

Book 4

The gods, seated by Zeus, were gathered together
on the golden floor, and among them the lady Hēbē
was pouring them nectar, and they with their golden cups
pledged one another while gazing out at the Trojans' city.
Now the son of Kronos was minded to irritate Hērē 5
with taunting remarks, and said, speaking deviously:
"Two goddesses, no less, Menelaös has as his helpers—
Hērē of Argos and Athēnē the Defender.
But they sit here at a distance, getting enjoyment only
as onlookers, whereas Aphrodītē, lover of laughter, 10
stands by *her* man, protects him from the death spirits—
indeed, just lately she saved him when he thought he'd die!
Still, the victory must go to warlike Menelaös,
so we should be figuring out how these matters shall be:
are we once more to stir up vile warfare and grim fighting, 15
or rather to bring about friendship between the two sides?
If this last choice should turn out welcome and pleasant to all,
then might King Priam's city remain inhabited,
and Menelaös go home, taking Argive Helen with him."

So he spoke, but Athēnē and Hērē muttered against him, 20
sitting side by side, planning trouble for the Trojans.
Athēnē kept quiet now, said nothing openly,
though angry with Zeus her father, gripped by wild resentment;
but Hērē's breast could not contain her fury. She said:
"Most dread son of Kronos, what's this you're telling us? 25
How can you mean to void and nullify all my labor—
the sweat that I sweated in toil, the exhaustion of my horses
as I gathered the troops, bringing trouble to Priam and his sons?
Do this, but we'll not all endorse it: we, the other gods!"

Deeply angered, to her cloud-gatherer Zeus made answer: 30
"Are you mad? What great harm have Priam and Priam's sons
ever done you, to make you rage endlessly
for Ilion, that well-built citadel, to be destroyed?
Only if you were to penetrate their gates and lofty ramparts,

and devour Priam raw, him and all his sons, together 35
 with every other Trojan, would you finally glut your anger!
 Act as you like, but don't let this quarrel in future
 become a great cause of dissension between us two.
 One other thing I will tell you, and you take it to heart: 40
 Whenever I, too, am minded to bring down a city,
 and choose one in which the men are your special favorites,
 do nothing to thwart my anger, but let me be,
 now I'm willing to yield to you—though with unwilling heart,
 since of all cities beneath the sun and starry heavens
 in which men bred on earth maintain their dwellings, 45
 sacred Ilion has ever been most honored in my heart,
 and Priam, lord of the fine ash spear, and Priam's people.
 For never yet has my altar lacked its share of the feasting,
 neither libations nor savor, the honor that's due to us."

To him then spoke in answer the ox-eyed lady Hērē: 50
 "Three cities there are that I love far above all others:
 Argos and Sparta and wide-streeted Mykēnai:
 Lay these waste whenever your heart is stirred against them!
 I'm not standing as their defender, I don't grudge them to you.
 For suppose I was reluctant, didn't want them destroyed, 55
 My reluctance would be useless, since you're far the stronger.
 Yet my toil also must not be made of no account:
 I too am a god, of the same descent as yourself,
 sired as the first of his daughters by devious Kronos—
 on two counts, since I'm the oldest, and because I'm known 60
 as your consort, while you rule over all the immortals.
 But on this let us both yield, each one to the other,
 I to you, you to me: then the rest of the immortal
 gods will follow our lead. So, act now, order Athēnē
 to enter the fearful conflict between Trojans and Achaians 65
 and try to arrange that the Trojans are first, and in defiance
 of their sworn oaths, to do harm to the arrogant Achaians."

So she spoke, and the Father of men and gods did not
 refuse her, but straight away spoke winged words to Athēnē:
 "Go quickly down to the hosts of the Trojans and Achaians, 70
 and try to arrange that the Trojans are first, and in defiance
 of their sworn oaths, to do harm to the arrogant Achaians."

