HOMER

THE ODYSSEY

A NEW TRANSLATION BY

PETER GREEN

University of California Press

THE ODYSSEY

The publisher and the University of California Press Foundation gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Joan Palevsky Endowment Fund in Literature in Translation.

HOMER

THE ODYSSEY

A NEW TRANSLATION BY

PETER GREEN

University of California Press

University of California Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in the United States, enriches lives around the world by advancing scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Its activities are supported by the UC Press Foundation and by philanthropic contributions from individuals and institutions. For more information, visit www.ucpress.edu.

University of California Press
Oakland, California

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Homer, author. | Green, Peter, translator.
Title: The Odyssey / Homer ; a new translation by Peter Green.
Other titles: Odyssey. English (Green)
Description: Oakland, California : University of California Press, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017029463 (print) | LCCN 2017032327 (ebook) | ISBN 9780520966871 () | ISBN 9780520293632 (cloth : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Odysseus, King of Ithaca (Mythological character)—Poetry. | Epic poetry, Greek—Translations into English.
Classification: LCC PA4025.A5 (ebook) | LCC PA4025.A5 G74 2018 (print) | DDC 883/.01—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017029463

Manufactured in the United States of America

25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Preface

Translating Homer—a cherished project that I for half a century thought had been set aside far too long ever to be undertaken—has reached its conclusion for me with this book. As I came to realize when working on the *Iliad,* the experience gained during those many decades when I was otherwise engaged proved invaluable. Others will decide whether the wait was worth it; I can only say that I am pretty sure the result would have been much less satisfactory had I been able to embark on this task any earlier.

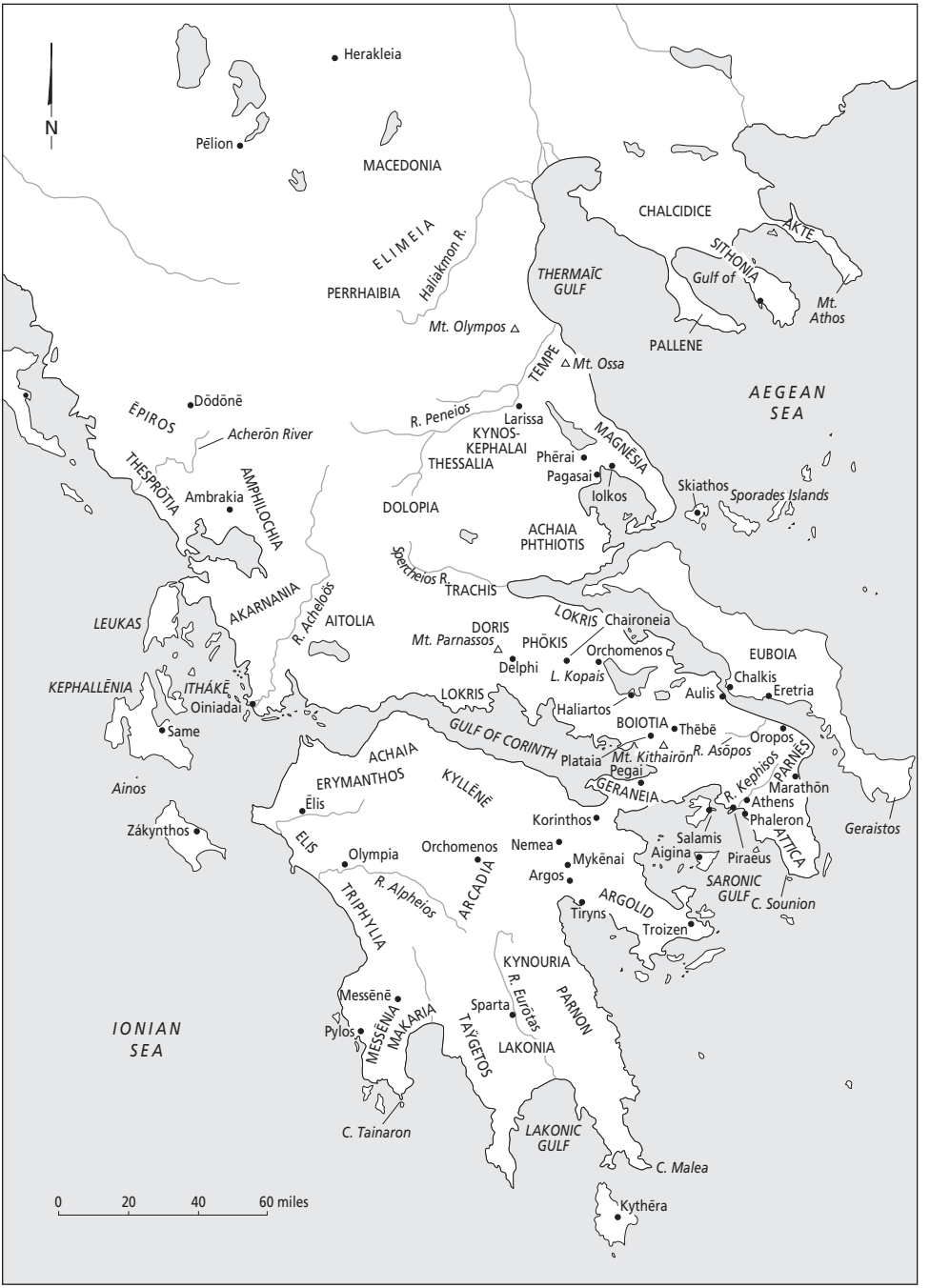
I've lost count of the times over the years that I have read both poems, either with students or for my own private pleasure; but when it came to translation, each of them, the *Odyssey* in particular, still had some unexpected discoveries in store for me. While tackling the *Iliad,* I was already looking forward to moving on to its lighter, technically less formulaic and morally more individualistic sequel. I thought from my long acquaintance with their texts that the *Odyssey* would not only be more enjoyable but by far the easier of the two to translate. As I explain in my Introduction, however, I was in for a considerable surprise. I found as translator that the *Odyssey* was a far more challenging, demanding, and ambiguous proposition both conceptually and linguistically. From start to finish, I had to work far harder, not only to find the *mot juste,* but also not seldom—and a good deal more often than in the *Iliad*—simply to nail down with any precision what the Greek was in fact attempting to convey. This does not imply a very flattering picture of my prior grasp of the text; but I comfort myself with the old translators' truism that however many times you have read a foreign classic, you only begin to really understand it when you apply yourself seriously to its reproduction in your own language.

A deep personal loss has had an incalculable effect on the present work. For over forty years, everything I have written has benefited more than I can easily express from an ongoing mutual discussion of the progress of our respective areas of work with Carin, my late, and sorely missed, wife, best

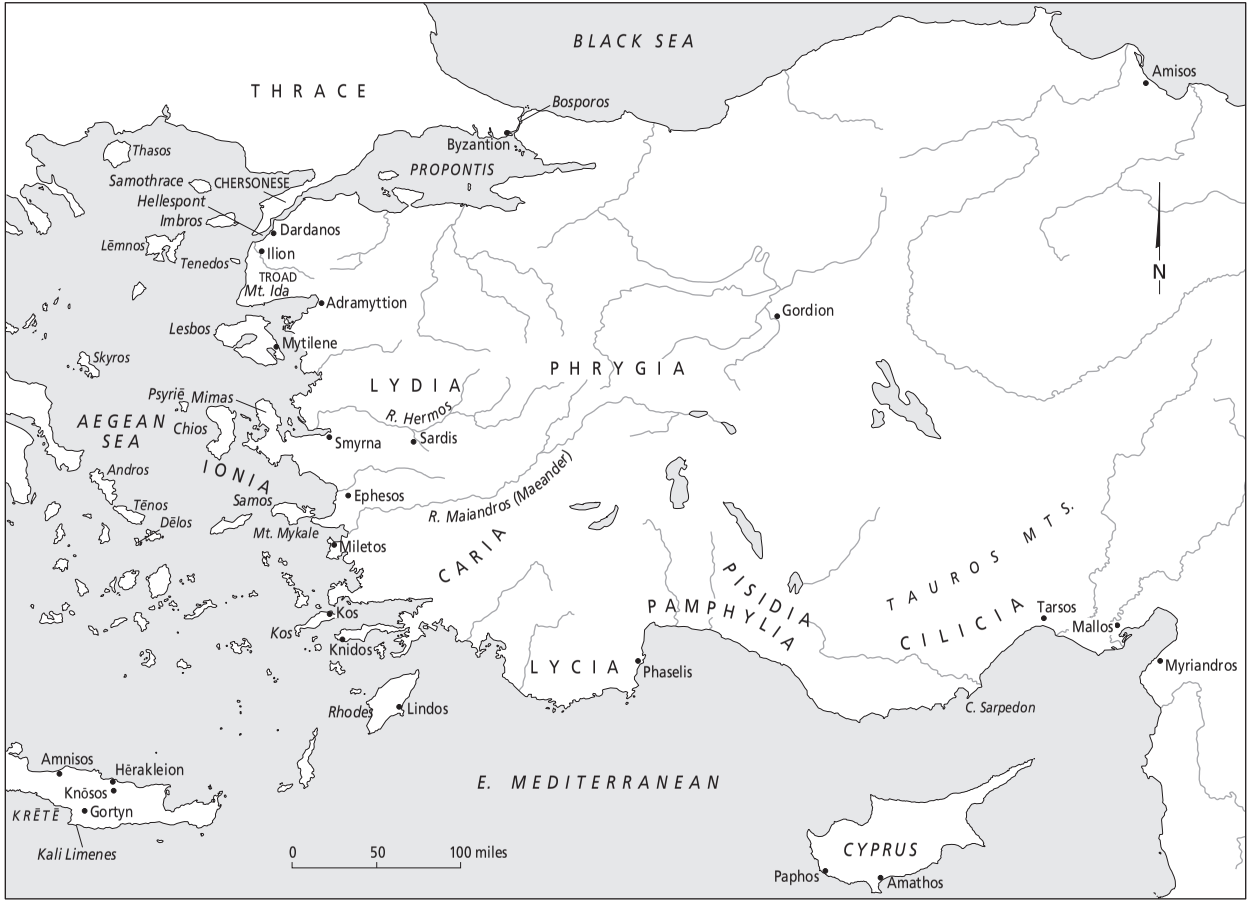
friend, fellow classicist, colleague, and treasured critic. This book has had neither the stimulus of her ideas nor the wise restraint of her advice, and I am only too well aware of how much it has lost in consequence. She knew and loved the *Odyssey*, and I'd like to think she might have enjoyed this translation.

Acknowledgments

My acknowledgments, as always, are few but heartfelt. I owe a sizable debt to the late Martin West, from whose wise insights, not least in his last published book, *The Making of the* Odyssey, my own work has benefited so much. I am grateful, as always, to the University of California Press, which for many years has patiently put up with my oddities, for once more taking a chance on a Homeric translation from so unpredictable—and now solidly nonagenarian—an author. My thanks yet again to Peter Dreyer, copy-editor and long-time friend, for ironing out my inevitable inconsistencies, and to Paul Psoinos for his erudite and ultra-careful proofreading, a thankless task that too often goes unthanked. Another dear friend, Barbara Hird, has not only endowed my *Odyssey*, as she did my *Iliad*, with a superb index, but has more than lived up to her well-earned reputation for saving us from embarrassing disasters. Last, but very far from least, my treasured in-house editors, Eric Schmidt and Cindy Fulton, have kept things going smoothly even at times when such disasters seemed inevitable and more than once saved me tactfully from my more than usually absent-minded errors. To have had such clever and amiable people once more working on my behalf has been a rare privilege and pleasure.



Map 1. Mainland Greece



Map 2. Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean

Abbreviations

Ael.	Claudius Aelianus (c. 170–c. 230 C.E.), a Roman freedman from Praeneste, writer (in Greek) of miscellanies
NA	Ael., *On the Nature of Animals*
Aesch.	Aeschylus (525–456/5 B.C.E.), Greek tragedian
Eum.	Aesch., *Eumenides*
Aeth.	*Aethiopis:* Lost Cyclic epic sequel by Arktinos of Milētos to the *Iliad,* ending with the death of Achillēs; summary and fragments survive
Apollod.	Apollodorus of Athens, grammarian (c. 180–c. 120 B.C.E.); certainly not, however, the author of the *Bibliothēkē* (*Library*), a manual of mythology attributed to him, by a (probably) near-contemporary forger
Epit.	*Epitome* to Apollod., *Bibliothēkē*
Ap. Rhod.	Apollonius Rhodius, Hellenistic author of the epic poem *Argonautika*
Arg.	Ap. Rhod., *Argonautika*
arg.	*argumentum,* i.e., argument (in the sense of a précis or synopsis)
Athen.	Athenaeus of Naukratis in Egypt (fl. c. 200 C.E.), author of the *Deipnosophistae,* or *Learned Banqueters,* his sole surviving work, a fifteen-book account of a symposium, or drinking party, mostly notable for its excerpts from classical works now otherwise lost
BA	*Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World,* edited by R. J. A. Talbert et al. (Princeton, NJ, 2000)
Comm.	*A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey.* vol. 1: *Introduction and Books i–viii,* ed. A. Heubeck et al. (Oxford, 1988); vol. 2: *Books ix–xvi,* ed. A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra (Oxford, 1989); vol. 3: *Books xvii–xxiv,* ed. J. Russo et al. (Oxford, 1992)
Cypr.	*Cypria* or *Cypriaka:* Lost Cyclic epic attributed to Stasinos or Hegesias, covering the causes and early years of the Trojan War; summary and fragments survive

Diod. Sic.	Diodorus Siculus, of Agyrium in Sicily (c. 100–c. 30 B.C.E.), universal historian, author of a *Bibliothēkē* [*Library*]
fr.	fragment
gloss.	glossary
H.	Homer
Il.	H., *Iliad*
Od.	H., *Odyssey*
Hdt.	Herodotus, of Halicarnassus and Thurii (c. 485–c. 420 B.C.E.), historian of the Persian Wars
HE	*The Homer Encyclopedia,* 3 vols., ed. M. Finkelberg (Oxford, 2011)
Hes.	Hesiod, epic/didactic poet (fl. c. 700 B.C.E.)
Cat.	Hes., *Catalogue of Women*
Th.	Hes., *Theogony*
WD	Hes., *Works and Days*
HHAphr.	*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
LI	*Little Iliad*: Lost Cyclic epic attributed to Leschēs of Lesbos, covering the final stages of the Trojan War; summary and fragments survive
OCD[4]	*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. rev., ed. S. Hornblower et al. (Oxford, 2012)
Pliny	Pliny the Elder, Gaius Plinius Secundus (23/4–79 C.E.), equestrian procurator and literary scholar
HN	Pliny, *Historia Naturalis,* a thirty-seven-book encyclopedic *Natural History*
Plut.	Plutarch of Chaeronea, c. 40–c. 120 C.E., philosopher and biographer
Thes.	Plut., *Life of Thēseus*
SI	*Sack of Ilion:* Lost Cyclic epic in two books attributed to Arktinos of Milētos, covering the capture of Troy; summary and fragments survive
Thuc.	Thucydides of Athens (c. 460–c. 395 B.C.E.), author of an (unfinished) history of the Peloponnesian War
Xen., *An.*	Xenophon, *Anabasis*

Introduction

POSTWAR PLEASURES

The change of atmosphere that greets anyone turning from the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey*—which surely may be thought to reflect a parallel transformation in both the poet's own world and the world, however remote, that he or she was striving to recapture—is total and immediate, like the sudden emergence of sunlight after a long grey winter. A decade of grinding, relentless, destructive, and seemingly unending formulaic warfare is at last over, and the social code that enforced it shows unmistakable signs of breaking up. The surviving victorious Achaian veterans may face unforeseen hazards on their way home, and, like returning warriors of any age, may find worse personal problems facing them at home than any they left behind on the battlefield; but nevertheless wider horizons now confront them, there is scope for individualism and adventure. The unknown beckons enticingly for exploration, old myths and exciting new discoveries coalesce, there is a sense, however evanescent, of freedom in the air. The result is a heady mixture of Bronze Age memories and the opening up of the old world's unknown magical frontiers to intrepid voyagers. The Clashing Rocks may no longer be impassable; even Hadēs may be reached in a black ship (10.501–2); and old legends like those of the Sirens and the Lotus-Eaters may take on physical, if still elusive, reality somewhere out in the newly explored west.

All these features are present in the *Odyssey* as we have it and substantially contribute to making its narrative so vivid and compulsive throughout. The readability is also much enhanced by what can be seen as a striking modernity of vision, not least in comparison with the *Iliad*. The *Odyssey,* unlike its predecessor, has a strong sense of context. It is highly conscious of and very often interested in describing the scenery and background of whatever action may be going on. An early, memorable, and—as far as the story goes, quite unnecessary—instance of this is Kalypsō's remote island abode, duly scrutinized by Hermēs on arrival. He might have contented himself with noting, when he found the nymph at home, singing as she worked at the loom, that "a great fire / was ablaze on the hearth: the fragrance of split cedar / and citron wood burning spread far over the island" (5.58–60: smells, too, we note, are of interest). But he goes on to list the various birds of sea and land that nest around, as well as Kalypsō's garden vine, her four gushing

springs, "and beyond them soft meadows of blossoming violets and celery" (5.72–73), detail for detail's sake.

Scene after scene gets similar observant treatment. Sometimes, indeed, this contributes to the action, as when Nausikaä carefully describes Odysseus' route into the Scherian capital and her father's house, and what he will see along the way (6.255–315): the harbor with its array of moored ships, the place of assembly, Poseidōn's temple, the grove of Athēnē with its poplar trees—all interspersed with shrewd social advice on how to behave so as not to attract too much attention. Odysseus' fearful struggle in the sea after shipwreck (5.291–457), during which

> Both knees now lost their strength
> and his strong hands too: the salt deep had crushed his spirit,
> all his flesh was swollen, seawater oozed in streams
> out through his mouth and nostrils. Breathless, speechless
> he lay, barely stirring (453–57)

is described throughout with extraordinary power. The island of Ithákē, not surprisingly, gets careful scrutiny: its ruggedness and unsuitability for horses (4.601–8, 9.21–27), the harbor of Phorkys and the cave of the nymphs (13.95–112), the town spring with its encircling poplars (17.204–11). Scenes of country farming are described in detail: as M. L. West says (2014, 52), "this is a man who has lived on the land and knows it at first hand." The account of the Kyklōps' cave offers a highly knowledgeable picture of its owner's dairy-farming practices (9.219–23).

An equally full picture is provided of the farmstead and piggery looked after by the loyal swineherd Eumaios. Its thorn-topped stone wall is described in detail. We learn the number of sows and hogs, and their disposition in a dozen large sties (14.5–20). As Odysseus approaches, Eumaios is sitting outside his house, cutting up oxhide for a new pair of sandals. Four fierce guard dogs run barking to attack the stranger: an experienced countryman himself, Odysseus drops his stick and sits down, while Eumaios calls the dogs off and showers them with stones (14.21–36). Like so much in the *Odyssey,* this could be a scene from a movie.

It is also a reminder of this composer's interest in dogs. When Odysseus, after a twenty-year absence, comes home disguised as a ragged vagrant, his old hunting hound Argos, lying near death in the filth of the courtyard, is too weak to do more than feebly wag its tail and cock its ears in recognition of its master—and Odysseus, still very much incognito, cannot even acknowledge the gesture (17.291–327). Briefly and tellingly sketched, this is among the most moving moments of the entire poem.

We are not only told that the suitors invade and virtually take over Penelopē's domain in the absence of her husband: we both see and hear them at it, as Athēnē (disguised as Mentēs the Taphian) does when she arrives to give instructions to Tēlemachos:

> There she found the bold suitors. They at the time
> were amusing themselves with board games out of doors,
> seated on hides of oxen they themselves had slaughtered,
> while heralds and henchmen were busy on their behalf,
> some mixing wine and water for them in bowls,
> while others were swabbing the tables with porous sponges
> and setting them out, or carving meat in lavish helpings. (1.104–12)

Again, as so often in the *Odyssey,* the impression given is much akin to that of an introductory or tracking shot in a film. This is the kind of world that we know, we feel, reinforced by "the naturalism and verisimilitude with which [the composer's] characters tend to act and talk" (West 2014, 53). Think of Alkinoös (13.20–22) pacing to and fro aboard the Phaiakian ship that will ferry Odysseus home, making sure that the various gifts accompanying him are packed under the benches in such a way that they do not impede the oarsmen; or, during dinner (8.62–7, 105–8), the way the herald Pontonoös takes care that the blind minstrel Dēmodokos knows exactly where to find, not only his lyre, but also the food and drink awaiting him; or the sophisticated informality of Helen (4.120–82, 220–32), speculating to Menelaös on the identity of their guests and dosing the wine with a relaxing social drug when the conversation shows signs of becoming fraught; or the giggling, chattering realism of the maids (18.320–36, 20.6–8), whose vulgar pertness and lascivious habits so infuriate Odysseus (20.6–21). The insults of the maid Melanthō and his angry response are as near conversational realism as epic diction can allow, and show full awareness of the variability of individual emotions.

It is, perhaps, the dialogue of the *Odyssey* that establishes the clearest distinction between it and the formal, indeed formulaic, exchanges of the earlier *Iliad*. There is often a surprisingly lifelike resemblance to the confusion, broken sequences, and occasional illogicalities of a recorded discussion: that involving Tēlemachos, Peisistratos, Menelaös, and Helen (4.71–295), well analyzed by West (2014, 63), is typical. Questions, as in life, are not always answered directly or immediately. Two people will talk across, and about, a third (e.g., at 16.56–89 and 23.88–116). It is a truism of ancient portraiture that it aims to catch not physical actuality so much as an idea, a concept with which the artist associates his subject. With the *Odyssey* we come perceptibly closer to that actuality than does the *Iliad*.

THE INDIVIDUAL EMERGENT

There is an interesting, and significant, progression discernible in the opening lines of the surviving epics from antiquity. The composer of the *Iliad* takes a state of mind, wrath (*mēnis*), as his theme and appeals to the goddess (unnamed) to sing it, presumably using him as her instrument. The *Odyssey,* by contrast, picks on a particular man (*andra*) as subject and invites the Muse, rather than the goddess, not to sing, but to tell, his story. When we reach Apollonius of Rhodes, the sophisticated Hellenistic author of the *Argonautika,* he may be starting from Apollo (whatever exactly that means), but he is composing the work himself and goes back earlier than the Trojan War for his theme. By the time we reach the *Aeneid,* even the allusion to the god has been dropped: *Arma uirumque cano,* Vergil announces, *I* do the singing: war and this man—another survivor, Trojan this time, from that same remote war—form *my* subject. From millennia of oral anonymity as a *vox dei,* the poet has at last fully emerged as an individual in his own right, with all that this implies for the world as he portrays it.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The *Odyssey* is constructed in three major interrelated sequences, which, again, may well remind a modern reader of the way a film is constructed, with parallel tracks, chronological manipulation, and occasional cross-cutting (e.g., from Sparta to the suitors [4.625] or from Tēlemachos' potentially dangerous voyage [15.300] to Odysseus and Eumaios at the farmstead. The first sequence, having opened with a meeting of the Olympian deities that discusses the dilemma of the poem's protagonist—isolated perforce, after shipwreck, chez Kalypsō, in what many might regard as a decidedly enviable exile—then proceeds to leave him until book 5, while his wife and son are shown coping as best they can with the unwanted presence of numerous young men eager to marry Odysseus' (presumed) widow and only too happy to freeload off her until she makes up her mind.

Penelopē, Tēlemachos, and the leading suitors are all presented with remarkable psychological insight. Penelopē is in an essentially weak position. She cannot just send her would-be suitors packing: she simply lacks the force to do so. Loyal to her absent husband she may be, but the strong likelihood of his death—of which she is unhappily conscious—both undermines her status as wife (rather than as highly eligible widow) and correspondingly encourages the lawless arrogance of her suitors. She is convincingly shown playing a desperate delaying game, in which her prime excuse of putting off

any final decision until she has completed weaving a burial shroud for her father-in-law Laërtēs is augmented with teasing messages and promises (2.87–92) designed to string her importunate suitors along. She knows only too well that if Odysseus *is* dead the only possible way she can save the family fortune (and possibly stop her son from being killed) is by remarriage. As a pis aller, this—contrary to what many scholars, West (2014, 68) included, surmise—is constantly at the back of her mind, and Penelopē's ambivalence over it is conveyed with percipient subtlety.

