

# RHESUS

*Translated by* RICHMOND LATTIMORE

# RHESUS: INTRODUCTION

## *The Play: Date and Composition*

The date and even the authorship of *Rhesus* are unknown. It is transmitted among the works of Euripides. But according to a hypothesis (a summary) of the play, already some ancient scholars thought it was spurious; they argued that it seemed more Sophoclean than Euripidean (perhaps what they had in mind is that there are almost no female characters in the play). Others pointed out, however, that a play with this title by Euripides was included in the records of the competitions at the Greater Dionysian Festival in Athens, and that the curiosity about astronomical matters it manifests (for example, lines 528–31) was typical of Euripides. The play's authorship is still debated by modern scholars, especially since the eighteenth century. Those who deny its attribution to Euripides do so on linguistic, metrical, stylistic, and dramaturgical grounds, while those who defend it usually think the play must have been written early in Euripides' career. Although the question will probably never be resolved definitively, the great majority of contemporary scholars consider that *Rhesus* was written not by Euripides but by some unknown tragedian, most probably sometime in the fourth century BCE, and that it entered his collected works by mistake in place of a genuine *Rhesus* written by Euripides but which had been lost.

## *The Myth*

*Rhesus* is the only surviving Greek tragedy whose plot is taken directly from one of the two great Homeric epics. Its story coincides with an episode from book 10 of the *Iliad*. At a particularly difficult moment for the Greeks, when Achilles has withdrawn from battle in anger at Agamemnon and the Trojans are gaining the upper hand, both sides send out spies during the night to reconnoiter the enemy. The Greek spies, Odysseus and

Diomedes, capture and kill the Trojan one and return to their camp after they also kill Rhesus, king of the Thracian allies of the Trojans, slaughter a number of his men, and steal his marvelous horses.

Despite its title, *Rhesus* is centered from beginning to end upon the figure of Hector, whom it sets into a series of stark contrasts with all the other characters and with the chorus. The play follows the Homeric story fairly closely but views the events from the Trojan perspective rather than from the Greek one. Moreover, it elaborates upon some aspects that are absent or only hinted at in the epic version (for example, the disastrous consequences for the Greeks if Rhesus should survive to the next day) and involves many changes in tone and characterization (Hector here is far stupider, and Rhesus much more bellicose, than in Homer). It is possible that its author drew upon other, now lost sources besides the *Iliad*.

The play begins with the Trojan sentries waking Hector to warn him that the Greeks have lit watch fires. Aeneas persuades him not to attack the enemy at once, but to send a spy instead to find out what they are up to, and Dolon volunteers for the mission. Then Rhesus arrives with his Thracian army, and Hector and he discuss what to do before Hector leads him to the encampment where he is to spend the night. Odysseus and Diomedes enter cautiously: they have captured and killed Dolon, and Athena directs them to kill Rhesus, after which they escape. Rhesus' wounded charioteer recounts his master's death; and finally one of the Muses, the mother of Rhesus, appears, bearing her son's corpse and lamenting his death.

The play as transmitted begins, uniquely among Greek tragedies, with a lively scene of dialogue chanted in anapests between the chorus as it enters and Hector. One would expect it to begin instead with a prologue spoken by characters; and in fact the hypothesis mentioned above indicates that two such prologues were extant in antiquity. Of one it provides only the first line, which indicates the hour of the night by reference to celestial phenomena; of the other—which the author of this hypothesis describes as being very prosaic, not worthy of Euripides, and perhaps composed by some actors—it gives eleven lines that are addressed by Hera to Athena asking her help in destroying Troy. (Both of these prologue beginnings can be found in the first textual note to this play in this volume.) Scholars disagree about how to explain this odd situation. Some have suggested that

the single line came from some completely different play and that the longer passage was the original beginning of this one, subsequently lost in direct transmission. But other explanations seem no less probable. Perhaps the one line belonged to the original version of the prologue of this very play, but that opening was lost at some point; later the longer one was written as part of a new opening in order to provide at least some kind of prologue, but then it too was not transmitted together with the rest of the play. The question remains open.

### *Transmission and Reception*

*Rhesus* has never been one of the most popular plays in the Euripidean corpus. But some quotations and allusions from later ancient writers, and two papyri that preserve parts of its hypothesis or text, suggest that it did enjoy at least a limited readership.

Furthermore, it was selected to be one of the ten plays by Euripides that were most widely diffused during ancient and medieval times; perhaps this choice was influenced by the play's use of a Homeric story. As a result, it is transmitted by about five primary manuscripts and their copies, and it is equipped with some ancient commentaries (scholia) that explain various kinds of interpretive difficulties. The play seems to have left its trace on several south Italic vases of the mid-fourth century BCE that show the death of Rhesus. But its influence on modern literature and art has been negligible, and only rarely has it been translated, adapted, or performed.

# RHESUS

## *Characters*

CHORUS of Trojan guards

HECTOR, a Trojan prince

AENEAS, a Trojan chieftain

DOLON, a Trojan soldier

SHEPHERD

RHESUS, king of the Thracians

ODYSSEUS, a Greek chieftain

DIOMEDES, a Greek chieftain

ATHENA

ALEXANDER (Paris), brother of Hector

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

THE MUSE, mother of Rhesus

*The tent of Hector in the Trojan camp on the plain between the city and the shore. It is late at night.* ◦

*(Enter from the side, in haste, the Chorus of Trojan guards, headed by an officer [the Chorus Leader].)*

CHORUS LEADER ◦ [*chanting*]

*Go find where Hector is sleeping. Ho there,  
is any of the king's bodyguard awake,  
or his armor-bearers?*

*There is a new message he must hear*

5 *from those who keep this quarter of the night's*

*guard duty for the entire army:*

*“Sit up, or lean your head on your arm;*

*unclose your lids. Open your keen eyes.*

*Rise now from the piled leaves of your bed,*

10     *Hector. A report. You must hear it.”*

*(Enter Hector from inside the tent.)*

HECTOR [*chanting*]

*Who speaks? Enemy or friend? What is  
the watchword? Speak.*

*Who comes here out of the night to find  
where I sleep? Declare.*

CHORUS LEADER

*Sentries of the army.*

HECTOR

15                     *What troubles you so?*

CHORUS LEADER

*Never fear.*

HECTOR

*Not I.*<sup>o</sup>

*What is it? A night raid?*

CHORUS LEADER

*No, not that.*

HECTOR

*Then why*

have you left your post to come here and waken  
the camp, unless we must form by night?  
20 Do you realize that the Argive spears  
are there, close by  
where we sleep this night in our armor?

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE

Arm, arm, Hector, and run to where  
the allied forces lie sleeping.  
25 Wake them, tell them to take their spears in their hands.  
Send true men to run to your company;  
have the curb chains put on the horses.  
Someone go to Panthoüs' son  
or Europa's, lord of the Lycian men. Who will?  
Where are those who are in charge  
30 of sacrifices?  
Or the light-armed captains?  
Where are the Phrygian archers?  
Archers! Have your hornbows strung, quickly.