So saying he urged on Athēnē—already eager to go—
 and down she darted from the heights of Olympos.
 As the son of devious Kronos dispatches a meteor 75
 to be a portent for sailors or a widespread encampment
 of troops—a bright one, and a trail of sparks flies from it—
 like that as she swooped to earth was Pallas Athēnē.
 She landed between the lines, amazing those who saw her,
 both Trojan horse breakers and well-greaved Achaïans, 80
 and thus would a man exclaim, turning to his neighbor:
 “Surely once more evil warfare and the dread noise of battle
 will return—unless now friendship’s being set between the two sides
 by Zeus, long since the dispenser of warfare to mortals.”

 Such was the talk among Achaïans and Trojans. But she 85
 came down into the thick of the Trojans in the likeness
 of a man, Laodokos, Antēnōr’s son, a strong spearman,
 looking for godlike Pandaros, hoping to find him—
 and find him she did, the son of Lykaōn, noble, mighty,
 standing there, and around him the mighty ranks of shield-bearing 90
 troops that had followed with him from the streams of Aisēpos.
 Then, standing close, she addressed him with winged words:
 “Will you do now what I ask you, skilled son of Lykaōn?
 Would you dare to let fly a swift shaft at Menelaös?
 Among all the Trojans you’d reap great gratitude and renown, 95
 and of them most in the eyes of the prince Aléxandros.
 From him you, above all others, would get the richest gifts
 if he were to see Menelaös, Atreus’s warlike scion,
 felled by your arrow, and laid on the grievous funeral pyre!
 So come now, shoot that arrow at glorious Menelaös, 100
 and vow to Apollo, the wolf-born, the famous archer,
 a splendid rich offering consisting of first-born lambs
 when you get back to sacred Zeleia, your city.”

So Athēnē spoke,
 and thus persuaded the wits of this witless man. At once
 he took out his polished bow, made from the horns 105
 of a wild goat he’d once shot beneath the breastbone,
 watching from cover as it trotted out from the rocks,
 then hit in the chest: it fell back among the boulders.
 The horns on its head had grown to sixteen palms in length,
 and these a craftsman in horn had worked and fitted together, 110

smoothing them well overall, and added a golden tip.
 This bow he now grounded firmly, bent it and strung it,
 his worthy companions sheltering him with their shields
 in case the Achaians' warlike sons might try to rush him
 before Menelaös, Atreus's warlike son, was hit. 115
 Now he opened his quiver's lid, took out an arrow,
 brand-new, winged, a vehicle for dark anguish.
 Quickly he settled this bitter shaft to the bowstring,
 made his vow to Apollo, the wolf-born, the famous archer,
 of a splendid rich offering of first-born lambs 120
 when he got back home to his city of sacred Zeleia,
 then drew, clutching notched arrow and ox's sinew together,
 brought the string back to his nipple, to the bow the iron arrowhead.
 And when he'd drawn the great bow into a curve,
 it twanged, the bowstring sang loud, the sharp arrow leapt, 125
 eager to speed its way through the throng.

Yet even now,

Menelaös, the blessed gods, the immortals, did not forget you.
 First among them was Zeus's daughter, the spoil bringer,¹
 who stood before you, diverted the piercing missile,
 swept it just clear of your flesh—just as a mother 130
 will swat flies away from her child that's bedded in sweet sleep—
 and turned it, herself, to where the golden buckles
 of the baldric were fastened, and the corselet was folded double.
 Into the fitted baldric the bitter arrow struck,
 right through the baldric's decorations it was driven, 135
 right through the finely wrought corselet it forced its way,
 and the kilted guard he wore to shield his flesh, a defense
 against missiles, his chief protection—through that too it sped.
 The arrow scraped skin and flesh as it passed, and at once
 dark blood trickled down from the wound it made. 140

As when

some woman—perhaps a Maiōnian or a Karian—
 stains ivory with purple, to make a cheek piece for horses,
 and it lies in a storeroom, and many the riders who long

1. This is Athēnē: the epithet “spoil bringer” (ἀγγελίη, *ageleîē*) is (like so many Homeric epithets) of dubious meaning: most often interpreted as the bringer, driver, or carrier of spoil, it was also sometimes thought to mean “war leader.”

to flaunt it, but there it lies, a prince's pleasure—
 his horse's adornment and its driver's source of pride— 145
 just so, Menelaös, were your shapely thighs stained with blood:
 they, and your shins, and the fine ankles beneath them.

