

Book 2

All others, both gods, and mortals, chariot marshals,
slept the night through, but on Zeus sweet sleep could get no hold,
for in his mind he was pondering how he might do honor
to Achilles, and slay many beside the Achaians' ships.
And to him, as he thought, this looked to be the best plan: 5
to send Atreus's son Agamemnōn a destructive Dream.
He spoke to the Dream, addressed it in winged words:
"Go now, destructive Dream, to the swift ships of the Achaians,
and when you reach the hut of Atreus's son Agamemnōn
repeat to him exactly the message that I now give you. 10
Bid him to arm the long-haired Achaians for battle
as quickly as may be, for now he may take the broad-streeted city
of the Trojans, since no longer are the immortals who dwell
on Olympos at odds, now Hērē has forced them to agreement
by her pleading, and troubles will be the Trojans' lot." 15

So he spoke: the Dream went, on hearing his charge,
and quickly came to the swift ships of the Achaians.
To Atreus's son Agamemnōn it went, and came upon him
asleep in his hut, and about him divine slumber was shed.
It stood there above his head in the likeness of Nēleus's son 20
Nestōr, whom Agamemnōn honored above all elders.
So in his likeness the god-sent Dream addressed him:
"You sleep, son of Atreus the warlike, breaker of horses!
Night-long sleep is not fitting for a man that's a counselor,
to whom troops are entrusted, who's burdened with many cares. 25
But now listen well: I bring word to you from Zeus,
who though far distant greatly cares for and pities you.
He bids you arm the long-haired Achaians for battle
with all speed, for now you may take the broad-streeted city
of the Trojans, since no longer are the immortals who dwell 30
on Olympos at odds, now Hērē has forced them to agreement
by her pleading, and trouble will be the Trojans' lot
at Zeus's hands. Keep this in your heart, don't permit
forgetfulness to seize you when honey-sweet sleep lets you go."

Thus it spoke and departed, leaving him there 35
 to reflect in his heart on things not destined to be fulfilled.
 For he thought he would take Priam's city on that very day,
 the fool, and did not know the deeds that Zeus was planning,
 that he was yet to afflict with much anguish and suffering
 both Trojans and Danaäns through the grind of battle. 40
 He woke, the divine voice still in the air around him,
 sat upright, shrugged into his comfortable tunic—
 elegant, newly made—flung a great cloak over it,
 tied under his smooth-skinned feet his elegant sandals,
 and slung from his shoulders his silver-studded sword. 45
 Then he took his ancestral scepter, forever imperishable,
 and with it strode by the ships of the bronze-corseleted Achaians.

The goddess Dawn drew near to high Olympus, bringing
 her announcement of light to Zeus and the other immortals;
 and the king commanded his clear-voiced heralds to call 50
 to assembly, by proclamation, the long-haired Achaians.
 They so proclaimed, and promptly the troops then gathered.

But first he held a council of the great-hearted elders
 by the ship of Nestōr, the king of Pylian ancestry.
 Having convened them, he outlined his crafty plan: 55
 "Listen, my friends. As I slept a heaven-sent Dream approached me
 through the ambrosial night; and most it resembled noble
 Nestōr, in shape and stature and appearance.
 It stood there above my head and spoke these words to me:
 'You sleep, son of Atreus the warlike, breaker of horses! 60
 Night-long sleep is not fitting for a man that's a counselor,
 to whom troops are entrusted, who's burdened with many cares.
 But now listen well: I bring word to you from Zeus,
 who though far distant greatly cares for and pities you.
 He bids you arm the long-haired Achaians for battle 65
 with all speed, for now you may take the broad-streeted city
 of the Trojans, since no longer are the immortals who dwell
 on Olympus at odds, now Hērē has forced them to agreement
 by her pleading, and trouble will be the Trojans' lot
 at Zeus's hands. Keep this in your heart.' So speaking 70
 it flew away and was gone, and sweet sleep released me.
 Let's see, then, if we can arm the Achaians' sons for battle!
 But first I shall test with them words, this being the custom,

even urge them to take flight in their many-benched vessels,
while you, some here, some there, with words restrain them.” 75

So saying, he sat down, and there then stood up among them
Nestōr, who reigned as king in sandy Pylos.

He, with friendly intent, now spoke before the assembly:

“My friends, leaders and rulers of the Argives,
had it been any other Achaian who informed us of this dream 80
we’d call it a lie and have nothing to do with it—But
he saw it who claims to be far the best of the Achaians!
So come, let us seek some way to arm the Achaians’ sons.”

This said, he led the way out of the council.

The other sceptered kings, obeying the people’s shepherd, 85
rose to their feet, as the people came hurrying in to assembly.

Just as close-packed swarms of bees keep on emerging
from some hollow rock, one new group after another,
and hover like clustering grapes above the springtime blossoms,
or fly off in masses, some this way and some that, 90

so from the ships and huts in their great numbers
along the wide seashore the troops from every homeland
marched in throngs to the assembly. With them flared Rumor,
urging them on, Zeus’s messenger. Thus they gathered.

The assembly was all confusion, the earth groaned under 95
these men as they sat, there was uproar. Nine heralds tried
to restrain them with shouted orders, to make them stop
their noise and attend to the princes, Zeus’s nurslings.

With great effort the people were settled, kept in place,
their shouting silenced. Then the lord Agamemnōn 100
rose, holding the scepter Hēphaistos had toiled to make:

Hēphaistos gave it to Lord Zeus, the son of Kronos,
from Zeus it passed to the courier slayer of Argos,¹
Lord Hermēs gave it to Pelops, driver of horses; Pelops
in turn bestowed it on Atreus, shepherd of his people, 105
Atreus, dying, bequeathed it to Thyestēs, rich in flocks,
and Thyestēs in turn left it to Agamemnōn to carry,
as lord over many islands and the whole of Argos.

1. An ancient, and obscure, title of Hermēs. Some scholiasts believed that the reference is to a monstrous dog called Argos, full of eyes, that Hērē set to watch Io, Zeus’s latest love, after he metamorphosed her into a cow to escape Hērē’s maleficent attentions. Zeus allegedly enlisted Hermēs’ help to get rid of the dog.