HECTOR [*still chanting*]

What you report seems partly alarm,  
35 partly to be comfort. All is confusion.  
What is this? Has the whiplash of Cronian Pan  
struck you to shivering panic?◦ Speak, say,  
what are you reporting? You have talked a great deal  
40 without telling me one thing clearly.

CHORUS [*singing*]

ANTISTROPHE

*The Argive army has lit its fires,  
Hector, all through the darkness.  
The positions of their ships are clear in the firelight.  
But all their army has gathered in darkness  
45 by Agamemnon's shelter, noisily.  
They must wish to consult, to take  
counsel, since never before was this sea-borne army  
so utterly frightened. Therefore  
I, to forestall anything that may happen,  
50 came to report it, so that  
you will not say I failed to do my duty.*

HECTOR [*now speaking*]

Good. You are timely, though you come to us in alarm.  
I see these people mean to row away by night,  
quietly, when I cannot see them, and make good  
55 their flight. I know exactly what their night fires mean.  
O God, you robbed me, robbed the lion of his spoil.  
All prospered, till you halted me before I swept  
the Argive army to destruction with this spear.  
For if the flaring lanterns of the sun had not  
60 shut down against us, I would never have stayed my spear  
in its fortune, until I had fired their ships, and made my way  
through their camp, killing Achaeans with this murderous hand.  
I myself was all ready to keep up the fight,  
to use the darkness and the powerful force of god.  
65 But the diviners, these educated men who know  
the mind of heaven, persuaded me to wait for day—  
and *then* to leave not one Greek alive on land.  
But will they wait to be carefully slaughtered? No,



not they. The runaway slave is a great man by night.  
70 Come, then. We must pass the order to our men, at once.  
Have them wake and put on the armor that lies by.  
So the Achaean, even while he jumps for his ship,  
shall be stabbed in the back and drench the ladderways  
with blood. And the survivors can be caught, and tied,  
75 and learn to work the wheat fields in our land of Troy.

CHORUS LEADER [*now speaking*]

Too quick, Hector. You act before you understand.  
We are not certain yet that they are running away.

HECTOR

For what cause did the Argives light their fires?

CHORUS LEADER

I do not know. I am suspicious of the whole matter.

HECTOR

80 If you fear this, you would be afraid of anything.

CHORUS LEADER

The enemy never lit fires like this before.

HECTOR

They never fled in such an awful rout before.

CHORUS LEADER

Yes. It was your work. Now consider what comes next.

HECTOR

There is only one order to give: arm and fight the enemy.

*(Enter Aeneas from the side.)*

CHORUS LEADER

85      Here comes Aeneas in great haste  
         of foot, as one who has news for his friends to hear.

AENEAS

Hector, why has the night guard of the camp come here  
to where you were quartered? Is it panic? Here is talk  
going on at night, and all the army is disturbed.

HECTOR

90      On with your armor quick, Aeneas.

AENEAS

Yes? What for?

Has someone come in to report the enemy  
have made a surprise attack upon us in the dark?

HECTOR

No, no, they are withdrawing. They are boarding their ships.

AENEAS

And what good reason do you have to believe this?

HECTOR

95      Their watch fires are illuminating all the night,  
         and I believe they will not wait until the dawn  
         but burn them so that by their light they can escape  
         on their well-benched ships, to leave this country and go home.

AENEAS

What will you do about this, then? Why are you armed?

HECTOR

100 To fall upon them as they flee and board their ships,  
to charge with our spears against them, and hit hard.  
It would be shame, and more than shame, sheer cowardice,  
to let them, when they did us so much harm, escape  
without a fight, when a god has given them to our hands.

AENEAS

105 I wish you could make plans as well as you can fight.  
But so it is: the same man cannot well be skilled  
in everything; each has his special excellence,  
and yours is fighting, and it is for others to make good plans,  
not you. You heard how the Achaeans had lit their fires  
110 and hope roused you to wish to lead the army on  
across their deep moats in the time of night. Yet see,  
suppose you do cross over the ditch, despite its depth,  
and meet an enemy not withdrawing from our coast  
as you think, but standing with spears faced to your attack—  
115 you will have no free way to escape if they defeat you.  
How will a beaten army cross the palisades?  
How will your charioteers drive over the embankments  
without smashing the axles of their chariots?  
Then, even if you win, they have Achilles in reserve.  
120 He will not sit by while you fire their ships; he will  
not let you prey on the Achaeans, as you hope.  
The man is hot, and he has massive strength of hand.  
No, better, let us hold our army out of the way  
of hard strokes; let them sleep at peace beside their shields;  
125 but send one volunteer to scout the enemy.

So I think best. Then, if they really are in flight,  
we can advance in force upon the Argive host.  
But if this burning of their fires leads to some trick,  
our scout will inform us what they are doing.

130 Then take our measures. This, my lord, is what I urge.

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE

*This is what I think best. Change your mind and accept it.  
I do not like it when the general uses power that is  
unsure. What could be better  
than that a swift-paced man should go to spy on their ships,  
135 from close, and see what it means  
when our enemies have fires burning where their prows are  
beached?*

HECTOR

You win, Aeneas, since this is approved by all.  
Go, quiet our allies, let them sleep, since the whole army  
might well be restless, hearing how we consult at night.  
140 I will send a man to spy upon the enemy,  
and if we find out that there is some stratagem,  
you shall hear all, being near by, and be called to plan  
with us; but if it is flight and they are casting off,  
be ready for action when you hear the trumpet speak;  
145 because I will not wait for you; I shall be there  
among the Argives and their vessels, now, tonight.

AENEAS

Send him with all speed. Now your plan is sound. And if  
the need comes for it, I will be as bold as you.

*(Exit Aeneas to the side.)*

HECTOR

Is there a Trojan, then, in earshot of my words,  
150 who volunteers to spy upon the Argive ships?  
Who is there who would have his country in his debt?  
Who speaks? I cannot, by myself, do everything  
that must be done to help our city and our friends.

*(Enter Dolon from the side.)*

DOLON

I will do it. For my country I undertake this cast  
155 of hazard. I will go and scout the Argive ships  
and listen to everything they plan to do and bring  
word back. On such conditions I accept the task.

HECTOR

You are well named, my crafty Dolon, and you love  
your city well. Your father's house was bright in name  
160 before. Now you have made it twice as bright.

DOLON

It is good to work and fight, but when I do, it also  
is good to be rewarded. For in every work  
a reward added makes the pleasure twice as great.

HECTOR

True. I will not deny that what you say is fair.  
165 Name your price. Anything except my royal power.

DOLON

I do not want your royal power, nor to rule a city.

HECTOR

Marry a daughter of Priam. Be my brother-in-law.

DOLON

I think it best not to marry above my station.

HECTOR

I have gold to give, if that is what you will be asking.

DOLON

170 We have it at home. We do not lack for anything.

HECTOR

What would you have out of the treasures of Ilium?

DOLON

Nothing. Catch the Achaeans, and then grant my gift.

HECTOR

I shall. But do not ask for the leaders of their fleet.

