan warriors.  
Men came up behind them. Just as a flock of sheep  
follows the ram from pasture to their water,  
filling the shepherd's heart with joy, so Aeneas  
was happy in his chest to see that band of soldiers  
standing there around him.

The men now battled on,  
close combat with long spears, over Alcatous.  
As they lunged at one another in the crowd of men,

[590] their bronze chests echoed with the fearful noise.

Two men stood out above the rest for bravery—  
Aeneas and Idomeneus, equals of Ares,  
striving to slash each other's flesh with ruthless bronze.  
First, Aeneas threw a spear at Idomeneus,  
who, seeing it coming, eluded the bronze spear,  
which then impaled itself in earth, still quivering—  
it had flown from that strong hand but missed its target.  
Then Idomeneus struck Oenomaus in the stomach,  
smashing the front plate on his body armour.

[600] His bowels spilled out, as he dropped in the dust  
and clutched the dirt. Idomeneus yanked his long spear  
out of the corpse. But he couldn't strip away  
any of the lovely armour on its shoulders,  
for he was being attacked with flying weapons.  
His lower limbs were no longer fast enough  
for him to charge in quickly after his own spear  
or dodge aside. He could keep grim death at bay  
in pitched battle, but that's all his legs could do—  
they were too slow for him to run away from combat.

[610] As Idomeneus retreated step by step,  
Deïphobus tried to hit him with a shining spear—  
he'd always hated Idomeneus—but he missed,  
hitting Ascalaphus instead, a son of Ares.  
The heavy spear passed straight through his shoulder.  
He collapsed in the dust, hands clawing at the ground.

Loud-voiced mighty Ares was not yet aware  
his own son had fallen in the killing zone.  
He sat on the highest part of Mount Olympus,  
under golden clouds, confined by Zeus' will,

[620] along with the rest of the immortal gods,  
forbidden to participate in warfare.

The close fighting over Ascalaphus continued.  
Deïphobus stripped off the corpse's shining helmet.  
But Meriones, like swift Ares, jumped out

and speared him in the arm. The plumed helmet,  
 with a clang, fell on the ground. Like a vulture,  
 Meriones leapt out again, pulled the heavy spear  
 out of his upper arm, then moved back to his group,  
 But Deïphobus' blood brother Polites,  
 [630] with both arms round his waist, hauled him from the fight,  
 until he came to his swift horses in the rear.  
 They were standing there, waiting for him,  
 with charioteer and finely decorated chariot.  
 These took him away, back to the city, tired out,  
 moaning heavily, blood dripping from his wounded arm.  
 The rest kept fighting, with no let up in the noise.

Then Aeneas went at Aphareus, son of Caletor,  
 as he was facing him. His sharp spear hit his throat.  
 Aphareus' head snapped back—his shield and helmet  
 [640] fell down on him, and Death, which takes the living spirit,  
 gathered him in.

Antilochus kept watching Thoön.  
 As he turned, he rushed up and stabbed him,  
 severing the vein which runs the full length of the back  
 up to the neck—Antilochus slashed through this vein.  
 Thoön fell, stretching his arms up from the dust,  
 reaching to his friends. Antilochus jumped on him  
 and began to strip the armour on his shoulders.  
 But he kept his eyes alert, for he was surrounded,  
 with Trojan men on every side, thrusting their spears  
 [650] at his broad shining shield. But their ruthless bronze  
 could not scratch the tender skin behind that shield,  
 for Earthshaker Poseidon was guarding Nestor's son,  
 even in that hail of spears. So Antilochus  
 never moved far from his enemies. He kept going,  
 ranging around among them. His spear never stopped,  
 always in motion, quivering, his eager heart  
 keen to throw that spear at someone or attack him.

As Antilochus went through that crowd of men,  
 he was observed by Adamas, son of Asius,  
 [660] who charged close in—his sharp bronze spear struck  
 the middle of his shield. But dark-haired Poseidon,  
 unwilling to concede Antilochus' life,  
 made the spear point fail—so part of it got stuck  
 in Antilochus' shield, like the charred end of a stick,  
 and half fell on the ground. Adamas then withdrew,  
 returning to the group of his companions,  
 avoiding death. But Meriones went after him,  
 as he moved back, and hit him underneath his navel,  
 in the scrotum, the most agonizing way  
 [670] for men to perish miserably in battle.  
 When that spear struck Adamas, he doubled up,  
 bent down over the spear, writhing like a bull  
 which farmers in the mountains bind with willow shoots  
 and drag along by force, against the creature's will.  
 That's how Adamas, once hit, twitched there for a while,  
 but not for long. Warlike Meriones, running up,  
 pulled out his spear. Then darkness covered up his eyes.

At close quarters, Helenus then hit Deïpyrus,  
 striking his helmet with a massive Thracian sword,  
 [680] knocking it off, so it fell to earth and rolled away  
 among the soldiers' feet. Some Achaean picked it up.  
 Deïpyrus' eyes grew cloudy, and darkness took him.

Atreus' son Menelaus, skilled at war shouts,  
 was overcome with grief. He stepped up, threatening  
 and waving a sharp spear at warrior Helenus.  
 Helenus pulled back on the centre of his bow.  
 They both let fly together—one with a sharp spear,  
 the other with an arrow from his bowstring.  
 Priam's son hit Menelaus with his arrow—  
 [690] on the front plate of his armour, in the chest.  
 The keen arrow bounded off. Just as black beans or peas  
 fly off a broad shovel on large threshing floors,

driven by the sharp wind or winnower's strength—  
that's how the arrow point glanced off the breast plate,  
then flew aside, away from glorious Menelaus.

When Atreus' son Menelaus, skilled at war shouts,  
threw his spear, he hit Helenus in the hand,  
the one which held the finely polished bow.

The bronze sliced through his hand into the bow.

[700] Helenus drew back into the group of his companions,  
escaping death. He let his hand hang by his side,  
dragging the ash spear behind him, till brave Agenor  
pulled it out. Agenor then bound up his hand  
in a strip of twisted sheep's wool and made a sling,  
which his attendant carried for him, his people's shepherd.

Then Peisander made straight for glorious Menelaus.

But an evil fate was leading him towards his death,  
destroyed at your hands, Menelaus, in lethal war.

When the two men had approached each other,

[710] standing at close range, Menelaus threw but missed—  
his spear point was deflected. Then Peisander struck,  
hitting glorious Menelaus' shield, but his bronze  
could not break through. The broad shield withstood the blow,  
which snapped the spear off at its socket. But in his heart,  
Peisander still felt a joyful hope of victory.

The son of Atreus pulled out his silver-studded sword,  
then leapt at Peisander, who, from under his own shield,  
produced a fine axe of well-cast bronze, with a long shaft  
of finely-polished olive wood. The two men met.

[720] Peisander struck Menelaus on his helmet ridge,  
at the top, just underneath the horsehair crest.

But as Peisander charged, Menelaus hit him—  
right on the forehead, just above his nose.

The bones cracked. Both his bloody eyes fell out  
into the dirt beside his feet. Peisander doubled up  
and then collapsed. Menelaus stepped on his chest,  
stripped off his armour, crying out in triumph:

“You arrogant Trojans, who can’t get enough  
of war’s destructive noise, this is the way  
[730] you’ll go back from these ships of the Danaans,  
who ride fast horses. You’re not reluctant,  
where insults and dishonour are concerned,  
to go after me, you worthless mongrel dogs,  
without fearing in your hearts harsh anger  
from thundering Zeus, god of hospitality,  
who some day will destroy your lofty town.  
For you carried off the wife I married,  
lots of my property, and brought them here,  
although she’d entertained you royally  
[740] in her own home. Now you’re madly eager  
to throw deadly fire on our sea-going ships,  
to kill Achaean warriors. But you’ll be stopped,  
no matter how much you now want to fight.  
O Father Zeus, people say for wisdom  
you exceed all others, men and gods alike.  
Yet all this comes from you, the way you show  
favours to these insolent men, these Trojans,  
whose aggressive spirit has no limit,  
who can never get enough of battle,  
[750] though they’re not winning in an equal fight.  
To all things there is a limit set—to sleep,  
to love, sweet songs, and gorgeous dancing.  
A man would rather have his fill of these, not war.  
But Trojans here are gluttons for a fight.”

After Menelaus spoke, he stripped the body,  
then gave its bloody armour to his comrades.  
He went back and rejoined those fighting in the front.

The next man to charge against him was Harpalion,  
son of king Pylamenes, who came to fight at Troy  
[760] following his dear father. But he never did return  
to his own country. With his spear at close range,  
he struck the centre of Menelaus’ shield,



but the bronze could not penetrate completely.  
So he drew back into the throng of his companions,  
escaping death. He looked around him carefully,  
as he moved, so no warrior's bronze would hit his flesh.  
But on his way back, Meriones shot at him.  
The bronze-tipped arrow hit his right buttock, pushing  
underneath the bone, going right into the bladder.

[770] He sat down there, in the arms of his dear comrades,  
choking his life away, convulsing on the ground,  
like some worm. His dark blood gushed out, soaking the earth.  
Brave Paphlagonians came up to help Harpalion.  
They set him in a chariot and took him away,  
full of sorrow, to sacred Ilion. His father  
went back with them, in tears, for he could find  
no satisfaction for the slaughter of his son.

Harpalion's death made Paris really angry.  
For with the Paphlagonians he'd welcomed Paris  
[780] as his guest. In a fit of anger, Paris shot off  
a bronze-tipped arrow. Now, there was a certain man  
called Euchenor, son of Polyidus the prophet,  
a rich, brave man, who lived at home in Corinth.  
He'd set sail knowing full well his deadly fate,  
for many times his brave old father, Polyidus,  
had told him—he would either die in his own home  
from some foul disease or be destroyed by Trojans  
among Achaean ships. Euchenor thus escaped  
both the stiff penalty exacted by Achaeans  
[790] and deadly sickness—he felt worthy in his heart.

The arrow Paris shot hit this man by his jaw,  
right on the ear. At once his spirit left his limbs,  
and hateful darkness carried him away.

Thus the men keep fighting like a blazing fire.  
But Hector, dear to Zeus, hadn't heard and didn't know  
how the Achaeans were killing off his army  
at the left end of the ships. Glory in this battle

would soon have been awarded to Achaeans—  
 that's how powerfully Earthshaker Poseidon,  
 [800] who enfolds the earth, was driving Argives forward,  
 helping them with his own strength as well. But Hector  
 charged on from where he'd first breached the gates and wall,  
 smashing up the close-packed ranks of the Danaans,  
 right to the ships of Protesilaus and Ajax,  
 drawn up on the beach beside the blue-grey sea.  
 By these ships the wall was lowest. So there the fight  
 with men and horses was particularly fierce.  
 There Boeotians fought, Ionians in long tunics,  
 Locrians, Phthians, and glittering Epeians.  
 [810] But they had trouble standing up to Hector's charge,  
 as he attacked the ships. They couldn't push him back,  
 away from them, as he came up, like an inferno,  
 not even the finest men of the Athenians,  
 with their leader Menestheus, son of Peteos,  
 alongside Pheidas, Stichius, and brave Bias,  
 with the Epeians led by Meges, son of Phyleus,  
 Amphion, Dracius, and the Phthians,  
 led by Medon and Podarces, both brave men.  
 Medon was a bastard son of noble Oïleus  
 [820] and Ajax's brother. But he lived in Phylace,  
 far from his native land, for he'd killed a man,  
 one related to Eriopis, his stepmother,  
 wife of Oïleus. Podarcus was Iphicles' son,  
 child of Phylaces. These men in their armour  
 were fighting at the head of those brave Phthians,  
 standing with Boeotians to defend the ships.

Ajax, son of Oïleus, would not move away  
 from Ajax, son of Telamon—he fought beside him.  
 Just as in a meadow a pair of wine-dark oxen  
 [830] strain with the same heart to pull a jointed plough,  
 beads of sweat running from the bottom of their horns,  
 with nothing but a well-polished yoke between them,  
 as they labour down the furrows, till the plough

slices through the edges of the field—that's the way  
the two Ajaxes stood together then, side by side.  
Telamonian Ajax had many comrades with him,  
courageous soldiers, who'd relieve him of his shield  
when his sweaty limbs grew tired. But the Locrians  
had not come forward with brave Oïlean Ajax—  
[840] they lacked courage for fighting in the killing zone,  
for they had no plumed bronze helmets, no round shields,  
and no ash spears. They'd come to Troy with Ajax  
trusting in their bows and slings of twisted sheep's wool.  
Later they battled on with these, firing thick volleys,  
breaking ranks of Trojans. So one group of men,  
those with glittering weapons, fought at the front  
against bronze-armed Hector and his Trojans,  
while another shot from safe positions at the back.  
The arrows drained the Trojans' fighting spirit.

[850] The Trojans would then have been shamed into retreat,  
moving back from the ships and huts to windy Troy,  
if Polydamas hadn't approached bold Hector, saying:

“You're a difficult man to deal with, Hector,  
for you don't take advice. God has made you  
more excellent in war than other men.  
Thus, in council you want us all to think  
you're better than the rest. But in yourself  
you can't be everything at once. The gods  
make one man superior in warfare,  
[860] another in the dance, or singing,  
or playing the lyre. For some others,  
all-seeing Zeus puts wisdom in their hearts—  
and from these men many people benefit,  
many are saved, for such men know what's right.  
So I'll say what I think it's best to do.  
All around you war's fiery circle rages,  
but some brave Trojans, having breached the wall,  
are standing idle with their weapons.

Others, scattered around the ships, fight on—  
[870] but in small groups against a larger mass.  
You should fall back, then summon here to you  
all our finest men. Then we can weigh our options—  
whether we should assault the well-decked ships,  
in the hope god wants to give us victory,  
or whether, for safety's sake, we leave the ships.  
I'm afraid Achaeans may avenge the hurt  
we gave them yesterday, since by their ships  
there sits a man with appetite for war—  
I think he may change his decision not to fight.”

[880] Polydamas finished. His advice pleased Hector.  
At once he jumped out of his chariot to the ground.  
He took up his weapons and spoke—his words had wings:

“Polydamas, keep all the best men here.  
I'll go back to battle over there,  
returning when I've told them what to do.”

Saying that, Hector strode off, like a snowy mountain,  
going by Trojans and allies, shouting instructions.  
When these men heard what Hector wanted them to do,  
they all came running over to Polydamas,  
[890] kind son of Panthous. Hector marched through the ranks  
of their best warriors, looking for Deïphobus,  
brave prince Helenus, Adamas, son of Asius,  
and Asius, son of Hyrtacus. But these men  
had not come through unscathed. Some were already dead,  
killed at Argive hands by the sterns of Achaea's ships.  
Others inside the wall had spear or arrow wounds.  
On the left flank of that destructive battle,  
Hector met Paris, husband of fair-haired Helen,  
encouraging his comrades, urging them to fight.  
[900] Approaching him, Hector taunted Paris:

“You may be the best-looking man around,

but you're a useless woman-mad seducer.  
Where are Deiphobus, brave prince Helenus,  
Adamas, son of Asius, and Asius,  
son of Hyrtacus? Where's Othryoneus?  
Tell me that. All of high Ilion  
has been destroyed. Your own death is certain."

Then noble Alexander answered Hector:

"Hector, you're now blaming someone innocent.  
[910] At other times I have held back from war,  
but not this time. When my mother bore me,  
she did not produce a total coward.  
Since the moment you told your men to fight  
beside the ships, we've been in combat here,  
in a constant struggle with Danaans.  
Those comrades you just mentioned have been killed.  
Only Deiphobus and brave Helenus  
have gone back, both wounded in the arm—  
hit by long spears—but Zeus saved them from death.  
[920] But now, lead on where your spirit tells you,  
we'll follow you quite willingly. I don't think  
we'll show a lack of courage while our strength holds out.  
Once that goes, no matter how keen a man may be,  
he can no longer continue in the war."

Warrior Paris' words won his brother's heart.  
They set off for the centre of that noisy battle,  
with Cebriones, noble Polydamas,  
Phalces, Orthaeus, godlike Polyphetes,  
Palmys, Ascanius, Morus, son of Hippotion,  
[930] men who'd come from fertile Ascania the day before  
as reinforcements. Now Zeus incited them to war.  
The Trojans advanced. Just like blasts of storming winds  
striking the earth under Father Zeus' thunder,  
then with a roar slicing into the sea, whipping up  
a crowd of surging waves across a booming ocean,

with lines of arching foam, one following another—  
that how Trojans marched behind their leaders,  
in a tight formation, one behind the other,  
glittering in bronze. Like man-destroying Ares,  
[940] Hector, son of Priam, led them. He held his shield  
in front of him, an even circle made of hide,  
densely packed, then covered with a solid layer  
of hammered bronze, helmet gleaming round his temples.  
He moved out, testing all parts of the Achaean lines,  
to see if they'd retreat from him as he came forward  
covered by his shield. But Achaean hearts stood firm.  
The first fighter to challenge Hector was great Ajax,  
who marched out with long strides and shouted:

“Come closer,  
you poor man. Why try to scare the Argives?  
[950] When it comes to fighting, we're not ignorant.  
Zeus' harsh whip has lashed Achaeans back,  
and your heart now wants to break our ships.  
But we've got hands to raise in their defence.  
In fact, I think it's far more likely now  
we'll take your well-built city—these hands of ours  
will smash it long before you seize our ships.  
I say the time has come when you'll run back,  
praying to Father Zeus and other gods,  
to make your horses with their lovely manes  
[960] fly as fast as hawks, when they speed through dust  
to get you to your city on the plain.”

As Ajax spoke, a bird flew out on the right,  
a high-flying eagle. Encouraged by the omen,  
the Achaean soldiers responded with a cheer.  
Glorious Hector then said to Ajax in reply:

“What are you saying, you stupid boaster?  
I wish it were as certain that I was  
the son of aegis-bearing Zeus himself,

with Hera for my mother, and honoured  
[970] like Apollo or Athena, as I am that this day  
brings disaster to the Argives—all of them.  
You'll lie among the dead, if you dare  
to stand up to my long spear. It will slice  
your lily skin. Then once you fall down there,  
beside Achaea's ships, Trojan dogs and birds  
will feed upon your flesh and fat."

Hector spoke.  
Then he advanced—the troops moved up behind him,  
making a huge din, even from soldiers at the back.  
On the other side, the Argives raised a shout.  
[980] They hadn't lost their courage. They'd held their line  
against the finest Trojans launching their attack.  
The noise from both sides went up into bright Zeus' sky

Book Fourteen  
Zeus Deceived

*[Nestor leaves his hut to look around, sees the Achaeans in retreat; Nestor meets the wounded kings inspecting the field; Agamemnon advises going home; Odysseus responds harshly to the suggestion; Diomedes advises them to visit the battle; Poseidon continues to encourage the Argives; Hera thinks of a plan to deceive Zeus; she prepares herself to look seductive; Hera gets a Aphrodite's love charms; Hera visits Sleep and gets his cooperation; Hera visits Zeus on Ida, has sex with him, and Zeus goes to sleep; Poseidon rallies the Argives and leads them into battle; Ajax wounds Hector badly with a rock; Hector withdraws; the killings continue on both sides, the Argives getting the better of the battle.]*

As Nestor sat drinking wine, listening to the noise of war,  
he said to Asclepius' son:

“Noble Machaon,  
think about how this battle will end up—  
the shouting from our young men by the ships  
is getting louder. You should sit here for now.  
Drink some sparkling wine, till Hecamede  
with the lovely hair draws you a warm bath  
and washes the dried blood off your body.  
I'll go to a lookout, see what's going on.”

[10] Nestor took the well-made shield belonging to his son,  
horse-taming Thrasymedes. It lay there in the hut,  
gleaming bronze. The son was fighting with his father's shield.  
Nestor took a strong spear with a sharp bronze point,  
then stood outside the hut. At once he saw a shameful sight—  
Achaeans in retreat, pushed back by their enemies,  
high-hearted Trojans. The Achaean wall was breached.  
Just as the great sea heaves with a sullen purple swell,  
anticipating the swift passage of sharp winds—  
but uncertainly—so its waves have no direction,  
[20] until some steady storm blows down from Zeus—that's how  
the old man was lost in thought, his heart divided  
between two courses. Should he seek out the crowd



of swift-riding Danaans, or see if he could find  
Agamemnon, son of Atreus, his people's shepherd?  
As he thought it over, the best course seemed to be  
to find the son of Atreus.

Meanwhile, the other men  
kept up the fight, kept on butchering each other.  
Around their bodies the unwearied bronze rang out,  
as they thrust with swords and double-bladed spears.  
[30] Then Nestor came across the kings the gods sustain—  
they were walking round among the ships—all the ones  
whom bronze had wounded—Diomedes and Odysseus,  
along with Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

They'd drawn their ships on shore beside the blue-grey sea,  
far from battle, dragging up their own ships first,  
hauled them inland, then built the wall along the sterns.  
The beach was wide, but not long enough for all the fleet.  
The army didn't have much space to hold the boats.  
So they'd set the ships in rows, and thus filled up  
[40] the whole wide coastal bay between the headlands.  
The kings had set out in one group together,  
each one leaning on a spear, to see the fighting  
and check the progress of the war. Deep in their chests  
they were very troubled. When old Nestor met them,  
the anxiety in their Achaean hearts  
was even more acute. Mighty Agamemnon  
spoke to him and said:

"Nestor, son of Neleus,  
great glory of Achaeans, why are you here?  
Why have you left the battle? I'm afraid  
[50] that mighty Hector will make good those words  
he used to threaten us, in that speech  
he gave his Trojans, saying he'd not return  
from our ships to Troy until he'd burned them  
and slaughtered all the men. That's what he said.

And now it's happening. What chaos!  
Other well-armed Achaeans in their hearts  
must be angry with me, like Achilles,  
unwilling to continue fighting by our ships."

Geranian horseman Nestor answered Agamemnon:

[60] "What's happened so far is over, done with—  
not even high-thundering Zeus himself  
could make that something else—our wall is down.  
We put our faith in it as a firm defence  
for ships and for ourselves. At this moment,  
men are constantly in action by our ships,  
with no relief. Whichever way you look,  
even if you really try, you cannot tell  
from what direction we are being attacked.  
It's all confused. The killing is haphazard.

[70] The battle shouts fill heaven. As for us,  
if thinking is a help, we should consider  
how these events will end. I'm not saying  
we should rejoin the fight—that's not expected  
from those who have been wounded."

Agamemnon, king of men, replied:

"Nestor,  
since the men now fight at our ships' sterns,  
and since our strong wall and ditch are useless—  
something crushing for Danaans, whose hearts  
had trusted they'd provide a firm defence

[80] and keep our soldiers and our ships secure—  
from this I gather that almighty Zeus  
must enjoy it when Achaeans perish  
without a name, right here, far from Argos.  
I felt when Zeus was giving the Danaans  
his full assistance, and I know it now,  
when he gives the glory to the Trojans,

like blessed gods, while draining all our strength,  
our fighting spirit. But come now, let's agree  
to what I propose. Let's drag down those ships  
[90] drawn up there in line closest to the surf  
and pull them all into the sacred sea,  
and moor them with stones in deeper water,  
until the coming of immortal night—  
which may prevent the Trojans' fighting.  
Then we can shift the other ships. To flee  
from ruin, even at night, brings no shame.  
It's better to escape one's own destruction—  
to run off—than let it overtake you."

In response to this, Odysseus scowled and said:

[100] "Son of Atreus, how can such words as these  
come from your mouth? I'm finished with you.  
I wish you ruled some other army,  
some useless men, and were not our leader.  
Zeus sees to it that from our youthful days  
to our old age we must grind away  
at wretched war, till, one by one, we die.  
Are you really willing to leave Troy,  
city of wide streets, for whose sake we've borne  
so many evils? You'd better keep that quiet—  
[110] another Achaean man may hear the news,  
learn what you've proposed in words no man  
should ever let pass through his mouth at all,  
no man whose heart has any understanding  
of what's appropriate to say, no one  
who is a sceptred king whom men obey—  
as many as those Argive troops you lead.  
From what you've said, I think you've lost your mind.  
In the middle of a fight, you tell us now  
to drag our well-decked ships down to the sea,  
[120] so that, though Trojans may be winning now,  
they'd get what they most pray for realized—

the complete annihilation of us all.  
For once we drag our ships into the sea,  
Achaeans then will never go on fighting—  
the whole time they'll be looking over here  
and pulling out from battle. Then your plan,  
you leader of the army, will destroy it."

Agamemnon, king of men, replied:

"Odysseus,  
that harsh rebuke of yours has stung my heart.  
[130] But I'm not the man to tell Achaea's sons  
to drag our well-decked ships into the sea  
if they're not willing. So show me someone  
with a better plan than mine—young or old—  
I'll welcome it."

Then Diomedes,  
skilled in battle shouts, spoke up:

"That man's close by.  
We've no need to search too long, if you'll listen,  
without any one of you resenting me  
because I'm younger than the rest of you.  
I claim worthy descent through Tydeus,  
[140] who lies in Thebes hidden underground.  
Portheus had three fine sons in Pleuron  
and steep Calydon—Agrius, Melus,  
and a third, Oeneus, my father's father.  
He was the most courageous of them all.  
He stayed there, but my father roamed around.  
He came to Argos. That was what Zeus willed—  
other gods, as well. He married a daughter  
of Adrestus, lived in a prosperous home,  
with many wheat-bearing fields and orchards  
[150] planted all through his estate—and many sheep.  
He was the best of all the Argive spearman.

You must have heard all this and know it's true.  
So you would never label me by birth a coward,  
a weakling, and thus demean what I advise,  
if what I say is good. We must go back there,  
to the battle, though we're wounded. Once there,  
we'll stand back from combat, beyond the range  
of flying weapons, in case someone is hit  
and gets more wounds. But we'll urge on the others,  
[160] even those who, wallowing in their feelings,  
have stood aside, without fighting up to now."

They listened well to Diomedes and agreed.  
So they set off, led by Agamemnon, king of men.

Famous Earthshaker Poseidon saw all this.  
He walked among them in the shape of an old man.  
Taking Atreus' son Agamemnon by his right hand,  
Poseidon talked to him—his words had wings.

"Son of Atreus, in Achilles' chest  
his destructive heart is really happy now,  
[170] to see Achaeans slaughtered and in flight.  
He's not in his right mind, not in the least.  
Well, he may be killed anyway—some god  
may strike him. As for you, the blessed gods  
aren't angry with you over anything,  
so Troy's kings and leaders may yet make dust  
while scurrying over this wide plain,  
while you watch them running to their city,  
back from these huts."

Poseidon said these words,  
then, as he raced off to the plain, let out a mighty roar—  
[180] as loud as the din from nine or ten thousand men  
when on a battleground they first clash with Ares.  
That's how loud the sound was which came out then  
from powerful Earthshaker's chest, infusing

great strength in each man's heart to keep on going,  
to fight on there and not to pause for rest.

As this was happening, on a peak of Mount Olympus  
Hera of the golden throne was standing watching.  
She recognized her brother-in-law at once,  
as he kept busy in the war where men win glory,  
[190] for he was her brother and her husband's, too.  
Hera's heart was pleased. She looked across at Zeus,  
sitting on the highest peak on top of Ida,  
with its many fountains. Hatred filled her heart.  
So ox-eyed queen Hera then began considering  
how she might deceive the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus.  
In her heart the best course of action seemed to be  
to make herself look most attractive, go to Ida,  
then see if Zeus would want to lie down with her,  
embrace her, and make love. Then she could pour out  
[200] on his eyelids and his crafty mind a deep warm sleep.  
She went off to her bedroom, which Hephaestus,  
her dear son, had made for her, with close-fitting doors  
set against their posts, secured with a secret lock,  
which no other god could open. She went in there,  
then closed the shining doors. First, with ambrosia  
she washed from her lovely body all the stains,  
then rubbed her skin with fragrant oil, divinely sweet,  
made specially for her. If this perfume were merely stirred  
inside Zeus' bronze-floored house, its scent would then diffuse  
[210] throughout heaven and earth. She used this perfume  
all over her fair body, then arranged her hair.  
With her own hands she combed her shining locks in braids,  
a stunning style for an immortal goddess.  
Then she wrapped around herself a heavenly robe,  
which Athena made for her from silky fabric,  
adorning it with gorgeous embroidery.  
She pinned the robe around her breast with golden brooches.  
On her waist she put a belt with a hundred tassels.  
Hera then fixed earrings in her pierced ear lobes,

[220] each with three gemstones, an enchanting glitter.  
Next the queen of goddesses placed on her head  
a fine new dazzling shawl, white as the sun.  
She then slipped lovely sandals over her sleek feet.

Once Hera had dressed her body in this finery,  
she left the room and summoned Aphrodite.  
Some distance from the other gods, she said to her:

“My dear child, will you agree to do  
what I ask of you, or will you refuse,  
because you’re angry with me in your heart,  
[230] since I help Danaans and you aid the Trojans?”

Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite answered her:

“Hera,  
honoured goddess, daughter of great Cronos,  
say what’s on your mind. My heart tells me  
I should do what you ask, if I can,  
if it’s something that can be carried out.”

Then queen Hera, with her devious mind, replied:

“Then give me Love and Sexual Desire,  
which you use to master all immortals,  
and mortal men as well. I’m going to visit  
[240] the limits of this all-nourishing earth,  
to see Oceanus, from whom the gods arose,  
and mother Tethys, the two who reared me,  
taking good care of me inside their home,  
once they got me from Rhea, that time Zeus,  
who sees far and wide, forced Cronos  
underground, under the restless seas.  
I’m going to visit them. And I’ll resolve  
their endless quarrel. For a long time now,  
they’ve stayed apart from one another,

[250] not sharing love there in the marriage bed,  
since anger fills their hearts. If my words  
could reconcile the hearts in these two gods,  
bring them to bed again, once more in love,  
they'd think of me with loving reverence."

Laughter-loving Aphrodite answered Hera:

"It wouldn't be appropriate for me  
to say no to your demand, since you sleep  
in the arms of Zeus, the greatest of the gods."

Aphrodite spoke, then loosened from her breasts  
[260] the finely decorated, embroidered garment  
in which all her magic charms were fixed—for love,  
erotic lust, flirtation, and seduction,  
which steals the wits even of clear-thinking men.  
Aphrodite put this in Hera's hands, then said:

"Take this garment. Tie it round your breasts.  
Everything is interwoven in the cloth.  
I don't think you'll come back unsuccessful  
in getting what it is your heart desires."

Aphrodite finished. Ox-eyed queen Hera smiled,  
[270] and, as she did so, put the garment round her breasts.  
Then Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter, went back home.

Hera sped off, leaving the crest of Mount Olympus.  
She touched down on Pieria, lovely Emathia,  
rushed by the highest mountains of Thracian horsemen—  
her feet did not touch ground on those snow-covered peaks.  
From Athos she went across the heaving sea,  
coming to Lemnos, city of godlike Thoas.  
There she met Sleep, Death's brother. Claspings his hand,  
she spoke to him:



“Sleep, king of all men and gods,  
[280] if you’ve ever listened to what I say,  
obey me now. I’ll be grateful always.  
Lull Zeus’ radiant eyes to sleep for me,  
when I’m stretched out for sex beside him.  
I’ll give you as a gift a lovely throne,  
indestructible gold which my own son  
Hephaestus with his ambidextrous skills  
will make for you. Under it he’ll set a stool,  
so you can rest your feet when drinking wine.”

Sweet Sleep then said in reply:

“Honoured goddess Hera,  
[290] daughter of mighty Cronos, I could with ease  
bring some other immortal one to sleep,  
even the streams of river Ocean,  
the source of all of them. But I won’t come  
near Zeus, lull him to sleep, unless he bids me,  
asks in person. Your request some time ago  
taught me my lesson, on that very day  
when Hercules, son of almighty Zeus,  
set sail from Ilion, after he’d sacked  
the Trojans’ city. That’s when I seduced  
[300] the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus, pouring  
my sweetness over him. You then carried  
evil in your heart for Hercules, driving  
blasts of hostile winds across the sea,  
taking him at last to well-settled Cos,  
far from all his friends. When Zeus woke up,  
he was incensed, throwing gods around his house,  
looking, above all, for me. He’d have tossed me  
from heaven into the sea, if Night,  
who subdues gods and men, had not saved me.  
[310] I ran away to her, and Zeus held back,  
though still enraged, not wishing to offend  
swift Night. Now here you are again, asking me

to do something I simply must not do.”

Ox-eyed queen Hera then answered him:

“Sleep,  
why concern your heart about these matters?  
Do you think all-seeing Zeus feels for Trojans  
the same rage he felt then for Hercules,  
his own son? But come, I’ll give you as your wife  
one of the younger Graces. You can marry  
[320] Pasithea, whom you long for every day.”

Hera finished. Sleep was overjoyed and said:

“All right, then. Swear to me by waters  
of the inviolable river Styx, setting  
one hand on the all-nourishing earth,  
the other on the shimmering sea,  
so all may witness our agreement,  
even those gods underground with Cronos,  
that you will give me one of the Graces,  
Pasithea, whom I long for every day.”

[330] White-armed goddess Hera agreed to Sleep’s request.

She made the oath, as he had asked, invoking  
all the gods under Tartarus, those called the Titans.\*  
Once she’d finished saying the oath, they both set off,  
wrapping themselves in mist. They left behind them  
the cities of Lemnos and Imbros, moving quickly,  
then came to Mount Ida with its many springs,  
mother of wild creatures, and arrived at Lectum,  
where for the first time they left the sea. They walked  
on dry land, shaking treetops underneath their feet.

[340] Sleep then stopped, before Zeus’ eyes could see him,  
climbed a high pine tree, at that time the tallest one  
growing on Ida. It stretched up through the lower air  
right into the sky. Concealed in that tree’s branches,

Sleep perched there, shaped like the clear-voiced mountain bird  
which gods call Chalcis, but people name Cymindis.

Hera moved quickly on to Ida's peak, high Gargarus.  
Cloud-gatherer Zeus caught sight of her. As he looked,  
his wise heart became suffused with sexual desire,  
as strong as when they'd first made love together,  
[350] lying on a couch without their parents' knowledge.  
Zeus stood up in front of her, called her, and said:

"Hera, what are you looking for, coming  
down here from Olympus? Your chariot,  
your horses are not here. You should use them."

Queen Hera with her crafty mind then answered Zeus:

"I'm going to visit the outer limits  
of this all-nourishing earth, to Oceanus,  
from whom gods came, and mother Tethys,  
who looked after me in their own home.  
[360] They raised me well. I'll try to mediate  
their endless quarrel. For a long time now,  
they've stayed apart from one another,  
not sharing love there in the marriage bed,  
since anger fills their hearts. As for my horses,  
they're standing at the foot of Ida,  
with its many springs, to carry me  
across dry land and sea. I've come here now,  
down from Mount Olympus, to stop you  
from being angry with me afterwards,  
[370] if I say nothing about going to visit  
deep-flowing Oceanus in his home."

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered:

"Hera,  
you can go there later. But why don't we

lie down and make joyful love together?  
 I've never felt such sexual desire before  
 for any goddess, for any mortal woman.  
 It's flooding through me, overpowering the heart  
 here in my chest—not even when I lusted for  
 Ixion's wife, who bore me Peirithous,  
 [380] a man as wise as gods, or Danaë,  
 with her enchanting ankles, daughter  
 of Acrisius, who gave birth to Perseus,  
 most illustrious of men, nor the daughter  
 of famous Phoenix, who bore me Minos  
 and godlike Rhadamanthus, nor Alcmene,  
 who gave birth to Hercules in Thebes,  
 a mighty hearted son, nor Semele,  
 who bore that joy to mortals Dionysus,  
 nor fair-haired lady Demeter, nor Leto,  
 [390] that glorious girl, not even for yourself—  
 I felt for none of these the love I feel  
 for you right now—such sweet desire grips me.”

Queen Hera with her cunning mind then said in reply:

“Most fearsome son of Cronos, what are you saying?  
 If you now want us to make love lying here,  
 on Ida's peaks, where anyone can see,  
 what if one of the immortal gods observes us,  
 as we sleep, then goes and tells the other gods?  
 I could not get up from this bed and go  
 [400] into your home. That would be scandalous.  
 But if that's your wish, if your heart's set on it,  
 you have that bedroom your own son Hephaestus  
 had built for you. It has close-fitting doors  
 fixed into posts. Let's go and lie down there,  
 since you're so keen for us to go to bed.”

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered her:

“Hera,  
don’t be afraid that any god or man  
will glimpse a thing. I’ll cover you up  
in a golden cloud. Even sun god Helios  
[410] will not see the two of us, and his rays  
are the most perceptive spies of all.”

Zeus finished. Then Cronos’ son took his wife in his arms.  
Underneath them divine Earth made fresh flowers grow—  
dew-covered clover, crocuses, and hyacinths,  
lush and soft, to hold the lovers off the ground.  
They lay together there covered with a cloud,  
a lovely golden mist, from which fell glistening dew.  
Then Zeus slumbered peacefully on Mount Gargarus,  
overcome with love and sleep, his wife in his embrace.

[420] Sweet Sleep rushed to the Achaean ships, to inform  
Poseidon, the Encircler and Shaker of the Earth.  
Coming up to him, Sleep spoke—his words had wings:

“Poseidon, you could now help the Argives  
quite readily and give them glory,  
if only for a while—Zeus is fast asleep.  
I’ve covered him with a delicious sleep.  
Hera has seduced him on a bed of love.”

Saying this, Sleep left there for some well-known tribes of men.  
But he made Poseidon want to help Danaans,  
[430] even more so than before. He ran to those in front,  
calling in a loud voice:

“You Argives,  
are we really going to give the victory  
to Hector, son of Priam—allow him  
to take our ships and get the glory?  
That’s what he says. He even boasts about it—  
since Achilles stays beside his hollow ships,

anger in his heart. But we won't miss him much  
 if the rest of us get fighting strength  
 and help each other. So come, let's all follow  
 [440] what I suggest. Let's arm ourselves with shields,  
 the best and biggest in our whole army,  
 cover our heads with gleaming helmets,  
 take in our hands the longest spears, and go.  
 I'll lead us. I don't think Hector, Priam's son,  
 will hold, no matter how much he wants to fight."

Poseidon spoke. The soldiers heard him and obeyed.  
 The kings themselves, though wounded, organized the men—  
 Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus.  
 Moving among the warriors, they supervised  
 [450] the exchange of weapons. The best men put on  
 the best equipment, the worst men got the worst.  
 Once their bodies were encased in gleaming bronze,  
 they marched out. Earthshaker Poseidon led them,  
 gripping in his powerful fist a fearful sword,  
 with a long edge, like a lightning bolt, which no man  
 in grim battle could withstand—his fear would hold him back.  
 On the other side, glorious Hector organized his men.  
 Then he and dark-haired Poseidon launched the fight,  
 the most destructive moments of that battle,  
 [460] one commanding Trojans, the other leading Argives.  
 The sea surged up to the Achaean huts and ships,  
 as the two sides met with a tremendous noise,  
 louder than ocean surf booming on shore, driven there  
 from the depths by the harsh North Wind, louder, too,  
 than roaring fire as it jumps to burn the trees  
 in some mountain clearing, louder than the wind  
 which howls through the highest branches of some oak tree,  
 a wind which at its worst makes the most piercing noise—  
 that's how loud the shouting came from Trojans and Achaeans,  
 [470] terrifying screams, as they went at each other.

Glorious Hector first threw his spear at Ajax,

as he'd just turned to face him. The spear hit Ajax,  
 right where two straps intersected on his chest,  
 one for his shield, one for his silver-studded sword.  
 These saved his tender flesh. Hector was annoyed—  
 his weapon had flown from his hand and missed its mark.  
 He drew back into the group of his companions,  
 evading death. But great Telamonian Ajax  
 hit Hector with a rock as he was moving back—  
 [480] there were many of them there rolling underfoot,  
 right where they fought, rock wedges used to prop the ships.  
 Ajax picked up one of these and struck Hector's chest,  
 just above the shield rim, close to Hector's neck.  
 The impact spun Hector like a top, reeling  
 round and round. Just like those times Father Zeus  
 uproots some oak tree with a lightning bolt—it falls,  
 with an awful smell of sulphur spreading from it,  
 which no one close by can look at without fear,  
 for Zeus' lighting bolts fill men with terror—  
 [490] that's how mighty Hector fell down in the dust.  
 His spear dropped from his hand. His shield fell on him,  
 his helmet, too. The finely worked bronze armour  
 round his body rattled. Raising a loud shout,  
 Achaeans ran up, hoping to drag Hector back.  
 Their spears flew thick and fast, but no one could wound him,  
 that shepherd of his people, with sword or spear.  
 Before that happened, the best men rallied by him,  
 Polydamas, Aeneas, lord Agenor,  
 Lycian leader Sarpedon, and noble Glaucus.  
 [500] None of the others ignored Hector. In front of him,  
 they held round shields. His companions picked him up  
 and took him in their arms out of the fighting,  
 until they came to his swift horses waiting for him  
 with their charioteer and richly ornate chariot  
 behind the battle lines. With chariot and horses  
 they took Hector, groaning badly, towards the city.  
 But when they reached the ford on that lovely river,  
 the swirling Xanthus, whose father is immortal Zeus,

they lifted him out and set him on the ground.  
[510] They poured on water to revive him. His eyes opened.  
He rose to his knees, but then vomited dark blood  
and fell down on his back again, lying on the ground.  
Black night was covering up his eyes, for his spirit  
was still overpowered by that blow from Ajax.

When Argives saw Hector carried back, they charged in,  
going at Trojans even more, their battle fury roused.  
Far ahead of all the rest came Oïlean Ajax.  
Jumping out with his sharp spear, he struck Satnius,  
son of Enops, who'd conceived him with a Naiad nymph,  
[520] while he was tending cattle by the river banks  
at the Satnioeis. Ajax, son of Oïleus,  
famous spearman, came up and struck him in the side.  
Satnius fell backwards. Trojans and Danaans  
then fought on around him. Spearman Polydamas,  
son of Panthous, came up to help. He threw and hit  
Prothoënor, son of Areilycus, in his right shoulder.  
The heavy spear tore through the shoulder. He fell down—  
lying in the dust and clawing dirt. Polydamas,  
with a great shout, exulted in his triumph:

[530] "I don't think that spear flew in vain  
from the strong hand of Panthous' valiant son.  
Some Argive has got it in his flesh.  
I think as he goes down to Hades' house,  
he'll use it as a walking staff."

Polydamas' loud boasting pained the Argives.  
He especially roused the spirit in fierce Ajax,  
son of Telamon. For Prothoënor fell  
right next to him. So Ajax quickly moved ahead  
and hurled his shining spear. But jumping to one side,  
[540] Polydamas nimbly avoided his dark fate.  
The spear hit Archelochus, Antenor's son—  
the gods had planned his death. It struck his spine up high,



where the head attaches to the neck—slicing through,  
it cut both sinews. As he fell, his head, mouth, and nose  
hit the earth well before his knees, and Ajax cried  
to brave Polydamas:

“Consider this, Polydamas,  
and tell me the truth—is not this man here  
worth killing to avenge Prothoënor?  
He doesn’t seem to be unworthy,  
[550] or from inferior parents. He looks like  
a brother of horse-taming Antenor,  
perhaps his son—he looks a lot like him.”

Ajax shouted this, knowing very well the man he’d killed.  
Trojans hearts were seized with grief. Then Acamas,  
standing above his brother’s body, with his spear  
struck Promachus, a Boeotian, as he was trying  
to drag Archelochus by his feet. Over the body  
Acamas shouted then in triumph:

“You Argive boasters,  
how you love to threaten! Misery like this,  
[560] all this suffering, is not for us alone.  
You too some day will be killed like this.  
See how your Promachus now sleeps in death,  
thanks to my spear. Whatever’s owed to me  
for my brother has not been unpaid long.  
That’s why in time of war a soldier prays  
he leaves at home a brother to avenge him.”

Acamas shouted this, bringing grief to Argives.  
He really stirred the heart of warlike Peneleus.  
He charged at Acamas, who did not stay there  
[570] to confront the charge of noble Peneleus,  
so he then struck Ilioneus, son of Phorbas,  
who owned many flocks, a man whom Hermes loved  
above all Trojans, and he’d made him wealthy.

Ilioneus was the only child his mother bore  
to Phorbas. But then he was hit by Peneleus,  
below his eyebrows, just underneath his eye.  
The spear knocked out the eyeball, went in his eye,  
drove through his neck, and sliced the tendons at the nape.  
Ilioneus collapsed, stretching out his arms.

[580] Peneleus drew his sharp sword and struck his neck,  
chopping head and helmet, so they hit the ground,  
the spear still sticking from the socket of his eye.  
Holding it up high, like a flowering poppy,  
Peneleus shouted a loud boast at the Trojans:

“Trojans, you can now tell the dear father  
and mother of fine Ilioneus to lament  
all through their house. When we Achaean lads  
sail in our ships from Troy, then the wife  
of this Promachus, son of Alegenor,  
[590] will not be celebrating the return  
of her beloved husband.”

Peneleos finished.

The Trojans were shaken, limbs trembling. Every man  
looked around to see how he could evade grim death.

Tell me now, you Muses living on Olympus,  
which of the Achaeans was first to carry off  
bloody trophies from the men who'd just been slaughtered,  
when famous Earthshaker turned the tides of war.  
The first for that was Ajax, son of Telamon.  
He hit Hyrtius, the son of Gyrtius,  
[600] who led the courageous Mysians. Then Antilochus  
stripped spoils from Mermerus and Phalces.  
Meriones killed Morus and Hippotion,  
while Teucer slaughtered Prothoön and Periphetes.  
and Menelaus hit Hyperenor in the side,  
a shepherd to his people. As it went through him,  
the spear forced out his guts. His life-spirit left him

through the wound, and darkness veiled his eyes.  
But Ajax, swift son of Oileus, killed the most.  
For none could match his speed on foot, as he ran,  
[610] chasing men in flight when Zeus forced them to flee.

Book Fifteen  
The Battle at the Ships

*[Trojans are being driven in retreat; Zeus wakes up on Ida, turns on Hera; Zeus instructs Hera to send Iris and Apollo to him; Hera returns to Olympus, gets Ares angry at Zeus; Athena restrains Ares; Iris and Apollo go to Zeus on Ida; Iris goes to Poseidon with Zeus' orders; Poseidon's resentment of Zeus; Poseidon withdraws from battle; Zeus sends Apollo to Hector; Apollo helps Hector recover; the battle starts again with Apollo leading the Trojans and pushing the Achaeans back; Apollo knocks down the wall and fills in the ditch; the armies fight around the ships; Ajax plays a leading role in defending the Achaeans; Hector seizes the stern of a ship, but Ajax holds Achaeans off with a long pike]*

Trojans, in full retreat, passed the wall and ditch,  
with many slaughtered by Danaans. Then they stopped,  
regrouping by their chariots, pale with fear, terrified.  
At that point Zeus, lying on the peaks of Ida  
alongside Hera of the golden throne, woke up.  
He stood up quickly, looked at Trojans and Achaeans,  
saw Trojans running off with Argives driving them  
from the back, among them god Poseidon.  
He saw Hector lying on the plain, his companions  
[10] sitting round him. Hector was gagging painfully,  
dazed and vomiting blood. The warrior who'd struck him  
was not the weakest of Achaeans. Watching him,  
the father of gods and men pitied Hector.  
Looking at Hera with a fearful scowl, Zeus said:

“You’re impossible to deal with, Hera,  
devising such deceitful tricks to get  
lord Hector from the fight and make the army  
run away. But I think you may be the first  
to get rewarded for your wretched scheme,  
[20] when I flog you with my whip. Don’t you recall  
the time I strung you up on high, putting  
two anvils on your feet, tying your wrists  
with unbreakable gold rope? You hung there,  
in the air among the clouds. Other gods,

all through Olympus, were very anxious,  
but just stood there, unable to untie you.  
If I'd caught one trying, I'd have grabbed him,  
tossed him from the threshold so he hit ground,  
his strength all gone. But even with all that,  
[30] I couldn't ease the constant pain I felt  
for god-like Hercules. You and North Wind  
drove him with storm blasts over restless seas.  
Your evil scheming later carried him  
to well-settled Cos. I rescued him from there  
and brought him back to horse-breeding Argos,  
but only after he'd endured too much.  
I'll remind you of these things once more,  
so you'll stop your malicious trickery,  
so you'll see the advantages you get  
[40] from this seduction, this couch where you lay  
to have sex with me, when you came from the gods  
intending to deceive me."

Zeus spoke. Ox-eyed queen Hera  
trembled as she answered—her words had wings:

"Let earth and wide heaven above be witnesses,  
with the flowing waters of the river Styx,  
on which the most binding, most fearful oaths  
are made by blessed gods—let your sacred head,  
our marriage bed as well, stand witnesses,  
things on which I'd never swear untruthfully—  
[5] O the harm that Earthshaker Poseidon did  
to Hector and the Trojans, to help Argives—  
in all that I had no part. His own heart  
pushed and drove him on. He saw Achaeans  
being beaten by their ships and pitied them.  
I'd not advise him to go against you,  
lord of the dark cloud, but to follow you,  
wherever you might lead."

Hera finished.

The father of gods and men smiled and then replied—  
his words had wings:

“Ox-eyed queen Hera,  
[60] if from now on you and I were of one mind,  
as you took your seat among immortals,  
then, no matter how much Poseidon’s views  
differed from our own, he’d quickly bring them  
into line with yours and mine. If you’re being frank,  
speaking the truth, go now to that group of gods,  
and order Iris to come here with Apollo,  
the famous archer, so she may visit  
bronze-armed Achaean soldiers and instruct  
lord Poseidon to stop fighting and return  
[70] to his own house. And Phoebus Apollo,  
after reviving Hector for the fight,  
will breathe new strength into him. He’ll forget  
that pain which now weighs down his spirit.  
He’ll drive Achaeans back a second time,  
once he’s turned them into cowards. They’ll run  
back to Achilles’ ships with many oars.  
The son of Peleus will send out his companion,  
Patroclus, whom glorious Hector will then kill  
in a spear fight right in front of Ilion,  
[80] after many other young men have gone down,  
killed by Patroclus, including my own son,  
godlike Sarpedon. Then, in his anger  
at Patroclus’ death, godlike Achilles  
will slaughter Hector. From that moment on,  
I’ll make the Trojans steadily fall back,  
leaving the ships, until Achaeans take  
steep Ilion, with Athena’s guidance.  
Until that time, I’ll not restrain my anger,  
nor let any other immortal god  
[90] assist Achaeans here, not before  
Achilles’ wishes have been carried out,

as I first promised, nodding my assent,  
that day when goddess Thetis held my knee  
and begged me to bring honour to Achilles,  
destroyer of cities.”

Zeus finished speaking.  
White-armed goddess Hera obeyed him, leaving  
Mount Ida for high Olympus. Just as the mind  
races in a man who’s voyaged to many lands,  
when in his fertile head he recalls everything,  
[100] and thinks “I wish I were here! I wish I were there!”—  
that’s how fast queen Hera hurried in her eagerness.  
Reaching steep Olympus, she found immortal gods  
together at Zeus’ palace in a meeting.  
Seeing her, they all stood up and offered her  
their cups in welcome. Ignoring all the others,  
Hera took the cup of fair-cheeked Themis, the first  
who came running up to meet her. Themis spoke to her—  
her words had wings:

“Hera, why have you come?  
You look upset. Perhaps your husband,  
[110] the son of Cronos, has frightened you?”