He shuddered then, did the lord of men, Agamemnōn,
 when he saw the dark blood trickling down from the wound;
 and Menelaös himself, the warlike, likewise shuddered.² 150
 But when he saw that the barbs and their binding were still
 clear of the flesh, the spirit within his breast recovered.
 With a deep groan, the lord Agamemnōn spoke among his comrades,
 Menelaös's hand in his, and they groaned in sympathy:
 "Dear brother, it was for your death, then, that I swore this oath, 155
 sending you out, alone, before the Achaians, to battle
 the Trojans, since they have now shot you, and trampled down
 the oaths they swore. Yet an oath's not in vain—the lambs' blood,
 the unmixed libations, the handclasps in which we put our trust.
 Though the Olympian may not bring instant retribution, 160
 bring it in time he will. Men pay heavily for their atonement—
 with their own heads, through their wives, or through their children.
 For this I know full well, in my heart and in my mind:
 A day will come when sacred Ilion will perish,
 with Priam, lord of the fine ash spear, and Priam's people; 165
 and Zeus, high-throned son of Kronos, the sky dweller,
 will, in fury at such deceit, shake his black-cloud aegis
 over them all. These matters will not fail of fulfillment.
 But dreadful sorrow for you will be mine, Menelaös my brother,
 if you die now, and fulfil your lifetime's destiny; 170
 and a contemptible creature I'd be, back in thirsty Argos,
 for at once the Achaians' minds will turn to their native land,
 and we'd be leaving the Trojans and Priam a cause for boasting
 in Argive Helen! The plowland will rot your bones
 as you lie here in Troy, your mission unaccomplished, 175
 and one of the arrogant Trojans will thus declare,
 as he capers upon the grave mound of glorious Menelaös:

2. It has long been wondered why both Menelaös and Agamemnōn should have been so alarmed by what was clearly a very superficial wound. Gilbert Murray was almost certainly right when he argued years ago in *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (129–30) that the passage looked back to an era when poisoned arrows were a commonplace (cf. line 218, where Machaön sucks blood from the wound), being banned, by general agreement, from warfare only later (like lethal gas after World War I).

‘So may Agamemnōn’s anger always find fulfillment,
 as now all in vain he has brought here his host of Achaians,
 and gone back home to his own dear native country 180
 with empty ships, and left brave Menelaös behind.’
 Thus someone will speak: that day let the wide earth gape for me.”

But fair-haired Menelaös spoke encouragingly to him:
 “Take heart—and do not frighten the Achaian rank and file!
 Not in any fatal spot did the sharp shaft lodge: before that 185
 my gleaming baldric stopped it, and under that the leather
 apron and kilted guard that the coppersmiths armored for me.”

In answer to him then spoke the lord Agamemnōn:
 “Indeed may it be so, dear brother, dear Menelaös!
 A physician will handle your wound, will spread upon it 190
 medicinal herbs to relieve you of your dark pains.”

That said,
 he then addressed Talthybios, the sacred herald:
 “Talthybios, go with all speed, summon Machâōn here,
 the mortal son of Asklēpios, peerless healer,
 to see to Menelaös, Atreus’s warlike son, 195
 whom someone has shot and hit—an expert archer,
 some Trojan or Lycian: glory for him, for us sorrow.”