DOLON

Kill them. I will not ask for Menelaus' life.

HECTOR

175 It is not the son of Oileus you are asking me for?

DOLON

Those well-bred hands would never work well in the fields.

HECTOR

Is there any Achaean you would have alive, for ransom?

DOLON

I told you before. We have gold aplenty in our house.

HECTOR

Well, you shall come and take your own pick from the spoils.

DOLON

180     Take them, and nail them on the houses of the gods.

HECTOR

What prize greater than such things can you ask me for?

DOLON

The horses of Achilles.

                  Since I risk my life  
on dice the gods throw, it must be for a high stake.

HECTOR

Ah. You are my rival, for I love those horses too.

185     They are immortal, born of an immortal strain,  
who bear the fighting son of Peleus. The king  
of the sea, Poseidon, broke them once and tamed them and gave  
them to Peleus, so the story goes. Yet I have raised  
your hopes, and I will not be false. I give you them:  
190     Achilles' horses, a great possession for your house.

DOLON

I thank you. Thus my courage shall have a reward  
that will outshine all others in the land of Troy.  
But you should not be jealous. There is much besides

for you, our best and greatest, to take glory in.

CHORUS [*singing*]

ANTISTROPHE

195    *High is the venture, high are the honors you hope to capture.  
Blessed will your name be called if you win. For here  
is glorious work to be done.  
It would have been bold to marry into the house of our kings.  
May the gods grant that Justice's eyes be on you,*  
200    *as men now grant that all you deserve shall be yours.*

DOLON

I am ready, once I have gone inside my house  
and put upon my body the necessary gear.  
From there, I shall take my way against the Argive ships.

CHORUS LEADER

What costume will you wear in place of what you have on?

DOLON

205    One suited to my venture and my stealthy way.

CHORUS LEADER

Some cleverness is to be learned from the clever man.  
Tell me then, how do you mean to have your body arrayed?

DOLON

I shall put a wolfskin upon my back, fitted  
so that the grinning jaws of the beast are on my head,  
210    then, with the forepaws on my hands and the hind feet  
upon my legs, shall imitate the four-foot tread



of the wolf, to puzzle the enemy who track me there  
beside the ditch and by the bows of the beached ships.  
Then when I reach the lonely stretch where no one is  
215 I shall go upright. Thus my strategy is planned.

CHORUS LEADER

May Hermes, son of Maia, bring you there and bring  
you back, since Hermes is the friend of slippery men.  
You know your business. All you need now is good luck.

DOLON

I shall come safely back, but kill Odysseus first  
220 and bring his head to you, to give you solid grounds  
for saying Dolon won through to the Argive ships.  
Or maybe Diomedes—but my hand will not  
be bloodless when, before the day breaks, I come home.

*(Exit to the side.)*

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE A

*Lord of Thymbraeum, lord of Delos, who walk*  
225 *in the holy Lycian shrine,*  
*Apollo, O son of Zeus, come with your bow*  
*armed, come in the night,*  
*lead, preserve, and guide on his way this man*  
230 *of battles, lend your strength to Dardanus' children,*  
*O power complete, who long ago*  
*founded the walls of Troy.*

ANTISTROPHE A

*Grant that he reach their shipsteads and come to spy  
on the spread army of Greece  
and turn and make his way back to the house of his father  
235 and the sacred hearth, in Troy;  
and grant, some day, he may mount the Phthian horse-chariot,  
after our chief has smashed the war strength of Achaea,  
240 and win the gift the sea god gave  
once to Peleus, son of Aeacus.*

STROPHE B

*Yes, for he alone dared go down to  
spy on their ships  
for our land and people. I  
admire  
245 his courage; for indeed few  
are found brave when the city  
is a ship riding a hard  
storm on the open  
water. There is still manhood  
250 alive in Phrygia  
and valor left still in her  
spears.  
What Mysian is there who  
holds  
scorn that I fight beside him?*

ANTISTROPHE B

*Who shall that man of Achaea be whom our stalking killer  
255 will spear among the shelters as he goes  
on fours in the pace of a lurking  
beast? May it be Menelaus!  
Or may he kill Agamemnon*

*and bring the head back*  
260 *for Helen to lament, that evil brother of hers*  
*by marriage. For it was he*  
*who led the thousand ships*  
*and the army here against Troy.*

*(Enter a Trojan Shepherd from the side.)*

SHEPHERD

My lord, I hope I can always bring my masters news  
265 as good as what I bring you now, for you to hear.

HECTOR

What crude creatures these yokels are. They have no sense.  
You think it fitting to report about the flocks  
to the armed nobility? You have no business here.  
Do you not know where my house is, or my father's throne?  
270 Go there for your announcement that the sheep are well.

SHEPHERD

We herdsmen are crude creatures, I will not say no.  
Nevertheless, I am bringing good news for you.

HECTOR

Will you stop trying to tell me about what goes on  
in the farmyard? We have spears and fighting on our hands.

SHEPHERD

275 But it is just such matters I report to you.  
There is a man, with strength of thousands at his back,  
who comes to fight for our country at your side.

HECTOR

Where are the native plains that he has emptied of men?

SHEPHERD

Thrace; and his father is called Strymon.

HECTOR

Do you mean  
280 that Rhesus has set foot on Trojan soil?

SHEPHERD

You have it. So saved me half of what I had to say.

HECTOR

How did he lose the carriage road on the broad plains  
to wander through the herds on Ida's mountainside?

SHEPHERD

I do not know exactly. I can guess at it.  
285 It is no small thing to bring an army through the night  
when you know the plain is full of enemies in arms.  
We countrymen, who live where Ida runs to rock,  
and plant our hearth on the bare ground, took alarm, as he  
came through the oak wood with its animals in the night.  
290 For this army of the Thracians streamed along  
with great clamor, and we, terror-stricken, ran away  
to the high pastures, fearing some Argives had come  
on a plundering expedition and to rob your folds.  
But then our ears made out their language; it was not  
295 anything Greek, and now we were no more afraid.  
I went and stood before the pathway of their scouts,

hailed them, and questioned them aloud in Thracian speech:

“Who rides as general here, and of what father called  
comes he in arms to fight by Priam’s citadel?”

300 Then, having heard answers to all I wished to know,  
I stood and watched. There I saw Rhesus like a god  
upright behind his horses in the Thracian car.

The golden balance of a yoke enclosed the necks  
of his young horses, and these were whiter than snow.

305 The buckler on his shoulders glowed with beaten plates  
of gold, and as upon a goddess’ aegis, the bronze  
face of a Gorgon on the horses’ frontlet shields  
glared, and with bells beat out a clashing sound of fear.

You could not reckon on an abacus the count

310 of all their army, so innumerable did it seem,  
horsemen in numbers, numerous squads of buckler men,  
many archers with their slender arrows, and, besides,  
the light troops, in their Thracian costume, followed with them.

Such is the man who comes to fight for Troy. Neither

315 by flight, nor yet by standing to him with the spear,  
will Peleus’ son Achilles find escape from death.

CHORUS LEADER

When the gods change and stand behind the citizens,  
a depressed fortune climbs uphill, and wins success.