Tēlemachos, too, gets insightful psychological treatment. As a fatherless boy just emerging from adolescence, his mood swings, from nervous uncertainty to brash overconfidence, are pinpointed with uncommon accuracy (1.114–36, 345–59, 365–80; 2.40–84, 129–45, 208–23, 309–20). His relationship with his mother is impatient and edgy: the effects of her prolonged mourning—unwashed person, dirty clothes—he finds distasteful. His formulaic epithet, *pepnumnos,* "sagacious," ironic at first, becomes step by step more appropriate as he matures. His clashes with the suitors facilitate sharp sketches of their leaders as well: Antinoös, glibly plausible (2.85–128), and Eurymachos, imperious and openly aggressive (2.178–207). Tēlemachos' travels to Pylos and Sparta in books 3 and 4 introduce first Nestōr, splendidly garrulous in his extreme old age (3.103–200), and then the even more long-winded Menelaös (4.333–592), living in luxurious retirement with his recovered wife, that sophisticated and blithely unabashed professional survivor Helen, an unforgettable cameo portrait done in a minimum of shrewd strokes (4.120–46, 220–89).

So we come, at last, in the second sequence, to the homonymous protagonist of the entire poem. For those who last met Odysseus in the *Iliad*—or even during Helen's reminiscences—this encounter can be somewhat disconcerting. At Troy, he was among the military leaders and both shrewd and valiant. He had what veterans of World War II used to describe as a "good war," distinguishing himself in a night raid against the enemy camp (*Il.* 10 passim), in the commando venture of the Wooden Horse (4.270–89; *Little Iliad,* arg. 4; West 2014, 122–23), and, with Aias, in the rescue of Achillēs' corpse (*Aeth.,* arg. 3; West 2014, 112–13). But here he is (5.81–84), the solitary survivor of shipwreck on Kalypsō's island, "sitting out on the seashore, weeping, / rending his heart with tears and groans and sadness, / gazing out through his tears at the unharvested sea." For a marooned sailor, he has not done badly: seven years, no less, of luxurious cohabitation with a sexy nymph, who not only feeds and sleeps with him but has promised him immortality (5.135–36) if he stays. But now he wants to go home. Why? We

do not have to wait long to learn. Because (5.153) "the nymph no longer pleased him." Our hero may long for wife and home, but chiefly because he has, very literally, a case of the seven-year itch.

Seldom in the history of literature can a hero have had a less promising introduction, and it is a mark of this composer's narrative powers and ability to create a wholly convincing character, as it were on the wing, that after very little time our sympathies are completely with Odysseus in his struggle to return to his island home of Ithákē. His powerful, and praiseworthy, masculinity is constantly stressed, from the moment Hermēs delivers Zeus' ultimatum to the protesting Kalypsō that her lover is to be sent on his way (5.112–47). He mightily fells the trees with which in four days he skillfully constructs a seaworthy raft (5.233–61). He stays awake, steering his homemade vessel effectively by the stars, until the land of the Phaiakians shows up on the horizon (5.270–81), and, at the last moment, a wrathful Poseidōn decides to intervene.

Odysseus can't resist the storm that the sea god inflicts on him (5.280–332), but—strong male that he is—he attracts the sympathy of a marine nymph, Īnō, who gives him good advice and her magic veil to use as a life belt (5.333–53). He swims for it, and Athēnē—another feminine supporter—conveniently calms the storm (5.382–86). He gets safely ashore, and sleeps in a handy leaf-filled hollow under two bushes (5.445–93). Meanwhile, Athēnē ensures by means of an instructive dream that Nausikaä, the Phaiakian king's daughter, will make a clothes-washing expedition to the same spot, meet Odysseus, and guide him to her father's house (6.1–47). So it duly falls out; and once more Odysseus' strength and masculinity are stressed, this time with a strong sexual component: the girls' laughter wakes him, and he lurches out in front of them, naked except for a leafy branch held in front of his private parts (6.110–38). He has stripped off all his waterlogged clothes prior to swimming ashore, setting us up for what now follows. Nausikaä alone stands and faces him: he greets her, still standing carefully apart, with an elegantly flattering speech, culminating in one of the best definitions of a happy marriage ever made (6.148–85). By now his transformation for reader or listener is complete.

This preparatory treatment is essential, since during his time on Scheria Odysseus is the narrator of his own adventures, with the Phaiakians as an eager audience. We need to assume more than usual significance in such a decision on the composer's part, since once Odysseus' ship has been driven off course beyond Cape Malea (9.79–81) by far the greater part of his narrative is literally off the map. After nine days' further sailing, he and his men encounter, in succession, the Lotus-Eaters, the Kyklōps, Aiolos the wind

master, the Laistrygonians (who destroy all but one of his ships, with their crews, 10.121–32), and Kirkē (who turns some of his own men into swine, 10.230–43, and keeps the rest of them there for over a year, 10.466–71). Despite their protests, before they can voyage home, they are required to make a journey to the Underworld so that Odysseus can consult the shade of the seer Teirēsias. He duly does so and reports seeing the ghosts of many famous old-time heroes and heroines (11, passim). After he and his men return from the Underworld, they resume their voyage. This takes them by way of the Sirens (12.36–54, 166–200) and Skyllē and Charybdis (12.73–110, 223–59) to the island of Thrinakiē (12.127–40, 260–398), where the famished crew kill and eat the sacred cattle of Hēlios, the sun god. For this offense, they perish in a divinely raised storm (12.397–419), with only Odysseus himself surviving to be washed up on Kalypsō's shore (12.447–53) and—seven years later—reach Scheria and tell his story.

That story is, in effect, the account of an improbable progress round the traditional mythic frontiers of the Greek world, culminating in a blatantly impossible venture beyond those frontiers to the dark, mysterious, and geographically vague realm of Hadēs and the Underworld. The relevance of either to the rest of the *Odyssey* is highly debatable: even Teirēsias' prophecy regarding Odysseus' future seems originally to have been given, not in the Underworld, but at the very real Thesprōtian Oracle of the Dead in Dōdōnē (refs. in West 2014, 123–24). What did the composer have in mind in saddling Odysseus with such an experience, and, more important, its subsequent lengthy narration?

It should never be forgotten that our *Odyssey* was put together in a period that saw, not only the expansion of physical horizons through commerce and colonial exploration, but also the dawn of scientific rationalism, a radical questioning of old beliefs, and the new morality of thinkers like Xenophanēs of Kolophōn, who launched effective attacks on the all-too-human immorality, as they saw it, of the Olympian pantheon. The mythical frontiers of the Mediterranean were everywhere being challenged, and an entire fabric of belief with them.

At the same time there was a deep psychological resistance to the new discoveries, which seemed to undermine the entire system of traditional reality. Not only liminal myths, but the very existence of the Olympian universe, of encircling Ocean, of Hadēs and the Underworld, was at stake. As I note elsewhere, "The mythic past was rooted in historical time, its legends treated as fact, its heroic protagonists seen as links between the 'age of origins' and the mortal, everyday world that succeeded it" (Green 2007, 14–15). This remained true long after the seventh century. For the author of the

Marmor Parium, a Hellenistic epigraphic chronology, events that we would relegate to the world of fantasy are confidently dated: for example, Deukaliōn's Flood to 1528 B.C.E., the Amazons' alleged campaign against Athens to 1256, and (today perhaps more plausibly) the Trojan War to 1218. The fourth-century C.E. Christian historian Eusebius, with equal confidence, fixes the voyage of the Argonauts as having taken place in 1264. The postwar travels of Odysseus must have been similarly regarded. It is more than possible, when we consider the background of belief regarding them, that our composer cleverly hedged bets on their historicity by having their protagonist narrate them, leaving everyone, like Alkinoös and the Phaiakians, to make up their own minds as to whether he was telling the truth or, as so often, fabricating a tall story for the sheer pleasure of it.

The third and final sequence of the *Odyssey* occupies a good half of the whole, and is entirely taken up with the events following its hero's long-delayed return home, delivered to Ithákē, still sleeping, by his Phaiakian conveyers, together with a rich assortment of parting gifts from his hosts (13.70–125). It is characteristic of this composer that while we are eagerly awaiting Odysseus' reactions to his homecoming, the scene switches abruptly to Olympos, where Poseidōn, though conceding that Odysseus has been granted a safe return by Zeus, is shown complaining bitterly to his brother that he nevertheless shouldn't have been given so easy, comfortable, and profitable a passage. His, Poseidōn's, honor has been offended. No problem, Zeus responds: you can deal with those escorts of his how you like! You want to smash their ship—why not turn it to stone near the harbor where all can see it, as an object lesson? But that idea of yours of hiding their city with a mountain I wouldn't recommend. Wrathful Iliadic Poseidōn has been met with the new postwar Olympian reasonableness. He does what Zeus suggests, but no more (13.139–64). It is a reminder, to Athēnē and the returning Odysseus, that excessive vengeance, old style, should now be avoided: a reminder that, as we know, will be ignored until the very end, and then only enforced, upon goddess and humans alike, by a well-aimed thunderbolt (24.539–40).

Athēnē's cooperation with Odysseus in his restoration has its odd beginning now, and is marked later (18.346–48, 20.284–86) by a vengeful determination to have the suitors fully justify extreme measures against them. The mist she now sheds about him (13.189–93) not only makes him unrecognizable, even to his own wife, but also (by what seems a kind of careless excess) makes the features of his island home unrecognizable to *him,* so that he supposes the Phaiakians have misdelivered him, and perhaps robbed him of his presents (13.200–219). Materializing before him as a young shepherd, Athēnē

deplores his ignorance (which she herself has caused) and reassures him that this is, indeed, Ithákē (13.236–49). At which point Odysseus launches into yet another cover story, cut short by the goddess, who now takes on the appearance of a handsome woman (not, one would guess, unlike herself), reveals her true identity (13.287–310), strokes him, scatters the mist (13.352), and from then on converses with him in what can only be described as a flirtatious manner. Any other man, she says, would have made straight for home, but he has always been cautious. He must tell no one his identity. She will show him round, help him store away his treasure, and together they will plan the destruction of the suitors, something that will involve the spilling of blood and brains (13.394–96, 427–28) She then describes how she will alter his appearance to protect him. She also gives him immediate instructions: he is to go to the piggery of his faithful swineherd Eumaios, while she goes to Sparta to fetch back Tēlemachos, who's been seeking news of his father there. Brushing aside Odysseus' very reasonable query—why didn't she herself tell Tēlemachos his father was alive?—she touches him with her wand and effects his instant metamorphosis, described in detail (13.429–38), into an elderly, wrinkled, raggedly clad beggar.

All this sets the scene for what follows. We know, as did the original audience, what the climax will be, and, like them, grow impatient at the leisurely development of the narrative. The meeting with Eumaios takes up all of book 14, is full of vivid detail and conversation—including yet another fictitious, and lengthy (199–359), cover story—but advances the narrative little except to provide the piggery as a safe and hospitable base from which Odysseus can make forays into the noisy world of the feasting suitors, and where, heroic appearance restored in a flash by Athēnē (16.172–76), he is reunited with the awestruck Tēlemachos, back from Pylos, who at first takes him for a god. Back in his role as a dirty old beggar, Odysseus, in the intervals of planning the suitors' downfall, suffers humiliation at their hands (e.g., 17.217–35, 445–65). There are predictions of their doom, none more striking than a brief moment (20.345–58), quickly forgotten, when the suitors' laughter becomes hysterical, while their food and the walls seem spattered with blood.

Through all this moves the increasingly fraught figure of Penelopē, near despair, yet tempted by a dream (19.535–53) and repeated assertions by Tēlemachos' traveling companion Theoklymenos (17.152–61) and, above all, by the vagrant stranger who is in fact her husband (19.300–307, 546–58) that Odysseus is alive, nearby, and about to return. It is now (19.572–80) that she sets up the contest of the bow. "Why does the queen decide *at this point* to set the contest of the bow for the very next day and stake her entire future on its outcome?" Joseph Russo asks (*Comm.,* 3: 104), like many other commentators.

The answers that have been suggested achieve varying degrees of improbability. This I find puzzling, since the answer strikes me—in sharp contrast to any proposed solution regarding the bowshot—as both reasonable and obvious. Penelopē, after holding out for almost twenty years against all odds, is a woman in her middle or late thirties very near breaking point. Convinced that her husband must by now be dead, she is seriously contemplating remarriage, not least since her refusal to do so is threatening both the family fortune and her son's life. But at this critical juncture she receives strong hints—in particular, the assertions of the beggar, who is thought by Odysseus' old wet nurse Eurykleia to look remarkably like him (19.379–80), as well as her own dream (19.535–58)—that Odysseus just may, however improbably, still be alive. She could be further encouraged by an as yet unacknowledged sense that this beggar might indeed, even more improbably, be Odysseus himself.

What then to do? The contest of the bow (explained or not) is a brilliant solution. If Odysseus is, by some miraculous chance, the beggar, he will be certain to reveal himself by winning it, and thus will provide the best possible solution to her dilemma. If he is not, then Penelopē will do what she is already planning to do faute de mieux: marry the best of the suitors. The contest is the means by which she is giving her forlorn hope one last chance, something to make Odysseus, if it is indeed he, drop his maddening and inexplicable false role, and act. Which of course in the event it does.

INCIDENTAL PROBLEMS

There is a famous, and perennial, legal joke about a man facing prosecution, who, after discussion, accepts with enthusiasm the line of defense suggested by his counsel. He then goes home, thinks it over, sleeps on it, and begins to worry about certain details. It gets to the point where he calls up his attorney and tells him yes, on first hearing the proposed line of defense did strike him as perfect, but overnight he's been thinking things over, and certain possible flaws in it have occurred to him, and—

At this point the lawyer gently interrupts him to say: "But my dear fellow, the jury is only going to hear it *once.*" Throughout my work on translating Homer's *Odyssey,* this anecdote, for reasons that will become all too clear as we proceed, was never very far from my mind.

When I began the Introduction to my translation of the *Iliad,* it was in a mood of pessimism dictated by overwhelming ignorance. As I wrote then: "We do not know for certain who Homer was, or where he lived, or when he wrote. We cannot be absolutely certain that the same man (if it was a man)

wrote both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* or even that 'wrote' is a correct description of the method of composition involved. . . . Even the time at which the texts we know were actually written down, and what stage of composition they represent, are equally uncertain." In brief, I said, "in the sense that we normally consider a written work, there is no anterior background; we are at the beginning."

The situation facing us in the *Odyssey* is, in several crucial ways, different from that presented by the *Iliad.* First, and most important, we are no longer at the beginning. In the form in which we have it, the *Odyssey* describes a world that is historically recognizable and different in moral, social, and religious terms from the formulaic aristocratic society portrayed in the *Iliad.* With the notable exception of Poseidōn, the gods are no longer the spiteful and quarreling family whose vices incurred the harsh criticism of thinkers such as Xenophanes: like their human counterparts, they are acquiring middle-class ethical habits. Few now have speaking roles; for the most part, they give tacit agreement to the generally acceptable decisions of Zeus and Athēnē. The limits of their power remain uncertain: inexorable fate and destiny are still lurking in the background. Furthermore, though the *Odyssey* sets out to depict the end of the heroic age, it is made clear throughout that the postwar horizons of the Mediterranean world have definitely opened up. Peaceful sea travel has developed; destinations as far afield as Sicily, Sidon, Egypt, and the Black Sea are not uncommon. These are still remote areas, but measurably more is now known about them than can be deduced from the *Iliad.* In other words, we have now reached a period that not only marks a clear evolution from the world in which the *Iliad* was conceived, but is one that we can roughly date based on external historical evidence. It is the eastern Mediterranean world of the seventh century B.C.E.

Most of this I had, as a historian, deduced for myself while reading and rereading the text of the *Odyssey* over the years, and, at long last, translating it. The two obvious (I thought) conclusions that could be drawn from this were, first, that the *Odyssey* was a later work than the *Iliad;* and, second, that it was very probably put into the form in which it has reached us at some point in the seventh century. I was uncomfortably aware that such a view ran counter to the opinions of a large number of Homerists, some of whom were not slow to remind me that, as a historian, I had no understanding of the way in which literature, poetry in particular, and, a fortiori, its critical interpretation, worked. Quite apart from the fact that I had been studying, and writing, poetry for long before I decided to become a professional historian, I saw, and see, no reason why literary critics, whether ancient or modern, should be mysteriously exempt from the normal constraints of historical

evidence. No literary argument that I saw in any way shook my judgment on these two points.

When I was about two-thirds of the way through my translation, by the kind of happy coincidence that would raise eyebrows in fiction, but that keeps obstinately turning up in real life, I received just the kind of support that I most needed from an unexpected quarter. I had been sent for review Martin West's *The Making of the Odyssey,* in the event the last book he was to produce before his wholly unforeseen premature death. I had kept putting off reading it, because, knowing the quality of West's scholarship, I was afraid of what I might find there. I need not have worried. There was plenty in this text over which we differed, but nevertheless, on the likely date of the *Odyssey,* its chronological relation to the *Iliad,* and the reasons for both, we saw eye to eye. Moreover, West furnished me with detailed evidence that added some much-needed precision to my own opinions. As will become apparent below, this is by no means the only debt that I owe to a remarkable book, and I was glad of the chance, when I wrote my review, to pay tribute to one of the twentieth century's truly great classical scholars.[1]

Another discovery, gradually forcing itself upon me as my translation progressed, came as an unexpected surprise. I had assumed, from years of previous reading, that the Greek of the *Odyssey* would be both easier to construe and more enjoyable to turn into English than that of the *Iliad.* In fact, neither assumption proved to be the case. I found the Greek of the *Odyssey* consistently harder, and very often far more ambiguous,[2] than that of the *Iliad.* Speeches (and a great deal of the *Odyssey* consists of dialogue) proved particularly difficult. Exchanges tended to be conversational and realistic, but lengthy monologues were another matter. I sometimes found sentence length and subordination of clauses looking forward to the sophisticated syntactical usages of fifth-century drama. Meaning tended to be more subtly nuanced. Formulaic phrases were far fewer, and—partly in consequence—the text was more tightly packed with particularist action and descriptions: as a result, finding room for line-by-line equivalency proved consistently harder than in the *Iliad,* and when I came to write the synopses of each book, these turned out, however hard I aimed for abbreviation, measurably longer than those of the earlier epic—despite the fact that the books of the *Odyssey* are, line for line, almost all a good deal shorter than those of the

1. The review appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement,* no. 5867 (September 11, 2015): 10.
2. On this, see now West 2014, 69–82.

Iliad, where repetitive battle action, with formulaic phrasing, takes up a remarkable amount of space. The *Odyssey* has sometimes been described, misleadingly, as the first modern novel—seldom, as we shall see, can a greater strain often have been placed on the reader's suspension of disbelief—but the claim is at least true to the extent that in its narrative, whether direct or reported, the percentage of individual, original activity moving the story forward is unprecedentedly high.

The essential incompatibilities between *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in fact go a good way beyond what can be explained solely by differences of subject and genre, considerable though these are: the *Iliad* is in essence a heavily formalized tragedy, if at times unexpectedly realistic, whereas the *Odyssey* is rather a semi-heroic romantic adventure story, with a strong, and at times disconcerting, element of folktale and fantasy. The clear chronological gap between them indicated by the various social and linguistic differences outlined above suggests a genesis for our *Odyssey* perhaps fifty years later than that of the *Iliad.* We also need to take into consideration the *Odyssey*'s notably larger vocabulary than that of its predecessor. The formulaic phraseology is severely reduced, and sometimes, when used, seems awkward. Similes, so striking and brilliant a feature of the *Iliad,* are notably fewer in the *Odyssey,* and will on occasion strike the reader as strained or downright bizarre. When Odysseus reacts in anger at the lascivious maids (20.5–16), his heart within him growls like a bitch standing over her puppies and barking at strangers; Odysseus and Tēlemachos embracing in happy tears at their reunion (16.216–18) are likened to vultures mourning their stolen chicks.[3] As I worked at the translation, I came to feel, more and more, that whoever was responsible for the *Odyssey* as we have it could not be the same creative mind that had produced our *Iliad.* And here, too (this time with prior knowledge of his position), I was in agreement with Martin West.

THE NARRATIVE EXAMINED

Exactly how the surviving text of the *Odyssey* was composed will never be agreed: there simply is not enough surviving evidence. The best we can do is to look closely at what's there and see what it can tell us. Two basic assumptions seem reasonable: first, that the *Odyssey* drew generously upon the oral lays of the past; second, that it was compiled in roughly its final form by a poet who had learned what could be done with the written word from the *Iliad* and sought to produce a work that matched it in length and scope.

3. For other improbable similes, see, e.g., 6.232–35; 7.106; 20.25–27.

That goal was not achieved; the *Odyssey* is measurably shorter than the *Iliad,* notwithstanding the various lengthy digressions that occupy so much space: the reminiscences of Nestōr (3.103–200, 254–328), Menelaös (4.333–592), and, later, Eumaios (15.390–484), the antecedents of Theoklymenos (15.222–82), the repetitive fictional cover stories of Odysseus, to Eumaios (14.199–359), Antinoös (17.415–44), and Penelopē (19.165–202), parts indeed even of the seemingly interminable off-the-map disquisition to the Phaiakians that takes up all of books 9–12.

The narrative of the *Odyssey* also differs fundamentally from that of the *Iliad.* Dramatically speaking, the world of the *Odyssey* is that of the Greek heroes' returns (*nostoi*) home after the Trojan War, but there is far less sense of historical reality than in the *Iliad.* No tantalizing hint of evidence that might authenticate the actuality of the events—or, better, the characters—lurks in the background. The Lotus-Eaters, the Laistrygonians, the Kyklōps, the Sirens, the Cattle of the Sun, the remote islands of Kalypsō and Kirkē, even the idealized—and equally remote—Scherian court of King Alkinoös: none of these belong to the harshly human world of Troy, Mykēnai, or even, indeed, to the corrupt postwar aristocratic society of the suitors' Ithákē. After Odysseus has been telling the Phaiakians the names of famous heroines of olden time whose ghosts he has observed in the Underworld, it is hard not to sense a tone of deadpan irony in Alkinoös' voice when he reassures his voluble guest (11.356–76) that his listeners do not suppose for one moment that he's one of those "itinerant men who fashion false tales from what no man could really see!" Few modern readers can have reached this point without entertaining a similar suspicion. By contrast, in the heady and expansive days of the seventh century that saw the birth of the *Odyssey*—when beyond-the-horizon myths like those of Skyllē and Charybdis, or the Sirens, or the Wandering Rocks, were being supplanted by less colorful geographical fact—there must have been many listeners who derived a certain quiet comfort from a narrative in which the reality of such myths was still vouched for, if only by a spellbinding teller of tales energetically singing for his supper.

Nor indeed, in this last context, does the narrative always maintain a plausible realism. We may, like the original audience, be able, at a pinch, to accommodate traditional monsters such as the Kyklōps or even the Sirens. But the *Odyssey* is also careless about practical details. As West stresses (2014, 66), "the whole narrative is pervaded by contradictions and inconsistencies," and its composer "is a chronically inconsistent narrator" who "cannot ever be relied upon to make the details of what happens in one passage match what an earlier passage portended, or a later report of events agree precisely with what we were told when they happened." A typical case is his confusion

over the removal of weapons from the hall.[4] He has only the vaguest notion regarding the specific structure of Odysseus' house (see, e.g., 22.142–43 and n. 2 ad loc.). Several times we are confronted by physically improbable incidents or situations. The goatherd Melanthios is credited (22.142–46) with the ability to heft at one trip no fewer than twelve full sets of armor for the suitors. The hanging of the errant maidservants produces nooses from nowhere, and puts a minimum of 1,200 lbs. weight on a single rope that seems simply looped round a column (22.446–73, with n. 5 ad loc.).

Though originally, according to tradition, there seem to have been no more than a dozen suitors, all from Ithákē, a reasonable target for Odysseus' great bow (see West 2014, 104), nevertheless the composer of the *Odyssey,* who shows a liking for large numbers, at one point (16.245–53) has Tēlemachos list for his father over a hundred, from all around, islands and mainland, to emphasize the difficulty of dealing with them. Later, however, after a stretch of generalized slaughter, they have conveniently shrunk to a manageable number.

Most notable of all is the feat to be emulated in the contest of the bow (21.75–76 and elsewhere). How does Odysseus, from a sitting position (21.416–23), so shoot an arrow that it somehow passes through no fewer than twelve iron axe heads in a row (19.577–78, 21.419–23)? No remotely credible explanation of this feat has ever been advanced: for a recent account of some of these, with their difficulties, see *Comm.,* 3: 140–47. There are two main theories: that the arrow went through either (i) the empty sockets in the axe heads or (ii) the hanging rings, on double axes, at the base of the axe helves. In both cases, the holes would seem likely to have been far too narrow; indeed, it seems more than likely that the feat as described is a physical impossibility. Despite hopeful arguments and claims, no actual known hole in an ancient axe head or hanging ring is nearly large enough to sustain the trajectory of a fletched arrow, however accurately aimed, through twelve such spaced holes in a row, even granting the unlikely supposition that all twelve holes could be accurately aligned.[5]

MESSING WITH THE LEGEND: MORAL CENSORSHIP, CHRONOLOGICAL FIXES, AND OVERINTRUSIVE PRETERNATURALISM

There is one major event, referred to again and again in the *Odyssey*—first by Zeus during a conclave of the Olympians (1.29–43, 299–300), then by

4. See 16.281–98 and n. 2 ad loc.
5. The Greek, *prōtēs steileiēs,* is of uncertain meaning: it seems to refer to the end (*prōtēs*) of the axe's helve, haft, or handle, leaving the exact nature of the hole undescribed.