So he spoke: the herald heard, and did not disregard him,
 but went straight off through the well-greaved Achaians’ ranks,
 looking out for the hero Machâōn. He found him standing 200
 at ease, all around him the strong ranks of shield-bearing troops
 who had accompanied him all the way from horse-pasturing Triikka.
 So he approached, and addressed him with winged words:
 “Up with you, son of Asklēpios! Lord Agamemnōn needs you
 to attend to Menelaös, the warlike son of Atreus, 205
 whom someone has shot and hit—an expert archer,
 some Trojan or Lycian: glory for him, for us sorrow.”

So he spoke, and stirred up the spirit in Machâōn’s breast,
 and they set off through the wide camp of the Achaian troops.
 When they arrived at the place where fair-haired Menelaös 210
 lay wounded, with all the chieftains in a circle around him,
 Machâōn, the godlike mortal, came in among them,
 and at once pulled out the arrow through the fitted belt, so that,

as it was drawn through, its sharp barbs broke off backwards.
 Then he undid the gleaming baldric, and beneath it the leather 215
 apron and kilted guard that the coppersmiths had armored,
 and when he saw the wound that the bitter arrow had made,
 he sucked out the blood, with skill applied the healing herbs
 that Cheirōn had once given to his father in friendship.

While they were busy around Menelaös of the great war cry, 220
 the ranks of the shield-bearing Trojans began to advance,
 so they armed themselves once more, minds reverting to battle.

Then you would not have seen illustrious Agamemnōn
 asleep, or shrinking in fear, or unwilling to join battle,
 but most eager for the conflict that brings men honor. 225

His horses he left behind, with his bronze-inlaid chariot,
 and these fierce-breathed steeds were held back by his charioteer,
 Eurymedōn, son of Peiraios's son Ptolemaios,
 with strict instructions to have them on hand for whenever
 fatigue might assail his limbs while marshalling so many. 230

Out there on foot he worked his way through the ranks:
 those of the fleet-horsed Danaäns that he saw as hot for the fray
 he'd approach, and give them words of rousing encouragement:
 "Argives, never relax that fighting spirit of yours!
 Zeus, the Father, will lend no support to liars— 235

Those who first did violence in defiance of their oaths,
 surely their tender flesh will be eaten by vultures—yes,
 and we shall carry off their dear wives and little children
 in our vessels, as soon as we've captured their citadel."

But any he saw holding back from hateful warfare, 240
 these he would strongly reprove with indignant words:

"You contemptible arrow-brave Argives, have you no shame?
 Standing there in a dumbstruck daze, like a bunch of fawns,
 exhausted after scampering over some lengthy plain,
 that stop, stock-still, with no spark of courage left in them! 245

That's you, stuck in a stupor, away from the fighting—
 maybe you're waiting until the Trojans reach your fine-sterned
 vessels, hauled up here on the shore of the grey sea?
 Or is it to see if Kronos's son will stretch his arm over you?"

So, acting the lord, he ranged through the army's ranks, 250
 and came, as he went through the mass of troops, to the Krētans.

They were arming for battle around doughty Idomeneus,
 and Idomeneus stood in the forefront, brave as a wild boar,
 while Mérionēs rallied the rearguard companies.
 Seeing them, Agamemnōn, the lord of men, rejoiced, 255
 and at once greeted Idomeneus with winning words:
 “Idomeneus, you I do honor above all the swift-horsed Danaäns,
 whether it be in warfare or any other business,
 or indeed at the feast, when the elders’ fire-bright wine
 is mixed in the bowl by the chief men of the Argives. 260
 For though all the other long-haired Achaians drink
 their allotted portion, your cup stands always full,
 just as mine does, to drink whenever the spirit moves you.
 Now rouse up for battle, like the man you claim you once were!”

 To him then Idomeneus, the Krētans’ leader, replied: 265
 “Son of Atreus, to you I shall be a trusty comrade
 just as I promised and swore, from the very beginning.
 But now urge on all the other long-haired Achaians,
 so we can join battle the soonest! The Trojans are forsworn,
 and for them hereafter there shall be death and sorrow: 270
 by breaking their oath they were the first offenders.”