HECTOR

Now that my spear is fortunate, and Zeus is on  
320 our side, I shall be finding that I have many friends.  
We can do without them. We want none who did not fight  
our perils, past now, when the driving god of war  
blew big upon our city’s ship and wrecked our sails.

Rhesus has shown what kind of friend he is to Troy.  
325 He is here for the feasting, but he was not here  
with spear in hand to help the huntsmen catch the game.

CHORUS LEADER

Your grievance and complaint of friends is just. And yet,  
accept those who, of their free will, will fight for us.

HECTOR

We have saved Ilium this long time. We are enough.

CHORUS LEADER

330 Are you so sure you have the enemy beaten now?

HECTOR

I am so sure. God's daylight, which is near, will show.

CHORUS LEADER

Look to the future. God often reverses fortunes.

HECTOR

I hate a man who comes too late to help his friends.  
As for this man, since he is here, let him be here<sup>o</sup>  
335 as a stranger guest at our table, but as no fighting man.  
He has lost all the kind feelings of the sons of Troy.

CHORUS LEADER

Spurn allies, lord, and you gain peril and lose love.

SHEPHERD

If the enemy only saw him they would be afraid.

*(To Chorus Leader.)*

HECTOR

You urge me faithfully.

*(To Shepherd.)*

And you have given a timely report.

340 So, for the sake of what the messenger has said,  
let golden-armored Rhesus join us as our ally.

*(Exit Shepherd to the side.)*

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE A

*Adrasteia: Necessity: Zeus’  
daughter! Keep bad luck from my mouth.  
For I will speak what is in my heart.*

345 *All I wish shall be spoken.  
You are here, child of the River,  
here, at long last now in the court of Friendship,  
and welcome, since it was long, before  
the Muse your mother and the grand-bridged  
350 river god sent you to help us.*

ANTISTROPHE A

*This was Strymon, who with the Muse  
melodious, in the clear shining  
and watery swirl of their embrace,  
begot your youth and glory.*  
355 *You come, a Zeus resplendent  
for show, driving behind your dappled horses.  
Now, O my country, my Phrygia,*

*now, with god's will, you can claim the aid  
of Zeus himself, Liberator.*

STROPHE B

360 *Will it ever happen again that  
our ancient Troy*

*will know the day-long revelries,  
the love pledge and  
    companionship,  
the strumming on the lyres and the  
    wine cups circling,  
passed to the right, in sweet  
    contention,  
while on the open water the sons  
365 of Atreus make for Sparta,  
gone from the shores of Ilium?  
O friend, could it only be  
that with hand and spear you  
    would do  
this before you leave us!*

ANTISTROPHE B

370 *O come, appear, lift and flourish your golden buckler,  
slant it across the eyes of Peleus' son, over  
the split chariot-rail, spur on your colts, then  
cast the two-pointed spear. None  
375 who stands against you shall dance  
ever again on the level lands  
of Argive Hera. He shall die  
here, by a Thracian death, a welcome  
weight on this land, which will take him.*



*(Enter Rhesus from the side.)*

*[chanting]*

*Great King, he comes, O great King.*

380 *Gallant, O Thrace,  
is this youngling you bred, a monarch to behold.  
See the great force on his gold-armored body,  
hear the brave noise of his clashing bells  
that jangle on the shield rim.*

385 *A god, O Troy, a god, a real Ares  
is this stallion sired by the singing Muse  
and Strymon, who comes to inspire you.*

RHESUS

Great son of a great father, monarch of this land,  
O Hector, hail. On this late day I greet you,  
390 and greet the good success that finds you so advanced  
against the enemy's camp. Now I am here to help  
you knock their walls to rubble and to burn their ships.

HECTOR

O son of a melodious mother, one of the Nine,  
and Strymon, the River of Thrace: it is my way  
395 always to speak the truth. I have no diplomacy.  
Long, long ago you should have come to help our struggle.  
For all you have done, Troy could have fallen to Greek arms.  
This should not be.  
You cannot say it was because your friends never called you  
400 that you did not come, and did not help, and paid no heed.  
What herald or what aged representatives  
did not arrive to entreat you to our city's help?

What honorable gifts did we not send? For all  
you did, you might as well have thrown us to the Greeks,  
405 though you and we are non-Greek, one barbarian blood.  
Yet it was I who with this hand made you so great  
and lord of Thrace, though you were but a small chieftain  
before I swept Pangaeum and Paeonia,  
fought with the Thracian warriors face to face, and broke  
410 their lines of bucklers, made slaves of their people, turned  
them over to you. You owe us much. You have spurned it  
and to your friends in distress come with late relief.  
Yet here are others, who are not our kin by blood,  
who came long ago, and some of them have fallen and lie  
415 buried in their mounds, who greatly kept faith with our city,  
while others, in their armor, by their chariot teams,  
have stood whatever cold winds or thirsty heat the god  
sends, and still do endure it, without  
sleeping, as you did, snug beneath the covers,  
or drinking deep your wine and toasting one another.  
420 There, you may know that Hector speaks his mind.  
I have my grievance, and I tell you to your face.

RHESUS

I am another such as you. I cut a path  
straight through arguments. I too have no diplomacy.  
But I have been hurt more at the heart than you, more vexed  
425 and shamed, not to be here in your country.  
But see. There is a land neighbor to mine, its people  
are Scythian, and as I was about to keep appointment  
at Ilium, these attacked me. I had reached the shores  
of the Hostile Sea, to put my Thracian army across,  
430 and there the ground was sopped with Scythian blood, and Thracian

too, as the spearwork made commingled slaughter.  
Such were the accidents that kept me from my march  
to Troy's plain and my arrival as your ally.  
Once I had beaten them, made hostages of their children,  
435 and set a yearly tribute to be paid to us,  
I crossed the sea gate with my ships, went on by land  
over the intervening country, and so am here;  
not, as you claim, because I drank in comfort, not  
because I slept at leisure in a golden house.  
440 For I know well, I have endured them, those stiff winds  
of ice that sweep Paeonia and the Thracian Sea.  
Sleepless, and in this cloak here, I have come through these.  
I come to you behind my time, but timely still,  
for here is the tenth summer of your years of war,  
445 and *you* have made no progress, but day after day  
you throw your dice against the hazard of Argive arms;  
one single day of sunlight is enough for *me*  
to storm their walls and burst upon their mooringsteads  
and kill the Achaeans. On the next day after that  
450 I am off for home, having disposed of your whole war.  
Not one of your people needs to lift a single shield.  
I will deal with these vaunted Achaeans with my spear,  
and destroy them, even though I came behind my time.