Ox-eyed queen Hera then replied:

“Goddess Themis,  
don’t question me like this. You know his moods,  
how he can be so harsh and overbearing.  
You should start the communal banquet now,  
here in the palace. You’ll learn about these things  
when all the immortals do—the evil plans  
Zeus is proposing, something, in my view,  
which won’t please all hearts alike, in gods or men,  
although some may still enjoy our feast.”

[120] Hera finished speaking. Then she sat down.

In Zeus' palace gods were angry. Hera's lips smiled,  
but above her dark eyebrows her forehead frowned.  
Irritated with them all, Hera then burst out:

“What fools we are to get incensed at Zeus  
so stupidly! We're still keen to get close to him,  
so we can hold him back with words or force.  
But he sits there, all by himself, without a care,  
without a worry, claiming he's supreme  
among immortal gods, manifestly so,  
[130] for strength and power. So you just accept  
whatever trouble he sends each of you.  
In fact, I think bad trouble has now come  
to Ares—in that fight his son's been killed,  
his favourite man, Ascalaphus, whom Ares,  
mighty war god, acknowledges as his.”

Once Hera finished, Ares struck his sturdy thighs  
with the flat of his hands and, in his grief, burst out:

“Don't blame me, you dwellers on Olympus,  
if I go down now to Achaean ships,  
[140] to avenge my son's slaughter, even if  
it's my fate to be struck by Zeus' lighting,  
to lie there with the dead in blood and dust.”

Ares finished. Then he told Terror and Flight  
to yoke up his horses, while he dressed himself  
in his glittering armour. Now, at that moment,  
feelings between Zeus and other immortal gods  
could have become much harsher, more incensed,  
if Athena, fearing what might happen to the gods,  
hadn't jumped up from the throne where she'd been sitting,  
[150] rushed out the door, seized Ares' helmet from his head,  
grabbed the shield from off his shoulders and the spear  
out of his mighty fist, and thrown them to one side.  
Then with these words Athena went at raging Ares:



“You idiot! Have you lost your mind, gone mad?  
Do those ears of yours hear anything at all?  
Where’s your common sense or your discretion?  
Did not you get what Hera said just now,  
the white-armed goddess who’s come straight from Zeus?  
Do you want a belly full of trouble,  
[160] forced to come back to Olympus, though in pain,  
sowing seeds of danger for the rest of us?  
For Zeus will abandon men immediately—  
those proud Trojans and Achaeans—and come here,  
to Olympus, then start to go at us.  
He’ll lay his hands on each one of us in turn,  
guilty or innocent. So I’m telling you—  
set aside that anger for your son.  
Better men with stronger hands than his  
have already been destroyed and will be.  
[170] It’s hard to keep the families and children  
safe for everyone.”

Athena finished.

Then she made angry Ares sit down on his throne.  
Hera called Apollo from the house with Iris,  
messenger for the immortal deities.  
Hera addressed them both—her words had wings:

“Zeus is ordering you two to go to Ida,  
as fast as possible. Once you get there,  
look in Zeus’ face, do what he commands.”

Having said this, queen Hera went inside the house,  
[180] sat on her throne. Flying off in a rush, the two gods  
reached Ida with its many springs, mother of wild beasts.  
They found all-seeing Zeus sitting on Gargarus,  
wrapped in a finely scented cloud. The two approached,  
came up, and stood there before cloud-gatherer Zeus.  
Seeing them, Zeus’ heart felt no anger. They’d been quick

obeying his dear wife. Zeus spoke first to Iris—  
his words had wings:

“Go now, swift Iris,  
convey to lord Poseidon these instructions,  
report it all precisely—he’s to stop,  
[190] to leave the battle strife, and go away  
to the group of gods or to his sacred sea.  
If he won’t obey my orders and ignores them,  
he should consider in his mind and heart  
this point—no matter how mighty he may be,  
he can’t stand up to me if I attack him.  
For I can say I’m stronger than he is,  
more powerful. And I’m the first born.  
Yet his fond heart thinks it’s all right to claim  
equality with me, whom all others fear.”

[200] Zeus spoke. Swift Iris, with feet like wind, obeyed.  
She set off from Mount Ida for sacred Ilion.  
Just as snow or icy hail flies down from clouds, swept on  
by gales from North Wind, child of the upper sky,  
that’s how quickly swift and eager Iris moved.  
She stood close by the famous Earthshaker and said:

“A message for you, Encircler of Earth,  
dark-haired god—I’ve brought it here from Zeus,  
who holds the aegis. He orders you to stop,  
to leave the battle strife. You’re to go away,  
[210] to the crowd of gods or to your sacred sea.  
If you ignore and disobey his orders,  
he threatens you he’ll come in person,  
to stand in war against you. And Zeus says  
you should avoid his hands, asserting  
he’s a stronger god than you, more powerful,  
and was born first. Yet your fond heart  
thinks nothing of claiming equality  
with him, whom other gods all fear.”

The famous Earthshaker, enraged, replied:

“It’s unjust!

- [220] He may be best, but he speaks too proudly,  
if he restrains me by force against my will,  
for I’m as worthy of respect as he is.  
We are three brothers, sons of Cronos,  
born from Rhea—Zeus, myself, and Hades,  
third brother, ruler of the dead. The whole world  
was divided in three parts, and each of us  
received one share. Once the lots were shaken,  
I won the blue-grey sea as mine to live in  
for ever. Hades got the gloomy darkness,  
[230] Zeus wide heaven, with the upper air and clouds.  
But earth and high Olympus still remained  
to all of us in common. So I won’t go.  
I won’t follow Zeus’ will. Let him stay,  
for all his strength, happy with his third.  
Let him not try to scare me with the power  
of his hands, as if I were some coward.  
It would be better if he’d use his threats,  
his bluster, on those sons and daughters  
which he himself produced. They, at least,  
[240] will have to listen to his orders.”

Swift Iris, with feet like the wind, replied:

“Dark-haired Earthshaker, is that the message  
I’m to take from you to Zeus, these harsh,  
defiant words? Or will you change your mind?  
For the finest hearts can change. The Furies,  
as you know, always serve the elder one.”

Earthshaker Poseidon then said:

“Goddess Iris,

what you say is right. It's commendable  
when a messenger understands things well.  
[250] But this business brings harsh pain into my heart,  
my spirit, when the deity whose share  
is the same as mine and who's been given  
a common destiny, wants to abuse me  
with angry words. However, for now  
I'll concede, for all my indignation.  
But I'll tell you—this threat comes from my heart—  
if, despite me, Athena, goddess of spoils,  
Hera and Hermes and lord Hephaestus,  
Zeus spares steep Ilion, if he's unwilling  
[260] to destroy it and to give great power  
to the Argives, let him know that with us  
an anger will arise that no one can appease."

With these words the Earthshaker left Achaean troops.  
Going to the sea, he plunged in. Achaeans troops  
missed his presence there among them.

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then spoke to Apollo:

"Dear Phoebus,  
go down to bronze-armed Hector. Poseidon,  
who encircles and shakes the earth, has gone  
back to the sacred sea and thus avoided  
[270] my harsh anger. If he'd fought it out with me,  
others would certainly have heard about it,  
even gods below, down there with Cronos.  
But for me this is much better, and for him, too,  
that before we came to blows he backed off,  
away from my hands, despite his anger.  
We'd have had to sweat it out to end it.  
But take this tasselled aegis in your hand  
and shake it well to scare Achaean warriors.  
And Apollo, far-shooting god, make Hector  
[280] your special care. Infuse him with great strength,

until Achaeans run back to their ships  
and reach the Hellespont. From that point on,  
I'll figure out how in word and deed  
Achaeans may get new relief from war."

Zeus spoke. Apollo did not disobey his father.  
Swooping down from Mount Ida like some swift hawk  
killing pigeons, the fastest of all flying creatures,  
he found lord Hector, wise Priam's son, sitting up,  
no longer prone. He was just starting to recover,  
[290] to recognize his comrades round him. He'd stopped  
gasping and sweating, for aegis-bearing Zeus  
had revived his mind. Apollo, the far worker,  
stood close to him and said:

"Hector, son of Priam,  
why are you having fainting spells right here,  
away from all the others? Are you in trouble?"

Hector of the shining helmet, still weak, replied:

"Which of the mighty gods are you, my lord,  
questioning me face to face? Don't you know  
that Ajax, skilled at war cries, hit me,  
[300] as I was slaughtering his companions  
by the ships' sterns? He got me in the chest  
with a rock and stopped my frenzied fighting.  
I thought today my heart would breathe its last,  
that I'd be seeing the dead in Hades' house."

Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, then answered Hector:

"Take courage now. Cronos' son has sent you  
a powerful defender from Mount Ida,  
to stand beside you as your protector,  
Phoebus Apollo with his golden sword,  
[310] who's helped you before, you and your city.

But come now, tell your many charioteers  
to charge the hollow ships with their swift horses.  
I'll go ahead and smooth the horses' path.  
I'll turn back these Achaeans warriors."

With these words Apollo breathed power into Hector,  
his people's shepherd. Just as some horse in a stall  
who at the manger has eaten well, then breaks his halter  
and runs off across the plain at a thundering gallop,  
eager for its usual bath in the flowing river,  
[320] exulting as it goes, with head held high, its mane  
flowing across its shoulders, fully confident  
of its own splendour, limbs carrying it lightly  
to places where the mares are in the pasture,  
that's how quickly Hector moved his feet and limbs,  
as he urged on his charioteers, once he'd heard  
Apollo's voice.

Just as dogs and country farmers  
chase a horned stag or wild goat, but the creature  
saves itself in a sheer rock face or dark underbrush,  
and men have no luck finding it, but their shouts  
[330] attract a bearded lion to their path, who scatters them,  
despite their eagerness—that's how Danaans  
for a while continued to press on in groups,  
thrusting away with swords and double-bladed spears.  
But when they saw Hector moving among the ranks,  
they were afraid. Each man's heart sank to his feet.  
Then Thoas, Andraemon's son, spoke out, the best man,  
by far, among Aetolians, expert in the spear throw,  
good at fighting hand to hand, and in assemblies  
few Achaeans could beat him when young men argued.  
Thinking of their situation, Thoas said:

[340] "Here's something—  
My eyes are watching an amazing sight.  
Hector's got up again, evading death.

In our hearts we all hoped that he'd been killed  
at the hands of Ajax, son of Telamon.  
But some god has once more rescued Hector,  
saved the man who's drained strength from many limbs  
among Danaans. That will continue now,  
I think, for he's not standing there like that,  
so keen to fight, against the will of Zeus,  
[350] the thunderer. But come, let's all follow  
what I propose. Let's tell most of the men  
to move back to the ships. Those among us  
who claim to be the best men in the army  
will make a stand. If we can reach him first  
and hold him off with our extended spears,  
for all his fury I think his heart will fear  
to mingle with this Danaan company."

Thoas spoke. The others heard him and readily agreed.  
Those with Ajax, lord Idomeneus, Teucer,  
[360] Meriones, and Meges, like the war god Ares,  
summoning the best men, recommenced the battle,  
confronting Hector and his Trojans. Behind them,  
most of the troops went back to the Achaean ships.

Trojans charged in a mass assault, led by Hector,  
moving with huge strides. Phoebus Apollo marched  
in front of Hector, his shoulders covered up in clouds,  
holding the fearful aegis, with its double fringe  
glittering ominously. The smith Hephaestus  
had given it to Zeus to make men run from war.  
[370] Apollo now held this aegis in his hands,  
as he lead on the army. The Argives, closely packed,  
stood their ground. Shrill war cries came from either side,  
arrows flew from bowstrings, many spears were thrown.  
Some impaled themselves in the flesh of quick young men.  
Many fell halfway before they reached white skin,  
skewered in the earth, still longing to taste flesh.  
As long as Phoebus Apollo held the aegis steady

in his hands, on both sides weapons hit their mark—  
men kept on dying. But when Apollo stared directly  
[380] at the swift Danaans and then shook the aegis,  
howling a horrific roar, he bewitched them all—  
the spirit in their chests then lost the will to fight.  
Just as two wild beasts stampede a herd of cattle  
or large flock of sheep, coming suddenly in dark night,  
with no herdsman present, that's how Achaeans,  
in their weakness, were then put to flight. Apollo  
sent the panic, glorifying Hector and his Trojans.

Then, as men killed each other, the battle front collapsed.  
Hector slew Stichius and Arcesilaus—  
[390] one a leader of bronze-armed Boeotians,  
one a trusted comrade of brave Menestheus.  
Aeneas slaughtered Medon and Iasus.  
Medon was a bastard son of noble Oïleus,  
thus brother to Ajax, but lived in Phylace,  
far from his native land. For he'd killed someone,  
a relative of his step-mother Eriopis,  
wife to Oïleus. Iasus, a commander  
of Athenians, was known as a son of Sphelus,  
son of Bucolus. Polydamas killed Mecistus,  
[400] and Polites killed Echius fighting at the front.  
Then lord Agenor slew Clonius, and from behind  
Paris struck Deïochus just below the shoulder,  
as the latter fled from soldiers fighting in the front.  
He drove the bronze spear straight through the man.

While Trojans were stripping armour from the corpses,  
Achaeans jumped in the ditch they'd dug, on the stakes,  
running to and fro, forced to withdraw behind their wall.  
Hector then gave a great shout to his Trojans:

“Charge the ships. Leave the blood-stained spoils alone.  
[410] Whoever I see not moving to the ships  
on the other side, I'll make sure he dies



right there. His relatives, men and women,  
won't be burying him, once he's dead,  
with the proper rites of fire. Instead,  
the dogs will rip him up before our city."

Saying this, Hector swung his whip down from his shoulders,  
lashing on his horses, calling Trojans in the ranks.  
They all shouted with him, then drove the horses  
pulling chariots. A tremendous noise arose.

[420] In front, Phoebus Apollo easily knocked down  
the banks of the steep trench—with his feet he pushed dirt  
into the middle, making a long broad causeway,  
as wide as the distance a man can throw his spear  
when he's showing off his strength. Trojans poured through,  
wave after wave of them, with Apollo leading on,  
holding up the priceless aegis. The Achaean wall  
he easily demolished, as a child will scatter sand—  
in a childish game beside the sea he builds a sand wall,  
then with his hands and feet flattens it for fun.

[430] That's how you, archer Phoebus, at that time knocked down  
what the Achaeans had built with so much effort,  
such hard work. You sent them flying back in panic.  
The Danaans halted to regroup beside their ships,  
shouting to each other, lifting up their hands  
to all the gods, with each man praying fervently.  
Geranian Nestor, Achaea's guardian,  
prayed most of all, hands stretched to starry heaven:

"Father Zeus, if, in wheat-yielding Argos,  
any man has ever burned fat thighs

[440] of bulls or sheep in sacrifice to you,  
praying for his return, and you answered him,  
nodding your head and promising assent,  
Olympian god, remember that. Protect us  
from a pitiful doom. Don't let Trojans  
destroy Achaeans in this way."

Nestor prayed.

Counsellor Zeus, hearing the prayers of that old man,  
son of Neleus, gave a great clap of thunder.

When Trojans heard aegis-bearing Zeus' thunder,  
they attacked the Argives all the more, drawing on

[450] their battle fury. Just as a great wave crashes  
from the wide sea onto the planking of a ship,  
driven by forceful winds whipping up the waves—  
that's how Trojans, with tremendous shouts, came down,  
through the wall, driving their chariots to the fighting,  
the hand-to-hand combat with double bladed spears  
by the ships' sterns. Trojans battled from their chariots,  
Achaean from high up on the planks of their black ships.  
They'd climbed up on the decks to fight there with long pikes  
lying in place for battles out at sea, jointed weapons  
with forged bronze at the tip.

[460] As long as Trojans and Achaeans  
were fighting by the wall away from the swift ships,  
Patroclus stayed sitting in Eurypylus' hut,  
cheering him up with pleasant conversation,  
relieving his black pain by spreading ointments  
on his painful wound. But when he realized  
Trojans were capturing the wall, while Danaans  
were crying out and in retreat, Patroclus groaned.  
Striking his thighs with the flat of his hands, he spoke  
in evident distress:

“Eurypylus, I can't stay  
[470] with you any longer here, though you need help.  
For a fierce battle has begun. Your companion  
must look after you. I'll run to Achilles,  
to urge him on to fight. Who know? With god's help,  
I may rouse his spirit with my words.  
A friend's persuasion perhaps can do some good.”

Patroclus finished speaking and went off on foot.

Achaeans, with fewer numbers, still held firm  
against advancing Trojans, but could not push them back  
or dislodge them from the ships. Trojans could not break through,  
[480] get past Danaan ranks to assault the ships and huts.  
Just as a carpenter's line makes ship's timber straight,  
when a craftsman's hand applies it, a skilled expert  
in all facets of his trade, inspired by Athena—  
that's how tensely poised the fighting in that battle stood.  
Men fought in various groups from one ship to the next.

Hector went straight for glorious Ajax, both men  
struggling over the same ship. Hector was unable  
to push Ajax back and burn the ship, while Ajax  
could not drive Hector off, now that Apollo  
[490] had brought him so far. Noble Ajax hurled his spear.  
He hit Caletor, son of Clytius, in the chest,  
as he was bringing fire to the ships. With a crash,  
he collapsed, and the burning torch dropped from his hands.  
When Hector saw his cousin fall there in the dirt  
by the black ship, right before his eyes, he called out  
to his Trojans and Lycians with a powerful shout:

“Trojans, Lycians, Dardan spearmen,  
don't hold back from battle in this danger.  
Save the son of Clytius, just in case  
[500] Achaeans strip his armour now he's fallen  
among this group of ships.”

Saying this,  
Hector threw his bright spear at Ajax, but missed.  
Instead he hit Lycophron, son of Mastor,  
from Cythera, one those attending Ajax.  
Since he'd killed someone in holy Cythera,  
he lived with Ajax. Hector's sharp bronze struck him  
on the head, above his ear, as he stood near Ajax.  
He fell into the dust, tumbling from the stern  
down to the ground. Then his limbs went slack.

Ajax shuddered and cried out to his brother:

[510] “Teucer, my friend,

Mastor’s son, our worthy comrade, has been killed.

He lived with us when he arrived from Cythera.

In our house we honoured him just as we did

our parents. Proud Hector has now killed him.

Where are your swift lethal arrows and the bow

Phoebus Apollo gave you?”

Ajax finished.

Teucer heard him and came up running to stand there,

beside Ajax, with his curved bow in his hand

and a quiver full of arrows. He began to shoot,

[520] loosing arrows in quick succession at the Trojans.

He hit Cleitus, fine son of Peisenor, a companion

of Polydamas, noble son of Panthous,

who was holding chariot reins. He’d been busy

managing his horses, which he’d been driving

to where the ranks were most confused, as a favour

to Hector and his Trojans. But he was struck

by that evil no man can defend himself against,

no matter how much he desires. The painful arrow

lodged behind his neck. He tumbled from the chariot,

[530] forcing his horses to swerve aside—that made

the empty chariot rattle. Polydamas

saw this right away and was the first to rush

into the horses’ path. He then handed them

to Astynous, Protiaon’s son, firmly telling him

to keep them close and watch. Then Polydamas

went back to join those fighting at the front.

Taking out another arrow, Teucer tried to hit

bronze-armed Hector. That would have stilled his heart

and stopped his fighting at Achaean ships, if Teucer

[540] had hit him as he was showing off how brave he was.

But the perceptive mind of Zeus guarding Hector

was paying attention. He robbed Teucer of that triumph  
by snapping the fine bow's tightly twisted string,  
just as Teucer was lining up a shot at Hector.  
The heavy bronze-pointed arrow flew awry.  
The bow fell from his hands. Teucer, with a shudder,  
spoke out to his brother Ajax:

“Look at that!  
Some god is thwarting all our efforts in this fight.  
He's knocked the bow out of my hands and snapped  
[550] my freshly twisted bowstring. I strung it  
just this morning so it would last a while  
and I could shoot scores of arrows with it.”

Great Telamonian Ajax then answered Teucer:

“My friend, leave your arrows and your bow—  
set them down, since some god has broken them  
to spite Danaans. Take hold of a long spear,  
set a shield against your shoulder—fight the Trojans.  
Encourage other troops to do the same.  
They won't take our well-decked ships without a fight,  
[560] even though they're overpowering us,  
so let's concentrate our minds on battle.”

Ajax spoke. Teucer took his bow into his hut,  
then slung a four-layered shield against his shoulder.  
On his strong head he set a well-made helmet,  
with a horsehair crest which nodded menacingly.  
He took a strong spear with a sharp point and set off,  
running quickly to take his place by Ajax.

When Hector saw that Teucer's arrow shot had missed,  
he called in a loud voice to Trojans and to Lycians:

[570] “Trojans, Lycians, Dardan spearmen,  
be men, my friends. Recall your warlike power

among these hollow ships. For I've witnessed  
with my own eyes how Zeus has cancelled out  
an arrow shot at us by their best man.  
It's easy to see how Zeus assists men,  
those to whom he grants great victories,  
or how he drains men's strength, refusing  
to protect them, as he now saps the power  
among the Argives and works to help us,  
[580] as we fight by the ships. So stay together.  
Should one of you meet his fate and die,  
stabbed by a spear or cut down with a sword,  
let the man die. To be killed defending  
one's own native land is no ignoble act.  
The man's wife is safe, his children live,  
his house and land remain, if Achaeans leave,  
returning to their country in their ships."

With these words, Hector roused each man's fighting spirit.  
On the other side, Ajax called out to his companions:

[590] "For shame, Argives. Now the issue's clear—  
either we'll be killed or we'll be saved,  
if we can push the danger from our ships.  
Are you expecting, if the ships are taken  
by Hector of the shining helmet,  
you'll all get to your native land on foot?  
Don't you hear frenzied Hector urging on  
his men. He's frantic now to burn the ships.  
He's inviting them to fight, not to a dance.  
For us there's no better choice or tactic  
[600] than to bring our arms and warrior strength  
against them and keep fighting hand to hand.  
It's better to settle this once and for all—  
whether we live or die—than be hemmed in,  
fighting a long grim battle, as we are now,  
among our ships against inferior men."

Ajax's words rallied the fighting spirit in each man.

Hector then killed Schedius, son of Perimedes,  
leader of Phocians. Ajax slew Laodamas,  
noble Antenor's son, who led up troops on foot.

- [610] Polydamas slaughtered Otus of Cyllene,  
comrade of Phyleus' son, who led brave Epeians.  
Seeing this death, Meges then attacked Polydamas,  
who slipped away from him, eluding Meges' charge.  
Apollo would not let Panthous' son be killed  
among those fighting in the front. But Meges  
thrust his spear into Croesmus, right in his chest.  
He fell with a crash. Meges started stripping armour  
from his shoulders, but Dolops charged at him,  
the bravest son of Lampus, son of Laomedon,  
[620] a skilled spear-fighter, who knew all there was to know  
about fighting close in. Dolops moved up to Meges,  
then with his spear struck the centre of his shield.  
Meges' thick armour with fitted breastplates saved him.  
Phyleus had brought this armour from Ephyre,  
from the river Selleis. A guest of his there,  
Euphetes, ruler of men, had given it to him  
to wear in war, protection from his enemies.  
Now this armour saved his son's flesh from destruction.  
Meges then thrust his sharp spear at Dolops' helmet,  
[630] striking it on top, on the bronze ridge, which held in place  
the horsehair plume. He sheared it off. The whole plume,  
a bright fresh purple, fell onto the dusty ground.  
While Meges fought on, still expecting victory,  
warlike Menelaus came to his assistance.  
Standing to one side, out of Dolops' line of sight,  
Menelaus speared his shoulder from behind.  
The eager spear kept going, driving into Dolops' chest.  
He fell on his face. The two men hurried forward  
to strip bronze armour from his shoulders. But Hector  
[640] shouted to his kinsmen one and all. The first man  
he yelled at was strong Melanippus, Hicetaon's son,

who used to graze his shambling herds in Percote,  
when enemies were far away. Once Danaans  
arrived in their curved ships, he'd gone back to Ilion,  
where Trojans held him in respect. He lived with Priam,  
who honoured him as if he were a child of his.  
Hector called to him, speaking some angry words:

“Melanippus, why are you so feeble?  
Is that fond heart in you not worried  
[650] for your slain relative? Do you not see  
how they're busy stripping Dolops' armour?  
Come on, we can't fight Argives from a distance.  
We've got to stay with them until we kill them off,  
or they capture Ilion completely,  
butchering her people.”

Hector finished,  
then led on. Godlike Melanippus followed.

Then great Telamonian Ajax roused the Argives:

“Friends, be men. In your hearts remember shame.  
In the killing zone let each man shame the rest.  
[660] That sense of shame saves more men than it kills.  
Those who flee help no one, and they get no glory.”

Ajax spoke. The men were already keen to fight,  
but they took his words to heart and fenced in the ships  
within a hedge of bronze. Zeus drove the Trojans at them.  
Then Menelaus, skilled at war shouts, urged Antilochus:

“Antilochus, no other Achaean warrior  
is as young as you or quicker on his feet,  
or as brave in battle. So jump out there—  
see if you can hit one of the Trojans.”

[670] Menelaus finished speaking and moved back again.



But his words aroused Antilochus. He stepped forward,  
ahead of those fighting at the front, glanced around,  
and threw his shining spear. Trojans moved back,  
as he made his throw. The spear wasn't thrown in vain.  
It hit proud Melanippus, Hicetaon's son,  
in the chest, as he was moving up to fight,  
right beside his nipple. He collapsed with a crash,  
and darkness fell upon his eyes. Then Antilochus  
pounced on him, like a dog leaping on a wounded fawn,  
[680] which some hunter hits as it rushes from its den,  
loosening its limbs. That how bold Antilochus  
went after you, Melanippus, to strip your armour.  
But Hector noticed him. He came up on the run  
to face Antilochus directly. But the latter,  
though an impetuous warrior, did not stand his ground.  
He ran back, like some wild beast intent on mischief,  
one that's killed a dog or herder with the cattle,  
and scampers off before a crowd of people gather.  
That's how Nestor's son scurried back. Trojans and Hector,  
[690] shouting loudly, showered him with lethal weapons.  
When he reached the crowd of his companions,  
Antilochus turned round and made a stand there.

Trojans attacked the ships like ravenous lions,  
fulfilling Zeus' will. He kept on giving them  
great fighting strength, while he drained Achaean hearts,  
denying them glory, as he drove the Trojans forward.  
Zeus' heart was set on glorifying Hector,  
son of Priam, so he might throw onto the ships  
a blazing tireless fire and thus fulfil completely  
[700] that disastrous request from Thetis. Counsellor Zeus  
was waiting to glimpse with his own eyes the blaze  
from a burning ship, for that would be the moment  
he was going to push the Trojans from the ships  
and give the glory to Danaans. With this in mind,  
Zeus drove Hector, son of Priam, against those ships,  
something Hector was furiously keen to do.

He raged like spear-fighting Ares or deadly fire  
in the thickets of deep mountain forests.

He was foaming at the mouth. Below his eyebrows  
[710] the eyes were raging fire. The helmet round his temples  
shook with menace, as Hector battled on, for Zeus,  
the god of heaven, was his protector, giving him  
glory and honour, though he was but one man  
among so many, for Hector's life would soon cease.  
Already Pallas Athena was pushing forward  
that fated day when he'd die at the mighty hand  
of Achilles, son of Peleus.

But now Hector  
was striving to break through the warriors' ranks,  
probing them wherever he saw the largest groups,  
[720] the finest armour. But he could not break through,  
for all his eagerness. In their defensive wall,  
Achaeans held their ground. Just as a huge stone cliff  
by the blue-grey sea stands firm against the wind  
howling straight at it or the surging surf which pounds it—  
that's how Danaans stood up to the Trojans then,  
firmly with no falling back. But then Hector,  
blazing all over like some fire, charged the throng,  
falling on them as a fierce wave whipped up by a storm  
crashes against a ship, which gets hidden in the foam,  
[730] blasts of wind shrieking past the sail, and sailors' hearts  
tremble with fear as they are carried off from death  
inch by inch—that's how hearts in those Achaean chests  
were cracking. Hector charged them like a vicious lion  
going at cattle grazing in huge numbers  
in the bottom wetlands of a spacious meadow,  
guarded by a herdsman who still lacks the skills  
to fight a wild beast for the mangled carcass  
of some short-horn heifer—with the herd he goes  
always beside the first or last ones of the group,  
[740] but the lion leaps into the middle and devours a cow,  
as all the others scatter—that's how Achaeans then

were all driven back in awe-struck terror by Hector and Father Zeus.

But Hector killed only one man—  
Periphetes of Mycenae, dear son of Copreus,  
who used to take messages from king Eurystheus  
to mighty Hercules.\* This dishonourable man  
had a son with much more virtuous qualities—  
he could run fast and was an excellent fighter,  
and for his mind among the best in Mycenae.

[750] But this man then gave Hector even greater glory.  
For as he turned, he tripped against a shield rim,  
the one he carried, which extended to his feet  
and protected him from spears. He stumbled and fell.  
The helmet round his temples gave a dreadful clang,  
as he went down. Hector saw this at once, ran up,  
stood by Periphetes, and struck him with his spear  
in the chest, killing him beside his dear companions.  
Those men were sorry for their comrade, but could not help—  
they were too afraid of godlike Hector.

[760] By now they were in among the ships, encircled  
by the outer row of those they'd dragged up first.  
But Trojans kept on pouring in. So Argives were forced  
to move back from the ships' first row. But they stayed  
in a single group beside the huts, not scattering  
throughout the camp, held there by shame and fear.  
They called out to one another continually,  
especially Geranian Nestor, Achaea's guardian.  
He kept appealing to each man's parents, saying:

“Friends, be men. Let sense of shame from all men  
[770] fill your hearts. Remember, each of you,  
your children, wives, possessions, and your parents—  
whether alive or dead. They're not here,  
but, on their behalf, I beg you to stand firm.  
Don't let yourselves turn round and run away.”

With these words, Nestor boosted each man's spirit.  
Then Athena removed the strange cloudy mist  
and cleared their eyes, so on both sides light streamed in,  
back to the ships and out towards the battle groups.  
They saw Hector, skilled at war cries, his companions,  
[780] all the soldiers standing idle in the rear,  
all those warriors battling on by their swift ships.

The spirit in great-hearted Ajax could not bear  
to take up a position with Achaea's sons  
where there was no fighting. So with his huge strides,  
he kept moving up and down the decks along the ships.  
In his fists he held a long pike used in sea fights,  
one with fitted with sockets—thirty feet in length.  
Just as a man well skilled in guiding horses  
harnesses together four chosen out of many,  
[790] then drives them at a gallop from the plain  
to some large city on a public highway,  
while many men and women look at him amazed,  
as he keeps leaping from one horse to another,  
landing firmly, never slipping as they race ahead—  
that's how Ajax, with huge strides, kept on moving  
over many decks on those swift ships, shouting  
so his voice reached heaven, telling Danaans  
in fearsome yells to defend their ships and huts.

Hector did not stay in the well-armed Trojan group,  
[800] but, like an eagle swooping down upon some flock  
of winged birds feeding by a river bank—  
wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans, he rushed  
straight at the dark-prowed ships to take on Ajax.  
With his mighty hand Zeus pushed him from the back,  
while urging other warriors to accompany him.

The brutal fight began again among the ships.  
You'd think they weren't tired at all, but only starting—

they went at each other with such ferocity,  
as they faced each other in that battle. Each side  
[810] fought for different reasons—Achaeans thought  
they'd never escape that danger and would be destroyed—  
for Trojans, the heart in each man's chest was hoping  
they'd fire the ships and kill Achaean warriors.  
That's what they thought as they fought one another.

Hector grabbed hold of a seaworthy ship, at the stern,  
the fine fast boat which brought Protesilaus to Troy,  
though it didn't take him back to his own native land.\*  
In close combat by this ship, Achaeans and Trojans  
were hacking at each other. By this point, the battle  
[820] was no more a matter of standing at some distance,  
enduring showers of spears and arrows, but of fighting  
at close quarters—united by a common spirit—  
battling with sharp axes, hatchets, long swords,  
and double-bladed spears. Many lovely swords,  
with dark mountings, fell to earth, from hands and shoulders  
of those fighting warriors. Earth flowed black with blood.  
Hector seized hold of that ship and would not let go—  
gripping the ornamental marker on the stern,  
yelling to his Trojans:

“Bring fire. Raise a general shout.  
[830] Now Zeus has given us a day that makes up  
for everything—to seize the ships that came here,  
contravening the gods' will, creating  
many troubles for us, because our elders  
in their cowardice restrained me, held back  
my troops, when I was keen to fight it out  
at the ships' sterns. But if all-seeing Zeus  
dulled our minds then, now he commands us,  
now he drives us forward.”

Hector shouted.  
Then Trojans attacked the Argives even more intensely.

[840] Ajax could not hold his position any longer.

Assailed by flying spears, he backed off a little,  
abandoning the deck on that well-balanced ship.  
He moved to the raised platform, seven feet high,  
and looked for Trojans, always jabbing with his pike,  
pushing from the ship any Trojan bearing tireless fire,  
always yelling fearful shouts at the Danaans:

“Friends,  
Danaan warriors, companions of Ares,  
be men, my friends. Recall your battle fury.  
Do we think we’ve got people to help out  
[850] somewhere behind us or some stronger wall  
which will hold off our men’s destruction?  
There’s no nearby city fenced with walls,  
where we can defend ourselves or with many men  
turn the tide of battle. No, we’re here,  
on this plain crammed with well-armed Trojans,  
our backs to the sea, far from our native land.  
The light that’ll save us lies in our hands,  
not in holding back from battle.”

Saying this, Ajax kept on jabbing ferociously  
[860] with his sharp pike. Any Trojan who charged the ships  
with blazing fire, seeking to please Hector,  
found Ajax waiting to slice him with his pike.  
He wounded twelve men in close fighting by the ships.

Book Sixteen  
Patroclus Fights and Dies

*[Patroclus begs Achilles to send him back to the war to help the Achaeans; Achilles agrees but sets conditions; Hector breaks Ajax's spear, sets fire to the ship; Achilles sends Patroclus to war with the Myrmidons; Patroclus arms himself, Achilles organizes the Myrmidons in fighting groups; Achilles prays to Zeus; Patroclus goes into battle, driving Trojans back from the ships; Trojans retreat; Sarpedon rallies the Lycians, fights Patroclus; death of Sarpedon; Apollo cures Glaucus' wound; the fight over Sarpedon's body; Trojans are driven back towards Troy, Hector kills Patroclus]*

While the men kept on fighting at the well-decked ships,  
Patroclus went to Achilles, his people's shepherd,  
shedding warm tears, like a fountain of dark water  
whose stream flows over the lip of a sheer rock face.  
Looking at him, swift-footed, godlike Achilles  
felt pity. So he spoke to him—his words had wings:  
“Why are you crying, Patroclus, like some girl,  
an infant walking beside her mother,  
asking to be picked up. She pulls the robe  
[10] and stops her mother strolling on ahead,  
looking up at her in tears, until the mother  
lifts her up. You're crying just like that girl,  
Patroclus. Is there something you need to say  
to the Myrmidons or me? Some news  
from Phthia that only you have heard?  
People say Menoetius, Actor's son,  
is still living, and Peleus is alive,  
Aeacus' son, among his Myrmidons.  
If these two had died, then we'd have something  
[20] real to grieve about. Or are you feeling sad  
for Argives as they're being obliterated  
among the hollow ships for all their pride?  
Speak up. Don't conceal what's on your mind.  
Then we'll both understand.”

With a heavy sigh,

horseman Patroclus, you then replied:

“Achilles,

Peleus’ son, by far the strongest of Achaeans,  
don’t be angry with me. Such great despair  
has overcome the Argives. For all those  
who used to be the bravest warriors

[30] are lying at the ships with sword and spear wounds—  
powerful Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
hit by a spear, famous spearman Odysseus  
with a stab wound, and Agamemnon, too.  
An arrow struck Eurypylus in the thigh.  
Many healers, exceptionally skilled  
in various medicines, are with them now,  
tending their wounds. But it’s impossible  
to deal with you, Achilles. I hope anger  
like this rage you’re nursing never seizes me.

[40] It’s disastrous! How will you be of use  
to anyone in later generations,  
if you won’t keep shameful ruin from the Argives?  
You’re pitiless. Perhaps horseman Peleus  
was not your father, nor Thetis your mother—  
the grey sea delivered you, some tall cliff,  
for you’ve an unyielding heart. If your mind  
shuns some prophecy, or your noble mother  
has told you news from Zeus, at least send me,  
and quickly, with the others in our troop

[50] of Myrmidons. I could be a saving light  
for the Danaans. Give me your armour  
to buckle round my shoulders, so Trojans,  
mistaking me for you, may stop the fight.  
Then Achaea’s warrior sons could get some rest.  
They’re worn out. War doesn’t offer much relief.  
We’re fresh, so we should easily repulse  
the Trojans tired of the battle noise  
back from our ships and huts towards the city.”  
Patroclus finished his entreaty. How wrong he was!



[60] He was praying for his own death, his dreadful fate.

Swift-footed Achilles, with some heat, replied:

“My dear divinely born Patroclus,  
what are you saying? I’m not concerned  
with any prophecy I know about,  
nor has my noble mother said a thing  
from Zeus. But dreadful pain came in my heart  
and spirit when that man wished to cheat  
someone his equal and steal away that prize,  
and just because he’s got more power.

[70] That really hurt, given that I’ve suffered

in this war so many pains here in my chest.

Achaea’s sons chose that girl as my prize.

I won her with my spear, once I’d destroyed  
her strong-walled city. Lord Agamemnon  
took her back, out of my hands, as if I were  
some stranger without honour. But let that be—  
it’s over, done with. Besides, my spirit  
didn’t mean to stay enraged for ever,  
although I thought I wouldn’t end my anger

[80] until the cries of warfare reached my ships.

Come, put my famous armour on your shoulders  
and lead war-loving Myrmidons to battle,  
since black clouds of Trojans now surround the ships,  
expecting victory, and Argives stand  
crammed in by the sea shore, with little space,  
while a city full of Trojans comes at them  
without fear, because they don’t see near them  
my helmet with its glittering front. Soon enough,  
they’d be running back, filling the gullies

[90] with their dead, if mighty Agamemnon

treated me with kindness—but now they fight  
all through our camp. For there’s no spear raging  
in the fists of Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
to protect Danaans from disaster.

I’ve not heard the voice of Agamemnon  
crying out in his vile head. As for Hector,

- that man-killer's voice echoes everywhere,  
shouting at Trojans, who fill all the plain  
with their noise, as they defeat Achaeans
- [100] in this battle. Even so, Patroclus,  
you must stave off disaster from the fleet.  
Go after them in force—they may fire those ships  
and rob us of the journey home we crave.  
Now, pay attention to what I tell you  
about the goal I have in mind for you,  
so you'll win me great honour and rewards,  
so all Danaans will send back to me  
that lovely girl and give fine gifts as well.  
Once you push Trojans from the ships, come back.
- [110] If Zeus, Hera's mate, who loves his thunder,  
gives you the glory, don't keep on battling  
those war-loving Trojans with me absent.  
You would decrease my honours. Don't let  
the joy of fighting and of killing Trojans  
lead you on to Ilion, just in case  
some deathless Olympian god attacks you.  
Apollo, the far-worker, loves his Trojans.  
So make sure you come back here again,  
once your saving light has reached our ships.
- [120] Let others keep on fighting in the plain.  
O Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo—  
if only no single Trojan or Achaean  
could escape death, and just we two alone  
were not destroyed, so that by ourselves  
we could take Troy's sacred battlements!"
- As these two were talking on like this together,  
Ajax was losing ground, under attack from spears,  
overcome by the will of Zeus and Trojans,  
who kept throwing weapons. The bright helmet on his head
- [130] rattled dangerously as it was struck. Many hits  
landed on the well-made armour on his cheeks.  
His left shoulder was worn out from always holding up  
his shining shield. But for all the onslaught with their spears,

the Trojans couldn't budge him. Still, he was in trouble,  
breathing heavily, sweat pouring down in rivulets  
from every limb. He'd had no time for any rest.  
In every way, his desperate plight was getting worse.  
Tell me now, you Muses living on Olympus,  
how the fire first got tossed onto Achaean ships.

- [140] It was Hector. He came up close to Ajax,  
then with his great sword hacked at Ajax's ash spear,  
right behind the point. He cut straight through it.  
Telamonian Ajax still gripped the spear,  
but it was useless without its bronze spear head,  
which fell some distance off, clanging on the ground.  
The heart in mighty Ajax recognized gods' work.  
He shuddered, for he perceived how high-thundering Zeus  
was denying completely all his fighting skill,  
wanting the Trojans to prevail. Ajax backed off,  
[150] out of range. Then onto that swift ship the Trojans threw  
untiring fire, which spread itself immediately  
in a fiery blaze that no one could extinguish.  
The ship's stern started to catch fire.

At that moment,  
Achilles, slapping his thighs, said to Patroclus:

"Up now,  
divinely born Patroclus, master horseman.  
In the ships I see destructive flames going up.  
Trojans must not seize our ships and leave us  
with no way to escape. Put armour on—  
and quickly. I'll collect the soldiers."

- [160] Achilles spoke. Patroclus dressed in gleaming bronze.  
First, he fixed on his shins the beautiful leg armour,  
fitted with silver ankle clasps. Around his chest  
he put on the body armour of Achilles,  
swift-footed descendant of Aeacus—finely worked  
and glittering like a star. On his shoulders he then slung  
his bronze silver-studded sword and a large strong shield.

On his powerful head he set the famous helmet  
 with its horsehair crest. The plume on top nodded  
 full of menace. Then Patroclus took two strong spears  
 [170] well fitted to his grip. He'd didn't choose Achilles' spear,  
 for no Achaean man could wield that weapon,  
 so heavy, huge, and strong, except for brave Achilles.  
 It was made of ash wood from the peak of Pelion.  
 Cheiron gave it to Achilles' father to kill warriors.  
 Patroclus told Automedon to yoke the horses quickly,  
 the man he most esteemed after Achilles,  
 breaker of men, and the one he trusted most  
 to carry out his orders in a battle.  
 For Patroclus Automedon put swift horses  
 [180] in the harnesses, Xanthus and Balius, who flew along  
 as swiftly as the wind. These horses Podarge,  
 the harpy, had conceived with West Wind, as she grazed  
 in a meadow beside the stream of Oceanus.\*  
 In the side traces he set Pedasus in harness,  
 a fine horse Achilles had taken for himself,  
 when he'd captured the city of Eëtion.  
 Though mortal, it kept pace with his deathless horses.  
 Meanwhile Achilles went to and fro among the huts,  
 getting all his Myrmidons to arm themselves.  
 [190] They rushed out, like flesh-eating wolves, hearts full  
 of unspeakable fury, beasts which in the mountains  
 have caught and ripped apart some huge antlered stag.  
 Then in a pack they charge off, jaws all dripping blood,  
 to lap black surface water with their slender tongues  
 in some dark spring, vomiting up clots of blood  
 from their crammed bellies, while in their chests their hearts  
 are resolute. That's how the leaders and commanders  
 of the Myrmidons rushed around brave Patroclus,  
 comrade of swift Achilles, Aeacus' descendant,  
 [200] who stood among them there, urging on the horses  
 and the warriors carrying their shields.  
 Achilles had brought fifty ships to Troy—  
 in each were fifty men, his own companions.

He'd picked five leaders whom he trusted to give orders.  
 His great power gave him overall command.  
 The first contingent was led by Menesthius,  
 with his flashing breastplate, son of Spercheius,  
 the river fed from heaven. Lovely Polydora,  
 Peleus' daughter, had conceived Menesthius  
 [210] with timeless Spercheius, a woman copulating  
 with a god. But in name Borus was his father,  
 son of Perieres, who'd married her in public,  
 after paying out a huge price for the bride.  
 The second group was led by warrior Eudorus,  
 a bastard child of Polymele, Phylus' daughter,  
 a lovely dancer. The god who slaughtered Argus,  
 mighty Hermes, fell in love when he noticed her  
 among the singing maidens in the chorus  
 dancing for Artemis, the golden-arrowed goddess  
 [220] in the echoing hunt. Hermes the helper,  
 going at once into her upper room in secret,  
 had sex with her. She bore him a fine son, Eudorus,  
 outstanding as a warrior and speedy runner.  
 But when Eileithyia, goddess of labour pains,  
 brought him into the light and he saw sunshine,  
 then strong Echeclus, Actor's son, took Polymele  
 to his home, after giving an enormous bride price.  
 Old man Phylus was very kind to the young boy.  
 He looked after him, surrounding him with love,  
 [230] as if he were his son. The third commander  
 was warlike Peisander, son of Maemalus,  
 a man pre-eminent among the Myrmidons  
 for spear fighting, second only to Patroclus.  
 Phoenix led the fourth contingent, and Alcimedon,  
 splendid son of Laerces, was leader of the fifth.  
 Once Achilles had set all the ranks in order  
 behind their leaders, he addressed them sternly:  
 "My Myrmidons, let none of you forget  
 those threats you spoke about by our swift ships,  
 [240] while I was angry—you'd go on and on

against the Trojans. Each of you blamed me:  
'Cruel son of Peleus, surely your mother  
suckled you with bile, you pitiless man,  
who keeps his comrades by their ships  
against their will. Why don't we go home  
in our seaworthy ships, since evil rage  
has fallen on your heart?'

That's what you men  
complained about me in your meetings.  
Now a great work of war awaits you,  
[250] the sort of enterprise you used to love.  
So make sure each man's heart is resolute,  
as you go to battle with these Trojans."  
With these words, Achilles stirred the spirit in each man.  
As they heard their king, the ranks bunched up more closely.  
Just as a man constructs a wall for some high house,  
using well-fitted stones to keep out forceful winds,  
that's how close their helmets and bossed shields lined up,  
shield pressing against shield, helmet against helmet,  
man against man. On the bright ridges of the helmets,  
[260] horsehair plumes touched when warriors moved their heads.  
That's how close they were to one another. In the front,  
ahead of all of them, two men stood fully armed—  
Automedon and Patroclus—sharing a single urge,  
to fight in the forefront of their Myrmidons.  
Achilles went into his hut and opened up the lid  
on a beautifully decorated chest  
placed on board his ship by silver-footed Thetis  
for him to take. She'd packed it with cloaks and tunics,  
and woollen blankets, too—protection from the wind.  
[270] There he kept an ornate goblet. Other than Achilles  
no one used it to drink gleaming wine. With this cup  
Achilles poured libations to no god but Father Zeus.  
Taking this out of the chest, first he purified it  
with sulphur, then rinsed it out in streams of water.  
He washed his hands and drew some gleaming wine.

Standing in the middle of the yard, he poured it out,  
gazing up at heaven. Thunder-loving Zeus looked on.  
“Zeus, king, lord of Dodona, Pelasgian,  
you who live far off, ruling cold Dodona,  
[280] around whom live the Selli, your prophets,  
with unwashed feet, who sleep upon the ground,  
you heard me when I prayed to you before.  
You gave me honour then by striking hard  
at the Achaean army. So grant me now  
what I still desire. I intend to stay  
beside this group of ships, but I’m sending out  
my comrade and my many Myrmidons.  
Send glory with him, all-seeing Zeus.  
Strengthen the heart inside his chest, so Hector  
[290] sees if Patroclus can fight on alone  
or if his hands are always conquering  
only when I’m with him in the raging war,  
in the centre of the havoc Ares brings.  
But when he’s pushed the fight and battle noise  
back from the ships, let him return to me,  
here at my hollow ships, without a scratch,  
with all his weapons and companions,  
men who battle in the killing zone.”

So Achilles prayed.  
Counsellor Zeus heard his prayer. He granted part of it,  
[300] part he denied. Father Zeus agreed that Patroclus  
should drive the battle fighting from the ships,  
but not that he’d return in safety from the war.  
Once Achilles had made his libation and prayed  
to Father Zeus, he went back into his hut,  
put the goblet in the chest, came out, and stood there,  
before his hut, still wishing in his heart  
to see the fatal clash of Trojans and Achaeans.  
The armed warriors who went with brave Patroclus  
marched out in formation, until, with daring hearts,  
[310] they charged the Trojans, immediately swarming out,

like wasps beside a road, which young lads love to torment,  
constantly disturbing them in their roadside nests—  
those fools make mischief for all sorts of people.  
If some man going past along the road upsets them  
by accident, they all swarm out with fearless hearts  
to guard their young—with that same heart and spirit  
the Myrmidons then poured out from their ships  
with a ceaseless roar. In a loud shout, Patroclus  
called out to his companions:

“You Myrmidons,

[320] companions of Achilles, son of Peleus,  
be men, my friends, recall your fighting strength,  
so we may honour the son of Peleus,  
by far the best Achaean at the ships,  
with the finest comrades in a close combat.  
Wide-ruling Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, will see  
his folly in not honouring Achilles,  
the best of the Achaeans.”

With these words,

Patroclus spurred the strength and heart in every soldier.

Then, in a massed group, they fell upon the Trojans.

[330] Terrifying cries came from Achaeans by their ships.

When Trojans saw the brave son of Menoetius  
with his attendant, both in glittering armour,  
all their hearts were shaken and their ranks fell back.

They thought Peleus’ swift-footed son by his ships  
had set aside his anger and made friends again.

Each man glanced around, checking how he might escape  
his own complete destruction.

Patroclus was the first

to throw his bright spear right at the central mass  
where most troops clustered, by the stern part of the ship

[340] of great-hearted Protesilaus. He hit a man,  
Pyræchmes, who’d led Paeonian charioteers  
from Amydon, by the broad flowing Axios.



Struck by that spear in his right shoulder, he fell down  
screaming on his back there in the dust. Comrades round him,  
his Paeonians, ran off—Patroclus terrified them,  
now he'd killed their leader and best fighter.  
He drove them from the ships and doused the blazing fire.  
The half-burnt ship he left there. The Trojans scattered,  
making a tremendous noise. Danaans poured out  
[350] from among the ships throughout the constant uproar.  
Just as from a high peak of some massive mountain,  
Zeus, who gathers lightning, shifts a bulky cloud,  
once more revealing all the peaks, high headlands,  
and mountain glades, while from heaven the huge bright sky  
breaks open—that's how Danaans saved their ships  
from fire and could rest, if only for a moment,  
since the fighting was not over yet. At this point,  
Achaean troops had not fully pushed the Trojans  
from the ships. They'd been forced back from the sterns,  
[360] but they still stood there, facing the Achaeans.  
The leaders then began to slaughter one another  
in the scattered fighting. First, Menoetius' brave son  
with his sharp spear struck Areilycus in the thigh,  
as he was turning. He drove the bronze straight through,  
breaking the bone. Areilycus fell face down in the dirt.  
Then warlike Menelaus hit Thoas in the chest,  
in a place where it was open right beside his shield.  
The blow collapsed his limbs. Meges, Phyleus' son,  
saw Amphiclus charging at him, but hit him first,  
[370] spearing the top of his leg, where a man's muscle  
is the thickest. The spear point sliced his tendons,  
and darkness closed his eyes. Then the sons of Nestor  
went into action. Antilochus jabbed his sharp spear  
at Atymnius, driving the bronze point in his side,  
so he fell forward. Maris, who was close by,  
angry about his brother, charged Antilochus  
holding his spear, and then stood by his brother's body.  
But godlike Thrasymedes moved too quickly for him.  
Before Maris could thrust, he lunged out at his shoulder.