Nestōr (3.193–98, 253–75, 301–10), Athēnē disguised as Mentōr (3.234–35), and Tēlemachos (3.237–52) in discussion, then by Menelaös, again to Tēlemachos (4.512–37), then by the shade of Agamemnōn to Odysseus (11.387–434) and Achillēs (24.20–22, 95–97) in the Underworld—that has an all-too-realistic supposed historical context. This is the seduction, during Agamemnōn's absence at Troy, of his wife Klytaimnēstra by his cousin Aigisthos, the son of Thyestēs, followed by their joint rule over Mykēnai for seven years; their murder of Agamemnōn on his return from the wars; and the retributive murder, in the eighth year, of both Aigisthos and Klytaimnēstra by the latter's son Orestēs.

The immediate object of the repeated reminders of this event—which might be seen, in historical terms, as a characteristic and predictable consequence of the prolonged absence from a major Greek citadel of its normal defenders—is clearly to contrast Klytaimnēstra with faithful Penelopē, who holds out for years, through thick and thin, the embodiment of an ideally loyal wife, against the temptations presented by a crowd of lawless and importunate suitors. In addition, there is the implied comparison of Tēlemachos with Orestēs. The motif of Agamemnōn's betrayal and murder has rightly been interpreted thus by many scholars.

But the episode as presented has also been responsible for one of the most bizarre—and, on the face of it, entirely unnecessary—modifications of the postwar returns. From a very early date, tradition had it that Aigisthos and Klytaimnēstra jointly ruled Mykēnai for seven years. At some point, it was decided, improbably, that this reign *began* with the murder of Agamemnōn on the latter's return from Troy. The reason for this may well have been the awkward fact that Aigisthos' rule had been popular—his otherwise surprising formal epithet *amumōn,* "blameless" (*Il.* 1.29) may be suggestive here; and, since he was not only a grandson of Pelops, but the son of Atreus' brother Thyestēs, who had himself succeeded Atreus as king of Mykēnai (*Il.* 1.102–8), he may well have been regarded as having as legitimate a claim to the throne (cf. 4.517–18) as his cousin Agamemnōn (to whom, rather than to his own son, Thyestēs had allegedly passed on the scepter of power).

There is also the tradition, never mentioned in Homeric epic, but a prominent feature of the Epic Cycle (see *Cypria,* arg. 8; West 2003, 74–75), that at the very beginning of the expedition to Troy, Iphigeneia, Klytaimnēstra's daughter, was sent to the port of Aulis at the request of her father Agamemnōn on the pretext that she was to marry Achillēs, but in fact to be sacrificed to Artemis in order to placate the goddess' wrath at Agamemnōn himself and obtain a following wind for the fleet to sail to Troy. The sacrifice took place, the fleet got its wind and sailed.

Klytaimnēstra may well have been thought by the rhapsodes who transmitted the oral legend to have had a very good reason to hate her husband—something that could indeed have influenced her when his cousin Aigisthos came calling. So when was that? Surely at a fairly early point during the Trojan War. Nestōr's reminiscences (3.262–75) of how Aigisthos seduced Klytaimnēstra, as well as the version told to Menelaös by the Old Man of the Sea (4.517–37, esp. 524–29, with a watch set to provide advance warning of Agamemnōn's return) are clearly based on just such a tradition. Klytaimnēstra's initial reluctance, like the claim that a deer was substituted for the human victim, reveal a later determination to expunge the entire episode as morally repugnant, and to remove any hint of approval from the account of Aigisthos' behavior throughout. For this, two changes were regarded as absolutely indispensable: the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was suppressed, while the commencement of Aigisthos' seven years' rule in Mykēnai was set at a point *after* the murder of Agamemnōn. Aigisthos was thus rendered wholly culpable, and Agamemnōn could be seen as the conventional cuckolded husband, whose murder directly facilitated both his murderer's seven-year reign and the liaison with the (violently widowed) queen that went with it. Significantly, the reported degree of Klytaimnēstra's own direct involvement in the actual murder remains variable (though Agamemnōn himself, as a shade, is angrily convinced of it, and loses no opportunity of comparing his own unhappy marital position with that of Odysseus: see 11.409–11, 421–30; 24.93–98, 192–202).

But the chronological displacement of Aigisthos' rule over Mykēnai had an unlooked-for, and most unfortunate, narrative consequence. Nestōr takes it for granted (3.256–61) that, had Menelaös returned while Aigisthos was still alive, he would surely have avenged his brother's murder. But—as everyone knew—it was Orestēs (who is thus, like Tēlemachos, given time to grow up) who, in the eighth year of Aigisthos' rule, came back and did the deed, killing not only Aigisthos but also his own mother (3.302–10). Menelaös himself arrives, bringing much treasure, on the very day of the funeral feast (3.311–12), having spent eight years, after leaving Troy, trafficking round the Levant and Egypt with Helen (4.78–96, 227–32), and carefully emphasizes (4.90–92) that it was while he was thus occupied that his brother was killed. In fact, of course, the only reason for the existence of this unbelievably prolonged postwar business tour is to keep him out of the way until the murder has been avenged by Orestēs, since any earlier appearance would raise the question of why he had not then done the job himself.

The seven-year sojourn of Odysseus chez Kalypsō—during which, as West (2014, 127–28) remarks, nothing at all happens—is equally incredible.

Originally, Odysseus was thought to have taken no more than three years after the fall of Troy to get back home.[6] Kalypsō has no real function other than to give Tēlemachos, like Orestēs, time to grow up—in his case with a view both to providing his mother with a compelling motive for remarriage, and to playing a creditable role himself in helping his father overcome the suitors. Poseidōn inflicts shipwreck on Odysseus in revenge for his having blinded the Kyklōps, Poseidōn's son (albeit in self-defense), but the resulting seven-year haven for Odysseus will not have formed part of his original three-year *nostos* (journey home). As a chronological device, these multi-year segregations are both obvious and singularly lacking in contextual plausibility.

In the first book of the *Iliad* (1.188–222), at a point when Achillēs, infuriated by Agamemnōn, is debating in his mind whether or not to draw his sword and kill him, the observant goddess Hērē notices and quickly dispatches Athēnē earthward to prevent such violence. Athēnē comes up quietly behind Achillēs, invisible to everyone except him, and grasps him by his long hair. Astonished, Achillēs swings round, instantly recognizes Athēnē, and enquires if she's come to witness Agamemnōn's "arrogant gall" (203), for which he's likely to lose his life. No, the goddess responds, she's been sent to curb Achillēs' own wrath, to stop his violence, make him restrict his fury to verbal abuse. Abashed, Achillēs exclaims: "Needs must, goddess, respect the words of you both, / however angry at heart one may be. It is better so— / and those who comply with the gods are listened to in return" (216–18). By the time he has resettled his sword in its scabbard, Athēnē, her task done, is already on her way back to Olympos.

It is a famous, unexpected, and immensely effective scene. Nothing quite like it ever happens again in the *Iliad*. Athēnē's divine intrusion is over almost before it has begun, but its impact on Achillēs is total and instantaneous: modern readers have been known to wonder whether the whole thing is a flash of imagination in Achillēs' mind. This sudden and daring injection into an all-too-human quarrel of an overriding preternatural ele-

6. As West (2014, 115) rightly says: "Neither the individual adventures nor the travelling from one to the next occupied long periods of time. It was hard to make them fill up ten years in aggregate, and Q [West's title for our *Odyssey*'s composer] only makes it at all plausible by keeping his hero's progress stalled for a year with Circe and for seven years with Calypso. It has struck more than one scholar that without that stay with Calypso the ten years would be reduced to three: just the length of time suggested by the references to the suitors' three-year presence in the palace and Penelopē's three years of weaving." That of course, would leave Tēlemachos a mere thirteen-year-old. Not impossible: children grew up fast and early then.

ment—no sooner glimpsed than gone—depends for its effectiveness to a great extent on its rarity.

I have long nursed an uneasy suspicion that the composer of the *Odyssey* was not only impressed by the idea but also convinced that it could be repeated ad infinitum, with variations, without losing any of its real creative power. We first meet Athēnē (1.45–59) at a conclave of the Olympians, complaining that Zeus is not concerned with rescuing Odysseus from detention on Kalypsō's remote island. Zeus reminds her (1.63–79) that Poseidōn's claims must be considered. But he agrees, in a casual way, that Olympos should arrange for Odysseus' homecoming, and that it's mainly up to Athēnē to see to this. The result is a staggering sequence of (often preternatural) ad hoc micromanagement on Athēnē's part. She lectures Tēlemachos like a fussy schoolmistress on how to grow up (1.112–305), then flies off as a bird (1.320). At 2.224–41, the wise Ithakan Mentōr, whom Odysseus, Troy-bound, left in charge of his affairs, makes the first of his own rare appearances: advisedly so, since from soon after this (2.267–95) to the final emergency pact arranged with the dead suitors' surviving relatives (24.545–48), when Mentōr seemingly appears, it is in fact, with one exception (17.67–71), Athēnē in his likeness, and one sometimes wonders (especially in that final case) where in fact the real Mentōr was at the time.

When busily arranging Tēlemachos' trip to Pylos (2.382–87), Athēnē actually takes on the likeness of Tēlemachos himself: luckily, this is a one-off, but the repeated alert that the goddess then "had another idea" can lead to endless improbabilities, such as Athēnē delivering the supposed Mentōr's prayer to Poseidōn (3.55–61), "while herself was bringing it all to pass." Athēnē flies off like a sea eagle (3.371–72; Nestōr twigs that the bird is her); puts ideas into Odysseus' head from a distance (5.425–29); and visits Nausikaä in a dream in the form of a girlfriend (6.20–40), encouraging her to do the laundry by the seaside (6.112–15), in order to bring about her meeting Odysseus. In fact, she can at a moment's notice take on the likeness of anyone needed to pass on information or in any way advance the narrative, from a girl at the well (7.48–77) to a herald (8.7–15), a well-bred young shepherd (13.221–25), or a handsome woman invisible to Tēlemachos but seen by Odysseus and the dogs (16.155–77).

However, what must put the heaviest strain on the modern reader's willing suspension of disbelief is Athēnē's preternatural, instantaneous ability to transform Odysseus' physical appearance. She can spiff up the sleeping Penelopē's appearance to make her look sexually desirable to the suitors (18.187–96), and we can accept that; but her treatment of Odysseus defies credulity, and may have something to do with the inherent unlikelihood of no one, even his own wife, recognizing him when he is twenty years older—

though Eurykleia comes very close to doing so (19.379–81), before that telltale scar reveals the truth (19.467–75). Athēnē can, at need, and in a split second, magically transmogrify not only Odysseus' person but also his clothing: from a wrinkled old beggar in rags (13.397–403, 429–38) to a well-dressed, healthy, good-looking middle-aged man in his prime (8.16–23, 16.172–76), and back again (16.207–12, 452–59). In the one form (6.229–35), he not only charms the young Nausikaä but is told by her father (7.311–16) that he'd welcome him as a son-in-law. In the other, his persona as an aged beggar is so real that it seriously confuses his own wife (19.100–360). In the rejuvenation process preceding his final reunion with Penelopē, Athēnē restores his former heroic appearance, including a rich crop of "hyacinthine" hair (23.155–58). At a stroke these preternatural interferences with the naturally irreversible effects of twenty years' physical aging undercut the all-too-real and challenging emotions of husband and wife nervously rediscovering one another after their fraught and seemingly endless separation.

TRANSLATION AND THE HOMERIC HEXAMETER

It is over half a century now since Richmond Lattimore, following up (as I too have now done) on his *Iliad,* first published his deservedly famous, and ground-breaking, translation of the *Odyssey.*[7] What made his version truly different from its innumerable predecessors was his determination to get as close as possible, in every respect—metre, rhythm, formulaic phrases, style, vocabulary, as well as the rapidity, plainness of thought, directness of expression, and nobility of concept emphasized by Matthew Arnold in his lectures *On Translating Homer*—to the original Homeric Greek. The stimulus for such an English *Odyssey* was, of course, the vast expansion of American university education in the humanities, largely fostered by the GI Bill in the years immediately following World War II; and what it sought to do was to give a totally Greekless readership the closest possible idea of what Homer had been about, metrically, linguistically, and in literary terms. My own version, a generation later, has the same objectives in view, with another added: the determination, in dealing with a poem so oral in its essence, that what I have written should be naturally declaimable.

At first sight what Lattimore was attempting did not seem innovative: ever since the Renaissance there had been an ongoing battle between modernist and Hellenizing translators, with the modernists generally winning.

7. Some of what follows here has been adapted from my review-article "Homer Now," published in *The New Republic* 243, no. 10 (June 28, 2012): 36–41, and is used by kind permission.

The essential modernist principle was famously expressed by Dryden, who declared of his version of Horace (but the same principle applies here), in relation to the original author's work, that "my own is of a piece with his, and that *if he were living, and an Englishman,* they are such as he would probably have written" (emphasis, except for *Englishman,* mine).[8] This formula at once licensed any Anglicization, however inappropriate. It might have been thought that the Hellenizers, whose aim was the preservation of the original characteristics of the Greek, would suit a Greekless audience better; the trouble was that they, like the modernists, assumed, sometimes unconsciously, *an audience that could still read the original Greek,* and thus would be capable of making informed comparisons between text and translation. What Lattimore saw, very clearly, was that communicating the ultra-foreign essence, at every level, of Homer to minds that were virtually tabula rasa where any but English poetry was concerned called for a quite new fidelity—rhythmical and rhetorical no less than idiomatic—to the alien original, together with a comparable avoidance of all those comfortingly familiar, yet wildly misleading, fallbacks (blank verse being the most obvious, and the most misleading) that had served translators so well in the past.

Of all the essential features in this new type of translation—retention of formulaic phrases, syntactical empathy, avoidance of factitious pseudo-similarity to familiar English landmarks—the most difficult by far to achieve has always been an acceptable equivalent to Homer's metrical line, the epic hexameter. At the heart of the matter lies a fundamental difference between Greek and English poetics. In Greek (and Latin) verse, all vowels have a fixed quantity, either long or short. Short quantities can be lengthened by position, that is, before two or more consonants, which gives a poet more scope; but every metre is determined by an arrangement of vowel quantities. The power of a line is determined by the contrapuntal play of natural stress (ictus) against this rigid metrical pattern. In English, on the contrary, vowels have no fixed given length (though diphthongs and naturally long or duplicated vowels—think "chain," "groin," "fame," "teeth," "dice," "home," "dune"—to some extent can be made to follow the classical rule), and in the last resort are stressed solely by the natural syllabic emphases given to any sentence. In the strict sense, English doesn't have metres at all.

In Homer's case the situation is made still more difficult by the fact that the prevalent unit of emphasis ("foot") in the epic hexameter is the dactyl (—u u), one long syllable followed by two shorts, dah-didi. This six-foot

8. Preface on translation prefixed to the *Second Miscellany* (1685), reprinted in *The Works of John Dryden,* ed. G. Saintsbury (Edinburgh, 1885), 12: 281–82.

line can be set out as follows: —u u |—uu |—|| u u | — || uu |—u u |—u. Any dactyl (i.e., any of the first five feet, though a resolved fifth foot is rare) is resolvable into one long, dah-dah, forming a spondee (——). The sixth foot is an abbreviated (catalectic) dactyl, shorn of its last syllable (— u). It too can be a spondee (——). The hexameter has a natural mid-break, against the metre most commonly in the third or fourth foot, as marked (||). To illustrate this line in English, here is a Victorian rendering of *Iliad* 1.44, by C. S. Calverley: "Dark was the | soul of the | god || as he | moved from the | heights of O | lympos." Calverley, a good classicist, knew very well that dactylo-spondaic rhythm runs flat contrary to natural English rhythm, which is essentially iambic (u—) or, in lighter moods, anapestic (uu—), and forms the building blocks of the blank verse line, employed by Milton in *Paradise Lost,* and by the vast majority of would-be translators of Homer, even though that seriously reduces the speed of the hexameter, and has totally alien associations to it (translators like Pope compounded this error by choosing the tightly rhymed heroic couplet, since rhyming was unknown to Homer). Iambs naturally climb uphill, while dactyls are on the gallop: listen to the onomatopoeia Homer works into a line (*Od.* 11.598) describing the rock of Sisyphos obstinately rolling and bouncing down to the plain again: *Autis epeita pedonde kulindeto lāas anaidēs.*

The combination of alien rhythm and absence of stress/metre counterpoint has always made any sustained attempt at an English stress hexameter a lost cause, not least because the English stress pattern tends both to avoid spondaic resolved feet and to coincide exactly with the metrical schema. H. B. Cotterill's *Odyssey* is typical, its flat dactylic rhythms boringly soporific:

> Now when at last they arrived at the beautiful stream of the river
> Here the perennial basins they found where water abundant
> Welled up brightly enough for the cleansing of dirtiest raiment
> So their mules they unloosened from under the yoke of the wagon,
> Letting them wander at will on the bank of the eddying river. (6.85–89)

The problem was a daunting one, but most translators, who couldn't have cared less about the needs of a Greekless general audience, never saw it as one at all.

What is still by far the best solution, though by no means a perfect one, was hit on by C. Day Lewis in 1940, when translating Vergil's *Georgics,* and later developed in his version (1952) of the *Aeneid.* By a real stroke of luck, this translation was commissioned for broadcasting by the BBC, which meant that it was, precisely, aimed at a nonclassical general public that

would, in the first instance, hear rather than read it. It therefore had perforce to be, like its original, *declaimable,* a quality sadly to seek in most previous versions, but fundamental to all ancient epic. This meant, among other things, capturing something of Vergil's verbal structures and linear rhetoric, which, in turn, demanded a line-by-line adherence to the original text. Thus two crucial necessities were imposed on Day Lewis from the start, and they in turn made him face the dilemma of the English hexameter, one problem with which had always allegedly been that it was unmanageably long.[9] What Day Lewis evolved was a variable 6/5 stress line, ranging from 12 to 17 syllables, and (though he did not claim this) largely dactylo-spondaic in its emphases.

The result made for far less boring rhythms, and even for a certain verbal springiness. Amusingly, Day Lewis' declared intention in varying the line's length had been to remove the need in translation to either pad or omit as occasion required.[10] What he created was in fact the nearest thing to a truly contrapuntal stress hexameter we're ever likely to achieve. Lattimore, who had clearly seen the potential of such a line in Day Lewis' *Georgics,* used it for his *Iliad* (1951) and *Odyssey* (1965), and I explored its potential further in my version of Apollonius Rhodius (1997). While taking advantage of its variable length while translating the *Iliad* (2015)—as indeed of English natural rhythms, which allowed, very often, for a short syllable before an initial dactyl (which a strict hexameter wouldn't), quietly converting it to UU—that is, an anapest—I was surprised by how often, in fact, the line wrote itself either as a true hexameter, or with one syllable short (catalectic) in the final foot:

> The assembly then broke up. The troops now scattered, each man
> off to his own swift ship, their minds on the evening meal
> and the joy of a full night's sleep. But Achilles wept and wept,
> thinking of his dear comrade, so that sleep the all-subduing
> got no hold on him: he kept tossing this way and that,
> missing Patroklos—his manhood, his splendid strength,
> all he'd been through with him, the hardships he'd suffered,
> facing men in battle and the waves of the cruel sea. (*Il.* 24.1–8)

Controlling the hexameter is, in fact, the key to producing a version of Homer that gives one's nonclassical audience some sense of the *Iliad* or the

9. In fact, it was not as long as the clumsy (and rhymed) "fourteener" employed to translate Homer (1598–1616) by the Elizabethan scholar George Chapman, who has always had a good press from literary critics.
10. See his remarks in *The Aeneid of Virgil* (Garden City, NY, 1953), 8–9.

Odyssey as a whole poem, and I'm lucky in having had a lifetime of preliminary practice before I finally tackled it.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This translation, then, aims to introduce Homer's *Odyssey,* as far as possible without familiar distracting comparisons or personal additions, to an audience that in essence knows nothing about the poem, its antecedents, or the circumstances of its creation. As far as possible I have done nothing to remove those features—not so many as might be supposed, and fewer in the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad*—that are often alleged to militate against modern acceptance. The leading characters, and other entities, all retain their repetitive personal epithets. A reader or listener very soon acclimatizes to these and comes to appreciate the subtly ironic way in which they are often employed. The formulaic oral phraseology governing familiar activities like eating and drinking is no odder than the da capo repetition of a dominant theme in, say, a string quartet.[11] Homer's own subtle sentence structure and linear rhetoric are at least as effective as the way translators have chopped and changed his language to make it sound more comfortingly like words written by an English poet.

It is true that sometimes—very seldom, in fact, and again less often in the *Odyssey*—a point can be reached where close adherence to an idiomatic preference risks, through false associations, sounding ridiculous rather than simply strange or alien.[12] In such cases I have modified the original, generally with an explanatory note. But for the most part, these men and women created long millennia ago (not to mention their heavily anthropomorphized deities) combine a wholly alien background and ethos with all-too-familiar habits that are endearing or alarming according to circumstance: filial and marital devotion, status-conscious pride and arrogance, ancient long-windedness, obstinacy and recklessness, passion and despair. It is the universalism captured by this extraordinary epic poem, in a very different way from that achieved by the *Iliad,* that gives it its remarkable staying power; but the enjoyment it generates comes in great measure from the unexpectedly modern impression it so often achieves. At a distance of nearly three millennia, and

11. Indeed, a similar argument, and comparison, could be made in justification of yet another translation of the *Odyssey:* Would anyone ever raise serious objections to one more interpretation of J. S. Bach's six unaccompanied suites for cello?
12. A nice instance in the *Odyssey* is the Homeric use (paralleled in Latin) of the human head as a summation, personal no less than physical, of the individual: most famous from the Underworld (e.g., at 10.521) as the "weak heads of the dead."

despite its preternatural trimmings, this world, and its occupants, present, much of the time, what seems a recognizable familiarity. The problems, mutatis mutandis, are often ours. The reactions are recognizable. The unbridgeable otherness of the ancient world is somehow less of a stumbling-block here than in many later and more sophisticated works that should, on the face of it, be less alien and thus more easily appreciable. And in following the twists of the story, we skim blithely over most of those errors and inconsistencies—some of them described above—that so bedevil the translator and commentator. Any person in search of a compelling and enjoyable narrative is amply rewarded by the *Odyssey:* like Homer's ancient audience, and the jury of the legal joke, he or she will probably only hear or read it once; and those who return to it, often again and again, will have had their impression of it formed, indelibly, trust me—*experto credite*—by that first unforgettable exposure.

One last word. It will be noticed that I have made virtually no attempt to dictate the literary terms in which anyone new to the *Odyssey* should seek to appreciate it as a poem. This is partly because, just as no two historians can fully agree on the poem's genesis, so no two critics are in complete concordance when delineating its literary qualities. But first and foremost, it is because a lifetime devoted to teaching of one sort or another has shown me that initial impressions are crucial, and that if these are imposed externally, they can never be shaken off. First-time readers of the *Odyssey* should be allowed to establish their own personal impression of it before listening to the competing chorus of professionals, who are all too ready to shape their opinions for them. My bibliography offers a way into this noisy marketplace. Take my advice and don't consult it until you've familiarized yourself with the great poem itself, preferably on more than one reading, and have established your own personal attitude to it. Then Daniel Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey: A Father, a Son, and an Epic* (2017) might be a stimulating place to begin. If the experience leads you to learn Greek and tackle the original, so much the better. You won't regret it.

Book 1

The man, Muse—tell me about that resourceful man, who wandered
far and wide, when he'd sacked Troy's sacred citadel:
many men's townships he saw, and learned their ways of thinking,
many the griefs he suffered at heart on the open sea,
battling for his own life and his comrades' homecoming. Yet 5
no way could he save his comrades, much though he longed to—
it was through their own blind recklessness that they perished,
the fools, for they slaughtered the cattle of Hēlios the sun god
and ate them: for that he took from them their day of returning.
Tell us this tale, goddess, child of Zeus; start anywhere in it! 10

Now the rest, all those who'd escaped from sheer destruction,
were home by now, survivors of both warfare and the sea;
Him alone, though longing for his homecoming and his wife,
the queenly nymph Kalypsō, bright among goddesses,
held back in her hollow cavern, desiring him for her husband. 15
But when the year arrived, with its circling seasons, in which
the gods had ordained he should make his homeward journey
to Ithákē, not even then would he be free of trials,
even among his own people. All the gods felt pity for him
except for Poseidōn, who still nursed unabated wrath 20
against godlike Odysseus until he reached his native land.