Leaning on this scepter he now addressed the Argives:
 “My friends, Danaän heroes, comrades in arms of Arēs, 110
 Great Zeus, Kronos’s son, has snared me in a crushing delusion,
 harsh god that he is. Once he promised, and bowed his head in assent,
 that I should sack strong-walled Ilion before returning home.
 Now he’s turned to a vile deception, orders me back
 in dishonor to Argos, after the loss of so many men. 115
 Such things, I suppose, give pleasure to Zeus in his mightiness,
 who has brought down the high towers of many a city,
 and will bring down still more, for his power is the greatest.
 A shameful thing it is, and for future men to learn, how
 in vain it was that so strong, so vast an Achaian army 120
 waged a war to no purpose—though they were fighting
 against fewer men—and still with no end in sight!
 For if we were so minded, Achaians and Trojans both,
 to swear a solemn truce, and to both be counted,
 the Trojans numbering all those with city households, 125
 and we Achaians being sorted in groups of ten,
 with each group choosing a Trojan to pour our wine,
 then many a group would lack for a wine pourer.
 So far, I say, do the sons of the Achaians outnumber
 those Trojans who dwell in the city. But there are allies 130
 from many cities, spear-wielding warriors, who
 thwart me, will not allow me, for all my wanting it,
 to take and sack Ilion’s populous city. By now
 nine years of great Zeus have come and gone, by now
 our ships’ timbers are rotted, their rigging all gone slack, 135
 while at home our wives and young children may be still
 sitting there in our halls and awaiting us. Yet the work
 for which we came here remains entirely unaccomplished.
 So come, then, let us all agree to do as I say:
 pull out with our ships, return to our own native land, 140
 since now we shall never capture Troy of the wide streets.”

So he spoke, and roused the spirit in the breasts of all
 that throng, none of whom had heard what was said in council.
 The assembly was stirred into motion like the long sea rollers
 of the Ikarian deep, which winds from the east or south 145
 roil up, rushing on them from the clouds of Zeus, the Father.
 As when the west wind’s onset flurries the deep-standing

grain with its rough blast, and all the corn-ears bend,
 so all the assembly was shifted, and with loud hullabaloo
 men raced to the ships, and from under their feet the dust 150
 lifted and hung in the air. They shouted one to another
 to lay hold of the ships, drag them down to the bright sea,
 started clearing the slipways, voices soaring skyward
 in their longing for home, knocked props away from the hulls.

Then for the Argives a homecoming beyond their destiny 155
 would have come about, had not Hērē thus addressed Athēnē:
 “Good heavens, unwearied daughter of Zeus of the aegis,
 is it thus to their native land the Argives will take flight
 homeward, across the broad back of the sea,
 leaving—a trophy for Priam and every Trojan to boast of— 160
 Argive Helen, for whom so many of the Achaiaans
 perished in Troy, far distant from their own fatherland?
 Go, now, through the ranks of the bronze-corseleted Achaiaans,
 with your gentle words restrain each individual:
 don’t let them haul their trim vessels seaward!” 165

So she spoke,
 and the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, did not demur,
 but went her way, swooping down from the peaks of Olympus,
 and speedily reached the swift ships of the Achaiaans.
 There she found Odysseus, Zeus’s equal in counsel,
 standing idle, not setting a hand to his black and well-benched 170
 vessel, since grief had possessed his heart and spirit.
 Standing close beside him grey-eyed Athēnē said:
 “Zeus-sprung son of Laertēs, resourceful Odysseus,
 is it thus to your native land that you’ll take flight homeward,
 tumbling aboard your many-benched vessels? Would you 175
 leave, as a trophy for Priam and every Trojan to boast of,
 Argive Helen, for whom so many of the Achaiaans
 perished in Troy, far distant from their own fatherland?
 Go, now, through the Achaiaans’ ranks, hold back no longer,
 with your gentle words restrain each individual, 180
 don’t let them haul their trim vessels seaward!”

So she spoke.

He knew from her speech that her voice was that of a goddess,
 and left at a run, throwing off his cloak, to be picked up

by the herald Eurybatēs, from Ithákē, his attendant.
 He himself went straight to Atreus's son Agamemnōn, 185
 who gave him his family's scepter, forever imperishable;
 with this he strode by the ships of the bronze-corseleted Achaians.

Any prince or eminent man whom he encountered,
 he'd stand at his side, try with gentle words to restrain him:
 "My good sir, it's not proper to browbeat you like a coward! 190
 Just sit yourself down, get your people seated too.
 As yet you've no clear knowledge of what Atreus's son intends:
 Now he's just making trial, but he'll hit the Achaians' sons
 soon, and hard. Did we not all hear what he said in council?
 May he not in his wrath do hurt to the sons of the Achaians! 195
 Proud is the spirit of kings, Zeus's nurslings: their honor
 derives from Zeus, and Zeus the Counselor loves them."

But each commoner that he saw, and discovered shouting,
 him he'd thrash with his staff, and assail with words as well:
 "You, fellow, sit quiet, attend to the words of others, 200
 better men than yourself! Unwarlike, strengthless,
 you're of no account either in battle or in counsel.
 No way can we all be kings here, we Achaians:
 no good thing is the lordship of many; let there be one lord,
 one king, to whom Kronos's son, that devious schemer, 205
 gives scepter and right of judgment, to deliberate for his people."