- [380] He didn't miss. The spear point sheared off muscle  
at the bottom of his arm and broke the bone in two.  
Maris fell with a crash, and darkness veiled his eyes.  
Thus, these two, slaughtered by two brothers, went off  
to Erebus. They'd been Sarpedon's brave companions,  
spearmen sons of Amisodarus—he'd reared  
the raging Chimera, who'd killed so many men.\*  
Ajax, son of Oileus, jumped out at Cleobulus,  
captured him alive, stuck in that confusion. Even so,  
Ajax struck him with his sword across the neck,  
[390] draining his fighting strength. The sword grew warm with blood.  
Dark death closed up his eyes, and strong Fate embraced him.  
Then Peneleus and Lycon charged each other.  
Each had thrown his spear and missed, wasting the throw.  
So they went at one another once again with swords.  
Lycon struck the helmet ridge on its horse-hair crest,  
but his sword shattered at the hilt. Then Peneleus  
slashed Lycon's neck below the ear. The sword bit deep,  
sinking the entire blade, so Lycon's head hung over,  
held up on one side only by the uncut skin.  
His limbs gave way.
- [400] Meriones, with quick strides,  
caught up with Acamas, then hit him with his spear  
in his right shoulder, as he was climbing in his chariot.  
He tumbled out. A mist descended on his eyes.  
Idomeneus' pitiless bronze then struck Erymas  
right in his mouth—the spear forced itself straight through,  
below his brain, splitting his white skull apart,  
smashing out his teeth. His eyes filled up with blood.  
More blood spurted from his nose and open mouth.  
Then death's black cloud enveloped Erymas.
- [410] Thus these Danaan leaders each killed his man.  
Just as ravenous mountain wolves suddenly attack  
young goats or lambs and seize them from the flock,  
when in the mountains an inattentive shepherd  
lets them wander off—once the wolves see them,

they attack at once, for those young lack the heart to fight—  
that's how Danaans then went after Trojans,  
whose minds now turned to shameful flight, for they'd lost  
their will to battle on.

Great Ajax kept on trying  
to throw his spear at bronze-armed Hector.

[420] But Hector's battle skills kept his broad shoulders hidden  
behind his bull's hide shield, as he watched arrows  
and thudding spears flying past. Hector realized  
the tide of victory in that fight was changing,  
but he stood there, trying to save his loyal companions.

Just as those times a cloud comes from Olympus,  
moving from the upper air across the sky,  
when Zeus brings on a rain storm—that's how Trojans  
fled yelling from the ships, crossing the ditch again  
in complete disorder. Hector's swift-footed horses

[430] carried him and his weapons back, leaving behind,  
against their will, the Trojans held up at the trench  
dug by Achaeans. In that ditch many swift horses  
lost their master's chariots when poles snapped at the end.  
In pursuit, Patroclus, intent on killing Trojans,  
yelled fierce orders to Danaans. Meanwhile, the Trojans,  
shouting and scattering in panic, were jammed up  
in every pathway. Under the clouds a high dust storm rose,  
as sure-footed horses strained to get away,  
leaving the huts and ships and rushing for the city.

[440] Wherever Patroclus saw the biggest crowd  
of soldiers in retreat, with a yell he charged at them.  
Bodies kept rolling underneath his axle,  
as men fell out when chariot cars rolled over.  
His swift horses, those immortal beasts the gods gave  
as a priceless gift to Peleus, flew straight on  
across the ditch, charging forward. Patroclus' heart  
was set on finding Hector, eager to strike him down.  
But Hector's own swift horses carried him away.  
Just as in late summer rainstorms, the dark earth

[450] is all beaten down, when Zeus pours out his waters  
with utmost violence, when he's enraged with men  
who have provoked him with their crooked judgments,  
corrupting their assemblies and driving justice out,  
not thinking of gods' vengeance, so all the rivers  
crest in flood, their torrents carving many hillsides,  
as they roar down from the mountains in a headlong rush  
toward the purple sea, destroying the works of men—  
that's how, as they sped on, the Trojan horses screamed.

When Patroclus had cut the Trojans' front ranks off,  
[460] he pushed them back again towards the ships,  
keeping them from the city they were trying to reach.  
Between the ships, the river, and the lofty wall,  
in that middle ground, he kept charging at them,  
killing them, avenging deaths of many comrades.  
There he first struck Pronous with his shining spear,  
where Pronous' shield had left his chest exposed.  
His limbs gave way, and he fell down with a thud.  
Patroclus next rushed at Thestor, son of Enops,  
who just sat crouching in his polished chariot,

[470] paralyzed with terror, reins slipping from his hands.  
Coming up, Patroclus struck him with his spear  
right on the jawbone, smashing through his teeth.  
Patroclus pulled his spear back, dragging Thestor  
out across the chariot rail. Just as a man  
sitting on a rocky point hauls up a monstrous fish  
out of the sea, using a line and bright bronze hook—  
that's how Patroclus dragged Thestor from his chariot,  
mouth skewered on the shining spear. He threw him down,  
face first. As Thestor fell, his spirit abandoned him.

[480] Then Erylaus rushed up, but Patroclus struck him  
with a rock right on his head, smashing the entire skull  
inside his heavy helmet. Erylaus collapsed  
face down in the dirt.

Death, who destroys men's hearts,  
flowed all around Patroclus, as he slaughtered

Erymas, Amphoterus, Epaltes,  
Tlepolemus, son of Damastor, Echius,  
Pyris, Ipheus, Euippus, and Polymelus,  
son of Argeas—all these Patroclus laid out,  
one by one, on the earth, which nourishes all men.

[490] When Sarpedon observed his Lycian companions,  
who wear no belt around their tunics, being cut down  
by the hands of Menoetius' son Patroclus,  
he called out to reprimand his godlike Lycians:  
“Shame on you Lycians! Where are you running?  
Now's the time for you to fight on bravely.  
I'll stand up to this man, so I'll find out  
who it is that fights so well, who brings with him  
so much destruction for the Trojans,  
breaking the limbs of many fearless soldiers.”

[500] Sarpedon finished. He jumped out of his chariot  
down to the ground holding his weapons. On the other side,  
when Patroclus saw him, he leapt from his chariot.  
Then they rushed at each other, screaming like vultures  
fighting with hooked talons and curved beaks, screeching  
on some rocky height.

Looking down on the two men,  
the son of crooked-minded Cronos pitied them.  
He spoke to Hera, his sister and his wife:  
“Alas—Sarpedon, dearest of all men,  
is fated now to die, killed by Patroclus,

[510] son of Menoetius. My heart's divided,  
as I think this over. Should I snatch him up  
while still alive and place him somewhere else,  
in his rich land of Lycia, far distant  
from this wretched fighting, or have him killed  
at the hands of Menoetius' son.”  
Ox-eyed queen Hera then replied to Zeus:

“Dread son of Cronos,  
how can you say this? The man is mortal,

doomed long ago by Fate. Now you desire  
to rescue him from miserable death.

[520] Do as you wish. But we other gods  
will not all agree with you. And I'll tell you  
something else—make sure you remember it.  
If you send Sarpedon home alive,  
take care some other god does not desire  
to send his dear son from the killing zone.  
Around Priam's great city, many men,  
sons of the immortals, are now fighting.  
You'll enrage those gods and make them bitter.  
But if Sarpedon's dear to you, if your heart

[530] feels pity for him, then let him be killed  
in a fierce combat at Patroclus' hands,  
son of Menoetius. Once his living spirit  
has abandoned him, send Death and sweet Sleep  
to carry him away, back to the spacious land  
of Lycia, where his brother and his kinsmen  
will bury him with a mound and headstone.  
That's what appropriate for those who die.”  
Hera spoke. The father of gods and men agreed.  
But he shed blood rain down upon the ground, tribute

[540] to his dear son Patroclus was about to kill  
in fertile Troy, far from his native land.  
The two approached within range of each other.  
Patroclus threw and struck renowned Thrasymelus,  
lord Sarpedon's brave attendant, low in the gut.  
His limbs gave way. Then Sarpedon charged Patroclus.  
His bright spear missed him, but it struck a horse,  
Pegasus, in its right shoulder. The horse screamed,  
gasping for life, then fell down in the dust, moaning  
as the spirit left him. The two other horses reared,

[550] their yoke cracked, and their reins got intertwined  
with the trace horse Pegasus lying in the dust.  
But famous spearman Automedon cleared the tangle.  
Pulling out the long sword on his powerful thigh,  
he dashed in and, without a pause, cut the trace horse loose.

The two other horses straightened out, then pulled together in their harness. The two men kept going, taking up again their heart-destroying combat. Once more Sarpedon failed with his bright spear. Its bronze point sailed past Patroclus' left shoulder, missing him.

[560] Then Patroclus, in his turn, threw his bronze spear, which did not leave his hand in vain. It struck right between Sarpedon's midriff and his beating heart. Sarpedon toppled over, as an oak tree falls, or poplar or tall mountain pine which craftsmen cut with sharpened axes, to harvest timber for a ship—that's how he lay there stretched out before his chariot and horses, groaning and clawing at the bloody dust. Just as a lion moves into a herd, then kills a bull, a sleek great-hearted steer among the shambling cattle,

[570] which bellows as it dies right in the lion's jaws—that's how Sarpedon, leader of the Lycian spearmen, struggled as he died, calling to his dear companion: "Glaucus, my friend, you warrior among men, now you must really show yourself a spearman, a true courageous fighter. You must now embrace this evil war, if you're brave enough. First, move round and urge the Lycian leaders to make a stand here by Sarpedon. And then, you fight over me in person with your bronze.

[580] I'll be a source of misery to you, and shame as well, for all your days to come, if Achaeans strip my armour now I'm down among the fleet of ships. So hold your ground with force. Spur on the army."

As he said this, death's final end covered Sarpedon's eyes and nostrils. Then Patroclus set his foot upon Sarpedon's chest, pulled his spear out of the body. The guts came with it. So in the same moment he tugged out the spear point and took Sarpedon's life. Myrmidons reined in the horses,

[590] snorting in their eagerness to bolt, now they'd left  
their master's chariot.

When Glaucus heard Sarpedon's voice,  
he was overcome with savage grief, his heart dismayed  
that he could not have come to his assistance.  
With his hand he grabbed and squeezed his wounded arm,  
still painful from being hit by Teucer's arrow,  
as he'd attacked him on that high defensive wall.  
Teucer had been defending his companions  
from disaster. So Glaucus prayed then to Apollo:  
"Hear me, my lord. You may be in Lycia,

[600] somewhere in that rich land, or here in Troy.  
But you can hear a man's distress from anywhere.  
Bitter grief has now come in my heart.  
For I have this cruel wound. Sharp pains  
run up and down my arm, the flow of blood  
won't stop. The wound wears out my shoulder,  
so I can't grip my spear with any force,  
or move to fight against our enemies.  
And our finest man has perished—Sarpedon,  
child of Zeus, who would not assist his son.  
[610] But, my lord, heal my savage wound at least,  
and ease my pain. Give me strength, so I can call  
my Lycian comrades, urge them on to war,  
and I can fight in person by the corpse  
of our Sarpedon now he's dead."

So Glaucus spoke in prayer.  
Phoebus Apollo heard him. He eased the pains at once,  
stopped the dark blood flowing from the cruel wound,  
and filled his chest with fighting strength. In his heart  
Glaucus recognized with joy that the great god  
had quickly heard his prayer. First, he moved around  
[620] and spurred on Lycia's leading men in every spot  
to rally round Sarpedon. Then, with long strides,  
he went among the Trojans—to Polydamas,



son of Panthous, and brave Agenor. He searched out  
Aeneas and Hector dressed in bronze. Approaching him,  
he spoke—his words had wings:

“Hector,  
now you’re neglecting all your allies,  
men who for your sake are far away from friends,  
their native land, wasting their lives away.  
You’ve no desire to bring assistance.

[630] Sarpedon, leader of Lycian spearmen,  
lies dead, the man who protected Lycia  
with his judgment and his power—slaughtered  
by Ares on the bronze spear of Patroclus.  
My friends, stand by him, keep in your hearts  
your sense of shame, in case the Myrmidons  
strip off his armour and mutilate his corpse,  
in their anger at the dead Danaans,  
the ones killed by our spears at their fast ships.”  
Glaucus finished. Trojans were completely overwhelmed

[640] with grief—unendurable and inconsolable.  
For Sarpedon had always fought to guard their city,  
although he was a distant stranger. Many soldiers  
followed him, and he was pre-eminent in war.  
Full of furious passion, they went at Danaans,  
Hector in the lead, angry about Sarpedon.  
But Patroclus, Menoetius’ son, with his strong heart,  
rallied the Achaeans. He spoke first to the Ajaxes,  
both eager for the fight:

“You two Ajaxes,  
now you must get your joy protecting us,  
[650] as you’ve done before, but even better.  
The man who was the first to jump inside  
Achaean’s wall lies dead—Sarpedon.  
We must try to mutilate the body,  
to seize and strip armour off its shoulders,  
slaughtering with our pitiless bronze

any of his comrades who defend him.”

Patroclus spoke. The Ajaxes both were fiercely eager  
to fight off the enemy in person. Then both sides  
reinforced their ranks—Trojans and Lycians,

[660] Achaeans and Myrmidons. These forces struggled,  
with terrific shouts across the dead man’s corpse.  
The warriors’ armour rang out harshly. Then Zeus,  
to make the fight for his dear son more difficult,  
spread ominous darkness over that fierce battle.  
At first the Trojans pushed bright-eyed Achaeans back,  
for they hit a man who was by no means the worst  
among the Myrmidons—noble Epeigeus,  
son of great-hearted Agacles. He’d once been king  
of populous Boudeum, but he’d killed a man,

[670] a noble relative. So he came a suppliant  
to Peleus and silver-footed Thetis, who’d sent him  
to follow man-destroying Achilles, to sail with him  
to Troy and fight the Trojans. Glorious Hector  
struck him as he grabbed the corpse—with a rock  
he hit his head and split the skull completely open  
inside his heavy helmet. Epeigeus collapsed,  
face down on the corpse. Death, who destroys men’s hearts,  
flowed over him.

Grief for his dead companion  
filled Patroclus. He moved through those fighting in the front,

[680] like a swift hawk swooping down on daws or starlings.  
That’s how fast, Patroclus, master horseman, you charged  
the Lycians and Trojans then, with anger in your heart  
for your companion. With a rock he hit Sthenelaus,  
dear son of Ithaemenes, squarely in the neck,  
snapping the tendons. Those fighting in the ranks in front,  
including glorious Hector, moved back somewhat,  
as far as a long javelin flies when it’s been thrown  
by a man in competition showing off his strength,  
or in a battle with a murderous enemy—

[690] that’s how far Achaeans forced the Trojans to move back.

Glaucus, leader of the Lycian spearmen, was the first to turn around. He killed great-hearted Bathycles, Chalcon's dear son, who lived at home in Hellas, a man pre-eminent among the Myrmidons for a wealthy and successful life. With his spear, Glaucus turned suddenly, as Bathycles came up in pursuit, then struck him in the middle of his chest. He fell down with a crash. Achaeans felt keen sorrow that such a worthy man had fallen. But Trojans, [700] elated, gathered in a crowd to make a stand around him. Achaeans did not forget their courage—they brought their fighting spirit to the Trojans. Meriones killed a well-armed Trojan warrior, Laogonus, daring son of Onetor, a priest of Zeus at Ida, honoured by his people like a god. Meriones threw and hit him underneath the jaw. His spirit swiftly left his limbs, and he was carried off by hateful darkness. Then Aeneas, hoping to hit Meriones as he advanced under his shield, [710] threw his bronze spear at him. But Meriones, looking right at Aeneas, evaded that bronze spear by bending forward. The long spear impaled itself behind him in the ground, its shaft still quivering, until strong Ares took away its power. With anger in his heart, Aeneas then called out: "Meriones, you're a lovely dancer, but if my spear had hit you, your dancing days would have ended for all time to come." Famous spearman Meriones then replied:

"Aeneas, [720] you may be brave, but it's hard for you to crush the fighting strength of every man who stands to defend himself against you. For you, too, are made of mortal stuff. If I threw, if my bronze spear hit you in the middle of your body, then no matter

what your courage, or how much trust you place  
in your strong hands, you'd quickly give me glory,  
and your life to famous horseman Hades."

Meriones spoke. But then Menoetius' noble son  
reprimanded him:

- [730] "Meriones, why do you,  
an honourable man, talk on like this?  
My friend, Trojans won't move back from the corpse  
because someone abuses them with words.  
They won't budge until the earth holds many men.  
Our task here is to battle with our hands.  
The assembly is the place for speeches.  
We don't need more talk. We need to fight."  
Saying this, Patroclus led off, and Meriones,  
that godlike man, went too. Then the turmoil started—  
[740] just like the din woodcutters make in mountain forests,  
a noise heard far away—that's how it sounded then,  
the clamour rising from the widely travelled earth,  
a clash of bronze and leather, well-made ox-hide shields,  
as they fought there with two-edged spears and swords.  
Not even a man who knew Sarpedon very well  
could recognize him then, covered with blood and dirt  
and weapons, from the soles of his feet up to his head.  
For men were swarming round the corpse like farmyard flies  
clustering by buckets full of milk in springtime,  
[750] when milk overflows the pails—that how those warriors  
buzzed around Sarpedon then.

Zeus' bright eyes never once  
glanced from that brutal combat, gazing down  
and thinking in his heart of many different things  
about how lord Patroclus ought to meet his death,  
wondering whether glorious Hector should cut him down  
with his bronze in that bitter fighting there  
over godlike Sarpedon and then strip the armour  
from his shoulders, or whether he should multiply

grim misery for still more men. As Zeus pondered,  
[760] he thought the best plan would be to let Patroclus,  
brave companion of Achilles, son of Peleus,  
drive the Trojans and bronze-armed Hector back again  
towards their city, destroying the lives of many men.  
So Zeus first took the courage out of Hector's heart,  
so that he jumped into his chariot and turned in flight,  
calling to other Trojans to run back, for he knew  
that Zeus' sacred scales were changing. The Lycians,  
though brave, did not hold their ground. They all fled back,  
once they'd seen their king struck through the heart, lying there  
[770] in the pile of bodies. Many men had fallen down  
on top of him, when Cronos' son intensified  
fierce conflict. So the Achaeans stripped Sarpedon,  
pulling the gleaming bronze from off his shoulders.  
Menoetius' brave son gave it to his companions  
to carry to the hollow ships. At that moment,  
cloud-gatherer Zeus spoke to Apollo:

"Up now,  
dear Phoebus, and move Sarpedon out of range.  
When you've cleaned the dark blood off his body,  
take him somewhere far away and wash him  
[780] in a flowing river. Next, anoint him  
with ambrosia, and put immortal clothes  
around him. Then you must hand him over  
to those swift messengers Sleep and Death,  
twin brothers, to carry off with them.  
They'll quickly place him in his own rich land,  
wide Lycia, where his brothers and kinsmen  
will bury him with mound and headstone,  
as is appropriate for those who've died."  
Zeus finished. Apollo did not disobey his father.  
[790] Descending from Mount Ida to that lethal war,  
he carried lord Sarpedon quickly out of range.  
Once he'd taken him a long way off, he washed him  
in a flowing river. Next, he anointed him

with ambrosia and put immortal clothing round him.  
Then Apollo gave Sarpedon up to Sleep and Death,  
swift messengers, twin brothers, to take with them.  
They quickly set him down in spacious Lycia,  
his own rich land.

Patroclus then called to his horses  
and to Automedon to pursue the Trojans,  
[800] the Lycians, as well. How blind he was, poor fool!  
If he'd done what the son of Peleus had told him,  
he'd have missed his evil fate, his own dark death.  
But Zeus' mind is always stronger than a man's.  
He can make even a brave man fearful, rob him  
of his victory with ease. And Zeus can rouse a man  
for battle, as he did then, putting desire to fight  
into Patroclus' chest.

Who was the first warrior you killed,  
Patroclus, and who the last, that time the gods  
called you on to death? Adrestus was the first,  
[810] then Autonomous, Echeclus, Perimus, son of Megas,  
Epistor, and Melanippus. Then Patroclus killed  
Elasus, Mulius, and Pylantes. The other Trojans,  
each and every one of them, set their minds on flight.  
At that point Achaea's sons would have captured Troy  
and its high gates, at Patroclus' hands, as he raged  
with his frenzied spear, but for Phoebus Apollo,  
who stood there on the well-built wall, intending  
to destroy Patroclus and assist the Trojans.  
Three times Patroclus started to climb up a corner  
[820] on that high wall. Three times Apollo shoved him back,  
his immortal hands repelling the bright shield.  
But when Patroclus, for the fourth time, came on  
like some god, Apollo, with a terrific cry,  
shouted these winged words at him:

“Go back,

divinely born Patroclus. This city  
of proud Trojans, according to its fate,  
will not be ravaged by your spear, nor even  
by Achilles, a far better man than you.”

Apollo spoke. Patroclus drew back a little,  
[830] evading the anger of Apollo, the far shooter.  
Meanwhile, Hector pulled his sure-footed horses up  
beside the Scaean Gate, uncertain what to do—  
drive back to the confusion and then battle on,  
or tell his soldiers to gather there inside the walls.  
As he was thinking, Phoebus Apollo approached  
in the form of Asius, a strong young man,  
horse-taming Hector’s uncle, Hecuba’s blood brother,  
Dymas’ son, who lived by the river Sangarius  
in Phrygia. In that shape, Apollo, Zeus’ son,  
spoke out:

[840] “Hector, why withdraw from battle?  
That’s not worthy of you. I wish I were  
more powerful than you, as much as you’re  
superior to me. Then you’d quickly leave  
this battle in disgrace. But come on,  
drive your strong-footed horses at Patroclus,  
so you can kill him, and then Apollo  
can give you glory.”

Saying these words, Apollo left,  
a god among the toiling men. Glorious Hector  
then told fiery Cebriones to lash the horses on,  
[850] drive them to battle. Apollo slipped into the throng  
of fighting men. He totally confused the Argives,  
conferring glory on Hector and his Trojans.  
The rest of the Danaans Hector left alone,  
not killing any of them. His sure-footed horses  
were heading at Patroclus, who, for his part,  
jumped down from his chariot to the ground, holding a spear  
in his left hand. In his right hand, he gripped a stone,

a large jagged rock, his fingers wrapped around it.  
Taking a firm stance, he went for Hector right away.  
[860] He threw the rock and didn't waste his throw—he hit  
Cebriones, Hector's charioteer, a bastard son  
of famous Priam, as he held onto the reins.  
The sharp rock struck him on the forehead, bashing in  
his eyebrows, breaking through the skull. His two eyes  
dropped down onto the ground, in the dust right at his feet.  
Like a diver, Cebriones toppled over,  
out of the well-made chariot. His spirit left his bones.  
Then, horseman Patroclus, you made fun of him:

“Well now,  
there's an agile man! What a graceful diver!  
[870] If he were on the fish-filled seas somewhere,  
he'd feed a lot of men by catching oysters,  
jumping over in the roughest water,  
judging from that easy dive he made  
out of his chariot onto the plain. I suppose  
these Trojans must have acrobats as well.”  
This said, Patroclus rushed at warrior Cebriones,  
moving like a lion who, while savaging some farm,  
is hit in the chest, so his own courage kills him.  
That's how you, Patroclus, rushed at Cebriones,  
[880] in your killing frenzy. Opposing him, Hector  
leapt from his chariot down to the ground. The two men  
then battled over Cebriones, like two lions  
struggling on a mountain peak over a slaughtered deer,  
both ravenous, both filled with fighting fury—  
that's how those two masters of the war shout fought,  
Patroclus, Menoetius' son, and glorious Hector,  
over Cebriones, both keen to slash each other's flesh  
with pitiless bronze. Hector grabbed the corpse's head,  
refusing to let go. At the other end, Patroclus  
[890] gripped the feet. A desperate struggle then ensued  
among the Trojans and Danaans fighting there.  
Just as East and South Winds challenge one another



in mountain forests, shaking up deep stands of oak,  
ash, and tapering cornel trees, hurling slim branches  
one against the other, with tremendous noise  
as the branches snap—that's how Trojans and Achaeans  
collided with each other in that conflict.

Neither side had any thought of ruinous flight.

Around Cebriones many spears were driven home,  
[900] many winged arrows flew from bowstrings, many boulders  
crashed on shields, as men kept fighting round him.  
But the great man Cebriones, proud of his glory,  
just lay there in the swirling dust, his horsemanship  
now quite forgotten.

As long as the sun kept moving through  
the middle sky, weapons from both sides found their mark—  
men kept on dying. But when the sun came to the point  
which shows the time has come to unyoke oxen,  
then Achaeans, contravening Fate, were stronger.

They dragged warrior Cebriones out of range,  
[910] away from shouting Trojans, and stripped the armour  
off his shoulders. Then Patroclus charged the Trojans,  
intent on slaughter. Three times he assaulted them,  
like war god Ares, with terrific shouts. Three times  
he killed nine men. But when he attacked a fourth time,  
then, Patroclus, you saw your life end. For Phoebus,  
a terrible god, in that grim fight came up against you.  
Patroclus failed to see Apollo, as he moved  
through the confusion, for he advanced towards him  
hidden in thick mist. Apollo stood behind him.

[920] Then with the flat of his hand, he struck Patroclus  
on his back, on his broad shoulders—that made his eyes  
lose focus. Next, Phoebus Apollo knocked the helmet  
from his head. The horsehair crest rolled with a clatter  
under horses' feet. The dust and blood then stained  
the helmet's plumes. Up to that time, gods had not let  
that helmet with its horsehair plume get smudged with dirt,  
for it was always guarding godlike Achilles' head,

- his noble forehead, too. Later Zeus awarded it  
to Hector to carry on his head, as his death loomed.
- [930] In Patroclus' hands, his heavy long-shadowed spear,  
thick and strong, with its bronze point, was completely smashed.  
His tasselled shield and strap fell from his shoulders  
down on the ground. Next, Apollo, Zeus' son, loosened  
the body armour on Patroclus. His mind went blank,  
his fine limbs grew limp—he stood there in a daze.  
From close behind, Euphorbus, son of Panthous,  
a Dardan warrior, hit him in the back,  
with a sharp spear between the shoulder blades.  
Euphorbus surpassed all men the same age as him  
in spear throwing, horsemanship, and speed on foot.
- [940] He'd already knocked twenty men out of their chariots,  
and that was the first time he'd come with his own chariot  
to learn something of war. Euphorbus was the first  
to strike you, horseman Patroclus, but he failed  
to kill you. Pulling the spear out of Patroclus' flesh,  
Euphorbus ran back again to blend in with the throng.  
He didn't stand his ground, even though Patroclus  
had no weapons for a fight. So Patroclus,  
overwhelmed by the god's blow and spear, withdrew,  
back to the group of his companions, avoiding death.
- [950] But when Hector noticed brave Patroclus going back,  
wounded by sharp bronze, he moved up through the ranks,  
stood close to Patroclus and struck him with his spear,  
low in the stomach, driving the bronze straight through.  
Patroclus fell with a crash, and Achaea's army  
was filled with anguish. Just as a lion overcomes  
a tireless wild boar in combat, when both beasts  
fight bravely in the mountains over a small spring  
where they both want to drink, and the lion's strength  
brings down the panting boar—that's how Hector,
- [960] moving close in with his spear, destroyed the life  
of Menoetius' noble son, who'd killed so many men.  
Then Hector spoke winged words of triumph over him:  
"Patroclus, you thought you'd raze our city,

robbing our women of their life of freedom,  
taking them in ships to your dear native land.  
You fool! In front of them, Hector's horses,  
swift of foot, came out to fight. With the spear  
I'm the very best war-loving Trojan,  
and I've saved them from their fatal day.

[970] Now vultures will eat you here. You poor wretch,  
even Achilles, for all his courage,  
was no use to you. Though he stayed behind,  
he must have given you strict orders as you left,  
'Don't return to me, horseman Patroclus,  
at the hollow ships, until you've slashed blood  
all over man-killing Hector's tunic  
from his own chest.'

That's what he must have said  
to win you over to such foolishness."  
Then you, horseman Patroclus, your strength all gone,  
replied:

[980] "Boast on, Hector, for the moment.  
Zeus, son of Cronos, and Apollo  
have given you victory. They overcame me  
easily, for they personally removed  
the armour from my shoulders. If twenty men  
came to confront me, just like you,  
all would have died, slaughtered by my spear.  
But deadly Fate and Leto's son have slain me—  
and Euphorbus. So you're the third in line  
at my death. But I'll tell you something else—

[990] bear this in mind—you'll not live long yourself.  
Your death is already standing close at hand,  
a fatal power. For you'll be destroyed  
at brave Achilles' hands, descendant of Aeacus."  
As Patroclus said these words to Hector,  
the finality of death flowed over him.  
His spirit fluttered from his limbs and went to Hades,

lamenting its own fate, the loss of youthful manhood.

As Patroclus died, splendid Hector spoke to him:

“Patroclus, why predict my own death for me?

[1000] Who knows? It may happen that Achilles,

son of fair-haired Thetis, is hit first

by a spear of mine and gives up his life.”

As he said this, Hector set his foot down on the corpse,

pulled the bronze spear from the wound, and pushed the body

backwards. Then with that spear he set off at once,

going after Automedon, godlike attendant

to the swift-footed kinsman of Aeacus,

eager to strike at him. But he’d been carried off

by those swift immortal horses, the priceless gift

presented by the gods to Peleus.

Book Seventeen  
The Fight Over Patroclus

*[The men fight over the body of Patroclus; the exploits of Menelaus in that fight; Apollo rouses Hector to attack, Menelaus retreats; Ajax and Menelaus then move up over the body; Glaucus upbraids Hector; Hector attacks again, with Zeus' support; the battle goes back and forth over the body; Zeus spreads fog over the battle field; Apollo rouses Aeneas to fight; the horses of Achilles mourn Patroclus, refusing to move; Automedon takes them into battle with Zeus' help; Hector and Aeneas go after Achilles' horses, but are pushed back; Athena rouses Menelaus to fight on; Apollo does the same for Hector; Achaeans are driven back; Zeus lifts the fog from the battle; Menelaus goes to Antilochus, tells him to give Achilles the news of Patroclus' death; the Achaeans move off with the body of Patroclus, back towards the ships]*

In that battle, warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
noticed that the Trojans had just killed Patroclus.  
Dressed in gleaming armour, he strode through the ranks  
of those fighting in the front, then made a stand  
over the corpse, like a mother beside her calf,  
lowing over her first born, with no experience  
of giving birth till then. In just that way,  
fair-haired Menelaus stood above Patroclus.  
In front of him he held his spear and a round shield,  
[10] eager to kill anyone who might come at him.  
But Euphorbus, son of Panthous, with his ash spear,  
also knew that brave Patroclus had been killed.  
Moving up close to the dead body, he spoke out,  
addressing warlike Menelaus:

“Divinely raised Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
leader of men—go back. Leave this corpse.  
Abandon these battle trophies. No Trojan  
and no famous ally hit Patroclus  
before I struck him with my spear  
[20] in that murderous fight. So let the Trojans  
give me the honour and the fame. If not,  
I’ll steal your sweet life with one spear throw.”

With a great scowl, fair-haired Menelaus then replied:

“By Father Zeus, such arrogant boasting  
has no great merit. The spirit in a leopard,  
lion, or ferocious boar, whose chest  
contains the fiercest and the strongest fury—  
none of these, it seems, can match the arrogance  
in sons of Panthous with their long ash spears.

[30] But not even horse-taming Hyperenor,  
strong as he was, got much enjoyment  
from his youthful vigour, once he’d mocked me,  
as he waited when I came against him,  
calling me the most unworthy warrior  
among Danaans. I don’t think he went home  
to cheer up his dear wife and worthy parents  
on his own two feet. So if you stand here  
against me, I’ll drain your strength as well,  
just as I did his. In fact, I’d advise you  
[40] to retreat, get back to your companions.  
Don’t oppose me, in case you run into  
something unwelcome. From experience  
there are lessons even fools can learn.”

Menelaus spoke,  
but he failed to sway Euphorbus, who replied:

“Now, indeed, divinely raised Menelaus,  
you’ll surely make up for my brother’s death,  
Hyperenor, whom you killed. You speak  
in triumph about widowing his wife  
in her new bridal home, bringing sorrow,  
[50] grief beyond enduring, to his parents.  
I may provide them with a way of easing  
their sad misery, if I bring home your head  
and armour and toss them in the hands  
of Panthous and queen Phrontis. In any case,

we won't delay our struggle long. Let's start—  
fight on, whether for victory or flight.”

Saying this, Euphorbus struck Menelaus' round shield.  
But the bronze did not break through. The powerful shield  
bent back the point. Then Menelaus, Atreus' son,  
[60] praying to Father Zeus, charged in clutching his spear,  
as Euphorbus was moving back. He struck him  
at the bottom of his throat, putting his full weight  
behind the blow, with confidence in his strong fists.  
The spear point drove straight through Euphorbus' soft neck.  
He fell with a thud, his armour clanging round him.  
His hair, as lovely as the fine curls on the Graces,  
with braids in gold and silver clips, was soaked in blood.  
Just as a man tends a flourishing olive shoot,  
in some lonely place with a rich source of water,  
[70] a lovely vigorous sapling stirred with the motion  
of every breeze, so it bursts out in white blossoms—  
but then a sudden stormy wind arising rips it  
from its trench and lays it out prone on the earth—  
that's how Menelaus, son of Atreus, cut down  
Panthous' son, Euphorbus of the fine ash spear.  
He then began to strip the armour off.

Just as a mountain lion, trusting its own strength,  
snatches the finest heifer from a grazing herd,  
seizing her first by the neck in its powerful jaws,  
[80] then breaks the neck and savagely rips that cow apart,  
gorging itself on blood and all the entrails,  
while around it dogs and herdsmen cry out in distress,  
again and again, but at a distance, unwilling  
to confront the beast, pale in the grip of fear—  
in just that way, no Trojan's heart was brave enough  
to move up and fight against fine Menelaus.  
Then Atreus' son would have easily carried off  
the celebrated armour of the son of Panthous,  
if Phoebus Apollo had not been offended.

[90] He urged Hector, swift Ares' equal, to challenge  
Menelaus. Taking on the likeness of a man,  
Mentes, leader of the Cicones, Apollo  
addressed Hector with these winged words:

“Hector,  
now you're going after something you'll not catch,  
chasing the horses of warrior Achilles,  
descendant of Aeacus. No mortal man,  
except Achilles, can control or drive them,  
for an immortal mother gave him birth.  
Meanwhile, warrior Menelaus, Atreus' son,  
[100] standing by Patroclus, has just killed  
the best man of the Trojans, Euphorbus,  
son of Panthous, ending his brave fight.”

With these words, Apollo withdrew again, a god  
among the toiling men. A bitter cloud of sorrow  
darkened Hector's heart. Looking through the ranks of men,  
he quickly noticed Menelaus stripping off  
the famous armour, with Euphorbus on the ground,  
lying there, blood flowing from his open wound.  
Armed in his gleaming bronze, Hector marched ahead  
[110] through those fighting in the front, with a piercing shout,  
like the inextinguishable fires of Hephaestus.  
Hearing that penetrating yell, Atreus' son  
grew worried. He spoke to his courageous heart:

“Here's trouble. If I leave this fine armour  
and Patroclus, who lies here because he tried  
to avenge my honour, some Danaan,  
seeing this, will call me a disgrace.  
But if I fight Hector and his Trojans  
all by myself out of a sense of shame,  
[120] then they'll surround me—many warriors  
against one man. Hector's gleaming helmet  
is bringing all the Trojans straight at me.



But why's my fond heart debating about this?  
When a man wants to cross what gods have willed,  
fighting a man the gods are honouring,  
then some disaster soon rolls over him.  
So none of the Danaans seeing me here  
moving back from Hector will find that shameful,  
seeing that Hector fights with gods' assistance.

[130] But if I could find Ajax, skilled in war shouts,  
the two of us, drawing on our fighting strength,  
might come back, even against god's will,  
so we could find a way to save this corpse,  
for Achilles' sake, the son of Peleus.  
In this bad situation, that's what's best."

As Menelaus thought these matters over  
in his mind and heart, the Trojan ranks moved forward,  
with Hector in the lead. Menelaus then backed off,  
leaving the corpse behind. He kept looking round,  
[140] like a bearded lion which dogs and men chase off—  
their spears and shouts drive it from the farm. The beast's heart,  
though brave, grows cold, moving from that farmyard  
against its will—that's how fair-haired Menelaus  
backed off from Patroclus. He turned round, standing firm,  
once he'd reached the company of his companions.  
He looked for mighty Ajax, son of Telamon,  
and soon observed him on the left flank of the army,  
rallying his companions, urging them to fight.  
For Phoebus Apollo had made them all fall back  
[150] in an amazing panic. Going off on the run,  
Menelaus came up to Ajax, then spoke out:

"Ajax, my friend, come here. Let's hurry over  
to defend the dead Patroclus. Let's see whether,  
for Achilles' sake, we can at least retrieve  
the naked corpse. Hector with his bright helmet  
already has the armour."

Menelaus spoke,  
rousing the heart in warlike Ajax, who moved up  
among those fighting in the front. With him went  
fair-haired Menelaus. Once Hector had stripped off  
[160] the famous armour from Patroclus, he then tried  
to drag away the body, so with his sharp bronze  
he could hack Patroclus' head from off its shoulders,  
then pull back the corpse to give to Trojan dogs.  
But Ajax moved in close with his shield up, like a wall.  
So Hector gave ground, withdrawing to the company  
of his companions, then jumped up in his chariot.  
He gave the splendid armour to some Trojans  
to carry to the city, something that would bring him  
special glory. Ajax then covered Menoetius' son  
[170] with his broad shield and made his stand there, like a lion  
over its cubs, a beast which hunters run across  
in the forest as it leads its young along.  
The lion shows off its power and contracts its brows  
into fine slits which conceal its eyes—that's how Ajax  
defended warrior Patroclus. With him there,  
on the other side, stood war-loving Menelaus,  
son of Atreus, heart filled with utmost sorrow.

Then Glaucus, son of Hippolochus, commander  
of the Lycians, looking at Hector with a frown,  
criticized him harshly:

[180] "Hector, to look at you,  
you're the finest man we've got, but in battle  
you're sadly lacking. That fame you have  
as a courageous warrior is misplaced.  
You're a man who runs away. Consider now,  
how are you going to save your city  
only with those soldiers born in Ilion?  
For no Lycian will set out to fight  
against Danaans for your city's sake,  
since there's apparently no gratitude

[190] for taking on our enemies without a rest.

How can you rescue a lesser warrior  
from the thick of battle, ungrateful man,  
when Sarpedon, once your companion,  
your guest, you abandon to the Argives,  
to become their battle spoils, their trophy.  
He often served you well—both your city  
and you personally, while he was alive.

But now you lack the courage to protect him  
from the dogs. So now, if any Lycian man

[200] will listen to me, we'll go home, and Troy  
will witness its utter devastation.

If Trojans now could fill themselves with courage,  
a resolute and dauntless spirit, the sort  
men have when they defend their native land,  
struggling hard against a hostile army,  
then we'd haul Patroclus back to Ilion  
at once. If we pulled him from the battle  
and brought the corpse to Priam's mighty city,  
Argives would quickly trade the lovely armour

[210] belonging to Sarpedon, and we could then  
take his body back to Troy. Their dead man  
attended on the greatest of the Argives,  
who leads the best spear fighters by their ships.  
But you don't dare stand up to Ajax  
in the thick of battle, look that brave warrior  
in the eye, or confront him one on one,  
since he's a better man than you."

Hector of the gleaming helmet, looking angry, then replied:

"Glaucus, why would a man like you speak out  
[220] so arrogantly? My friend, I thought you had  
a better mind than any other man  
living in fertile Lycia. But now,  
on the basis of what you've just said,  
I find your thinking questionable.

You say I didn't stand to fight great Ajax.  
I'm not afraid of war, the din of chariots,  
but there's always something more powerful,  
the mind of Zeus, who bears the aegis.  
Zeus makes even brave men run away,  
[230] stealing their victory with ease, or in person  
rouses men to fight. But come, my friend,  
stand here beside me. Look at what I do,  
whether I'm a coward all day long,  
as you allege, or whether I'll prevent  
Danaans, for all their fighting frenzy,  
from defending dead Patroclus."

Hector spoke.

Then, with a great shout, he called out to his Trojans:

"Trojans, Lycians, Dardan spearmen,  
be men, my friends. Recall your battle fury,  
[240] until I can put on the lovely armour  
of great Achilles, which I stripped off  
the great Patroclus, once I'd killed him."

With these words, Hector of the shining helmet  
left that furious conflict and strode quickly off  
with rapid strides, following his companions,  
the men taking the famous armour of Achilles  
towards the city. He caught them a short distance off.  
Then, standing apart from that dreadful fight,  
he changed his armour. He gave his own equipment  
[250] to war-loving Trojans to carry to the city,  
sacred Ilion, then put on the immortal armour  
of Achilles, son of Peleus, which heavenly gods  
had given to Achilles' well-loved father.  
Once he'd grown old, Peleus gave it to his son,  
who, for all his father's armour, did not reach old age.

From far away, cloud-gatherer Zeus gazed down on Hector,

as he dressed himself in the battle armour  
of Peleus' godlike son. Shaking his head, Zeus  
then spoke to his own heart:

“You poor wretch,  
[260] you're not considering your own death at all—  
it's getting closer. So you're putting on  
the immortal armour of the finest man,  
who makes other men afraid. You've just killed  
his comrade, a kind, courageous man,  
and then vainly stripped the armour off  
his head and shoulders. But for the moment,  
I'll give you great power, to compensate you,  
since you'll not be coming back from battle,  
or handing over to Andromache  
[270] the glorious armour of the son of Peleus.”

The son of Cronos spoke, then nodded his dark brow.  
He changed the armour so it suited Hector's body.  
Then the fearful war god Ares entered Hector,  
filling his limbs with strength and courage. He set off,  
to the tremendous shouts of all his famous allies,  
as he paraded there in front of them, dazzling them all  
with the armour of the great-hearted son of Peleus.  
Hector moved around with words of encouragement  
to everyone—Mesthles, Glaucus, Medon,  
[280] Thersilochus, Asteropaeus, Deisenor,  
Hippothous, Phorcys, Chroraius, and Ennomus,  
who read omens found in birds. Hector urged them on—  
his words had wings:

“Listen to me,  
you countless tribes of allies, you neighbours.  
I called you here, each from your own city,  
not because I wished a large display  
or needed it, but so you might help me  
rescue Trojan wives and little children

from warrior Achaeans. With this in mind,  
[290] I squander the resources of my people,  
with food supplies and presents, to strengthen  
hearts in each of you. So now let everyone  
turn round and face the enemy directly,  
whether to survive or die. For in that choice  
we find the joy which we derive from war.  
Patroclus is dead, but whoever pulls him  
to horse-taming Trojans here and makes Ajax  
move away—I'll give him half the spoils,  
keeping the other half myself, and he'll get  
[300] a share of glory equal to my own."

Hector finished. Trojans then threw their full weight  
straight at the Danaans, holding spears up high,  
their hearts hoping they would drag that body  
away from Ajax, son of Telamon. What fools!  
By that corpse Ajax took many of their lives.

Then Ajax said to Menelaus, skilled at war shouts:

"Divinely reared Menelaus, my friend,  
I don't expect we two will be returning  
from this battle. I'm not concerned so much  
[310] about Patroclus' corpse, which soon enough  
will be food for Trojan dogs and birds,  
but I fear for my own head, and yours, as well,  
which may be in danger. Hector's become  
a war cloud which envelops everything.  
And our complete destruction's plain to see.  
So come, call out to Achaea's finest men.  
One of them may hear."

Ajax finished.

Menelaus, skilled at war shouts, followed his advice.  
He shouted to Danaans with a piercing yell:

[320] “Friends, rulers and leaders of Achaeans,  
all you who drink your wine at public cost  
with Agamemnon and Menelaus,  
sons of Atreus, all you who rule your people,  
to whom Zeus has given honour and glory,  
it’s difficult for me to see precisely  
what each of you is doing—this conflict  
rages on so fiercely. But all of you  
must come here, even if not called by name,  
for you’ll feel shame and anger in your hearts,  
[330] if Patroclus should become a toy  
for Trojan dogs to play with.”

Menelaus stopped.

Swift Ajax, son of Oïleus, heard him clearly.  
He was the first to come running through the battle  
to meet Menelaus. After him came others—  
Idomeneus and his companion Meriones,  
the man-killing war god’s equal, and others, too.  
But what man has a mind which could name all those  
who came up behind these warriors in that conflict  
to reinforce Achaeans?

Trojans then drove forward

[340] in a single group with Hector leading them.  
Just as a huge wave roars into a flowing stream  
at the mouth of a river fed from heaven,  
with headlands on both sides of the shoreline  
echoing the boom of salt water surf beyond—  
that’s how Trojans roared as they came on in attack.  
Achaeans held firm around Menoetius’ son,  
united by a common spirit, behind a fence  
of their bronze shields. The son of Cronos  
cast a thick mist down on their glittering helmets,  
[350] for Zeus had not felt hostile to Patroclus  
in earlier days, when he was alive and comrade  
to Achilles. So Zeus did not want Patroclus

to become merely a plaything for the dogs  
of his Trojan enemies. Thus, he encouraged  
Patroclus' companions to defend him there.  
At first the Trojans drove bright-eyed Achaeans back,  
so they retreated from the body, leaving it behind.  
But the Trojans, though confident with their long spears,  
did not kill anyone, for all their eagerness.

[360] Still, they did begin to drag away the body.  
But the Achaean pull back was only temporary,  
for Ajax quickly rallied them. Of all Danaans  
he was the finest in his looks and actions  
after the son of Peleus. Ajax strode around  
through those fighting in the front, like a mountain boar  
who scatters dogs and strong young men with ease,  
as it wheels through forest clearings—that's how Ajax,  
splendid son of noble Telamon, easily pushed back  
the Trojan ranks, as he moved among them. They stood there,  
[370] over Patroclus, wanting desperately to haul him off,  
back to their city, and win glory for themselves.

Then Hippothous, noble son of Pelasgian Lethous,  
began to drag the body by the feet back through the crowd.  
He'd tied his shield strap round both ankle tendons,  
eager to please Hector and the Trojans. But right away  
he faced a danger which no one could avert,  
no matter how much he might want to. For Ajax,  
moving quickly through the throng, struck him at close range  
on the bronze cheek piece of his helmet. The spear point  
[380] smashed through the helmet with its horsehair crest, driven on  
by the force of Ajax's mighty fists in that huge spear.  
Blood and brains gushed from the wound and oozed together  
along the socket of the spear. The strength drained out of him  
where he was standing. Hippothous let go the feet  
of brave Patroclus, allowing them to fall and lie there.  
Then he collapsed, falling face down on the body,  
far away from rich Larissa. He did not repay  
his parents for the work they'd done to rear him—



he did not live long enough, slaughtered on the spear  
of great-hearted Ajax.

[390] Hector then threw his shining spear  
at Ajax. But he was directly facing Hector,  
so he saw it coming. Ajax dodged the weapon,  
but only just. It hit Schedius, by far the best  
of men from Phocis, son of great-hearted Iphitus,  
who lived at home in celebrated Panopeus,  
ruling many men. Hector's spear struck this man  
right on the collar bone. The bronze point drove on through  
and came out by his shoulder. He fell with a crash,  
his armour rattling round him. Then Ajax struck,  
[400] hitting warlike Phorcys, Phaenops' son, in the gut,  
as he stood over Hippothous. Breaking the plate  
on body armour, the bronze sliced out his innards.  
Phorcys fell in the dust, fingers clawing at the earth.  
At that point glorious Hector and his foremost men  
drew back. With a tremendous shout, Argives dragged off  
the bodies of dead Hippothous and Phorcys.  
They began to strip the armour from their shoulders.

Right then war-loving Achaeans would have driven Trojans  
back to Ilion, conquered by their own cowardice,  
[410] with Argives winning glory beyond what Zeus decreed,  
through their own strong power. But Apollo himself  
stirred up Aeneas, taking on the form of Periphas,  
the herald, son of Epytos, who'd grown old  
serving as herald to Aeneas' old father.  
He was wise and well-disposed towards Aeneas.  
In this man's form, Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke up:

“Aeneas, can you not defend steep Ilion  
in defiance of some god? I've seen other men  
who trusted their strong power and courage  
[420] and with their numbers held their country  
against Zeus' will. But Zeus wants us to win

far more than the Danaans, and you all suffer  
countless fears and won't keep battling on."

He finished. Aeneas recognized Apollo,  
the far shooter, once he'd looked into his face.  
Aeneas then shouted out, addressing Hector:

"Hector and the rest of you commanders,  
both Trojans and allies, it would be shameful  
if war-loving Achaeans drive us back  
[430] all the way to Ilion, if we're beaten  
by our cowardice. Some god's just told me—  
he came and stood beside me—that even now  
in this fight high counsellor Zeus is helping us.  
So let's go straight at these Danaans,  
and not let them carry dead Patroclus  
back to their ships without a battle."

Aeneas finished.  
He strode far ahead of all the fighters at the front,  
then stood there. Trojans rallied round and made a stand,  
facing the Achaeans. With his spear, Aeneas  
[440] then struck down Leocritus, son of Arisbas,  
the courageous companion of Lycomedes.  
As he fell, war-loving Lycomedes pitied him.  
He moved in close, stood there, and threw his shining spear.  
It hit Apisaon, a son of Hippiasus,  
shepherd of his people, below his abdomen,  
right in the liver. Apisaon's limbs collapsed.  
He'd come from fertile Paeonia, their best man  
in a fight after Asteropaeus, and his fall  
filled warrior Asteropaeus with sorrow.  
[450] He charged ahead, ready to fight Danaans.  
But that was now impossible. For they stood there,  
in a group around Patroclus, holding up their shields  
on every side, with their spears extending outward.  
Ajax moved around among them all, giving orders,

telling them that no man should move back from the corpse  
or stride out to fight in front of massed Achaeans.  
They must all stand firm around the body, fighting  
hand to hand. That's what mighty Ajax ordered.  
Dark blood soaked the earth. The pile of dead bodies grew,  
[460] as they fell—Trojans, proud allies, Danaans, too,  
all together. For as Danaans fought, they shed  
their own blood also. But far fewer of them died,  
for they were careful to protect each other  
from complete destruction in that fighting crowd.

So they fought on, like blazing fire. You couldn't tell  
whether sun and moon still shone, for in that fight  
a mist surrounded all the best men standing there  
beside Menoetius' dead son. Meanwhile, other Trojans  
fought other well-armed Achaeans undisturbed,  
[470] under a clear sky, bright sunshine all around them,  
no clouds above the entire earth or on the mountains.  
So they fought more casually, keeping their distance,  
staying out of range of each other's painful weapons.  
But soldiers in the centre were suffering badly  
in the fog and fighting. The pitiless bronze  
was wearing down the finest men.