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE A

*Hail, hail,*  
455 *welcome your cry, welcome, you come from Zeus, only I pray*  
*that Zeus keep away*  
*the invincible spirit of Envy from cursing your words.*

*For no man from Argos*  
460 *did the sea armament bring, before*  
*or now, stronger than you. Say how*  
*could even Achilles endure your spear?*  
*How could Ajax endure it?*  
*If I could only see, my lord, only see that day*  
465 *when your spear hand*  
*is bloody with retribution.*

RHESUS

So for my too-long absence I will make amends  
thus (but mayAdrasteia not resent my words):  
when we have liberated this city of yours and when  
470 you have chosen first spoils and devoted them to the gods,  
I am willing to sail with you against the Argives, storm  
and ravage the whole land of Hellas with our spears,  
to let them learn what it is like to be attacked.

HECTOR

If I could only get rid of my present troubles  
475 and rule a peaceful city as I did before  
I would be very grateful to the gods.  
As for the Argive country and the Greek domain,  
they are not so easy to devastate as you seem to think.

RHESUS

Do they not say the greatest of the Greeks are here?

HECTOR

480 They are great enough for me. I want no more.

RHESUS

Then, once we have killed these, have we not done everything?

HECTOR

Don't plan for distant ventures before finishing what's at hand.

RHESUS

You seem content to be acted on, not to act.

HECTOR

I have my own kingdom here, and it is large.

485 Now, whether you want the left wing, or the right,  
or to be among the central allies, take your choice,  
and plant your shields, station your army where you wish.

RHESUS

My wish, Hector, is to fight the enemy alone;  
but if you think it shame to take no hand in burning  
490 their beached ships, an end for which you fought so long,  
set me face to face with Achilles and his men.

HECTOR

It is not possible to set your eager spears  
against him.

RHESUS

The story was he sailed to Troy.

HECTOR

He sailed. He is here. But angry  
495 with their generals, he takes no part in the fighting.

RHESUS

Who is most famous in their army after him?

HECTOR

Ajax, I think, is just as good, and Tydeus' son  
Diomedes. Then there is that talker, that big mouth,  
Odysseus, but his heart is brave enough, who has done  
500 more damage to our country than any single man.  
He it was who crept in the night to Athena's shrine  
and stole her image and took it to the Argive ships.  
There was a time the Argives sent him to scout us,  
and in a beggar's miserable outfit, disguised,  
505 he got inside our walls, railing against the Greeks.  
But then he killed the sentries and the gate guards and got free  
away. Constantly he is observed, under cover  
by the Thymbraean altar, near the city, watching  
his chance. A crafty planner, always a handful of trouble.

RHESUS

510 Why, no true man of spirit deigns to kill his man  
by stealth. One should go forward and attack direct.  
This man you speak of, crouching in thievish ambushes  
and scheming stratagems, this man I will seize alive,  
impale him through the spine where the road goes out the gates,  
515 and leave him there to feed the vultures.  
That is the kind of death that such a man should die  
for being a low brigand and a temple robber.

HECTOR

Well, it is night now, and time for you to bivouac.  
I will show you your place, apart from where the rest  
520 of the army is stationed. There your men can spend the night.

Should you want anything, the watchword is “Phoebus.”  
Learn it. Remember. Tell it to your Thracian force.

*(To the Chorus.)*

Now, you must go out in advance  
of our position,  
keep a sharp watch, and be on the  
lookout for Dolon

525                    who's scouting the ships, for, if  
                     he is still alive,  
  
he must be almost back now to the  
Trojan camp.

*(Exit Hector and Rhesus to the side.)*

CHORUS [*singing*]

## STROPHE B

Whose is the watch now? Who relieves  
mine? The early constellations  
are setting. The Pleiades' sevenfold course  
530 rides high, and the Eagle soars in the center of heaven.  
Wake. What keeps you? Wake  
from your sleep, to your watch.

*Do you not see how the moon shines?*

535     *Dawn is near, dawn*  
           *is breaking now, here is the star*  
           *that runs before it.*

*[The next few lines are chanted by various Chorus members]*

CHORUS LEADER

*Who was announced for the first watch?*

CHORUS MEMBER

*Coroebus, they say, Mygdon's son.*

CHORUS LEADER

*Who was after that?*

CHORUS MEMBER

540                    *The Paeonian force*  
*awoke the Cilicians. Mysians awoke us.*

CHORUS LEADER

*Then is it not time to go wake the Lycians*  
*and take the fifth*  
545    *watch in our turn as allotted.*

CHORUS [*singing*]

ANTISTROPHE B

*I hear. But perched above Simois*  
*the nightingale,*  
*the own-child-slayer in vociferous chant*  
550    *sings her murderous marriage, sings her song and her sorrow.*  
*The flocks are pasturing on Ida*  
*now. I can hear the night-murmuring*  
*call of the shepherd's pipe.*  
*Sleep is a magic on my eyes.*  
555    *It comes sweetest*  
*to the lids about dawn.*  
*[Again, the following lines are chanted by different Chorus*  
*members]*

CHORUS LEADER



*Why is the scout not here, that one  
Hector sent to spy on their ships?*

CHORUS MEMBER

*I fear for him. He is long gone.*

CHORUS LEADER

560     *Might he have stumbled into an ambush  
and been killed?*

CHORUS MEMBER

*He might. It is to be feared.* °

CHORUS LEADER

*My orders are to go wake the Lycians  
and take the fifth  
watch in our turn as allotted.*

*(Exit the Chorus to the side. Then enter Odysseus and Diomedes cautiously  
from the side, bearing Dolon's armor.)*

ODYSSEUS

565     Diomedes, did you hear? Or was it a noise without  
meaning that falls on my ears? Some clash of armor?

DIOMEDES

It was nothing, the jangle of iron on the harness  
against the chariot rails. But I was frightened too,  
at first, when I heard the clanking of the metal.

ODYSSEUS

570     Be careful. You might run into their sentries in the dark.

DIOMEDES

I will watch how I step despite the darkness.

ODYSSEUS

If you do wake anyone, do you know what their watchword is?

DIOMEDES

I know it. It's "Phoebus." Dolon told me.

ODYSSEUS

Look!

Here are some bivouacs of the enemy. But empty.

DIOMEDES

575     Dolon spoke of this too. He said Hector should be sleeping  
here. And it is for Hector that this sword is drawn.

ODYSSEUS

What can it mean? Perhaps the troops have gone somewhere?

DIOMEDES

He may have gone to work some stratagem against us.

ODYSSEUS

Hector is bold, very bold, now that he is winning.

DIOMEDES

580     What shall we do now, Odysseus? We hoped to find  
our man asleep, but we've failed.

ODYSSEUS

We must go back to our mooring place as quick as we can.

Whatever god it is who grants him his success  
is watching over him now. We must not force Fortune.

DIOMEDES

585 But should we not look for Aeneas? Or for that Phrygian  
we hate worst of all, Paris? Cut their heads off?

ODYSSEUS

How, without deadly peril, can you find these men  
in the dark, and here among our enemies?

DIOMEDES

But it is shameful to go back to the Argive ships  
590 without doing our enemies the least damage.

ODYSSEUS

How can you say you have done no damage? Did we not kill  
Dolon, who scouted our ships? Do we not carry his armor  
here, our spoils? Do you think you can sack their whole camp?

DIOMEDES

You are right. Let us go back. May we only succeed!