So, acting the lord, he controlled the troops. They hurried
 back from the ships and huts to the place of assembly,
 with a noise as when a wave of the loud-resounding sea
 thunders upon a great beach, and the deep re-echoes. 210

The rest had settled, were quiet; one man only,
 Thersitēs, a blabbermouth, kept scolding on: he had
 a great store of words in his mind, but all disordered,
 random, out of true sequence, to wrangle with the kings—
 anything that he figured might set the Argives laughing. 215
 Of all who'd come under Troy's citadel, he was the ugliest—
 bandy-legged, lame in one foot, both shoulders hunched,
 drawn in over his chest; above them his head
 came to a peak, and sparse the hair growing on it.
 Hated he was above all by Achilles and Odysseus, 220
 stock targets for his haranguing; but at noble Agamemnōn

he now directed his shrill abuse. With him the Achaians
 were fearsomely angry, indignant and resentful,
 yet still, at the top of his voice, he kept scolding Agamemnōn:
 “Son of Atreus, what’s your complaint now, what is it you lack? 225
 Your huts are crammed with bronze items, there are women galore
 in your huts, real choice ones, given you by the Achaians
 first off, whenever we get to capture a citadel!
 Or do you still itch for more gold, to be fetched you from Ilion
 by some horse-breaking Trojan as ransom for his son— 230
 whom I, or another Achaian, may have captured and brought in?
 Or is it some young woman for you to lie with in love,
 and keep apart for yourself? It isn’t right for one
 who’s their leader to bring harm to the Achaians’ sons!
 Weaklings! Cowardly creatures! You women, not men, of Achaia, 235
 let’s go back home in our ships, and leave this fellow
 here in Troy to gorge on his prizes: let him discover
 whether we’ll bother to help him, or not—this man who’s
 subjected Achilles, a far better man than he is,
 to dishonor, himself has taken his prize, and keeps it. 240
 Yet there’s no gall in Achilles’ heart, he’s easy-going.
 Otherwise, son of Atreus, this insult would be your last.”

Thus, railing at Agamemnōn, the shepherd of the people,
 Thersitēs. But quickly there came up noble Odysseus,
 stood by him, eyed him darkly, reproved him with harsh words: 245
 “Thersitēs, wild babbler, sharp stump speaker you may be,
 but shut up! Don’t try, on your own, to challenge princes,
 for I think there exists no more worthless mortal than you
 among all who came below Ilion with the sons of Atreus.
 Quit mouthing the names of the kings, leave off your ranting, 250
 the insults you cast at them, watching your chance to pull out!
 We still don’t know for certain how these matters will be:
 shall we, the Achaians’ sons, get a good or a bad homecoming?
 Yet here you sit, reviling Agamemnōn, son of Atreus,
 the people’s shepherd, because so much was given to him 255
 by the Danaän heroes: your speech is all jeering mockery.
 But this I will tell you straight, and it shall come to pass:
 should I find you once more playing the fool, as you are now,
 then may Odysseus’s head no longer rest on his shoulders,

no longer may I be called Tēlemachos's father, 260
 if I don't seize you and strip off all your clothing,
 your cloak and your tunic, that cover your naked shame,
 and send you off, howling, back to the swift ships,
 whipped out of the assembly with demeaning blows."
 So saying, with the scepter he struck Thersitēs' back 265
 and shoulders: he doubled up, the tears gushed from him,
 and a bloody welt rose on his back from the golden
 scepter. Then down he sat, in pain and terrified,
 with a helpless expression, wiping away the tears.
 Sorry for him or not, the troops still found him comic, 270
 and one, with a laugh, would turn to his neighbor and say:
 "I tell you, Odysseus may have done countless good things—
 a master of sound advice, of deployment in battle—but
 this is the best deed by far he's performed among the Argives,
 to make this slanderous word-slinger cease from his ranting! 275
 Never again will Thersitēs' headstrong spirit impel him
 to inveigh in insulting language against the princes."

 So spoke the common folk. Then Odysseus, city-sacker,
 stood up holding the scepter, while beside him grey-eyed Athēnē
 in the form of a herald ordered the people to keep silent, 280
 so that all the Achaians' sons, both front and rearmost ranks,
 could hear his words and take cognizance of his counsel.
 He, with friendly intent, now spoke before the assembly:
 "Son of Atreus! Indeed now, my lord, the Achaians are minded
 to name you the most blameworthy among all mortal men, 285
 nor will they fulfil the promise they once gave you
 on their way here from Argos, excellent pasture for horses—
 that not till walled Ilion fell would you sail away;
 for as though they were little children or widowed women
 they wail loudly, one to another, about returning home. 290
 It's true that it's hard, this sad longing to be gone;
 for anyone parted even one month from his wife with
 his many-benched ship feels distress, when wintry gales
 and tumultuous seas hold him back. But for us this is
 the ninth of the circling years that have seen us still 295
 soldiering on here. I don't blame the Achaians
 for fretting beside their curved ships, but, even so,

it's shameful to stay so long and go home empty-handed.
 Endure, my friends, hold firm a while longer, until we learn
 whether Kalchas is, or is not, a truthful prophet. 300
 There's a moment we well recall, and you can, every one of you,
 except those caught by the death-spirits, bear witness to it,
 when—it seems only yesterday—at Aulis the Achaian
 fleet was assembling, trouble for Priam and his Trojans.
 We on the sacred altars set up around a spring 305
 were offering unblemished sacrifices to the immortals
 under a lovely plane tree from which the bright water flowed.
 Then appeared a great sign: a serpent, backed blood-red,
 horrific, sent into the light by the Olympian himself,
 slid out from under the altar and made for the plane tree. 310
 There huddled a sparrow's fledglings, babes new-hatched,
 on the topmost branch, and cowering under its leaves—
 eight, and the mother that hatched them made the ninth.
 Then the serpent devoured them, all piteously cheeping,
 while the mother fluttered around, bewailing her little ones, 315
 till the snake, coiling, seized her wing as she shrilled in sorrow.
 But when it had polished the lot off, mother and all,
 the god behind its appearance made it a clear portent:
 the son of devious Kronos turned it to stone, and we
 stood there, amazed at what had happened. So when 320
 this dread prodigy interrupted our sacrifice to the gods
 Kalchas at once declared to us, in prophetic mode:
 'Why have you fallen silent, you long-haired Achaians?
 This great portent's been shown to us by Zeus in his wisdom:
 late, and late in fulfillment, but its fame will never perish!
 As this serpent devoured the sparrow's brood, and their mother 325
 with them—all eight, and she that hatched them made nine—
 so we for that sum of years shall wage war there,
 but in the tenth we shall take the wide-streeted city.'
 Such were his words, and now all this is being accomplished! 330
 So come, stand firm all of you, you well-greaved Achaians,
 here, till the day that we capture Priam's great citadel."