But two warriors,  
Thrasymedes and Antilochus, well-known men,  
had not yet learned about the death of lord Patroclus.  
They thought he was still alive, fighting the Trojans  
[480] in the front ranks of the throng. These two were fighting  
some distance off, watching their companions, keeping track  
of who was killed or fleeing back, as Nestor had instructed,  
when he'd urged them into battle by their black ships.

Throughout that entire day the great combat raged,  
a bitter conflict. The men kept toiling on without a pause,  
sweat dripping on their knees and legs, under their feet,  
and running down men's eyes and hands, as both sides

battled over swift-footed Achilles' brave companion.  
Just as a man gives his people a huge bull's hide  
[490] to stretch, after soaking it in fat, and they stand,  
once they've picked it up, in a circle pulling hard,  
so the moisture quickly leaves the hide, as the fat  
soaks in under the tension of so many hands  
stretching the entire skin as far as it will go—  
that's how those men on both sides pulled at the corpse,  
back and forth in a narrow space, hearts full of hope—  
Trojans seeking to drag it back to Ilion,  
Achaean to their hollow ships. Around Patroclus  
the conflict grew intense. Neither Ares nor Athena,  
[500] who incite warriors to battle, if they'd seen that fight,  
would have disparaged it, not even if they'd been  
intensely angry. That's how destructive Zeus made  
the conflict for men and horses that day men fought  
over Patroclus.

Godlike Achilles, at this time,  
knew nothing of Patroclus' death, for they were fighting  
under the walls of Troy, away from the fast ships.  
He'd never imagined in his heart that Patroclus  
was dead. He thought he was alive and would return  
once he'd reached the gates. He didn't think  
[510] he'd lay waste the city with him or without him,  
for often Achilles had learned this from his mother,  
listening to her in private, when she'd told him  
what great Zeus had planned. But at that time, Thetis  
said nothing of the evil which had taken place,  
the death of his companion, his dearest friend by far.

But those beside the corpse kept holding their sharp spears,  
with no pause in the fighting. The mutual slaughter  
continued on. Bronze-armed Achaeans talked together,  
using words like these:

“My friends,

[520] there'd be no glory for us if we went back  
to the hollow ships. So let the black earth  
open here for each of us. That would be better  
for us all by far than if we leave this corpse  
for horse-taming Trojans to carry off,  
back to their city, winning glory."

Great-heated Trojans, too, spoke words like these:

"Friends, if we're all fated to be killed together  
by this man, let no one leave the battle."

Men talked like this to strengthen their companions.

[530] Then they fought on, the smash of iron rising up  
through the bronze sky. But the horses of Achilles,  
descendant of Aeacus, stood some distance from the fight,  
weeping from the time they first learned their charioteer  
had fallen in the dust at the hands of Hector,  
killer of men. Automedon, brave son of Diores,  
often lashed them with a stroke of his quick whip,  
and often spoke to them with soothing words or threats,  
but the two weren't willing to withdraw back to the ships  
by the broad Hellespont, or go towards Achaeans

[540] locked in battle. They stayed beside their ornate chariot,  
immobile, like a pillar standing on the tomb  
of some dead man or woman, heads bowed down to earth.  
Warm tears flowed from their eyes onto the ground,  
as they cried, longing for their driver. Their thick manes,  
covered in dirt, trailed down below their harnesses  
on both sides of the yoke. Looking at those horses,  
as they mourned, the son of Cronos pitied them.  
Shaking his head, Zeus spoke to his own heart:

"Poor horses!

Why did we give you to king Peleus,

[550] a mortal man, for you're immortal, ageless?

Was it so you'd experience sorrow

among unhappy men? For the truth is this—  
of all the things which breathe or move on earth,  
nothing is more miserable than man.  
But at least Hector, Priam's son, won't mount you  
or drive your finely decorated chariot.  
That I won't permit. Is it not enough  
he wears his armour and then brags about it?  
I'll put strength into your legs and hearts,  
[560] so you can carry Automedon safely  
from this battle back to the hollow ships.  
For I'll still grant glory to the Trojans,  
to keep on killing till they reach the ships,  
at sunset, when sacred darkness comes."

Saying this, Zeus breathed great strength into those horses.  
The two shook out their manes, so the dirt fell on the ground.  
They then set off towards the Trojans and Achaeans,  
quickly pulling the fast chariot along with them.  
Behind them Automedon joined the fighting,  
[570] though still grieving for his comrade, swooping down  
in that chariot like a vulture on a flock of geese.  
He easily escaped the Trojan battle noise  
and then with ease charged into the large crowd once more.  
But in these attacks he didn't kill a man,  
as he rushed to chase them down. It was impossible,  
for in the sacred chariot he was by himself.  
He couldn't wield a spear and manage those swift horses.  
But at last one of his companions noticed him,  
Alcimedon, son of Laerces, Haemon's son.  
[580] Standing behind the chariot, he cried to Automedon:

"Automedon, what god put inside your chest  
this useless plan, stealing your common sense?  
You're fighting against the Trojans by yourself,  
in the front ranks of the crowd. Your comrade  
has been killed, and on his shoulders Hector  
is now wearing the armour of Achilles—

he celebrates his glorious triumph.”

Automedon, son of Diores, replied:

“Alcimedon, what Achaean warrior  
[590] is better able to control and guide  
these strong immortal horses than yourself,  
except Patroclus, a man as wise as gods,  
while he was alive? Now he’s met his death,  
his fate. So take the shining reins and whip.  
I’ll get down from the chariot and fight.”

Automedon spoke. Then Alcimedon, springing up  
into that fast chariot, quickly grabbed the reins and whip.  
Automedon jumped out. Seeing this, glorious Hector  
at once spoke to Aeneas, who was close by:

[600] “Aeneas, counselor to bronze-armed Trojans,  
I see the two-horse team of swift Achilles  
coming to this fighting with poor charioteers.  
That pair I’d like to capture, if your heart  
is willing, since those men lack the courage  
to confront the two of us, if we attack,  
or to stand and fight against us both.”

Hector spoke. Anchises’ strong son was not unwilling.  
So the two moved straight ahead, guarding their shoulders  
under bull’s hide shields, tanned and tough, with thick bronze  
[610] hammered out on top. With them went Chromius,  
and godlike Aretus, fully hoping in their hearts  
they’d kill the men, then drive those strong-necked horses off.  
What fools! They would not return from Automedon  
without shedding their own blood. Then Automedon  
prayed to Father Zeus, and his dark heart was filled  
with strength and courage. Immediately he spoke out  
to Alcimedon, his loyal companion:

“Alcimedon,  
make sure you keep the horses close to me,  
so they breathe right on my neck. I don’t think  
[620] Hector, son of Priam, will check his fury,  
until he’s killed the pair of us and climbed  
behind the fine manes of these horses  
belonging to Achilles, then driven in flight  
the Argive ranks, or himself been slaughtered  
among the front-line fighters.”

Automedon finished,  
then shouted to both Ajaxes and Menelaus:

“You Ajaxes, both Argive leaders, Menelaus,  
leave that corpse to the rest of our best men,  
who’ll stand firm around it. Protect the two of us  
[630] from ruthless fate while we’re still living.  
For Hector and Aeneas, Troy’s best men  
in this harsh fight, are coming hard against us.  
But these things lie in the lap of the gods,  
so I’ll attempt a throw—whatever happens,  
it’s all up to Zeus.”

Saying this, Automedon  
hefted his long-shadowed spear and threw it, hitting  
the round shield of Aretus, which didn’t stop it.  
The bronze went straight on through, severed his belt,  
then drove low in his stomach. Just as a strong man  
[640] with a sharp axe strikes a farm ox right behind its horns,  
slicing clean through sinews, so the ox stumbles forward  
and falls down—that’s how Aretus jerked forward and then fell  
onto his back. Once that sharp spear impaled itself,  
quivering in his organs, his limbs gave way.  
Then Hector threw his bright spear at Automedon,  
but since he was directly facing Hector,  
he saw the bronze spear coming and evaded it  
by leaning forward. The long spear stuck in the ground



behind him, its shaft trembling until great Ares  
[650] stilled its force. Now they would have charged each other  
and fought hand to hand with swords, but the Ajaxes  
made them move apart for all their battle fury.  
They came through the crowd answering their comrade's shout.  
Hector, Aeneas, and godlike Chromius,  
afraid of both Ajaxes, moved back once again,  
leaving Aretus lying there with a mortal wound.  
Automedon, swift Ares' equal, stripped the armour,  
boasting in triumph:

"I've managed here  
to ease somewhat my heart's grief for the death  
[660] of Menoetius' son, though the man I've killed  
is a lesser man than he."

With these words,  
he took the blood-stained spoils and put them in the chariot.  
Then he got in, feet and upper arms all bloody,  
like a lion that's just gorged itself on cattle.

Then once more over Patroclus the bitter fight  
resumed—fierce and full of sorrow. Athena  
stirred up the conflict, coming down from heaven,  
sent by wide-seeing Zeus to urge on the Danaans.  
For his mind had changed. Just as for mortal men  
[670] Zeus bends his coloured rainbow down from heaven,  
an omen prophesying war or some harsh storm,  
upsetting flocks and stopping men from work  
upon the earth—that's how Athena then placed herself  
in the Achaean throng, wrapped in a purple mist.  
She stirred up all the men, giving encouragement  
first to courageous Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
who was close by her. Taking the form of Phoenix,  
in his untiring voice she said:

"Surely, Menelaus,

you'll be disgraced, have to hang your head in shame,  
[680] if Achilles' fine and loyal companion  
is ravaged by swift dogs beneath Troy's walls.  
So be brave. Stand firm. Encourage all your men."

Menelaus, expert in war shouts, answered her:

"Old Phoenix, you venerable old man,  
if only Athena would give me strength,  
defend me from this shower of weapons,  
I'd be happy to stand above Patroclus,  
protecting him. His death has touched my heart.  
But Hector has the power of deadly fire.  
[690] He won't stop cutting men down with his bronze,  
for Zeus is giving him the glory."

Menelaus' words pleased the bright-eyed goddess,  
Athena, for he'd first prayed to her of all the gods.  
She put strength into his shoulders and his knees.  
Then in his chest she set the persistence of a gnat,  
which, no matter how much one brushes it away  
from someone's skin, keeps on biting—it finds human blood  
so sweet—with that stamina she filled up his dark heart.  
Standing over Patroclus, he hurled his shining spear.  
[700] Among the Trojans was a rich, brave man called Podes,  
son of Eëtion, to whom Hector granted  
special honour among men as his companion,  
his good friend at a feast. Fair-haired Menelaus  
struck him with his spear, as he began to flee.  
He hit him on the belt. The bronze drove straight on through.  
Podes fell with a thud. Then Menelaus, Atreus' son,  
dragged the corpse away from Trojans into the crowd  
of his companions.

At that point, Apollo  
came up close to Hector to reinforce his spirit.  
[710] He took the form of Phaenops, son of Asius,

of all Hector's guests the one he liked the most.  
Phaenops lived at home in Abydos. In his shape,  
Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke out:

"Hector,  
which of the Achaeans will now fear you,  
since you're afraid of Menelaus,  
who so far has been a feeble spearman?  
But all by himself he's snatched a body  
from the Trojans and gone off with it.  
He's killed your trusty comrade Podes,  
[720] Eëtion's son, a noble front-line warrior."

As he spoke, black clouds of grief enveloped Hector.  
He strode by the foremost fighters, armed in gleaming bronze.  
Then the son of Cronos took his tasselled aegis,  
all glittering, hid Ida behind clouds, then flashed  
his lightning, with a tremendous peal of thunder,  
as he shook the aegis, awarding victory  
to Trojans and making Achaeans run away.

The first to begin the rout was Peneleus,  
a Boeotian. Standing there facing the enemy,  
[730] as usual, he was hit in the shoulder by a spear  
from Polydamas, who'd come in close to throw.  
It was a glancing blow, but the point of the spear  
sliced quite near the bone. Then at close quarters, Hector  
attacked Leitus, son of great-hearted Alectryon.  
Hector sliced his wrist, and so his fighting ended.  
Looking around him anxiously, Leitus drew back—  
he knew if he couldn't grip his spear, he had no hope  
of fighting Trojans. As Hector went at Leitus,  
Idomeneus threw and struck his body armour  
[740] on the chest, right beside the nipple. But the long spear  
broke at the socket. The Trojans gave a shout.  
Then Hector threw a spear at Idomeneus,  
Deucalion's son. He missed him, but not by much.

He did hit Coeranus, Meriones' comrade,  
his charioteer, who'd followed him from well-built Lyctus.  
Idomeneus had come from the curving ships that day  
on foot and would've given the Trojans a great triumph,  
if Coeranus hadn't quickly driven up  
with his swift-footed horses. For Idomeneus  
[750] he came as a saving light, protecting him  
from ruthless fate. But the act cost him his life  
at the hands of man-killing Hector, who struck him  
underneath his jaw and ear. The spear smashed his teeth,  
roots and all, splitting his tongue in half. Coeranus  
tumbled from the chariot. The reins fell on the ground.  
Meriones stooped down and scooped them from the plain  
with his own hands, then spoke to Idomeneus:

"Now lash these horses on until you reach  
our swift ships. For you recognize yourself  
[760] that Achaeans will not win this victory."

Meriones finished. And so Idomeneus  
whipped the fair-maned horses back to the hollow ships,  
for by now a fear had fallen on his heart, as well.

Great-hearted Ajax and Menelaus also knew  
that Zeus had turned the tide of battle now, giving  
victory to the Trojans. The first one to speak  
was Telamonian Ajax:

"Here's a problem.  
Even a fool can see that Father Zeus  
is now personally helping Trojans.  
[770] All their flying weapons hit a target,  
whether a brave man throws them or a coward—  
Zeus makes them all fly straight. In our case,  
all our throws fall wasted on the ground.  
But come, let's sort out the best course of action,  
so we both can drag the corpse and then get back

in person to bring joy to our companions.  
They must be anxious as they watch us here,  
thinking we can't check the fighting frenzy  
of man-killing Hector, his all-conquering hands,  
[780] and we'll withdraw to our black ships. I wish  
some comrade would report back quickly  
to Peleus' son, for I don't think he's learned  
the dreadful news of his dear comrade's death.  
But I can't see any Argive who could do that.  
Men and horses are all shrouded in this mist.  
Father Zeus, rescue these Achaean sons  
from this fog, make the sky clear, let us see  
with our own eyes. Since it gives you pleasure,  
kill us, but do in the light of day."

[790] As he finished, Ajax wept. Father Zeus pitied him.  
At once he dispersed the mist, scattering the haze.  
The sun shone down, and all the fight came into view.  
Then Ajax spoke to Menelaus, skilled at war shouts:

"Look now, divinely raised Menelaus,  
see if you can spot Antilochus alive,  
son of great-hearted Nestor. Get him to go  
with speed to rouse up fiery Achilles,  
by telling him his companion, the man  
he loves the most by far, has just been killed."

[800] Ajax spoke. Menelaus, expert at war shouts, agreed.  
He went off like some lion moving from a farm,  
exhausted by his attacks on dogs and men,  
who prevent it tearing flesh out of some cow,  
keeping their watch all night—but ravenous for meat,  
the beast keeps charging in without success, for spears  
rain down, thrown by keen hands, then burning sticks,  
which, for all his fierce desire, make him afraid,  
so he slinks away at dawn in disappointment—  
that's how Menelaus, skilled at war cries,

[810] left Patroclus, much against his will—he feared  
Achaean might be pushed back in painful flight,  
leaving the corpse a trophy for the enemy.  
He issued many orders to Meriones  
to the Ajaxes, as well:

“You two Ajaxes,  
Argive leaders, and you, Meriones,  
let each man bear in mind the kindnesses  
of poor Patroclus, who, when he was alive,  
knew how to treat every man with care.  
Now fatal death has overtaken him.”

[820] With these words, fair-haired Menelaus went away,  
glancing warily in all directions, like an eagle,  
which, men say, has the sharpest sight of all the animals  
flying in the sky—a bird which, while soaring high,  
doesn’t miss the swiftly running hare crouched down  
under a leafy bush, and, swooping low, seizes it  
at once, and then tears out its life—that’s how, Menelaus,  
raised by gods, your bright eyes kept searching all around  
through groups of many comrades, seeking Nestor’s son,  
to see if he was still alive. Then Menelaus,

[830] quickly seeing him on the left flank of the battle  
encouraging his companions, urging them to fight,  
came up to him. Then fair-haired Menelaus said:

“Divinely raised Antilochus, come here,  
so you can learn the painful news, something  
I wish had never happened. You already know,  
I think, for your own eyes can see it,  
how some god is rolling this disaster  
over the Danaans, giving victory  
to the Trojans. The best Achaean,

[840] Patroclus, has been slaughtered, a huge loss  
for the Danaans, who miss him badly.  
You must run quickly to Achaean ships

to tell Achilles, so he can bring the corpse  
in safety to his ship—the naked body,  
for now Hector of the gleaming helmet  
wears his armour.”

Menelaus finished speaking.

Hearing that news, Antilochus was overwhelmed.

For a long time he stood in shock, speechless. His eyes  
filled up with tears, his strong voice failed. But even so,

[850] he did not neglect what Menelaus told him.

Giving his armour to his noble comrade

Laodocus, who drove the horses close beside him,

he set off on the run. As he wept, his swift feet

took him from the battle, bearing the bad news

to Achilles, son of Peleus. And then your heart,

divinely raised Menelaus, had no desire

to help defend the hard-pressed comrades left there

by Antilochus, men of Pylos, who felt his loss

severely. But to assist them, Menelaus

[860] sent godlike Thrasymedes. Then he went in person

to stand by warrior Patroclus. Running over,

he took up a position by both Ajaxes and said:

“I’ve sent Antilochus to our fast ships,

to swift Achilles. Still, I don’t expect

he’ll come out now, no matter how enraged

he is with godlike Hector. He can’t fight

at all against the Trojans without armour.

But now we should consider for ourselves

the best thing we should do, so we’ll be able

[870] to haul off the corpse and leave this Trojan tumult,

escaping our own death and our destruction.”

Great Telamonian Ajax then answered him:

“Glorious Menelaus, everything you say

is true enough. So you and Meriones

stoop down and lift the body quickly,  
as fast possible. Take it from this fight.  
We'll hold off the Trojans and godlike Hector,  
standing behind you with a single heart,  
just as we share one name. We've stood firm before,  
[880] holding our positions by each other,  
in the face of Ares, the fierce god of war."

Ajax spoke. Then they raised the body off the ground,  
lifting it high with one great heave. Behind them,  
Trojans soldiers gave a shout, as they saw Achaeans  
hoisting up the corpse. They went after them like hounds  
charging ahead of youthful hunters, as they chase  
some wounded wild boar, keen to rip it into pieces,  
but once it wheels around on them, sure of its strength,  
they run back in fear, scattering in all directions—  
[890] that's how groups of Trojans kept following them a while,  
thrusting at them with swords and double-bladed spears,  
but when both Ajaxes turned round to stand against them,  
their colour changed, and no one dared rush forward  
to battle for the dead.

So these men worked hard  
to bring that body from the battle to the hollow ships,  
in the face of a fierce conflict, like some fire  
suddenly rushing at a city full of people,  
setting it alight, so houses fall among the flames,  
as winds whip the inferno on. That's how the din  
[900] of chariots and spearmen coming up against them  
kept resounding as they moved along. But like mules  
throwing their great strength into their work, as they haul  
a beam or huge ship timber on an uneven path  
down from the mountains, hearts worn out with the strain,  
as they work on covered in sweat—that's how these men  
strove hard to carry off the corpse. Behind them,  
both Ajaxes held off the enemy. Just as  
a wooded ridge which cuts across a plain holds back



a flood, even the strong flow of some harsh rivers,  
[910] pushing their waters back to go across the plain,  
for the strength of their current cannot rupture it—  
that's how both Ajaxes held back the Trojans then  
in that fight. But Trojans kept up their pursuit,  
especially two of them—Aeneas, Anchises' son,  
and glorious Hector. Just as a flock of daws or starlings  
flies off in screaming fear, once they see a falcon  
as it comes after them, bringing death to all small birds—  
that's how the young Achaean soldiers ran off then,  
away from Hector and Aeneas, screaming in panic,  
[920] forgetting all their fierce desire for battle.  
As Danaans fled, plenty of fine weapons fell  
around the ditch. But there was no let up in the war.

Book Eighteen  
The Arms of Achilles

*[Antilochus brings the news to Achilles of Patroclus' death; Achilles collapses in grief; Thetis hears his grief, talks to her sister Nereids, then visits Achilles, promises to bring him new armour from Hephaestus; Iris visits Achilles with a message from Hera; Achilles displays himself to the Trojans by the ditch and wall; Trojans debate what to do; Polydamas advises retreat; Hector opposes him; Achaeans take Patroclus' body back to the ships, begin their laments over Patroclus; Thetis visits Hephaestus, requests new armour for Achilles; Hephaestus makes new armour, especially a new shield; Thetis leaves with the armour]*

As the men fought on like a blazing fire raging,  
swift-footed Antilochus came to Achilles  
with his news. He found Achilles by his beaked ship,  
sensing in himself what had already happened,  
speaking with a troubled mind to his own great heart:

“Why are long-haired Achaeans once again  
retreating to their ships, being beaten back  
across the plain in terror? I hope the gods  
have not done something that will break my heart.

[10] My mother told me once they'd do that,  
when she told me that while I was alive  
the best man of the Myrmidons would leave  
the sun's light at the hands of Trojans.  
So it must be the case that the fine son  
of Menoetius is dead, that reckless man.  
I told him to return back to the ships,  
once he'd saved them from consuming fire,  
and not face up to Hector man to man.”

As Achilles in his mind and heart was thinking this,  
[20] noble Nestor's son approached, shedding warm tears.  
He told him the agonizing truth:

“Son of warlike Peleus,  
you must hear this dreadful news—something

I wish weren't so—Patroclus lies dead.  
Men are fighting now around the body.  
He's stripped. Hector with his gleaming helmet  
has the armour.”

Antilochus finished speaking.  
A black cloud of grief swallowed up Achilles.  
With both hands he scooped up soot and dust and poured it  
on his head, covering his handsome face with dirt,  
[30] covering his sweet-smelling tunic with black ash.  
He lay sprawling—his mighty warrior's massive body  
collapsed and stretched out in the dust. With his hands,  
he tugged at his own hair, disfiguring himself.  
The women slaves acquired as battle trophies  
by Achilles and Patroclus, hearts overwhelmed  
with anguish, began to scream aloud. They rushed outside  
and beat their breasts around warlike Achilles.  
Then all the women's legs gave way, and they fell down.  
Across from them, Antilochus lamented,  
[40] eyes full of tears, as he held Achilles by the hand.  
Achilles' noble heart moaned aloud. Antilochus  
feared he might hurt himself or slit his throat  
with his own sword. Achilles gave a huge cry of grief.  
His noble mother heard it from the ocean depths  
where she was sitting by her ancient father.  
She began to wail. Then around her gathered  
all the divine daughters of Nereus deep in the sea—  
Glauce, Thaleia, Cymodoce, Nesaea,  
Speio, Thoe, ox-eyed Halië, Cymothoë,  
[50] Actaia, Limnoreia, Melite, Iaera,  
Amphithoe, Agave, Doto, Proto,  
Pherousa, Dynamene, Dexamene,  
Amphinome, Callianeira, Doris, Panope,  
lovely Galatea, Nemertes, Apseudes,  
Callianassa. Also there were Clymene,  
Ianeira, Ianassa, Maera, Orithyia,  
Amatheia with her lovely hair, and others,

Nereus' daughters living in the ocean depths.  
They filled the glistening cave, beating their breasts.  
Thetis led them all in their laments:

[60] "Sister Nereids, listen,  
so all of you, hearing what I say,  
will understand my heart's enormous sorrow.  
Alas, for my unhappy misery,  
that to my grief I bore the best of men.  
For when I gave birth to a fine strong boy  
to be an excellent heroic warrior,  
when he'd grown as tall as some young sapling,  
for I'd raised him like a lovely orchard tree,  
I sent him out in the beaked ships to Ilion,  
[70] to war against the Trojans. But now,  
I'll never welcome him back home again,  
returning to the house of Peleus.  
While he's still alive and sees the sunlight,  
he lives in sorrow. When I go to him,  
I can provide no help. But I shall go  
to look on my dear child, to hear what grief  
has overtaken him while he remains  
detached from all the fighting."

With these words,  
Thetis left the cave. Her sisters went with her in tears.  
[80] Around them sea waves parted, until they came  
to fertile Troy. They emerged, climbing up on shore,  
one after another, right where the Myrmidons  
had dragged up their ships in close-packed formation  
near swift Achilles. Then his noble mother moved  
beside him, as he was groaning bitterly.  
With a sharp cry, she cradled her son's head, then spoke.  
As she grieved, she talked to him—her words had wings:

"My child, why are you crying? What sorrow now  
has come into your heart? Speak out. Hide nothing.

[90] Zeus has given you what you begged him to  
when you stretched your hands out to him—  
all Achaea's sons by their ships' sterns  
are hemmed in there, desperate for your help,  
suffering a terrible ordeal."

With a heavy groan,  
swift-footed Achilles then answered Thetis:

"Yes, Mother,  
Olympian Zeus has indeed accomplished  
what I asked. But what pleasure's there for me,  
when Patroclus, my beloved companion,  
has been destroyed, the man I honoured  
[100] as my equal, above all my comrades.  
I've lost him and the armour, which Hector took,  
once he'd killed him, that massive armour,  
so wonderful to look at, which the gods  
gave as a priceless gift to Peleus  
on that day they placed you in the bed  
of a mortal man. If only you had stayed  
among the eternal maidens of the sea  
and Peleus had married a mortal wife.  
But now there'll be innumerable sorrows  
[110] waiting for your heart, once your child is killed.  
You won't be welcoming him back home again.  
My own heart has no desire to live on,  
to continue living among men,  
unless Hector is hit by my spear first,  
losing his life and paying me compensation  
for killing Menoetius' son, Patroclus."

Through her tears, Thetis then answered Achilles:

"My son, from what you've just been saying,  
you're fated to an early death, for your doom  
[120] comes quickly as soon as Hector dies."

Swift-footed Achilles answered her with passion:

- “Then let me die, since I could not prevent  
the death of my companion. He’s fallen  
far from his homeland. He needed me there  
to protect him from destruction. So now,  
since I’m not returning to my own dear land,  
and for Patroclus was no saving light  
or for my many other comrades,  
all those killed by godlike Hector while I sat  
[130] here by the ships, a useless burden  
on the earth—and I’m unmatched in warfare  
by any other Achaean armed in bronze,  
although in council other men are better—  
so let wars disappear from gods and men  
and passionate anger, too, which incites  
even the prudent man to that sweet rage,  
sweeter than trickling honey in men’s throats,  
which builds up like smoke inside their chests,  
as Agamemnon, king of men, just now,  
[140] made me enraged. But we’ll let that pass.  
For all the pain I feel, I’ll suppress the heart  
within my chest, as I must. So now I’ll go  
to meet Hector, killer of the man I loved.  
As for my own fate, let it come to me  
when Zeus and the other deathless gods  
determine. For not even strong Hercules,  
the man lord Zeus, son of Cronos, loved the most,  
escaped his death. He was destroyed by Fate  
and by malicious Hera’s anger, too.  
[150] And so for me. If a like fate has been set,  
then once I’m dead, I’ll just lie there. But for now,  
let me seize great glory—let me make  
so many Trojan and Dardan matrons weep,  
and with both hands wipe tears from their soft cheeks,  
and set them on to constant lamentation,

so that they'll know I've long refrained from war.  
Don't keep me from battle. Though you love me,  
you'll not convince me."

Silver-footed Thetis  
then said to Achilles:

"My child, what you say is true—  
[160] it's no bad thing to protect companions  
when they're in trouble from complete disaster.  
But now the Trojans have your lovely armour,  
all your glittering bronze. It's on the shoulders  
of Hector with the shining helmet—  
he boasts about it. But I don't think  
his triumph will last long, since his death  
is coming closer. But you must not rejoin  
Ares' conflict until with your own eyes  
you see me in the morning here again.  
[170] I'll return at sunrise, and I'll bring you  
lovely armour made by lord Hephaestus."

Saying this, Thetis turned away from her own son  
to address her ocean sisters:

"Now you must plunge  
into the broad lap of Ocean and go find  
the Old Man of the Sea in our father's house.  
Tell him everything. I'll go to high Olympus,  
to that famous artisan Hephaestus,  
to see if he is willing to give my son  
some splendid glittering armour."

Thetis spoke.

[180] Her sisters quickly plunged under the waves.  
Then the silver-footed goddess Thetis went away  
to fetch that lovely armour from Olympus  
for her beloved son.

As Thetis' feet carried her  
towards Olympus, Achaeans were running back,  
with a huge noise, fleeing man-killing Hector,  
until they reached their ships beside the Hellespont.  
But those well-armed Achaeans couldn't extricate  
Achilles' comrade, dead Patroclus, from the spears,  
for they'd been overtaken by Trojan warriors  
[190] and chariots once again, with Hector, Priam's son,  
as furious as fire. Three times glorious Hector,  
from behind, seized the corpse's feet, keen to drag it off,  
shouting furiously to his Trojans. Three times,  
the two Ajaxes, clothed in their full battle strength,  
beat him from the corpse. But Hector kept on coming  
without a pause, confident of his fighting power.  
Sometimes he charged right at them in the frenzied crowd.  
Sometimes he just stood there and gave a mighty yell,  
but he never yielded any ground. Just as shepherds  
[200] are unable to drive off from their farmyard  
a tawny ravenous lion by some carcass—  
so the two warrior Ajaxes could not push Hector,  
Priam's son, back from that body. And now Hector  
would have seized that corpse, winning infinite glory,  
if swift Iris with feet like wind had not come down,  
speeding from Olympus to the son of Peleus,  
with a message that he should arm himself for war.  
Hera had sent her, unknown to Zeus and other gods.  
Standing by Achilles, Iris spoke—her words had wings:  
  
[210] "Rouse yourself, son of Peleus, most feared of men.  
Defend Patroclus. For on his behalf  
a deadly conflict rages by the ships—  
men are butchering each other, some trying  
to protect the dead man's corpse, while others,  
the Trojans, charge in to carry it away  
to windy Ilion. The one most eager  
to haul the body off is glorious Hector,



whose heart is set on hacking off the head  
from its soft neck. He'll fix it on a stake  
[220] set in the wall. So get up. No more lying here.  
Your heart will be disgraced if Patroclus  
becomes a plaything for the dogs of Troy—  
his mutilated corpse will be your shame.”

Swift-footed godlike Achilles then asked her:

“Goddess Iris, which of the gods sent you  
with this message to me?”

Swift Iris,  
with feet like wind, then said to Achilles:

“Hera sent me, Zeus’ glorious wife.  
Cronos’ son, who sits on high, doesn’t know,  
[230] nor do any other immortal gods  
inhabiting snow-capped Olympus.”

Swift-footed Achilles then questioned Iris:

“But how can I rejoin that conflict?  
Those men have my armour. My dear mother  
has told me not to arm myself for war,  
not until my own eyes see that she’s come back.  
She promised to bring me splendid armour  
from Hephaestus. I don’t know anyone  
whose glorious equipment I could use,  
[240] with the exception of the shield of Ajax,  
son of Telamon. But I expect he’s out there  
with his spear among the front-line warriors  
in that conflict over dead Patroclus.”

Wind-swift Iris then answered Achilles:

“We know well enough your lovely armour

is in Trojan hands. But you should go now,  
just as you are, to the ditch. Show yourself  
to Trojans. It may happen that the Trojans,  
afraid of you, will pull back from battle,  
[250] giving Achaea's exhausted warlike sons  
a breathing space. For rests in war are rare."

With these words, swift-footed Iris went away.  
Then Achilles, loved by Zeus, moved into action.  
Around his powerful shoulders Athena set  
her tasselled aegis. Then the lovely goddess  
wrapped his head up in a golden cloud, so from him  
a fiery light blazed out. Just like those times when smoke  
from a city stretches all the way to heaven,  
rising in the distance from an island under siege  
[260] by an enemy, where men fight all day long  
in Ares' hateful war, struggling for their city—  
then at sunset, they light fires one by one,  
beacons flaming upwards to attract attention  
from those on near-by islands, so their ships will come  
to save them from destruction—that's how the light  
blazed then from Achilles' head right up to heaven.  
He strode from the wall, then stood there by the ditch.  
But recalling what his mother had said to him,  
he didn't mingle with Achaeans. As he stood there,  
[270] he cried out. From far away, Pallas Athena  
added her voice, too, causing great consternation  
among the Trojans. As thrilling as a trumpet's note  
when it rings clearly, when rapacious enemies  
besiege a city—that's how sharp and piercing  
Achilles' voice was then. When the Trojans heard it,  
that brazen shout Achilles gave, all their hearts  
were shaken. Their horses with the lovely manes  
turned back the chariots, anticipating trouble  
in their hearts. Charioteers were terrified, seeing  
[280] the fearful inextinguishable fire blazing  
from the head of the great-hearted son of Peleus.

For Athena, goddess with the glittering eyes,  
kept it burning. Three times godlike Achilles yelled  
across that ditch. Three times Trojans and their allies  
were thrown into confusion. At that moment,  
twelve of their best men were killed by their own chariots  
and their own spears. Achaeans then, with stronger hearts,  
pulled Patroclus out of spear range and laid him on a cot.  
His dear companions gathered mourning round him,  
[290] Achilles with them, shedding hot tears when he saw  
his loyal companion lying on a death bed,  
mutilated by sharp bronze. He'd sent him out to war  
with chariot and horses, but never welcomed him  
at his return.

Then ox-eyed queen Hera  
made the unwearied sun, against his will, go down  
into the stream of Ocean. So the sun set.  
Godlike Achaeans now could pause for some relief  
from the destructive killing of impartial war.

For their part, once Trojans drew back from that harsh fight,  
[300] they untied swift horses from their chariots and then,  
before they thought of food, called for a meeting.  
There everyone stayed standing. No one dared sit down,  
all terrified because Achilles had appeared,  
after his long absence from that savage conflict.  
The first to speak was Polydamas, Panthous' son,  
a prudent man, the only one who weighed with care  
the past and future. He was Hector's comrade,  
both born on the same night. As a public speaker,  
he was the better of the two, but Hector  
[310] far surpassed him with a spear. Bearing in mind  
their common good, Polydamas addressed them:

"My friends, consider both sides of this issue.  
For my part, I advise us to return  
into the city—we should not stay here,

on the plain, waiting for dawn beside the ships.  
 Our walls are far away. While Achilles  
 kept up his anger at lord Agamemnon,  
 Achaeans were easier to fight against.  
 Personally, I was glad to spend the night  
 [320] by their swift ships, hoping then we'd capture  
 those curved vessels. But now I really have  
 a dreadful fear of Peleus' swift-footed son.  
 He has a reckless heart—he's not a man  
 to rest content in the middle of the plain,  
 where Trojans and Achaeans have a share  
 of Ares' battle fury. No, he'll fight on  
 for our city and our women. So let's go back,  
 return into the city. Trust me when I say  
 that's how things will go. For now, sacred night  
 [330] has stopped the swift-footed son of Peleus.  
 But if tomorrow he moves into action  
 fully armed and encounters us still here,  
 we'll recognize him well enough. Anyone  
 who gets away and makes it back to Ilion  
 will be a happy man. For dogs and vultures  
 will eat many Trojans. I don't want to hear  
 that such events have happened. If we all  
 follow my advice, although reluctantly,  
 tonight we'll collect our forces in one group.  
 [340] Walls, high gates, and doors with fitted planks,  
 polished and bolted shut, will guard the city.  
 But in the morning early, we'll arm ourselves,  
 then take up our positions on the walls.  
 If Achilles comes from the ships keen to fight  
 for our walls, then he'll be disappointed.  
 He'll go back to his ships, once he's worn out  
 his strong-necked horses with too much running,  
 scampering around below our city wall.  
 His heart won't let him force his way inside,  
 [350] and he'll not lay waste our city, not before  
 our swift dogs eat him up for dinner."

With a scowl, Hector of the flashing helmet then replied:

“Polydamas, what you say displeases me—  
you tell us to run back to the city  
and stay inside it. Haven’t you already  
been cooped up long enough within those walls?  
In earlier days, all mortal men would claim  
that Priam’s city was rich in gold and bronze.  
But now those splendid treasures are all gone.

[360] Many goods from our own homes we’ve sold.  
They went to Phrygia or fair Maeonia,  
once great Zeus, in anger, turned against us.  
But now, when crooked-minded Cronos’ son  
allows me to win glory by the ships,  
hemming the Achaeans in beside the sea,  
this is no time, you fool, to say such things  
before the people. Not a single Trojan  
will take your advice. I won’t permit it.  
But come, let’s all follow now what I suggest.

[370] You must take your dinner at your stations  
all through the army, making sure you watch,  
with every man awake. Any Trojan  
too concerned about his property  
should gather it up and give it to the men  
for common use. Better that one of us  
gets use from it than that Achaeans do.  
Tomorrow morning early, right at dawn,  
we’ll fully arm ourselves with weapons,  
then take keen battle to those hollow ships.

[380] If indeed it’s true that lord Achilles  
is returning to that battle by the ships,  
if he wants that, so much the worse for him.  
I won’t run from him in painful battle,  
but stand against him, fighting face to face,  
whether great victory goes to him or me.  
In war the odds are equal, and the man

who seeks to kill may well be killed himself.”

Hector spoke. The Trojans roared out in response.

The fools! Pallas Athena had robbed them of their wits.

[390] They all applauded Hector’s disastrous tactics.

No one praised Polydamas, who’d advised them well.

Then throughout the army they ate their dinner.

Meanwhile, Achaeans mourned Patroclus all night long

with their elegies. Among them, Peleus’ son

began the urgent lamentations, placing

his murderous hands on the chest of his companion,

with frequent heavy groans, like a bearded lion,

when a deer hunter in dense forest steals its cubs—

the lion comes back later, then sick at heart

[400] roams through the many clearings in the forest,

tracking the man’s footprints, in hopes of finding him,

as bitter anger overwhelms the beast—just like that

Achilles, amid his groans, addressed his Myrmidons:

“Alas, what a useless promise I made then,

the day I tried to cheer Menoetius up

at home, telling him when I’d sacked Ilion,

I’d bring his splendid son back there to him,

in Opoeis, and with his share of trophies.

But Zeus does not bring to fulfilment

[410] all things which men propose. Now both of us

share a common fate, to redden the same earth

right here in Troy. Old horseman Peleus

will not be welcoming me at my return

back to his home, nor will my mother Thetis.

For in this place the earth will cover me.

And now, Patroclus, since I’m journeying

under the earth after you, I’ll postpone

your burial till I bring here Hector’s head,

his armour, too, the man who slaughtered you,

[420] you courageous man. I’ll cut the throats

of twelve fine Trojan children on your pyre,  
in my anger at your killing. Till that time,  
you'll lie like this with me by my beaked ships,  
and round you Trojan and Dardanian women  
will keep lamenting night and day, shedding tears,  
the very women we two worked hard to win  
with our strength and our long spears, by looting  
prosperous cities of mortal men."

After these words, godlike Achilles told his comrades  
[430] to place a large tripod on the fire, so they could wash  
the blood clots from his comrade's corpse. On the blazing fire,  
they set a cauldron with three legs, poured water in it,  
then brought split wood to burn below the water.  
Fire licked the cauldron's belly and made the water hot.  
Once it had boiled inside the shining bronze,  
they washed him, rubbed oil thickly over him,  
and filled his wounds with ointment nine years old.  
Then they placed Patroclus on a bed, covering him  
with a fine woollen cloth from head to foot  
[440] and a white cloak on the cloth. Then all night long,  
the Myrmidons around swift-footed Achilles  
mourned Patroclus with their lamentations.

Then Zeus spoke to Hera, his sister and his wife:

"You've got what you wanted, ox-eyed queen Hera.  
Swift-footed Achilles you've spurred into action.  
From your own womb you must have given birth  
to these long-haired Achaeans."

Ox-eyed queen Hera  
then replied to Zeus:

"Most dread son of Cronos,  
what are you saying? Even a human man,  
[450] though mortal and ignorant of what I know,

can achieve what he intends for someone else.  
And men say I'm the finest of all goddesses  
in a double sense—both by my lineage  
and my marriage to the ruler of the gods.  
So why should I not bring an evil fortune  
on these Trojans when they've made me angry?"

Thus these two conversed with one another then.

Meanwhile, silver-footed Thetis reached Hephaestus' home.  
Made of eternal bronze and gleaming like a star,  
[460] it stood out among the homes of the immortals.  
The crippled god had constructed it himself.  
She found him working with his bellows, moving round,  
sweating in his eager haste. He was forging  
twenty tripods in all, to stand along the walls  
of his well-built house. Under the legs of each one  
he had fitted golden wheels, so every tripod  
might move all on its own into a gathering of the gods  
at his command and then return to his own house.  
They were wonderful to look at. His work on them  
[470] had reached the stage where finely crafted handles  
had still not been attached. He was making these,  
forging the rivets. As he was working on them  
with his great skill, silver-footed goddess Thetis  
approached more closely. Noticing her, Charis,  
lovely goddess with the splendid veil, came forward—  
she was wife to the celebrated crippled god.  
Taking Thetis by the hand, she called her name, and said:

"Long-robed Thetis, why visit our house now?  
You're a welcome and respected guest, but to this point  
[480] you haven't come by very much. Do step inside.  
Let me show you our hospitality."

With these words, the goddess led her inside the house.  
She asked Thetis to sit in a silver-studded chair,



beautifully finished, with a footstool under it.  
Then she called the famous artisan Hephaestus:

“Come here, Hephaestus. Thetis needs to see you.”

The celebrated lame god then replied to Charis:

“Here’s a fearful honoured goddess in my home,  
the one who saved me when I was in pain,  
[490] after my great fall, thanks to my mother,  
that shameless one, eager to conceal me,  
because I was a cripple. At that time,  
I would have suffered heartfelt agonies,  
if Thetis and Eurynome, daughter  
of circling Ocean stream, had not taken me  
into their hearts. With those two, for nine years  
I made many lovely things—brooches,  
spiral bracelets, earrings, necklaces—  
inside their hollow cave. The Ocean stream  
[500] flowed round me, always with the roar of surf.  
No one else knew, neither god nor mortal man.  
But Thetis and Eurynome—the ones  
who rescued me—they knew.\* And now Thetis  
has come into my home. So I must give her  
full recompense—fair-haired Thetis saved my life.  
But Charis, show her now our hospitality.  
I’ll put away my bellows and my tools.”

Huge god Hephaestus got up from the anvil block  
[510] with laboured breathing. He was lame, but his thin legs  
moved quickly under him. He placed his bellows  
far from the fire and collected all his work tools,  
then stored them in a silver chest. With a sponge,  
he wiped his face, both hands, thick neck, and hairy chest.  
Then he pulled on a tunic and came limping out,  
gripping a sturdy staff. At once he was helped along  
by female servants made of gold, who moved to him.

They look like living servant girls, possessing minds,  
hearts with intelligence, vocal chords, and strength.  
[520] They learned to work from the immortal gods.  
These women served to give their master detailed help.  
Hephaestus came limping up to Thetis and sat down  
in a shining chair. Then, clasping her hand, he spoke:

“Long-robed Thetis, why have you come here,  
to our house, an honoured welcome guest?  
To this point, you haven’t come here often.  
But say what’s on your mind. My heart tells me  
I shall do it, if I can accomplish it,  
if it’s something that can be carried out.”

Thetis answered him in tears:

[530] “Oh, Hephaestus,  
is there any goddess on Olympus  
who’s suffered so much painful sorrow  
in her heart to equal the unhappiness  
that Zeus, son of Cronos, loads on me  
more than any other god? Of all goddesses  
living in the sea, he made me subject  
to a mortal man, Peleus, son of Aeacus.  
So I had to put up with a man in bed,  
though much against my will. Now he lies there,  
[540] in his home, worn out by harsh old age.  
And I have still more pain. He gave me a son  
to bear and raise as an outstanding warrior.  
The boy grew up as quickly as a sapling.  
Then, when I had reared him like a tree  
in a fertile garden, I sent him off  
in the beaked ships to fight at Ilion  
against the Trojans. I’ll never welcome him  
returning home to the house of Peleus.  
And while he still lives to glimpse the sunlight,  
[550] he lives in sorrow. When I visit him,

I cannot help him. Achaea's sons chose for him  
as his prize a girl, whom great Agamemnon  
seized right out of his arms. In grief for her,  
his heart has pined away. Then the Trojans  
penned Achaeans in by their ships' sterns,  
not letting them come out. The senior men  
among the Argives pleaded with my son.  
They promised splendid gifts. But he refused,  
declining to protect them from disaster.

[560] But then he sent Patroclus to the war,  
dressing him in his own armour, providing  
a force of many men. They fought all day  
around the Scaean Gates, and that very day  
would have utterly destroyed the city,  
if Apollo had not killed Menoetius' son,  
after he'd inflicted bloody carnage.  
He killed him at the front, giving Hector  
all the glory. That's why I've come here now,  
asking at your knees if you'd be willing  
[570] to give my son, who is fated to die soon,  
a shield, helmet, good leg armour fitted  
with ankle clasps, and body armour, too.  
His previous equipment was all taken  
when Trojans killed his loyal companion.  
Now my son lies in the dust, heart filled with pain."

The famous crippled god then answered Thetis:

"Cheer up. Don't let these things afflict your heart.  
I wish I could hide him from distressful death,  
when his cruel fate arrives, as surely  
[580] as I know there'll be fine armour for him—  
such splendid armour that it will astound  
all the many men who chance to see it."

With these words, Hephaestus left her there, going to start  
his bellows. He directed them right at the fire,

then told them to start working. So the bellows,  
twenty in all, started blowing on the crucibles,  
each one emitting just the right amount of air,  
sometimes blowing hard to help when he was busy,  
sometimes gently, whatever way Hephaestus wished,  
[590] so his work could go ahead. He threw on the fire  
enduring bronze and tin, precious gold and silver.  
Next, he placed the great anvil on its block, took up  
a massive hammer in one hand and in the other his tongs.

The first thing he created was a huge and sturdy shield,  
all wonderfully crafted. Around its outer edge,  
he fixed a triple rim, glittering in the light,  
attaching to it a silver carrying strap.  
The shield had five layers. On the outer one,  
with his great skill he fashioned many rich designs.  
[600] There he hammered out the earth, the heavens, the sea,  
the untiring sun, the moon at the full, along with  
every constellation which crowns the heavens—  
the Pleiades, the Hyades, mighty Orion,  
and the Bear, which some people call the Wain,  
always circling in the same position, watching Orion,  
the only stars that never bathe in Ocean stream.\*

Then he created two splendid cities of mortal men.  
In one, there were feasts and weddings. By the light  
of blazing torches, people were leading the brides  
[610] out from their homes and through the town to loud music  
of the bridal song. There were young lads dancing,  
whirling to the constant tunes of flutes and lyres,  
while all the women stood beside their doors, staring  
in admiration.

Then the people gathered  
in the assembly, for a dispute had taken place.  
Two men were arguing about blood-money owed  
for a murdered man. One claimed he'd paid in full,

setting out his case before the people, but the other  
was refusing any compensation. Both were keen  
[620] to receive the judgment from an arbitration.

The crowd there cheered them on, some supporting one,  
some the other, while heralds kept the throng controlled.  
Meanwhile, elders were sitting there on polished stones  
in the sacred circle, holding in their hands  
the staffs they'd taken from the clear-voiced heralds.  
With those they'd stand up there and render judgment,  
each in his turn. In the centre lay two golden talents,  
to be awarded to the one among them all  
who would deliver the most righteous verdict.

[630] The second city was surrounded by two armies,  
soldiers with glittering weapons. They were discussing  
two alternatives, each one pleasing some of them—  
whether to attack that city and plunder it,  
or to accept as payment half of all the goods  
contained in that fair town. But those under siege  
who disagreed were arming for a secret ambush.  
Their dear wives and children stood up on the walls  
as a defence, along with those too old to fight.  
The rest were leaving, led on by Pallas Athena  
[640] and Ares, both made of gold, dressed in golden clothes,  
large, beautiful, and armed—as is suitable for gods.  
They stood out above the smaller people with them.  
When the soldiers reached a spot which seemed all right  
for ambush, a place beside a river where the cattle  
came to drink, they stopped there, covered in shining bronze.  
Two scouts were stationed some distance from that army,  
waiting to catch sight of sheep and short-horned cattle.  
These soon appeared, followed by two herdsmen  
playing their flutes and not anticipating any danger.  
[650] But those lying in ambush saw them and rushed out,  
quickly cutting off the herds of cattle and fine flocks  
of white-fleeced sheep, killing the herdsmen with them.  
When the besiegers sitting in their meeting place

heard the great commotion coming from the cattle,  
they quickly climbed up behind their prancing horses  
and set out. They soon caught up with those attackers.  
Then they organized themselves for battle and fought  
along the river banks, men hitting one another  
with bronze-tipped spears. Strife and Confusion joined the fight,  
[660] along with cruel Death, who seized one wounded man  
while still alive and then another man without a wound,  
while pulling the feet of one more corpse from the fight.  
The clothes Death wore around her shoulders were dyed red  
with human blood. They even joined the slaughter  
as living mortals, fighting there and hauling off  
the bodies of dead men which each of them had killed.

On that shield Hephaestus next set a soft and fallow field,  
fertile spacious farmland, which had been ploughed three times.  
Many labourers were wheeling ploughs across it,  
[670] moving back and forth. As they reached the field's edge,  
they turned, and a man came up to offer them  
a cup of wine as sweet as honey. Then they'd turn back,  
down the furrow, eager to move through that deep soil  
and reach the field's edge once again. The land behind them  
was black, looking as though it had just been ploughed,  
though it was made of gold—an amazing piece of work!

Then he pictured on the shield a king's landed estate,  
where harvesters were reaping corn, using sharp sickles.  
Armfuls of corn were falling on the ground in rows,  
[680] one after the other. Binders were tying them up  
in sheaves with twisted straw. Three binders stood there.  
Behind the reapers, boys were gathering the crop,  
bringing it to sheaf-binders, keeping them busy  
Among them stood the king, a sceptre in his hand,  
there by the stubble, saying nothing, but with pleasure  
in his heart. Some distance off, under an oak tree,  
heralds were setting up a feast, dressing a huge ox  
which they'd just killed. Women were sprinkling white barley

on the meat in large amounts for the workers' meal.

