

## BOOK THREE

### Telemachus Visits Nestor in Pylos

[Telemachus and his crew reach Pylos and are welcomed by Nestor; Nestor describes events at Troy and on the voyage home; Nestor gives an account of Aegisthus' plan to seduce Clytaemnestra and murder Agamemnon; Nestor sacrifices to Poseidon, then invites Athena and Telemachus to stay the night with him; Athena declines, but Telemachus goes with Nestor; Nestor and his sons offer a sacrifice to Athena; Polycaste gives Telemachus a bath; Nestor orders a chariot; Telemachus and Peisistratus leave Pylos, spend the night in Pherae, then continue their journey.]

When the sun had left the splendid sea and risen up  
into an all-bronze heaven, giving light to gods  
and mortal men and grain to farmers' fields,  
the ship and crew reached Pylos, a well-built city  
ruled by Nestor. There by the sea the city folk  
were preparing black bulls as holy offerings  
to Poseidon, dark-haired Shaker of the Earth.  
There were nine groups, each with five hundred people  
and nine offerings of bulls ready to sacrifice.

[10] As they were tasting samples of the innards  
and cooking thigh parts for the gods, the ship and crew  
were heading straight for shore. They hauled in and furled  
the sails on their trim ship, moored it, and disembarked.  
With Athena showing him the way, Telemachus  
stepped from the ship. The bright-eyed goddess spoke to him:

“Telemachus, no need to feel embarrassed,  
not in the least, for this is why you've sailed  
across the sea, to get information  
about your father—where he is buried

[20] and what fate has befallen him. Come now,  
go directly to horse-taming Nestor.  
Let's find out what advice his heart contains.  
You yourself must beg him to report the truth.  
He will not lie, for he is truly wise.”

Prudent Telemachus then answered her and said:

“Mentor, how shall I go up there and greet him?  
I’ve had no practice with such formal speech.  
And then, when a young man seeks to question  
an older one, that could bring him shame.”

[30] Athena, goddess with the gleaming eyes, then said:

“Telemachus, your heart will think of something,  
and power from heaven will provide the rest.  
For I don’t think that you were born and raised  
without being favoured by the gods.”

She spoke.

Pallas Athena then quickly led them off.

Telemachus followed in the goddess’ footsteps.

They reached the group of Pylians gathered there,  
where Nestor sat among his sons. Around them  
his companions were preparing for the feast,

[40] cooking meat and setting other pieces onto spits.

When they saw the strangers, they came thronging round,  
clasping their hands and inviting them to sit.

Nestor’s son Peisistratus approached them first,  
took Athena and Telemachus both by the hand,  
and asked them to sit on soft cushions and eat  
beside his brother Thrasymedes and his father  
on the beach. He gave them portions of the innards,  
and then into a cup of gold he poured some wine.

He made a toast to Pallas Athena, daughter

[50] of aegis-bearing Zeus, then said to her:

“Stranger, you must now pray to lord Poseidon,  
for the feast which you have chanced upon  
is in his honour. When you have offered  
your libation and have prayed, as is right,  
hand your comrade the cup of honey wine,

so he can pour out his libation, too,  
for he looks like someone who offers prayers  
to the immortals. All men need the gods.  
Since he's a younger man of my own age,  
[60] I'll start by giving you this golden cup."

Saying this, he set the cup of sweet wine in her hand.  
Athena rejoiced at such a wise and righteous man,  
because he had offered the gold cup to her first.  
At once she made a solemn prayer to lord Poseidon:

"Hear me, Poseidon, you who enfold the earth—  
do not hold back from bringing to fulfilment  
those events we pray for. And to begin with,  
give Nestor and his sons a glorious name,  
and then grant all other men of Pylos  
[70] a pleasing recompense in answer to  
these lovely offerings. And in addition,  
grant that Telemachus and I get back,  
once we have accomplished all those things  
for which we came here in our swift black ship."