So he spoke: the Argives gave a great shout, and round them
 the ships echoed deafeningly to the Achaians' cheering
 as they applauded the speech of godlike Odysseus. 335
 Then the Gerēnian horseman Nestōr spoke out among them:

“Oh really! You’re like children when you hold assembly,
 mere infants, unacquainted with the business of warfare!
 What’s to become of our covenants, our sworn oaths?
 Shall we toss in the fire all men’s counsels and stratagems, 340
 those neat libations, those handshakes in which we placed our trust?
 We keep on wrangling with words, yet we can find
 no remedy, for all the lengthy time we’ve been here.
 Son of Atreus, you must, as before, maintain unshaken purpose,
 be the Argives’ leader throughout our fierce engagements! 345
 Leave those others to perish, the one or two Achaians
 plotting apart from the rest—but their work will come to
 nothing—
 to make their way back to Argos, even before we know
 if that promise by Zeus of the aegis is a falsehood or not.
 For I tell you, he nodded approval, did Kronos’s mighty son, 350
 on that day when in their swift-travelling vessels the Argives
 set forth, to the Trojans bearing slaughter and destruction:
 he struck lightning on our right, showed us signs of his favor.
 So let no man be over-hasty to set out homeward until
 he has lain with the wife of some Trojan, and got requital 355
 for all our effort and misery in the matter of Helen.
 But if anyone is terribly minded to set out homeward,
 let him so much as touch his black well-benched vessel,
 and the rest will watch his encounter with his death and destiny!
 Now, my lord, plan well yourself—and obey another: 360
 not to be tossed aside will be the advice I give you.
 Order your troops by their clans and by brotherhoods, Agamemnōn:
 Thus brotherhood will bring aid to brotherhood, clan to clan.
 If you act thus, and the Achaians do as you command,
 then you’ll know which of them, leaders and men, are cowards, 365
 and which the brave, since they’ll be fighting by themselves,
 and whether it’s heaven’s will that you fail to reduce the city,
 or because of your own troops’ lack of warlike skill and valor.”

To him now spoke in answer the lord Agamemnōn:
 “Once more, old sir, you surpass the sons of the Achaians 370
 in debate—Zeus the Father, Athēnē, Apollo! I wish
 I’d ten such counselors from among the Achaians! Then
 quickly indeed would King Priam’s city totter and fall,
 taken and sacked by our hands. But the son of Kronos,

Zeus who bears the aegis,² has rather brought me sorrows, 375
 tossing me into insoluble quarrels and disputes.
 For I and Achilles fought each other over a girl,
 exchanging violent words, and my anger it was began it.
 But if ever we reach agreement, from then no longer
 shall the Trojans' doom be postponed, not for a moment! 380
 Now off with you, get your meal, and then prepare for battle:
 let each man sharpen his spear, have his shield in good order;
 let each man provide good feed for his swift-footed horses;
 let each man look to his chariot, ready himself to fight,
 so that all day long we may be matched in hateful warfare. 385
 For there'll be no respite, no, not for a moment,
 Till night comes on and parts the warriors' mingled fury.
 Sweat-sodden about his chest will stretch the strap of each man's
 protective shield, the hand that grips his spear will weary;
 sweat-sodden the horse as it strains at his polished chariot. 390
 But any man I observe away from the fighting, who's minded
 to hang back by the curved ships—he'll no longer be able
 to rely on eluding the dogs and the birds of prey."

 So he spoke, and the Argives gave a great shout, like a wave
 stirred by a southern gale, crashing into some lofty headland, 395
 a jutting rock face ever assailed by breakers,
 that come at it from all quarters, driven by every wind.
 Up they got, and scattered hurriedly to the ships,
 built fires by their shelters, and set about their dinner;
 and each man sacrificed to one of the immortal gods, 400
 praying for escape from death and the grind of battle.
 But the lord of men, Agamemnōn now sacrificed an ox—
 a fat one, five years old—to Kronos's almighty son,
 and summoned the leading elders of all the Achaians:
 Nestōr, first of all, and noble Idomeneus, 405
 then, both the Aiases and the son of Tydeus,
 and, sixth, Odysseus, Zeus's equal in counsel.
 Menelaös, great at the war cry, chose to come with them,

2. The aegis is a divine appurtenance variously likened to a shield, wrap, or apron. It seems to vary with the bearer, which suggests that there may have been more than one: e.g., in Zeus's hands it is a shield, made for him by Hēphaistos; but for Athēnē it is some sort of a wrap, with the Gorgon's head woven into it. In the *Iliad* it is variously described as fringed, tasseled, golden, gleaming, and immortal. Its function is both to protect its wearer and to cause terror in the viewer, mostly on the battlefield.

for he knew in his heart how hard-pressed his brother was.
 They stood there around the ox, and held up the barley groats, 410
 and in prayer the lord Agamemnōn spoke among them:
 “Zeus, most glorious, greatest, lord of the storm clouds,
 heaven-dweller—let not the sun go down, or darkness
 come upon us until I have levelled Priam’s palace,
 left it blackened with smoke, filled its gates with devouring fire, 415
 and slashed open Hektōr’s tunic about his chest,
 ripped up by the bronze; and may many of his companions
 fall prone in the dust around him, teeth grinding into earth.”

So he spoke. But not yet did Kronos’s son grant him this;
 the sacrifice he accepted, but laid yet more grim toil upon him. 420

When they had prayed, and scattered the barley groats, first
 pulling back the victims’ heads, they slaughtered and flayed them,
 cut out the thighs, wrapped them up in a double layer
 of fat, and placed over them cuts of raw meat. These then
 they burned on split billets, stripped of all their leaves, 425
 while the innards they spitted and roasted in Hēphaistos’s flames.
 But when the thighs were well broiled and they’d tasted the innards,
 then they chopped up the rest, threaded the bits on skewers,
 grilled them with care, then drew them all off, and once
 they were through with their work, and the meal had been got ready, 430
 they feasted, and no one’s heart lacked a fair share in the feasting.
 But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
 first to address them was the Gerēnian horseman Nestōr:
 “Most glorious son of Atreus, lord of men, Agamemnōn,
 let us waste no more time on discussion, nor any longer 435
 postpone the action the god himself puts in our hands!
 Come now, let the heralds of the bronze-clad Achaians
 gather the troops ship by ship and make proclamation,
 while we all go in a body through the Achaians’ broad camp,
 the quicker to stir up their sharp-edged martial spirit.” 440

So he spoke. Agamemnōn, lord of men, did not ignore him:
 at once he ordered the clear-voiced heralds to summon
 the long-haired Achaians to battle by proclamation.
 They so proclaimed, and the men assembled quickly.
 Those around Atreus’s son, the princes, Zeus’s nurslings, 445
 hastened to marshal the ranks. Grey-eyed Athēnē joined them,

wearing the precious aegis, ageless, immortal,
 with a hundred dangling tassels, all of pure gold, and each
 finely woven, and worth the price of a hundred oxen.
 Thus adorned she flashed swiftly through the Achaian host, 450
 urging them onward: in each man's heart she stirred strength
 for ceaseless warfare and fighting, so that to them
 war at once became sweeter than any thought of returning
 in their hollow ships to the dear land of their fathers.