[690] Next, Hephaestus placed on that shield a vineyard,  
full of grapes made of splendid gold. The grapes were black,  
the poles supporting vines throughout were silver.  
Around it, he made a ditch of blue enamel,  
around that, a fence of tin. A single path led in,  
where the grape pickers came and went at harvest time.  
Young girls and carefree lads with wicker baskets  
were carrying off a crop as sweet as honey.  
In the middle of them all, a boy with a clear-toned lyre  
played pleasant music, singing the Song of Linos,  
[700] in his delicate fine voice. His comrades kept time,  
beating the ground behind him, singing and dancing.\*

Then he set on the shield a herd of straight-horned cattle,  
with cows crafted out of gold and tin. They were lowing  
as they hurried out from farm to pasture land,  
beside a rippling river lined with waving reeds.  
The herdsmen walking by the cattle, four of them,  
were also made of gold. Nine swift-footed dogs  
ran on behind. But there, at the front of the herd,  
two fearful lions had seized a bellowing bull.  
[710] They were dragging him off, as he roared aloud.  
The dogs and young men were chasing after them.  
The lions, after ripping open the great ox's hide,  
were gorging on its entrails, on its black blood,  
as herdsmen kept trying in vain to chase them off,  
setting their swift dogs on them. But, fearing the lions,  
the dogs kept turning back before they nipped them,  
and stood there barking, close by but out of reach.

Then the famous crippled god created there a pasture  
in a lovely valley bottom, an open ground  
[720] for white-fleeced sheep, sheep folds, roofed huts, and pens.

Next on that shield, the celebrated lame god made

an elaborately crafted dancing floor, like the one  
Daedalus created long ago in spacious Cnossus,  
for Ariadne with the lovely hair.\* On that floor,  
young men and women whose bride price would require  
many cattle were dancing, holding onto one another  
by the wrists. The girls wore fine linen dresses,  
the men lightly rubbed with oil wore woven tunics.  
On their heads the girls had lovely flower garlands.  
[730] The men were carrying gold daggers on silver straps.  
They turned with such a graceful ease on skilful feet,  
just as a potter sits with a wheel between his hands,  
testing it, to make sure that it runs smoothly.  
Then they would line up and run towards each other.  
A large crowd stood around, enjoying the dancing magic,  
as in the middle two acrobats led on the dance,  
springing, and whirling, and tumbling.

On that shield, Hephaestus then depicted Ocean,  
the mighty river, flowing all around the outer edge.

[740] When he'd created that great and sturdy shield,  
he fashioned body armour brighter than blazing fire,  
a heavy helmet shaped to fit Achilles' temples,  
beautiful and finely worked, with a gold crest on top.  
Then he made him leg guards of finely hammered tin.

When the famous lame god had made all the armour,  
he took it and set it there before Achilles' mother.  
Then, like a hawk, she sped down from Olympus,  
carrying the gleaming armour of Hephaestus.



Book Nineteen  
Achilles and Agamemnon

*[Thetis brings the divine armour to Achilles; Achilles summons an assembly of Achaeans; Achilles and Agamemnon are reconciled; Agamemnon explains the origin of his folly; Odysseus urges Achilles to eat, Achilles refuses; Agamemnon gets his gifts for Achilles brought to the assembly; Agamemnon swears he has not touched Briseis; Briseis laments over the corpse of Patroclus; the elders continue to mourn Patroclus; Zeus sends Athena to help Achilles deal with his hunger; the troops move out to battle again; Achilles speaks to his horses, who prophesy his death]*

When Dawn in her yellow robe rose from Ocean's stream,  
bringing her light to immortal gods and mortal men,  
Thetis reached the ships bearing Hephaestus' gifts.  
She found her dear son lying beside Patroclus,  
crying bitterly. Many of his companions  
mourned around him. The noble goddess went to them.  
Standing by Achilles, she clasped his hand, then said:

“My son, we must let this man lie here  
for all our grief. He's dead once and for all.  
[10] It's the gods' will. Now you must accept  
this splendid armour from Hephaestus—  
no man has ever had such gorgeous armour  
to wear around his shoulders.”

With these words,  
the goddess set the armour down before Achilles.  
The wonderfully crafted metal rang out loudly.  
Fear gripped all the Myrmidons. Not one of them  
dared look directly at those weapons. They shrank away.  
But when Achilles saw them, his anger grew.  
His eyes glared underneath his eyelids, like a fire—  
[20] a terrifying light. But as his hands went over  
the god's priceless gifts, he felt great joy. He gazed at them,  
filling his heart with pleasure at the rich designs.  
Then he spoke to his mother—his words had wings:

“Mother, this armour the god has given me  
is a work fit for the immortals, something  
no living human could create. So now,  
I’ll arm myself for war. In the meantime,  
I have a dreadful fear that flies may burrow  
into those wounds carved by the slicing bronze  
[30] in the body of Menoetius’ noble son.  
They may breed worms in him, defile his corpse,  
now that the life in him is gone. If so,  
all his flesh will fester.”

Then Thetis,  
goddess with the silver feet, answered Achilles:

“My child, don’t let such things distress your heart.  
I’ll make the effort to protect him here  
from those cruel swarms of flies which feed  
on warriors who’ve been killed in battle.  
Even if he lies here an entire year,  
[40] his flesh will stay just as it is or better.  
But you must summon the Achaean warriors  
to assembly, to renounce your anger  
with Agamemnon, his people’s shepherd.  
After that, arm yourself for battle quickly—  
clothe yourself in all your fighting strength.”

Saying this, Thetis filled him with fearless power.  
Then she inserted ambrosia and red nectar  
into Patroclus, through his nostrils, so his flesh  
would stay uncorrupted.

But Achilles, like a god,  
[50] strode down along the seashore, raising fearful shouts,  
stirring Achaean warriors into action.  
So even those who up to now used to remain  
with the assembled ships—helmsmen who worked

ships' steering oars and stewards who stayed with the ships  
rationing provisions—these men all showed up  
for the assembly, because Achilles had appeared  
after his long absence from that painful war.  
Two associates of the war god Ares came in limping,  
the brave offspring of Tydeus and lord Odysseus,  
[60] leaning on their spears—their wounds still pained them.  
They came and sat down at the front of the assembly.  
Last to arrive was Agamemnon, king of men,  
still suffering from the wound Coön had given him,  
Antenor's son, who in deadly conflict stabbed him  
with his bronze-tipped spear. Once all Achaeans  
were assembled, swift-footed Achilles rose to speak:

“Son of Atreus, has it been good for us,  
for you and me, to continue squabbling  
in a heart-rending quarrel full of grief  
[70] for both of us, over some girl? I wish  
she'd been killed by Artemis' arrow  
right beside my ships, the day I got her  
as my prize, after we destroyed Lyrnessus.  
Fewer Achaeans would have sunk their teeth  
into this wide earth at enemy hands,  
if I'd not been so angry. That's really helped  
lord Hector and his Trojans. But Achaeans,  
will, I think, long recall this argument  
you and I have had. Still, though it hurts,  
[80] we should let all this pass, repressing hearts  
within our chests—we must do that. So now,  
I end my anger. It's not appropriate  
for me to remain enraged for ever.  
But come, quickly urge long-haired Achaeans  
on to battle, so I may go out once again  
to face the Trojans and see if they still wish  
to spend the night beside our ships. I think  
many of them will be glad to get some rest,  
the ones who escape this deadly warfare

and who evade my spear.”

[90] Achilles finished speaking.

The well-armed Achaeans then were full of joy  
that Peleus’ great-hearted son had set aside  
his anger. Next, Agamemnon, king of men,  
addressed them:

“My friends, Danaan warriors,  
companions of the war god Ares, it’s good  
to listen to a man who’s standing up  
to speak and not to interrupt him.  
That makes things difficult, even for a man  
skilled in speaking. When men all shout at once,

[100] how can any one speak up or listen?

Even a clear-voiced speaker gets upset.  
I’m going to address the son of Peleus,  
but you other Argives pay attention—  
let every one of you mark my words well.  
You Achaeans have often criticized  
and spoken ill of me. But I’m not to blame.  
It’s Zeus’ fault and Fate—those Furies, too,  
who walk in darkness. In our assembly,  
they cast a savage blindness on my heart,

[110] that day when on my own I took away

Achilles’ prize. But what was I to do?  
It is a god who brought all this about.  
Zeus’ eldest daughter, Ate, blinds all men  
with her destructive power. Her feet are soft,  
she walks, not on the ground, but on men’s heads,  
and she brings folly onto humankind,  
seducing them at random. Even Zeus,  
who they say is the greatest of the gods  
and men, was blinded by her, when Hera,

[120] a mere female, with her cunning tactics,  
deceived him that very day Alcmene  
was to give birth to mighty Hercules,

in Thebes, city with the splendid walls.  
Zeus then boasted openly to all the gods,

‘Listen to me, you gods and goddesses,  
so I can say what the heart inside me bids.  
The goddess of childbirth, Eileithyia,  
today brings into the sun’s light a man  
who will rule all those who live around him,  
[130] one of the race of men with my blood in them.’

But then that deceitful lady Hera said to Zeus,

‘You’re not being candid. You don’t really mean  
what you now say. So come, Olympian,  
swear a binding oath for me that the man  
who falls out today between a woman’s feet  
will, in fact, rule those who live around him,  
one of the race of men with your blood in them.’

That’s what she said. Zeus didn’t see the trick.  
He swore a binding oath in his great blindness.  
[140] Hera then left that peak on Mount Olympus.  
Darting off, she quickly came to Argos,  
in Achaea, where she knew the strong wife  
of Sthenelus, Perseus’ son, was pregnant  
with a son, in her seventh month. This child  
Hera induced into the light before its term.  
She then delayed Alcmene’s childbirth,  
getting the Eileithyiae to hold it back.  
Then she brought the news to Zeus, Cronos’ son,  
saying,

‘Father Zeus, lord of bright lightning,  
[150] I’ll tell you my heartfelt news. Just now,  
a noble man was born who’ll rule the Argives,  
Eurystheus, son of Sthenelus, Perseus’ son,  
of your own lineage. So it’s fitting

he should become king of all the Argives.’

When Hera said that, sharp pain seized Zeus  
deep in his heart. He seized Ate at once  
by the shining hair wound round her head.  
His heart was furious. He swore a great oath  
that Ate, who blinds everyone, would no more  
[160] come to Olympus or to starry heaven.

That said, in one hand he swung her round,  
then flung her clear out of the star-filled skies.  
She quickly landed among toiling men.  
Whenever Zeus saw his dear son Hercules  
carrying out menial work in all his labours  
for Eurystheus, he’d always groan aloud,  
thinking of Ate. That’s how I was, too,  
when great Hector of the shining helmet  
was killing Argives off at the ships’ sterns.

[170] I could not forget Ate, who blinded me  
when all this started. But since I was blind,  
since Zeus robbed me of my wits, I will agree  
to make amends, to give priceless gifts.  
But prepare yourself for battle, rouse up  
all your other men. As for me, I’m ready  
to give every gift which lord Odysseus  
promised you in your hut yesterday.  
Or, if you prefer, don’t turn right now to war.  
Though you’re keen to go, let my servants fetch  
[180] those presents from my ship and bring them here,  
so you can see if you approve of them.”

Swift-footed Achilles then answered Agamemnon:

“Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon,  
king of men, if you wish to give me presents,  
as is appropriate, or to withhold them,  
that’s up to you. Now we must think of war,  
and with all speed. We should not be wasting time

in conversation or with such delays.

We have great work to do, so once again

[190] men see Achilles with the front-line warriors,  
destroying Trojan ranks with his bronze spear.  
Keep this in mind when you confront your man.”

Resourceful Odysseus then addressed Achilles:

“Though you’re a brave man, god-like Achilles,  
don’t encourage Achaea’s sons to fight  
against the Trojans on empty stomachs.

If so, the fight won’t last for long if troops  
engage right now, once some god infuses strength  
into both sides. No. Instruct Achaeans

[200] to have some food and wine by their swift ships.

For they give strength and courage. No soldier  
can fight the enemy all day till sunset  
without some food. However fierce his heart  
may be for battle, his limbs grow heavy  
without his knowledge. Once thirst and hunger  
overtake him, his knees get tired as he moves.  
But the man who’s had sufficient food and wine  
fights all day long against his enemies  
with a courageous heart. His limbs don’t tire

[210] until all warriors have left the battle.

So dismiss your men. Tell them to make a meal.  
Let Agamemnon, king of men, present his gifts,  
so all Achaeans here in our assembly  
can see them first hand and delight your heart.  
Let him stand up there among the Argives,  
swear an oath to you he’s never climbed  
in that girl’s bed to have sex with her,  
as is usual, my lord, with men and women.  
Let the heart in your own chest be open

[220] to reconciliation. Then, Agamemnon  
should offer you a fine and pleasing dinner  
in his hut, so there’ll be nothing due to you

which remains unsatisfied. As for you,  
son of Atreus, you should be more righteous  
with others from now on. There's no shame  
when a king pays someone compensation,  
if the king was the first to lose his temper."

Agamemnon, king of men, answered Odysseus:

"Son of Laertes, I am glad to hear  
[230] what you've just said. You've explained this well,  
exploring all these matters very fairly.  
I'm prepared to swear the oath, as my heart bids,  
and, before the gods, I'll not swear falsely.  
But let Achilles stay here a little while,  
though he desires to fight, and let others  
stay gathered here, until the gifts are brought  
out of my hut and we can sacrifice  
to seal our oaths. To you I assign this task—  
select from the entire Achaean force  
[240] the five best young men to carry from my ships  
all those gifts we promised yesterday  
to give Achilles—that includes the woman.  
Let Talthybius at once prepare for me  
in the middle of this wide Achaean camp  
a sacrificial boar to offer up  
to Zeus and Helios, god of the sun."

Swift-footed Achilles then replied to Agamemnon:

"Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,  
ruler of men, it would be far better  
[250] to worry about all this some other time,  
when there's a let up in the fight, when the heart  
here in my chest is less enraged. For now,  
all those killed by Hector, son of Priam,  
when Zeus gave him glory, are lying there,  
all mangled, and you are urging us to eat!



For my part, I'd lead Achaea's sons to war  
right now, unfed, with empty stomachs,  
then at sunset make them a great dinner,  
when we've avenged our shame. Until that time,  
[260] no drink or food will pass my throat, at least,  
while my dead comrade lies inside my hut,  
mutilated by sharp bronze, with his feet  
still pointing at the door, while his companions  
mourn there around him. That's why my heart  
cannot concern itself with what you've said,  
only with killing, blood, men's dying groans."

To this, resourceful Odysseus then replied:

"Achilles, Peleus' son, of all Achaeans  
the mightiest by far. You're stronger than me,  
[270] more than a little better with your spear,  
but I might say I'm far better with advice,  
since I'm older and know more. So your heart  
should listen now to what I have to say.  
In battle men quickly have enough, for there  
bronze slices piles of straw onto the ground,  
but there's a slender harvest, once Zeus  
lifts up his scales, establishing for men  
the outcome of the battle. Achaeans  
cannot mourn a corpse by eating nothing.  
[280] Too many men are dying every day,  
one after another. When would anyone  
get some relief from fasting? No, the dead  
we must bury, then mourn a single day,  
hardening our hearts. But those who do survive  
grim battle must remember food and drink,  
so we can fight our enemies once more,  
on and on incessantly, covering our flesh  
with bronze which never tires. So let no soldier  
hang back, waiting for another call to war.  
[290] This is the call, and things will not go well

for anyone left at Achaean ships.  
Let's all set off together as one army,  
taking cruel war to those horse-taming Trojans."

Odysseus finished. Then he took along with him  
splendid Nestor's sons, Meges, son of Phyleus,  
Thoas, Meriones, and Lycomedes,  
Creon's son, and Melanippus. They went off  
to the huts of Agamemnon, Atreus' son.

As soon as they gave out the order, the task was done.

[300] From the hut they took seven tripods, as he'd promised,  
twenty gleaming cauldrons and twelve horses.  
They quickly led out seven women, all well skilled  
in lovely handiwork. Eighth came the fair Briseis.  
Odysseus weighed out a sum of ten gold talents.  
Then he led them back, with the young Achaean men  
carrying the gifts. These they placed in the assembly,  
in the middle of them all. Agamemnon stood up.  
Talthybius, whose voice was like a god's, was there,  
by Agamemnon's side, his hands gripping a boar.

[310] Agamemnon drew out the knife he always wore  
by his sword's scabbard. He cut hairs from the boar  
to start the ritual. Lifting up his arms,  
he prayed to Zeus. Argives all sat in silence,  
listening to their king with suitable respect,  
as he gazed up to spacious heaven, saying this prayer:

"Let Zeus, the loftiest and finest god,  
first witness, then Sun and the Erinyes,  
those Furies under the earth who punish  
men who've made false oaths—I hereby swear

[320] I've never laid a hand on that girl Briseis,  
either for sex or any other reason.  
In my huts she stayed untouched. If what I say  
is not the truth, then let gods punish me  
with many painful sorrows, the sort they give  
to men who in their oaths blaspheme them."

This said, he cut the boar's throat with the ruthless bronze.  
Talthybius swung the body round, then threw it  
in the vast grey sea, food for fish. Then Achilles,  
standing up, addressed war-loving Argives:

“Father Zeus,  
[330] you keep afflicting humans with great blindness.  
For Atreus' son would never make my heart  
so totally enraged here in my chest,  
nor would he take that girl away from me,  
so arbitrarily against my will,  
if Zeus did not somehow desire the deaths  
of Argives in large numbers. But now,  
you should all eat, so we can start the fight.”

Saying this, Achilles quickly ended the assembly.  
The men dispersed, each one going off to his own ship.  
[340] Great-hearted Myrmidons looked after all the gifts,  
taking them to godlike Achilles' ship and storing them  
inside his huts. They left the women there, as well.  
His noble attendants drove the horses to his herd.

Briseis, looking like golden Aphrodite,  
then saw Patroclus mutilated by sharp bronze.  
With a cry, she threw herself on him, hands tearing  
at her breast, her tender neck, her lovely face,  
fair as a goddess, lamenting:

“Patroclus,  
you who brought the utmost joy to my sad heart,  
[350] I left you here alive, when I went off,  
taken from these huts. But now, at my return,  
I find you dead, you, the people's leader.  
Again for me, as always, evil follows evil.  
I saw the husband I was given to  
by my father and my noble mother killed

by sharp bronze before our city. My brothers,  
three of them, whom my own mother bore,  
whom I loved, have all met their fatal day.  
But when swift Achilles killed my husband,  
[360] you wouldn't let me weep. You told me then  
you'd make me lord Achilles' wedded wife,  
he'd take me in his ships back to Phthia,  
for a marriage feast among the Myrmidons.  
You were always gentle. That's the reason  
I'll never stop this grieving for your death."

As Briseis said this, she wept. The women joined her  
in wailing for Patroclus, although each of them  
had her own private sorrows. The Achaean elders  
gathered round Achilles, urging him to eat.  
[370] But he refused, continuing his laments:

"If any of my dear companions here  
wishes to obey me, then I beg you  
don't ask me to satisfy my heart  
with food or drink when painful sorrow  
grips me. I'll remain like this till sunset,  
enduring everything."

Achilles finished speaking.  
Then he sent away the leaders. But some remained—  
both sons of Atreus, lord Odysseus, Nestor,  
Idomeneus, and old horseman Phoenix,  
[380] each trying to console him in his painful grieving.  
But his heart would find no joy until he'd entered  
the bloody mouth of war. Thinking of Patroclus,  
he sighed repeatedly, then said:

"Poor man,  
most loved of all my comrades, in the past  
you used to set out tasty meals right here,  
making them well and quickly in my hut,

when we Achaeans were in such a rush  
to set out against horse-taming Trojans  
in wretched war. Now you lie disfigured,  
[390] my heart refuses meat and drink, though both  
are in this hut, because I miss you so.  
I could suffer nothing worse than this,  
not even if I learned my father's died—  
he must be shedding gentle tears in Phthia,  
missing a son like me, while I stay here  
among strange people, fighting Trojans  
over Helen, whom I detest, or if I heard  
my dear son had died, who's being raised for me  
on Scyros, if, in fact, he's still alive,  
[400] godlike Neoptolemus.\* Up to now,  
the heart here in my chest hoped I alone  
would perish here in Troy, so far from Argos,  
where horses breed. You'd return to Phthia,  
taking my child in your swift black ship  
away from Scyros, show him all my things,  
possessions, servants, my high-roofed palace.  
For by now Peleus is either dead and gone,  
I must assume, or just barely living,  
afflicted with hateful old age, waiting  
[410] all the time for distressful news of me,  
when he finds out that I have died."

As he spoke, Achilles wept. The elders also mourned,  
each one remembering what he had left at home.  
As they lamented, the son of Cronos saw them.  
Feeling pity for them, Zeus spoke to Athena—  
his words had wings:

"My child, here's a man  
you seem to be neglecting totally,  
a special favourite of yours—Achilles.  
Does your heart no longer care for him at all?  
[420] There he sits in front of his beaked ships,

mourning his dear companion. Other men  
have all gone off to dinner, but he's fasting  
and won't eat. Go now. Put into his chest  
some nectar and beautiful ambrosia,  
so hunger won't consume him."

With these words,  
Zeus spurred Athena, already eager, into action.  
She swooped down through the air, screaming shrilly,  
like a broad-winged hawk. Then as Achaeans, with all speed,  
armed themselves throughout the camp, she inserted  
[430] nectar and beautiful ambrosia in Achilles' chest,  
so his limbs would not suffer pangs of hunger.  
Then she left for her mighty father's well-built home.

Achaeans then came swarming out from their fast ships.  
Just as freezing snowflakes fall thick and fast from Zeus,  
driven by the raging sky-born North Wind—that's how  
crowds of them streamed out then, pouring from the ships—  
brightly gleaming helmets, strong-plated body armour,  
ash spears and embossed shields—the glitter of it all  
flashed up to heaven. All around, earth chuckled  
[440] to see that gleaming bronze. A noise like thunder rose,  
drummed by the soldiers' marching feet. Amid them all,  
noble Achilles armed himself for battle,  
his teeth clenched, eyes blazing with a fiery light,  
his heart filled with a sorrow not to be endured.  
As he pulled on the divine gifts which Hephaestus  
had made for him, he raged against the Trojans.  
First, he strapped on his leg armour, beautifully made,  
fitted with silver ankle clasps. Then on his chest  
he fixed the body armour. Around his shoulders,  
[450] he slung his bronze silver-studded sword, then picked up  
his huge strong shield which, like the moon, shone everywhere.  
Just like the blazing light that sailors glimpse at sea  
from a fire burning in some isolated farm,  
high in the mountains, as winds blow them further out,

taking them against their will over the fish-filled seas  
away from loved ones—that's how Achilles' shield,  
so finely crafted, burned out far into the sky.  
Then raising the great helmet, he set it on his head.  
It glittered like a star, that helmet with its horse-hair plumes,  
[460] adorned with the golden hairs Hephaestus placed  
so thickly round the crest. Noble Achilles,  
trying out the armour for himself, made sure  
it fit him so his splendid limbs could move with ease.  
It was like his own set of wings, lifting him up,  
this shepherd of his people. Then from its case,  
he took his father's spear, heavy, huge, and strong.  
No other Achaean could control that spear.  
He was the only one with skill enough to wield it.  
Made of ash wood from the top of Pelion,  
[470] that spear had been given to own his dear father  
by Cheiron, so he could kill heroic warriors.

Automedon and Alcinous kept themselves occupied  
yoking the horses, tying fine chest straps round them,  
setting bits inside their jaws, and aligning reins  
back in the well-made chariot. Taking the shining whip  
which fit his grip, Automedon jumped in the chariot.  
Achilles, fully armed, climbed up beside him,  
his armour gleaming like dazzling Hyperion.  
Then he called out to those horses of his father,  
in a terrifying voice:

[480] "Xanthus, Balius,  
you famous children of Podarge, this time  
make sure you bring your charioteer back safely  
to the Danaan army, once we've had enough  
of battle. Don't leave him out there slaughtered,  
as you did Patroclus."

From under the yoke,  
his swift-footed horse called Xanthus spoke to him,

ducking his head down quickly, so all his mane  
streamed down from underneath his shoulder harness  
beside the yoke towards the ground. Goddess Hera  
gave Xanthus power to speak:

[490] “Mighty Achilles,  
on this occasion we will bring you safely back.  
But the day you’ll die is fast approaching.  
We won’t be the cause, but some mighty god  
and a strong fate. It was not our laziness  
or lack of speed which helped the Trojans  
strip that armour from Patroclus’ shoulders.  
A powerful god born to Leto killed him  
among those fighting at the battle front,  
then gave Hector glory. The two of us  
[500] could run as quickly as the West Wind’s blasts—  
men say they are the fastest thing there is—  
your fate still stays the same, to die in war,  
killed by a mortal and a god.”

Once Xanthus had said this,  
the Erinyes removed his voice. Then Achilles,  
in a fury, said to his horse:

“Xanthus,  
why do you prophesy my death? There is no need.  
I know well enough I’m fated to die here,  
far from my loving parents. No matter.  
I will not stop till I have driven the Trojans  
[510] to the limit of what they can endure in war.”

With these words, he drove his sure-footed horses off,  
speeding forward to the front, screaming as he went.



Book Twenty  
Achilles Returns to Battle

*[As the armies ready for battle, Zeus summons an assembly of gods, tells them they can join the fight on either side; the gods leave Olympus for the battle; Apollo persuades Aeneas to fight Achilles; Aeneas and Achilles confront each other; Aeneas explains his ancestry; Aeneas and Achilles fight; Poseidon saves Aeneas; Achilles starts his slaughter of Trojans; Hector confronts Achilles; Apollo saves Hector; Achilles continues his slaughter]*

Then, son of Peleus, Achaeans armed themselves  
around you, feeding your boundless appetite for war.  
On the other side, higher up the sloping plain,  
the Trojans did the same. At that very moment,  
from the summit of many-ridged Olympus,  
Zeus told Themis to summon gods to an assembly.  
She raced around, calling them to Zeus' home.  
None of the rivers was left out, except Oceanus,  
nor any nymph. All those who live in lovely woods,  
[10] river springs, and grassy meadows came together  
at cloud-gatherer Zeus' home, seating themselves  
on porticoes of polished stone, constructed there  
by Hephaestus' cunning arts for his father Zeus.  
The gods gathered there in Zeus' house. Poseidon  
also answered Themis' summons, coming from the sea  
to join them. He sat in the middle of them all,  
asking about Zeus' purposes:

“Lord of bright lightning,  
why have you called gods to this assembly?  
Are you concerned for Trojans and Achaeans?  
[20] Right now their fight is close to flaring up  
into a total war.”

Cloud-gatherer Zeus  
then said to Poseidon in reply:

“You understand, Earthshaker,

the plans here in my chest, the reasons why  
I've summoned you. Yes, I am concerned for them.  
Though they are being destroyed, I'll stay here,  
sitting on a ridge of Mount Olympus.  
From here I'll look on to my heart's content.  
But all the rest of you can go away  
to join Trojans and Achaeans, helping  
[30] either side, as your spirits each dictate.  
For if we leave Achilles there alone  
to fight the Trojans, they'll not hold out  
against the swift-footed son of Peleus,  
not even briefly. In earlier days,  
if they saw him, their fear would make them shake,  
and now his heart's so terribly enraged  
for his companion, I fear he may go  
beyond what Fate ordains and storm the walls."

With these words, Cronos' son then launched relentless war.  
[40] The gods charged off to battle, their hearts divided  
in two groups. Hera went to the assembled ships,  
with Pallas Athena and Poseidon, who shakes the earth.  
Helper Hermes accompanied them as well, the god  
with the most cunning mind of all. Hephaestus  
also went along with them, exulting in his power.  
Though he was lame, his feet moved quickly under him.  
Ares with the shining helmet joined the Trojans,  
taking with him long-haired Phoebus, archer Artemis,  
Leto, Xanthus, and laughter-loving Aphrodite.\*

[50] As long as the gods were far away from mortal men,  
Achaeans won the glory, since Achilles  
had come back, after staying away from war so long.  
For every Trojan's limbs were seized with trembling fear  
when they observed him there, swift son of Peleus  
in that blazing armour, like man-killing Ares.  
But once Olympians mingled in the crowds of soldiers,  
then mighty Strife, who stirs men up in battle,

went into action, while Athena kept on shouting,  
sometimes standing by the ditch they'd dug beyond the wall,  
[60] sometimes yelling out beside the roaring sea shore.

On the other side, like a black whirlwind, Ares  
kept shouting out his piercing orders to the Trojans,  
sometimes from the city heights, sometimes as he raced  
along the banks of Simois to Callicolone.\*

Thus, sacred gods spurred both sides on, urging them  
to war, inciting cruel conflict. From on high,  
the father of gods and men thundered ominously,  
while Poseidon shook the vast earth under them  
and lofty mountain crests. All the lower slopes of Ida,  
[70] with its many springs, trembled, as did the peaks,  
the Trojan city, and Achaean ships. Under the earth,  
the king of the dead, Aidoneus, was terrified.\*

He leapt up from his throne afraid and shouting,  
frightened that Earthshaker Poseidon would split up  
the earth above him and reveal to gods and men  
the dark and dreadful habitations of the dead,  
which even gods detest, so massive was the shock  
when gods collided in that war, with Poseidon  
matched against Apollo with his feathered arrows,

[80] glittery eyed Athena going against a mighty god,  
Ares Enyalios, and Hera against Artemis,  
with her golden arrows, goddess of the noisy hunt,  
sister of Apollo, god who shoots from far away.  
Strong Helper Hermes was opposed by Leto,  
and Hephaestus by that huge and swirling river  
the gods call Xanthus, but all men name Scamander.  
So the gods went out to battle other gods.

But of all warriors in that fighting crowd, Achilles  
was most eager to meet Hector, son of Priam.  
[90] His spirit urged him to glut Ares, warrior god  
with the bull's hide shield, on Hector's blood, more so  
than on the blood of any other man. But Apollo,  
who inspires men to fight, sent out Aeneas

to confront the son of Peleus directly.  
The god placed great force within him. Making his voice  
like Lycaon's, a son of Priam, Apollo,  
Zeus' son, taking on that man's shape, spoke out:

“Aeneas, Trojan counsellor, where are now  
those threats you used to make to Trojan princes,  
[100] as you drank your wine and promised them  
you'd fight Peleus' son, Achilles, man to man?”

Aeneas then said to Apollo in reply:

“Son of Priam, why are you telling me  
to fight the arrogant son of Peleus,  
when I don't wish to? This isn't the first time  
swift Achilles and I have come to blows.  
Once before he chased me away from Ida  
with his spear—he'd come for our cattle,  
when he destroyed Lyrnessus and Pedasus.  
[110] But then Zeus saved me—he gave me strength  
and made my legs run faster. Otherwise,  
Athena and Achilles would have killed me.  
She went on ahead of him to make things safe.  
Then she told him to kill off the Leleges  
with his bronze spear, as well as Trojans.  
No man can face Achilles in a fight—  
some god is constantly beside him, saving him  
and making sure his spear flies always straight,  
not stopping till it's hit some human flesh.  
[120] If some god made sure our fight was equal,  
he'd not easily defeat me, even though  
he boasted he's completely made of bronze.”

Apollo, son of Zeus, then said to Aeneas:

“But, as a warrior, you, too, should pray  
to the immortal gods. For people say

that Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter, bore you,  
while he comes from a lesser goddess.  
Your mother is great Zeus' daughter, but his  
a daughter of the Old Man of the Sea.

[130] So go straight at him with your tireless bronze.  
Don't let him hold you back with words,  
expressing his contempt or making threats."

With these words, Apollo breathed great power then  
into that shepherd of his people. Through the front lines  
Aeneas strode, armed in gleaming bronze. As he moved,  
going after Peleus' son among those crowds of men,  
he did not go unnoticed. Seeing Anchises' son,  
Hera gathered her companion gods and said:

"Poseidon, Athena, both your hearts  
[140] should think about what's going on. Aeneas,  
armed in gleaming bronze, is going to meet  
the son of Peleus, at Apollo's urging.  
So let's work to turn him back at once,  
or else one of us should help Achilles,  
give him great strength, so that his heart won't flinch.  
And then he'll know the gods who love him  
are the best of the immortals and those gods  
who up to now have guarded Trojans  
in this war's battles have only little power,  
[150] as feeble as the wind. We've all come here,  
down from Olympus, to join this conflict,  
so Achilles will not come to any harm  
from Trojans, at least not in the fight today.  
Later, he'll suffer everything which Fate  
spun with her thread for him that very day  
his mother bore him. But if Achilles  
doesn't learn this from a god who speaks to him,  
then he may be fearful if some god appears  
against him in the battle. For the gods  
[160] are terrifying when they reveal themselves."

Earthshaker Poseidon then answered her:

“Hera,

don’t let your rage defeat your common sense.  
There’s no need. For I have no desire  
that gods should fight each other in this battle.  
We should move off to one side and sit down  
where we can watch, leaving this war to men.  
But if Phoebus Apollo or if Ares  
begins to fight or holds Achilles back,  
not allowing him to go on fighting,  
[170] then we’ll get in the conflict right away,  
join in the battle. Soon enough, I think,  
those two will remove themselves from warfare,  
returning to Olympus, to the company  
of other gods whom our strong hands have conquered.”

With these words, the dark-haired god Poseidon led the way  
to the remnants of the wall of godlike Hercules,  
the high rampart Pallas Athena and the Trojans  
had built for him, so he could protect himself  
and escape that monster from the sea, when it forced him  
[180] to move in from the shore. Poseidon sat there,  
beside the other gods, wrapping a concealing cloud  
around their shoulders. The other group of gods  
sat on the crest of Callicolone, around you,  
archer Phoebus, and Ares, who destroys whole cities.  
So these gods sat there on either side, making plans,  
both groups holding back from fighting painful war.  
Sitting high above them, Zeus stayed in control.

The whole plain by now was filled with men and horses,  
all in gleaming bronze. The ground shook underfoot,  
[190] as men charged each other. Two of the finest men  
then came at one another in the middle ground  
between the armies, both prepared for combat—

Aeneas, Anchises' son, and godlike Achilles.  
Aeneas strode out first, making threatening taunts,  
his heavy helmet nodding as he moved around.  
Holding his strong shield across his chest, he brandished  
his bronze spear. The son of Peleus, from the other side,  
charged up against him like a murderous lion  
which a whole community is keen to slaughter—  
[200] At first, the beast moves on and leaves the group alone,  
but when some quick young hunter hits it with a spear,  
the lion gathers itself, opens its jaws wide,  
foaming at the mouth, as its brave heart roars inside.  
Its tail twitches to and fro against its ribs and flanks.  
Then it drives itself to fight, charging straight ahead  
with furiously glaring eyes to kill someone  
or die there in the first attack. That's how Achilles,  
driven by his furious proud heart, came on then  
against the brave Aeneas. As they approached each other,  
[210] coming to close quarters, swift-footed Achilles yelled:

“Aeneas, why have you stepped forward,  
standing here so far in front of all your men?  
Does your heart prompt you to fight against me  
in the hope you'll win Priam's royal honours  
among horse-taming Trojans? If you kill me,  
that won't make Priam put his regal power  
in your hands. For he has his own sons.  
Besides, he's healthy, and he is no fool.  
Or have the Trojans given you some land  
[220] better than all the rest—a fine orchard,  
as well as land to plough—yours to keep,  
if you kill me? You'll find that hard to do.  
My spear has sent you running once before.  
Don't you remember? You were alone.  
I chased you away from your own cattle.  
You scampered off, down Mount Ida's slopes,  
and quickly, too. That time we met, you ran  
and never once looked back, then hid yourself

inside Lyrnessus. But I destroyed that city—  
[230] I attacked it with help from Athena,  
as well as Father Zeus, seized their women  
and took away their freedom. You were saved,  
thanks to Zeus and other gods. But today,  
I don't think he'll save you, as your heart hopes.  
So I'm telling you to move back now,  
retreat into the crowd. Don't stand against me,  
or you'll come up against an evil time.  
A man who doesn't face the facts is stupid.”

Aeneas then said in response:

“Son of Peleus,  
[240] don't try to scare me off with words, as if  
I were a child. I, too, know well enough  
how to hand out threats and insults. We both know  
each other's parents and our ancestry.  
We've heard the famous tales of mortal men,  
told long ago, though your eyes have not seen  
my parents, nor mine yours. People say  
you're noble Peleus' son, your mother  
fair-haired Thetis, daughter of the sea.  
Well, I claim I'm great Anchises' son,  
[250] and Aphrodite is my mother. Today,  
one of them will mourn a dear dead son.  
For I don't think that you and I will leave  
without a fight, once we've exchanged  
some childish conversation. But if you wish,  
then listen to me, so you'll understand  
my lineage well. Many people know it.  
First cloud-gatherer Zeus fathered Dardanus,  
who built Dardania, for sacred Ilion,  
city of mortal men, was not yet built  
[260] here in the plain. His people settled there,  
by the slopes of Ida with its many springs.  
Dardanus, in turn, was father to a son,



king Erichthonius, and he became  
the richest of all mortals, possessing  
three thousand horses grazing in the fens,  
all mares happy with their foals. Then North Wind  
fell in love with them as they pastured there.  
Taking on the form of a dark stallion,  
he copulated with them. They conceived,  
[270] delivering twelve foals. When these foals played,  
running across the fertile farmland, they'd skim  
the highest ears of corn and never break them,  
or they'd race across the sea's broad back,  
gliding the surface of the breaking waves.  
This Erichthonius had a son Tros,  
who ruled the Trojans, and Tros then fathered  
three outstanding sons—Ilus, Assaracus,  
and godlike Ganymede, the handsomest man  
among all mortal men, so beautiful,  
[280] gods kidnapped him and made him cup bearer  
to Zeus himself, so he'd live among immortals.  
Ilus had a noble son, Laomedon,  
who fathered Priam and Tithonus,  
Clytius and warlike Hicetaon.  
Assaracus fathered his son Capys,  
who had Anchises. He is my father.  
Priam's son is godlike Hector. That, then,  
is my ancestry, the blood I boast of.  
But as for courage, well, that's up to Zeus,  
[290] who makes it less or greater as he wills,  
for he's the mightiest one of all. But come,  
let's no longer talk this way, like little boys  
standing in the middle of a battle.  
Both of us have insults we could utter,  
lots of them, so many that a cargo ship  
with a hundred oars could not take on the load.  
Men's tongues are glib, with various languages—  
words can go here and there in all directions,  
and the sorts of words one speaks will be

[300] the sorts of words one has to listen to.

But what's the point? Why should the two of us  
be squabbling here and fight by trading insults  
back and forth, like two irritated women,  
who, in some heart-wrenching raging spat,  
go into the street to scream at one another  
with facts and lies, each one gripped by anger.  
I want to fight—your words won't send me off,  
not before we've fought it out with bronze,  
man to man. So come. Let's start this now

[310] and test each other with our bronze-tipped spears.”

Aeneas finished. Then he threw his heavy spear  
at Achilles' wondrous, dreadful shield. As it hit,  
the spear point made the shield ring out. Peleus' son  
held the shield away from him in his big fist,  
fearing the long-shadowed spear from brave Aeneas  
would easily go through. That was a foolish thought!  
His heart and mind were not aware that gifts like that,  
splendid presents from the gods to mortal men,  
are not so easily defeated, nor do they fail.

[320] So the mighty spear of warrior Aeneas  
did not break the shield, stopped by the golden armour,  
a present from the god. It drove on through two layers,  
but there were still three more, for crippled god Hephaestus  
had hammered out five layers, two made of bronze,  
two inner ones of tin, with a gold one in between.  
The gold one stopped that ash spear from Aeneas.  
Then Achilles, in his turn, hurled his long-shadowed spear,  
hitting Aeneas' round shield right on the rim,  
where bronze and leather backing were the thinnest.

[330] The spear of Pelian ash drove straight through the shield,  
which rattled from the blow. Aeneas cowered down,  
holding the shield out away from him in terror.  
The spear flew high, above his back, then drove itself  
into the ground. But it ripped apart two layers  
on that protective shield. Having escaped the spear,

Aeneas straightened up, eyes glazed with shock,  
frightened that the spear had come so close to him.  
Drawing his sword, Achilles launched a frenzied charge  
with a blood-curdling scream. Aeneas picked up a rock,  
[340] a heavy lift, which no two men now alive could do,  
although he managed it with ease all by himself.  
With that rock Aeneas would have struck Achilles,  
as he charged at him, on his helmet or the shield  
which had rescued him from death, and then Achilles  
in close combat with his sword would have taken  
Aeneas' life, had not the Earthshaker Poseidon  
been paying attention. He spoke up immediately,  
addressing the immortal gods beside him.

“Here's trouble. I feel sorry for Aeneas,  
[350] who'll be going down to Hades quickly,  
slain by Peleus' son, because Apollo,  
the far shooter, talked him into it, the fool!  
Apollo won't protect him from grim death.  
But why should an innocent man like him  
suffer such misfortune, without doing wrong,  
just because of other people's troubles?  
With all his gifts, he's bringing pleasure  
to the gods who live in spacious heaven.  
So come, let's carry him away from death,  
[360] in case the son of Cronos grows enraged,  
if he's killed by Achilles. For Fate ordains  
that he'll escape, so the Dardanian race  
will not die out and leave no seed alive.\*  
For the son of Cronos did love Dardanus  
above all other children born to him  
from mortal women, though he's come to hate  
the family of Priam. So now Trojans  
will be ruled by powerful Aeneas,  
his children's children born in years to come.”

[370] Ox-eyed queen Hera then said to Poseidon:

“Earthshaker, in your own heart and mind  
you must decide whether to save Aeneas,  
or to leave him, for all his nobleness,  
to be killed by Peleus’ son, Achilles.  
We two, Pallas Athena and myself,  
have often sworn among immortals  
not to rescue Trojans from wretched death,  
not even when all Troy is being engulfed  
in all-consuming, blazing fire, set off  
by Achaea’s warrior sons.”

[380] Hearing her words,

Earthshaker Poseidon went down into the battle,  
among the flying spears and came right to the place  
where Aeneas stood with glorious Achilles.  
At once he cast a dense mist on Achilles’ eyes,  
pulled the ash spear of Peleus’ son out of the shield  
of brave Aeneas and set it at Achilles’ feet.  
Poseidon then raised Aeneas up, swinging him  
far above the ground. Aeneas soared high up,  
above the many ranks of warriors and chariots,

[390] flying from Poseidon’s hand, and then came down  
on the fringes of that battle, where the Caucones  
were arming for the fight. Then Earthshaker Poseidon,  
coming up beside Aeneas, spoke to him—  
his words had wings:

“Aeneas,  
what god brought on such foolishness in you—  
fighting man to man with proud Achilles,  
a stronger man and more loved by the gods?  
When you run into him, you must move back,  
or you’ll end up in Hades’ house, contravening  
[400] what destiny ordains. But when Achilles  
has met his fate and died, then you may fight  
in full confidence among those at the front,

for of all Achaeans no one else will kill you.”

With these words, Poseidon left, once he’d explained these matters to Aeneas. Then he took away the wondrous mist over Achilles’ eyes. He looked out, testing his eyesight, and spoke to his great heart, passionately confused:

“What’s happening?

My eyes are playing amazing tricks on me.

[410] I see my spear lying here upon the ground,  
but I don’t see the man I threw it at  
in my eagerness to kill him. Aeneas  
must be really dear to the immortal gods,  
though I thought those things he boasted of  
were merely idle talk. Well, let him go.  
He’ll have no heart to try me once again.  
He’ll be delighted to escape being killed.  
Come, I’ll give a shout to these Danaans  
to fight more Trojans—put them to the test.”

[420] Achilles finished. Then he leapt in among the ranks,  
calling each man:

“Don’t just stand there any more,  
you fine Achaeans—don’t stay away from Trojans.  
Let each of you go up against your man  
in full warrior fury. It’s hard for me,  
though I’m a powerful man, to attack  
so many men and battle with them all.  
Even deathless gods like Ares and Athena  
could not fight them in the jaws of war  
in such a conflict and keep on going.

[430] But what I can do with my hands and feet  
and my own power, I’ll do. I’ll not hold back,  
but go straight at their lines. I don’t think  
a Trojan who gets within my spear range

will have reason to feel happy.”

With these words,  
Achilles urged them on. Then splendid Hector,  
calling with a shout, announced that he’d come forward  
to confront Achilles.

“You proud-hearted Trojans,  
don’t be afraid of that son of Peleus.  
I, too, can battle anyone with words,  
[440] even the immortals. But with a spear,  
that’s more difficult—they’re so much stronger.  
Achilles won’t accomplish everything  
he says he will. Some of it he’ll manage,  
some he’ll leave undone. I’ll go against him,  
though his blazing hands are like a fire,  
his strength like glittering iron.”

With these words  
he roused them into action. Trojans held their spears up high,  
then turned to face Achaeans. Both sides joined battle  
in a terrific frenzy. Then Phoebus Apollo,  
moving close to Hector, spoke to him:

[450] “Hector,      & nbsp;  
don’t step out to face Achilles openly.  
Wait for him in the noisy crowd of men.  
Don’t let him hit you with his spear or slash you  
at close quarters with his sword.”

Apollo spoke.  
Hector pulled back into the crowd of soldiers,  
seized with fear at hearing a god’s voice talk to him.  
Giving a blood-curdling scream, Achilles leapt  
among the Trojans, his heart wrapped in battle fury.  
First he killed Iphition, Otrynteus’ brave son,  
[460] who commanded many men. A Naiad nymph bore him

to Otrynteus, sacker of cities, in Hyde,  
a fertile land, below snow-covered Mount Tmolus.  
As he charged right at him, godlike Achilles  
struck Iphition with his spear squarely in the head,  
splitting his skull apart. He fell with a crash.  
Godlike Achilles then cried out in triumph:

“Lie there, son of Otrynteus, of all men  
the one we fear the most. Here you die.  
You were born beside the Gygaean lake,  
[470] on your father’s land, by the fish-filled Hyllus  
and the swirling Hermus rivers.”

Achilles triumphed. But down on Iphition’s eyes  
the darkness fell, and then, in the first attack,  
Achaean wheel rims on the chariots ripped him up.  
After him, Achilles went for Demoleon,  
Antenor’s son, a brave defensive fighter,  
hitting the bronze cheek armour on his helmet.  
But that didn’t check the spear—it smashed through,  
breaking his skull, splattering all his brains inside.  
[480] That stopped his fighting charge. Then Hippodamas  
jumped down out of his chariot to flee Achilles.  
But Achilles speared him in the back. As he died,  
panting his life away, he screamed—just as a bull roars,  
when it’s pulled around the altar of Poseidon,  
lord of Helice, the Earthshaker, who delights  
in those young lads who drag the beast—in just that way  
Hippodamas bellowed then, as his noble spirit  
slipped out from his bones. Then Achilles with his spear  
attacked noble Polydorus, son of Priam.  
[490] His father would not let Polydorus fight,  
for of all his children he was the youngest born,  
the one most loved. He was the fastest runner, too.  
Now, like a fool, he was showing off his speed,  
sprinting through front lines until he lost his life.  
As he ran past, swift-footed godlike Achilles

threw his spear into the middle of his back,  
where the golden belt clasps joined together  
on the overlapping body armour. The spear point,  
going straight through, came out his navel. With a scream,  
[500] he fell onto his knees. Then black cloud enveloped him.  
As he collapsed, his guts spilled out into his hands.

When Hector saw his brother Polydorus there,  
down on the ground, collapsed and holding his own entrails,  
a mist flowed right across his eyes. He could no longer  
bear to keep his distance. He moved against Achilles,  
waving his sharp spear, just like a flame. Achilles,  
when he saw him, jumped out and roared in triumph:

“He’s getting closer—the very man  
who scarred my heart more than all other men.  
[510] We won’t be evading one another  
in the battle lanes much longer.”

As he said this, Achilles scowled at godlike Hector,  
then yelled at him:

“Come closer,  
so you can meet your fatal doom more quickly.”

Hector of the shining helmet, quite unafraid,  
then cried out to Achilles:

“Son of Peleus,  
don’t try to frighten me with words, as if  
I were some child. I, too, know well enough  
how to shout out taunting words and insults.  
[520] I know you’re brave, stronger than me by far.  
But these things are in the lap of the gods.  
Though I’m the weaker man, I’ll take your life,  
with one throw of my spear, for in the past  
it’s proved it’s sharp enough.”



With these words,  
Hector raised his spear and threw it. But Athena,  
with the slightest puff of breath, blew it aside,  
away from glorious Achilles, turning it back  
to godlike Hector. It landed there beside his feet.  
Then, with a terrifying shout, Achilles charged,  
[530] lusting to kill. But Apollo snatched up Hector,  
something a god can do with ease, then hid him  
in thick cloud. Swift-footed, godlike Achilles  
charged that cloud three times, striking hard each time  
with his bronze spear. When for the fourth time  
he came on like a god with a terrific shout,  
Achilles cried out these winged words to Hector:

“You dog—once more you’re evading death for now.  
But you’ve narrowly escaped disaster.  
Phoebus Apollo has saved you one more time.  
[540] No doubt you always pray to him as you go  
out into the sound of thudding spears.  
Next time we meet, I’ll surely finish you,  
if some god is there to assist me, too.  
For now I’ll fight the others, any man  
I chance to meet.”

Achilles finished shouting.  
Then he struck Dryops with his spear right in the neck.  
Dryops fell at Achilles’ feet. But he left him there.  
Next, Achilles stopped Demouchus, Philetor’s son,  
a big brave warrior, with a spear thrust in his knee.  
[550] Then he hit him with his massive sword, taking his life.  
After that, he went at Dardanus and Laogonus,  
both sons of Bias, throwing them out of their chariot  
onto the ground. He hit one of them with his spear  
and slashed the other at close quarters with his sword.

Then Tros, Alastor’s son, fell at Achilles knees,

clutching them, begging him to spare his life,  
to capture him alive, instead of killing him,  
moved by pity for a man the same age as himself.  
What a fool! He did not know there was no way  
[560] to change Achilles' mind—he was not a tender man  
with a soft heart, but full of fighting rage. With his hands  
Tros tried to clutch Achilles' knees, desperate  
to plead for mercy, but Achilles' sword struck him  
in his liver, which slid out from the wound.  
Black blood, pouring from the gash, filled up his lap.  
Then darkness veiled his eyes, and his spirit left him.

Next, Achilles moved up to Mulius and with his spear  
struck him on the ear. The bronze point, driven in hard,  
came out his other ear. Then he hit Echeclus,  
[570] Agenor's son, with his hilted sword right on his head.  
The blood made the whole blade hot. Then dark death,  
his powerful fate, came down across his eyes.  
Next, Achilles hit Deucalion—his bronze spear point  
struck him in the arm where tendons meet the elbow.  
His arm now useless, Deucalion stood there waiting,  
staring death right in the face. Achilles hit him  
with his sword blade in the neck, slicing off his head.  
He knocked the head and the helmet far away.  
From Deucalion's spine the marrow spurted out,  
[580] as his body lay there, stretched out on the ground.  
Next, Achilles, after chasing the noble son of Peires,  
Rhigmus, who'd come from fertile Thrace, hit him  
with a spear throw in the gut, fixing the bronze  
firmly in his belly. Rhigmus fell from his chariot.  
His attendant, Areithous, wheeled the horses round,  
but Achilles' sharp spear struck him in the back  
and threw him from the chariot. The horses bolted.

Just as a terrifying fire rages through deep woods  
on a parched mountain, burning dense stands of trees,  
[590] as the driving wind blows flames to every spot,

that how Achilles, like a god, raged with his spear,  
attacking and killing men all through the fight.  
The dark earth ran with blood. Just as a man yokes oxen,  
big bulls, wide in the shoulder, to grind barley  
on a well-built threshing floor, and lowing oxen  
quickly flatten all the grain, that how brave Achilles  
drove his sure-footed horses to trample on the dead  
and on their shields as well. The chariot axle underneath  
got sprayed with blood. Blood soaked the chariot rails,  
[600] thrown up in gouts from horses' hooves and wheel rims.  
But Peleus' son pushed on to win more glory,  
blood spattered over his all-conquering hands.