But now Poseidōn was visiting the remote Aithiopians—
who live in two sundered groups, both at mankind's frontiers,
the one at Hyperion's setting, the other where he rises—
to receive from them a full sacrifice of bulls and rams, 25
and was sitting there at the feast, enjoying himself: the other
gods were all assembled in the halls of Olympian Zeus.
Discussion was started among them by the Father of men and gods,
who'd been brooding in his heart over handsome[1] Aigisthos,

1. The epithet applied to Aigisthos is *amumōn,* which usually carries the formulaic meaning "blameless" or "peerless." This seems inappropriate here, since Aigisthos murdered his cousin Agamemnōn. A. A. Parry 1973, 123–24 argues on etymological grounds that *amumōn* could also mean "handsome" or "stately." I accept this explanation faute de mieux, but suspect (see pp. 15–17 above) there may be some other reason for the presence of the surprising formulaic title.

slain by far-famed Orestēs, the son of Agamemnōn: 30
with him in mind he now spoke among the immortals, saying:
"My oh my, the way mortals will fasten blame on the gods!
From us, they say, evils come, yet they themselves
through their own blind recklessness have ills beyond
their fated lot, as lately Aigisthos—beyond *his* fated lot— 35
killed Atreus' son at his homecoming, married his wife,
though he knew this meant sheer destruction, since we'd told him
before the event, sending Hermēs, the sharp-eyed Argos-slayer,
he should neither slay the man nor marry his bedfellow,
since vengeance for Atreus' son would come from Orestēs 40
once he'd reached manhood, and longed for his own country.
So Hermēs said; but he failed, for all his good intentions,
to dissuade Aigisthos, who now has paid the full penalty."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"Our father, son of Kronos, highest above all rulers, 45
that man indeed was destroyed by well-merited disaster—
so may all others perish who commit such crimes!—
but my heart is distressed on account of clever Odysseus,
that ill-fated man, who, far from his dear ones, has long
suffered griefs on a sea-ringed island, where the sea's navel is: 50
a tree-rich island, and a goddess has her home there,
the daughter of crafty-minded Atlas, who knows the depths
of every sea, who in person shoulders those lofty
pillars that keep earth and firmament apart from each other.
His daughter it is who detains that luckless, sorrowful man, 55
forever beguiling him with soft and wheedling words
to forget his island, Ithákē. Yet Odysseus, in his yearning
to perceive were it only the smoke rising up into the sky
from his homeland, longs now for death. But your own heart
cares nothing for him, Olympian! Did not Odysseus 60
by the Argives' ships honor you with the sacrifices he made
in the broad land of Troy? Why, Zeus, do you hate[2] him so?"

Cloud-gatherer Zeus responded to her, saying: "My child,
what's this word that's escaped the barrier of your teeth?
Now how could I ever forget the godlike Odysseus, 65

2. There is an untranslatable pun here (and elsewhere) involving the name Odysseus and the verb *odussomai,* meaning to hate, or be wrathful. Cf. 19.409 and note ad loc.

who for mind surpasses all mortals, who's sacrificed most
to the deathless gods who possess the wide firmament? No,
it's Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker, whose fury with him is relentless,
unceasing, because of the Kyklōps, whose eye he blinded—
the godlike Polyphēmos, whose strength is the mightiest 70
among all the Kyklōpes: the nymph Thoōsa bore him,
daughter of Phorkys who rules the unharvested sea,
for there in the hollow sea caves she lay with Poseidōn.
That's why Earth-Shaker Poseidōn is wroth with Odysseus:
not killing him, but forever frustrating his homeward journey. 75
So come, let all of us here give some thought to his return,
how to get him home safely: Poseidōn will have to abandon
his rage, he won't be able, with all the immortals united
against him, to strive alone, lacking the gods' goodwill."

The goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying: 80
"Our father, son of Kronos, highest above all rulers,
if indeed it is now agreeable to the blessed gods
that quick-witted Odysseus should return to his own home,
let us then dispatch Hermēs, the guide, the slayer of Argos,
to the isle of Ōgygia, so that as soon as may be 85
he can inform the fair-tressed nymph of our firm decision
on steadfast-minded Odysseus: that he's to return home.
I meanwhile will go to Ithákē, approach his son,
put more strength in his heart, give him the courage
to summon the long-haired Achaians to assembly, and make 90
a strong case to the suitors, who without cease slaughter
his flocks of sheep and his shambling, crumple-horned cattle;
and then I'll send him to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to seek
news of his father's homecoming—he may learn something—
and win a good reputation among men at large." 95
So she spoke,
and bound on her elegant sandals under her feet,
immortal, golden, that bore her both over the sea
and across the boundless earth, as swift as the wind's blast;
and she took her brave spear, so massive, thick and strong,
its tip of sharp bronze, with which she routs the ranks of men, 100
heroes against whom she, a strong sire's daughter, is wroth,
and took off, down from the heights of Olympos, landing
on Ithákē, right before Odysseus' outer entrance,

his courtyard's threshold, still grasping the bronze spear,
in the guise of a stranger, the Taphian leader Mentēs. 105
There she found the bold suitors. They at the time
were amusing themselves with board games out of doors,
seated on hides of oxen they themselves had slaughtered,
while heralds and henchmen were busy on their behalf,
some mixing wine and water for them in bowls, 110
while others were swabbing the tables with porous sponges
and setting them out, or carving meat in lavish helpings.

By far the first to see her was godlike Tēlemachos,
who was sitting among the suitors, sorely vexed at heart,
in his mind's eye seeing his noble father, how he might 115
return, make a scattering of the suitors through his domain,
and himself gain honor, be king of his own possessions.
Thinking thus, there among the suitors, he noticed Athēnē,
and went at once to the forecourt, embarrassed at heart
that a guest had to wait outside. He stood beside her, 120
clasped her right hand, took charge of the bronze spear,
and addressed her with winged words, saying: "Greetings, stranger!
As a guest you're welcome among us, and afterwards, when
you've shared our meal, then explain to us what it is you need."

That said, he led the way, and Pallas Athēnē followed. 125
When they entered the lofty house, Tēlemachos carried
her spear across and stood it beside a tall pillar, in
a polished spear rack, where many more spears were standing,
that belonged to steadfast Odysseus. Athēnē herself
he led and had sit down in a backed chair, spreading 130
a cloth on it first: a finely wrought chair, with footstool,
and beside it an inlaid seat for himself, away from the others,
the suitors, lest his guest, irritated by their uproar,
should be put off his food, among such arrogant men—
and besides, he wanted to ask him about his absent father. 135
Then a handmaid brought water for them in an exquisite
golden pitcher, poured it into a silver basin, so they
could rinse their hands, then set a polished table beside them,
and a grave housekeeper brought them bread, and with it
appetizers galore, giving freely of what was to hand, 140
while a carver made up and sent them platefuls of meat

of every kind, and set by them golden goblets, while
a herald went to and fro to furnish them with wine.

Then in came the arrogant suitors, and all immediately
settled themselves in rows on the seats and benches, 145
and heralds now poured water over their hands, while maids
brought them bread by the basketful, and youths
filled the bowls to the brim with drink for them, and they
reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink, 150
the suitors' minds now turned to other pleasures,
to singing and dancing, a feast's proper complement,
and a herald brought out for Phēmios his well-tuned lyre—
he sang for the suitors only because he was forced to—
and he struck a chord, introducing his own fine song. 155

But Tēlemachos now spoke to grey-eyed Athēnē, leaning
his head close to hers, so that no one else could hear him:
"Dear stranger, would you be shocked by what I tell you?
All these men care about is music and singing, easy enough
for them—they're freeloading off another man's livelihood, 160
a man whose white bones may be rotting in the rain
away on the mainland, or rolled by the sea's breakers.
If they were to see him, if he ever returned to Ithákē,
they'd all be praying that they could run away faster, not
as now, that they were richer in gold and expensive clothes! 165
But no, he must have suffered a wretched fate, nor is there
any comfort for us, not even should someone, somewhere,
claim he'll come back: his day of returning's perished.
But now tell me this, and give me a truthful answer:
Who are you? From where? What city? Who are your parents? 170
On what kind of ship did you come here? How did sailors
bring you to Ithákē? What place do they say they're from?
For I don't imagine you made your way here on foot!
And tell me this truly too, that I may be certain of it:
Is this your first visit here, or are you one of my father's 175
guest-friends? Many the men who used to visit our home,
just as he too traveled widely among mankind."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"So, I'll answer the questions you asked me fully and truthfully.

I declare I am Mentēs, wise Anchialos' son, 180
and that I rule the Taphians, master rowers; and now,
as you see, I've put in here by ship, with my companions,
sailing the wine-dark deep to meet men of foreign speech,
on my way to Temésē for copper, with a cargo of gleaming iron.
My ship's out there, by the countryside, far from the city, 185
in the harbor of Rheithron, down below wooded Nēion.
Guest-friends of each other Odysseus and I claim we are
from way back—you can go ask that elderly hero
Laërtēs, who, they say, no longer comes to the city,
but far away in the backwoods has a hard existence 190
with one old woman servant, who sees to his victuals and drink
when exhaustion steals over and weakens his limbs as he
shuffles along the high slope of his patch of vineyard.
So now I've come, for indeed word had it that your father
was back home; but the gods must be thwarting his return, 195
since not yet has he died in this world, the noble Odysseus,
but still lives, perhaps held prisoner, out on the vast deep
in some sea-girt island, kept there by violent men,
wild savages, who, most likely, are holding him under duress.
But I shall now make a prediction for you, just as the immortals 200
put it into my mind—and I think it will come to pass,
though I am no seer, have no clear knowledge of bird-signs!
Not much longer will he be away from his own beloved
country, no, not even if iron bonds restrain him—he'll
find a way to return, this man of many resources! 205
But now tell me this, and declare it to me truly,
if indeed, big as you are, you're Odysseus' own son—because
your head and fine eyes bear an amazing resemblance
to his: many the hours we spent with one another
before he embarked for Troy, like so many others, 210
the finest of the Achaians, in the hollow ships, and set forth.
But since then I've not seen Odysseus, nor he me."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to her, saying:
"So, stranger, I'll give you a full and truthful answer.
My mother says I'm his child, but for my own part 215
I cannot tell: never yet did any man know his begetting!
Indeed, I could wish I'd been the son of some fortunate
gentleman, taken by age while among his own possessions!

But truth is, it was the most ill-fated of mortals who,
so they say, begot me—since you're asking about this matter." 220
Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"No nameless lineage, surely, did the gods decree for you
hereafter, since such as you are you were born to Penelopē!
But now tell me this, and declare it to me truly:
What party, what gathering's this? What's your concern with it? 225
A feast, is it? Or a wedding? No communal dinner, surely?
The riotous, arrogant manner in which, as it seems to me,
they are carrying on in your house! A man might well take offense,
walking in on this shameful behavior—any decent man, that is."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to her, saying: 230
"Since, stranger, you ask this, and question me on these matters,
our household once looked to be rich and respectable,
so long as that certain man was here among his people;
but now the gods have willed otherwise, have planned misfortune,
have vanished him utterly, as they've done to no other man 235
ever—I wouldn't be grieving so over his death
had he fallen alongside his comrades upon Trojan soil
or expired in his friends' arms after winding up the war!
Then all the Achaians would have made him a burial mound,
and great glory would have been his, and his son's, hereafter. 240
But now, ingloriously, the storm winds have swept him away.
He's gone, out of sight, out of knowledge, leaving me pain and sorrow
—and it's not on his sole account that I'm lamenting now,
since the gods have inflicted other harsh troubles on me.
All those highborn leaders who lord it over the islands— 245
Doulichion and Samē and forested Zákynthos,
besides those who rule as princes over rocky Ithákē—
are all paying court to my mother, and devouring our property.
Yet she neither refuses this hateful marriage, nor can she make
an end of the business, while they with feasting keep on 250
eating away our substance: very soon they'll destroy me too."

Outraged by his statement, Athēnē responded, saying:
"It's true, you're in urgent need of the vanished Odysseus,
to come and lay hands on these shameless suitors!
How I wish he'd appear now, here at your outer gate, 255
armed with helmet and shield and a brace of spears,

the way he was the first time I set eyes upon him,
in our house, drinking wine and enjoying himself, on his way
back from Ephyrē, where he'd gone to see Ilos, Mermeros' son.
Odysseus had voyaged there aboard his speedy vessel 260
in search of a lethal poison that he wanted to get
to smear the bronze tips of his arrows. But Ilos refused
to give it him, fearing the wrath of the gods that are forever;
yet my father did, for he loved the man most dearly.
If only Odysseus might come, thus arrayed, among the suitors! 265
They'd all find a quick death then, and a bitter marriage.
But of course all this rests on the knees of the gods—
whether or not he'll return and exact full retribution
in his own halls. But I urge you yourself to consider
how you might drive out these suitors from your household, 270
so pay attention now, mark carefully what I tell you.
Tomorrow call an assembly of the Achaian heroes:
Speak your mind to them all, let the gods be your witnesses!
Tell the suitors all to disperse, to go back home;
And if your mother's heart is urging her toward marriage, 275
she should return to her powerful father's domain,
where they'll set up the wedding and arrange the bride-gifts,
lots of them, all that's fitting to go with a much-loved daughter.
And for you yourself wise advice, if you'll take it: man a ship,
the best you have, with twenty rowers, and go 280
to seek news of your father, who's been so long absent,
just in case some person can tell you, or you pick up a rumor
from Zeus, the most common way that mortals gather tidings.
Go first to Pylos, interrogate noble Nestōr,
and from there to Sparta, to fair-haired Menelaös, 285
for he was the last of all the bronze-corseleted Achaians
to get home. If you hear that your father's alive, and on his
way back, then, though beleaguered, hold on for another year;
but if you get word that he's dead, no longer living,
then make your way back to your own dear country, 290
raise him a burial mound, perform funeral rites at it—
lavish ones, as is fitting—and find your mother a husband.
Then, when all this business is over and done with,
is the time to consider, in your mind and spirit,
how you might slaughter these suitors in your halls, 295
whether by guile or openly. It does not become you

to persist in childish ways: you're no longer a child.
Or have you not heard what glory noble Orestēs won
among all mankind when he slew his father's murderer,
crafty Aigisthos, for killing his famous father? 300
You too, my friend—for I see how handsome and tall you are—
be valiant, that men yet unborn may speak well of you!
But now I shall go back down to my swift ship,
where my comrades must be waiting impatiently for me.
So think on these things, and pay heed to what I've told you." 305

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to her, saying:
"Stranger, the words that you said were spoken considerately,
as a father would speak to his son: I will never forget them.
But please do stay longer, though eager to be on your way,
so that when you've had a bath and refreshed your spirit 310
you can go to your ship with a present, happy at heart—
an expensive and beautiful gift, to be an heirloom for you
from me, such as guest-friends exchange with one another."

The goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"Delay me no longer—I need to resume my journey: 315
and whatever gift your heart incites you to give me,
give it me when I return here, to take back home. And choose
something really precious: it'll bring you its worth in exchange."

That said, the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, departed,
flying up through the skylight. Into his heart she set 320
courage and strength, and put him in mind of his father
even more than before. Reflecting on what had happened
his mind was in awe: this must be a god, he thought.

At once he approached the suitors, a godlike mortal.
For them the far-famed minstrel was singing, and they 325
sat listening in silence. His song recounted the Achaians'
wretched homecoming from Troy, laid on them by Athēnē.
From upstairs the marvelous tale was heard and pondered
by Ikarios' daughter, the prudent Penelopē, who now
went down from her high bright upper chamber: not 330
alone, for two of her handmaids followed in attendance.
When she, bright among women, came where the suitors were,
she stood by the central post of the snugly timbered roof,
holding up her shining veil in front of her face,

and flanked on either side by a devoted handmaid, 335
and then, in tears, addressed the godlike minstrel:
"Phēmios, much else you know to keep mortals spellbound—
deeds of men and of gods, made famous by minstrels:
give them one such song as you sit here, let them in silence
still drink their wine, but quit this lay you're singing, 340
so unhappy, it always agonizes the heart in my breast,
since on me beyond all others has come unforgettable
grief, for that much-loved being I picture with such longing—
my husband, of wide renown through Hellas and mid-Argos."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to her, saying: 345
"Mother, why do you begrudge so excellent a minstrel
the right to please in whatever way he chooses?
It's not minstrels who are at fault, but Zeus, who deals out
to bread-eating mortals whatever he likes for each.
Don't blame this bard for singing the Danaäns' grim fate: 350
men always show most enthusiasm for the newest lay
that's performed with a view to enchant their listening ears!
So harden your mind and heart, be resigned to listen:
It was not Odysseus alone who lost his day of returning
from Troy—many others perished, just as he did. 355
So go back to your room, get down to your regular tasks,
at the loom, with the distaff; see to it that your handmaids
do their proper work too! But speechmaking is men's business,
and mine above all, since mine is the power in this household."

Taken aback, Penelopē now withdrew to her chamber, 360
and stored in her heart her son's smart observations.
Upstairs she went, her handmaids with her, and then
wept for Odysseus, her own dear husband, until
grey-eyed Athēnē spread sweet sleep over her eyelids.

But the suitors created an uproar throughout the shadowy hall, 365
each praying that he might be the one to bed and lie with her,
and among them sagacious Tēlemachos was the first to speak:
"You, my mother's suitors, domineering and arrogant,
for now let us feast and enjoy ourselves, but please,
no shouting! It's a rare pleasure to be able to hear 370
a minstrel like this one, with a voice like that of the gods!

But tomorrow at dawn let's go and be seated in assembly,
all of us, where I'll make you a forthright public request:
Get out of my home! Go find other feasts for yourselves,
consume your own goods, move around from house to house! 375
But if this is what you regard as better, more profitable,
to devour one man's livelihood without offering compensation,
then gobble on! I'll petition the gods who are forever,
and maybe Zeus will grant me an occasion of reprisal,
so that you, while still feasting for free in my halls, all perish!" 380

So he spoke; and all of them bit their lips hard, astonished
at the way Tēlemachos had spoken out so boldly.

Antinoös, son of Eupeithēs, now addressed him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, it must be the gods themselves who've taught you
this high-flown delivery, this audacious way of speaking! 385
You, king of sea-girt Ithákē? May the son of Kronos never
grant you the throne, though it's yours by ancestral right!"

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"Antinoös, what I now say may perhaps offend you.
This too I'd be glad to accept, were Zeus the giver: 390
do you think it the worst fate that could befall a man?
To be king's no disaster: right from the start your domain
Is enriched, and you yourself are held in greater honor.
Still, there are many other princes of the Achaians,
both young and old, who dwell here in sea-girt Ithákē: 395
any one of them might get this, since noble Odysseus
is dead. But I shall be lord over our own household,
and the servants that noble Odysseus got as booty for me."

Then Eurymachos, son of Polybos, responded to him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, all these matters rest on the knees of the gods— 400
like, which of the Achaians will be king in sea-girt Ithákē!
So keep your possessions, lord it over your own household,
and may the man never come here who'd deprive you by force
of your possessions, as long as Ithákē's inhabited! Yet
I'd like, my good friend, to ask you about that stranger— 405
Where did he come from? What country does he claim as his?
Where are his relatives, his family acres, to be found?
Did he come here with news about your father's return,

or was it just to take care of some business of his own?
The way he took off and vanished, not even waiting 410
to meet us—he didn't look, though, like some common fellow."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Eurymachos, by now all hope for my father's return
has perished. No longer do I trust rumors from any source,
or give any heed to prophecies, such as my mother 415
might pick up from a seer that she'd invited home.
As for this stranger, he's from Taphos, a friend
of my father, he says, named Mentēs, wise Anchialos' son,
and is lord of the Taphians, those master rowers."
So spoke
Tēlemachos; but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess. 420

The suitors now turned to dancing and the pleasures of song,
pursuing their revels until it was evening: only darkness
interrupted their merrymaking, only then
did each of them slope off homeward to take his rest.
But Tēlemachos made his way to the handsome courtyard, 425
in a sheltering corner of which his chamber had been built,
and sought his bed there, pondering much in his mind,
escorted by his old nurse, who bore the lighted torches—
faithful Eurykleia, daughter of Ōps, Peisēnōr's son.
Long ago she'd been bought by Laërtēs, at a good price, 430
when she was still a young girl: twenty oxen, no less.
He respected her in his home no less than his loyal wife,
but never made love to her, for fear of his wife's anger.
So now it was she who carried the lighted torches: of all
the servants she loved him most, had nursed him as a child. 435
He opened the door of his well-carpentered chamber,
sat down on the bed and took off his soft tunic,
then placed it in the hands of this wise old woman, who
now folded and smoothed the tunic, hung it up
on a peg at the side of the corded bedstead, and went 440
out of the chamber, pulled the door shut behind her
with its silver hook, and drew the bolt home by its thong.
So the whole night through, wrapped in a woolen blanket,
he brooded over the journey Athēnē had planned for him.

Book 2

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
Odysseus' dear son got up from the bed he'd slept in,
put on his clothes, slung a sharp sword from one shoulder,
tied on a pair of fine sandals under his sleek feet,
and sallied forth from his chamber, in appearance like a god. 5
At once he issued orders to the clear-voiced heralds
to call to assembly the long-haired Achaians.[1] They made
the proclamation he ordered, and quickly the people gathered.
When they were met together in a single body
Tēlemachos now joined them, a bronze spear in one hand, 10
not alone, but accompanied by a pair of hunting dogs,
and wondrous the grace that Athēnē now shed on him,
so that the whole crowd watched him as he approached:
he sat in his father's seat, and the elders made way for him.

The hero Aigyptios was the first among them to speak, 15
a man bent with age, of much varied experience.
Besides, his dear son had accompanied godlike Odysseus
to Ilion, rich in fine foals, aboard the hollow ships—
the spearman Antiphos: but the savage Kyklōps had killed him
in his hollow cave, the last of the crew to be eaten. 20
He had three other sons. One, Eurynomos, joined the suitors;
the remaining two looked after the family farmlands. And yet,
grieving and sorrowful, he couldn't forget the lost one.
It was in tears for him that he now addressed the assembly:

"Pay attention, men of Ithákē, to what I shall now tell you! 25
Not once have we met in assembly, there's been no session
since noble Odysseus set sail in the hollow ships!
Who, then, has summoned us now? What urgent need
has come upon one of our men, whether younger or older?
Has he had some news about an impending attack 30
that he can explain to us, having heard it earlier?

1. The term "Achaians" is properly used of the Greeks as a whole in Troy (e.g., at 1.239, 326). But the author of the *Odyssey* also applies it throughout, incorrectly, to the male inhabitants of Ithákē.

Or will he announce for debate some other public business?
A fine man I think him, and blessed: may Zeus grant
a good fulfillment of whatever his heart desires."

So he spoke, and Odysseus' dear son rejoiced at the omen, 35
nor remained seated longer, in his urgency to speak,
but stood up in mid-assembly, while the scepter was placed
in his hands by the herald Peisēnōr, a man astute in counsel;
and then he spoke, first addressing the old man:

"Old sir, the man's not far, as you'll soon learn yourself: 40
It was I who summoned the people: this grief affects me most.
I've had no news of any impending attack
that I can explain to you, having heard of it earlier;
nor shall I announce for debate any other public business,
but rather my own needs, because of the double evil 45
that's befallen my house: I've lost my noble father, who once
was king among you here, as gentle as any father;
and now there's a far worse plague, that will very soon
destroy my house altogether, consume my whole livelihood!
My mother, against her will, is being pestered by suitors, 50
the sons of those very men who are the noblest here!
They shudder at the idea of going rather to the house
of her father, Ikarios, have him fix his daughter's bride-gifts
and betroth her to whom he will, to the man that he prefers;
instead, day in day out, they crowd into our house, 55
slaughter our oxen and sheep, our fattest goats,
hold an endless party, swill down our sparkling wine
without restraint. Much is lost already, there's no man
such as Odysseus was, to save our house from ruin—
we ourselves lack the strength to defend it: in the event 60
we'd be shown up as wretched weaklings, unversed in prowess.
Yet indeed I'd defend myself, if the strength was in me,
for deeds not to be borne have been done, there's nothing decent
in the way my estate's been destroyed! You should feel ashamed,
embarrassed before the men in your neighborhood, 65
those who live near here! And beware of the gods' wrath,
lest outraged by evil actions they turn against you!
By Olympian Zeus I beseech you, and by Themis,
who both dissolves and convenes our mortal assemblies,
forbear, my friends, leave me alone to pine away in bitter 70

sorrow—unless it could be that my father, noble Odysseus,
at some point in anger mistreated the well-greaved Achaians,
and now you, in angry requital, are mistreating me by urging
these suitors on? For me it would be better by far
were you yourselves to consume my property and my cattle, 75
because, if you did the eating, there might some day
be recompense—we'd hawk the story round town,
demanding back our possessions, till all were restored.
But this way you burden my heart with incurable agony."