That's the prayer Athena uttered then, while she herself  
was taking care that everything would work out well.  
She gave Telemachus the fine two-handled cup.  
Odysseus' brave son then made a prayer like hers.  
Once they'd finished roasting the upper cuts of meat  
[80] and pulled them off the spits, they served out portions  
and had a sumptuous feast. When every one of them  
had taken food and drink to his own heart's content,  
Nestor, the Geranian horseman, began to speak:

"It seems to me that it's a good time now  
to ask our guests to tell us who they are,  
now they've enjoyed our food. And so, strangers,  
who are you? What country did you sail from,  
when you set your course across the water?"

Are you on business? Or are you roaming  
[90] on the seas at random, like those pirates  
who sail around, risking their own lives,  
posing a threat to men from other lands?”

Then shrewd Telemachus spoke up in reply,  
and boldly, too, for Athena herself had put  
courage in his heart, so he might talk about  
his absent father and acquire for himself  
a noble reputation:

“Nestor, son of Neleus,  
great glory of Achaeans, you asked us  
where we come from, so I’ll tell you.  
[100] We’re from Ithaca below Mount Neion.  
My business, which I’ll speak about, is private,  
not a public matter. I am pursuing  
wide-spread rumours of the brave Odysseus,  
my father, who, they say, fought at your side  
and utterly destroyed the Trojans’ city.  
We have heard reports about the others,  
all those who went to war against the Trojans—  
where each met his bitter fate—but Zeus,  
son of Cronos, has made Odysseus’ death  
[110] something unknown, for none of us can say  
with any confidence where he was killed,  
whether he was overwhelmed by enemies  
on land or killed at sea by waves stirred up  
by Amphitrite. That’s why I have come  
to sit now in your home, for there’s a chance  
you could tell me something of his death,  
which you may have seen with your own eyes.  
Or perhaps you’ve heard about his wanderings  
from someone else. For his mother bore him  
[120] to go through trouble more than other men.  
Do not pity me or, from compassion,  
just offer me words of consolation,

but tell me truly how you chanced to see him.  
If my father, brave Odysseus, in word or deed,  
ever promised you something and kept his word,  
way over there among the Trojans,  
where Achaeans suffered such distress,  
I ask you now—remember what he did,  
and give me the truth.”

Responding to Telemachus,  
Geranian horseman Nestor said:

- [130] “My friend,  
you make me call to mind the suffering  
and boundless courage of Achaea’s sons  
in all they went through over there, the things  
we had to endure while on board the ships,  
as we roamed across the misty waters,  
in search of loot, with Achilles in the lead,  
and all the fights around great Priam’s city,  
where so many of our finest men were killed.  
That’s where warlike Ajax and Achilles lie,  
[140] and Patroclus, too, a man whose counsel  
was like the gods’. My own dear son fell there,  
Antilochus, as strong as he was noble,  
outstanding for his speed and fighting skill.  
And we endured countless other hardships  
apart from these. Who could possibly describe  
every detail of the men who perished?  
If you were to spend five or six years here  
questioning me about the brave Achaeans  
and the troubles they went through, you’d grow tired  
[150] and sail back home well before I’d finished.  
Nine years we spent scheming to bring them down  
with every sort of trick, but Cronos’ son  
made all our plans so hard to carry out.  
Over there no one ever tried to claim  
he could match Odysseus’ shrewd advice.

In devising every kind of devious scheme  
he was easily the best, your father,  
if indeed you are his son. Looking at you,  
I am astonished, for you really speak  
[160] the way he did. No one would ever think  
a younger man could talk so much like him.  
All that time back then, never once did I  
and lord Odysseus, in council or assembly,  
disagree. We spoke with a single heart  
and gave the Argives wise and useful views  
about how those events would best turn out.  
But when Priam's towering city was destroyed  
and our ships set off, the Achaean fleet  
was scattered by some god. And even so,  
[170] Zeus planned in his heart to give Achaeans  
a sorrowful return. They had not been wise  
or righteous, so many met a nasty fate,  
thanks to the mortal anger of Athena,  
bright-eyed goddess with a mighty father.  
She incited the two sons of Atreus  
to quarrel with each other. The two men  
had quickly called Achaeans to assembly,  
not in the usual way, but at sunset.  
Achaea's sons arrived all flushed with wine.  
[180] Both kings delivered speeches. They explained  
why they had called the meeting. Menelaus  
told Achaeans to plan on going home  
on the broad back of the sea. What he said  
did not please Agamemnon in the least,  
because he wished to keep the army there,  
so they could all offer sacrifices  
to appease Athena's dreadful anger.  
The fool! He didn't know there was no chance  
that she was going to hear what he would say.  
[190] For the minds of gods, who live forever,  
are not altered quickly. So these two men  
stood there, trading hard words with each other.