Book Twenty One  
Achilles Fights the River

*[Achilles attacks the Trojans hiding in the river Xanthus (also called Scamander); takes twelve young men alive to sacrifice for Patroclus; Achilles meets Lycaon, who begs for mercy; Achilles replies and then kills Lycaon; Achilles fights and kills Asteropaeus, then slaughters many Paeonian leaders; the river objects to the slaughter; the river rises against Achilles, who appeals to the gods for help; Hera appeals to Hephaestus to fight the river; Hephaestus launches his fire against the flooding river; the river gives up, so Hephaestus withdraws his fire; the gods begin to fight each other; Athena fights Ares and then Aphrodite; Poseidon offers to fight Apollo, who declines; Hera and Artemis fight; Apollo moves into Ilion; Apollo deceives Achilles, enabling many Trojans to reach the city]*

When the Trojans reached the ford across the Xanthus,  
lovely swirling river born of immortal Zeus,  
Achilles split them in two groups, chasing one  
across the plain towards the city, where the previous day  
Achaeans had fled in terror, when glorious Hector  
had prevailed. Some Trojans fled back there in panic.  
Hera sent fog in front of them to slow them down.  
But half the Trojans were crammed in along the river,  
trapped by its deep currents and its silver eddies.  
[10] They fell in there, making a huge commotion.  
The noise roared down along the rushing river banks  
amplifying the din. Men thrashed around, back and forth,  
as they were sucked down in the current screaming.  
Just as fire drives flights of locusts to seek refuge  
in some river, when the tireless flames attack them  
in a sudden onrush and they sink below the water—  
that's how, faced with Achilles' attacking charge,  
a confused mass of chariots and men filled up  
the deep and swirling waters of the river Xanthus.  
[20] Then divinely born Achilles left his spear  
beside a tamarisk bush and jumped into the stream,  
like an inhuman thing, armed only with his sword,  
his heart intent on killing. Turning in all directions,  
he kept on striking. The men his sword slaughtered

cried out in terror. The water turned blood red.  
 Just as other fish swim off from a huge dolphin  
 filling safe corners of some sheltered harbour,  
 fearful because the beast eats all it captures—  
 that's how Trojans huddled then, under hanging banks,  
 [30] all along the stream edge of that murderous river.  
 When Achilles' arms grew weary from the killing,  
 he plucked out of the river twelve young men alive,  
 as blood payment for the killing of Patroclus,  
 Menoetius' son. He led them up onto dry land,  
 like stupefied fawns, tied their hands behind them,  
 using belts they wore around their woven tunics,  
 and gave them to his men to lead back to the ships.  
 Then he jumped in again, eager to keep killing.  
 But then Achilles met someone fleeing the river—  
 [40] Lycaon, a son of Dardanian Priam,  
 whom he'd captured once before in a night attack,  
 taking him against his will from his father's orchard.  
 With his sharp bronze Lycaon had been cutting  
 young shoots from off a fig tree to make chariot rails.  
 He'd had the bad luck to meet godlike Achilles.  
 That time, Achilles took him in his ship and sold him  
 in well-built Lemnos, where the son of Jason  
 had paid the purchase price. From there, Eëtion,  
 a friend and guest from Imbros, had ransomed Lycaon,  
 [50] paying a huge sum, then sent him on to Arisbe.  
 He'd escaped from there in secret and gone home,  
 back to his father's house. Once he returned from Lemnos,  
 for eleven days his heart enjoyed his friends.  
 On the twelfth, some god threw him back again  
 into Achilles' hands, who was about to ship him,  
 against Lycaon's wishes, down to dwell with Hades.  
 When swift-footed, godlike Achilles saw Lycaon  
 totally unarmed, without his helmet, shield, or spear,  
 for he'd thrown these on the ground, exhausted  
 [60] after he'd escaped the river, worn out and sweating  
 in all his lower limbs, Achilles, much surprised,

spoke to his own courageous heart:

“What’s this?

My eyes are witnessing something amazing.  
Great-hearted Trojans I’ve just slaughtered  
will rise again, up out of murky darkness,  
if this man’s avoided death, returned like this,  
after I’d sold him off in sacred Lemnos.  
The grey sea, which holds many people back  
against their will, hasn’t seemed to stop him.

[70] But come, let him taste my spear point. I’ll see—  
and in my heart confirm—if he’ll return,  
as he’s just done, or if life-giving earth,  
which keeps even strong men down, will hold him.”  
That’s what Achilles thought, as he stood there waiting.  
Lycaon, dazed with fear, approached Achilles,  
eager to clasp his knees in supplication,  
heart desperate to escape dark fate and evil death.  
Godlike Achilles raised his long spear, prepared to strike.  
But Lycaon, stooping down, slipped underneath the spear,  
[80] then clasped Achilles’ knees. Flying above his back,  
the spear stuck in the ground, hungry for human flesh.  
With one hand, Lycaon grabbed Achilles’ knee.  
His other clutched the spear, refusing to let go.  
He begged for mercy, addressing Achilles  
with these winged words:

“By your knees, Achilles,  
I beg you to respect me as a suppliant.  
Have pity on me. I claim that sacred right,  
my lord, because it was at your table  
I first ate Demeter’s grain the very day  
[90] you seized me in that well-built orchard.  
You led me far from father and my friends,  
then sold me off in sacred Lemnos. For me  
you got the value of a hundred oxen,  
but I was ransomed for three times that price.

It's now twelve days since I reached Ilion,  
after my ordeal. Once more, deadly Fate  
has placed me in your hands. I do believe  
Father Zeus must hate me, to give me to you  
for a second time. My mother, Laothoë,  
[100] daughter of old Altes, gave birth to me  
to live a shortened life. Altes rules over  
war-loving Leleges, in steep Pedasus,  
by the river Satnioeis. His daughter  
married Priam, who has many other wives.  
She had two sons. Now you'll have slaughtered both.  
You killed fine Polydorus with those men  
fighting at the front, when your sharp spear  
sent him to die. Now death comes for me, as well.  
I don't expect to escape your hands this time,  
[110] since some god has guided me right to them.  
But I'll say one more thing—take it to heart—  
don't kill me. I'm not from the same womb  
as Hector, the man who killed your comrade,  
that kind and powerful warrior.”  
So Lycaon begged for mercy from Achilles.  
But the response he got was brutal:

“You fool,  
don't offer me a ransom or some plea.  
Before Patroclus met his deadly fate,  
sparing Trojans pleased my heart much more.  
[120] I took many overseas and sold them.  
But now not one of them escapes his death,  
no one whom god delivers to my hands,  
here in front of Ilion, not one—  
not a single Trojan, especially none  
of Priam's children. So now, my friend,  
you too must die. Why be sad about it?  
Patroclus died, a better man than you.  
And look at me. You see how fine I am,  
how tall, how handsome? My father's a fine man,

[130] the mother who gave birth to me a goddess.  
Yet over me, as well, hangs Fate—my death.  
There'll come a dawn, or noon, or evening,  
when some man will take my life in battle—  
he'll strike me with his spear or with an arrow  
shot from his bowstring.”

Achilles finished.  
Then Lycaon's knees gave way, his heart collapsed.  
He let go of the spear and crouched there, both his hands  
stretched out. Achilles pulled out his sharp sword and struck,  
hitting him on the collar bone, beside his neck.  
[140] The whole two-edged blade sliced into him. Lycaon fell,  
lying face down on the earth. His dark blood flowed out  
and soaked the ground. Achilles seized him by the foot,  
then flung him in the river, shouting out in triumph—  
his words had wings:

“Lie there, among the fish.  
They'll lick blood from your wound with no respect.  
Your mother won't set you on your funeral bed,  
lamenting over you. No, Scamander,  
the swirling river, will carry you away  
to the broad lap of the sea. Many fish  
[150] will swim up to the darkly rippled surface  
to eat white fat from Lycaon. So die,  
all you fleeing Trojans, until we reach  
that sacred city Ilion, with me there,  
right behind you, fighting and killing you.  
Your flowing river with its silver eddies  
won't help, for all those bulls you've sacrificed  
all these years, all the sure-footed horses  
you've thrown alive into its swirling pools.  
No matter—you'll suffer an evil fate,  
[160] till every one of you has paid in full  
for Patroclus' death, for Achaea's dead,  
the men you slaughtered by our swift ships,



when I was not among them there.”

Achilles’ words enraged the heart in river Xanthus,  
who wondered how he might stop godlike Achilles  
from his slaughter and protect the Trojans from disaster.  
Meanwhile, Peleus’ son, gripping his long-shadowed spear,  
still eager to kill more, charged Asteropaeus,  
son of Pelegon, born to the broad river Axius

[170] and Acessamenus’ eldest daughter, Periboea.

The deep swirling river had had sex with her.  
Achilles went at Asteropaeus, who stood there,  
facing him, holding two spears. In his anger  
at the slaughter of young soldiers in the battle,  
whom Achilles kept butchering along the stream,  
showing no pity, Xanthus then put fighting strength  
into Asteropaeus. But when the two men  
had approached each other, moving close together,  
godlike Achilles was the first to speak:

[180] “Who are you that dares to come against me?

Where are you from? Children who confront me  
leave their parents full of sorrow.”

The glorious son of Pelegon then said in reply:

“Great-hearted son of Peleus, why ask me  
my lineage? I come from Paeonia,  
a fertile country far from here, leading  
Paeonians, men carrying long spears.  
It’s now eleven days since I came here,  
to Ilion. I’m born from Axius,

[190] the wide-streaming river, whose waters  
are the loveliest which flow upon this earth.

Axius fathered a famous spear man,

Pelegon, whose son they say I am.

But now, splendid Achilles, let us fight.”

In response to that speech from Asteropaeus,  
godlike Achilles raised his Pelian ash spear.

But then Asteropaeus, an ambidextrous man,  
threw two spears at once. One hit Achilles’ shield,

but did not break through. The gold, gift of a god,  
[200] had checked it. The other hit Achilles a glancing blow  
on his right arm at the elbow. Dark blood flowed out.  
But the spear passed over him and struck the ground,  
still eager to taste flesh. Then Achilles, in his turn,  
threw a straight-flying spear at Asteropaeus,  
hoping to kill him. But he missed the man, hitting  
the high river bank, driving half that ash spear  
deep in the ground. Drawing the sharp sword by his thigh,  
Peleus' son, enraged, went after Asteropaeus,  
who was trying to pull the spear Achilles threw  
[210] out of the river bank with his huge fist. He failed.  
Three times he shifted it in his frantic haste to grab it,  
but three times he had to abandon the attempt.  
The fourth time his heart was keen to bend and break  
the ash spear of Achilles, but before he could,  
Achilles himself charged in and took his life  
with a sword thrust in the belly by the navel.  
His guts fell out onto the ground. As he lay gasping,  
darkness veiled his eyes. Jumping on his chest,  
Achilles stripped his armour off, boasting aloud:  
[220] "Lie there. It's hard to compete with children  
of the mighty son of Cronos, even though  
you are descended from some river. You claim  
your family stems from a broad flowing stream,  
but I boast a family coming from great Zeus.  
The man who is my father, Peleus,  
son of Aeacus, rules many Myrmidons.  
Aeacus came from Zeus himself, and Zeus  
is stronger than rivers flowing to the sea,  
so Zeus' line is stronger than all those  
[230] descended from a river. Look beside you—  
there's a great stream there, but he can't help you.  
For there's no way to battle against Zeus,  
son of Cronos. Even lord Achelous  
cannot equal him, nor the great power  
of deep flowing Oceanus, from whom

all rivers, seas, fountains, and deep wells  
derive their water—even Oceanus  
is afraid of lighting from great Zeus  
and his thunder when it crashes in the skies.”

[240] Saying this, he pulled his bronze spear from the river bank.

Achilles left the corpse of Asteropaeus  
lying there in the sand, dark water lapping round him.  
Fish and eels then went at him, nibbling and chewing off  
the fat around his kidneys. Achilles moved away,  
attacking the Paeonian charioteers still crouched  
beside the flowing river, terrified once they’d seen  
their best man butchered in that desperate conflict  
on the powerful sword of the son of Peleus.

There Achilles killed Thersilochus, Mydon,

[250] Astypylus, Mnesus, Thrasius, Aenius,  
and Ophelestes. Swift Achilles would have killed  
still more Paeonians, but the deep-flowing river,  
in its anger, taking on a human form, called out,  
speaking from a deep swirling pool:

“Achilles,  
you may be the most powerful of men,  
but you’re inflicting too much damage here.  
Yes, the gods are always there to help you.  
And if Cronos’ son is now enabling you  
to kill all Trojans, at least drive them off

[260] far from my stream. Carry out your work—

this butchery—out there on the plain.  
Now corpses fill my channels, I can’t let  
my waters flow through anywhere to reach  
the glimmering sea. I’m choking on the dead,  
while you keep up these harsh atrocities.  
Come, you leader of your people, let me be.  
I find your actions here astounding.”

In reply,  
swift-footed Achilles then addressed the river:

“Divinely raised Scamander, it shall be  
[270] as you request. But I’ll not stop killing  
these proud Trojans till I have them cornered  
in their city and have tested Hector  
in a fight, and he kills me or I kill him.”  
Saying this, Achilles fell upon the Trojans,  
like something superhuman. Then Scamander,  
the deep-flowing river, cried out to Apollo:  
“What’s happening, lord of the silver bow,  
child of Zeus? You’re not following Zeus’ plans.  
He clearly told you to assist the Trojans,  
[280] to defend them until evening comes,  
casting its shadows on the fertile farm land.”  
The river spoke. Then famous spearman Achilles  
jumped from the bank into the middle of the stream.  
The river attacked him with a rising flood,  
stirring all his waters into seething turmoil,  
sweeping up many corpses crowded in the shoals,  
men slaughtered by Achilles. Roaring like a bull,  
the river hurled these bodies up onto the shore,  
preserving in its lovely stream those still alive  
[290] by hiding them in deep wide pools. Around Achilles,  
huge waves towered threateningly, beating down  
his shield. The breaking waters pushed him backwards.  
Achilles lost his footing. His hand reached out to grab  
a large elm tree, fully grown, but the tree came loose,  
roots and all, tearing the whole river bank away.  
As it fell in the river, its thick branches blocked  
that lovely stream, damming its flow. In terror,  
Achilles scrambled up out of the raging waters,  
trying on his swift feet to run out to the plain.  
[300] But the great god wasn’t done. With a dark wave,  
he went after godlike Achilles, to prevent  
the killing and to rescue Trojans from destruction.  
Peleus’ son ran off as far as one spear throw,  
moving as fast as a black eagle plummets,  
the hunting bird which is the strongest and the fastest

of all flying things—that's how Achilles ran.  
The bronze armour on his chest was clanging fearfully  
as he swerved out from underneath the flooding river,  
desperate to escape. But with a tremendous roar,  
[310] Scamander's flood rushed on in pursuit behind him.  
Just as a man laying out a ditch from a dark spring  
to his plants and gardens digs a water channel,  
mattock in hand, removing what obstructs the flow,  
and the water, as it starts to run, pushes aside  
the pebbles, and then, gaining momentum, flows down  
and overtakes the man who's guiding it—  
that's how the flooding wave kept clutching at Achilles  
for all his speed, since gods have much more strength than men.  
Every time swift-footed, godlike Achilles  
[320] tried stopping to fight back, to see if all the gods  
who live in spacious heaven were forcing him to flee,  
a tremendous wave from that heaven-fed river  
would crash down around his shoulders. He'd jump clear,  
heart panicking, but the river kept tugging at his legs  
with a strong undertow, washing out the ground  
beneath his feet. Then gazing up into the wide sky  
the son of Peleus cried out:

“Father Zeus,  
why is no god standing by me here,  
in this pitiful state, rescuing me  
[330] from this river? After this, I can endure  
everything. I don't blame any Olympian  
as much as I blame my own dear mother,  
who led me astray with lies, telling me  
I'd die from the swift arrows of Apollo,  
under Trojan walls and fully armed.  
Now I wish that I'd been killed by Hector,  
the best man of those native to this region.  
Then a fine man would have done the killing,  
another fine man would have been destroyed.  
[340] But now it's been ordained that I'm to suffer

an ignoble death, caught by this great river,  
like some child in care of pigs, swept away  
while trying to cross a torrent in a rain storm.”

Achilles spoke. Then Poseidon and Pallas Athena,  
coming up quickly, stood in human form beside him.  
They joined their hands with his, and with their words  
they pledged their help. Poseidon spoke out first:

“Son of Peleus,  
don’t be so afraid. You need have no fear.  
We two come from the gods, here to help you—

[350] me and Pallas Athena, and Zeus approves.

It’s not ordained that you’re to die here,  
killed by some river, which will soon recede,  
as you will see. We have advice for you,  
if you’ll listen. Don’t hold back your hands  
in murderous warfare till you’ve cornered  
inside the famous walls of Troy those men  
now in retreat before you. Once you’ve taken  
Hector’s life, return back to the ships.

We giving you a chance for glory.”

[360] With these words, the two gods went away. Achilles,  
greatly moved by what the gods had said, set off,  
running across the plain, now full of flooding water,  
with many lovely weapons of the slaughtered men  
floating there among their corpses. As he went,  
he raised his legs high, striving against the current.  
The broad flowing river couldn’t slow him down,  
once Athena had put great power in Achilles.  
But Scamander did not hold his fury back,  
growing even more enraged at Peleus’ son.

[370] He raised himself up in a high-crested wave  
and called out with a shout to Simoeis:

“Dear brother,  
let’s both together counter this man’s power,  
since he’ll soon demolish Priam’s city.

Trojans will not stand up to him and fight.  
Come quickly. Help me. Fill your streams  
with water from your springs. Whip up your torrents.  
Then stand in a huge wave, raising a din  
with rocks and tree trunks, so we can stop  
this violent man, now in a conquering rage,  
[380] like some god. I don't think his strength will help him,  
or his beauty, or that lovely armour—  
that will lie somewhere underneath the flood,  
buried in slime. I'll cover him in sand,  
with an massive layer of silt on top,  
beyond all measurement. I'll hide him there  
with so much mud, Achaeans will not know  
how to collect his bones. There where he'll lie,  
I'll make him a tomb—he won't need a mound  
when Achaeans organize his funeral.”  
[390] Saying this, Scamander crested high against Achilles,  
then charged, seething with foam and blood and corpses.  
The dark wave of the heaven-fed river rose, towering  
above Achilles, about to overwhelm him.  
But Hera, afraid for Achilles, cried out, fearing  
the great, deep, swirling river would sweep him off.  
She called out to Hephaestus, her dear son:

“Rouse yourself,  
my crippled child. We think that you're a match  
for swirling Xanthus in a fight. Come quickly.  
Help Achilles with a giant outburst  
[400] of your flames. I'll stir up some winds—  
West Wind's harsh sea blasts and white South Wind—  
to whip on your destructive fires, so they may burn  
dead Trojans and their weapons. You must go  
along the river banks, burning trees,  
attacking river Xanthus with your flames.  
Don't let him slow you down in any way,  
not with gentle words or making threats.  
Don't check your fury till I tell you to.

I'll give you a shout. Then you can pull back  
your inexhaustible fire."

[410] Hera spoke.

Hephaestus then prepared a prodigious blaze.  
First it burned up all the plain, incinerating corpses,  
the many bodies of men slaughtered by Achilles  
scattered everywhere. The entire plain dried up.  
The shimmering river waters were held back.  
Just as at harvest time North Wind quickly dries  
well-watered orchards, to the farmer's great delight,  
that's how the whole plain then grew dry, as Hephaestus  
burned up the dead. Then he turned his blazing flames

[420] against the river, burning elms, willows, tamarisks,  
clover, rushes, sedge, all growing in abundance  
along that lovely stream. In the river pools,  
eels and fish were much distressed—they jumped everywhere  
in that fine river, suffering the fiery blasts  
prepared by that resourceful god Hephaestus.  
The river, too, was burned. So Xanthus cried out,  
calling to the god:

"No god, Hephaestus,  
can stand against you. I can't fight you  
when you burn with flames like this. So stop.

[430] End this strife. Godlike Achilles can continue.

Let him drive the Trojans from their city.  
What do I care about assisting in this war?"  
The river spoke, still burning from the fire,  
his lovely waters seething. Just as a cauldron  
with hot flames heating it boils inside and melts  
the fat from off a well-fed hog, bubbling over,  
once dry split wood is set down under it—that's how  
the fire burned that lovely stream. Its seething waters  
would no longer flow downriver, held up there,

[440] defeated by the power of that fiery blast  
made by the skill of god Hephaestus. Then the river,



with a strong appeal to Hera, spoke these winged words:  
“Hera, why’s your son burning up my stream,  
doing it more injury than any other?  
I’m not as much to blame as all the rest,  
the ones who help the Trojans. If you say so,  
I’ll stop, if Hephaestus stops as well.  
And I’ll swear this oath—never again will I  
protect a Trojan from his evil death,  
[450] not even when all Troy itself is burning,  
ablaze with all-consuming fire, started  
by Achaea’s warlike sons.”

White-armed goddess Hera,  
as soon as she’d heard this, spoke to Hephaestus,  
her dear son:

“Hold off, Hephaestus, splendid child.  
It’s not right to hurt a deathless god like this,  
just for the sake of mortal men.”

When Hera spoke,  
Hephaestus extinguished his stupendous fire at once.  
The river’s stream flowed once more in its channel.  
When the fighting spirit in Xanthus had been broken,  
[460] the two gods fought no longer. Hera had stopped them,  
though she was still enraged. But now the other gods  
began a heavy conflict and a cruel fight  
among themselves. The spirits in their hearts  
pushed them in various directions. As they clashed,  
with a tremendous din, the wide earth cried out,  
and mighty heaven pealed, just like a trumpet.  
Sitting on Olympus, Zeus heard the sound—his heart  
laughed with delight to see these gods go at it  
in mutual conflict. They no longer stood aloof.  
[470] Shield-breaker Ares started it, attacking  
Athena first with his bronze spear and taunting her:  
“You dog fly, why is it you’re once again

inciting gods to fight each other,  
heart prompted by your own foolhardiness?  
Don't you recall the moment you provoked  
Diomedes, Tydeus' son, to wound me?  
We all saw it—you grabbed his spear yourself  
and drove it at me, scratching my fair skin.  
Well, now I think you'll pay for all you've done."

[480] Saying this, Ares struck Athena's tasselled aegis,  
that fearful aegis which not even Zeus' lightning  
can overcome. Bloodstained Ares' long spear struck it.  
Drawing back, Athena picked up in her strong hand  
a large, black, jagged rock, lying there on the plain.  
In earlier ages men had set it there to indicate  
the boundary of a field. With this rock Athena  
struck raging Ares in the neck. His legs collapsed.  
Ares fell. Stretched out he covered seven hundred feet.  
His hair was dirtied with the dust. His armour rang.

[490] Pallas Athena laughed, then cried in boastful triumph—  
her words had wings:

"You fool, still so ignorant  
of how much stronger I can claim to be  
than you, when you seek to match my power.  
This is the way you'll answer now in full  
your mother's vengeful rage. She's angry,  
planning nasty things for you, since you left  
Achaeans to support the arrogant Trojans."  
With these words, she turned her glittering eyes away.  
Zeus' daughter Aphrodite then took Ares

[500] and led him off by hand, as he kept groaning—  
he found it difficult to get his spirit back.  
When white-armed goddess Hera saw Athena,  
she spoke, addressing her with these winged words:  
"Look there, child of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
you tireless one, that dog fly once again  
is leading man-killing Ares through the crowd,  
away from battle. Go after her."

Once Hera spoke, Athena dashed off in pursuit,  
delighted in her heart. Charging Aphrodite,  
[510] she struck her in the chest with her powerful fist.  
Aphrodite's knees gave way, her heart collapsed.  
So both gods lay there, on the all-nourishing earth.  
Athena then spoke out winged words of triumph:  
"Let all those who assist the Trojans  
end up like this in warfare with Achaeans,  
with all the fortitude and boldness  
Aphrodite showed in helping Ares,  
standing up against my fighting power.  
We'll then soon end these hostile fights,  
[520] once we've destroyed well-peopled Ilion."  
As Athena spoke, white-armed goddess Hera smiled.  
Then the mighty Earthshaker spoke to Apollo:  
"Phoebus, why do we two stand aloof?  
That's not right, now that others have begun.  
It would be shameful if we both went back  
to Olympus, to Zeus' bronze-floored home,  
without a fight. Since you're the younger one,  
you must begin. It's not fair play if I do,  
since I'm your elder and thus I know more.  
[530] How foolish you are with your thoughtless heart!  
Don't you recall the trouble we two had  
around Troy, just the pair of us alone,  
with no other gods, that time when Zeus  
made us come here to work for a whole year  
at a fixed wage for proud king Laomedon?  
He was our master and told us what to do.  
I built the Trojans a wide and splendid wall  
around their city, to make it impregnable.  
You, Phoebus, worked with his cattle herds,  
[540] taking his shambling bent-horned livestock  
through Ida's wooded spurs and valleys.  
When the joyful seasons stopped our working there,  
that despicable Laomedon robbed us.  
He kept our wages and sent us off with threats.

He promised he'd tie up your hands and feet,  
then in some distant island sell you as a slave.  
He said he'd slice off both our ears with bronze.  
We came back really angry in our hearts,  
enraged about those promised wages  
[550] he'd withheld. That's the man whose people  
you're now keen to favour. You don't join us,  
so we destroy these arrogant Trojans  
once and for all, along with all their children  
and their honourable wives as well."  
Lord Apollo, who shoots from far, answered Poseidon:  
"Earthshaker, you'd never call me prudent,  
if I fought with you over human beings—  
those pitiful creatures are like the leaves,  
now full of blazing life, eating nourishment  
[560] the earth provides, then fading into death.  
No, let's quickly end our quarrel, leaving  
these mortal men to fight amongst themselves."  
Saying this, he turned away, thinking it shameful  
to fight in battle against his father's brother.  
But his sister, forest goddess Artemis,  
queen of all wild beasts, was furious with him.  
She spoke to him with scorn:

"So, far worker,  
you're running off, ceding total victory  
to Poseidon, giving him an easy glory.  
[570] You fool! Why do you carry such a bow,  
as useless as the wind? From now on,  
I never want to hear you boasting,  
the way you used to among deathless gods,  
how you could fight Poseidon face to face."  
Artemis spoke. Far-shooting Apollo did not answer.  
But Hera, Zeus' honoured wife, was angry.  
She went at the archer goddess, insulting her:  
"You shameless bitch, you dare stand against me?  
You'll find it hard to match my power,

[580] even if you have your bow and Zeus made you  
a lion among women, allowing you  
to kill whichever one of them you please.  
I say it's better to be slaughtering wild beasts,  
deer in the mountains, than to fight all out  
with those more powerful. Still, if you're keen  
to learn about this war, to understand  
how much more powerful I am, let's fight,  
since you are challenging my strength."

With these words, Hera caught both arms of Artemis  
[590] in her left hand. With her right she grabbed the bow,  
snatching it and its quiver off her shoulders.  
Then she slapped her with those weapons. As she did so,  
Hera smiled to see Artemis twist away and squirm.  
The swift arrows tumbled out. Artemis ran off,  
crying like a pigeon speeding from a hawk,  
flying to some hollow cleft among the rocks,  
for she's not fated to be caught—that's how Artemis  
escaped, in tears, leaving her bow lying there.  
Then Hermes, the guide, killer of Argus, spoke out,  
addressing Leto:

[600] "I'll not fight you, Leto.  
It's dangerous to come to blows with those  
married to cloud-gatherer Zeus. So you can tell  
immortal gods your great strength conquered me—  
and you can even boast about it."

Hermes finished.  
Leto then collected the curved bow and arrows,  
which had fallen here and there down in the swirling dust.  
Then she left, taking her daughter's weapons with her.  
Artemis returned then to Olympus, to Zeus' home,  
with its bronze floor. The girl sat on her father's lap,  
[610] her immortal garments shaking as she wept.  
Her father, Cronos' son, holding her to him,  
asked her with a gentle laugh:

“My dear child,  
which of the heavenly gods has treated you  
so nastily, as if you were committing  
some evil act in public?”

Then Artemis,  
with her beautiful headband, answered Zeus:  
“It was your wife who hit me, father,  
white-armed Hera. Now, thanks to her,  
immortal gods engage in fights and quarrels.”

[620] As these two talked together in this fashion,  
Phoebus Apollo went to sacred Ilion.  
He was concerned about that well-built city wall,  
afraid Danaans might breach it that very day,  
contravening what Fate ordained. The other gods,  
who live forever, went back to Olympus,  
some incensed and others relishing their triumph.  
They sat down by Zeus, lord of the dark cloud.  
Meanwhile, Achilles still kept on killing Trojans,  
both soldiers and their sure-footed horses, too.

[630] Just as smoke rises up, reaching spacious heaven,  
when a city burns from fires set by wrathful gods—  
that’s how Achilles brought Trojans death and danger.  
Then old Priam stood on that wall built by gods,  
observing huge Achilles as he drove the Trojans  
ahead of him in total panic, their spirit broken.  
With a groan, he left the wall, came down to the ground,  
and summoned the well-known sentries at the gates.  
“Hold the doors wide open with your hands,  
until the fleeing troops come to the city.

[640] For Achilles is coming closer, driving  
them in panic. I think disaster looms.  
When the men have gathered here inside the wall,  
able to get relief, then close the gates,  
these tight-fitting doors, once more. I’m afraid  
this murderer may jump inside our walls.”

Then the men pushed back the bars, opening the gates,  
and gave a saving light for those men on the run.  
Then Apollo charged out to meet Achilles,  
seeking to protect the Trojans from destruction,  
[650] as they ran back, straight for the high-walled city,  
suffering from thirst and dusty from the plain.  
Still in a rage, Achilles chased them with his spear,  
his heart filled with strong and unrelenting fury,  
still eager to win glory. At that moment,  
Achaean's sons would have captured Troy's high gates,  
if Phoebus Apollo had not intervened,  
by stirring up noble, godlike Agenor,  
Antenor's son, a powerful warrior. In his heart  
Apollo instilled courage and then stood by him,  
leaning against the oak tree, covered in thick mist,  
[660] so he might ward off the heavy hand of Death.  
When Agenor saw Achilles, sacker of cities,  
he made a stand, his heart pondering many things,  
as he stood there. In his agitation, he spoke out,  
addressing his proud heart:

“Here's trouble!  
If I rush away before Achilles  
where other men are running in their panic,  
he'll catch me, then kill me as a coward.  
But what if I let Achilles, son of Peleus,  
[670] drive them on, then dash away myself  
to some other place, distant from the wall,  
out in the Trojan plain, until I reach  
Ida's spurs, where there's a bush to hide in?  
When evening comes, I could wash in the river,  
get rid of all the sweat and then go back,  
return to Ilion. But why's my fond heart  
debating all these options? He might see me,  
as I moved off from the city for the plain,  
and catch me with a sprint of his swift feet.  
[680] I'd no longer have a chance to get away

from death, my fate. The man is really strong,  
much more powerful than other men.  
What if I go out to stand against him  
before the city? My sharp bronze, I think,  
can slice up his flesh, too. He's got one life,  
no more. And men say that he's a mortal,  
although Zeus, Cronos' son, gives him glory."  
Saying this, Agenor stood up straight and waited,  
the heart within him prepared for war and keen to fight.

[690] Just as a leopard emerges from thick undergrowth,  
to face a hunter, with no fear in its heart,  
no hint of flight when it hears the baying hounds—  
even if the hunter first hits it with his spear,  
the wounded beast won't lose its fighting spirit,  
until it closes with him or is killed itself—  
that's how godlike Agenor, noble Antenor's son,  
refused to run before fighting Achilles.  
Holding his round shield in front of him, he aimed his spear  
directly at Achilles, then shouted out:

[700] "Glorious Achilles, I'm sure you've set your heart  
on destroying the city which proud Trojans hold  
this very day. What foolishness! Much pain  
must still be suffered in that enterprise.  
We who live in Troy are men with courage,  
and there are lots of us. We'll guard Ilion,  
in front of our dear parents, wives, and sons.  
Here you'll meet your doom, though as a fighter,  
you are so formidable and brave."

Agenor spoke.

Then he threw his sharp spear from his massive hand.

[710] He hit Achilles on the shin, below the knee.  
The spear did not miss its man. The armour on his leg,  
newly hammered tin, gave out a fearful clang.  
But the spear just struck the metal and bounced off,  
without going through. The god's gift had protected him.



Then Peleus' son, in turn, went for godlike Agenor.  
But Apollo didn't let him win the glory there.  
He snatched Agenor up, hid him in dense mist,  
then sent him quietly away from battle.  
After that, he led the son of Peleus astray,  
[720] far from Trojan soldiers. The far shooter tricked him,  
by standing right before Achilles' feet, looking  
exactly like Agenor. Achilles charged off  
in pursuit, chasing Apollo out across the plain,  
past wheat fields, turning him towards the river,  
the deep, swirling Scamander. Apollo raced on,  
only a little bit ahead, using his cunning  
to trick Achilles with his pace, so he'd think  
he could catch up. Meanwhile, the other Trojans  
fleeing in confusion, came crowding in the city,  
[730] throngs of them, cramming the gates, happy to be there.  
They didn't dare to wait outside the wall, to check  
who made it back and who had perished in the fight.  
They streamed into the city in an eager rush,  
all whose legs and knees had brought them safely in.

## Book Twenty Two The Death of Hector

*[The Trojans retreat into the city; Apollo reveals his deception to Achilles; Hector remains outside the gates; Priam and Hecuba appeal to Hector to come inside the walls; Hector debates what to do, then panics and runs away; Achilles chases Hector around Troy; the gods look on; Zeus holds up his golden scales; Athena intervenes to advise Achilles; Athena takes on the form of Deiphobus to get Hector to fight Achilles; Hector and Achilles fight; Hector is killed; the Achaeans mutilate Hector and Achilles dishonors the corpse; Priam and Hecuba see the corpse of Hector being dragged past the city; Andromache reacts to the sight of her dead husband]*

At this point, the Trojans, having fled like deer,  
spread out through the city, resting by its sturdy walls,  
drying their sweat and taking drink to slake their thirst.  
Meanwhile, Achaeans were moving to the walls,  
their shields held up against their shoulders. But Hector  
was forced by deadly Fate to stay right where he stood  
in front of Ilion, outside the Scaean Gate.

Then Phoebus Apollo spoke out to Achilles:

“Son of Peleus, why are you, a mere human,  
[10] running so hard in an attempt to catch me,  
an immortal god? You’re still ignorant,  
it seems, of the fact that I’m a god.  
You keep coming at me with such anger.  
But what about your battle with those Trojans  
you put to flight? They’re crowding in the city,  
while you chase off on a diversion here.  
But you will never kill me. I’m not someone  
whose fate it is to die.”

Swift-footed Achilles,  
in a towering fury, then answered Apollo:

“You’ve tricked me,  
[20] god who shoots from far away, deadliest

of all the gods. You've turned me from the wall.  
Otherwise, before reaching Ilion,  
many men would have sunk their teeth in earth.  
You've robbed me of great glory, saving them  
with ease, since you don't have to be afraid  
of future retribution. I'd make you pay,  
if only I were powerful enough."

With these words, Achilles set off towards the city,  
his heart full, charging on like a prize-winning horse  
[30] pulling a chariot at full speed across the plain  
with little effort—that's how fast Achilles ran,  
sprinting with his legs and feet.

Meanwhile, old Priam  
was the first to catch sight of Achilles, as he dashed  
across the plain, blazing like that star which comes  
at harvest time—its light shines out more brightly  
than any of the countless lights in night's dark sky.  
People call this star by the name Orion's Dog.  
It's the brightest of the stars, but an unwelcome sign,  
for it brings wretched mortals many fevers.  
[40] The bronze on Achilles' chest glittered like that star,  
as he ran forward. With a cry, old Priam  
struck his head with his hand, then, reaching up,  
with many groans, he called out, pleading with his son,  
who was still standing there before the gates,  
firmly resolved to fight Achilles. The old man,  
hands outstretched, appealed to Hector's sense of pity:

"Hector, my dear son, don't stand out there alone,  
facing that man with no one else to help you,  
or you will quickly meet your death, slaughtered  
[50] by Peleus' son, who's much more powerful.  
Don't be obstinate. If only the gods  
would love Achilles just as much as I do,  
then dogs and vultures would soon gnaw at him

as he lay there. And then my heart might shed  
its dreadful sorrow, for he's taken from me  
many valiant sons. Some he's butchered.  
Others he's sold in islands far away.  
Right now, I can't see two of my young sons,  
Polydorus and Lycaon, among those  
[60] who've gathered with the Trojans in the city,  
both delivered to me from Laothoe,  
queen among women. If they're still alive  
in the Achaean camp, we'll ransom them,  
with bronze and gold we have stored up at home.  
For famous ancient Altes gave many gifts  
when he gave me his daughter. But if they're dead  
and already in that dwelling place of Hades,  
that's a sorrow to my heart, their mother's, too,  
their parents. But that's a briefer sorrow  
[70] for other people, unless you die as well,  
slaughtered by Achilles. Come here, my child,  
inside the walls, so you can help to save  
Trojan men and women. Don't give that man,  
that son of Peleus, great glory. He'll take  
your own dear life. Have pity on me, too.  
Though full of misery, I still can feel.  
Father Zeus will kill me with a cruel fate  
on the threshold of old age, once I've seen  
so many dreadful things—my sons butchered,  
[80] my daughters hauled away, their houses ransacked,  
their little children tossed down on the ground  
in this murderous war, my daughters-in-law  
led off captive in hard Achaean hands.  
In the end, I'll be ripped by ravenous dogs,  
in front of my own doors when some man strikes me  
with his sharp bronze or throws his spear in me,  
robbing my limbs of life—the same dogs I raised  
at home beside my table to guard the doors.  
They'll drink my blood, then lie there at the gates,  
[90] their hearts gone mad. When a young man dies in war

lying there cut down by sharp bronze, that's all right.  
Though dead, he shows us his nobility.  
But when the dogs disfigure shamefully  
an old man, chewing his grey head, his beard,  
his sexual organs, that's the saddest thing  
we wretched mortals see."

As the old man spoke,  
his hands tugged his grey hair and pulled it from his head.  
But he could not sway Hector's heart. Beside Priam,  
Hector's mother wept. Then she undid her robe,  
[100] and with her hands pushed out her breasts, shedding tears.  
She cried out, calling him—her words had wings:

"Hector, my child, respect and pity me.  
If I ever gave these breasts to soothe you,  
remember that, dear child. Protect yourself  
against your enemy inside these walls.  
Don't stand out there to face him. Stubborn man,  
if he kills you, I'll never lay you out  
on your death bed or mourn for you, my child,  
my dearest offspring—nor will your fair wife.  
[110] Far away from us, beside Achaean ships,  
their swift dogs will eat you."

So these two, both crying, spoke to their dear son,  
pleading with him incessantly. But Hector's heart  
would not budge. He stood awaiting huge Achilles,  
who was getting closer. Just as a mountain snake  
waits for some man right by its lair, after eating  
poison herbs so that a savage anger grips him,  
as he coils beside his den with a fearful glare—  
that's how Hector's dauntless heart would not retreat.  
[120] But then he leaned his bright shield up against the wall  
where it jutted out, and, with a groan, spoke up,  
addressing his courageous heart:

“What do I do?  
If I go through the gates, inside that wall,  
Polydamas will be the first to blame me,  
for he told me last night to lead the Trojans  
back into the city, when many died,  
once godlike Achilles rejoined the fight.  
But I didn’t listen. If I’d done so,  
things would have been much better. As it is,  
[130] my own foolishness has wiped out our army.  
Trojan men will make me feel ashamed—  
so will Trojan women in their trailing gowns.  
I’m afraid someone inferior to me  
may say,

‘Hector, trusting his own power,  
destroyed his people.’

That’s what they’ll say.  
For me it would be a great deal better  
to meet Achilles man to man, kill him,  
and go home, or get killed before the city,  
dying in glory. But what would happen,  
[140] if I set my bossed shield and heavy helmet  
to one side, leaning my spear against the wall,  
and went out to meet noble Achilles,  
just as I am, promising that Helen,  
along with all the goods shipped here to Troy  
by Alexander in his hollow ships,  
the origin of our hostilities,  
would be given to the sons of Atreus,  
to take away with them—in addition,  
to give the Achaeans an equal share  
[150] of all this city holds. Then later on,  
I’d get Trojan elders to swear on oath  
that not a single thing would be concealed,  
that all would be divided equally,  
every treasure our lovely city owns.

But why's my dear heart having this debate?  
If I went out to meet him in that way,  
he'd show me no respect. He wouldn't pity me.  
Once I'd set aside my armour, he'd kill me  
on the spot, unarmed, like some woman.

[160] There's no way I can bargain with him now,  
like a boy and girl chatting by some rock  
or oak tree, as they flirt with one another.  
No, it's better to clash in battle right away.  
We'll see which one wins victory from Zeus."

That's what Hector thought as he stood there waiting.  
But Achilles was coming closer, like Enyalios,  
the warrior god of battle with the shining helmet.  
On his right shoulder he waved his dreadful spear  
made of Pelian ash. The bronze around him glittered  
[170] like a blazing fire or rising sun. At that moment,  
as he watched, Hector began to shake in fear.  
His courage gone, he could no longer stand there.  
Terrified, he started running, leaving the gate.  
Peleus' son went after him, sure of his speed on foot.  
Just as a mountain falcon, the fastest creature  
of all the ones which fly, swoops down easily  
on a trembling pigeon as it darts off in fear,  
the hawk speeding after it with piercing cries,  
heart driving it to seize the prey—in just that way  
[180] Achilles in his fury raced ahead. Hector ran  
under the walls of Troy, limbs working feverishly.  
They ran on past the lookout and the wind-swept fig tree,  
some distance from the wall, along the wagon track.  
They reached the two fair-flowing well springs  
which feed swirling Scamander's stream. From one of them  
hot water flows, and out of it steam rises up,  
as if there were a fire burning. From the other,  
cold water comes, as cold as hail or freezing snow  
or melting ice, even in summer. By these springs  
[190] stood wide tubs for washing, made of beautiful stone,

where, in peace time, before Achaea's sons arrived,  
Trojan wives and lovely daughters used to wash  
their brightly coloured clothing. The men raced past there,  
one in full flight, the other one pursuing him.  
The man running off in front was a brave warrior,  
but the man going after him was greater. They ran fast,  
for this was no contest over sacrificial beasts,  
the usual prizes for a race. They were competing  
for horse-taming Hector's life. Just as some horses,  
[200] sure-footed, prize-winning creatures, make the turn  
around the post and race quickly as they strive to win  
some splendid prize—a tripod or a woman  
honouring a man that's died—that's how these two men raced,  
going three times round Priam's city on their sprinting feet.  
All the gods looked on. Among them the first one to speak  
was Zeus, father of the gods and men:

“What a sight!  
My eyes can see a fine man being pursued  
around the walls. How my heart pities Hector,  
who's often sacrificed to me, burning  
[210] many thighs of oxen on the crests  
of Ida with its many spurs and valleys,  
on the city heights, as well. And now,  
godlike Achilles is pursuing him  
on his quick feet round Priam's city. Come,  
you gods, think hard and offer your advice—  
do we wish to rescue him from death,  
or kill him now, for all his bravery,  
at the hands of Peleus' son, Achilles?”

Then Athena,  
goddess with the glittering eyes, replied to Zeus:

[220] “Father, lord of lightning and dark clouds,  
what are you saying? How can you want  
to snatch the man back from his wretched death.



He's mortal—his fate doomed him long ago.  
Well, do as you wish, but we other gods  
will not all approve your actions."

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered Athena:

"Cheer up, Tritogeneia, my dear child,  
I'm not saying how my heart intends to act.  
I want to please you. So you can do  
[230] whatever your mind tells you. Don't hold back."

Athena, who was already eager, was spurred on  
by Zeus' words. She rushed down from Olympus' peak.

Swift Achilles was still pressing Hector hard  
in that relentless chase. Just as in the mountains  
a hound startles from its cover some young deer,  
then goes after it through glens and valley gorges—  
and even if the fawn evades it for a while,  
cowering in some thicket, the dog tracks it down,  
always running till he finds it—that's how Hector  
[240] could not shake off the swift-footed son of Peleus.  
Every time he tried to dash for the Dardanian gates  
to get underneath the walls, so men on top  
could come to his assistance by hurling spears,  
Achilles would intercept him and turn him back  
towards the plain, always making sure he kept  
running a line between Hector and the city.  
Like a dream in which a man cannot catch someone  
who's running off and the other can't escape,  
just as the first man can't catch up—that's how  
[250] Achilles, for all his speed, could not reach Hector,  
while Hector was unable to evade Achilles.  
But how could Hector have escaped death's fatal blow,  
if Apollo had not for one last time approached,  
to give him strength and make his legs run faster?  
Godlike Achilles, with a shake of his head,

prevented his own troops from shooting Hector  
with their lethal weapons, in case some other man  
hit Hector, robbed him of the glory, and left him  
to come too late. But when they ran past those springs  
[260] the fourth time, Father Zeus raised his golden scales,  
setting there two fatal lots for death's long sorrow,  
one for Achilles, one for horse-taming Hector.  
Seizing it in the middle, Zeus raised his balance.  
Hector's fatal day sank, moving down to Hades.  
At once Phoebus Apollo abandoned him.  
Then Athena, goddess with the glittering eyes,  
came to Peleus' son. Standing close to him, she spoke—  
her words had wings:

“Glorious Achilles,  
beloved of Zeus, now I hope the two of us  
[270] will take great glory to Achaean ships,  
by killing Hector, for all his love of war.  
Now he can't escape us any longer,  
even though Apollo, the far shooter,  
suffers every torment, as he grovels  
before Father Zeus, who bears the aegis.  
Stay still now. Catch your breath. I'll go to Hector  
and convince him to turn and stand against you.”

Once Athena had said this, Achilles obeyed,  
rejoicing in his heart, as he stood there, leaning  
[280] on his bronze-tipped ash spear. Athena left him.  
She came to Hector in the form of Deïphobus,  
with his tireless voice and shape. Standing beside him,  
she spoke—her words had wings:

“My brother,  
swift Achilles is really harassing you,  
with his fast running around Priam's city  
in this pursuit. Come, we'll both stand here,  
stay put, and beat off his attack.”

Then Hector of the shining helmet answered her:

“Deiphobus, in the past you’ve always been  
[290] the brother whom I loved the most by far  
of children born to Hecuba and Priam.  
I think I now respect you even more,  
since you have dared to come outside the wall,  
to help me, when you saw me in distress,  
while the others all remained inside.”

Goddess Athena with her glittering eyes replied:

“Dear brother, my father, my noble mother,  
and my comrades begged me repeatedly  
to stay there. They all so fear Achilles.  
[300] But here inside me my heart felt the pain  
of bitter anguish. Now, let’s go straight for him.  
Let’s fight and not hold back our spears,  
so we can see if Achilles kills us both,  
then takes the bloodstained trophies to the ships,  
or whether you’ll destroy him on your spear.”

With these words, Athena seduced him forward.  
When they’d approached each other, at close quarters,  
great Hector of the shining helmet spoke out first:

“I’ll no longer try to run away from you,  
[310] son of Peleus, as I did before, going  
three times in flight around Priam’s great city.  
I lacked the courage then to fight with you,  
as you attacked. But my heart prompts me now  
to stand against you face to face once more,  
whether I kill you, or you kill me.  
So come here. Let’s call on gods to witness,  
for they’re the best ones to observe our pact,  
to supervise what we two agree on.

If Zeus grants me the strength to take your life,  
[320] I'll not abuse your corpse in any way.

I'll strip your celebrated armour off,  
Achilles, then give the body back again  
to the Achaeans. And you'll do the same."

Swift-footed Achilles, with a scowl, replied:

"Hector, don't talk to me of our agreements.  
That's idiotic, like a faithful promise  
between men and lions. Wolves and lambs  
don't share a common heart—they always sense  
a mutual hatred for each other.

[330] In just that way, it's not possible for us,  
for you and me, to be friends, or, indeed,  
for there to be sworn oaths between us,  
till one or other of us falls, glutting Ares,  
warrior with the bull's hide shield, on blood.  
You'd best remember all your fighting skills.  
Now you must declare yourself a spearman,  
a fearless warrior. You've got no escape.  
Soon Pallas Athena will destroy you  
on my spear. Right now you'll pay me back,  
[340] the full price of those sorrows I went through  
when you slaughtered my companions."

With these words, he hefted his long-shadowed spear,  
then hurled it. However, anticipating the throw,  
splendid Hector saw it coming and evaded it  
by crouching down, so the bronze spear flew over him,  
then struck the ground. But Pallas Athena grabbed it  
and returned it to Achilles, without Hector,  
that shepherd of his people, seeing what she'd done.  
Hector then called out to Peleus' noble son:

[350] "You missed, godlike Achilles. So it seems  
you learned nothing from Zeus about my death,

although you said you had. That was just talk.  
You were telling lies to make me fear you,  
so I might forget my strength and courage.  
Well, with your spear you won't be striking me  
in my back as I run away in fear.  
You'll have to drive it through my charging chest,  
as I come right at you, if a god permits.  
Now, see if you can cope with my bronze point.  
[360] I hope you get this whole spear in your flesh.  
This war would then be easier on Trojans  
with you dead, for you're their greatest danger.

With these words, Hector balanced his long-shadowed spear,  
then threw it. It struck the shield of Peleus' son,  
right in the centre. That spear didn't miss its mark.  
But it bounced some distance off the shield. Hector,  
angry that the spear had flown from his hand and missed,  
stood dismayed, for he had no substitute ash spear.  
So he shouted out, calling to Deïphobus,  
[370] who carried a white shield, asking him with a yell  
to pass him his long spear. But Deïphobus  
was nowhere to be seen. Then Hector in his heart  
saw everything so clearly—he said:

“This is it, then.  
The gods are summoning me to my death.  
I thought warrior Deïphobus was close by.  
But he's inside the walls, and Athena  
has deceived me. Now evil death is here,  
right beside me, not somewhere far away.  
There's no escape. For a long time now,  
[380] this must have been what Zeus desired,  
and Zeus' son, the god who shoots from far,  
and all those who willingly gave me help  
in earlier days. So now I meet my fate.  
Even so, let me not die ingloriously  
without a fight, but in some great action

which those men yet to come will hear about.”