 So he spoke, and Atreus’s son moved on, gladdened at heart,
 and came to the two named Aias as he strode through the throng:
 they were arming, and backed by a cloud of troops. As when
 from his lookout point a goatherd perceives a cloud 275
 approaching across the deep, blown by the west wind,
 and to him, being at a distance, it looks blacker than pitch
 as it passes over the deep, bringing a mighty tempest,
 and he shrinks at the sight of it, and drives his flock to a cave—
 just so, beside both Aiases, the dark and serried ranks 280
 of vigorous youths, Zeus’s nurslings, were on the march
 into deadly battle, all bristling with shields and spears.
 Seeing them, the lord Agamemnōn rejoiced in his heart.
 and he then addressed them, speaking with winged words:
 “You two Aiases, leaders of bronze-corseleted Achaians, 285
 to you—out of place to urge you—I give no orders: you
 yourselves are exhorting your men to battle fiercely!
 If only—by Zeus the Father, by Athēnē and Apollo!—
 such a spirit might be engendered in every man’s heart,

then would King Priam's city soon totter to its fall,
stormed and sacked at our hands." 290

That said, he left them there
and went on his way in search of others; and next
he came upon Nestōr, the Pylians' lucid spokesman,
arraying his comrades and urging them on to battle,
those led by tall Pelagōn and Alastōr and Chromios, 295
and lord Haimōn, and Bias, the shepherd of his people.
The mounted fighters he set in front, with their horses and chariots,
and behind them, in large numbers, the valiant foot soldiers,
to be a strong wall of battle. The cowards he drove to the middle,
so that all, even though unwilling, would be forced to fight. 300
He first briefed the mounted fighters, giving them orders
to rein in their horses and not get entangled with the masses:
"And let no man, trusting in his horsemanship and valor,
be eager to fight with the Trojans alone, in front of the rest—
but don't retreat either: that way you'll be less effective! 305
When a man in his chariot comes within range of an enemy's, then
let him lunge with his spear, for that's the best way by far—
it's how men in the olden days would storm cities and ramparts,
holding this purpose and spirit within their hearts."

So thus
the old man urged them on, from his knowledge of wars long past;
and at the sight he rejoiced, did the lord Agamemnōn, 310
and addressed him as follows, uttering winged words:
"Old sir, if only, like the heart in your breast, so might
your knees still serve you, your strength remain unimpaired!
But age, ineluctable, weighs on you: how I wish some other
warrior had your years, and you were among the youths!" 315

Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, to him made answer:
"Son of Atreus, I too most heartily wish I still had
the strength that was mine the day I slew noble Ereuthaliōn!
But no way do the gods grant mortals all things at once— 320
Then I was young, but now old age is my companion.
Even so, I shall go round the mounted fighters, instruct them
with words of counsel: that is an old man's right.
The wielding of spears belongs to a later generation,
men younger than me, men with confidence in their strength." 325

So he spoke, and Atreus's son moved on, gladdened at heart,
 and found Peteos's son Menestheus, whipper of horses,
 standing there, and around him the Athenians, war-cry masters,
 and close by there stood resourceful Odysseus, and with him
 the ranks of the Kephallēnians—no weaklings they— 330
 were waiting: not yet had their forces heard the war cry,
 since only now were the ranks of Achaians and horse-breaking

Trojans

stirring themselves to action. So they stood there, idle,
 till some other Achaian body should move forward,
 make a charge at the Trojans, get the battle started. 335
 Seeing these drew a rebuke from the lord of men, Agamemnōn,
 so that he spoke out, addressed them with winged words:

“You there, son of King Peteos, Zeus's nursling,
 and you, the master deceiver, mind set on crafty profit!
 Why do you hang back nervously, waiting upon others? 340
 You two should be out up front there with the foremost troops,
 ready to play your part in the fiery conflict! You're
 always the first to hear my call to the feasting
 when we Achaians make ready a dinner for the elders:
 then you're happy enough to eat roast meat, and swill 345
 honey-sweet wine by the cupful, as long as you wish—but now
 you'd cheerfully stand by and watch, were there ten Achaian
 companies battling before you with the pitiless bronze.”