As annihilating fire burns up a boundless forest 455
 on some mountain summit, and the glare can be seen far off,
 so, as they marched, from their marvelous bronze gear
 the burnished radiance gleamed up through the air to heaven;
 and just as the many species of winged creatures—
 wild geese, or cranes, or swans with their long necks— 460
 on the Asian meadowland beside Kaÿstrios's streams
 fly hither and thither exulting in their wings' strength,
 then settle clamorously, and the meadowland resounds,
 just so from the ships and huts their many nations
 poured forth to Skamandros's plain, and beneath the tread 465
 of men and horses the earth re-echoed, a fearsome sound,
 and they halted and stood, in Skamandros's flowery meadow,
 thousands strong, like leaves and blossoms in their season.
 Like the multitudinous clusters of teeming flies
 that swarm round the shepherd's steading in the springtime 470
 when milk comes flooding the buckets, in such numbers
 they stood on the plain, the long-haired Achaians, against
 the Trojans, eager, determined, bent on their destruction.
 And as goatherds easily sort out their wide-scattered herds
 of goats when they've mingled for pasturage, so now the Achaians 475
 were positioned, some here, some there, to join in battle
 by their leaders, among them the lord Agamemnōn,
 in eyes and head like Zeus who delights in the thunderbolt,
 like Arēs in girth, and with the chest of Poseidōn.
 As one steer in a herd of cattle stands out, far above them all— 480
 the bull, distinguished among the cows assembled round it—
 such a one on that day Zeus rendered Atreus's son,
 preeminent among many, of heroes the foremost.

Tell me now, Muses, who have your dwellings on Olympos—
 for you are present, and goddesses, and know all things, whereas 485

we mortals have only hearsay, know nothing for certain—
 who were the leaders and princes of the Danaäns?
 As for the common throng, I could not report or name them,
 not even were ten tongues mine, all in ten mouths,
 an unbreakable voice, and a brazen heart within me, 490
 had I not the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus of the aegis,
 to remind me of all those who came below Ilion. Now
 I'll list the ships' commanders and all their squadrons.

Pēneleōs and Lēitos were leaders of the Boiōtians,
 with Arkesilaos and Prothoēnōr and Klonios, 495
 those who dwelt in Hyria and rocky Aulis,
 in Schoinos and Skōlos and many-spurred Eteōnos,
 in Thespeia, Graia, Mykalessos with its broad dancing floor;
 those who dwelt around Harma and Eilesion and Erythrai,
 those who held Eleōn³ and Hylē and Peteōn, 500
 Ōkalea and Medeōn, the well-wrought citadel,
 Kōpai, Eutrēsis, dove-haunted Thisbē; those
 who dwelt in Korōneia and grassy Haliartos,
 who held Plataia and who dwelt in Glisas; those
 who held lower Thēbē, the well-wrought citadel, and 505
 sacred Onchēstos, the bright grove of Poseidon;
 those who held grape-rich Arnē, and Mideia,
 sacrosanct Nisa, and borderland Anthēdōn.
 Of these there came fifty ships, and aboard each one
 a hundred and twenty young men of the Boiōtians. 510

Those who lived in Asplēdōn and Minyan Orchomenos,
 them Askalaphos led and Ialmenos, sons of Arēs,
 whom Astyoche bore, in the house of Azeios's son
 Aktōr—a bashful virgin, she went up into her chamber
 to mighty Arēs, who lay there with her in secret. 515
 With these were mustered thirty hollow vessels.

The Phōkians were led by Schedios and Epistrophos,
 offspring of Iphitos, great-hearted Naubolos's son.
 These were the ones who held Kyparissos and rocky Pythō,
 sacrosanct Krīsa and Daulis and Panopeus, 520

3. It is interesting, and significant, that Eleōn (like some other places listed in the Catalogue) was completely unknown until the reading of the Linear B tablets, indicating that at least part of the Catalogue dated back to Mycenaean times.

who dwelt around Anemōreia and Hyampolis,
 who lived beside Kēphisos, that noble river,
 and held Lilaia by the springs of Kēphisos.
 Along with these there followed forty black vessels.
 Carefully they ordered the ranks of the Phōkians, set them 525
 on the left wing, ready for battle, beside the Boiōtians.

Oileus's swift son was leader of the Lokrians: Aias,
 Aias the lesser, not huge like Aias Telamōn's son,
 but smaller by far. Slight of build, he wore a linen corselet,
 yet with the spear outclassed all Hellenes and Achaians. 530
 These men dwelt in Kynos, Opoeis, Kalliaros,
 Bēssa and Skarphē and beautiful Augeiai,
 Tarphē, and Thronion by Boagrius's streams.
 Along with Aias there followed forty black ships, belonging
 to the Lokrians who dwell across from sacred Euboa. 535

Next, those who held Euboa, the fierce-breathing Abantes:
 Chalkis and Eretria and grape-rich Histiaia,
 seaside Kērinthos and Dion's steep citadel, and
 those who held Kárystos, those who dwelt in Styra,
 whose leader was Elephēnōr, companion of Arēs, 540
 Chalkōdōn's son, the great-hearted Abantes' commander.
 With him the Abantes came, all runners, back hair long,
 spearmen hot with their out-thrust ash-wood lances
 to rip through the corselets that covered their enemies' chests.
 Along with him there followed forty black vessels. 545

Then there were those who held Athens, the well-built citadel,
 land of great-hearted Erechtheus, whom once Zeus's daughter
 Athēnē reared—the grain-giving plough-land bore him—
 and established in Athens, in her own rich shrine;
 and there with bulls and rams Athenian young men 550
 continue to seek his favor through the circling years;
 of these Menestheus was leader, the son of Peteōs.
 No other man on earth was as yet his equal
 at marshalling chariots and shield-bearing warriors:
 Nestōr alone could match him, for he was the elder. 555
 Along with him there followed fifty black vessels.