*(Enter Athena above the tent.)*

ATHENA

595 Where are you going? Why do  
you leave the Trojan camp  
biting your very hearts for  
disappointed spite

because the god will not allow  
you to kill their Hector

or their Paris? Have you not heard

of the ally,  
Rhesus, who has come to Troy in  
no mean circumstance?  
600 For if he survives this night and is  
alive tomorrow,  
not even Achilles, and not Ajax  
with his spear,  
can keep him from destroying all  
the Argive fleet,  
smashing, demolishing your walls  
and storming in  
to fight with level spears.  
605 Kill him, and all is won. Let  
Hector bivouac  
in peace, nor try to murder him.  
His death shall come, but it shall  
come from another hand.

ODYSSEUS

Athena, mistress, for I recognized your voice  
and way of speaking that I know so well, and know  
610 how you are always with me and watch over me,  
tell me, where is this man sleeping whom you bid us  
attack? Where is his station in the Trojan camp?

ATHENA

He is camped right here and has not joined the main army.  
Hector gave him this place to sleep, outside the lines,  
615 until this night passes and day comes, and by him  
are picketed the horses from the Thracian  
chariots, so white that you can see them through the dark  
gleaming, as if they were the wings of swans on water.

Kill their master and bring these home to your camp,  
620 spoils of surpassing splendor, for no place on earth  
contains a team of chariot horses such as these.

ODYSSEUS

Diomedes, yours be the work of killing Thracians—  
or let me do it, and you look after the horses.

DIOMEDES

I will do the killing; you manage the horses.  
625 You are the experienced one, the quick improviser.  
One ought to place a man where he can do most good.

ATHENA

Alexander is here, I see him, coming our way  
in haste. He must have heard from one of the guards  
confused rumors about the presence of enemies.

DIOMEDES

630 Does he have others with him or is he by himself?

ATHENA

He's alone. He seems to be making for where Hector sleeps,  
so he can report to him the presence of spies in the camp.

DIOMEDES

Well, should he not be killed and his account settled?

ATHENA

No. You must not go beyond what has been destined for you.  
635 There is no authority for you to kill this man.  
You came here, bringing their destined death to certain others.

Do it. Dispatch. Now to this man I shall pretend  
I'm Aphrodite, his ally, standing beside him  
in all perils. I'll pay him back with rotten lies.

640 This I have said. But though my victim stands close by  
he's heard and knows nothing of what's in store for him.

*(Exit Diomedes and Odysseus to one side, enter Alexander from the other.)*

ALEXANDER

Hector, my general, my brother, Hector I say,  
are you sleeping? How can you sleep? Waken, will you?  
Here is some enemy got close inside our lines;  
645 someone has come to rob us, or to spy on us.

ATHENA

Fear not. Here is your faithful ally Aphrodite  
watching over you. Your war is my war. I do not forget  
your favor and your kindness to me. I am grateful,  
and now, to your Trojan army in its high success  
650 I come, bringing a friend and mighty man of war,  
the Thracian, child of that divine maker of melodies,  
the Muse herself; the River Strymon is named his father.°

ALEXANDER

Always you are in truth the good friend of my city  
and me. I think the best thing I ever did  
655 in my life was to judge you first and win you to my city.  
What brings me here—there are wild rumors flying about  
among the sentries, nothing clear. Achaean spies,  
they say, are among us. One man reports but has not seen them;  
another saw them coming but knows nothing else  
660 about it. This is why I came to Hector's quarters.

ATHENA

Never fear. There's nothing wrong in the camp.  
Hector is gone to give the Thracians a place to sleep.

ALEXANDER

I trust you. I always believe what you say. I'll go  
and keep my station, free of this anxiety.

ATHENA

665 Go, for your interests are always on my mind,  
and all my purpose is to see my friends succeed.  
Oh, you will learn soon how I shall take care of you.

*(Exit Alexander to one side.)*

*(Calling offstage to the other side to Odysseus and Diomedes.)*

You two, over there. You are too bold. You, I am calling  
you, son of Laertes, put your sharp sword away.  
670 Our Thracian captain's down.  
We have his horses, but the enemy are aware  
and coming at you. Now is the time for speed, speed,  
to run for where the ships are moored. What keeps you?  
The enemy are upon you. Save your lives.

*(Exit Athena. Enter from one side Odysseus and Diomedes, from the other  
the Chorus of Trojan guards.)*

CHORUS [*singing*]

*There they go, there!°*

675 *Shoot, shoot.*  
*Spear them.*

*Who is it? Look! That's the man I mean.*

*They have come to rob us in the night, and they have roused the camp.*

680 *This way all.*

*Here they are. We have them fast.*

*What's your regiment? Where do you come from? Who are you?*

ODYSSEUS

Nothing for you to know. You have done an evil day's work.  
You shall die.

CHORUS LEADER

Tell me the watchword, will you, before you get this spear stuck  
through your chest.

ODYSSEUS

Stop. There's no danger.

CHORUS LEADER

685 Bring him here. Now, everyone, strike him.

ODYSSEUS

Was it you killed Rhesus?

CHORUS LEADER

No. You tried to kill him. We'll kill you!

ODYSSEUS

Hold hard everyone.

CHORUS LEADER

We will not.



ODYSSEUS

Hold. You must not kill a friend.

CHORUS LEADER

What's the watchword?

ODYSSEUS

Phoebus.

CHORUS LEADER

I acknowledge it. Down spears all.

Do you know where those men have got to?

ODYSSEUS

Yes, I saw them go this way.

*(He points to one side.)*

CHORUS LEADER

On their trail, then, everyone.

690

Should we raise a general alarm?

No. It would be bad to disturb our friends with an alarm in the  
night.

*(Exit Odysseus and Diomedes to one side; the Chorus starts to go off to the  
other but hesitates.)*

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE

*Who was the man who was here?*

*Who is it so hardy that he shall boast*

*that he escaped my hand?*

695     *Where shall I find him now?  
What shall I think he can be,  
that man who came on fearless foot through the dark  
across the stations of our ranks and our guards?  
Some Thessalian*  
700     *or some dweller in a seaside Locrian city?  
One whose living is made on the scattered islands?  
Who was it? Where did he come from? What country?  
Which god does he acknowledge as god supreme?*

CHORUS LEADER [*speaking*]

Was this the work of Odysseus after all? Or whose?  
705     If we are to judge by past deeds, who else?

CHORUS MEMBER [*singing*]

*You think so?*

CHORUS LEADER [*singing*]

*I must do.*

CHORUS MEMBER

*He has been bold against us!*

CHORUS MEMBER

*Bold? Who? Whom are you praising?*

CHORUS MEMBER

*Odysseus.*

CHORUS LEADER [*speaking*]

Never praise him, that thief, that treacherous fighter.

CHORUS [*singing*]

ANTISTROPHE

710     *He came once before  
          into our citadel, bleary-eyed  
          and huddled in a disguise  
          of rags, his sword hand  
          hidden under his clothes,  
715     begging his bread he crept in, a wretched vagrant,  
          dirty, unkempt, foul,  
          and much evil he spoke  
          against the royal house of the sons of Atreus  
          as if he hated all the lords of their host.  
720     I wish he had died, died as he deserved  
          before he ever set foot on the Phrygian shore.*

CHORUS LEADER

Whether it was Odysseus or not, I am afraid.  
We are the sentries, and Hector will hold us to blame.