With a dark glance resourceful Odysseus answered: “Son
 of Atreus, what's this talk that's escaped the barrier of your teeth? 350
 How can you say that we hold back from fighting whenever
 we Achaians make bitter war on the horse-breaker Trojans?
 You'll see—if you care to, if you have the slightest interest—
 Tēlemachos's dear father engaged with the front-line fighters
 of these same horse-breaker Trojans. Your words are empty wind.” 355

To this the lord Agamemnōn answered, smiling at him
 as he took in his indignation, unsaying the words he'd uttered:
 “Son of Laertēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus!
 Mine was no heavy rebuke, nor am I giving you orders:
 Full well I know that the spirit within your breast 360
 harbors friendly thoughts: you think the same way that I do.
 Come then, we'll make things right later, if any wrong word
 has been uttered—and may the gods reduce all this to nothing!”

So saying, he left them there, and went in search of others,
 and came upon Tydeus's son, bold-hearted Diomēdēs, 365
 standing there by his horses and dovetailed chariots,
 with Sthenelos, son of Kapaneus, at his side. The sight of him
 once more drew a scolding from the lord of men, Agamemnōn,
 so that he spoke out, addressed him with winged words:
 "Now then, you son of Tydeus, that fierce horse breaker, 370
 why are you skulking down here, one eye on the battlefront?
 It wasn't Tydeus's way to shrink back thus: no, rather
 he'd be far in front of his comrades, embattled with the foe!
 So they tell it who saw him in action: myself, I neither
 met him nor saw him; still, they say he excelled all others. 375
 Now once—as guest, not as enemy—he visited Mykēnai
 with godlike Polyneikēs, recruiting troops. At that time
 they were campaigning against the sacred walls of Thēbē,
 and urgently begged to be given some first-class allies.
 Our people were ready to help them, had agreed to the request, 380
 but Zeus changed their hearts with a show of ill-omened signs.
 So they left, and when they'd got some distance on their way
 they came to the reed-thick Asōpos with its grassy banks,
 and from there the Achaians sent Tydeus ahead with a message.
 So he set off, and found a large group of Kadmeians 385
 banqueting in the house of that mighty force Eteoklēs.
 Now, stranger though he was there, Tydeus the charioteer
 had no fear at being alone in this crowd of Kadmeians,
 whom he challenged to trials of strength, and easily beat
 every man jack of them, such a help was Athēnē to him. 390
 But these Kadmeian horse whippers then got furious,
 and on his way back they ambushed him in strength—
 fifty young fighting men, and a couple to lead them:
 Haimōn's son Maiōn, a man like the immortals,
 and Autophonos's son, the war veteran Polyphontēs. 395
 But on these too Tydeus let loose an unseemly fate:
 he slew the lot, spared one only to go back home again—
 Maiōn, in obedience to the gods' signs. Such a man
 was Aitōlian Tydeus. Yet the son he sired could not
 match him in battle, though a better maker of speeches." 400
 So he spoke, and not one word did mighty Diomēdēs
 say in reply, from respect for his honored king's rebuke.

But the son of renowned Kapaneus made this reply:
 “Son of Atreus, don’t lie when you know how to tell the truth!
 We two do call ourselves far better men than our fathers, 405
 seeing we captured the stronghold of seven-gated Thēbē
 when we’d brought a lesser force against their stronger ramparts,
 trusting in the gods’ omens and the support of Zeus—although
 it was through their own reckless folly that they perished.
 So, never rank our fathers as equal in honor to us.” 410

But to him, with an angry glance, mighty Diomēdēs said:
 “Friend, sit down, be silent, and listen to what I tell you:
 I do not fault Agamemnōn, the shepherd of the people,
 for urging the well-greaved Achaians into battle, since great
 honor will come to him should it happen that the Achaians 415
 slaughter the Trojans, and take sacred Ilion—but
 great grief, should it be the Achaians who are slaughtered.
 So come, let us two also reclaim our fighting spirit!”
 With that he sprang, armed and armored, from his chariot to
 the ground.
 Fearful the clash of bronze on the king’s chest as he moved: 420
 Even the stoutest heart would have quailed in terror at it.