The armed Achaeans jumped up on their feet,  
making an amazing noise. Two different plans  
were popular among them, and that night  
no one slept, as both sides kept arguing,  
each one with harsh opinions of the other,  
for Zeus was bringing us a wretched fate.  
In the morning, some of us dragged our ships  
[200] down to the sparkling sea, put goods on board—  
our women, too, who wore their girdles low.  
But half the soldiers stayed, remaining there  
with Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
shepherd of his army. So half of us  
embarked and rowed away. Our ships moved fast—  
some god had made the yawning sea grow calm.  
We came to Tenedos and sacrificed  
to all the gods, still keen to get back home.  
But even then Zeus had not decided  
[210] to let us all return—a stubborn god!  
He stirred up a second vicious quarrel.  
So some men turned their curving ships around  
and sailed back, among them lord Odysseus,  
that wise and cunning man, with his soldiers.  
Once again he favoured Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus. Then I fled away  
with the remaining ships, which followed me.  
I knew a god was planning something bad.  
And Diomedes, warrior son of Tydeus,  
[220] urged his comrades on to act as we did.  
Fair-haired Menelaus and his ships  
sailed later. They caught up with us at Lesbos.  
We'd been arguing about the major stretch—  
should we sail to the north of rugged Chios  
towards the island of Psyria, keeping  
Chios on our left, or take the southern route,  
below Chios and past stormy Mimas.  
So we asked a god to give us a sign.  
He did and ordered us to carve our way

[230] across the great sea straight to Euboea—  
that way we would escape from trouble  
as quickly as we could. A blustery wind  
began to blow, and so our ships moved fast  
across the fish-filled seas. That very night  
we landed at Geraestus, where we offered  
many bulls' thighs to Poseidon, our thanks  
for crossing the great sea. On the fourth day,  
the crews of Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
tamer of horses, berthed their well-built ships

[240] in Argos, but I sailed on to Pylos.

Once a god sent that wind to blow us home,  
it never once let up. And so, my lad,  
I made it back. But of the Achaeans—  
the ones who died and those who got back home—  
I didn't learn a thing. I just don't know.  
But what I have found out, as I've sat here,  
in my own home, you'll hear. You have that right.  
I'll not conceal it from you. People say  
great spear-fighting Myrmidons reached home safely,

[250] led by the glorious son of brave Achilles,  
as did the noble son of Poias, too,  
Philoctetes. And Idomeneus also  
took all his comrades back to Crete, the ones  
who'd made it through the war. Not one of them  
was lost at sea. As for Agamemnon,  
although you live a long way off, you've heard  
of his return—how he came home and then  
how Aegisthus planned his cruel slaughter.  
He later paid a terrible reckoning.

[260] That's why it's good for any murdered man  
to leave a worthy son. For Orestes  
got his revenge against his father's killer,  
sly Aegisthus, who'd killed Agamemnon,  
that splendid man. And you, my friend, I see  
that you're a strong, fine-looking man,  
but you must act with courage, so those born



in future years will say good things of you.”

Shrewd Telemachus then said in reply:

“Nestor,  
son of Neleus, great glory of Achaeans,  
[270] yes, indeed, that son got his revenge.  
Achaeans all will celebrate his fame  
and sing of it to men in years to come.  
If gods would only give me strength like that,  
so I could pay these haughty suitors back—  
they bring me such distress. In all their pride  
they keep on plotting wretched things for me.  
But happiness like that the gods deny me,  
me and my father. But now, in spite of that,  
I must keep going.”