So he spoke in his anger, then threw down the scepter, 80
and burst into tears. Now pity took hold of all the people.
All others kept silent; no one could bring himself
to offer an angry rebuttal to Tēlemachos' words:
only Antinoös replied to him, saying: "Tēlemachos,
lofty orator, angry, outspoken—what is this charge 85
you're trying to shame us with, put the blame on us?
It's not the Achaian suitors who are guilty in your regard
but rather your own dear mother, so expert at deceit!
For it's three years now, and will soon be four, she's spent
toying with the passions in the Achaians' hearts, 90
offering hope to all, making promises to each one,
and sending them messages, but herself planning otherwise.
And here's one other deception that she contrived:
in her halls she set up a great loom and started weaving—
very broad was the web, fine of thread—and said to us then: 95
'You young men, my suitors now noble Odysseus is dead,
be patient, though eager to wed me, until I finish
this web: I should not want my woven work to be wasted—
a shroud for the hero Laërtēs, against that day
when the grim fate of pitiless death shall overtake him: 100
then the local Achaian women won't be able to blame me
for a man who'd won so much being left with no winding-sheet.'

"So she spoke; and our proud hearts assented to what she said.
From then on, day after day, she'd be weaving at the great loom,
but at night she'd have torches set up, and undo her work. 105
Thus for three years she beguiled and persuaded the Achaians;
but when the fourth year arrived, and the seasons came round,
then it was that one of her women, well aware of what she did,
told us, and so we caught her undoing her elegant web,

and against her will she was forced to finish it. Thus 110
this is the suitors' response to you, to the end that you
and all the Achaians may have clear knowledge of it:
send your mother away, tell her to make a marriage
with whoever her father selects and whom she fancies!
But if she goes on tormenting the Achaians' sons much longer, 115
exploiting with forethought those talents Athēnē gave her—
expertise in fine handiwork, outstanding intelligence and
sagacity, such as we've never yet heard ascribed
to women of old, those fair-tressed Achaian ladies
Tyrō, Alkmēnē, and garlanded Mykēnē, 120
not one of whom for shrewd planning could rival Penelopē[2]—
then at least in this matter she made a wrong decision,
and they'll go on devouring your livelihood and your stock
so long as she holds to this purpose that the gods
have now put into her heart. She may be winning great fame 125
for herself, but for you regret over your lost plenty.
As for us, we'll not disperse to our homes or anywhere else
until she decides to wed whichever Achaian she picks."

Sagacious Tēlemachos replied as follows: "Antinoös,
I can't just drive from this house—against her will— 130
her who bore and reared me, while my father, alive or dead,
is in some distant country! And to pay a great sum to Ikarios,
as I must, if I throw out my mother, would be unfair on me.
Thus I'd get a bad deal from her father, besides which heaven
would add to my woes, since my mother on leaving our home 135
would invoke the foul Furies,[3] and I'd be an object of public
contempt—so this is a word I shall never utter. And you all,

---

2. Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus, king of Ēlis, and married to Krētheus, bore Nēleus to the god Poseidōn, and was thus Nestōr's grandmother. Alkmēnē, Amphitryon's wife, bore Hēraklēs to Zeus. Mykēnē, daughter of the Argive river god Inachos, and mother of Argos, was the eponymous heroine of Mykēnai (Mycenae), but is otherwise unknown to us. Whether she too bore offspring to a god while married is uncertain. They all seem singularly unsuited as parallels to the faithful wife Penelopē. Nor is there any reason (Stephanie West in *Comm.*, 1:139) to regard them as especially shrewd planners. These three great names from the past make for a vaguely flattering comparison, but that is all. As we shall see, Antinoös' rhetoric tends to be hit-and-miss.
3. The Furies (Erinyes) were born to Gaia (Hes., *Th.* 185, with West's note) specifically to pursue intra-familial crimes, from the castration of Ouranos by Kronos on. For their support of mothers against sons, see, e.g., 11.279–80; *Il.* 21.412–13; they were also associated with curses (*Comm.*, 1: 140).

if even your hearts are touched by guilt in this matter,
get out of my home! Go find other feasts for yourselves,
consume your own goods, move around from house to house! 140
But if this is what you regard as better, more profitable,
to devour one man's livelihood without offering compensation,
then gobble on! I'll petition the gods who are forever,
and maybe Zeus will grant me an occasion of reprisal,
so that you, while still feasting for free in my halls, all perish!" 145

So Tēlemachos spoke, and for him far-seeing Zeus
sent two eagles flying down from a lofty mountain peak.
For a while they glided, riding upon the wind stream,
side by side, close together, wings wide outspread; but when
they arrived at the midpoint of the many-voiced assembly, 150
then they circled over it, with a whirr of beating wings,
tore each other's cheeks and necks on both sides with their talons,
looking down, with death in their glance, on the heads of the crowd,
then sped off to the right, above their homes and city.
All were amazed by what they'd witnessed of these birds, 155
had much heart-searching as to what they might portend,
and were now addressed by the aged hero Halithersēs,
Mastōr's son, who excelled all men of his generation
in his knowledge of bird-signs and at interpreting omens.
He, with friendly intent, now spoke before the assembly: 160
"Listen well, you men of Ithákē, to what I have to tell you!
And the suitors above all should heed the message I bring,
for great troubles are rolling toward them, since Odysseus will not
be much longer away from his friends: already, I believe,
he may well be near, and devising slaughter and death 165
for them all! And for others in plenty he'll mean trouble,
who dwell in sunny Ithákē! But we should, well beforehand,
think of a way to stop them—or have them desist
of themselves, since that's a far better way for them.
I'm no novice at prophesying, I have sure knowledge, 170
and I declare that it's all now coming true for that man
exactly as I foretold when the Argives first sailed
for Ilion, and he, resourceful Odysseus, among them.
Having suffered much, with all his comrades lost,
recognized by nobody, after twenty years, I said, 175
he'd return home—and now all this is being fulfilled."

Eurymachos, Polybos' son, responded to him, saying:
"Old man, go home, and prophesy to your children,
lest they suffer some kind of misfortune in the future!
For this I'm a far more reliable prophet than you are. 180
There are birds in plenty that fly to and fro in the daytime,
yet not all of them carry omens. As for Odysseus, he's met
a distant death, and you should have perished with him—
then you wouldn't be unloading all these predictions,
or lending encouragement to Tēlemachos' burst of temper, 185
in the hope that he'll reward you with a gift to your family!
Let me speak plainly—and what *I* say *will* come to pass!
If you, given all the knowledge that age confers, beguile
a younger man with your words, encourage his resentment,
first, this will make more trouble for the man himself. 190
[He won't get anything done alone, without assistance;][4]
and on you, old sir, we'll impose a penalty that your heart
will be in torment at paying, and bitter your agony!
My own advice to Tēlemachos, before you all, is this:
Let him tell his mother to return to her father's domain, 195
where they'll set up the wedding and arrange the bridal-gifts,
lots of them, all that's fitting to go with a much-loved daughter.
Failing that, I don't suppose that the sons of the Achaians
will abandon their burdensome wooing, since we fear no man—
certainly not Tēlemachos, for all his lengthy rant— 200
nor shall we heed any predictions that you, old sir, may make:
they won't come true, and you'll be hated all the more!
What's more, his goods will continue to be devoured, without
compensation, so long as she continues to stall
the Achaians over her marriage! Here we are, kept waiting 205
day after day, in rivalry for her virtue, never going
after other suitable women, such as each of us might marry."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Eurymachos, and the rest of you, all you noble suitors,
over this I'll entreat you no longer, nor discuss it further, 210
since by now the gods are aware of it, as are all the Achaians.
So give me a swift ship, along with twenty companions
as crew on my journey, to both go there and come back.

4. This line is missing from numerous MSS, and largely ignored by ancient commentators; as West points out (*Comm.*, 1: 143), it is clearly modeled on *Il.* 1.562.

For I'm off to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to enquire for
news about the return of my long-absent father. 215
Maybe some mortal can tell me, or I can pick up a rumor
from Zeus, the most common way that mortals gather tidings.
If I hear that my father's alive, and on his way back,
then, though beleaguered, I'll hold on for another year;
but if I get word that he's dead, no longer living, 220
then I'll make my way back to my own dear country,
raise him a burial mound, perform funeral rites at it—
lavish ones, as is fitting—and find my mother a husband."

That said, he sat down, and there now stood up among them
Mentōr, who'd been a comrade of peerless Odysseus. 225
When Odysseus set out with his ships, he left him in charge
of his household, under Laërtēs, to safeguard everything.
He, with friendly intent, now spoke before the assembly:

"Listen well, you men of Ithákē, to what I have to tell you!
From now on let no kindness or gentleness be displayed 230
by a sceptered king, let his heart not cherish what's righteous—
let him rather be ever harsh, pursue injustice, since
there's nobody now who remembers godlike Odysseus
of the people whose lord he was, and kindly as a father!
It's not these arrogant suitors I so much resent, 235
for their violent acts and their nasty-minded misconduct—
they risk their own lives by forcibly wolfing down
Odysseus' goods, and saying he'll never return—
no, it's you, all the rest of the people, that I find fault with,
for sitting there silent, not speaking out roundly to stop 240
these suitors, though they are few, while you are many."

Against him Leokritos, son of Euēnōr, now spoke out:
"Mentōr, you mischief-maker, you're crazy! What's all this
talk about putting us down? It'd be a tough business
even for more men than these to clamp down on our feasting! 245
And what if Odysseus himself, the Ithákan, *did* return,
to find these haughty suitors banqueting in his palace,
and resolved in his heart to throw them all out? His wife
would get no joy of his homecoming, however deeply
she'd missed him: he'd suffer a shameful death on the spot 250
if he fought outnumbered. Your threats lack reality!

And you, good people, disperse now, each to his own affairs;
and as for this fellow here, Mentōr and Halithersēs
will speed his departure—they're old friends of his father's!
But myself, I think he'll just sit around listening to rumors 255
right here in Ithákē: he'll never accomplish this journey!"

With that, he abruptly dismissed the assembly. They all
dispersed at once, each man to his own house, except
the suitors, who went off to the house of godlike Odysseus,
and Tēlemachos, who withdrew, alone, to the seashore, 260
washed his hands in the grey salt water, then prayed to Athēnē:
"Hear me, you god who came yesterday to our home,
and told me to travel by ship across the misty deep
to seek news of my long-absent father's return!
Now all my plans are being held up by the Achaians, 265
and, above all, by these viciously arrogant suitors!"

So he spoke in prayer, and Athēnē then approached him,
assuming Mentōr's likeness in both voice and appearance,
and addressed him as follows, uttering winged words:
"Tēlemachos, you'll turn out neither craven nor witless 270
if indeed you've been imbued with your father's rare strength—
such a man he was, so masterful in both deeds and words!
In that case your journey won't be useless or unfulfilled;
but if you're not his son, his and Penelopē's, then
I have no hope you'll accomplish what you're planning. 275
Few are the sons who prove the equal of their fathers:
most are worth less, hardly any prove themselves better.
But since it would seem that you are neither craven nor witless,
and that Odysseus' resourcefulness hasn't passed you over,
there is a fair chance that you will bring this business off! 280
So don't worry about these suitors' attitudes and notions—
They're witless creatures, neither sensible nor right-thinking,
and wholly unaware of the fact that death and black fate
are very near, that on the same day they'll all perish!
But for you that journey you're planning is not far distant, 285
so true a companion I am to your father's family—
I'll fit you out a swift ship, accompany you myself.
Now go back to the house, keep company with the suitors,
make ready provisions, pack them all in containers:
the wine in jars, and the barley meal, men's marrow, 290

in stout leather bags. Meanwhile, I'll go through the town
and find you a volunteer crew. As for ships, there are plenty
here in sea-girt Ithákē, both old and new: of these
I myself will select you the one that best suits your purpose,
and we'll soon fit her out, launch her into the open sea." 295

So spoke Zeus' daughter Athēnē. Tēlemachos did not
linger, after he'd heard the voice of the goddess,
but made his way back to the house, much troubled at heart,
and found the proud suitors already there in his halls,
busy flaying goats and singeing fat hogs in the courtyard. 300
Antinoös, laughing, came over, confronted Tēlemachos,
took his hand, and had this to say to him, speaking plainly:
"Tēlemachos, lofty talker, angry, outspoken—no longer
nurse in your heart any evil thoughts or actions,
but, please, eat and drink with us, as you did before! 305
All these things the Achaians will surely provide for you—
a vessel and hand-picked oarsmen, to give you a speedy
voyage to sacred Pylos, to seek news of your father."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Antinoös, there's no way I could feast with you arrogant lot 310
undistracted, much less enjoy myself in comfort!
Is it not enough, you suitors, that in the past you devoured
so much of my choice possessions, when I was still a child!
But now that I'm grown, and can figure the truth from what
others tell me, and passion is surging up within me, 315
I'll try directing the evil death-spirits against you, either
by going to Pylos, or here in this district! But go I will,
nor shall the journey I speak of be made in vain,
though I'm a passenger, lacking a ship and oarsmen
of my own: this, I presume, was how you wanted it." 320

That said, he withdrew his hand from the hand of Antinoös,
lightly. Meanwhile the suitors, busy preparing dinner
about the house, made mock of him to each other,
and this is how one of these arrogant youths would talk:
"Oh, for sure, Tēlemachos must be planning our murder! 325
He'll bring over helpers either from sandy Pylos
or maybe from Sparta, he wants it so desperately—
or he's thinking of going to Ephyrē, that rich plowland,

to pick up some deadly poisons, bring them back here,
drizzle them into the wine bowl, and destroy us all!" 330
Again, another of these arrogant youths would announce:
"Who knows? Maybe he himself, going off in his hollow ship,
far from his friends, will die wandering, like Odysseus!
That way he'd cause us even more trouble—we'd have
to share out all his possessions, turn over the house 335
to his mother to keep, and whoever it was she married."

So they spoke. Tēlemachos now went down to his father's storeroom,
broad and high-ceilinged, where gold and bronze lay piled,
with clothes in chests, an abundance of sweet-smelling oil,
and jars of wine, well aged and sweet on the palate, 340
holding within them an unmixed heavenly drink,
set close together along the wall, for the day when Odysseus,
after laboring through much hardship, might come back home.
The close-carpentered double doors remained shut and locked,
and both day and night a housekeeper kept watch there, 345
guarding everything, both prudent and vigilant:
Eurykleia, daughter of Ōps, Peisenōr's son. Her now
Tēlemachos called to the storeroom, and addressed her, saying:
"Good old nurse, please draw me off wine in two-handled jars—
sweet wine, the best there is after what you're keeping back 350
for *him,* the ill-fated one, just in case from heaven knows where
Zeus' scion Odysseus returns, escaping death and the fates!
Fill me twelve jars, and fit them all with stoppers,
and measure out barley into well-stitched leather bags—
there should be twenty measures of well-ground barley meal. 355
Have all this taken care of. No one else is to know about it.
I'll pick up the load this evening, when my mother
goes to her upper chamber and retires for the night.
For I'm making a journey to Sparta and to sandy Pylos
to seek any news I may learn about my dear father's return." 360

So he spoke, and his dear nurse Eurykleia shrieked aloud,
and, lamenting, then addressed him with winged words, saying:
"Ah, how, dear child, did this thought ever enter your mind?
Where in this whole wide earth do you plan to go to, you,
an only child and much loved? But Odysseus, scion of Zeus, 365
has already died, far from home, in some foreign country,
and the moment you're gone these men will make trouble for you,

destroy you by guile, and share out all your goods!
Stay here and look after what's yours: you have no need
to wander and suffer misfortunes on the unharvested sea." 370

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to her, saying:
"Never fear, old nurse: this plan does not lack divine support!
Now, promise you won't say a word of it to my mother
before eleven or twelve days have passed, or else until
she herself misses me and hears that I've set out— 375
I don't want her to spoil her fine complexion with weeping."

So he spoke: the old woman swore a great oath, by the gods,
that she wouldn't tell. When she'd sworn, and completed the oath,
she at once drew off the wine in two-handled jars,
and measured the barley meal into well-stitched leather bags, 380
while Tēlemachos went back to the hall and joined the suitors.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, had another thought:
in Tēlemachos' likeness she went all around the city,
approaching each man in turn with an identical message,
that they should assemble that evening alongside the swift ship. 385
That done, she then asked Noēmōn, illustrious son
of Phronios, for a swift ship. He readily promised it her.

So the sun went down, and all the ways were in shadow,
and she drew the swift ship down to the sea, and left it
with all the gear that well-benched vessels carry, 390
moored at the harbor entrance. Beside it a doughty
company gathered: the goddess put strength in each man there.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, had another thought:
she made her way to the home of godlike Odysseus,
and there shed sweet drowsiness over all the suitors 395
as they drank, befuddled their wits, made them drop their cups.
Up they got, to go home to bed: no longer did they
sit on there, now sleep weighed heavy on their eyelids.
That done, to Tēlemachos grey-eyed Athēnē now spoke,
called him out from his well-established domain, 400
assuming the likeness of Mentōr, in both form and voice:
"Tēlemachos, already your well-greaved comrades are seated
at their oars, ready and waiting for the start of your voyage!
Come then, let's go, no point in delaying your departure."

That said, Pallas Athēnē now briskly led the way, 405
and Tēlemachos followed behind, in the goddess' footsteps.
When they came down to the sea and the vessel, they found
their long-haired comrades there, awaiting them on the shore,
and Tēlemachos, princely in power, now addressed them, saying:
"Come, friends, let us fetch the provisions: they're all ready, 410
back in the hall. My mother knows nothing of this,
nor do her maidservants, except for the one I told."

So saying, he led the way, and they accompanied him.
They carried back all the provisions, stowed them away
in the well-benched ship, as Odysseus' fine son commanded. 415
Then Tēlemachos went aboard, preceded by Athēnē,
who sat herself down in the stern, and Tēlemachos came
and sat down beside her. Men cast off the stern warps
and scrambled aboard, and took their seats on the benches.
Now grey-eyed Athēnē sent them a following wind, 420
a fresh west wind, loud-sounding over the wine-dark deep.
Tēlemachos urged on his crew, gave them the order
to haul on the sheets, and they obeyed his command.
They raised the fir-wood mast, set it upright in its hollow
mast-block, firmly belayed the sheets to the forestays, 425
then hauled up the white sail with cords of plaited oxhide.
The wind bellied the mid-sail, and cleft by the cutwater
a dark surging wave sang aloud as the ship drove forward,
shearing her path through the deep, accomplishing her journey.
When they'd belayed the tackle in the swift black ship 430
they set out mixing bowls brimming with wine, and poured
libations to the immortal gods that are forever,
and foremost of all to the grey-eyed daughter of Zeus.
So all night and into the dawn the vessel cut her course.

Book 3

Deserting the deep's enchanting surface, the sun rose up
into the brazen sky to bring light both to immortals
and to mortal beings upon the grain-rich plowland,
and they came to Pylos, the well-built citadel of Nēleus.
Here, on the shore of the sea, sacrifices were being made 5
of all-black bulls to the dark-haired Earth-Shaker. Nine
companies there were, and five hundred men were seated
in each, and each brought nine bulls. It was when they'd sampled
the innards and were burning thigh pieces for the gods
that the travelers arrived. They at once hauled up and brailed 10
the trim ship's sail, moored her, and came ashore themselves.
With Athēnē leading the way, Tēlemachos disembarked,
and the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, now first addressed him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, you've no longer the least need for modesty—
the whole point of your voyage is to get news of your father: 15
where he may have been buried, what kind of fate he met.
But for now, go straight up to Nestōr, tamer of horses,
and let's find out what advice lies hidden in his breast!
Entreat him yourself, have him tell you the true story—
a lie he won't utter: he's a most sagacious person." 20

Sagacious Tēlemachos answered her in these words:
"What, Mentōr, must be my approach? How am I to greet him?
I've no experience yet in subtle discourse; a young
man feels embarrassed when interrogating his elders."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying: 25
"Tēlemachos, there are some things you'll figure out for yourself,
and for others you'll have divine guidance—I don't think
you were born and raised without the gods' good favor."

So Pallas Athēnē spoke, and proceeded to lead the way
briskly, Tēlemachos following in the goddess' footsteps, 30
and they came to the Pylian men's assembly and companies.
There Nestōr sat with his sons, and around them their comrades
were preparing the feast, roasting some meat, had the rest on spits.

But when they spotted the strangers, they all came flocking
to meet them, shook their hands, made them sit down. 35
Peisistratos, Nestōr's son, was the first to reach them,
took them both by the hand, seated them at the feast
on soft sheepskins, there on the sandy seashore,
next to his father and Thrasymēdēs his brother,
gave them helpings of innards, poured out wine 40
in a golden cup, and addressed with welcoming words
Pallas Athēnē, daughter of Zeus, who bears the aegis:
"Make your prayer now, stranger, to the lord Poseidōn,
for his is the feast you have chanced upon, coming here.
And when you have fittingly prayed and poured libations, 45
then give this man also the cup of honey-sweet wine
to pour a libation, since he, too, I take it, prays
to the immortals: all humans stand in need of the gods.
Still, he is younger, and about the same age as I am:
that's why to you first I now give this golden cup." 50

So saying, he placed in her hand the cup of sweet wine,
and Athēnē rejoiced at this man's nice sense of decorum,
in giving the golden cup to her first of all; and at once
she offered this heartfelt prayer to the lord Poseidōn:
"Hear me, Poseidōn, Earth-Mover! Do not begrudge us 55
fulfillment of all that our prayers are now requesting!
On Nestōr, first and foremost, and his sons, bestow renown,
and next, to the rest, to all Pylians, grant a pleasing
requital for this most splendid and generous sacrifice!
Grant, too, that we may go home again, Tēlemachos and I, 60
having achieved what we came here for in our swift black ship."

So she prayed—and herself was bringing it all to pass.
Now she gave to Tēlemachos the fine two-handled cup,
and in like manner Odysseus' dear son then prayed.
When the outer meat was roasted, and off the spits, they next 65
divided the helpings, and shared in the sumptuous feast.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
the first to speak was Nestōr, the Gerēnian horseman:
"Now is a better time to interrogate these strangers,
enquire who they are, now they've had their fill of food. 70
So, strangers, who are you? From where was it you sailed here
over the watery ways? On business? Or are you reckless rovers,

cruising the sea like pirates, who, at risk of their own lives,
go around making trouble for men from other lands?"

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, greatly 75
encouraged: Athēnē herself now put fresh confidence
into his heart, to enquire about his long-absent father,
[and win a good reputation among men at large]:[1]
"Nestōr, son of Nēleus, great glory of the Achaians,
you want to know where we come from? Then I shall tell you. 80
We're here from that part of Ithákē under Mount Neïon,
and the business I'll speak of isn't public, but personal.
I've come to pursue any rumors about my father—
the noble, steadfast Odysseus, who once, they say,
fighting alongside you, brought down the Trojans' city. 85
Of all the others who fought against the Trojans, we've since
learned how and where it was that each met his grim end;
but with him Kronos' son has ensured that even his death's
unknown—no one can say for certain the place where he perished,
whether dispatched by enemies on the mainland 90
or out on the deep, amid Amphitrītē's breakers.[2]
That's why I'm here at your knees now—you might be willing
to tell me about his grim death, if you maybe saw it
yourself, or heard an account of it from some other
wanderer: to unmatched sorrow his mother bore him! 95
And don't, from concern or pity, speak false comfort to me,
but tell me exactly whatever you may have witnessed!
I beseech you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, made you
any promise, by word or action, and delivered on it
in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaians met grief, 100
remember it now, and tell me the unerring truth of it."

Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, responded to him, saying:
"Friend, since you've recalled all the grief that we endured
in that land—we, the dauntless sons of the Achaians!—
whether on board our ships, on the hazy deep, in pursuit 105

1. This line (identical with 1.95) is clearly an interpolation. It is missing from most medieval mss (and also from two papyri: *Comm.,* 1: 165).
2. Amphitrītē was a sea goddess: a Nēreïd (q.v. Gloss.) and wife of Poseidōn (Hes., *Th.* 243, 930). Here and at 12.60, she is simply used as an image of the sea; but she is also presented elsewhere (5.422, 12.97) as nurturing or breeding various sea beasts and monsters, e.g., sharks and dolphins.

of booty, wherever Achillēs might choose to lead us,
or our drawn-out struggle around King Priam's great city—
ah, it was there that all our very best were slain!
There lies the warrior Aias, there lies Achillēs, there
Patroklos, a man who could match the gods in counsel; 110
and there my own dear son, so strong and so virtuous—
Antilochos, in the first rank as both runner and fighter.
Many more ills we endured in addition to these: their sum
what transient mortal could ever narrate in full?
Not even were you to stay for five—no, six!—whole years 115
would you hear of all the woes the noble Achaians bore there—
and before then, surfeited, you'd have gone back home for sure!
Nine years we were busy cobbling up trouble for them
with ruses of every sort: Kronos' son took a weary age
to finish the job! There no one tried to compete with noble 120
Odysseus in scheming, since he far outstripped them all
with ruses of every sort—he, your father, if it's really true
that you are his offspring! When I look at you I wonder,
for your way of speaking is like his, one would never think
that so young a man could speak in so proper a manner! 125
The whole time noble Odysseus and I were out there, neither
in council nor in assembly did we oppose each other,
but, being of one mind, with good plans and shrewd judgment
we'd counsel the Argives on their best course of action.
But after we'd sacked the towering citadel of Priam 130
and had sailed away, and a god had scattered the Achaians,
then indeed it was that Zeus planned a grim homecoming
for the Argives, since not all of them were either right-thinking
or civilized: thus many met a bad end through the deadly
wrath of the grey-eyed daughter of a mighty sire. It was she 135
who stirred up strife between the two sons of Atreus.
The two of them called an assembly of all the Achaians,
thoughtlessly, not in due order, very close to sunset,
and the Achaians' sons arrived well loaded with wine
to hear their speeches, and learn why they'd been summoned. 140
Now Menelaös was urging the whole body of the Achaians
to embark on the voyage home, over the sea's broad back;
but this didn't please Agamemnōn at all: what *he* wanted
was to keep the army in place, and make lavish sacrifices
to appease the dread wrath of Athēnē—fool that he was, 145

not knowing that she wouldn't pay him the least attention,
since the mind of the gods eternal is not changed in a moment.
So the pair of them stood there, exchanging angry words,
while the well-greaved Achaians sprang to their feet with a deafening
clamor, and both these schemes collected their supporters. 150
We spent that night nursing harsh thoughts against
one another, while Zeus was devising a grief of evils. At dawn
some of us hauled our vessel down to the bright salt sea,
and put aboard our possessions and our deep-sashed women;
but half of the force held back, remained in place there 155
with Atreus' son Agamemnōn, his people's shepherd.
So half of us now embarked, and rowed out: swiftly our ships
moved on, for a god smoothed the monster-infested deep.
When we reached Tenedos we sacrificed to the gods,
longing for home; but Zeus, not thinking yet of return— 160
the wretch!—rather stirred up bad strife for the second time!
Some now brought their curved vessels around, sailed back
with lordly Odysseus—so clever, so subtle-minded—
once again showing favor to Atreus' son Agamemnōn;
but I, with the full squadron of ships that followed me, 165
kept retreating—I realized the god was planning trouble!—
as did Tydeus' son too, Arēs' favorite, urging on his men,
while, late in the day, there followed us fair-haired Meneläos,
who caught up with us at Lesbos, debating the long voyage—
should we set our course seaward, north of rocky Chios, 170
by the island of Psyra, with Chios on our port side,
or sail landward of Chios, past Mimas' windswept headland?
So we asked the god to show us a sign, and he did,
bidding us cut our way through the deep-sea route to Euboia,
and thus the soonest get ourselves clear of misfortune. 175
A good tailwind got up now and blew: our vessels ran
swiftly across the sea's fish-rich paths and reached
Geraistos at night: to Poseidōn we sacrificed many
bulls' thighs, grateful that we'd traversed the open water.
It was on the fourth day that the comrades of Diomēdēs 180
the horse breaker anchored their trim ships at Argos;
but I held on course for Pylos, nor did that good tailwind
drop once, from the time the god first set it on to blow.
Thus I came back, dear child, without news, nor do I know

anything of the rest, which Achaians survived, which perished. 185
But such reports as have reached me while ensconced here at home
I shall pass on, as is proper, and not conceal them from you.
The Myrmidons, those fierce spearmen, they say made it back,
led by great-hearted Achillēs' illustrious son; back too
came Philoktētēs, the distinguished offspring of Poias, 190
while Idomeneus brought safely home to Krētē all those
comrades surviving the conflict: the sea took none of them.
About Atreus' son you yourselves, though distant, will have heard:
how he returned, how Aigisthos devised a grim end for him.
Yet Aigisthos indeed was to pay a most terrible reckoning: 195
so it's good that when any man dies a son should survive,
since here was a son took revenge on his father's killer—
the crafty Aigisthos, who'd murdered his famous father.
You too, my friend—for I see how handsome and tall you are—
be valiant, that men yet unborn may speak well of you!" 200

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"Nestōr, Nēleus' son, great glory of the Achaians,
that man indeed got full vengeance, and the Achaians
shall spread his fame far and wide, for men unborn to hear!
If only the gods would endow me with the strength 205
to punish these suitors for their grievous transgression—
their wanton insults, their malicious acts against me!
But no such good fortune have the gods ever assigned
to me or my father: now I just have to endure."

Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, responded to him, saying: 210
"Friend, since by mentioning it you've reminded me of this,
numerous suitors, they say, for your mother's hand, are there
in your halls against your will, and making trouble for you.
So tell me, are you letting yourself be bullied, or do
the folk of the district, swayed by some god's word, despise you? 215
Who knows, one day *he* may come back, may be revenged,
either alone, or with all the Achaians. If only grey-eyed
Athēnē might choose now to love you as much as once,
long ago, she was concerned for renowned Odysseus
in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaians suffered 220
much hardship: for never I saw such open love from the gods
as Pallas Athēnē showed him, standing openly at his side!

If she would love you as much, and care for you in her heart,
then some of these men would quite forget about marriage."

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying 225
"Old sir, I don't think your words will ever find fulfillment:
What you say is too much, I'm dumbfounded, what I hope for
could never happen, not even were the gods to will it so!"

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, what's this word has escaped your teeth's barrier? 230
A determined god could save a man easily, even from afar!
I'd rather endure endless setbacks on the journey back
before I got home, and saw the day of my returning,
rather than make it there only to perish, as Agamemnōn
was killed by Aigisthos' treachery, and that of his own wife. 235
Yet death, that's common to all, not the gods themselves
can ward off even from a man they love, whenever
the dire fate of pitiless death has once got hold of him."

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to her, saying:
"Mentōr, despite our grief, let's talk no more of these matters: 240
For *him* a return's not reality now: long, long before this
for him the immortals will have contrived death and black fate.
But now I want to ask Nestōr about a different matter,
since his knowledge of justice and wisdom is unsurpassed—
three times, they say, he's ruled a generation of men, 245
and to me he has the appearance of an immortal!
So, Nestōr, son of Nēleus, tell me this in all honesty:
how did Atreus' son die, wide-ruling Agamemnōn?
And where was Menelaös? What death for the king did sly
Aigisthos contrive, since it was a far better man he killed? 250
Was he, Menelaös, not there in Achaian Argos, but roaming
abroad, so that Aigisthos could nerve himself for murder?"

Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, responded to him, saying:
"Very well then, my child: I shall tell you the whole truth.
You yourself are clear how all this would have turned out 255
had Atreus' son, fair-haired Menelaös, discovered,
on his return from Troy, Aigisthos alive in his halls!
Not even on his corpse then would the earth have been piled,
but the dogs and the birds of prey would have devoured him

as he lay on the plain, far outside the city, nor would any 260
Achaian women have mourned him, so vile the deed he wrought.
While we were bivouacked out there, campaigning long and hard,
he, at his ease in a corner of horse-grazing Argos,
was making seductive proposals to Agamemnōn's wife.
Now she indeed to begin with rejected the shameful act, 265
did the noble Klytaimnēstra, since hers was a virtuous heart;
and with her she had a minstrel, whom Atreus' son had ordered,
before leaving for Troy, to be her strict bodyguard.
But when divine destiny ensnared her for destruction,
then it was that Aigisthos marooned the minstrel, left him 270
on a desert island, a tasty morsel for birds of prey.
Her then he took back—both willing—to his own home.
Many thigh pieces he burned on the gods' hallowed altars,
and hung up numerous offerings, both woven and golden,
after bringing off the vile action he never hoped to achieve.[3] 275

"We were sailing together on our way back from Troy,
Atreus' son and myself, close friends with one another;
but when we reached sacred Sounion, the headland of Athens,
there it was that Phoibos Apollo slew Menelaös' steersman,
assailing him with his painless shafts while in his hands 280
he still held the steering oar of the speeding vessel—
Phrontis, the son of Onētōr, who excelled all tribes of mankind
at steering a ship when gale-force winds were blowing.
So Menelaös put in there, though impatient to be sailing,
to bury his comrade, perform the proper rites over him. 285
But when he too in his voyage over the wine-dark deep
in his hollow ships arrived off the sheer heights of Malea,
running swiftly, then far-seeing Zeus devised a way to make
his voyage disastrous: poured blasts of shrill winds on him,
swelled the waves to vast size, till they resembled mountains. 290
Then he split the flotilla in two, directed some ships to Krētē,
to where the Kydōnians dwelt around Iardanos' streams.
There's a certain steep headland, juts sheer out into the sea,
at the frontier of Gortyn, in the mist-shrouded deep,
where southwest gales drive great waves against the headland's 295

3. Nestōr's narrative (262–75) is clearly based on a very reasonable tradition that saw Aigisthos as having seduced Klytaimnēstra while Agamemnōn was still in Troy: see pp. 15–17 above.

left side, toward Phaistos, and low rocks hold back the waves'
violence. Here some ships came, their crewmen barely
escaping disaster: the ships themselves were smashed
to pieces upon the reef. But the five other dark-prowed vessels
were carried away by wind and wave to Egypt. 300
So Menelaös spent time there amassing goods and gold,
going to and fro in his ships among men of alien speech.
Meanwhile Aigisthos back home enacted his grim plot:
he killed Atreus' son, had the people as his subjects.
Seven years he reigned as king over golden Mykēnai 305
but in the eighth evil came for him—the noble Orestēs,
back home from Athens, who slew his father's slayer,
the crafty Aigisthos, who'd murdered his famous father.
After he'd killed him, he held a funeral feast for the Argives
over his hateful mother and the cowardly Aigisthos, 310
and that same day there arrived Menelaös of the great war cry,
with treasure galore, as much freight as his ships could carry.

"So you too, friend, should not wander over-far from home,
leaving your wealth behind you, as well as men in your house
of such arrogance, lest they share and devour your goods, 315
making your journey here a mere fool's errand! But now
the man I insist on your visiting is Menelaös, for he
has lately returned from abroad, got himself back home
from a people that no one would ever hope in his heart
to return from, once great storms had driven him off course 320
into a sea so vast that migrant birds take an entire
year to travel back from it, so vast and fearsome it is!
So be off with you now, you, your ship, and your comrades—
or go overland if you'd rather: here are chariot and horses,
and here, too, are my sons, who'll accompany you as guides 325
to lordly Lakedaimōn, home to fair-haired Menelaös.
Appeal to him in person, to tell you the whole truth:
He won't tell you lies, he's far too sagacious." So
he spoke, and the sun went down, and darkness came on.

Among them there then spoke the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē: 330
"Old sir, all this that you've told us was properly conveyed.
But come now, cut up the ox tongues, and mix the wine,
so that after libations to Poseidōn and the other immortals
we may turn our minds to sleep: that time has arrived.

Light's passed under darkness already, and it's not fitting 335
to sit late at a feast of the gods: best to be on one's way."

So spoke the daughter of Zeus, and they paid attention to her.
Heralds now poured out water over their hands,
while young men topped up the mixing bowls with wine
and served it to them all, with drops first in each cup.[4] 340
The tongues they threw in the fire, then stood, and poured
libations on them. This done, when they'd drunk as much
as they felt like, then both Athēnē and godlike Tēlemachos
were eager to be on their way to the hollow ship;
but Nestōr spoke persuasively, anxious to keep them there: 345
"Zeus forbid, and all the other immortal gods,
that you should go back from my house to your hollow ship
as though from some indigent wretch with no spare bedclothes,
no coverlets in his home, no abundance of blankets
on which both he and his guests could sleep in comfort! 350
Here in my house are coverlets and the finest blankets,
and never shall the dear son of that fine man Odysseus
bed down on a ship's afterdeck as long as I'm alive,
and sons survive after me, are left here in my halls
to look after whatever guest-friend may come visiting." 355

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"This was well said, old friend! And it's right that Tēlemachos
should listen to you, since that is by far the better way.
So he'll stay with you tonight, sleep on a bed in your house;
but I shall take myself off to our black ship, 360
cheer our companions, tell them all the news.
For I think I'm the only older person among them:
the rest are younger men, who came with him as friends,
all about the same age as great-hearted Tēlemachos.
It's there I shall lie tonight, by the hollow black ship; 365
then tomorrow morning I'll be off to the great-hearted
Kaukōnians, where there's a debt owed to me, neither recent
nor small. But you send this young man, your visiting guest,
on his way in a chariot, along with your son, and give him
horses as well, your lightest runners, your best for strength." 370

4. The drops were a preliminary ritual, designed to be poured out by way of libation.

So saying, the grey-eyed goddess Athēnē went on her way
in the likeness of a sea eagle: all who saw it were astounded,
including old Nestōr, who marveled at what his eyes beheld,
and he clasped Tēlemachos' hand, and said to him: "Friend,
I hardly think you'll turn out a mean fellow or a coward 375
if indeed when you're so young the gods act as your escorts!
For this was none other of those whose homes are on Olympos
than Zeus' own true-born daughter, maiden most glorious, who
likewise honored your noble father among the Argives!
Be gracious to me, my queen, grant me high renown 380
for myself, for my sons, and for my revered bedfellow,
and to you in return I'll sacrifice a yearling heifer, broad-browed,
still unbroken, that no man has yet led under the yoke:
that's the one I shall sacrifice, and gild her horns with gold."
So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athēnē heard him. 385

Now Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, led them, with his sons
and his daughters' husbands, to his splendid domain,
and when they reached the renowned domain of the king,
they sat down there in order on the chairs and benches.
When all of them were settled, the old man mixed them a bowl 390
of delicious wine, which was in its eleventh year
when the housekeeper broke its seal and opened the jar.
This wine the old man mixed, with many prayers, as he poured
libations to Athēnē, daughter of Zeus of the aegis.

When they'd poured libations, and drunk all they'd a mind to, 395
they went to lie down and sleep, each one in his own dwelling.
But Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, kept Tēlemachos, the dear son
of godlike Odysseus, to sleep there, settling him down
on a corded bedstead out in the echoing portico,
and with him Peisistratos, of the good ash spear, a leader 400
of men, a still unmarried son of his in the halls,
while he himself took his repose in the high house's inmost room,
and beside him his lady wife now shared their bed and marriage.

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, rose from his bed, went out, 405
and sat himself down on one of the polished stone blocks
that stood outside his high entrance doors, bright white
with a gleam as of oil. This was the place where in time past

Nēleus would sit, a counselor as prestigious as any god;
but he'd long since succumbed to fate, gone down to Hadēs, 410
and now Gerēnian Nestōr, the Achaians' guardian, sat there,
scepter in hand, and around him a crowd of his sons gathered,
coming out from their bedrooms: Echéphrōn, Stratios,
Perseus, Arētos, and—a match for a god—Thrasymēdēs;
then, sixth after these, the hero Peisistratos followed, 415
beside whom they brought in and seated godlike Tēlemachos.
Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, was the first to speak among them:
"Quickly now, my dear children, help realize my desire—
that very first of all deities I may propitiate Athēnē,
who came, clearly manifest, to our rich feast for the god! 420
So let one man go to the plain for a heifer, making sure
that it comes here right away, with its cowherd driving it;
and another to the black ship of great-hearted Tēlemachos,
to fetch all his comrades, leaving there two men only;
and another again to send here the goldsmith Laerkēs, 425
to overlay the horns of the heifer with gold. You others
are all to stay here, and issue instructions to my servants
that they should make ready a feast in my far-famed halls,
and bring in more chairs and firewood and clear bright water."

So he spoke, and they all bustled busily. The heifer arrived 430
from the plain, and, from their swift trim vessel, great-hearted
Tēlemachos' comrades showed up. The smith came too
bringing his bronze tools, the essentials of his trade:
anvil and hammer and finely fashioned tongs
with which he worked the gold. Athēnē likewise came 435
to be there at the sacrifice. Then Nestōr, old chariot driver,
gave the smith gold: he prepared it, overlaid the heifer's horns,
that the goddess might rejoice at the sight of her offering.
By its horns Stratios and noble Echéphrōn led in the heifer,
and Arētos, bringing out water in a flower-decked basin, 440
came from the inner chamber, in his other hand a basket
of barley-grain; Thrasymēdēs, that doughty fighter, stood by,
a sharp axe in his hand with which to fell the heifer,
while Perseus readied the blood bowl. Nestōr, old chariot driver,
began with the lustral water and sprinkling of barley, offered 445
long prayers to Athēnē, threw the victim's cut hairs in the fire.

When they'd prayed, and scattered the barley grains, then at once
Nestōr's son, high-spirited Thrasymēdēs, stepped
forward and struck. His axe sheared through the neck's tendons,
undid the strength of the heifer. The women keened: 450
the daughters, the sons' wives, Nestōr's revered
bedfellow Eurydikē, the eldest of Klymenos' daughters.
The men now raised the victim from the wide-wayed earth
and held it; Peisistratos, leader of men, cut its throat.
When the black blood had flowed from it, and life had left its bones, 455
at once they dismembered it, chopped out the thigh pieces
all in due order, then covered them with a layer of fat
folded double, laid raw bits of meat upon them. Then
the old man roasted them over split billets, drizzled with bright
wine, and young men beside him held their five-pronged forks. 460
When the thighs were properly barbecued, and they'd had a taste
of the innards, they cut up the rest and roasted it on spits
until it was done through, held the pointed spits in their hands.

Tēlemachos meanwhile was bathed by beautiful Polykastē,
the youngest daughter of Nestōr, Nēleus' son; and after 465
she'd bathed him, and massaged him generously with oil,
and dressed him in a fine mantle and tunic, he came forth
from the bathtub in appearance like the immortals, and went
and seated himself by Nestōr, the shepherd of his people.

When the outer flesh was well roasted they drew it off the spits, 470
and sat down and feasted; good fellows waited on them,
pouring the wine out for them into golden goblets.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, was the first to speak among them:
"Come, my sons, harness up our fine-maned horses to 475
the chariot for Tēlemachos, so he can start his journey."

So he spoke, and they hearkened promptly, and obeyed him:
at once to the chariot they harnessed the swift horses,
and the housekeeper put in the chariot bread and wine
and cooked meat, such as princes, Zeus' nurslings, feed upon. 480
Then Tēlemachos climbed aboard the elegant chariot,
And Nestōr's son Peisistratos, leader of men,
mounted beside him, took the reins in his hands, and used
the whip to start the pair: they, nothing loath, sped off

onto the plain, abandoning Pylos' steep citadel, 485
and all day shook the yoke that spanned their shoulders.
Then the sun went down, and all the ways were in shadow,
and they came to Phērai, to the dwelling of Dioklēs
the son of Ortilochos, whom Alpheios sired as his offspring,
and spent the night there; he treated them as guest-friends. 490

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
they yoked the horses, boarded the inlaid chariot,
drove out from the courtyard and echoing portico, used
the whip to start the pair: they, nothing loath, sped off,
and came to the wheat-bearing plain. From there they pursued 495
their journey at speed, so well did their swift horses bear them.
Then the sun went down, and all the ways were in shadow.

Book 4

Now they came to deep-hollowed Lakedaimōn with its ravines
and drove till they reached the domain of far-famed Menelaös.
Him they found holding a wedding feast with his many kinsmen
for a son and an elegant daughter, there in his own dwelling:
her he was sending out to Achillēs' son, the rank-breaker,[1] 5
for in Troy's country he first had pledged his word that he'd
give her to him, and now the gods were fulfilling the match.
With horses and chariots she was soon to travel
to the Myrmidons' famed city,[2] where her spouse was king;
while he was bringing from Sparta Alektōr's daughter, 10
to wed his favorite son, the doughty Megapenthēs,
born of a slave girl: to Helen the gods granted no more
issue after her first child, the lovely Hermionē,
who had all the beauty of golden Aphrodītē. So they
were feasting there in the spacious high-roofed hall— 15
the neighbors and kinsmen of far-famed Menelaös,
at ease, while among them a godlike minstrel was singing
and playing the lyre, while two tumblers circled
about in the thick of them, leading off the dance.

The two out at the gateway, themselves and their horses— 20
the hero Tēlemachos and Nestōr's splendid son—
pulled up short, were seen by the lord Eteōneus as he
came out: he, the deft squire of far-famed Menelaös.
Back through the hall he went to tell the people's shepherd,
approached him, and standing close uttered these winged words: 25

---

1. This was Neoptolemos, also known as Pyrrhos, Achillēs' only son, conceived on Skyros by Deïdameia when Achillēs was concealed there as a girl (*Cypria,* fr. 19; West 2003, 96–99). The alternative version has Achillēs blown off course and putting in to Skyros, clearly an attempt to provide a more "manly" occasion for his son's begetting. After the death of Achillēs, whose armor Neoptolemos inherited, Odysseus fetched him to Troy (*Little Iliad,* arg. 3; West 2003, 122–23), where he was one of the select band in the Wooden Horse. For his subsequent career, see 11.505–37 below and *HE,* 2: 569–70.
2. The name is unknown. Achillēs' Homeric kingdom of Phthiē formed part of the SE tetrad of Thessaly (*BA,* 55, C–D 3).

"Menelaös, Zeus' nursling, there are two strangers here—
two men who look very much like the offspring of great Zeus!
Tell me, shall we unharness their speedy horses,
or send them on somewhere else for their entertainment?"

Much annoyed, fair-haired Menelaös made him this answer:
'You used not to be a fool, Eteōneus, Boēthoös' son,
hitherto: but now you're babbling nonsense like a child!
We two ate well and often as the guests of other men,
generous hosts, on our way home, hoping only that Zeus
might rid us of sorrows hereafter. So go, unyoke the horses
of these our guests, bring the guests themselves to the feast!"

So he spoke. Eteōneus ran through the hall, calling out
to his busy fellow attendants to follow along with him.
They unharnessed the sweating horses from the yoke pole
and tethered them by their reins at the mangers for horses,
scattering fodder for them, emmer mixed with white barley.
Then they left the chariot resting against the white entrance walls
and led their guests into the godlike domain. What they saw
amazed them, passing through the abode of this king who was
Zeus' nursling: a brightness like that of the sun or moon
lit up the high-roofed dwelling of far-famed Menelaös.
And when they'd feasted their eyes on this spectacle, they stepped
into polished bathtubs and were bathed. Then, after
maidservants had washed them, massaged them with oil,
and clothed them in tunics and woolen mantles, they
sat down on high chairs next to Atreus' son Menelaös.
A handmaid fetched and poured them water from a pitcher—
exquisite, golden—over a silver basin, for them
to wash their hands, and placed a polished table nearby,
while the dignified housekeeper brought bread, set it before them,
with various side dishes, giving freely of her provisions,
and the carver loaded and brought to them platters of meat
of every kind, and put golden goblets before them.
Then fair-haired Menelaös welcomed them in these words:
"Fall to, and enjoy yourselves! Afterwards, when you've eaten
your dinner, then we'll question you as to who you may be
among men, for in you two the ancestry's not obscure—
your mortal bloodline's that of those sceptered princes,
Zeus' own nurslings: no commoner could have sired such sons."

With that he picked up and set before them the fat beef chine, 65
well roasted, that he himself had received as an honor. Then they
reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
then it was that Tēlemachos spoke to the son of Nestōr,
head leaning close to him, so that others might not hear: 70
"Just look, son of Nestōr, friend dear to my heart, at all
the bright shine of bronze throughout these echoing halls,
the gleam of gold and amber, of silver and ivory!
The court of Olympian Zeus must be like this inside,
there's such limitless wealth here: I'm awed by the sight of it!" 75

As he spoke, fair-haired Menelaös picked up what he said,
and addressed them both as follows, in winged words:
"Dear children, with Zeus no mortal might ever contend,
for eternal are his residences and his possessions;
but of men I might have a rival, or again I might not, 80
in possessions! True, after I'd suffered much, wandered far,
I came back home in the eighth year, bringing my wealth
in my ships, having visited Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt,
the Aithiopes, the Sidonians, and the Eremboi,
and Libya, where the lambkins grow horns almost from birth, 85
and the ewes give birth three times within a single year,
so that neither master nor shepherd ever goes without
cheese or mutton or sweet milk, but their flocks
are ready for milking the whole year through. But while
I was busy amassing a sizable livelihood as I roamed 90
from country to country, another man killed my brother[3]—
secretly, caught him off guard, through the guile of his damned wife!
So it gives me no pleasure to be lord of these possessions.
Besides, you'll have heard all this from your fathers, whoever
they are, since I suffered greatly, losing a well-established 95
household, that contained many rare possessions![4] If only

3. Again, we see that these elaborate travels have no purpose but to explain how it was that Menelaös somehow did not return home while Aigisthos was still alive, during his seven-year rule of Mykēnai. See also pp. 17–18 above.
4. Presumably, this refers to the claim, to which commentators pay scant attention, that when Paris ran off with Helen, they also carried off—we are not told how—much family treasure (*Cypria,* arg. 2; West 2003, 68–71). "We may find it hard to sympathize with this lament for bygone prosperity in view of the preceding emphasis on Menelaus' riches," Stephanie West observes (*Comm.,* 1: 199).