Aias from Salamis led twelve ships, and as leader
 stationed them where the ranks of the Athenians stood.

Those who held Argos and high-walled Tiryns and
 Hermionē and Asinē, lying on the deep gulf, with 560
 Troizēn and Eïonai and vine-clad Epídauros, and
 Aigina and Masēs, home to the young men of the Achaians:
 these Diomēdēs commanded, he of the great war cry,
 and Sthenelos, the dear son of wide-renowned Kapaneus,
 and with them as third came Euryalos, a godlike mortal, 565
 of king Mēkisteus the son, and grandson of Talaös—
 but Diomēdēs of the great war cry was lord over them all.
 Along with them there followed eighty black vessels.

Those who held Mykēnai, that well-wrought citadel.
 and wealthy Korinthos, and well-wrought Kleōnai, 570
 and dwelt in Orneai and lovely Araithyréa,
 and Sikyōn, over which Adrēstos first was king;
 those who held Hyperēsía, steep Gonoessa, and
 Pellēnē, who dwelt around Aígion and all
 the length of Aigialos, and around broad Helikē: commander 575
 of their hundred vessels was lord Agamemnōn, son
 of Atreus, and with him came the most troops by far, and the best,
 and among them he himself stood, armed in his gleaming bronze,
 exulting, preeminent among all the heroes, since
 he was the greatest, and brought by far the largest force. 580

And those who held hollow ravine-scored Lakedaimōn,
 Pharis and Sparta and dove-haunted Messē, those
 who dwelt in Bryseiai and lovely Augeiai, who held
 Amyklai and Helos, the coastal fortress, and Laäs,
 and dwelt around Oitylos: they were commanded by 585
 his brother, Menelaös, of the great war cry, who brought
 sixty vessels. These were stationed apart, and he
 moved among them in person, confident in his purpose,
 urging his men to battle, since above all his spirit longed
 to be revenged for the struggles and groans over Helen. 590

And those who dwelt in Pylos and lovely Arēnē,
 and Thryon, the ford of Alpheios, and well-built Aipy,
 who occupied Kyparissēs and Amphigeneia,
 Pteleos, Helos, and Dōrion—where the Muses encountered
 Thamyris the Thracian, and put an end to his singing, 595
 on his way from Oichalia, from the house of Eurytos

the Oichalian, for his boast that he'd win, even if the Muses themselves were to sing against him, the daughters of Zeus of the aegis; but they in their fury maimed him, deprived him of his marvelous singing, made him forget his skill with the lyre—: 600
of these the Gerēnian horseman, Nestōr, was leader,
and with him were mustered ninety hollow vessels.

Those who possessed Arkadía, below Kyllēnē's steep mountain,
by the tomb of Aipytos, where combatants are close fighters;
those who dwelt in Pheneos and flock-rich Orchomenos, 605
in Rhipē and Stratiē and wind-scoured Enispē,
those whose homes were Tegea and lovely Mantinea,
who held Stymphalos and dwelt in Parrhasía: these
were commanded by Ankaios's son, the lord Agapēnōr,
with sixty ships, and aboard each ship came many 610
Arkadian warriors, well skilled in warfare's business.
For Agamemnōn himself, son of Atreus, lord of men,
had given them well-benched ships in which to traverse
the wine-faced deep, seafaring being no concern of theirs.

For those who lived in Bouprasion and noble Ēlis— 615
all that Hyrminē and Myrsinos way out on the frontier
and the Ōlenian rock and Alēsion enclose between them—
there were four leaders, and each of these accompanied
by ten swift ships, with many Epeians aboard them. Of these
some were led by Amphimachos and Thalpios, sons, one of 620
Kteatos, the other of Eurytos, both blood-kin to Aktōr; others
by Amarynkeus's son, the mighty Diōrēs, while
the fourth group was led by godlike Polyxeinos, son
of royal Agasthenēs, whose father was Augeias.

Those from Doulichion and the sacred Echinean 625
islands, who live facing Ēlis, across the salt water,
were led by Megēs, a man the equal of Arēs, Phyleus's son.
His sire, Zeus's nursling, Phyleus the horseman, long ago
moved away to Doulichion after quarrelling with his father.
Along with Megēs there followed forty black vessels. 630

Odysseus led the high-spirited Kephallēnians,
who held Ithákē and Nēriton with its rippling leafage,
and dwelt in Krokyleia and rugged Aigilips, with
those who held Zákynthos, those who lived around Samē,

and those who held the mainland and the facing coastline: 635
of them Odysseus was leader, Zeus's equal in counsel.
With him there followed twelve ships, vermilion-prowed.

The Aitōlians were led by Thoas, Andraimōn's son:
the inhabitants of Pleurōn, Ōlenos and Pylēnē,
Chalkis by the seashore and rock-strewn Kalydōn; 640
for great-hearted Oineus's sons were no longer living,
nor he himself; dead, too, was fair-haired Meleagros,
so on Thoas the absolute rule of Aitōlians had devolved.
Accompanying him there followed forty black vessels.

Of the Krētans Idomeneus, famed spearman, was the leader: 645
of those who held Knossos and Gortyn with its high battlements,
Lyktos, Mīlētos, and chalk-bright Lykastos,
Phaistos and Rhytion, well-populated cities; and others
scattered through Krētē of the hundred cities.
Of these, then, Idomeneus, famed spearman, was the leader, 650
with Mērionēs, a match for the man-slaying War God himself.
Accompanying them there followed eighty black vessels.

Tlēpolemos, son of Hēraklēs, a man both brave and tall,
from Rhodos brought nine ships of the lordly Rhodians,
who occupied Rhodos in three separate settlements: 655
Lindos, Ialysos, and chalk-bright Kameiros.