Geranian horseman Nestor  
then said to Telemachus:

[280] “My friend,  
since you mentioned this and made me think of it,  
they say that many suitors in your home,  
seeking to become your mother’s husband,  
keep devising wicked schemes against you,  
over your objections. So tell me this—  
are you being oppressed with your consent?  
Or in response to what some god has said,  
have people turned against you? Who knows  
whether Odysseus will return some day  
[290] to pay them back for all their violence,  
either alone or with a combined force  
of all Achaeans? Ah, how I wish  
Athena with her bright eyes were willing  
to cherish you the way she cared back then  
for fine Odysseus in the land of Troy,  
where we Achaeans had to undergo

such grievous times. For I have never seen  
the gods display their love so openly  
as Pallas Athena did supporting him.

[300] If she was keen to love you in that way  
and to take you to her heart, those suitors  
would soon forget about the marriage.”

Shrewd Telemachus then answered Nestor, saying:

“Old man, I don’t think what you’ve described  
will ever happen. What you have said  
is too much to expect. I am surprised  
you mention it. I entertain no hopes  
that it could happen to me, even if  
the gods themselves were willing.”

Then Athena,  
bright-eyed goddess, answered him:

[310] “Telemachus,  
what a speech just passed the barrier of your teeth!  
A god could easily bring someone home  
from a long way off, if he wanted to.  
But I’d prefer to go through many hardships  
and then see the day when I got back  
and reached my home, than to complete my trip  
only to be butchered by my own hearth,  
the way that Agamemnon was cut down,  
tricked by his own wife and by Aegisthus.

[320] But the gods cannot protect a man from death—  
which comes to all—even ones they love,  
once the destroying fate of a harsh doom  
has seized him.”

Shrewd Telemachus  
then said in answer to Athena:

“Mentor,  
although we’re sad, let’s not discuss this further.  
For him there’ll be no more returning home.  
No. For by this time the immortal gods  
have planned some dismal fate for him. I’d like  
to change the subject and ask Nestor something.  
[330] He’s a righteous and intelligent man,  
more so than others. He’s been king, they say,  
over three human generations. To me,  
as I look at him, he seems immortal.  
O Nestor, son of Neleus, tell me the truth.  
How did wide-ruling Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus, meet his death? And where  
was Menelaus? As for Aegisthus,  
that deceitful man, what did he devise  
to kill a man much finer than himself?  
[340] Was Menelaus not in Achaean Argos,  
but wandering around some foreign land?  
Was that what made Aegisthus brave enough  
to carry out the killing?”

Geranian horseman Nestor  
then answered Telemachus and said:

“My boy,  
I’ll tell you all this and speak frankly, too.  
You yourself obviously understand  
what would have taken place if Menelaus,  
Atreus’ fair-haired son, had come home  
from Troy and found Aegisthus living there,  
[350] in his own house. He would have killed the man.  
No one would have heaped up a tomb for him—  
he’d have been eaten by the dogs and birds,  
as he lay on the plain outside the city.  
And not one of the Achaean women  
would have lamented him, the one who planned  
the monstrous act. We were over there in Troy,

fighting hard in battle after battle,  
while he was having a good time, tucked away  
in horse-breeding Argos, seeking to seduce  
[360] the wife of Agamemnon with his talk.  
Lady Clytaemnestra at first turned down  
such a repulsive crime, for she possessed  
a noble heart. Besides, she had with her  
a singer whom the son of Atreus  
had firmly charged to watch out for his wife,  
when he'd embarked for Troy. But when fate  
sent from the gods caught her and she succumbed,  
Aegisthus took that singer far away,  
to a deserted island, and left him there,  
[370] a trophy for the birds to prey upon.  
And when he wished to take her to his home,  
she agreed to go. Then Aegisthus burned  
many thigh cuts on the holy altars  
sacred to the gods and offered up  
all sorts of treasure, woven goods and gold,  
for he had managed a tremendous act,  
something his heart had never dreamed of.  
Well, once we'd left Troy, we sailed together,  
Menelaus and myself. At the time,  
[380] our relationship was very friendly.  
But when we came to holy Sunium,  
the Athenian headland, Phoebus Apollo  
with his gentle shafts struck down and killed  
Menelaus' helmsman, Phrontis,  
Onetor's son, as he gripped the steering oar  
on the swift-moving ship. He was a man  
preeminent among the tribes of men  
in piloting a ship through stormy winds.  
Now, though Menelaus was still very keen  
[390] to keep going on his trip, he stayed there,  
to bury his companion and provide  
the funeral rites. But when he re-launched  
his hollow ships upon the wine-dark sea