As when on an echoing shoreline the waves of the sea
 crash down one after the other, driven on by the west wind—
 first cresting out in deep water, but then they break
 on the beach with a thunderous roar, and around the headlands 425
 surge, arch, and peak, spew out the frothing brine:
 so then, one after the other, the Danāan companies moved
 unendingly into battle. Each leader issued the order
 to his own troops; the rest marched on in silence. You’d think
 the vast numbers following had no voice in their breasts— 430
 so speechless they were, so scared of their captains—while on them
 glinted the fine-wrought armor in which they marched.
 But the Trojans—like countless ewes in a rich man’s steading
 that stand and wait to be eased of their white milk, and keep up
 a ceaseless bleat as they hear the cries of their lambs— 435
 so the Trojans’ clamor went up through their massed forces,
 for they had no speech in common, no single language,
 but a mixture of tongues, men drafted from many regions.
 They were spurred on by Arēs, their foes by grey-eyed Athēnē,

and Terror and Panic, and Strife—so incessantly eager, 440
 the sister and comrade of man-slaying Arēs: at first
 she rears her crest only a little, but very soon
 her head is set in the heavens while she walks the earth.
 She it now was that spread evil contention in their midst
 as she passed through the massed ranks, increasing men's
 agony. 445

When they had come to one place, and were met together,
 buckler slammed against buckler, spears thrust, the bronze-
 clad rage
 of warriors pressed the attack, their bossed shields ground
 hard each upon the other, and a mighty hubbub went up.
 There were groans and triumphant shouts, from warriors killing 450
 or being killed, while the earth ran wet with blood.
 As when in winter two mountain torrents discharge
 a massive body of water down from their mighty springs
 to where the two streambeds meet in some hollow ravine,
 and far off in the mountains the herdsman hears their thunder: 455
 so from those met in battle came shouts of triumph and anguish.

Antilochos was the first to take down an armored Trojan,
 a seasoned front-line fighter, Thalysios's son Echeplōs:
 his first shot struck the boss of his horsehair-crested helmet
 and stuck in his forehead: right through into the bone 460
 the bronze spear point pierced. Darkness shrouded his eyes,
 and he crashed like a tower amid the grind of battle.
 When he fell, the lord Elephēnōr caught hold of his feet—
 Chalkōdōn's son, who led the high-spirited Abantes—
 and was dragging him out from the missiles, all too eager 465
 to strip off his armor. This effort lasted an instant only,
 for as he was lugging the corpse high-spirited Agēnōr
 saw him stoop, and where his ribs were exposed beyond the shield
 struck home with a bronze-tipped spear, and loosened his limbs.
 So the vital breath left him, and a hard-fought tussle took place 470
 between Achaians and Trojans over his corpse: like wolves
 they sprang one at another, and fighter battered fighter.

There Telamōnian Aias felled Anthēmion's young son,
 a bachelor in his prime, Simoeisios, whom his mother
 bore on her way down from Ida, by the banks of the Simoeis, 475