CHORUS MEMBER [*singing*]

*With what charge?*

CHORUS LEADER [*singing*]

*With curses ...*

CHORUS MEMBER

725     *For doing what? What do you fear?*

CHORUS LEADER

*... because they got through us.*

CHORUS MEMBER

*Who did?*

CHORUS LEADER [*now speaking*]

Those men who got into the Phrygian camp tonight.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS [*from the side, singing*]

*Oh god. Disaster!*

CHORUS LEADER

Listen!

730 Silence. Keep your places all. Perhaps someone is in our nets.

*(Enter Charioteer of Rhesus, wounded, from the side.)*

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

*Halloo, help!*

*Disaster and ruin for the Thracians.*

CHORUS LEADER

This is one of our allies  
in pain or terror.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS [*chanting throughout the following interchange*]

*Halloo!*

*I am hurt, I am done. And you, lord of the Thracians,  
how hateful that day you saw Troy,*

735 *what an end to your life.*

CHORUS LEADER

You must be one of our allies, but who? My eyes  
fail me in the dark. I cannot clearly make you out.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

*Where can I find some chief of the Trojans?*

*Where is Hector himself?*

740 *Drowsing somewhere, sleeping under arms?*

*Is there none in command to whom I can report*

*what happened to us, what someone has done*

*and got clean away, vanished, leaving plain to see*

*the hurt he inflicted on the Thracians?*

CHORUS LEADER

745     Some mishap has come to the Thracian force, it seems  
from what this man says.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

*The army is shattered, the king is killed*

*by a traitor's stroke,*

750 *and oh, my own wound hurts*

*deep and bleeds. Shall I die? Must both*

*Rhesus and I be basely killed*

*in Troy, which we came to help?*

CHORUS LEADER

There is no mystery in the ill news he reports

755     now; it is plain to see that our allies are killed.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS [*now speaking*]

There has been wickedness done here. More than wickedness:  
shame too, which makes the evil double its own bulk.

To die with glory, if one has to die at all,

is still, I think, pain for the dier, surely so,

760     yet grandeur left for his survivors, honor for his house.

But death to us came senseless and inglorious.

When Hector with his own hand led us to our quarters  
and gave us the watchword, we lay down to sleep, worn out  
with the fatigue of our long march. No one kept watch  
765 in our contingent for that night, nor were our arms  
stacked out in order, nor were the goads in place beside  
the yokes of the horses, since our king had been assured  
that you were masters of the field and your pickets threatened  
their anchorage; so we dropped in our tracks, and grossly slept.

770 Yet my own heart was restless, and I woke again  
to give some fodder to the horses, thinking we must  
harness them for the dawn's fighting, so I heaped their food  
lavishly. Now I see two fellows stealing through our camp  
in the dense dark, but when I started in their direction  
775 they dodged away and made off.

I called out and warned them to stay away from the camp.  
I thought some of our allies had gone out to steal  
from us.

    No reply.

        I did not give it another thought.

I went back to where I had been, and slept again.

780 But now there came an apparition to my sleep.

Those horses, that I trained and drove as charioteer  
at Rhesus' side, I saw them, as one sees in a dream,  
but wolves had got astride their backs and rode them now,  
and stabbed their backs and rumps with their tails as goads—the  
mares

785 went wild with terror, bucking and fighting, snorting  
from flared nostrils.

I started up to drive those savage beasts away  
from the mares, for the dream's terror had awakened me.

As I raised my head I heard a moan such as men make  
790 when they die, and a jet of hot fresh blood splashed me. It came  
from my master, who had been murdered, and died hard.  
I leapt upright, but there was no spear in my hand,  
and as I looked about and fumbled for a weapon  
somebody coming close up slashed me hard in the side  
795 with a sword. I took and felt a cut from the blade  
that ripped me deep.  
I fell on my face. He and the other man seized the team  
and car, mounted, galloped away, and escaped.  
Ah.  
I am faint from my wound, I cannot stand.  
800 I know what happened, for I saw it, but do not  
understand in what way these men could have been killed  
nor what hand killed them. I can guess.  
My guess is that our friends were the ones who hurt us.

CHORUS LEADER

O charioteer of that unfortunate Thracian king,  
805 do not be angry with us. The enemy did this.

*(Enter Hector from the side.)*

And here is Hector in person, who has heard the news  
and comes, I think, in sympathy for your misfortune.

*(To the Chorus.)*

HECTOR

You are responsible for a disaster. How did it happen  
that these marauders sent out by the enemy  
810 got past you and made havoc in our camp? Disgraceful!

Why did you not shout out loud as they came in  
nor as they were going out? Someone will pay for this,  
and who but you? I hold you responsible. You had the watch.  
Now they are gone, untouched, and much amused, no doubt,  
815 with the feebleness of the Trojans, and of me, their leader.  
I tell you now—father Zeus be witness to my oath—  
death by flogging or by the headsman's axe awaits you  
for your part in this. Else, say Hector is a weakling.  
Say he is nothing.

CHORUS [*singing*]

ANTISTROPHE A

820 *No, no!*  
*We came to you, lord, defender of the city, we did,<sup>o</sup>*  
*we came (it must have been these),*  
*we told you their fires were burning beside the ships.*  
825 *Since then, all through the night's vigil*  
*our eyes have not deadened, they have not slept;*  
*by the springs of Simois we swear it. O my lord,*  
*do not be angry with us. None of all this*  
*that has happened is our fault.*  
830 *If again, in the course of time, you prove we have said or done*  
*anything wrong, then bury us*  
*alive in the ground. We will not protest.*

(*To Hector.*)

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

You are a barbarian, so are we. Why do you parry  
my charge by threatening these men? Why make a Greek  
lawyer's speech here?



You did this.

835                   We Thracians,  
the wounded and the dead, will not be satisfied  
with anyone else. It would take you a long and artful speech  
to convince me that you have not been killing your friends.  
You coveted those horses. For their sake, you murdered  
840 your own allies, whose coming you had begged so hard.  
They did come. They are dead. When Paris shamed hospitality  
he was better than you—you murderer of your friends and helpers.  
Never tell me it was one of the Argives  
got through to destroy us. Who could slip through the Trojan lines  
845 without detection and reach us?  
You and the whole of the Phrygian army lay between.  
Who of your own particular allies is dead,  
or wounded, by those enemies you speak of? We  
who lay beyond are wounded, some, while others fared worse  
850 and do not look any longer on the light of the sun.  
I tell you plain. I do not think this was any Achaean.  
Who could pick a path through the enemy in the dark  
and find where Rhesus lay—unless they were directed  
by a god? They would not even know  
855 of his arrival. Your defense is artificial.