I could live in this house of mine with no more than a third
part of those goods, and that all the men were alive still
who died in broad Troy, far away from horse-grazing Argos!
Yet though I so often weep and lament for them all 100
as I sit here in my home—at times I indulge my heart
by mourning, but then again I'll stop, for all too soon
one reaches one's surfeit of sorrow—nevertheless,
despite my grief, I don't mourn so much for them all
as for that one, who makes me abhor both sleep and food 105
when I recall him: no other Achaian suffered such hardship
or achieved as much as Odysseus, though for himself
what was destined was trouble, and for me unforgettable
endless grief over him: he's been gone so long, we can't tell
if he's living or dead! They must be mourning him now— 110
old Laërtēs, prudent Penelopē, and Tēlemachos, still
a newborn child in the house at the time he left"—in whom,
so speaking, he stirred the urge to mourn his father. Tears
dropped from Tēlemachos' eyelids as he heard his father's name,
and with both hands he held his purple mantle up 115
in front of his eyes. Menelaös took note of what he did,
and turned over in his mind and in his heart the thought:
should he let the boy mention his father first himself,
or rather question him first, examine him on each matter?

While he was debating thus, in his mind and heart, 120
Helen came in, from her fragrant high-roofed boudoir,
like Artemis of the golden distaff, and with her Adrēstē,
who brought out for her a finely made recliner,
while Alkippē fetched her a rug of the softest wool,
and Phylō a silver basket given her as a present 125
by Alkandrē, the wife of Polybos, who dwelt in Egyptian
Thēbē, where the richest goods adorn all private homes:
he made Menelaös a present of two silver bathtubs,
a pair of tripods, and ten talents of gold.[5] In addition
his wife presented Helen with magnificent gifts: 130

5. The Homeric gold talent was certainly far lighter than the classical silver talent, which weighed approximately 57 1/2 lbs. In gold this would have had a huge value, far beyond anything possible on the occasions where Homer mentions it. If William Ridgway (cited by Leaf, 2: 253–4) was right, it in fact was equivalent in value to one ox, and this would seem a fair estimate in context: 4.526; 8.393; 9.202; 24.274; cf. *Il.* 9.122, 202, 264; 18.507; 19.247; 23.69, 614, 751, 796; 24.232.

a golden distaff she gave her, and a work basket on wheels,
fashioned of silver, its rims all finished off with gold.
It was this that her handmaid Phylō brought in and placed
beside her, full of yarn already spun, and across it
was laid the distaff, loaded with darkly violet wool. 135
Helen sat down in the recliner, a footstool under her feet,
and at once let fly at her husband a row of questions:
"Menelaös, nursling of Zeus, do we know who these men
are, or say they are, who've come to our house? Shall I
keep quiet or say what I think? Oh, I simply must tell you! 140
Not once did I ever see such a striking resemblance,
in either a man or a woman—it truly astounds me!
This boy could be the son of great-hearted Odysseus,
Tēlemachos, left as a newborn child in the house
by him, when because of me, the bitch, you Achaians 145
went out against Troy, hearts set on ruthless warfare."

Then fair-haired Menelaös responded to her, saying:
"I too see the likeness now, wife, exactly as you perceive it:
such as this boy's were Odysseus' feet and hands,
and the way he'd glance, and his head, and the hair above it! 150
And when, just now, I was reminiscing about Odysseus,
recounting all the sorrows and hardships that he endured
on my behalf, the boy shed bitter tears from under
his eyelids, held up that purple mantle before his eyes."

To him Peisistratos, Nestōr's son, now responded, saying: 155
"Atreus' son Menelaös, Zeus' nursling, leader of troops,
this youth is indeed his son, exactly as you tell it!
But he's also modest, and personally embarrassed
by the thought of being too outspoken in what he says
before you, whose voice delights us both like a god's. 160
As for me, the Gerēnian horseman Nestōr sent me
to be Tēlemachos' escort, since he was eager to see you,
and hoped you'd give him some encouraging word or action;
for many troubles a son encounters at home when his father's
long absent, when he's got no other supporters, as now 165
it is with Tēlemachos: his father's away, nor are there
any others among his people who'd stave off trouble from him."

Then fair-haired Menelaös responded to him, saying:
"Wonder of wonders! There's come to my house the son

of a man who's my dear friend, who faced much hardship 170
on my account: when he came home, I figured I'd welcome him
more than all other Argives—if we two ever got back over
the sea in our swift ships, thanks to far-seeing Olympian Zeus!
I'd have made some Argive town his, built a house there for him,
fetched from Ithákē his son, his possessions, all his people— 175
expelling the population of one of those cities located
round about, those that acknowledge me as their ruler.
Both living here, we'd have seen a lot of each other: nothing
would have kept us apart, away from friendship's pleasures,
until the black cloud of death in the end enfolded us! 180
But the god himself, I suppose, resented such a prospect,
and denied a safe homecoming to that unlucky man alone."

So he spoke, and stirred in them all an urge to lamentation:
Argive Helen, daughter of Zeus, shed tears now,
and Tēlemachos wept, as did Atreus' son Menelaös, 185
nor could the son of Nestōr keep his eyes tearless, as he
recalled in his heart the peerless Antilochos,
slain by the bright Dawn's glorious son.[6] So now,
thinking of him, he uttered winged words, saying:
"Son of Atreus, old Nestōr would always refer to you as 190
the most sagacious of men, when your name came up
in his halls, when questions arose between us: so now,
if it's possible, do me a favor! I'm not the sort of man
to hold sad discussions at dinner: next morning's soon enough
for that kind of thing. Of course, I'm not against 195
grieving for any mortal who's died and met his fate:
this is the only due we pay to wretched mortals,
to crop our hair, and let the tears course down our cheeks!
For a brother of mine, too, is dead, one far from the meanest
of Argives—you may well have known him, though I myself 200
never met nor saw him: still, they say that Antilochos
excelled all others both as a runner and as a fighter."

Then fair-haired Menelaös responded to him, saying:
"Friend, what you've said is all that any sagacious man

6. The charmingly aristocratic Antilochos, Nestōr's son and Peisistratos' brother, a frequent presence in the *Iliad,* close friend of Achillēs', and the only person who ever makes him smile (*Il.* 23.555–6), was killed by the Dawn's son Memnōn, whom Achillēs then slew (*Aeth.,* arg. 2; West 2003, 110–13).

could say or do, even one who was older than you are! 205
Such a father is yours, as your careful speech makes clear.
Easily known is the offspring of that man for whom
Kronos' son spins good fortune in his marriage and his children,
as now he has granted Nestōr, through all his days,
to reach old age at home in prosperity, with his sons 210
proving themselves both sharp-witted and expert spearmen.
So we'll leave off the weeping that recently took place,
and let's turn our minds back to dinner—let them pour water
over our hands! Time enough tomorrow morning
for me and Tēlemachos to have a full discussion." 215

So he spoke, and Asphaliōn poured water on their hands—
Asphaliōn, busy squire of renowned Menelaös. They now
reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.

Then Helen, daughter of Zeus, had another idea: at once
into the wine they were drinking she added a drug 220
that banishes grief and anger, brings oblivion of all ills:
whoever swallowed it when mixed into the bowl
would not, for the rest of that day, wet his cheeks with tears,
even though his mother and father should lie there dead,
or a brother or dear son should be killed in his presence, 225
cut down by the sword, and his own eyes witnessed it—
so powerful were the drugs that this daughter of Zeus possessed,
benign ones, a present from Thōn's wife Polydamna,
a native of Egypt; for there the grain-giving earth bears most
drugs—many healing in mixture, and many malignant: 230
each man there's a physician, more knowledgeable than all
mankind elsewhere, for indeed they are of Paiēōn's race.
So when she'd added the drug and had the wine poured out,
at once she spoke again, and responded to them, saying:
"Atreus' son Menelaös, Zeus' nursling, and you other sons 235
of excellent sires! Now to one man, now to another
the god, Zeus, gives good or ill, for he can do anything; so
feast on, sitting here in our halls at your ease, and enjoy
listening to tales: I'll tell one that fits this occasion well!
I can't rehearse or enumerate all the many trials 240
of steadfast-minded Odysseus, but there is this one exploit,
performed and endured by the mighty warrior in
the Trojans' land, where you Achaians endured troubles!

He scourged his own person with harsh unseemly blows,
flung rags about his shoulders to look like a menial, 245
and slipped into the enemy's wide-wayed city,
concealing himself in the likeness of another, a beggar,
quite different from the real man at the Achaians' ships.
Thus disguised he entered the Trojans' city, unrecognized
by them all: I alone perceived who he really was, 250
and questioned him; he in his cunning dodged my enquiries.
But after I'd bathed him and rubbed him down with oil,
and put good clothes on him, and swore a mighty oath
not to reveal him as Odysseus among the Trojans
until he was safely back to the swift ships and the huts, 255
then at last he told me all the plans of the Achaians;
and—after he'd killed many Trojans with the keen-edged bronze—
got back to the Argives, brought them much information.
The other Trojan women wailed in grief, but my own
spirit rejoiced, since already my heart was set to return 260
back home, and I groaned for the blindness that Aphrodītē
had inflicted in leading me there, away from my dear country,
abandoning my own child, my bedchamber, my husband—
who was lacking in nothing, either brains or looks."

Then fair-haired Menelaös responded to her, saying: 265
"All this indeed, my wife, you have stated correctly.
Long since have I come to know the minds and counsel
of many heroic men, and have traveled widely,
but never yet have I met and studied such a person
as steadfast Odysseus was at heart; nor have I known 270
so striking a deed as that great man devised and achieved
in the carpentered Horse, where we—all the very best
of the Argives—sat, bringing death and destiny
to the Trojans. You came then—maybe impelled
by a god determined to grant the Trojans some glory— 275
and godlike Deïphobos along with you. Three times
you circled the hollow ambush, tapping its surface,
calling out to all the Danaän leaders by name,
imitating the voice of each of the Argives' wives.
Now I and the son of Tydeus, with noble Odysseus, 280
were sitting inside, and could hear the way you were calling.
Diomēdēs and I were both eager to jump from our seats

and emerge, or at least to answer you from inside;
but Odysseus, despite our longing, held us back in place.
Then all the Achaians' sons kept silent except for 285
Antiklos, who was still determined to answer you,
had not Odysseus kept his mouth firmly shut
with his great powerful hands, and saved all us Achaians
by holding firm until Pallas Athēnē led you from us."

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying: 290
"Atreus' son Menelaös, Zeus' nursling, leader of troops,
so much the worse, for this didn't ward off grim destruction
from him, nor would have done, had his heart within been of iron!
So come now, dispatch us to bed, so that we without delay
may settle down and enjoy the pleasures of sweet sleep." 295

So he spoke, and Argive Helen gave orders to her handmaids
to set bedsteads under the colonnade, and lay upon them
fine purple wool throws, and over these to spread blankets,
topped off with fleecy mantles that would serve as coverlets.
Out from the hall went the handmaids, each holding a torch, 300
and made up the beds. A herald escorted the guests.
They then lay down to sleep there, in the dwelling's forecourt,
the hero Tēlemachos and Nestōr's splendid son;
but Atreus' son slept in a back room of the high house,
and by him lay long-robed Helen, resplendent among women. 305

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
Menelaös of the great war cry rose from the bed he'd slept in,
put on his clothes, slung a sharp sword from one shoulder,
tied on a pair of sandals under his sleek feet,
sallied forth from his chamber, in appearance like a god, 310
sat down beside Tēlemachos, and addressed him as follows:
'What need was it brought you here, heroic Tēlemachos,
to sunny Lakedaimōn, over the broad back of the sea?
Something public, or personal? Tell me the truth of this."

Sagacious Tēlemachos answered him: "Atreus' son, 315
Menelaös, Zeus' nursling, leader of troops, I came
in the hope you might be able to tell me news of my father.
My estate is being eaten up and my rich farms ruined,
my house is crowded with foes who continue to slaughter
my flocks of sheep and my crumple-horned shambling cattle— 320

these arrogant, overweening suitors of my mother!
That's why I'm here at your knees now—you might be willing
to tell me about his grim death, if you maybe saw it
yourself, or heard an account of it from some other
wanderer: to unmatched misery his mother bore him! 325
And don't, from concern or pity, speak false comfort to me,
but tell me exactly whatever you may have witnessed!
I beseech you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, made you
any promise, by word or action, and delivered on it
in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaians met grief, 330
remember it now, and tell me the unerring truth of it."

Deeply troubled, fair-haired Menelaös now addressed him:
"I tell you, it was indeed in the bed of a brave warrior
that these fellows, cowards themselves, hoped they might lie!
As when in a thicket, the lair of a powerful lion, 335
a doe has laid to sleep her newborn suckling fawns,
and goes off, traversing foothills and grassy glens
in search of pasture, and the lion returns to his den
and on both her fawns unleashes a ghastly fate—just so
will Odysseus unleash a ghastly fate on these men! 340
How I wish—by Zeus the Father and Athēnē and Apollo!—
that he, as strong as he was that time in well-built Lesbos
when he stood up and wrestled a bout with Philomeleidēs,
and threw him down forcefully, and all the Achaians cheered,
might come—he, Odysseus—in such strength among these suitors! 345
Then they'd all get a swift end and a bitter marriage!
As regards the business you're enquiring about, I shan't
veer off onto other subjects, nor will I mislead you—
of all that I heard from the forthright Old Man of the Sea
not one word will I keep back or conceal from you! 350

"Though I longed to return here, the gods still held me back
in Egypt, since I'd not offered them adequate sacrifices—
gods always want mortals to bear their behests in mind!
Well, there exists an island set in the surging sea,
offshore from Egypt: Pharos, they call it, as far out 355
as a hollow ship can cover in one whole day
with a tailwind strong and constant blowing behind it;
there's a harbor there with good anchorage, where men
take on water before sailing out in their trim ships.

There for twenty days the gods stayed me, nor ever did 360
those maritime tailwinds show up that escort ships
safely across the sea's broad back; so all my stores
would have been eaten up, and my crew's strength with them,
had not one of the gods shown compassion and rescued me—
the daughter of mighty Prōteus, the Old Man of the Sea, 365
Eidotheē: it was her heart I'd stirred in particular when
she encountered me straying alone, far away from my comrades,
who'd gone out round the island, engaged in fishing
with bent hooks, since starvation was crimping their bellies.
She it was who approached now, and addressed me, saying: 370
'Are you just childish, stranger, excessively dim-witted,
or deliberately acting the fool, out of pleasure in suffering?
The way you're stuck on this island, unable to discover
any way out, and your men near to despairing!'

"So she spoke; and I then responded to her, saying: 375
'Let me tell you—whichever goddess it is that you are—
that no way am I stuck here by choice: it must be that
I've trespassed against the immortals who hold wide heaven!
So tell me—for you gods have knowledge of everything—
which immortal is keeping me here, holding up my journey, 380
and how I'm to get back home, across the fish-rich sea.'

"So I spoke, and at once she, bright among goddesses, said:
'Well, stranger, I'll give you a full and accurate answer.
There's a certain Old Man of the Sea—he often comes here—
immortal and truthful—Prōteus of Egypt, who knows 385
the depths of every sea, a servant of Poseidōn:
they say he's my father, that he begot me. Now if
you could somehow lie in wait and get hold of him, then
he could tell you about your return, the details of your journey,
all your long voyage homeward across the fish-rich sea. 390
What's more, Zeus' nursling, if you wanted, he could relate
what's been done in your halls, for both good and evil,
while you were away on your long and arduous journey.'

"So she spoke, and I then made answer to her, saying:
'Show me yourself now how to ambush this old immortal— 395
he might see me beforehand, be alerted, avoid me:
it's hard for a mere mortal to overpower a god.'

"So I spoke, and at once she, bright among goddesses, said:
'Well, stranger, I'll give you a full and accurate answer.
At the time that the sun has risen to span mid-heaven 400
this truthful Old Man of the Sea emerges from the waves
with the breath of the west wind, concealed by a dark ripple.
When he's out, he lies down to sleep in the hollow caves,
and around him the seals,[7] the sweet sea daughter's brood,[8]
come up out of the grey sea water, fall asleep together, 405
exhaling a pungent reek of the sea's far-reaching depths.
I'll take you there tomorrow as dawn is breaking
and settle you down in a row—you must carefully choose
three of your comrades, the best in your strong-benched ships—
and tell you about all the tricks of the old man. First, 410
he'll count the number of seals, go over them all;
but when he's totted them up and reviewed them, then
he'll bed down in the midst of them, like a shepherd among his flock.
Now as soon as you see him settled, then will be the time
to muster up every last drop of your strength and vigor, 415
and hold him firm, though he'll struggle mightily to escape.
He'll test you by turning into every creature that comes forth
and moves on the earth, into water, into devouring fire;
yet keep him pinned down, hold on to him all the harder!
But when at last he questions you in his own person, 420
in that shape he had when you watched him settling down,
then, hero, cease your violence, set the old man free,
ask him which of the gods it is that's angry with you
and your homecoming, how you're to traverse the fish-rich sea.'

"That said, she dived down into the surging deep, 425
and I returned to my ships, drawn up on the beach,
my heart brooding darkly on many things as I went.
Then, after we'd gone on down to our ship and the sea,
and made ready our meal, and ambrosial[9] night came on,

---

7. "Only one species of seal occurs in Mediterranean waters, the Mediterranean monk seal, *Stenorhynchus albiventer,* now an endangered species" (S. West, *Comm.,* 1: 219).
8. Who this sea goddess is remains uncertain: probably either Thetis or Amphitrītē.
9. The epithet *ambrosios* has a range of meanings, from "fragrant, sweet-smelling" to "divine, immortal," sometimes, but not always, with reference to the divine food of the gods, *ambrosia* (see, e.g., 445 below). It has been suggested (*Comm.,* 1: 220) that, when applied to night (as here) it can also carry the sense of "restorative."

we lay down to sleep there, beside the breaking surf. 430
When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
then indeed along the strand of the broad-wayed sea
I went, praying much to the gods, and taking with me
the three comrades I most trusted for every venture.

"She meanwhile had plunged down into the sea's broad gulf 435
and fetched up from the deep the skins of four seals, all
recently flayed: she'd thought up a trick against her father.
She dug out hollow forms in the sandy beach, and sat there,
waiting. So we came right up to her, and she made us
lie down in a row, threw a skin over each of us. Now 440
our ambush would have been torture, for most horribly
did the vile stench of these brine-bred seals revolt us—
who'd choose to bed down beside a beast from the sea?—
had she herself not rescued us, devised a great remedy:
she brought and positioned ambrosia under each man's nose, 445
that breathed sweet fragrance, destroying the sea beast's stink.
So all that morning we waited, with enduring patience,
till the seals came crowding up from the water and then
settled themselves in lines along the seashore. At noon
the old man emerged from the sea, to find his well-nourished 450
seals: he inspected them all and checked their number,
counting us first among the beasts, never once suspecting
the trick we'd played. Then he too lay down to rest.
So we with a shout sprang on him, locked him in our arms;
But the old man hadn't forgotten his own elusive arts, 455
far from it: first he became a bearded lion,
then a serpent, then a leopard, then a gigantic boar;
then he turned into flowing water, and a tall leafy tree;
but with resolute heart we kept him firmly pinned down,
and when the cunning old trickster was at last exhausted 460
then he finally spoke and questioned me, saying: 'Which
of the gods, son of Atreus, was it advised you how to ambush
and catch me against my will? What is it that you want?'

"So he spoke, and I then made answer to him, saying:
'You yourself know, old man—why try to trick me with 465
this question?—how long I've been stuck here on this island,
unable to find a way out, my inner spirit fading: so you

tell me—since gods are all-knowing—which immortal
is it who fetters me here, who's kept me from my journey—
and how I'm to get back home across the fish-rich sea.' 470

"So I spoke: he at once made answer to me, saying:
'You should have made rich sacrifices to Zeus and the other gods
before embarking, to ensure your speedy return
to your own country, voyaging over the wine-dark deep!
For it isn't your fate to set eyes on your friends, or make it 475
back to your well-set home and your ancestral country
before you've once more been to the waters of Egypt's
heaven-fed river and offered ample sacrifices
to the immortal gods who hold wide heaven: only
then, at last, will they grant you the journey that you desire.' 480

"So he spoke; but the heart within me was shattered
by his sending me back again to traverse the misty deep
to Egypt, a lengthy and most wearisome journey.
Yet even so I still responded to him, saying:
'All this I shall do, old man, exactly as you bid me. 485
But come now, tell me this, give me a true report:
Did all the Achaians get home with their ships, unharmed,
all those Nestōr and I left when we set out from Troy?
Or did any die by some unkind fate on shipboard,
or in their friends' arms, after winding up the war?' 490

"So I spoke: he at once made answer to me, saying:
'Son of Atreus, why ask me this? It's not your business
to know or search out my mind—nor do I think
you'll long be tearless when you hear the full account!
For many of them perished, and many were left there, 495
though only two leaders of the bronze-corseleted Achaians
died when returning home, or in the war—you were there then!—
and one may still be alive, held back out there on the deep.
Aias[10] was done for, along with his long-oared vessels:
first Poseidōn drove him onto the massive rocks 500
of Gyrai, yet rescued him, brought him safe from the sea;
and he'd have escaped his fate, though hated by Athēnē,

10. The narrator assumes, correctly, that the audience would know at once that this was not the more famous Aias (1) son of Telamōn (q.v. Gloss.), whose madness and suicide were notorious, but Aias (2) son of Oileus (q.v. Gloss.), better known for his rape of Kassandrē during the sack of Troy.

had he not, infatuate, uttered a reckless boast, asserted
that it was in spite of the gods he'd escaped the sea's
great gulf, so that Poseidōn, hearing his noisy bragging, 505
at once took hold of the trident in his mighty fists
and struck the rock face of Gyrai, split a part off.
The rock held firm, but the fragment where Aias was perched
when he made his reckless boast crashed into the sea,
bore him down with it into the boundless surging main, 510
so he swallowed his fill of salt water, and thus perished.

'But your brother somehow escaped, eluded the death spirits
with his hollow ships: it was the lady Hērē who saved him.
Then, when he was nearing Malea's sheer promontory,
a strong gale took hold of him, carried him headlong 515
over the fish-rich waters, groaning disconsolately,
to the coast of that land where in time past Thyestēs
had his abode, but now his son Aigisthos dwelt there.
Yet from this point too an unharmed return was shown him:
The gods changed the gale to a tailwind, and they got home. 520
Now he, Agamemnōn, rejoicing, set foot on his native soil,
laid hold of the earth and kissed it, a flood of warm tears
streamed down his face, so glad he was to see his homeland.

'But a watch at his lookout saw him, a man brought in
and set there by crafty Aigisthos, who promised him a reward, 525
two talents of gold: he'd been keeping watch for a year now
in case *he* slipped past unseen, fierce valor not forgotten.
Now the watchman went to the palace, informed the people's
shepherd: Aigisthos at once thought up a crafty scheme:
he chose twenty men, the best fighters in the region, 530
and placed them in ambush, but across the hall laid on
a feast, then took horses and chariots to welcome Agamemnōn,
the people's shepherd, mind set on treacherous action,
and brought him back, unaware of his coming fate, and after
feasting him killed him, the way you'd butcher an ox at its crib. 535
Not one of all Atreus' son's comrades remained alive there,
not one of Aigisthos' men:[11] they all died in the halls.'

11. This implies that they put up a fierce resistance; but at 11.412–13, they are slaughtered like pigs, and Klytaimnēstra (11.410, 424–34) is very much involved in Agamemnōn's assassination. See also pp. 15–17 above.

"So he spoke, and the spirit within me was shattered.
And I wept as I sat on the sand there, my heart no longer
wanted to live, to behold the sunlight. But after 540
I'd had my fill of weeping and groveling, then
the forthright Old Man of the Sea addressed me, saying:
'No longer, son of Atreus, waste time like this in ceaseless
weeping: no good will come of it! Rather do all you can
to get back soon to your country: there's always a chance 545
of finding that man alive still—if Orestēs hasn't arrived first
and killed him, and you only get there in time for the funeral.'