Hector finished speaking. He pulled out his sharp sword,  
that strong and massive weapon hanging on his thigh,  
gathered himself, then swooped like some high-flying eagle  
[390] plummeting to the plains down through the murky clouds  
to seize a tender lamb or cowering rabbit—  
that’s how Hector charged, brandishing his sharp sword.  
Achilles attacked, as well, heart full of savage anger,  
covering his chest with that richly decorated shield,  
his shining four-ridged helmet nodding on his head,  
the golden plumes Hephaestus had set there  
shimmering around the crest. Just like that star  
which stands out the loveliest among all those  
in the heavenly night sky—the star of evening—  
[400] that’s how the sharp point then glittered on the spear  
Achilles hefted in his right hand, intent on  
killing noble Hector. He inspected his fine skin,  
to see where it was vulnerable to a blow.  
But Hector’s entire body was protected  
by that beautiful armour he had stripped off  
powerful Patroclus, once he’d killed him,  
except for that opening where the collar bones  
separate the neck and shoulders, at the gullet,  
where a man’s life is most effectively destroyed.  
[410] As Hector charged, noble Achilles struck him there,  
driving the spear point through his tender neck.  
But the heavy bronze on that ash spear did not cut  
his windpipe, so he could still address Achilles  
and reply to him. Hector fell down in the dust.  
Lord Achilles then cried out in triumph:

“Hector,  
I suppose you thought you could safely strip  
Patroclus, without giving me a thought,  
since I was far away. That was foolish!  
By our hollow ships he’d left me behind,

[420] a much greater man, to take out my revenge.

I've drained strength from your limbs—now dogs and birds  
will tear you into miserable pieces,  
while Achaeans are burying Patroclus.”

His strength fading, Hector of the shining helmet  
answered Achilles:

“By your life, I beg you,  
by your knees, your parents—don't let dogs eat me  
by Achaean ships. No, you should accept  
all the bronze and gold you might desire,  
gifts my father and lady mother give you,  
[430] if you'll send my body home again,  
so Trojans and Trojans' wives can bury me,  
with all the necessary funeral rites.”

Scowling at Hector, swift-footed Achilles then replied:

“Don't whine to me, you dog, about my knees  
or parents. I wish I had the heart and strength  
to carve you up and eat you raw myself  
for what you've done to me. So there's no one  
who'll keep the dogs from going at your head,  
not even if they bring here and weigh out  
[440] a ransom ten or twenty times as much,  
with promises of more, or if Priam,  
son of Dardanus, says he'll pay your weight  
in gold. Not even then will your mother  
set you on a funeral bed and there lament  
the son she bore. Instead, the dogs and birds  
will eat you up completely.”

Then, as he died,  
Hector of the shining helmet said to Achilles:

“I know you well. I recognize in you

what I expected— you'd not be convinced.  
[450] For your heart and mind are truly iron.  
But think of this—I may bring down on you  
the anger of the gods that very day  
when Paris and Phoebus Apollo,  
in spite of all your courage, slaughter you  
beside the Scaean Gate.”

As Hector spoke,  
death's final end slid over him. His life slipped out,  
flying off to Hades, mourning his fate to have to leave  
such youthful manliness. Over dead Hector,  
godlike Achilles then cried out:

“Die there!  
[460] As for my own death, I accept it  
whenever Zeus and the immortal gods  
see fit to bring it to me.”

Saying this,  
he pulled his bronze spear from the corpse, set it aside,  
and stripped the blood-stained armour from the shoulders.  
Then the rest of Achaea's sons came running up.  
They gazed at Hector's stature, his handsome body.  
All the men who came up to the corpse stabbed it,  
looking at each other, saying:

“Look here,  
it's easier for us to deal with Hector now  
[470] than when his fire burned our ships.”

With words like this, they came up close and wounded Hector.  
When swift-footed godlike Achilles had stripped the corpse,  
standing among Achaeans, he spoke these winged words:

“My friends, leaders and rulers of the Argives,  
since gods have granted that this man be killed,



who's done much damage, more than all the rest,  
 let's test these Trojan by attacking them  
 with armed excursions round their city,  
 to see what they intend—whether they'll leave  
 [480] their lofty city now that Hector's dead,  
 or stay there, still keen to fight without him.  
 But why's my fond heart discussing this?  
 By our ships lies a dead man—unwept,  
 unburied—Patroclus. I'll not forget him,  
 as long as I remain among the living,  
 as long as my dear limbs have motion.  
 If down in Hades men forget their dead,  
 even there I will remember my companion.  
 Come, young Achaeans, sing a victory song,  
 [490] as we're returning to our hollow ships.  
 We'll take the body. We've won great glory,  
 killing noble Hector—Trojans prayed to him  
 in their own city, as if he were a god."

Achilles finished. Then on noble Hector's corpse  
 he carried out a monstrous act. He cut through  
 the tendons behind both feet, from heel to ankle,  
 threaded them with ox-hide thongs, and then tied these  
 onto his chariot, leaving the head to drag behind.  
 He climbed up in his chariot, brought on the splendid armour,  
 [500] then lashed his horses. They sped off eagerly,  
 dragging Hector. A dust cloud rose above him,  
 his dark hair spread out round him, and Hector's head,  
 once so handsome, was covered by the dust, for Zeus  
 had given him to his enemies to dishonour  
 in his own native land. So all his head grew dirty.

When she saw her son, his mother pulled her hair,  
 threw off her shining veil, and began to shriek.  
 His dear father gave a pitiful groan. Around them,  
 people were overwhelmed with wailing and laments  
 [510] throughout the city. It was as if all Ilion

were engulfed in flames, all over the summit  
of that towering rock. The people then had trouble  
restraining the old man in his frantic grief,  
his desperate wish to go through the Dardanian gate.  
He begged them all, grovelling in the dirt, calling out,  
naming each of them:

“My dear friends,  
leave me alone. I know you care for me,  
but let me leave the city by myself,  
go to the Achaean ships, then beg him,  
[520] that ruthless man, that violent monster.  
He may feel shame in front of comrades.  
He may pity my old age. For he, too,  
has a father, one just like me, Peleus,  
who sired and raised him to butcher Trojans.  
On me especially he’s loaded sorrow,  
more than on any other man. He’s killed  
so many of my sons, all in their prime.  
But, despite that sorrow, I don’t grieve  
for all of them as much as I do for one,  
[530] for Hector. The sharp pain I feel for him  
will bring me down to the house of Hades.  
If only he had died here in my arms,  
we could have had our fill of weeping,  
of lamentation—me and his mother,  
who gave birth to him, to her own sorrow.”

As he said this, Priam wept. The townsfolk mourned.  
Hecuba led Trojan women in their loud laments:

“My child, how can I live with this misery,  
such wretched sorrow, now that you are dead?  
[540] You were my pride and joy, night and day,  
and in the city, a blessing to us all,  
to Trojan men and women in the state,  
who received you like a god. To them

you were great glory when you were alive.  
Now Death and Fate have overtaken you.”

Hecuba spoke through her tears. But so far Hector’s wife  
knew nothing of all this, for no messenger  
had come to tell her clearly that her husband  
had remained outside the gates. She was in a room  
[550] inside their lofty home, weaving purple fabric  
for a double cloak, embroidering flowers on it.  
She’d told her well-groomed servants in the house  
to place a large tripod on the fire, so Hector  
could have a hot bath when he came home from battle.  
Poor fool! She’d no idea that a long way from that bath,  
Athena with the glittering eyes had killed Hector  
at Achilles’ hands. Then she heard the wailing,  
laments coming from the walls. Her limbs began to shake.  
The shuttle fell out of her hands onto the floor.  
[560] She spoke out once more to her well-groomed housemaids:

“Come here you two and follow me. Let’s see  
what’s happened. For I’ve just caught the sound  
of my husband’s noble mother’s voice. In my chest,  
my heart leapt in my mouth, my lower limbs  
are numb. Something disastrous has taken place  
to Priam’s children. I hope reports like these  
never reach my ears, but I’m dreadfully afraid  
that godlike Achilles may have cut off  
my bold Hector from the city, driving him  
[570] into the plain all by himself, then ended  
that fearful courage which possessed him.  
He’s never one to hold back or remain  
within the crowd of men—he always moves ahead,  
well in front, second to none in fury.”

Saying this, she hurried through the house, heart pounding,  
like some mad woman, accompanied by servants.  
Once she reached the wall crowded with men, she stopped,

stood there, and looked out from the wall. She saw Hector  
as he was being dragged past before the city,  
[580] with swift horses pulling him ruthlessly away  
to the Achaeans' hollow ships. At the sight,  
black night eclipsed her eyes. She fell back in a faint,  
gasping her life away. From her head she threw off  
her shining headdress—frontlet, cap, woven headband,  
the veil that golden Aphrodite gave her  
when Hector of the shining helmet led her  
from Eëtion's house as his wife, once he'd paid  
an immense price for his bride. Around her  
stood her husband's sisters and his brother's wives.  
[590] They all helped pick her up, almost dead from shock.  
When she'd recovered and her spirit had returned,  
she started her lament. In a sobbing voice,  
she cried out to the Trojan women:

“Ah, Hector,  
how miserable I am. We both seem born  
to a single fate, you in Priam's house  
in Troy, and I in Eëtion's home  
in wooded Thebe. He raised me from childhood,  
an ill-fated father and a child who's doomed.  
How I wish he'd never fathered me!  
[600] Now you go to Hades' house deep underground,  
abandoning me to bitter sorrow,  
widowed in our home. Our son's an infant,  
born to wretched parents, you and me.  
No good will come to him from you, Hector,  
now that you're dead, nor will he help you.  
Even if he gets through this dreadful war  
with the Achaeans, his life will always be  
a constant pain and sorrow. For other men  
will take away his lands. The day a child  
[610] becomes an orphan all his friends are gone.  
He cannot hold up his head for anyone,  
his cheeks are wet from crying. In his need,

the child goes to his father's comrades,  
plucking one man's cloak, another's tunic.  
Some pity him and then hold out a cup,  
letting him for a moment wet his lips,  
without moistening his palate. Another man  
whose parents are still living pushes him  
out of the feast, hitting him with his fist,  
insulting him:

[620] 'Go away, just as you are.  
You've no father at our feast.'

So, in tears,  
the child returns to his widowed mother.  
That child is our son Astyanax, who,  
in earlier days on his father's knees,  
ate only marrow and rich fat from sheep.  
When sleep overpowered him and he'd stopped  
his childish play, he'd lie in his own bed,  
in his nurse's arms—on a soft couch,  
his heart full of happy dreams. But now,  
[630] now that he's missing his dear father,  
he'll suffer much, our dear son Astyanax,  
Lord of the City. Trojans called him this,  
because you alone kept their gates safe from harm,  
their towering walls. But now by the beaked ships,  
far from your parents, wriggling worms will eat you,  
once dogs have had their fill of your bare corpse.  
In your home are lovely well-made clothes,  
produced by women's hands. In a blazing fire  
I'll burn them all. They're no use to you,  
since you can't wear them. So I'll honour you,  
on behalf of Trojan men and women."

Saying this, she wept. The women added their laments.

Book Twenty Three  
The Funeral Games for Patroclus

*[Achilles keeps his troops together to mourn Patroclus; Patroclus' ghost visits Achilles, requesting a burial; Achaeans gather wood and prepare Patroclus' funeral pyre; Achilles cuts the hair dedicated to the river Spercheus; Achilles sacrifices animals and humans on Patroclus' pyre; Achilles gets the help of the winds to get the fire to light under Patroclus; Achilles brings out prizes for the Funeral Games, which then take place in series: the chariot race, boxing, wrestling, foot-racing, armed duelling, throwing a weight, archery, and spear throwing; Achilles awards Agamemnon the prize for the last event without any contest]*

Meanwhile, as Trojans were lamenting in the city,  
Achaeans reached their ships beside the Hellespont.  
There they scattered, each man going to his own ship.  
But Achilles didn't let his Myrmidons disband.  
He spoke out to his warrior companions:  
"Fast-riding Myrmidons, trusty comrades,  
let's not loose our sure-footed horses yet,  
untying them from their chariots. We must go  
with horse and chariot up to Patroclus,  
[10] to mourn for him. For that's a dead man's right.  
Once we've had our fill of sorrowful tears,  
we'll unyoke our horses, then all eat here."  
At these words, they all began their group lament,  
led by Achilles. Three times around the body  
they drove their well-groomed horses, mourning as they went.  
Thetis stirred up in them a strong desire to weep.  
Their tears made the sands wet, men's armour, too,  
for they were mourning the loss of a great warrior,  
who'd made men flee. Peleus' son led their loud lament,  
[20] placing his man-killing hands on his comrade's chest:  
"Rest in peace, Patroclus, even though  
you're in Hades house, for I'm completing here  
all I promised you before—to drag in Hector,  
then give him to the dogs to eat up raw,  
and cut the throats of twelve young Trojans,  
splendid children, on your funeral pyre,

in my rage that you've been slaughtered.”  
He finished. Then he continued to dishonour  
noble Hector, stretching his body out face down  
[30] in the dirt, beside the bier of Menoetius' son.  
Then each man took off his glittering bronze armour.  
They untied their loud-neighing horses and sat down,  
thousands of them, by swift-footed Achilles' ship.  
He prepared a funeral feast to ease their spirits.  
Many sleek oxen bellowed underneath the knife,  
as they were butchered. Many sheep, bleating goats,  
and white-tusked pigs rich in fat were laid out  
to roast over Hephaestus' fires. All around the corpse,  
blood ran so thick men scooped it up in cupfuls.  
[40] Then Achaean leaders led the swift-footed prince,  
son of Peleus, to lord Agamemnon.  
They had trouble convincing him to go there—  
his heart was still so angry for his comrade.  
Reaching Agamemnon's hut, they issued orders  
for clear-voiced heralds to heat up a large cauldron,  
to see if they could persuade Peleus' son to wash,  
to rinse off the spattered blood. In his stubbornness,  
he refused to do that, swearing this oath:

“By Zeus,  
highest and most excellent of all gods,  
[50] it's not right that water touch my head,  
until I've laid Patroclus on his fire,  
piled up a burial mound, and shaved my hair,  
since such grief will never reach my heart  
a second time, not while I still remain  
among the living. But for the moment,  
let's agree to dine, though I hate to eat.  
In the morning, Agamemnon, king of men,  
you must urge men to gather wood, arrange  
all things required for a man who's died,  
[60] as he goes below to murky darkness,  
so tireless fires can cremate him quickly

and remove him from our sight. Then soldiers  
can resume their duties.”

Achilles spoke.

They all listened to him and readily agreed.

Men all rushed out, prepared a meal, and dined,  
eating to their heart’s content and sharing equally.

Once they’d satisfied their need for food and drink,  
each man returned to his own hut to get some rest.

But Peleus’ son lay moaning loudly on the shore,  
[70] beside the crashing sea, with many Myrmidons,  
in an open spot, where waves washed up on shore.  
When sleep took hold of him and eased his aching heart  
by sweetly flowing round him—for his splendid limbs  
were tired out from chasing after Hector  
by wind-swept Ilion—then poor Patroclus  
came to him as a ghost, looking exactly like him  
in all respects—in stature, handsome eyes, and voice.  
He stood there, above Achilles’ head, body covered  
with the same clothes he used to wear over his skin.  
The ghost spoke to Achilles, saying:

[80] “You’re asleep, Achilles.

You’ve forgotten me. While I was alive,  
you never did neglect me. But now I’m dead.  
So bury me as quickly as you can.

Then I can pass through the gates of Hades.  
The spirits, ghosts of the dead, keep me away.  
They don’t let me join them past the river.

So I wander aimlessly round Hades’ home  
by its wide gates. Give me your hand, I beg you,  
for I’ll never come again from Hades,

[90] once you’ve given me what’s due, my funeral fire.

We’ll no more sit together making plans,  
separated from our dear companions.  
The jaws of dreadful Fate are gaping for me,  
ready to consume me—my destiny



from the day that I was born. You, too,  
godlike Achilles, you have your own fate,  
to die under the walls of wealthy Troy.  
I'll say one more thing, one last request,  
if you will listen. Achilles, don't lay your bones  
[100] apart from mine. Let them remain together,  
just as they were when we grew up in your home,  
once Menoetius brought me as a youngster  
into your land from Opoeis, for I'd done  
a dreadful murder on that day I killed  
Amphidamas' son, in my foolishness.  
I didn't mean to, but I was enraged  
over some game of dice. Horseman Peleus  
welcomed me into his home, raised me  
with love, then made me your attendant.  
[110] So let the same container hold our bones,  
that gold two-handled jar your mother gave you."  
Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:  
"Dear friend, why have you come to me here,  
telling me everything I need to do?  
I'll carry out all these things for you,  
attend to your request. But come closer.  
Let's hold each other one short moment more,  
enjoying a shared lament together."  
Saying this, Achilles reached out with his arms,  
[120] but he grasped nothing. The spirit had departed,  
going underground like vapour, muttering faintly.  
Achilles jumped up in amazement, clapped his hands,  
and then spoke out in sorrow:

"How sad!  
It seems that even in Hades' house,  
some spirit or ghost remains, but our being  
is not there at all. For this entire night  
the ghost of poor Patroclus stood beside me,  
weeping, lamenting, asking me to do things,  
in every detail amazingly like him."

- [130] Achilles' words stirred the desire to keep mourning  
in all of them. When rose-fingered Dawn appeared,  
they were still lamenting by that cheerless corpse.  
Then mighty Agamemnon sent out men and mules,  
from huts in every quarter, to gather wood.  
The man who supervised was Meriones,  
brave attendant to kind Idomeneus. They set off,  
grasping axes to chop wood and well-woven rope.  
The mules went on ahead. The men kept going,  
up and down the slopes, sometimes tracking sideways,  
[140] sometimes doubling back, till they reached Ida's foothills  
with their many springs. At once they started working—  
cutting high-branched oak trees with their long-edged bronze.  
Men worked hard, falling each tree with a mighty crash.  
Achaean then split the trees into convenient lengths,  
tied logs behind the mules, whose feet ploughed up the ground  
as they strained through thick underbrush towards the plain.  
Woodsmen all carried logs as well, under orders  
from Meriones, attendant to kind Idomeneus.  
Men threw these logs down in a line along the shore,  
[150] where Achilles planned a massive burial mound  
for Patroclus and himself. When they'd piled up  
immense amounts of wood on every side, they sat  
all together there and waited. Then Achilles  
quickly told war-loving Myrmidons to dress in bronze,  
ordering each man to get his horses harnessed  
in their chariots. They leapt up to put on armour.  
The warriors and charioteers climbed in their chariots  
and moved out first. Then came the men on foot  
in their thousands. In the middle, his companions  
[160] bore Patroclus, whose corpse they covered with the hair  
they'd cut from their own heads and thrown onto the body.  
Godlike Achilles came behind them, cradling  
Patroclus' head and grieving. For he was sending  
down to Hades' home a comrade without equal.  
When they reached the spot Achilles chose for them,  
they set the body down and quickly piled up wood

as he directed. Then swift-footed lord Achilles  
thought of something. Standing some distance from the pyre,  
he cut a lock of his own fair hair, one he'd grown  
[170] as a rich offering to the river Spercheus.  
Looking out over the wine-dark sea, he spoke out  
in passionate distress:

“Spercheus, my father Peleus  
promised you that, once I came back home  
to my dear native land, I'd cut my hair  
for you, then make a holy sacrifice,  
offering up fifty uncastrated rams  
to your waters, where you have your own estate  
and fragrant altars. That oath was useless.  
It's what the old man swore, but you failed  
[180] to bring about what he desired. So now,  
since I'll not be returning home again,  
let me give this lock to warrior Patroclus  
to carry with him.”

Having said these words,  
Achilles placed his hair in the hands of his dear comrade,  
stirring up in each of them desire to lament.  
Now they would have mourned till sunset, but Achilles  
soon got up and said to Agamemnon:

“Son of Atreus,  
Achaean troops will listen to your words  
more than to anyone. Men can grieve too much.  
[190] So dismiss them from the pyre for now.  
Tell them to prepare a meal. Those of us  
with special cause to mourn will take care of this.  
But let the leaders remain here with us.”  
When Agamemnon, king of men, heard these words,  
he quickly sent the troops off to their balanced ships.  
The chief mourners stayed behind. They piled up wood,  
making a square pyre, each side one hundred feet in length.

On that pyre's highest point they laid out the corpse,  
hearts full of sorrow. Then, in front of the pyre,  
[200] they flayed and made ready many sturdy sheep  
and shambling cattle with twisting horns. From all these,  
great-hearted Achilles took the fat, using it  
to cover up the corpse from head to foot, piling  
skinned carcasses around it. Next, he placed on top  
two-handled jars of oil and honey, leaning them  
against the bier. Then, crying with grief, Achilles  
threw four strong-necked horses quickly on the pyre.  
Patroclus had owned nine dogs who ate beside his table.  
Slitting the throats of two of them, Achilles  
[210] tossed them on the pyre. Then, with his bronze, he butchered  
those twelve noble sons of the courageous Trojans,  
his feelings grimly set on this atrocity.  
After that, he lit the fire to work its iron force  
and burn up everything. With a groan he called out,  
addressing his companion:

“Rest in peace,  
Patroclus, though you're in Hades' house.  
For I'm now completing everything  
I promised you before. Flames will burn  
twelve noble sons of great-hearted Trojans,  
[220] all cremated with you. But as for Hector,  
Priam's son, I'll not feed him to the fire,  
but to the dogs.”

Achilles made this threat,  
but dogs would not touch Hector. For Aphrodite,  
Zeus' daughter, kept them away, day and night.  
She covered him with immortal oil of roses,  
so Achilles would not wear away his body  
by dragging him around. Phoebus Apollo  
brought a dark cloud from the sky across the plain,  
shadowing the entire place where Hector lay,  
[230] to stop Sun's power from shrivelling up the flesh

on limbs and sinews.

But now the pyre of dead Patroclus  
would not catch fire. So swift-footed Achilles  
thought of something else. Standing away from the pyre,  
he prayed to the two winds—Boreas of the north,  
Zephyrus of the west—promising fine offerings.  
Pouring frequent libations from a golden cup,  
he begged them to come quickly to ignite the wood,  
so flames might incinerate the corpses quickly.  
Hearing his prayer, Iris at once took his message  
[240] to the winds, who were feasting all together  
in blustery West Wind's home. Iris raced up there,  
then stood on the stone threshold. Their eyes soon saw her.  
They all jumped up, each one inviting her to sit  
beside him. Iris declined their invitation,  
saying to them:

“I can't sit down. I must return  
to Oceanus' stream, back in the land  
of Ethiopians, where there's a sacrifice  
to the immortals. I'd like to be there  
for that sacred feast. But now Achilles  
[250] prays that North Wind and loud West Wind will come.  
He's promising you splendid offerings  
to stir the flames, so they burn up the pyre  
where Patroclus lies, whom all Achaea mourns.”  
After saying this, Iris left. The two winds rose up.  
With an astounding roar, driving clouds before them,  
they quickly stormed across the sea, whipping up waves  
with their howling breath. They came to fertile Troy,  
then fell upon that pyre. The fire crackled up  
into a prodigious blaze. All night long they howled,  
[260] blowing their shrill blasts together on the flames.  
And all night long with a two-handled cup in hand  
swift Achilles kept drawing wine from a golden bowl  
and pouring it upon the earth, soaking the ground

and calling on the spirit of poor Patroclus.  
Just as a father mourns his son, when he burns his bones,  
his newly married son, whose death brings parents  
dreadful sorrow—that's how Achilles kept crying then,  
as he burned his companion's bones, dragging himself  
round and round the pyre, lamenting endlessly.

[270] But at that hour when the Morning Star appears,  
announcing that light is coming to the earth,  
the star after which Dawn in her yellow robe  
moves out across the sea, by then the fire was dying.  
The flames went out. So the winds returned once more,  
back to their homes, going across the Thracian Sea,  
where a seething storm roared out. Then Peleus' son,  
moving away from the smouldering pyre, lay down  
exhausted. Sweet Sleep quickly slipped around him.  
But then the troops came up with Agamemnon,

[280] all together. The noise they made, as they marched in,  
woke up Achilles. Sitting bolt upright, he said:  
“Sons of Atreus and you other leaders  
of Achaean forces, you must first douse  
the smouldering pyre with gleaming wine—  
everything the powerful flames have touched.  
Then we'll collect bones from Patroclus,  
Menoetius' son, separating them with care  
from all the rest. They're easy to distinguish,  
for he lay in the centre of the pyre—

[290] the others burned some distance from him  
on the edges, the humans and the horses.  
Let's place his bones inside a golden urn,  
in a double layer of fat, until the time  
I myself am hiding there in Hades.  
I'm asking you to build a burial mound,  
nothing excessive—what seems appropriate.  
You Achaeans must build it high and wide,  
but later, once I'm gone, those who still remain  
beside our ships with many oars.”

Once Achilles spoke,  
[300] they did as the swift-footed son of Peleus wished.  
First, they doused the smoking pyre with gleaming wine,  
wherever flames had reached or ash was deep.  
Weeping, they picked the white bones of their comrade out  
and put them in a double layer of fat inside a golden urn.  
They placed the urn under soft linen in a hut.  
Then they traced out the dimensions of a mound,  
using stones to mark its base around the pyre,  
and then piled earth on top.

When they'd made the mound,  
they started to return. But Achilles checked them,  
[310] keeping soldiers there. He asked them to sit down  
in a wide group. Then he brought prizes from his ship—  
cauldrons, tripods, horses, mules, powerful oxen,  
as well as fine-dressed women and grey iron.  
First, he set out prizes for swift charioteers—  
for the winner, a woman skilled in fine handicrafts  
and a tripod with handles holding twenty measures.  
For second place he led out a mare six years old,  
unbroken and with a mule foal in her womb.  
For the man who came in third, he set out a cauldron  
[320] untouched by fire, a fine piece which held four measures.  
For fourth place he set a prize of two gold talents,  
while the fifth-place prize was a two-handled bowl,  
not yet put on the fire. Then Achilles stood up  
and spoke directly to the Argives:

“Sons of Atreus,  
you other well-armed Achaean warriors,  
these prizes lie set out here for a contest  
among the charioteers. If Achaeans  
were now hosting these games for someone else,  
then I myself would surely win first prize  
[330] and take it to my hut, since, as you know,  
my horses are far better than the rest,

for they're immortal, Poseidon's gift  
to Peleus, my father, who gave them to me.  
But I and my sure-footed horses now  
will stand down, for they've lost their charioteer,  
a strong, brave man, so kind he'd often pour  
soft oil all through their manes, while washing them  
in clean water. They stand there mourning him,  
manes trailing on the ground. So they won't race.  
[340] Their hearts feel too much grief. But you others,  
get yourselves prepared all through the camp,  
any Achaeon who has faith in his own horses  
and his well-made chariot."

Once Achilles finished speaking,  
swift charioteers rushed into action. First to move,  
well before the rest, was Eumelus, king of men,  
dear son of Admetus and excellent with horses.  
After him came forward mighty Diomedes,  
son of Tydeus, driving those yoked horses  
from Tros' herd, which he'd just taken from Aeneas,  
[350] though Apollo had snatched away their owner.  
After Diomedes came fair-haired Menelaus,  
royal son of Atreus, driving a yoked team,  
two fast creatures—his own horse Podargus  
and Agamemnon's mare Aethe, which Echepolus,  
Anchises' son, had given to Agamemnon  
as a gift, so he wouldn't have to go with him  
to wind-swept Ilion, but could remain at home,  
enjoying himself, for Zeus had given him great wealth.  
He lived in spacious Sicyon. This was the mare  
[360] Menelaus now led up in harness, a racehorse  
filled with a desire to run. The fourth contestant,  
Antilochus, got his fair-maned horses ready.  
He was a noble son of proud king Nestor,  
son of Neleus. Swift-footed horses bred at Pylos  
pulled his chariot. His father came up to him  
to give him practical advice, a wise man speaking



to one who could appreciate another's skill:  
"Antilochus, you may still be quite young,  
but Zeus and Poseidon have been fond of you.  
[370] They've taught you all sorts of things with horses,  
so there's no need to issue you instructions.  
You understand well how to wheel around  
beside the turning post. But your horses  
are the slowest in the race, and so I think  
you've got some problems here to deal with.  
The others' horses may be faster runners,  
but the drivers are no better skilled than you.  
So, dear boy, fix your mind on all that skill,  
so those prizes don't elude you. You know,  
[380] skill in a woodsman matters more than strength.  
It's skill that lets a helmsman steer his course,  
guiding his swift ship straight on wine-dark seas.  
And it's skill, too, that makes one charioteer  
go faster than another. Some racing drivers,  
trusting their chariot and horses, drive them  
carelessly, moving back and forth, weaving  
on the course. They don't control their horses.  
But a cunning man, though he's got worse horses,  
keeps his eye on that turning point, cutting  
[390] the pillar close. Such a man also understands  
how to urge his horses on, right at the start,  
using leather reins. But he keeps control.  
His mind doesn't wander, always watching  
the man in front. Now I'll tell you something—  
there's a marker, so clear you cannot miss it.  
It's a dry stump of oak or pine standing  
about six feet high. Rain hasn't rotted it.  
On both sides of that stump, two white stones  
are firmly fixed against it. At that spot  
[400] the race course narrows, but the ground is smooth,  
so a team can wheel around that stump.  
It may be a memorial to some man  
long dead, or perhaps men placed it there

to serve as a racing post in earlier times.  
 Swift-footed lord Achilles has made that stump  
 his turning point. You need to shave that post,  
 drive in really close as you wheel around  
 your chariot and horses. You should lean out  
 from that well-sprung platform, to your horses' left,  
 [410] giving the right-hand horse the lash, calling  
 to him with a shout, while with your hands  
 you let him take the reins. The inside horse  
 must graze the post, so the well-built wheel hub  
 seems to scrape the pillar. But be careful—  
 don't touch the stone, because if you do,  
 you'll hurt the horses, you'll smash the chariot,  
 which will delight the others but shame you.  
 So, dear boy, take care and pay attention.  
 If you can pass them by as you catch up  
 [420] right by the turning post, then none of them  
 will reach you with a sudden burst of speed,  
 much less overtake you, no, not even  
 if he were driving godlike Arion  
 behind you, that swift horse of Adrestus,  
 from heavenly stock, or the very horses  
 of king Laomedon, the finest ones bred here.”  
 Nestor, Neleus' son, spoke and sat down in his place,  
 once he'd gone over all the details with his son.  
 Then Meriones, the fifth contestant in the race,  
 [430] harnessed his fine-maned horses, and all the racers  
 climbed in their chariots. They gathered up the lots,  
 which Achilles shook. The first to tumble out  
 was for Antilochus, Nestor's son. Mighty Eumelus  
 was next, then came spearman Menelaus,  
 son of Atreus. After him, Meriones  
 drew his place. Last of all, and by far the best,  
 Tydeus' son drew for his horses' lane.  
 They took their places in a line. Then Achilles  
 showed them the turning point far out on the plain.  
 [440] Beside it he'd placed an umpire, godlike Phoenix,

his father's follower, to observe the racing  
and report back truthfully. Then all together,  
they raised their whips above their horses, lashed them  
with the reins, and shouted words of encouragement  
to urge them forward. The horses raced off quickly,  
galloping swiftly from the ships. Under their chests  
dust came up, hanging there like storm clouds in a whirlwind.  
In the rushing air their manes streamed back. The chariots,  
at one moment, would skim across the nourishing earth,  
[450] then, at another, would bounce high in the air.

Their drivers stood up in the chariots, hearts pounding,  
as they strove for victory. Each man shouted out,  
calling his horses, as they flew along that dusty plain.  
When the swift horses were starting the last stretch,  
racing back to the grey sea, their pace grew strained.  
Then the drivers each revealed his quality.  
The swift-footed horses of Eumelus raced ahead,  
followed by Diomedes' team from Tros' breed  
not far behind—really close, almost as if they'd charge  
[460] right up the back of Eumelus' chariot.

Their breath felt hot on his broad shoulders and his back,  
for, as they ran ahead, they leaned right into him.  
Now Tydeus' son would have passed Eumelus,  
or made the issue doubtful, if Phoebus Apollo,  
angry at him, hadn't struck the shining whip  
out of his hand. Then from Diomedes' eyes  
tears of rage streamed out, once he saw Eumelus' team  
running even faster than before, while his own  
were at a disadvantage, running with no whip.

[470] But Athena had observed Apollo as he fouled  
the son of Tydeus. She came running at top speed  
after that shepherd of his people, then gave back  
his whip, putting strength into his horses.  
Then, in anger, she went after the son of Admetus.  
The goddess snapped his chariot yoke. The horses swerved,  
running all around the course. The shaft dropped down  
and hit the ground—this threw Eumelus from the chariot

beside the wheel. On his elbows, mouth, and nose  
the skin was badly scraped. Above his eyebrows,  
[480] his forehead had a bruise. His two eyes filled with tears,  
his strong voice failed him. Tydeus' son swerved aside,  
then drove his sure-footed horses far ahead,  
outdistancing the rest, for Athena had put strength  
into his team, to give Diomedes glory.  
Behind him came Atreus' son, fair-haired Menelaus.  
But then Antilochus called to his father's horses:  
"Get going, you two. Push yourselves. Move up now,  
as fast as you can go. I'm not asking you  
to try to beat those horses up ahead,  
[490] the team of that warlike son of Tydeus,  
whom Athena has just helped run faster  
to give their driver glory. But overtake  
those horses of the son of Atreus—  
quick now—don't let them get too far ahead.  
You don't want to suffer shame from Aethe,  
who's just a mare. Why are you falling back,  
you strong horses? Let me tell you something  
which is sure to happen—if you slack off now  
and I win some inferior prize, then Nestor,  
[500] his people's shepherd, will stop feeding you.  
He'll take out his sharp bronze and kill you both,  
here and now. So keep on after them.  
Pick up the pace—as fast as you can run!  
My task will be to think of something,  
devise a way of getting past them there,  
where the road narrows. I won't miss my chance."  
Antilochus finished. His horses, frightened  
by their master's threat, ran faster for a stretch.  
Suddenly brave Antilochus saw up ahead  
[510] a place where the road was hollowed out and narrow,  
with a channel in the ground where winter rains  
had backed the water up, washing out some of the road  
and making all the ground subside. Menelaus  
was coming to this spot, leaving no space at all

for a second chariot to move along beside him.

But Antilochus guided his sure-footed horses  
off the track, charging up a little to one side.

Atreus' son, alarmed, shouted at Antilochus:

“Antilochus, you're driving like an idiot!

[520] Pull your horses back! The road's too narrow.

It gets wider soon—you can pass me there!

Watch you don't hit me. You'll make us crash!”

Menelaus shouted, but Antilochus kept going,  
moving even faster and laying on the whip,  
as if he hadn't heard. They raced on like this  
about as far as a discus flies when tossed  
with a shoulder swing by a powerful young man  
testing his strength. But then the son of Atreus' team  
slowed down and fell behind, reined in deliberately,

[530] in case the sure-footed teams somehow collided  
and overturned their well-sprung chariots in the road,  
leaving their drivers, for all their eagerness to win,  
sprawling in the dust. Then fair-haired Menelaus,  
in anger at Antilochus, yelled out:

“Antilochus,

you're more reckless than any man alive!

Damn you! Achaeans were all wrong to think  
you were a man with some intelligence.

But even so, you still may not win the prize,  
without the need to swear you won it fairly.”

[540] Menelaus yelled this, then called out to his horses:

“Don't slow down or stand there sad at heart.

Their feet and limbs will tire before yours do,  
for those two horses are no longer young.”

Menelaus spoke. Excited by their master's shout,  
his horses ran on even faster.

Meanwhile, the Argives,  
sitting all together, kept watching for the horses  
racing on the dusty plain. The first to spot them

was Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans.  
He sat some distance from the crowd, in a higher spot,  
[550] a fine lookout. The man in front was still far off,  
but when he called his horses, Idomeneus  
recognized his voice and could see quite clearly  
the horse in front—it was all brown, with a mark  
as round and white as a full moon on his forehead.  
Idomeneus stood up and called out to the Argives:  
“My friends, leaders and rulers of Argives,  
am I the only one to see those horses,  
or can you glimpse them, too? It seems to me  
that another team is now in front,  
[560] with another charioteer approaching.  
Going out, Eumelus’ mares were in the lead,  
but they must have run into some trouble  
out there, somewhere on the plain. I saw them  
wheeling round the turning post in front.  
Now I can’t see them anywhere, though my eyes  
keep searching the entire Trojan plain.  
Perhaps the charioteer let go the reins  
and couldn’t guide his chariot round the post  
and failed to make the turn. I think he fell  
[570] out there somewhere and smashed his chariot.  
His horses must have panicked in their hearts  
and run away. But stand up. Look for yourselves.  
I can’t see all that clearly, but the man  
seems to be of Aetolian descent,  
an Argive king, mighty Diomedes,  
son of horse-taming Tydeus.”

At that point,  
swift Ajax, son of Oïleus, mocked Idomeneus  
with these insulting words:  
  
“Idomeneus,  
why are you always nattering? Those prancing mares  
[580] are still far distant, with a lot more ground

to race across. And of all the Argives here  
you're not the youngest—those eyes in your head  
don't have the keenest vision. But for all that,  
you still chatter on. You don't need to babble,  
when there are better men than you around.  
Those same mares as before are out in front,  
Eumelus' team, and he's standing there, as well,  
holding the reins."

The leader of the Cretans,  
furious with Ajax, then replied:

"You're great at insults,  
[590] Ajax, but really stupid. In everything,  
you're the most useless Argive of them all,  
because your mind is dull. Come on then,  
let's bet a tripod or a cauldron on it—  
which horses are in front—so you'll learn  
by having to pay up. As our umpire,  
let's have Agamemnon, son of Atreus."  
At Idomeneus' words, swift Ajax, son of Oileus,  
jumped up at once, in a rage, ready to answer  
with more angry words. At that point, their quarrel  
[600] might have got much worse, but Achilles himself  
stood up and said:

"No more of this,  
Idomeneus and Ajax, no more angry words,  
no more insults—that's not appropriate.  
You'd both feel angry if another man  
behaved this way. So sit down with the group  
and watch for horses. It won't be long  
before their eagerness to win brings them here.  
Then you can both see the Argive horses,  
who's in the lead and who's behind."  
[610] As Achilles spoke, Tydeus' son came charging in  
really close to them. He kept swinging his whip

down from the shoulder, so his horses raced ahead,  
 raising their hooves up high as they ran the course.  
 Clouds of dust kept falling on the charioteer,  
 as his chariot made of gold and tin raced on,  
 drawn by swift-running horses, who left behind  
 only a slight trace of wheel rims in the dust,  
 as the team flew speeding by. Diomedes pulled up  
 right in the middle of the crowd. Streams of sweat  
 [620] dripped from the horses' necks and chests onto the ground.  
 He jumped down from his gleaming chariot, leaning the whip  
 against the yoke. Strong Sthenelus didn't wait for long  
 to get the prizes—he retrieved them right away,  
 giving the woman to his proud comrades to lead off  
 and the two-handled tripod to carry with them.  
 Then he untied the horses from their harnesses.  
 Next in came the horses driven by Antilochus,  
 grandson of Neleus, who just beat Menelaus—  
 he won by cunning, not by his horses' speed.  
 [630] But Menelaus was bringing his swift horses in  
 very close behind. The space between the two  
 was as far as a horse is from the chariot wheel,  
 when it strains to pull its master fast across the plain—  
 its tail ends touch the spinning wheels behind it—  
 there's not much space between them, as they move  
 at top speed on the plain—that's about how far  
 Menelaus lagged behind noble Antilochus.  
 At first, he'd been about a discus throw behind,  
 but he was quickly catching up, for the spirit  
 [640] in Agamemnon's mare, the fair-maned Aethe,  
 kept getting stronger. Had the course been longer  
 for both contestants, he'd have surely passed him,  
 without leaving the result in doubt. The next one in  
 was Meriones, Idomeneus' brave attendant,  
 a spear-throw length behind splendid Menelaus.  
 His horses were the slowest, and he himself  
 had the least skill at driving in a chariot race.  
 Last one in was Admetus' son, well behind the rest,



driving his horses in front of him and pulling  
[650] his chariot behind. Seeing Eumelus coming in,  
swift-footed lord Achilles felt sorry for him.  
Standing among Argives, he spoke his words had wings:  
“The best man brings up his sure-footed horses  
in last place. Come, let’s give him a prize,  
as seems fitting—the award for second place.  
Let Diomedes take the first-place prize.”  
Achilles spoke. They all agreed with his suggestion.  
So now he would have given Eumelus the mare,  
as Achaeans had agreed, but Antilochus,  
[660] great-hearted Nestor’s son, stood up to claim his right.  
Addressing Achilles, son of Peleus, he said:  
“Achilles, I’ll be angry with you,  
if you carry out what you’ve proposed.  
For you want to rob me of my prize,  
claiming that his chariot and swift horses  
ran into trouble—as he did himself,  
though he’s an excellent charioteer.  
But he should have prayed to the immortals—  
in the race he would not have finished last.  
[670] If you’re feeling sorry for Eumelus,  
if he’s someone your heart is fond of,  
in your hut there’s lots of gold. You’ve got bronze,  
sheep, women slaves, and sure-footed horses.  
Why not take some of that and then give him  
an even greater prize sometime later on?  
Or do it now. Achaeans will applaud you.  
But I won’t give up the mare. If someone  
wants her, let him try doing battle with me,  
hand to hand.”

Antilochus finished speaking.  
[680] Swift-footed, god-like Achilles smiled, delighted  
with Antilochus, who was a close companion.  
In reply, he spoke these winged words:

“Antilochus,  
if you’re telling me to give Eumelus  
some other prize inside my huts, I’ll do it.  
I’ll give him the breastplate I took away  
from Asteropaeus. It’s made of bronze,  
with a casting of bright tin around it.  
For Eumelus it will have great value.”  
After saying this, Achilles ordered Automedon,  
[690] his close companion, to fetch the breastplate from the hut.  
He went and brought it back and gave it to Eumelus,  
who was delighted to receive the armour.  
But then Menelaus stood up before them all.  
His heart was bitter with unremitting anger  
against Antilochus. A herald put the sceptre  
in Menelaus’ hand, then shouted out for silence  
among the Argives. God-like Menelaus spoke:

“Antilochus, you used to have good sense,  
before all this. Now look at what you’ve done.  
[700] You’ve brought my skills here into disrepute,  
fouling my horses when you hurled your team  
in front of me out there, that team of yours  
which is far inferior to mine. Come now,  
you leaders and rulers of the Argives,  
judge between the two of us—and fairly,  
so Achaeans armed in bronze will never say,  
‘Menelaus beat Antilochus with lies,  
when he received that mare. Though his horses  
were much slower, he used his influence,  
his rank and power.’

[710] In fact, I myself  
will judge the case, and no Danaan,  
I claim, will find fault with me in any way,  
for justice will be done. Antilochus,  
come here, my lord, and, as our customs state,  
stand there before your chariot and horses,

holding that thin whip you used before.  
With your hand on your horses, swear an oath,  
by the god who surrounds and shakes the earth,  
that you didn't mean to block my chariot  
with some trick."

[720] Antilochus, a prudent man, replied:

"Don't let me offend you, king Menelaus.  
I'm a younger man than you—you're my senior  
and my better. You know how a young man  
can do foolish things. His mind works quickly,  
but his judgment's suspect. So be patient  
in your heart. That mare I was awarded  
I freely give you. And if you requested  
something greater from my own possessions,  
I'd want to give it to you right away,

[730] rather than lose your good will, my lord,  
for ever and offend against the gods."

The son of great-hearted Nestor finished speaking.  
He led out the horse, then placed it in the hands  
of Menelaus, whose heart melted like the dew  
on ripening ears of corn, when fields are bristling  
with the crop—that's how, Menelaus, your heart  
softened in your chest. He spoke to Antilochus—  
his words had wings:

"Now, indeed, Antilochus,  
I'll give up my anger with you. Before now,

[740] you haven't been too reckless or a fool.

This time your youth overcame your judgement.  
In future, you shouldn't try to do such tricks  
against your betters. Another Achaean  
would not have won me over quite so fast.  
But you've worked very hard, endured a lot—  
you, your noble father, and your brother—  
in my cause. So I'll agree to your request.  
What's more, though she's mine, I'll give you the mare,

so all these people here will recognize  
[750] my heart's not arrogant or unyielding."  
Saying this, Menelaus gave the mare to Noëmon,  
a comrade of Antilochus, to lead away.  
Menelaus carried off the shining cauldron.  
Meriones then collected the two talents  
for his fourth-place finish. But the prize for fifth place,  
the two-handled jar, went unclaimed. So Achilles  
awarded it to Nestor. Carrying the prize  
into the crowd of Argives, he stood beside him.  
Then Achilles said:

"Take this now, old man.  
[760] Let it be your treasure, in memory  
of Patroclus' burial. For you'll see him  
no more among the Argives. This prize  
I'm giving you without a contest.  
For you won't be competing as a boxer,  
or in wrestling, or the spear throw.  
Nor will you be running in the foot race.  
For old age now has you in its cruel grip."  
With these words, Achilles placed the jar in Nestor's hands.  
He was happy to accept it. Then Nestor spoke,

[770] saying these winged words to Achilles:  
"Indeed, my son, you've made a valid point.  
For my limbs and feet are no longer firm,  
my friend. Nor do I find it as easy  
to extend my arms out from my shoulders,  
as I did before. Would that I were young,  
my strength as firm, as it was that day  
Epeians buried lord Amarynceus  
at Bouprasium. His sons awarded prizes  
in honour of their king. No man could match me,  
[780] none of the Epeians, my own Pylians,  
nor any of the brave Aetolians.  
In boxing I defeated Clytomedes,  
Enops' son, in wrestling Ancaeus,

from Pleuron, who fought against me.  
 In the footrace, I outran Iphicles,  
 who was outstanding, and in the spear throw,  
 I beat Phyleus and Polydorus.  
 I was beaten only in the chariot race  
 by the two sons of Actor. They pushed ahead,  
 [790] for there were two of them, both really keen  
 to win, because they'd set the greatest prize  
 for that particular race. They were two twins.  
 One always held the reins—he was the driver.  
 The other used the whip. That's the man I was,  
 back then, but now let younger men compete  
 in events like these. For I must follow  
 the dictates of a cruel old age these days,  
 though as a warrior I once excelled.  
 But come, you must continue with these games  
 [800] to honour your companion. As for this gift,  
 I accept it gladly. It delights my heart  
 that you think of me always as your friend.  
 You don't forget the honours due to me  
 among Achaeans. May the gods grant you,  
 as a reward for that, your heart's desires."  
 Nestor finished. Once he'd heard all of Nestor's story,  
 Peleus' son moved through the large Achaean crowd.  
 Then he set out prizes for the painful contest—  
 the boxing. To the group he led out a sturdy mule,  
 [810] an unbroken female, six years old, the hardest  
 to break in. For the loser, he put out a cup,  
 one with two handles. Then Achilles, standing up,  
 addressed the Argives:

"Son of Atreus,  
 all you other well-armed Achaeans,  
 for these prizes here we need two good men,  
 the best there are, to put up their fists and box.  
 The one to whom Apollo gives endurance  
 and Achaeans all acknowledge winner,

let him then take this mule back to his hut.

[820] The beaten man gets this two-handled cup.”

Achilles’ words at once stirred into action  
a strong, brave man, well skilled in boxing—Epeius,  
son of Panopeus. Putting his hand on the mule,  
Epeius said:

“Let whoever’s going to get  
the two-handled cup step forward. For I say this—  
no Achaeon will beat me with his fists  
and take this mule. I claim I’m the winner.  
I may not be the best in battle. So what?  
A man can’t be well skilled in everything.

[830] But I’ll say this—and what I say will happen—

I’ll break apart the skin and crush the bones  
of the man who fights me. Those close to him  
had better stay here in a single group  
to help him off, once my fists have thrashed him.”  
Epeius’ words reduced them all to silence.  
The only one to stand up to oppose him  
was godlike Euryalus, son of Mecisteus,  
son of Talaus. He’d once come to Thebes,  
for the funeral games of fallen Oedipus.

[840] There he’d triumphed against all the sons of Cadmus.

Famous spearman Diomedes helped him prepare,  
encouraging Euryalus with his words—  
he really wanted him to win the contest.  
First, he set the loin cloth on him, then gave him  
leather thongs, fine hide cut from a farmyard ox.  
When the two men had laced up their hands, they strode  
into the middle of the group. Raising their arms,  
their powerful fists, they went at one another.

Their hands exchanged some heavy punches, landing

[850] with painful crunches on their jaws. From their limbs  
sweat ran down everywhere. Then Euryalus fainted,  
but godlike Epeius moved and punched his cheek bone.  
Euryalus could not keep his feet for long.

His splendid limbs collapsed there on the spot—  
as a fish jumps through the rippling surface water  
in a forceful North Wind breeze near a weed-filled shore,  
before a black wave hides it—that how Euryalus  
jerked up as he was hit. But great-hearted Epeius  
grabbed him and set him on his feet. Around him,  
[860] his close comrades gathered. They led him through the crowd  
spitting gobs of blood, dragging his feet behind him,  
with his head down on one side. They took him off,  
set him down with them, still semi-conscious,  
then went themselves to collect the two-handled cup.  
For the Danaans, Peleus' son then set out  
a display of prizes for the third contest,  
the hard-fought wrestling match. The winning prize  
was a huge tripod to place above a fire,  
whose value among themselves Achaeans set  
[870] at twelve oxen. Into the middle of the crowd  
he then brought out the loser's prize, a woman  
skilled in every kind of work, worth four oxen.  
Standing up among the Argives, Achilles said:

“Step up now the two who'll try this contest.”  
At these words, great Telamonian Ajax got up,  
as did Odysseus, the crafty master of deceit.  
They strapped on their belts and strode out to the crowd,  
then, with their powerful hands gripped each other's elbows—  
locked together like rafters on some lofty house,  
[880] fitted by skilled craftsmen to keep out blasts of wind.  
Their backs cracked as their strong hands applied the pressure.  
Streams of sweat poured down, and red blood welts appeared  
across their ribs and shoulders, as both contestants  
kept up their struggle to prevail and get the prize,  
that well-made tripod. But it was impossible  
for Odysseus to trip up Ajax or throw him down,  
or for Ajax to do the same thing to Odysseus,  
for Odysseus' strength prevented him from that.  
But when well-armed Achaeans started to get bored,

[890] great Telamonian Ajax said to Odysseus:

“Divinely born son of Laertes,  
resourceful Odysseus—try lifting me,  
or I’ll try lifting you. And we’ll let Zeus  
decide the outcome.”

Saying this, Ajax tried a lift.

But Odysseus did not forget his various tricks.

He kicked Ajax behind the knee, taking out his leg.

Ajax toppled backward, with Odysseus falling  
on his chest. The spectators got excited then.

Next resilient, godlike Odysseus tried a lift.

[900] He managed to move Ajax off the ground a bit,

but couldn’t lift him. Then Ajax hooked him  
with his leg around the knee, so the two men fell  
close together on the ground, covered both in dust.

Now they would have jumped up to wrestle a third fall,  
but Achilles himself came up and held them back.

“You two need not continue wrestling.

Don’t let the pain exhaust you. For both of you  
are winners. You must take equal prizes.

Once you leave, other Achaeans can compete.”

[910] Hearing these words, both men agreed. The two of them  
cleaned their bodies of the dust and put on tunics.

After that, Peleus’ son quickly set out other prizes  
for the footrace—a finely crafted silver mixing bowl,  
holding six measures. It was very beautiful,  
the loveliest object in the world by far.