Of these, then, Tlēpolemos, famed spearman, was the leader,
whom Astyocheia bore to that mighty force Hēraklēs. Her
he brought out of Ephyrē from the Sellēis river, after
sacking many a city of warriors, Zeus's nurslings. 660
But Tlēpolemos, when a grown man in their well-built home,
soon afterwards killed his father's maternal uncle,
already an elderly man—Likymnios, scion of Arēs.

At once he fitted out ships, raised a large body of men,
and fled across the sea, since he'd already been threatened 665
by other sons and grandsons of the mighty force Hēraklēs.
He came to Rhodos, a wanderer, suffering hardship, and there
his people, settled in three tribal divisions, were favored
by Zeus, whose rule is over both gods and mortals;
the son of Kronos showered marvelous wealth upon them. 670

Nireus too from Symē brought three trim vessels:
Nireus, Aglaïa's son by the lord Charōpos,

Nireus, the handsomest man who came under Ilion
of all other Danaäns after Pēleus's blameless son—
but a weakling, and only a few troops accompanied him. 675

Those who held Nisyros, Karpathos and Kasos
and Kōs, Eurypylos' city, and the Kalydnian islands,
had as commanders Pheidippos and Antiphos,
the two sons of king Thessalos, whose father was Hēraklēs.
Along with them there were mustered thirty hollow vessels. 680

Now, too, all those who lived in Pelasgian Argos,
who were settled in Alos and Alopē, whose homes were in Trachis,
who occupied Phthiē and Hellas, the land of fair women,
and were known as Myrmidons, Hellēnes, and Achaians—
of the fifty ships of these men Achilles was the commander. 685
But to warfare's grievous clamor they gave no thought,
having no one to deploy them into the battle-line,
for the swift-footed noble Achilles lay idle by the ships,
enraged on account of Briseis, the girl with lovely hair,
whom he'd taken from Lyrnessos after much hard work— 690
destroying Lyrnessos and the walls of Thēbē,⁴
laying low Mynēs and Epistrophos, spear-battlers both,
sons of King Evēnos, Selēpos's son. And now
grieving for her he lay there—but would rise up soon enough.

Those who held Phylakē and flowery Pyrasos, 695
Dēmētēr's precinct, and Itōn, mother of flocks,
and seaside Antrōn and turf-bedded Pteleos: of them
warlike Prōtesilāos was the commander
while he still lived; but by then black earth already held him.
His wife, cheeks torn in grief, was left there in Phylakē 700
with a half-built house, for a Dardanian slew him
as he leapt from his ship, the very first of the Achaians.
Yet his men did not go leaderless, though they missed their leader,
being mustered by Podarkēs, offshoot of Arēs—son
of Iphiklos, grandson of Phylakos rich in flocks, 705
full brother to Prōtesilāos, he of the great heart,
but younger-born; the elder was the more warlike,
heroic Prōtesilāos, the warrior. Still, his people

4. This is Thēbē (Thebes) in Asia Minor, to be distinguished from Boiōtian Thēbē and Thēbē in Egypt: see Glossary.

did not lack a leader, though missing their good captain.
Along with him there followed forty black vessels. 710

Those who dwelt in Pherai beside Lake Boibēis,
and in Boibē and Glaphyrai and well-built Iolkos: they
were led, with eleven ships, by Admētos's dear son
Eumēlos, born to Admētos of that paragon among women,
Alkēstis, the most beautiful of the daughters of Pelias. 715

Those who dwelt in Méthōne and Thaumakia,
who held Meliboia and rugged Olizōn,
were commanded by Philoktētēs, an experienced archer,
with their seven ships, in each of which were embarked
fifty rowers, well skilled at hard fighting with the bow. 720
But he himself lay on an island, racked by violent pains:
sacred Lēmnos, where the Achaians' sons had left him
afflicted with a bad wound from a vicious water-serpent.
There he lay in his agony; but soon the Argives beside
their ships would have King Philoktētēs very much in mind. 725
Yet his men did not go leaderless, though they missed their leader,
being mustered by Medōn, Oileus's bastard son,
whom Rhēnē bore to Oileus, sacker of cities.

Those who occupied Triikka and crag-bound Ithōmē,
and Oichalia, city of Eurytos the Oichalian, 730
had as their leaders Asklēpios's two sons,
skilled healers both, Podaleirios and Macháōn.
Along with them there were mustered thirty hollow vessels.

Those who held Ormenios and the spring of Hypereia,
those who held Asterion and the white peaks of Titános 735
were led by Eurypylos, Euaimōn's splendid son.
Along with them there followed forty black ships.

Those who held Argissa and were domiciled in Gyrtōnē,
Orthē, and Ēlōnē, and Oloössōn the white city,
were led by that staunch fighter Polypoitēs, son 740
of Peirithōos—whom immortal Zeus begot—being
conceived to Peirithōos by renowned Hippodameia
that day he got his revenge on the shaggy Centaurs, drove them
out of Pēlion, sent them packing as far as the Aithikēs—
not alone: there went with him Leonteus, scion of Arēs, 745

son of bold-hearted Korōnos, Kaineus's son.

Along with them there followed forty black vessels.

Gouneus from Kyphos brought two and twenty vessels;
with him there came the Eniēnes and the battle-tough Peraiboians
who made their homes in the region of hard-wintered Dōdōna, 750
and worked the land around the beautiful Titaressos,
whose sweet-flowing waters join those of the Pēneios,
yet do not mingle with Pēneios's silvery eddies, but flow
over and separate from them, as though they were olive oil,
for this is a branch of Styx, the terrible oath-river. 755

The Magnēsians were led by Prothoös son of Teuthrēdōn.
Around the Pēneios and Pélion's rippling woodlands
they made their homes: swift Prothoös was their commander.
Along with them there followed forty black vessels.

These were the Danaäns' leaders and princes. But who 760
was outstanding among them? Who, now tell me, Muse,
among all those men, and their horses, that served with Atreus's sons?