HECTOR

We have had the help of our allies through all the time  
that the Achaean army has been on our shores,  
and not one word of complaint has come from any of them  
of ill treatment. You would be the first. I hope  
860 no greed for horses ever makes me kill my friends  
to get them. This is more of Odysseus. What man else  
among the Argives could have planned and done it?

I fear him. The thought, too, racks my mind,  
he might have chanced to meet Dolon and killed him. Dolon  
865 has been gone for a long time, and there's no sign of him.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

I don't know what "Odysseuses" you're talking about.  
I do know we're hurt, and it was no enemy did it.

HECTOR

Since you cannot think otherwise, then go on thinking this.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

O land of my fathers, how can I reach you, and there die?

HECTOR

870 No dying. Too many have died already.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

I have lost my masters. Where shall I turn to?

HECTOR

My own house will take you in and make you well.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

How shall the hands of our murderers take care of me?

HECTOR

This man keeps saying the same thing. He will not stop.

CHARIOTEER OF RHESUS

875 Perish the murderer. I do not mean you;  
you need not protest. The spirit of Justice knows who did it.

HECTOR

Take him up. Help him into my house,  
then look after him carefully, so that he will not  
be complaining any more.

*(Exit Charioteer of Rhesus, assisted, to the side.)*

*(To the Chorus.)*

880        You go to the forces on the wall,  
to Priam and the elders. Tell them it is time  
to bury these dead beside the highway where it leaves  
our city.

CHORUS [*chanting*]

*After our high success, does the god  
now change Troy's luck, bring us back, to suffer  
new losses? What does he plan?*

*(The Chorus starts to go off to one side but stops when the Muse appears  
above, holding in her arms the body of Rhesus.)*

885        *But see, see,  
my king, over your head, what goddess  
hovers, carrying aloft in her arms  
the man lately slain?  
A pitiful sight. It fills me with fear.*

THE MUSE

890        Behold me, Trojans, and fear not. I am the Muse,  
one of the Nine and prized among the poets, who stand  
before you. I have seen the death of my dear son  
so sadly slain by the enemy. His killer, treacherous

Odysseus, some day shall be punished as he deserves.

[*now singing*]

STROPHE

- 895     *With our own song of mourning*  
          *I mourn you, my child. Oh, you hurt*  
          *your mother when you went*  
          *that day to Troy,*  
          *a cursed, wretched way.*
- 900     *I would not have had you go, but you went.*  
          *Your father restrained you, but you broke away.*  
          *I mourn you, my child, dear,*  
          *dearest heart, I mourn you.*

CHORUS LEADER

- I, too, as much as ever one can grieve
- 905     who has no kinship with the dead, grieve for your son.

THE MUSE [*still singing*]

ANTISTROPHE

- Perish the grandson of Oeneus.*  
          *Perish the son of Laertes.*  
          *He made me childless, who had*  
          *the best child in the world.*
- 910     *Perish the woman who forsook*  
          *her Greek home for a Phrygian bed.*  
          *She, dearest son, she is your true destroyer,*  
          *she, who made unnumbered cities*  
          *empty of the brave.*

[*now speaking*]

915 Philammon's son, both when you lived and when you died  
you have struck my heart and wounded me deeply, O Thamyris.  
Rude violence did all. It brought you down. Your challenge  
to the Muses, too, made me bear this unhappy son;  
for as I waded through the waters of the Strymon,  
920 the river god was on me; I was in his arms  
and conceived. It was when we Muses, all arrayed  
with our instruments, went to the gold-soiled mountain-mass  
of Pangaeum, and the high contest of melody  
with that great Thracian singer, and we blinded him,  
925 Thamyris, who had vilified our craft of song.  
When you were born, in shame over my maidenhood  
and before my sisters, I flung you into the great waters  
of your father, and Strymon gave you into the care  
of no mortals, but the maiden nymphs of his own springs  
930 who nursed you to perfection and then sent you forth,  
child, to be king of Thrace and first of mortal men.  
There in the bloody valors of your land's defense  
I never feared your death.  
Only to Troy I warned you, you must never go  
935 knowing what waited you there, but Hector's embassies  
and the repeated conclaves of the men of state  
persuaded you to come to the defense of friends.  
Athena! You alone are guilty of this death.  
Odysseus and the son of Tydeus were your agents;  
940 without you they did nothing. Never think I do not know.  
And yet I and my sister Muses make your Athens  
great in our art, and by our presence in the land;  
and it was Orpheus, own first cousin to this man

you have slain, who first instructed your people in the rites  
945 of mystery and secrets revealed; last, it was we  
the sisters who with Phoebus educated  
Musaeus, your great and respected citizen,  
so he surpassed all other singers.  
Here is your gratitude. I hold my son in my arms  
and mourn him.

I need no other expert to sing with me.

CHORUS LEADER

950 Hector, that Thracian charioteer with his mad charge  
that we plotted Rhesus' murder is proved wrong.

HECTOR

I knew that well. It took no divination  
to see the hand of Odysseus in this warrior's death.  
And as for my part, when I saw the Greek army camped  
955 on our shores, what should I do but send my heralds out  
to our allies and ask them to come and help?  
I sent heralds. This man was in my debt. He came to help.  
But do not think I am unmoved by his death.  
I am also ready to make him a great funeral mound  
960 and burn the glory of innumerable robes.  
He was my friend. He came to help. And now he's dead.

THE MUSE

Rhesus will not go to the black meadow in the earth.  
So much at least I claim from the infernal bride,  
the daughter of Demeter, goddess of the fields,  
965 that she send up his soul. She is in debt to me  
to show that she gives honor to the friends of Orpheus.

For me he will be as one dead, with no more light  
in his eyes, for the rest of time. He will not come again  
to where he looks upon his mother any more.

- 970 Hidden deep in the caves among the silver mines  
under the ground he shall live on, a human spirit,  
seeing the light as prophet of Bacchus, who made his shrine  
under Pangaeum's cliff, a holy god for initiates.  
The load of grief that I must bear is lighter  
975 than that of the sea goddess. Her son too must die.  
I with my sisters first shall lament your death, my son,  
then mourn Achilles, on Thetis' day of sorrow.  
Pallas, who killed you, cannot save him.  
Apollo's quiver holds the shaft that means his death.  
980 O making of children, hapless work, sorrow of mankind,  
the man who reasons well  
will live his whole life childless and not risk having children  
whom some day he must bury.

*(Exit the Muse.)*

CHORUS LEADER

- Rhesus is in his mother's hands, and she will mourn him.  
985 Hector, your work lies now before you. It is dawn.  
It is time. What would you have us do?

HECTOR

- About your business. Tell the allies to arm with speed,  
and yoke their horses to the chariots,  
then, when full armed, await the call of the Tyrrhenian  
trumpet. For I am confident we can overrun  
990 the camp and walls of the Achaeans, fire their ships,

and that this sunlight that begins to climb  
brings us of Troy our day of liberty.

*(Exit to the side.)*

CHORUS LEADER [*chanting*]

*Obey the king. Let us march, well armed,  
in good order, give the word  
995 to the allies. Who knows? The god who is on our side  
might grant us the victory.*