having gone up there with her parents to see to their flocks.
 Hence his name, Simoeisios; yet he never repaid
 his parents the cost of his rearing—too brief his life span,
 eclipsed by a spear thrust he took from high-spirited Aias.
 Striding out in front, he was hit in the chest, above the right 480
 nipple: clean through his shoulder the bronze spear drove,
 and he slumped to the ground in the dust, like a black poplar
 that's grown in the bottom land of a great marsh meadow:
 smooth, except for the branches sprouting from its top,
 which a wheelwright has felled with his axe of gleaming iron 485
 to bend into a wheel rim for an elegant chariot,
 and it lies there drying out by the riverbank. Such was
 the slaying of Anthemios's son Simoeisios by Aias,
 scion of Zeus. At whom, then, bright-corseleted Antiphos,
 Priam's son, aimed through the throng with his knife-sharp spear, 490
 and missed; but struck Leukos, Odysseus's trusty comrade,
 full in the groin, as he was dragging away the corpse:
 he collapsed on it, and the body slipped from his grasp.
 This killing left Odysseus wrathful at heart, and through
 the front ranks he strode, in a helmet of gleaming bronze, 495
 coming up close, and stood there, took aim with his bright spear,
 glancing quickly around. The Trojans all shrank back
 as he threw; not in vain was his missile cast, but struck
 a bastard son of Priam's, Dēmoköön, who'd come over
 from Abydos, leaving behind his stable of racing mares. 500
 Him Odysseus, enraged on account of his comrade, speared
 full on the temple: clean through to the other temple drove
 the sharp bronze point. Darkness blacked out his eyes,
 he fell with a thud, and his armor rattled upon him.
 Then the front-line fighters gave ground, with illustrious Hector; 505
 the Argives raised a loud cheer, dragged off the bodies,
 and advanced still further forward. Apollo, furious
 as he looked down from Olympos, cried out to the Trojans:
 "Stir yourselves, horse-breaker Trojans, don't yield the battle
 to these Argives—their flesh is not made of stone or iron 510
 to resist the flesh-severing bronze when they take a hit:
 no indeed, nor yet has Achilles, sweet-haired Thetis's son,
 joined battle, but off by the ships is nursing his heartsick wrath."

So, from the citadel, the terrible god. The Achaians
 were urged on by Zeus's daughter, illustrious Trítogéneia,³ 515
 ranging through the ranks, on the watch for men giving ground.
 Fate there now ensnared Amarynkeus's son Diōrēs:
 by a jagged rock he was struck, on his right shin near the ankle,
 and the man who threw it was a leader of Thracians,
 Peirōs, Imbrasos's son, who had come to Troy from Ainos.
 Both tendons, and leg bones too, the pitiless stone 520
 utterly crushed: he collapsed on his back in the dust,
 both hands reaching forward to his own dear comrades
 as he gasped out his life. Then the stone thrower ran up,
 Peirōs, and speared him beside the navel. Out on the ground 525
 all his guts splashed, and darkness shrouded his eyes.

But as Peirōs withdrew he was speared by Aitōlian Thoas
 in the chest, over one nipple, and the bronze jammed in his lung.
 Forward at him ran Thoas, tugged out from his torso
 the weighty spear, then drew his keen-edged sword, 530
 and thrust it in Peirōs's mid-belly, robbed him of life,
 but failed to strip off his armor, for around him gathered
 his comrades, topknotted Thracians, grasping their long spears;
 and they, huge though he was, both strong and noble,
 thrust Thoas back from them: he staggered, gave ground. 535
 The two lay stretched in the dust beside each other, both
 leaders, one of the Thracians, the other of the Epeians
 in their bronze corselets; and many more died around them.

From now a late entrant could no more make light of the work—
 one who'd still taken no hit, was uncut by the sharp bronze— 540
 as he turned through the thick of it, even were Pallas Athēnē
 leading him by the hand, warding off the rush of missiles;
 for too many Achaians and Trojans on that day
 lay one by the other, stretched out face down in the dust.

3. A traditional epithet of Athēnē (also at 8.39, 22.183), but its meaning remains uncertain—and the explanations given in antiquity suggest that Hellenistic scholars were no wiser than we are. Modern philology suggests that *trīto-* (with lengthened iota), i.e. “third” is meant, so that Athēnē was Zeus's “third-born”, or genuine, daughter; but this too remains unconvincing. As with so many Homeric epithets, we simply have to admit that the original meaning was lost very early.