Of horses, the best by far were the mares of Phērēs' grandson,
those that Eumēlos drove, bird-swift in their running,
same coats, same age, even-backed as though ruled to a plumb-line. 765
Bred in Pēreia they were, by silver-bowed Apollo,
both mares, both bearing within them the fearfulness of battle.
Of men, the best was Aias, Telamōn's son—that is,
while Achilles still nursed his wrath, who was far the strongest,
he, and the horses that carried Pēleus's splendid son. 770
But now by the curved seafaring ships he lay, consumed
by fury against Agamemnōn, shepherd of the people,
Atreus's son; while along the seashore his followers
amused themselves with casting the discus and javelin,
and archery, while their horses, each by his owner's chariot, 775
stood cropping marsh-parsley and clover, while
the chariots themselves, well-covered, were stored away
in their masters' huts, and the men, missing their warlike leader,
wandered about in the camp, and did no fighting.

The army advanced as though the whole world was on fire, 780
and the earth groaned under them, as under Zeus with his angry
thunderbolts, when he hammers the land around Typhoios,

among the Arimoi, where men say is Typhoios's bed.
So under their marching feet the earth groaned out aloud
as quickly they made their advance across the plain. 785

To the Trojans wind-footed swift Iris came as a messenger
from Zeus of the aegis, bearing a grievous message.
They were met in assembly at the gates of Priam,
all of them gathered together, young men and elders.
Standing close, swift-footed Iris now addressed them, 790
making her voice like that of Priam's son Polītēs,
who sat as the Trojans' lookout, trusting his speed of foot,
on top of the burial mound of aged Aisyētēs,
watching for when the Achaians should set out from their ships.
As him, then, swift-footed Iris now addressed Priam: 795
"Old sir, as ever, unending talk is your pleasure,
just as in peacetime: but now unceasing war has arisen.
Many battles of warriors have I taken part in,
But never yet have I seen so vast or strong an army—
overwhelming, like leaves of the forest or grains of sand— 800
as this now crossing the plain to attack our city.
Hektōr, to you above all I give this command for action:
Numerous here are the allies spread out in Priam's great city,
men from many lands, all speaking different tongues.
So let each man give the signal to those he commands, 805
marshal his own citizens, then lead them forth."

So she spoke,
and Hektōr did not mistake the goddess's voice,
but at once broke up the assembly, and they rushed to arms.
All the gates were flung open, and the troops poured through them,
on foot and mounted both, and a mighty hubbub arose. 810

Set in front of the city there is a steep mound,
far out in the plain, with a clear space all around it.
This men know as Baticia, that is, Bramble Hill, whereas
the immortals call it the grave-mound of Myrīnē the dancer.
There, now, the Trojans and their allies marshaled their forces. 815

The Trojans were led by great bright-helmeted Hektōr,
Priam's son, and with him by far the most and the best
troops were deployed, all eager to battle it out with the spear.

The Dardanians were led by Anchīsēs' valiant son
 Aineias, conceived to Anchīsēs by shining Aphroditē 820
 among the spurs of Ida, a goddess lying with a mortal.
 He was not alone: with him came Antēnōr's two sons,
 Archelochos and Akamas, well trained in all fighting skills.

Those who dwelt in Zeleia, below the lowest spur of Ida,
 wealthy men, who drink the dark water of the Aisēpos, 825
 Trojans, had as their leader Lykaōn's splendid son,
 Pandaros, gifted with bowmanship by Apollo himself.

Those who held Adrēsteia and the district of Apaisos,
 who held Pityeia and Tēreia's steep mountain, were led
 by Adrēstos and Amphios, he of the linen corselet, the sons 830
 of Merōps of Perkōtē, who outstripped all other men
 in seercraft, and tried to prevent his sons from going
 off to murderous warfare. But the two of them would not
 obey him,
 for the spirits of black death were urging them onward.

Those who lived in the region of Perkōtē and Praktion, 835
 who held Sēstos and Abydos and noble Arisbē, were led
 by Asios, son of Hyrtakos, a leader of men:
 Asios, son of Hyrtakos, who was brought from Arisbē
 by his tall sorrel horses, from the Sellēis river.
 Hippothoōs led the tribes of fierce Pelasgian spearmen, 840
 who had their homes in rich-soiled Lárisa: they
 were led by Hippothoōs and Pylaïos, scion of Arēs,
 two sons of Pelasgian Lēthos, Teutamos's son.

The Thracians were led by Akamas and the hero Peiroōs—
 all those the strong-flowing stream of Hellespont encloses. 845

Euphēmos was the leader of the Kikonian spearmen,
 the son of Troizēnos, Zeus's nursling, Keas's son.

Pyraichmēs led the Paiōnians with their back-bent bows
 from far away out of Amydōn, from the broad stream of Axios,
 whose waters are the loveliest flowing on this earth. 850

The Paphlagōnians were led by stout-hearted Pylaimenēs
 from the land of the Enetoi, home to a breed of wild mules.
 These held Kytōros and dwelt around Sēsamos, in

their famous homes beside the Parthenios river,
in Krōmna, Aigialos, and lofty Erythinoi. 855

The Halizōnians had Odios and Epistrophos as their leaders,
from far-distant Alybē, where is the birth of silver.

The Mysians were led by Chromis and the bird-seer Ennomos,
who despite his seercraft could not stop the black death-spirit,
but died at the hands of Aiakos's swift-foot grandson⁵ 860
in the river, along with the other Trojans he cut down there.

The Phrygians' leaders were Phorkys and godlike Askanios
from distant Askania, eager to join the press of battle.

The Maiōnians were commanded by Mesthlēs and Antiphos,
Talaimenēs' two sons, whom the Gygaian lake-nymph bore, 865
and they led the Maiōnians whose homeland was under Tmōlos.

Nastēs commanded the Karians, men of barbarous speech,
who held Mīlētos, Mount Phthirēs with its dense woodlands,
Maiandros's streams, and Mykalē's rocky heights.
They had Amphinachos and Nastēs as their leaders, 870
Nastēs and Amphinachos, Nomiōn's splendid sons.
Amphinachos went off to war decked out in gold like a girl,
the young fool: that could not save him from a miserable end.
He died at the hands of the swift-foot grandson of Aiakos
in the river, and smart Achilles carried off the gold. 875

Sarpēdōn and noble Glaukos led the Lycians
from far-distant Lycia, from the eddying Xanthos river.

5. Achilles.