and quickly reached the steep crag of Malea,  
then far-seeing Zeus carried out a scheme  
to make his voyage dreadful. He sent down  
blasting winds and immense waves, like mountains.  
Once he split Menelaus' fleet in two,  
Zeus pushed some to Crete, where Cyndians live  
[400] beside banks of the river Iardanus.

There's a steep cliff there, a rock facing the sea  
right in the misty surf, on Gortyn's borders,  
where the South-West Wind smashes mighty waves  
against the promontory on the left,  
by Phaestus. A small rock in that spot holds back  
the mighty waves. Some of his ships came there.  
After making desperate efforts, the men  
escaped destruction, but on that rock  
the ships were smashed to pieces by the waves.  
[410] The wind then drove five other dark-nosed ships  
over the waves and carried them to Egypt,  
where Menelaus and his ships then sailed  
among some folk who spoke a foreign language,  
gathering plentiful supplies and gold,  
while at home Aegisthus planned the murder.  
After he had killed the son of Atreus,  
he ruled gold-rich Mycenae seven years.  
Under his kingship people were oppressed.  
But in the eighth year brave Orestes came  
[420] back from Athens—bad news for Aegisthus.

Orestes slew his father's murderer,  
sly Aegisthus, because he had cut down  
his famous father. Once he'd killed the man,  
he held a funeral feast for all the Argives,  
in remembrance of his hateful mother  
and cowardly Aegisthus. That same day,  
Menelaus, so good at battle shouts,  
arrived, bringing large amounts of treasure,  
as much cargo as his ships could carry.  
[430] So now, my friend, you must not wander off

and stay away from home too long, leaving  
your possessions there, with such arrogant men  
in your own house, in case they take over  
all your wealth or eat it up. That would make  
your voyage here quite useless. I'd urge you—  
and this I strongly recommend—to go  
to Menelaus. For he's just come home  
from foreign places very recently,  
when no one in his heart had any hope  
[440] he might be returning from those people.  
For stormy winds had driven him off course  
at first, into a sea so large that birds  
take a year or more to fly back from there.  
That's how huge and terrifying it is.  
But you and your companions should leave now  
in your ship. If you'd like to go by land,  
there are chariots and horses here for you.  
My sons will help, as well, and be your guides  
to fair-haired Menelaus, where he lives  
[450] in noble Sparta. Make sure you ask him  
to speak to you and to be quite candid.  
He will not lie, for he is far too wise."

As Nestor finished, the sun was going down,  
with darkness coming on. So Athena,  
the bright-eyed goddess, said to them:

"Old man,  
what you've just said is true and relevant.  
But now you should slice out the victims' tongues  
and mix the wine, so we can make libations  
to lord Poseidon and to other gods,  
[460] and then think of rest. It's that time of day.  
For now the light has slid below the darkness,  
and it's not right for us to linger here  
at a banquet for the gods. We must get back."

Zeus' daughter spoke, and they heard what she had said.  
Heralds poured out water for them to wash their hands,  
and young boys filled up wine bowls to the brim with drink,  
served everyone, pouring wine out in the cups,  
the first drops for libations. They threw the bulls' tongues  
on the fire and, standing up, poured out their offerings.

[470] That tribute made, they drank wine to their heart's content.  
Then both Athena and godlike Telemachus  
wished to get back to their hollow ship. But Nestor,  
wanting them to stay, appealed to them and said:

“Zeus and other eternal gods forbid  
that you should leave my home for your fast ship  
as if you were departing from a man  
who has no clothes or wealth, some pauper,  
whose home has no rich store of cloaks or blankets  
to give him and his guests a gentle sleep.