Sidonian experts in skilled handicrafts who made it  
had shaped it well. Then Phoenician men had brought it  
over the dark sea, unpacked it in the harbour,  
and given it as a gift to Thoas, as ransom

[920] for Lycaon, Priam’s son, paid by Euneus,

son of Jason, to warrior Patroclus. This bowl

Achilles set out as a prize to honour his companion,  
a trophy for the man who in the footrace  
proved he was the fastest. As prize for second place,



he led out a huge ox, rich in fat. For third place,  
he offered half a talent. Then Achilles stood up  
and announced to the Achaeans:

“Up all those of you  
who want to make the effort for this prize.”  
At that, swift Oïlean Ajax jumped up at once.

[930] Next came resourceful Odysseus and Nestor’s son  
Antilochus, who, of all the young men there,  
could run the fastest. These men stood in line,  
as Achilles pointed out the turning post—  
the race course was the distance there and back.  
The son of Oïleus quickly raced in front,  
with godlike Odysseus really close behind,  
as close as the weaving bar comes to the breast  
of a well-dressed woman when she deftly pulls it  
in her hands to pass the weaving spool through thread,  
[940] keeping the rod against her chest—that’s how close  
Odysseus ran behind, his feet hitting Ajax’s footprints  
before the dust could settle there. Godlike Odysseus  
ran so close, his breath touched the back of Ajax’s head.  
All the Achaeans were cheering on Odysseus,  
as he strove to win the race, yelling at him  
to push his energy right to the limit.  
While they were running the last section of the course,  
Odysseus in his heart prayed to Athena,  
goddess with the glittering eyes:

“Hear me, goddess!

[950] Be good to me. Help me. Speed up my feet.”  
Odysseus prayed, and Pallas Athena heard him.  
She made his legs, feet, and upper arms feel lighter.  
Then, as they were about to sprint in for the prize,  
Ajax slipped in mid stride—for Athena fouled him—  
right where the bellowing cattle had dropped their dung  
as they were slaughtered, the ones which swift Achilles  
had killed in honour of Patroclus. So Ajax

finished with his mouth and nostrils full of dung,  
as resilient Odysseus raced on ahead,  
[960] came in first, and won the prize. Ajax got the ox.  
He stood there, hands on the horn of that farmyard beast,  
spitting out cow dung, and then said to the Argives:  
“So the goddess played tricks with my feet—  
the one that always helps Odysseus out,  
taking care of him, just like a mother.”

Ajax spoke.  
They all had a good laugh at him. Antilochus  
took the prize for coming last. He smiled, then said,  
as he spoke to the Argives:

“Friends, I’ll tell you this,  
something you already know—immortal gods  
[970] still honour older men, even today.  
Ajax is just a little older than myself,  
but Odysseus comes from another time,  
an older generation. But his greater age,  
so people say, is green. Thus it’s difficult  
for Achaeans to beat him in a race—  
all except Achilles.”

Antilochus finished speaking.  
He’d acknowledged the swift-footed son of Peleus,  
so Achilles answered him and said:

“Antilochus,  
you’ve not paid that tribute here for nothing.  
[980] I’ll add a gold half-talent to your prize.”  
With these words, Achilles handed him the gold.  
Antilochus was very pleased to get it.  
Next, the son of Peleus brought to the gathering  
a long-shadowed spear. He set it down, and with it  
a shield and helmet. It was Sarpedon’s armour,  
which Patroclus had taken from him. Standing there,

Achilles then said to the Argives:

“We’re calling for two men,  
two of the best, to battle for these prizes,  
clothed in armour, wielding their sharp bronze,  
[990] testing each other here before this crowd.  
Whichever man hits the other’s fair skin first,  
under the armour, drawing his dark blood,  
will get from me this silver-studded sword,  
a lovely one from Thrace, which I seized  
from Asteropaeus. Both men will take  
this armour here, sharing it in common.  
And in my hut we’ll get a banquet ready  
for both of them.”

Achilles finished.

Then great Telamonian Ajax moved out front,  
[1000] and strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus, got up.  
On each side of the crowd they armed themselves,  
then both strode to the middle, prepared to fight,  
both glaring fearfully. All Achaeans were then gripped  
with anxious expectation. Once the two men  
approached each other at close quarters, they attacked,  
charging three times, three times going at it hand to hand.  
Ajax struck through the even circle of the shield  
of his opponent, but did not touch his flesh.  
The breastplate kept his body guarded from the spear.  
[1010] Tydeus’ son was trying to aim his gleaming spear point  
over the huge shield, to get Ajax in the neck.  
But then Achaeans, in their fear for Ajax,  
called for a halt and an award of equal prizes.  
So Achilles gave the great sword to Diomedes—  
the scabbard and the well-cut strap as well.  
Then Peleus’ son put out a lump of rough-cast iron,  
which, in earlier days, Eëtion had used for throwing.  
Godlike, swift-footed Achilles had slaughtered him,  
then taken his iron and all his other goods

[1020] away in his swift ship. Achilles then stood up,  
and addressed the Argives:

“Step up all those  
who want to try this competition.  
Whoever wins this iron can use it  
to serve his needs for five successive years,  
even though his rich fields are far away.  
His herders and his ploughman will not need  
to travel to the town through lack of iron.  
This will give them all that they require.”

Achilles spoke. Then up came Polypoetes,  
[1030] a strong fighter, and godlike Leonteus,  
a powerful man, then Telamonian Ajax,  
and godlike Epeius. They stood there in a line.  
Godlike Epeius gripped the weight, swung it round,  
then threw. The Achaeans all laughed at the result.  
The second one to throw was Leonteus,  
offshoot of Ares. Great Ajax, son of Telamon,  
was third to throw. His strong hand tossed the weight,  
hurling it beyond the marks of all the others.

But then that strong warrior Polypoetes  
[1040] picked up the weight and threw it even further  
than all those in the contest, by the same distance  
a herdsman throws his staff, so it flies spinning  
in among his cattle herd. The crowd all shouted.  
Then the comrades of strong Polypoetes stood up  
and carried off their king's prize to the hollow ships.  
Next, Achilles set out the prizes for the archers,  
things made of blackened iron—ten double axes  
and ten with single blades. Then he set up,  
far off in the sands, the mast of a dark-prowed ship.

[1050] Attached to it with a slender cord, he placed  
a quivering dove with the cord tied to its foot.  
He then told competitors to shoot the dove.

“The man who hits it,

that quivering dove, can carry off  
all these double axes. He can take them home.  
If he misses the bird and hits the cord,  
he'll be less successful, but he'll take as prize  
these single-bladed axes."

Achilles finished speaking.

Powerful lord Teucer then got up, and Meriones,  
courageous attendant to lord Idomeneus.

[1060] They took lots and shook them in a helmet made of bronze.

Teucer's lot gave him first attempt. He loosed an arrow,  
a powerful shot, but he'd made no promise  
to Apollo that he'd give a splendid offering  
of new born lambs. So he failed to hit the bird—  
Apollo wouldn't give him that. But he hit the cord  
tethering the bird near its foot and cut it.

The keen arrow sliced right through. The dove escaped,  
flying up into the sky, chord dangling down  
towards the ground. Achaeans then all cheered the shot.

[1070] But Meriones quickly snatched the bow from Teucer.

He'd been holding an arrow ready for some time,  
as Teucer aimed. He offered up a rapid prayer  
to Apollo, the far shooter, promising  
he'd make a splendid sacrifice of new-born lambs.  
He saw the trembling dove high up, under the clouds.  
As she circled there, he shot her through the middle,  
under the wing. The arrow passed straight through, falling  
back to earth again. It struck by Meriones' foot.

The dove fluttered to the mast of the dark-prowed ship,

[1080] her head hung down, her wings drooped, as life  
fled quickly from her limbs. She fell from the mast  
a long way to the ground. The crowd looked on amazed.  
So Meriones carried off ten double axes,  
while Teucer took back to his hollow ships  
the single-bladed ones.

Then Peleus' son

brought out a long-shadowed spear and set it down  
before the gathering and a brand new cauldron,  
not yet touched by fire, with a floral pattern on it.  
Its value was one ox. Then warriors got up  
[1090] for the spear-throw competition—the son of Atreus,  
wide-ruling Agamemnon, and Meriones,  
courageous attendant to lord Idomeneus.  
But then swift-footed, godlike Achilles spoke:

“Son of Atreus,  
we know how you surpass all others,  
how in the spear throw you’re much stronger,  
better than anyone. So take this prize,  
as you go to your hollow ships. Let’s give  
the spear to warrior Meriones, if your heart  
is pleased with that. It’s what I’d like to do.”  
[1100] Achilles spoke. Agamemnon, king of men, agreed.  
The warrior king gave the spear to Meriones,  
then handed his own prize, the lovely cauldron,  
over to Talthybius, his herald.

Book Twenty Four  
Achilles and Priam

*[Achilles continues to mourn and to dishonour Hector's corpse; the gods debate his action; Zeus resolves to deal with the problem; Iris goes off to fetch Thetis; Zeus instructs Thetis to visit Achilles; Thetis tells Achilles Zeus' instructions; Achilles agrees to give up Hector's body for ransom; Iris visits Priam, telling him to go to the Achaean ships; Hecuba objects to the trip; Priam insults his sons, then collects the ransom and leaves with Idaios, the herald; Zeus sends Priam an omen and tells Hermes to guide Priam to Achilles; Hermes meets Priam on the road; Hermes takes Priam to the Achaean camp; Priam meets Achilles; Achilles agrees to give back Hector; Achilles and Priam have dinner; Priam sleeps overnight outside Achilles hut; Priam and Idaios return to Troy with Hector's body; the women lament over Hector; the Trojans bury Hector]*

Once the funeral gathering broke up, the men dispersed,  
each one going to his own ship, concerned to eat  
and then enjoy sweet sleep. But Achilles kept on weeping,  
remembering his dear companion. All-conquering Sleep  
could not overcome him, as he tossed and turned,  
longing for manly, courageous, strong Patroclus,  
thinking of all he'd done with him, all the pain  
they'd suffered, as they'd gone through wars with other men  
and with the perilous sea. As he kept remembering,  
[10] he cried heavy tears, sometimes lying on his side,  
sometimes on his back or on his face. Then he'd get up,  
to wander in distress, back and forth along the shore.  
He'd see Dawn's approach across the sea and beaches,  
then he'd harness his fast horses to their chariot,  
tie on Hector and drag him behind, driving  
three times around the tomb of Menoetius' dead son.  
Then in his hut he'd rest again, leaving Hector  
stretched out, face down in the dust. But Apollo,  
feeling pity for Hector, though he was dead,  
[20] guarded his skin from any lacerations,  
covering his whole body with the golden aegis,  
so as Achilles dragged him, he did not tear his skin.  
Still Achilles kept dishonouring godlike Hector.

Then the blessed gods, looking on, pitied Hector.  
So they urged keen-eyed Hermes, killer of Argus,  
to steal the corpse, an idea that pleased them all,  
except for Hera, Poseidon, and Athena,  
the girl with glittering eyes, who kept up the hatred  
they'd felt when they first started to loathe Ilion,  
[30] Priam and his people, for Alexander's folly—  
he'd been contemptuous of those goddesses,  
when they were visiting his sheep-fold, choosing  
the one who volunteered to serve his dangerous lust.\*  
But after the twelfth dawn had come since Hector's death,  
Phoebus Apollo spoke out to the immortals:

“You gods are cruel and vindictive.  
Did Hector never sacrifice to you,  
burning thighs of perfect bulls and goats?  
And can't you now rouse yourself to save him,  
[40] though he's a corpse, for his wife, his mother,  
and his child to look at, and for Priam, too,  
his father, and the people, who'd burn him  
with all speed and give him burial rites?  
No, you want to help ruthless Achilles,  
whose heart has no restraint. In that chest  
his mind cannot be changed. Like some lion,  
he thinks savage thoughts, a beast which follows  
only its own power, its own proud heart,  
as it goes out against men's flocks, seeking  
[50] a feast of cattle—that's how Achilles  
destroys compassion. And in his heart  
there's no sense of shame, which can help a man  
or harm him. No doubt, a man can suffer loss  
of someone even closer than a friend—  
a brother born from the same mother  
or even a son. He pays his tribute  
with his tears and his laments—then stops.  
For Fates have put in men resilient hearts.



But this man here, once he took Hector's life,  
[60] ties him behind his chariot, then drags him  
around his dear companion's burial mound.  
He's done nothing to help or honour him.  
He should take care he doesn't anger us.  
Though he's a fine man, in this rage of his  
he's harming senseless dust."

Then Hera,  
angry at Apollo, replied

"Lord of the silver bow,  
yes, indeed, what you say may well be true,  
if you gods give Hector and Achilles  
equal worth. But Hector is a mortal man,  
[70] suckled at a woman's breast, while Achilles  
is the child of a goddess I raised myself.  
I brought her up and gave her to Peleus  
to be his wife, a man dear to the hearts  
of the immortal gods. All of you were there,  
when they got married. You, too, were with us  
at the banquet, you friend of evil men,  
clutching your lyre, as slippery as ever."

Cloud gatherer Zeus then answered Hera, saying:

"Hera, don't get so angry with the gods.  
[80] These two will not both share equal honours.  
Still, of all mortal men in Ilion,  
Hector was the favourite of the gods.  
At least that's what he was to me.  
He never failed to offer me fine gifts.  
At their communal feasts, my own altar  
never went without the proper offerings,  
libations and sacrificial smoke,  
as is our right. But we'll not let this corpse,  
brave Hector's body, be taken secretly.

[90] Achilles would for certain learn of it,  
since his mother sees him all the time,  
both day and night. But one of the gods  
should tell Thetis to come here before me,  
so I can put a useful plan to her,  
how Achilles can get gifts from Priam  
and then give Hector back to him.”

Once Zeus had spoken, storm-swift Iris rushed away,  
bearing Zeus’ message. Half way between Samos  
and rocky Imbros she plunged into the sea.

[100] As waters roared above her, she sank way down,  
just as a plummet sinks when fastened to a lure,  
one fashioned out of horn from some farmyard ox  
to bring death to hungry fish. She met Thetis  
sitting in a hollow cave with other sea gods  
thronging there around her. In the middle of them all,  
Thetis was lamenting the fate of her fine son,  
who would die in fertile Troy, far from his home.  
Standing right beside her, swift-footed Iris spoke:

“Rouse yourself, Thetis. Zeus, whose thoughts  
[110] endure forever, is calling for you.”

Silver-footed Thetis then said in reply:

“Why is that mighty god now summoning me?  
I’m ashamed to associate with immortals,  
my heart holds such immeasurable grief.  
But I’ll go. And no matter what he says,  
his words will not be wasted.”

Saying this,  
Thetis, queen of goddesses, took a dark veil,  
the blackest of her garments, then set off on her way.  
Swift Iris, with feet like wind, went on ahead.

[120] The surging sea parted round the two of them.

When they emerged on shore, they raced on up to heaven.  
They found the wide-seeing son of Cronos in the midst  
of all the other blessed gods, who live forever.  
Once Athena had made room for her, Thetis sat  
with Father Zeus. Hera placed a gold cup in her hand,  
with words of welcome. She drank, then handed back the cup.  
The father of the gods and men spoke first:

“You’ve come here to Olympus, goddess Thetis,  
though you’re grieving, with endless sorrows  
[130] in your heart. I know that. But even so,  
I’ll tell you the reason why I’ve called you here.  
For nine days immortals have been quarrelling  
about Achilles, sacker of cities,  
and Hector’s corpse. They keep urging Hermes,  
keen-eyed killer of Argus, to steal the body.  
But I want to give honour to Achilles,  
maintain my respect for you in future,  
and keep our friendship. So you must leave quickly.  
Go to the army. Tell your son what I say.  
[140] Tell him the gods are annoyed at him,  
that of all immortals I’m especially angry,  
because, in his heartfelt fury, he keeps  
Hector at his beaked ships, won’t give him back.  
Through fear of me, he may hand Hector over.  
I’ll also send Iris to great-hearted Priam,  
telling him to go to the Achaean ships,  
to beg for his dear son, bearing presents  
for Achilles to delight his heart.”

Silver-footed Thetis did not disagree with Zeus.  
[150] She went speeding from Olympus’ peak to her son’s hut.  
She found him there, still mourning endlessly.  
Around him, his close companions were all busy,  
in a hurry to get their morning meal prepared.  
Inside the hut they’d butchered a large woolly sheep.  
His noble mother sat close by him, caressed him

with her hand, then spoke to him, saying:

“My son,  
how long will you consume your heart with tears,  
with this grieving, not thinking about food  
or going to bed. To have sex with a woman  
[160] would do you good. I won’t see you still alive  
much longer—for at this moment, Death,  
your powerful fate, is standing close at hand.  
But quickly, listen to me. For I’m here  
as messenger from Zeus. He told me this—  
the gods are angry with you. Zeus himself  
is the angriest of all immortals,  
because, in your heartfelt fury, you keep  
Hector by your beaked ships, won’t return him.  
So come, now. Give him back, and for that corpse  
accept a ransom.”

[170] Swift-footed Achilles  
then replied to Thetis, saying:

“So be it.  
Whoever brings the ransom, let that man  
have the corpse, if that’s what the Olympian  
in his own heart truly desires.”

Thus, among the assembled ships, mother and son  
spoke to each other many winged words.

Meanwhile, Cronos’ son urged Iris to be off  
to sacred Ilion:

“You must go right away,  
swift Iris. Leave your home here on Olympus.  
[180] Take this message to great-hearted Priam,  
inside Ilion—tell him he must visit  
Achaean ships to ransom his dear son,

taking gifts to please Achilles' heart.  
He must go alone. No other Trojan man  
is to accompany him. One herald,  
an older man, can make the journey with him,  
to drive the mules and sturdy wagon  
and bring back to the city the body  
of the godlike man Achilles killed.

[190] He mustn't think of death or be afraid.  
A fitting escort will accompany him—  
Hermes, killer of Argus—as a guide,  
until he brings him to Achilles.  
Once he's led him to Achilles' hut,  
that man will not kill him—he'll restrain  
all other men. For he's not stupid,  
blind, or disrespectful of the gods.  
He'll spare a suppliant, treat him kindly.”

Zeus spoke. Storm-footed Iris rushed off with the message.

[200] Reaching Priam's house, she found him weeping there  
and mourning. His sons were sitting with their father  
inside the courtyard, wetting garments with their tears.  
The old man sat with them, cloak tightly wrapped around him.  
Both his head and neck were covered with the dung  
he'd grovelled in and grabbed up by the handful.  
His daughters and sons' wives were crying through the house,  
thinking of many noble warriors who'd been killed  
at Achaean hands. Zeus' messenger approached.  
Standing beside Priam, she spoke in a soft voice,  
[210] but nonetheless his limbs began to tremble.

“Let your heart be brave, Priam, son of Dardanus.  
Don't be afraid. I've not come with news  
of any harm to you, but to do good.  
I am a messenger to you from Zeus—  
he may be far off, but he looks out for you,  
cares very much, and feels pity for you.  
The Olympian is telling you to ransom

- godlike Hector. Take presents to Achilles,  
fine things his heart will find delightful.
- [220] You must go alone. No other Trojan man  
is to go along with you. A herald,  
an older man, may make the journey with you,  
to drive the mules and sturdy wagon  
and bring back to the city the body  
of the godlike man Achilles killed.  
You mustn't think of death or be afraid.  
A proper escort will accompany you—  
Hermes, killer of Argus—to guide you,  
until he brings you to Achilles.
- [230] Once he's led you to Achilles' hut,  
that man will not kill you—he'll restrain  
all other men. For he's not stupid,  
blind, or disrespectful of the gods.  
He'll spare a suppliant, treat him kindly."

- With these words, swift-footed Iris went away.  
Priam told his sons to prepare a sturdy mule cart  
and lash on a wicker box. Then he went in person  
down to the sweet-smelling vaulted storage chamber  
lined with cedar, which held many of his treasures.
- [240] He summoned Hecuba, his wife, then said:

"My lady,  
a messenger has come to me from Zeus,  
instructing me to ransom our dear son.  
I'm to go to the Achaean ships, taking  
gifts for Achilles to delight his heart.  
So come, tell me what you feel about this.  
My own heart and spirit are urging me,  
in a strange and fearful way, to go there,  
to the ships and wide Achaean camp."

At Priam's words, his wife cried out. Then she replied:

[250] “Where’s your mind gone, that wisdom you once had,  
for which in earlier days you were well known  
among your subjects and with strangers, too?  
How can you want to visit the Achaean ships,  
to go alone, before the eyes of the man  
who’s killed so many of your noble sons?  
You’ve an iron heart. If he captures you,  
once he sees you, that man’s so savage,  
so unreliable, he’ll show no pity.  
He’ll not respect you. No, let’s mourn here,  
[260] in our home, sitting far away from Hector.  
That’s what mighty Fate spun out for him  
when he was born, when I gave birth to him—  
that swift-running dogs would devour him  
far from his parents beside that powerful man.  
How I wish I could rip out that man’s heart,  
then eat it. That would be some satisfaction  
for my son, who wasn’t playing the coward  
when he killed him. No, he was standing there,  
defending deep-breasted Trojan women  
[270] and Trojan men, not thinking of his safety  
or running off in flight.”

The old man,  
godlike Priam, then said in response to Hecuba:

“I want to go. Don’t try to stop me.  
Don’t be a bird of ill omen in our house.  
You won’t convince me. If some other man,  
some earthly mortal, had told me this,  
a prophet who interprets sacrifices  
or some priest, we’d think it false, reject it.  
But this time I heard the goddess for myself.  
[280] I stared her in the face. So I will go.  
Her message won’t be wasted. If I’m fated  
to die by the bronze-clad Achaeans’ ships,  
that’s what I wish. Let Achilles kill me,

once I've embraced my son and satisfied  
my desire to mourn."

Priam finished speaking.

Then he threw open fine lids on the storage chests.

From there he took twelve lovely robes, twelve single cloaks,  
as many blankets, white coverlets, and tunics.

He brought gold, weighing out a total of ten talents,

[290] then two gleaming tripods, four cauldrons, and a cup,  
a splendid one given to him by men of Thrace,  
when he'd gone there as an envoy, a fine treasure.  
Even this cup the old man didn't leave at home—  
he was so eager to pay ransom for his son.

Then Priam chased the Trojans from his courtyard,  
shaming them with angry words:

"Go away,  
you wretches! You ought to be ashamed.  
Have you nothing to cry about back home,  
so you come here tormenting me like this?

[300] Isn't it enough that Zeus, Cronos' son,  
gives me this grief, that I must lose my son,  
the best one of them all? Well, you'll soon find out.  
Now he's been killed, it will be easier  
for Achaeans to kill you, too. As for me,  
may I go down to Hades' home, before I see  
this city plundered and destroyed."

With these words, Priam went at the people with his staff,  
lashing out. They moved off, beyond the old man's rage.

Then he began shouting at his sons, cursing them—

[310] Helenus, Paris, noble Agathon, Pammon,  
Antiphonus, Polites, skilled in war shouts,  
Deïphobus, Hippothous, and proud Dios.  
To these nine, the old man yelled his orders.

"Hurry up, you useless children, my shame.



I wish you'd all been killed instead of Hector  
by those swift ships—the entire bunch of you!  
My life's so miserable and empty.  
I fathered sons, the best in spacious Troy.  
I don't think a single one of them is left—  
[320] not Mestor, or horseman Troilus, or Hector,  
that god among men. He didn't seem to be  
the child of any mortal man, but of a god.  
Ares destroyed all those sons of mine.  
The ones still left here are disgraceful—  
liars, prancing masters of the dance floor,  
who steal lambs and goats from their own people.  
Will you not prepare a wagon for me—  
and quickly? Put all those items in it,  
so we can start out on our way.”

Priam finished.  
[330] The sons, shaken by their father's torrent of abuse,  
brought out the sturdy, well-made wagon, a new one.  
They lashed the wicker basket on it, then took down  
from its peg a box-wood yoke to fit a team of mules,  
furnished with guiding rings and with a knob on top.  
They brought out with the yoke the lashing for it,  
a strap five metres long. They placed the yoke with care  
across the polished pole at its front end, then set  
the rope's eye on the peg and bound it up securely  
with three twists round the knob. They lashed it to the pole,  
[340] twisting the end below the hook. Next, they brought out  
from the storeroom and stowed in the well-polished cart  
the huge ransom to be paid for Hector's head. The mules  
they then put into harness, underneath the yoke,  
strong-footed beasts, a splendid gift which Mysians  
once gave Priam. Then to Priam's chariot they yoked up  
the team the old man kept for his own personal use,  
taking care of them in his own gleaming stables.

While harnessing these animals went on this way

in the lofty courtyard for Priam and his herald,  
[350] two men with wisdom in their hearts, Hecuba approached.  
She came up to them with her heart in great distress.  
In her right hand she held out in a golden cup  
some honey wine, so the men could pour libations  
before setting out. Standing there beside their horses,  
she addressed them, saying:

“Take this wine.  
Pour a libation out to Father Zeus,  
and pray that you’ll come home again,  
back from your enemies, since your heart  
urges you against my will to those swift ships.  
[360] So pray to Cronos’ son, lord of dark clouds  
and god of Ida, who sees the land of Troy,  
and ask him to send a bird of omen,  
that fast messenger which is to him  
the favourite of all birds, the mightiest.  
Let that bird appear over to your right,  
so, once you witness it with your own eyes,  
you can have faith, as you go to the ships  
of those fast-riding Argives. But should Zeus,  
who sees far and wide, not send that messenger,  
[370] I’d not urge you or advise you go there,  
to Achaean ships, for all your eagerness.”

Godlike Priam then said in reply to Hecuba:

“Wife, I’ll not disregard what you advise.  
It’s good to extend one’s hand to Zeus,  
if he’s inclined to pity.”

Priam spoke.  
Then the old man ordered his servant woman  
to pour pure water on his hands. She came out,  
bringing with her a basin and a water jug.  
Priam washed his hands. Taking the cup from his wife,

[380] he prayed, standing in the middle of the courtyard.  
Gazing up to heaven, he poured out some wine,  
then spoke aloud, saying:

“Father Zeus,  
lord of Ida, most glorious and great,  
grant that when I come to Achilles’ hut,  
I’ll be welcomed kindly and with pity.  
Send me a bird as omen, a swift messenger,  
the one that is your favourite, the strongest.  
Let it appear to my right overhead,  
so, once I witness it with my own eyes,  
[390] I can have faith as I go to those ships  
of the fast-riding Danaans.”

So Priam prayed.  
Counsellor Zeus heard him. At once he sent an eagle,  
of all flying things the surest omen, a dark one,  
which people call black eagle, with wings as wide  
as doors on some rich man’s vaulted store house,  
one fitted well with bolts—that’s how wide this eagle  
spread its wings on either side, appearing on the right,  
speeding across the city. When they saw that bird,  
they all rejoiced. Hearts in their chests felt great relief.  
[400] The old man, in a hurry, climbed in his chariot,  
then drove out through the gate and echoing courtyard.  
In front the mules drew on the four-wheeled wagon,  
led by wise Idaios. The horses came behind.  
The old man kept laying on the whip, urging them  
swiftly through the city. All his family followed him  
in tears, as if Priam were going off to his death.  
When they’d passed the gate and reached the plain,  
his sons and sons-in-law turned back to Ilion.  
But as those two men came out into the plain,  
[410] they did not go unobserved by wide-seeing Zeus.  
Looking down on that old man, Zeus pitied him.  
At once he spoke to Hermes, his dear son:

“Hermes, since your favourite task by far  
is acting in a friendly way to men  
and listening to any man you like,  
go down there. Guide Priam to Achaeans,  
to their hollow ships, so no one sees him,  
so no Danaan even is aware of him,  
until he comes to the son of Peleus.”

[420] Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, hearing Zeus,  
did not disobey. At once he laced up on his feet  
his lovely sandals, immortal golden shoes  
which carry him across the seas and boundless earth  
as fast as winds can blow. With him he took the rod  
which puts to sleep the eyes of any man he wishes  
or wakes up others who are slumbering.  
With this rod in hand, mighty Hermes flew away.  
He quickly came to Troy and to the Hellespont.  
There he walked on in the form of a young prince  
[430] with his first hair on his lip, looking that age  
when charms of youth are at their loveliest.

When the two men had passed the burial mound of Ilus,  
they reined in the mules and horses, stopping there  
beside the river for a drink. For by this time  
darkness had come down over the earth. Looking round,  
the herald saw Hermes approaching. He said to Priam:

“Be careful, son of Dardanus. At this point,  
we need to think with prudence. I see a man,  
and it seems we may be cut to pieces soon.  
[440] Come, let's go in your chariot, or at least  
clasp him by the knees and beg for mercy.  
He may feel pity for us.”

Idaios spoke.  
The old man's mind was very troubled.

He was dreadfully afraid. On his bent limbs,  
the hairs stood out, and he stayed there in a daze.  
But Hermes the Helper came up by himself,  
took the old man's hand, then asked him questions:

“Father, where are you going with these horses  
and these mules through this immortal night,  
[450] when other living men are fast asleep?  
Aren't you afraid of those Achaeans,  
hostile, fury-breathing, ruthless soldiers—  
they're not far off. If one of them should see you  
bearing all this treasure in the swift black night,  
what would you do then? You're not that young.  
Your escort here is elderly, too old  
to defend himself against someone  
who wants to start a fight. But as for me,  
I'll not harm you. In fact, I will protect you  
[460] from other men, because in you I see  
my own dear father.”

Old godlike Priam  
then said to Hermes in reply:

“My dear child,  
Things are indeed just as you say. But some god  
holds his hand over me, to send me here  
a traveller like you who comes to meet us,  
an auspicious sign, with your handsome shape  
and your fine common sense. Those parents of yours  
who gave birth to you are surely fortunate.”

Messenger Hermes, killer of Argus, then said:

[470] “Old man, what you say is very true.  
But come now, tell me—and tell me truly—  
are you sending so much treasure out  
for foreign people to keep safe for you,

or are you leaving sacred Ilion  
in fear, now that the finest man's been killed,  
your own son, who never was reluctant  
in any battles with Achaeans."

Old godlike Priam spoke again to Hermes:

"Who are you, good sir? Who are your parents?  
[480] You speak so fairly of my doomed son's fate."

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, then replied:

"You want to test me, old man, by asking me  
of godlike Hector. My eyes have seen him  
many times in fights where men win glory.  
And when he drove the Argives to their ships,  
killing and butchering them with his sharp bronze,  
we stood there astonished. For Achilles,  
still in a furious rage with Agamemnon,  
would not let us fight. I attend on him.  
[490] The same ship brought us here. I'm a soldier,  
one of the Myrmidons. My father's Polyctor,  
a man of substance, about as old as you.  
He has six other sons—I'm the seventh.  
By casting lots with them I was selected  
to sail here. I've come now from our ships  
here to the plain. At dawn bright-eyed Achaeans  
will organize for battle round the city.  
They're restless, just sitting idly there.  
And it's impossible for Achaea's kings  
[500] to keep in check their eagerness for war."

Old godlike Priam then said to Hermes:

"If you, indeed, do serve with Achilles,  
son of Peleus, then tell me the whole truth—  
is my son still beside the ships, or has Achilles

already carved his body limb from limb  
and thrown him to the dogs to eat?"

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, answered:

"Old man, birds and dogs have not yet fed on him.  
He's lying still beside Achilles' ship,  
[510] among the huts, the same as when he died.  
For twelve days he's lain there, but his flesh  
has not decayed. Worms are not eating him,  
as they do with men who die in battle.  
Each dawn, Achilles drags him ruthlessly  
around his dear companion's burial mound,  
but that does not lacerate the corpse.  
It would amaze you, if you went in person,  
to see how he lies there as fresh as dew,  
with all blood washed away, no stain on him.  
[520] All the wounds he got have closed completely,  
and many people stuck their bronze in him.  
But that's how blessed gods care for your son,  
though he's a corpse. For their hearts loved him."

At these words, the old man felt joy. He replied:

"My son, it's good to pay immortal gods  
what's due to them. It's certainly the case,  
as true as that my son was once alive,  
he never once neglected in our home  
the gods who hold Olympus. That's the reason  
[530] they now remember him for what he did,  
even his dead body after death. Come now,  
take this lovely goblet as my gift to you.  
Protect me. Be my guide with the gods' help,  
until I reach the hut of Peleus' son."

Messenger Hermes, killer of Argus, answered Priam:

“You’re testing me, old man, because I’m younger.  
You won’t convince me when you ask me  
to take your gift without Achilles’ knowledge.  
My heart fears that man, but I respect him  
[540] too much to rob him, in case something bad  
comes to me later. But I’ll be your guide—  
even all the way to famous Argos—  
attending to your every need on a swift ship  
or else on foot. No man will fight against you  
because he’s thinks too little of your guide.”

With these words, Hermes jumped up in the chariot  
behind the horses, quickly grabbing reins and whip.  
He breathed great strength into those mules and horses.

When they reached the ditch and towers round the ships,  
[550] the sentries there were starting to prepare their meal.  
Hermes, killer of Argus, poured sleep on all of them,  
then opened up the gates at once, pulling back the bars.  
He led in Priam with the wagon load of priceless gifts.  
They then reached the lofty hut of Peleus’ son,  
which Myrmidons had built there for their king, cutting  
pine beams for it, then roofing it with downy reeds  
gathered from the meadows. They’d built around it  
a large courtyard for their king, strongly fenced with stakes.  
A single beam of pine kept the gate securely closed.  
[560] It needed three Achaeans to push it into place,  
and three to draw that great bolt from the door,  
three of the rest of the Achaeans, for Achilles  
could push it into place alone. Helper Hermes  
opened the gate himself for old man Priam,  
then brought in those splendid gifts for swift Achilles.  
He climbed down from the chariot and said:

“Old man,  
I am Hermes, an immortal god. I’ve come,  
because my father sent me as your guide.



But I'll go back now. I won't approach  
[570] within sight of Achilles. There'd be anger  
if an immortal god greeted mortal men  
face to face. But you should go inside,  
appeal to him in his father's name,  
his mother with her lovely hair, his child,  
so you may stir his heart."

With these words,  
Hermes went on his way, back to high Olympus.  
Priam then climbed from his chariot to the ground.  
He left Idaios there to tend the mules and horses.  
The old man went directly in the hut  
[580] where Achilles, dear to Zeus, usually sat.  
He found Achilles there, with only two companions,  
sitting some distance from him—warrior Automedon  
and Alcimus, offshoot of the war god Ares—  
busy attending him. He'd just completed dinner.  
He'd had food and drink, but the table was still there.  
The men did not see great Priam as he entered.  
He came up to Achilles, then with his fingers  
clasped his knees and kissed his hands, those dreadful hands,  
man-killers, which had slain so many of his sons.  
[590] Just as sheer folly grips a man who in his own land  
kills someone, then runs off to a land of strangers,  
to the home of some rich man, so those who see him  
are seized with wonder—that's how Achilles then  
looked on godlike Priam in astonishment.  
The others were amazed. They gazed at one another.  
Then Priam made his plea, entreating:

"Godlike Achilles,  
remember your own father, who's as old as me,  
on the painful threshold of old age.  
It may well be that those who live around him  
[600] are harassing him, and no one's there  
to save him from ruin and destruction.

But when he hears you're still alive,  
his heart feels joy, for every day he hopes  
he'll see his dear son come back home from Troy.  
But I'm completely doomed to misery,  
for I fathered the best sons in spacious Troy,  
yet I say now not one of them remains.  
I had fifty when Achaea's sons arrived—  
nineteen born from the same mother's womb,  
[610] others the women of the palace bore me.  
Angry Ares drained the life of most of them.  
But I had one left, guardian of our city,  
protector of its people. You've just killed him,  
as he was fighting for his native country.  
I mean Hector. For his sake I've come here,  
to Achaea's ships, to win him back from you.  
And I've brought a ransom beyond counting.  
So Achilles, show deference to the gods  
and pity for myself, remembering  
[620] your own father. Of the two old men,  
I'm more pitiful, because I have endured  
what no living mortal on this earth has borne—  
I've lifted up to my own lips and kissed  
the hands of the man who killed my son."

Priam finished. His words roused in Achilles  
a desire to weep for his own father. Taking Priam's hand,  
he gently moved him back. So the two men there  
both remembered warriors who'd been slaughtered.  
Priam, lying at Achilles' feet, wept aloud  
[630] for man-killing Hector, and Achilles also wept  
for his own father and once more for Patroclus.  
The sound of their lamenting filled the house.

When godlike Achilles had had enough of weeping,  
when the need to mourn had left his heart and limbs,  
he stood up quickly from his seat, then with his hand  
helped the old man to his feet, feeling pity

for that grey head and beard. Then Achilles spoke—  
his words had wings:

- “You unhappy man,  
your heart’s had to endure so many evils.  
[640] How could you dare come to Achaea’s ships,  
and come alone, to rest your eyes on me,  
when I’ve killed so many noble sons of yours?  
You must have a heart of iron. But come now,  
sit on this chair. Though we’re both feeling pain,  
we’ll let our grief lie quiet on our hearts.  
For there’s no benefit in frigid tears.  
That’s the way the gods have spun the threads  
for wretched mortal men, so they live in pain,  
though gods themselves live on without a care.  
[650] On Zeus’ floor stand two jars which hold his gifts—  
one has disastrous things, the other blessings.  
When thunder-loving Zeus hands out a mixture,  
that man will, at some point, meet with evil,  
then, some other time, with good. When Zeus’ gift  
comes only from the jar containing evil,  
he makes the man despised. A wicked frenzy  
drives him all over sacred earth—he wanders  
without honour from the gods or mortal men.  
Consider Peleus. The gods gave him gifts,  
[660] splendid presents, right from birth. In wealth,  
in his possessions, he surpassed all men.  
And he was king over the Myrmidons.  
Though he was a mortal, the gods gave him  
a goddess for a wife. But even to him  
the gods gave evil, too, for in his palace  
there sprang up no line of princely children.  
He had one son, doomed to an early death.  
I’ll not look after him as he grows old,  
since I’m a long way from my native land,  
[670] sitting here in Troy, bringing pain to you  
and to your children. Think of yourself, old man.

We hear that you were fortunate in former times.  
In all the lands from Lesbos to the south,  
where Macar ruled, and east to Phrygia,  
to the boundless Hellespont, in all these lands,  
old man, they say that you surpassed all men  
for wealth and children. But from the time  
you got disaster from the heavenly gods,  
man-killing battles round your city  
[680] have never ceased. You must endure it all,  
without a constant weeping in your heart.  
You achieve nothing by grieving for your son.  
You won't bring him to life again, not before  
you'll have to suffer yet another evil."

Old godlike Priam then answered Achilles:

"Don't make me sit down on a chair, my lord,  
while Hector lies uncared for in your huts.  
But quickly give him back, so my own eyes  
can see him. And take the enormous ransom  
[690] we've brought here for you. May it give you joy.  
And may you get back to your native land,  
since you've now let me live to see the sunlight."

With an angry look, swift-footed Achilles snapped at Priam:

"Old man, don't provoke me. I myself intend  
to give you Hector. Zeus sent me here  
a messenger, the mother who bore me,  
a daughter of the Old Man of the Sea.  
And in my heart, Priam, I recognize—  
it's no secret to me—that some god  
[700] led you here to the swift Achaean ships.  
No matter how young and strong, no living man  
would dare to make the trip to our encampment.  
He could not evade the sentries or push back  
our door bolts—that would not be easy.

So don't agitate my grieving heart still more,  
or I might not spare even you, old man,  
though you're a suppliant here in my hut.  
I could transgress what Zeus has ordered."

Achilles spoke. The old man, afraid, obeyed him.  
[710] Then Peleus' son sprang to the door, like a lion.  
Not alone—his two attendants went out with him,  
warrior Automedon and Alcimius, whom he honoured  
the most of his companions after dead Patroclus.  
They freed the mules and horses from their harnesses,  
led in the herald, the old man's crier, sat him on a stool.  
Then from the polished wagon they brought in  
that priceless ransom for Hector's head, leaving there  
two cloaks and a thickly woven tunic, so Achilles  
could wrap up the corpse before he gave it back  
[720] for Priam to take home. Achilles then called out,  
ordering his servant women to wash the body,  
and then anoint it, after moving it away,  
so Priam wouldn't see his son, then, heart-stricken,  
be unable to contain his anger at the sight.  
Achilles' own spirit might then get so aroused  
he could kill Priam, disobeying Zeus' orders.  
Servants washed the corpse, anointed it with oil,  
and put a lovely cloak and tunic round it.  
Achilles himself lifted it and placed it on a bier.  
[730] Then together he and his companions set it  
on the polished wagon. Achilles, with a groan,  
called to his dear companion:

"O Patroclus,  
don't be angry with me, if you learn,  
even in Hades' house, that I gave back  
godlike Hector to his dear father.  
He's brought to me a fitting ransom.  
I'll be giving you your full share of it,  
as is appropriate."

Godlike Achilles spoke,  
then went back once more into the hut and sat  
[740] on the richly decorated chair he'd left  
by the opposite wall. Then he spoke to Priam:

“Old man, your son has been given back,  
as you requested. He's lying on a bier.  
You'll see him for yourself at day break,  
when you take him. We should think of eating.  
Even fair-haired Niobe remembered food,  
with twelve of her own children murdered in her home,  
her six young daughters and her six strong sons.  
Apollo was so enraged at Niobe,  
[750] with his silver bow he killed the sons. The daughters  
Artemis the Archer slaughtered, for Niobe  
had compared herself to lovely Leto,  
saying the goddess only had two children,  
while she had given birth to many. Even so,  
though only two, those gods killed all her children.  
For nine days they lay in their own blood—  
there was no one there to give them burial.  
Cronos' son had turned the people all to stone.  
The tenth day, the gods in heaven buried them.  
[760] That's when, worn out with weeping, Niobe  
had thoughts of food. And now, somewhere in the rocks  
in Sipylus, among the lonely mountains,  
where, men say, goddess nymphs lie down to sleep,  
the ones that dance beside the Achelous,  
there Niobe, though turned to stone, still broods,  
thinking of the pain the gods have given her.  
But come, royal old man, let's think of food.  
Later you can lament for your dear son,  
when you have taken him to Ilion,  
[770] where you'll shed many tears for him.”

Swift Achilles finished. Then, jumping up, he killed

a white-fleeced sheep. His companions skinned it,  
then prepared the meat, slicing it skilfully  
and putting it on spits. They cooked it carefully,  
then pulled spits from the pieces. Taking bread,  
Automedon set it in fine baskets on the table.  
Achilles served the meat. Then their hands went to it,  
taking the food prepared and set beside them.  
When they'd satisfied their need for food and drink,  
[780] then Priam, son of Dardanus, looked at Achilles,  
wondering at his size and beauty, like gazing  
face to face upon a god. Achilles looked at Priam,  
marvelling at his royal appearance and the words he heard.  
Once they'd had their fill of looking at each other,  
the first to speak was the old man, godlike Priam:

“My lord, show me my bed now with all speed,  
so we may lie down and enjoy sweet sleep.  
For since your hands took my son's life away,  
my eyelids have not closed my eyes, not once.  
[790] I always weep, brooding on my sorrows,  
my endless grief. I grovel in the dung  
inside my closed-in courtyard. Now I've eaten,  
tasted meat, and let myself drink gleaming wine.  
Before this, I'd eat nothing.”

Priam spoke.  
Achilles told his comrades and the servants  
to set beds out on his portico, laying on them  
fine purple rugs with blankets spread on top,  
placing above them wool-lined cloaks for clothing.  
Women slaves went from the hall with torches.  
[800] Right away they spread out two beds, working quickly.  
Then swift-footed Achilles spoke to Priam,  
in a joking tone:

“Sleep here outside, my dear old man,  
in case some Achaean counsellor arrives.

They always come to see me to make plans,  
as is our custom. If one of them saw you  
on this pitch black night, he might run off  
to tell Agamemnon, his people's shepherd.  
Then giving back the corpse might be delayed.  
But come, tell me—and speak truthfully—  
[810] how many days do you require to bury  
godlike Hector, so I can stop that long  
and keep the troops in check?"

Old godlike Priam  
then said in answer to Achilles:

"If you're willing  
for me to give lord Hector a full burial,  
then, Achilles, as a personal favour,  
there is something you could do for me.  
You know how we're restricted to our city.  
It's a long way to the mountains to get wood.  
Besides, the Trojans are especially fearful.  
[820] We'll mourn Hector for nine days in our home.  
On the tenth day we'll have his funeral.  
Then there'll be a banquet for the people.  
On the eleventh, we'll make his burial mound.  
The twelfth day, if we must, we'll go to war."

Swift-footed Achilles then said to Priam:

"All right, old Priam, things will be arranged  
as you request. I'll suspend the fighting  
for the length of time you've asked for."

As he said this, Achilles took the old man's wrist  
[830] on his right hand, in case his heart was fearful.  
So by that house on the porch they lay down to sleep,  
Priam and his herald, both men of wisdom.  
Achilles slept in a corner of his well-built hut,



with lovely Briseis stretched out there beside him.

Meanwhile, other gods and warrior charioteers,  
all conquered by sweet sleep, slept the whole night through.  
But slumber did not grip the Helper Hermes,  
as he considered in his heart what he might do  
to guide king Priam from the ships in secret,  
[840] without the strong guard at the gate observing.  
So standing above Priam's head, he said to him:

“Old man, you're not expecting any harm,  
as you sleep like this among your enemies,  
since Achilles spared your life. Your dear son  
is ransomed for that huge amount you paid.  
But if Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
or all Achaeans learn that you are here,  
those sons you've left behind will have to pay  
a ransom three times greater for your life.”

[850] Hermes spoke. At his words, the old man grew afraid.  
He woke up the herald. Hermes harnessed mules and horses,  
then guided them himself quickly through the camp,  
attracting no attention. But when they reached the ford  
across the swirling river Xanthus, immortal Zeus' child,  
Hermes left them and returned to high Olympus.

As Dawn spread her yellow robes over all the earth,  
the two men drove their horses inside the city,  
weeping and groaning. The mules pulled in the corpse.  
No one noticed them, no man, no well-dressed woman,  
[860] except Cassandra, a girl as beautiful  
as golden Aphrodite. She'd climbed up Pergamus.  
She saw her father standing in his chariot,  
together with his herald, the town crier.  
In the mule cart she saw the corpse lying on the bier.  
With a scream, Cassandra cried out to all the city:

“See, men and women of Troy, come and see—  
look on Hector, if, while he was still alive,  
you would rejoice when he came back from war,  
for he was a great joy to all our city  
and its people.”

[870] At Cassandra’s shout,  
no man or woman was left unaffected.  
There in the city all were overcome with grief  
beyond anyone’s control. Close to the gates,  
they met Priam bringing home the body.  
First Hector’s dear wife and his noble mother,  
tearing their hair, ran to the sturdy wagon,  
trying to touch Hector’s head. People crowded round,  
all weeping. They would have stayed there by the gates,  
shedding tears for Hector the entire day  
[880] until the sun went down, but from the chariot  
the old man cried out to the crowd:

“Make way there—  
let the mules get through. There’ll be time enough,  
once I’ve got him home, for everyone to weep.”

At Priam’s words, the crowd moved back, making room.  
The wagon pushed on through. Once they’d got him home,  
inside their great house, they laid him on a corded bed,  
then placed singers there beside him, to lead their songs.  
They sang a mournful funeral dirge. Then the women  
began their wailing, led by white-armed Andromache,  
[890] who held in her arms the head of man-killing Hector.

“My husband—you’ve lost your life so young,  
leaving me a widow in our home,  
with our son still an infant, the child  
born to you and me in our wretchedness.  
I don’t think he’ll grow up to adulthood.  
Before that, our city will all be destroyed.

For you, who kept watch over for us, are dead.  
You used to protect our city, keeping  
its noble wives and little children safe.

[900] Now, soon enough, they'll all be carried off  
in hollow ships. I'll be there among them.  
And you, my child, you'll follow with me,  
to some place where you'll be put to work  
at menial tasks, slaving for a cruel master.  
Or else some Achaean man will grab your arm  
and throw you from the wall—a dreadful death—  
in his anger that Hector killed his brother,  
or his father, or his son. For Hector's hands  
made great numbers of Achaeans sink their teeth  
[910] into the broad earth. In wretched warfare,  
your father was not gentle. So in our city  
they now weep for him. O Hector, what sorrow,  
what untold grief you've laid upon your parents.  
What painful sorrows will remain for me,  
especially for me. As you were dying,  
you didn't reach your hand out from the bed,  
or give me some final words of wisdom,  
something I could remember always,  
night and day, as I continue my lament."

[920] Andromache said this in tears. The women all wailed with her.  
Then Hecuba took her turn in leading their laments:

"Hector, dearest by far of all my children,  
loved by the gods, as well, when you were living.  
Now, at your death, they still take care of you.  
When swift Achilles took my other sons,  
he'd ship them off across the boundless seas,  
to Samos, or Imbros, or foggy Lemnos.  
When his long-edged bronze took away your life,  
he dragged you many times around the mound  
[930] for his comrade Patroclus, whom you killed.  
Yet even so, he could not revive him.

Now you lie here in our house, fresh as dew,  
like someone whom Apollo of the silver bow  
has just come to and killed with gentle arrows.”

As she spoke, Hecuba wept. She stirred them on  
to endless lamentation. Helen was the third  
to lead those women in their wailing:

“Hector—of all my husband’s brothers,  
you’re by far the dearest to my heart.

[940] My husband is godlike Alexander,  
who brought me here to Troy. I wish I’d died  
before that happened! This is the twentieth year  
since I went away and left my native land,  
but I’ve never heard a nasty word from you  
or an abusive speech. In fact, if anyone  
ever spoke rudely to me in the house—  
one of your brothers or sisters, some brother’s  
well-dressed wife, or your mother—for your father  
always was so kind, as if he were my own—

[950] you’d speak out, persuading them to stop,  
using your gentleness, your soothing words.  
Now I weep for you and for my wretched self,  
so sick at heart, for there’s no one else  
in spacious Troy who’s kind to me and friendly.  
They all look at me and shudder with disgust.”

Helen spoke in tears. The huge crowd joined in their lament.  
Then old Priam addressed his people:

“You Trojans,  
you must fetch some wood here to the city.  
Don’t let your hearts fear any ambush,

[960] some crafty Achaean trick. For Achilles,  
when he sent me back from the hollow ships,  
gave me his word they’d not harm us  
until the twelfth day dawns.”

Priam finished.

The people hitched up mules and oxen to their wagons  
and then gathered before the city with all speed.

For nine days they brought in wood, an immense amount.

When the tenth dawn came, they brought brave Hector out,  
then, all in tears, laid his corpse on top the funeral pyre.

They set it alight. When rose-fingered Dawn came up,

[970] they gathered around that pyre of glorious Hector.

Once they'd all assembled there together,

first they doused the pyre with gleaming wine, every part  
that fire's strength had touched. His brothers and comrades  
collected Hector's ash-white bones, as they mourned him—  
heavy tears running down their cheeks—and placed them  
in a golden urn, wrapped in soft purple cloth.

They quickly set the urn down in a shallow grave,  
covered it with large stones set close together,  
then hurried to pile up the mound, posting sentries

[980] on every side, in case well-armed Achaeans

attacked too soon. Once they'd piled up the mound,  
they went back in, gathered together for a splendid feast,  
all in due order, in Priam's house, king raised by Zeus.

And thus they buried Hector, tamer of horses.