[480] No. My house has coverlets and lovely rugs.  
Surely the dear son of brave Odysseus  
will not lie down to sleep on a ship's deck,  
not while I'm alive and still have children  
left in my own halls to welcome strangers,  
whoever visits me in my own home.”

Athena, bright-eyed goddess, then answered Nestor:

“No doubt what you have said, old friend, is wise,  
and Telemachus should follow your advice.  
It would be far better if he did. But now,

[490] when he goes back with you to get some sleep  
in your own home, I'll go to our black ship,  
to rally the morale of our companions  
and tell them everything. Among our group  
I'm the only one who can make the claim  
that I'm an older man. The rest are young,  
all the same age as brave Telemachus.  
They follow us because they are our friends.

I'll lie down on the black hollow ship tonight  
and in the morning go to the Caucones,  
[500] where there's an old debt they still owe me,  
not a small amount. Since Telemachus  
has visited your home, give him horses,  
the strongest and the fastest ones you have,  
and send him off in a chariot with your son."

Gleaming-eyed Athena said these words and left,  
taking on the form of a sea eagle. Amazement  
gripped all the Achaeans. And the old man, too,  
was astonished as his eyes took in the sight.  
He grabbed Telemachus' hand and said to him:

[510] "My friend, I don't think you'll turn out to be  
a bad or feeble man, if gods follow you  
to be your guide, when you're so very young.  
Of all those who live on Mount Olympus,  
that is none other than Zeus' daughter,  
the glorious Tritogeneia, the god  
who held your splendid father in such honour  
among the Argives. But now, dear goddess,  
be gracious and give me a noble fame,  
me, my children, and the wife I cherish.

[520] And in return I'll sacrifice to you  
a broad-faced heifer, still unbroken,  
which no man yet has put beneath the yoke.  
I'll offer her to you with gold-wrapped horns."

Nestor spoke this prayer, and Pallas Athena heard him.  
Then Geranian horseman Nestor led them away,  
with his sons and sons-in-law, to his lovely home.  
Once they reached the splendid palace of the king,  
they sat down in rows on high-backed chairs and couches.  
When they'd all come in, the old man mixed for them  
[530] a bowl of sweet wine ten years old, which his steward  
opened after loosening the lid. The old man



had some of it mixed in a bowl, and then poured out libations, as he prayed in earnest to Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus. Others did the same. Then they drank wine to their heart's content and left, each to his own home, to get some sleep. Nestor, the Geranian horseman, told Telemachus, godlike Odysseus' dear son, to sleep right there, on a corded bed in the echoing corridor,  
[540] with spear-fighter Peisistratus, leader of men, there with him in the palace. Of all his sons he was the only one as yet unmarried. Nestor himself slept in an inner chamber inside the high-roofed house, with his noble wife, who had prepared the bed, lying down beside him.

As soon as rose-fingered early Dawn appeared, Geranian horseman Nestor got up out of bed, went outside, and sat down before his high white doors on polished stones, which glistened, as if rubbed with oil.  
[550] Neleus in earlier times used to sit on them, a man whose wise advice was equal to the gods. But Fate had overtaken him by now. He'd gone to Hades, so now Geranian horseman Nestor, protector of Achaeans, sat on those stones, a sceptre in his hand. His sons came from their rooms and gathered round him in a throng—Echephron, Stratius, Perseus, Aretus, and godlike Thrasymedes. Then the sixth son joined them, warrior Peisistratus. They brought in godlike Telemachus, asking him  
[560] to sit among them. Geranian horseman Nestor then began to speak to them:

“My dear children,  
you must act on my desires, and quickly,  
so I can propitiate Athena,  
before the other gods. She came to me  
in manifest form, at Poseidon's feast.

So come—one of you must fetch a heifer  
out there in the plain. And to guarantee  
the beast gets here as quickly as it can,  
have the cattle herder drive it to me.

[570] Then someone must set off for the black ship  
of brave Telemachus and bring back  
all his companions, leaving only two.  
And tell the goldsmith Laerces to come,  
so he can wrap the heifer's horns with gold.  
All the rest of you stay here together.  
Inform the inside household servants  
to prepare a fine banquet in the house,  
with chairs and logs set all around. Make sure  
they bring fresh water."

Once Nestor finished speaking,

[580] the men all set to work. The heifer from the plain  
was driven in, and brave Telemachus' comrades  
arrived from their fine ship. The goldsmith came, as well,  
gripping the bronze tools he needed for his trade,  
an anvil, hammer, and well-crafted tongs, the things  
he used to work the gold. And Athena also came,  
ready to receive the sacrifice. Then Nestor,  
the old chariot fighter, produced the gold. The smith  
worked it into a rich design and wrapped it  
around the heifer's horns, so that the goddess,

[590] when she saw the offering, would rejoice. Stratius  
and noble Echephron led in the heifer by the horns,  
as Aretus entered from an inner room,  
bringing water in a basin etched with flowers  
for them to wash their hands. In his other hand  
he brought in a basket filled with barley grains.  
Steadfast Thrasymedes stood holding a sharp axe  
to cut down the heifer. And Perseus held a bowl  
to catch the victim's blood. Then old man Nestor,  
the chariot fighter, began the ritual washing

[600] and sprinkled barley grains, intoning many prayers

to Athena. Then, as the initial offering,  
from the beast's head he cut off a single hair  
and threw it on the fire. When they'd made their prayers  
and scattered barley grains, then Thrasymedes,  
Nestor's daring son, approached the animal  
and struck it. The axe sliced through sinews on its neck,  
and the spirit of the beast ebbed out. The women—  
Nestor's daughters, his sons' wives, his cherished wife,  
Eurydice, eldest daughter of Clymenus—  
[610] raised the sacred cry, as the men then lifted up  
the animal's head above the much-travelled earth.  
Peisistratus, leader of men, slit its throat,  
and its black blood flowed. The spirit left its bones.  
They carved the body quickly, cutting thigh bones out,  
all in proper order, and then covered them up  
in a double fold of fat and set raw meat on top.  
Next, the old man burned the pieces on split wood  
and poured gleaming wine on them. Beside Nestor  
stood young men holding five-pronged forks. Once the thighs  
[620] had been completely burned and they'd sampled innards,  
they cut up the remaining meat, placed it on spits,  
and held the pointed skewers on the fire.

Then lovely Polycaste, youngest daughter  
of Nestor, son of Neleus, bathed Telemachus.  
When the bath was finished, she rubbed him with rich oil  
and gave him a tunic and fine cloak to wear.  
Coming from his bath, he looked just like a god.  
He went and sat by Nestor, the people's shepherd.

When they had cooked the upper cuts of meat  
[630] and pulled them off the spits, they sat and ate.  
The servers were distinguished men, who poured the wine  
in goblets made of gold. Once they had all eaten  
their fill of food and drink, Geranian horseman Nestor  
was the first to speak. He said:

“Come now, my sons,  
hitch up some fine-maned horses to a chariot,  
so Telemachus can start his journey.”

Nestor spoke. They heard and carried out his orders,  
eagerly and quickly harnessing swift horses  
onto the chariot. In it a servant woman  
[640] stored bread and wine and special delicacies,  
assortments that those kings Zeus cherishes  
eat with delight. Then Telemachus climbed up  
inside the splendid chariot, and Nestor’s son  
Peisistratus, leader of men, stepped up  
beside him in the chariot, grabbed the reins,  
and then cracked the whip. The pair of horses  
raced willingly across the plain, leaving  
the steep citadel of Pylos. All day long  
they rattled the yoke and harness on their necks.

[650] Then the sun set, and darkness covered all the roads.  
They reached the home of Diocles in Pherae.  
He was Ortilochus’ son, whose father  
was Alpheus, and there they spent the night.  
Diocles offered them the hospitality  
he owed to strangers who stayed there as his guests.

As soon as rose-fingered early Dawn appeared,  
they hitched their horses, climbed in the splendid chariot,  
and set off from the echoing portico and gate.  
With a touch of the whip, the horses raced along,  
[660] eager to run. The two men reached plains full of wheat,  
in a hurry to complete their journey, so quickly  
did their pair of horses pull them onward.  
The sun then set, and all the roads grew dark.