"So he spoke, and the heart and proud spirit once again
were cheered in my breast, despite the grief I felt,
and I spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying: 550
'These men I know of. But tell me, who's the third man,
the one who may be alive still, held back out there on the main—
or is he dead? Though it grieve me, I want to hear the truth.'

"So I spoke: he at once made answer to me, saying:
'That is the son of Laërtēs, whose dwelling is in Ithákē: 555
him I saw on an island, shedding copious tears,
in the home of the nymph Kalypsō, who by constraint
detains him there, so he can't get back to his own country,
for he has no ships with oars, nor any comrades
to further his voyage over the broad back of the sea. 560
But it isn't your destiny, Menelaös, Zeus' nursling,
to die and meet your fate in horse-grazing Argos: rather
it's to the Elysian plain and the furthest ends of the earth
that the immortals will bring you, where fair-haired Rhadamanthys
dwells, and where the living is easiest for mankind: 565
no snow's there, no strong storms, nor ever any rain,
but a constant light western breeze coming up off the ocean
to provide mankind with cooling relief; for as they see it,
since you have Helen as wife, you're a son-in-law of Zeus.'

"That said, he plunged down into the surging deep; 570
and I returned to the ships with my godlike comrades,
my heart brooding darkly on many things as I went.
Then after we'd gone on down to our ship and the sea,
and made ready our meal, and ambrosial night came on,
we lay down to sleep there, beside the breaking surf. 575

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
our ships first of all we hauled into the bright salt sea,
and set up the masts and sails in these well-trimmed vessels.
Then the men went aboard, and sat down on the benches,
and ranged in close order struck the grey sea with their oars. 580
So back to Egypt, land of the heaven-fed river, I brought
and moored my vessels, and offered most lavish sacrifices;
and when I'd appeased the wrath of the gods that are forever
I raised Agamemnōn a grave mound, that his fame might be
undying. That done, I set sail for home. The immortals 585
gave me a tailwind, conveyed me to my own dear land.
So come now, stay on with me longer here in my halls,
for eleven or twelve more days, and after that
I'll arrange you a proper send-off, with some splendid gifts—
three horses, a well-polished chariot. In addition 590
I'll give you a beautiful cup: then, when you pour libations
to the deathless gods, you'll remember me all your days."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"Son of Atreus, please don't invite me to stay here longer!
Truth is, I'd be only too happy to sit on for a full year 595
in your abode here, home and parents all forgotten,
so rare is the pleasure I get from listening to your stories
and the way you tell them! But already my comrades are fretting
to leave sacred Pylos, you're keeping me here so long!
As for the present you give me, make that a keepsake: 600
horses I'll not take back to Ithákē, but rather leave them
here for your pleasure, since you are lord of a spacious
plain with an abundance of clover and galingale,
of wheat and millet and ample-grained white barley.
But Ithákē has no broad courses, nor any meadows; it gives 605
pasture to goats—more attractive than that for horses!
None of the islands has meadows or space for chariots:
each of them slopes down seaward, Ithákē most of all."

So he spoke. Menelaös of the great war cry smiled,
caressed him with one hand, and addressed him, saying: 610
"The way you talk, dear child, reveals your good breeding!
I'll change these presents, then, since I can: of all the gifts
laid away in my house as personal treasures I shall
give you the one that's most beautiful and most costly:

a finely wrought mixing bowl, made all of silver throughout, 615
rims finished off with a golden inlay, the work
of Hephaistos, a present from the hero Phaidimos,
the Sidonians' king, at the time that his house gave me shelter
when I'd got that far homeward. This I'd like you to have."

Such were the words they exchanged between one another, 620
while the banqueters were arriving at the godlike king's domain:
they drove up sheep, they brought beneficent wine,
their fine-veiled wives came with them, carrying bread.
Thus they busied themselves about the feast in the halls.

Meanwhile the suitors gathered in front of Odysseus' abode 625
were amusing themselves, in their usual arrogant fashion,
by throwing the discus and javelin out on a leveled terrace
where Antinoös and godlike Eurymachos were sitting—
the suitors' leaders, by far the best-born among them.
They were approached now by Phronios' son Noēmōn, 630
who addressed Antinoös, had this question for him:
"Antinoös, do we or don't we know for certain when
Tēlemachos will get back here from sandy Pylos? He went
taking a ship of mine, and now I have need of it
to go over to widespread Ēlis, where I've a dozen 635
brood mares, now suckling young mules, unbroken, hard
workers: I want to drive one off, break it in."

So he spoke. They were quietly astonished, had no idea
that Tēlemachos had gone to Nēleian Pylos, believed him
somewhere out in the fields, with his flocks or at the swineherd's. 640

Antinoös, Eupeithēs' son, now responded to him, saying:
"When exactly did he leave? And who were those young men
that went with him? Select Ithákans, or just his own
field hands and household servants? This too he could have done.
And give me a true answer, I need to be quite certain: 645
Was it by force, against your will, that he took your black ship,
or did you give it him freely because he asked you for it?"

Noēmōn, the son of Phronios, responded to him, saying:
"I gave it him freely myself. What would anyone do
when a man of his sort, with the troubles he has at heart, 650
made the request? To not give it him would be hard.

As for the youths, those gone with him are Ithákē's best
after ourselves: I noticed their leader embarking and he
was Mentōr—or else some god who looked just like him.
It's an odd thing: I saw godlike Mentōr here yesterday 655
at dawn, but in fact he'd left then in the ship to Pylos."

This said, he took himself off to his father's house,
leaving the proud hearts of both highly disconcerted. They
at once made the suitors quit their games and sit down,
and among them Antinoös, Eupeithēs' son, now spoke, 660
bitterly troubled, his black heart brimming over
with rage, while his eyes had the semblance of blazing fire.
"An outrageous act, I swear, most high-handedly brought off,
this trip by Tēlemachos! And we thought he'd never make it!
Despite all of us here, the brat's gone, just like that— 665
got a ship, launched it, enrolled the best men we have!
Pretty soon he'll be trouble for us: so may Zeus
destroy his power before he ever comes to full manhood!
Come then, give *me* a fast ship and twenty comrades,
so I can set an ambush, watch for him as he steers 670
through the narrows between Ithákē and sheer beetling Samē,
and give him a miserable voyage in his quest for his father!"

So he spoke: they all assented, backed his proposal,
got up at once, and went off to the house of Odysseus.

Nor was Penelopē left for long without knowledge 675
of the schemes that the suitors hatched in secret discussion,
for Medōn the herald told her, who, outside the courtyard,
heard the whole plot that they, inside, were weaving,
and went in through the hall to inform Penelopē of it.

As he set foot across the threshold Penelopē addressed him: 680
"Herald, for what have the lordly suitors now dispatched you?
To tell the household servants of godlike Odysseus
to stop their appointed tasks, and cook up a feast for them?
Would that this, with no prospect of future wooing or meetings
elsewhere, were to be the last and latest dinner 685
of all you who throng here, gobbling up so much livelihood,
the possessions of clever Tēlemachos! Did you not listen
long ago, when you were children, to your fathers' talk
of what manner of man Odysseus was among your begetters,

wronging by deed or word no person in the land, 690
unlike the custom of most of these godlike monarchs,
who hate one man and favor another as they please?
But he never ever treated anyone badly, whereas
your cast of mind and unseemly actions are all too clearly
visible, nor nowadays do past favors reap gratitude." 695

Medōn, astute in counsel, then responded to her, saying:
"My queen, would that this were the worst of all your troubles!
But there's something else, more serious and threatening,
that the suitors are planning—Zeus forfend that it come to pass!
They intend to cut down Tēlemachos with the sharp bronze 700
on his way home—he sailed away, seeking news
of his father, to sacred Pylos and lordly Lakedaimōn."

So he spoke. On the spot her knees and heart gave way,
and for long she remained speechless. Both her eyes
brimmed over with tears, and her vigorous voice was stilled. 705
But at last she framed words again, and addressed him, saying:
"Herald, why is my child gone? There was no need for him
to go aboard swift-moving vessels that serve mankind
as the sea's horses, crossing wide stretches of the deep!
Is not even *his* name to survive among mankind?" 710

Medōn, astute in counsel, responded to her, saying:
"I do not know if some god incited him, or it was his own
spirit stirred him to go to Pylos, to find out about
his father's homecoming, or what fate he'd met."
With that
he went on his way, out through Odysseus' house; but she 715
was sunk in heart-crushing anguish, had no more strength
to get herself to a chair, of the many in the room, but sank
down there, on her richly worked bedchamber's threshold,
sobbing piteously, and around her wailed her handmaids,
all of them, young and old, that were there in the house. 720
After much crying, Penelopē now addressed them, saying:
"Listen, my friends: on me the Olympian's laid more grief
than any woman brought up with me has suffered! Years ago
I lost my good husband: a lion's heart he possessed,
and stood out among the Danaäns for every kind of virtue: 725
a fine man—wide is his fame through Hellas and mid-Argos!

And now the gales have swept my beloved son away
without trace from our home: I had no word of his going.
You cruel wretches, not one of you thought to arouse me
from sleep, though you knew very well what was going on 730
at the time that he went aboard that hollow black vessel!
If I'd only found out that he was planning this journey
he'd either have had to stay here, though longing to be gone,
or else he'd have left me a corpse, here in my own halls!
As it is, will someone go quickly and summon old Dolios, 735
my servant, a gift from my father when first I came here,
who tends my orchard of fruit trees. He is to go at once,
sit down beside Laërtēs, tell him all that's happened—
in the hope that Laërtēs will come up with some scheme,
present himself, lamenting, before these folk who are minded 740
to do away with his stock, and that of godlike Odysseus."

Eurykleia then, cherished nurse, responded to her, saying:
"Dear girl, whether you finish me with the pitiless bronze
or let me stay in the house here, I shan't conceal the truth.
I indeed knew all this, and gave him all he asked for— 745
bread and sweet wine. But he made me swear a great oath
not to tell you for twelve days at least—or till you yourself
missed him, and heard that he'd gone—so that you would not
fall to weeping, and spoil your lovely complexion. So now
go bathe yourself, and change into laundered clothes, 750
and go upstairs to your room, you and your serving women,
and pray to Athēnē, daughter of Zeus of the aegis: for she
might save him hereafter, even from death. But do not
further burden that burdened old man—I can't believe
that the line of Arkeisios' son is wholly detested by 755
the blessed gods: there will surely still be an heir to possess
his high-roofed abode, his rich and distant fields."
So speaking she lulled her grief, dried the tears from her eyes.

Penelopē went and bathed, changed into clean clothes,
went upstairs to her room, she and her serving women, 760
put barley grain in a basket, then made her prayer to Athēnē:
"Hear me, unwearying one, child of Zeus of the aegis!
If ever for you in his halls resourceful Odysseus made
burnt sacrifice of fat thigh pieces of sheep or oxen,

remember those offerings now, and save my dear son— 765
fend off these suitors, so haughtily arrogant, from him!'

So saying, she keened aloud. The goddess heard her prayer.

The suitors meanwhile raised uproar throughout the shadowy halls,
and this is the kind of remark that some arrogant youth would make:
"There's the much-courted queen deciding which of us she'll wed— 770
not knowing that her son's murder's already been arranged!"
So would one speak; but they didn't know what was arranged,
or how, and Antinoös now addressed them, saying:
"You idiots, avoid this kind of overconfident chatter
entirely, lest someone report it to those inside! 775
So now let's get going in silence, and put into action
the scheme that we all agreed to."
So he spoke,
and picked out the twenty best men: then they together
set off to their swift ship on the strand by the seashore.
First of all they hauled the black vessel down to deep water, 780
then they set up in it both mast and sail, and fitted
the oars to their leather thole-straps, all in due order,
and hoisted and set the white sail. Meanwhile their proud
attendants carried their gear aboard. They moored the vessel
in deep enough water, then disembarked themselves, 785
ate their dinner, and waited for the approach of evening.

But she, the prudent Penelopē, lay in her upper chamber
without any nourishment, tasting neither food nor drink,
wondering whether her blameless son would escape
death or be done away with by the arrogant suitors; 790
and just as a lion, when cornered by men, will deliberate
in fear, as they close their deceptive circle around him,
so was she worrying until sweet slumber overcame her,
and she sank back and slept, and all her joints relaxed.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, had another idea: 795
she made a phantom, in form resembling a woman—
Iphthīmē, the daughter of great-hearted Ikarios, whom
Eumēlos married, he whose home was in Phērai—
and sent it off to the home of godlike Odysseus, there
to tell Penelopē, who still was weeping and wailing, 800
that she should give over her grief, her tearful lamentation.

Into her room it wafted, round the strap of the door bolt,
and stood there above her head, and addressed her, saying:
"Are you asleep, Penelopē, heart still heavy with grief?
The gods, the easy livers, won't have it that you should be 805
weeping and grieving: return home is yet destined for your son,
since in the gods' eyes he's no kind of transgressor."

Then prudent Penelopē made it this answer, as she
slumbered on sweetly, ensconced at the gates of dreams:
"Why have you come here, sister? Never until now 810
would you visit: the home you live in lies far away.
And now you tell me to quit the grieving, the countless
agonies that beset me in mind and soul! Years ago
I lost my good husband: a lion's heart he possessed,
and stood out among the Danaäns for every kind of virtue: 815
a fine man—wide is his fame through Hellas and mid-Argos!
And now my beloved son, too, has left in a hollow ship—
a mere child, with no knowledge of hardship or public debate.
For him it is that I grieve, even more than for the other:
I tremble for him, I'm afraid of what he might suffer 820
in the land of those he's gone to, or out on the deep sea.
for many ill-wishers are plotting against him, eager
to kill him before he gets back to his own country."

In answer to her the dark phantom now declared:
"Take heart, don't let your mind be overweighed by panic: 825
a guide goes with him such as other men have prayed
to have at their side, since hers is indeed the power—
Pallas Athēnē! She feels compassion for you in your sorrow.
and it's she who has sent me here to bring you this message."

Then prudent Penelopē made this reply to her, saying: 830
"If you're indeed a god, and have heard this word from the goddess,
then come tell me the truth about that man of sorrows—
can it be that he's still alive, a witness to the sunlight,
or is he already dead, and in Hades' realm?"

The dark
phantom then answered her in these words, saying: "No, 835
about him I shall tell you nothing plainly as to
whether he lives or is dead. A bad thing, windy chatter."
So saying, it slipped out by way of the door bolt into

the draught of the winds. But she, Ikarios' daughter,
started up from her sleep, her heart greatly comforted 840
that so clear a dream had reached her in the dark of the night.

Now the suitors embarked and sailed the watery routes,
plotting sheer murder for Tēlemachos in their hearts.
There's a rocky islet, Asteris, out in the midst of the deep,
halfway between Ithákē and rugged Samē, not large 845
but double-harbored, safe mooring for ships; and there
the Achaians set up an ambush, and waited for him.

Book 5

As Dawn arose from her bed beside illustrious Tithōnos,
to bring light to the immortals and to mortal mankind,
the gods were taking their seats in assembly, and among them
Zeus the high-thunderer, whose power is the greatest.
Athēnē was speaking, reminding them of Odysseus' many woes, 5
much concerned by his being in the nymph's home: "Zeus,
Father, and you other blessed gods who live forever,
from now on let no kindness or gentleness be displayed
by a sceptered king, let his heart not cherish righteousness—
let him rather be ever harsh, pursue injustice, since 10
there's nobody now who remembers godlike Odysseus
of the people whose lord he was, and kindly as a father!
Yet now he's stuck on an island, suffering sore affliction
in the nymph Kalypsō's abode: she is keeping him there
under duress. He cannot return to his own country, 15
for he hasn't to hand any oared ships or companions
to carry him on his way across the broad back of the sea;
and now they're determined to kill, on his journey homeward,
his beloved son, who'd gone, seeking news of his father,
to sacred Pylos and to splendid Lakedaimōn." 20

Then in answer cloud-gathering Zeus addressed her, saying:
"My child, what's this word that's escaped the barrier of your teeth?
Did not you yourself think up the scheme whereby
Odysseus at his homecoming might be revenged on these men?
As for Tēlemachos, guide him skillfully—you can do this— 25
so that he gets back unscathed to his native country
and the suitors go home frustrated in their intentions."

That said, he addressed himself to Hermēs, his dear son:
"Hermēs, since in general matters you act as our messenger,
go inform the fair-haired nymph of my firm decision 30
regarding the return of steadfast-minded Odysseus:
he's to travel without the conveyance of gods or mortals,
on a tightly lashed raft, and enduring much hardship,
making landfall, twenty days on, at rich-soiled Scheria,

country of the Phaiakians, who are close kin to the gods. 35
They will honor him like a god, most heartily, and send him
aboard a ship of theirs to his own native country,
with generous gifts of bronze and gold and clothing,
more than Odysseus could ever have got for himself from Troy
had he, unscathed, brought home his fair share of the spoils. 40
This is how he's fated to rejoin his own people, come back
to his high-roofed abode and his own dear native land."

The guide, the slayer of Argos,[1] did not ignore his words.
At once beneath his feet he tied on the fine sandals,
ambrosial, golden, that carried him over the deep 45
and the boundless earth, as swift as a gale's blast;
and he took the wand with which he entrances the eyes
of those he so wills, while others he'll wake from their sleep.
Holding this, the strong Argos-slayer was airborne, flew
from the high sky over Pieria, swooped down on the sea, 50
then skimmed over the waves like a shearwater that flies
along the fearsome gulfs of the unharvested deep
hunting for fish, and wets its whirring wings in the brine—
just so did Hermes traverse that expanse of waves
until he finally reached the far-distant island. 55
Then he abandoned the violet deep for dry land,
made his way to the great cave where the fair-tressed nymph
had her abode, and found her at home. A great fire
was ablaze on the hearth: the fragrance of split cedar
and citron wood burning spread far over the island, 60
while she, within there, singing in a sweet voice,
went to and fro at the loom, wove with a golden shuttle.
Around the cave there flourished woodland in abundance—
alder, black poplar, and fragrant cypress—in which
spread-winged birds had fashioned their nesting places: 65
small horned owls, falcons, and those chattering seabirds,
cormorants, that busy themselves far out in deep water.
Encircling the hollow cavern there trailed a luxuriant

1. This is probably the likeliest interpretation of the phrase *diaktoros argeïphontēs,* a titular epithet of Hermēs that has been debated by scholars ever since the Hellenistic age. "Argos" here is taken as referring to the hundred-eyed "all-seeing" monster that guarded Io after her transformation into a white cow by Hērē (to put a stop to Zeus dallying with her). But it is also the only evidence we have that Hermēs slew the monster. See Hainsworth in *Comm.,* 1: 258–59.

garden vine, with plentiful ripe grape clusters
and four springs in a row, all gushing forth clear water, 70
close to each other, yet facing in different directions,
and beyond them soft meadows of blossoming violets
and celery: whoever might come there—an immortal, even—
would admire the sight, and rejoice in his heart, as now
the guide, the slayer of Argos, stared in admiration. But when 75
in his heart he'd admired and marveled at everything, then
he made his way straight into the spacious cave; nor did she,
Kalypsō, bright goddess, fail to know him when they met,
for gods, being immortal, are not strangers to each other,
even though one may dwell in a home that's far away. 80
But great-hearted Odysseus he did not find within there,
for he, as usual, was seated out on the seashore, weeping,
rending his heart with tears and groans and sadness,
gazing out through his tears at the unharvested sea.

Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, now questioned Hermēs, 85
after settling him down on a brightly gleaming chair:
"Why, golden-staffed Hermēs, honored and welcome, are you
now visiting me? In the past you've seldom come here.
Say what you want: my heart tells me to do it
if do it I can, and it's something that can be done. 90
But come with me now, let me offer you entertainment."[2]

So saying, the goddess placed before him a table on which
she'd set out ambrosia, and mixed the red nectar for him.
So he ate and drank, did the guide, the slayer of Argos;
then, when he'd eaten and stayed his appetite with food, 95
in response to her question he addressed her as follows:
"Why am I here, you ask me, as goddess to god: I'll give you
a full and truthful account, since that is your desire.
Zeus it was told me to come here: I didn't want to.
Who would willingly traverse so much salt water, 100
an expanse past telling, with no city of mortals near it,
men who honor the gods with lavish sacrifices?
But no way can another god negate or circumvent

2. In this "unimportant passage constructed of conventional lines" (*Comm.* 1: 263–64). Hermēs is in fact seated too soon for the fomulaic line 91 (omitted in the best MSS, clearly because of the inconsistency) and simply ignores Kalypsō's invitation, as indeed she does herself.

what Zeus the aegis bearer has set his mind to!
He says there's a man here with you, one more ill-starred 105
than all other warriors who round about Priam's city
battled on for nine years; then in the tenth they sacked it
and set off back home, but returning offended Athēnē,[3]
who sent against them a foul storm and surging waves.
Then all the rest of his noble companions perished, 110
but him the wind and waves bore off and carried hither,
and him Zeus now bids you with all speed send on his way,
since he's not fated to die here, far from his dear ones,
but it's still his lot to see his friends and come home
to his high-roofed house and his own dear native land." 115

So he spoke; and Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, shivered,
and responded to him with winged words, saying: "Hard-hearted
are you gods indeed, and jealous beyond all others,
who resent any goddesses sleeping with mortal men
openly, if they choose one such as their bedfellow! 120
So it was when rose-fingered Dawn took up with Oriōn—
you easy-living gods resented it, till at last
in Ortygiē chaste Artemis, she of the golden throne,
with her painless arrows assailed and killed him;[4] so it was
when fine-tressed Dēmētēr went with Iasiōn, gave in 125
to her passion, lay down and mingled with him
in thrice-plowed fallow soil; not long was it before
Zeus learned of it and with his bright bolt hit and slew him.
So now too, gods, you resent my having a mortal companion.
Him I saved when he was riding astride the keel, 130
alone, after Zeus with his bright bolt had struck
and shattered his swift ship out on the wine-dark sea:
Then all the rest of his noble companions perished,
but him the wind and waves bore off and carried hither.
To him I gave friendly welcome and comfort, telling him 135
I would make him immortal and ageless all his days. But since
there's no way for another god to negate or circumvent
what Zeus the aegis bearer has set his mind to,

3. The offense was that of Aias son of Oileus, who had raped Kassandrē at the sack if Troy and profaned Athēnē's altar where she sought refuge: *Sack of Ilion,* arg. 3; West 2003, 146–47, cf. *Returns,* arg. 3; West 2003, 154–55.
4. See 15.404 and n. 8 ad loc.

let him go, if that's what *he* has decided and so commands,
across the unharvested sea! But no way shall *I* dispatch him, 140
for I have here no oared ships, nor the crews for them,
to send him on his way across the broad back of the sea.
Still, I'll be glad to advise him, I'll hold back nothing,
to help him get back unharmed to his own country."

Then the guide, the slayer of Argos, responded to her, saying: 145
"So dispatch him now, and beware of the wrath of Zeus,
lest he nurse resentment and rage against you later."

So saying, the mighty slayer of Argos now departed,
and she, the queenly nymph, went to great-hearted
Odysseus, after hearing the message Zeus had sent her. 150
Him she found on the seashore, sitting; nor were his eyes
ever wiped dry of tears; sweet life was draining from him
as he yearned to be home, since the nymph no longer pleased him.
Nights indeed he would sleep beside her perforce
in the hollow caverns, the reluctant by the eager, 155
but all day he'd stay seated there on the stony beach,
rending his heart with tears and sighs and sorrows,
and wept as he gazed out over the unharvested deep. Now she,
bright among goddesses, stood close and addressed him, saying:
"Ill-fated man, I beg you, weep here no longer, don't let 160
your life go to waste: I'm now ready to send you on your way!
Come, hew long timbers with the bronze, and shape them
into a broad-beamed raft, fasten deck planks upon its
topside, to carry you over the misty deep; and I
will stow in it bread and water and bright red wine, 165
heart-strengthening stuff, to fend off hunger from you;
and I'll clothe you well, and send you a good tailwind,
to let you get back unharmed to your own country—
that's if the gods wish it, they who hold the broad heavens,
and are stronger than I am both to plan and accomplish." 170

So she spoke, and noble much-enduring Odysseus shivered,
and then responded to her with winged words, saying:
"You're planning some other thing, goddess, not my dispatch!
On a raft you're bidding me cross the sea's great gulf,
a fearful and perilous venture! Not even the best vessels, 175
trim and swift, always make it, even when given a tailwind

by Zeus! I'll not board any raft without your declared goodwill,
unless you, goddess, agree to swear a mighty oath that this
isn't some bad new trick that you're devising against me."

So he spoke; but Kalypsō bright among goddesses, smiled, 180
and stroked him with her hand, and addressed him, saying:
"What a rogue you are, and by no means feeble-minded,
that it occurred to you to address me in those terms!
Very well: let earth bear witness, and the wide heaven above,
and the cascade of Styx, the greatest and most dread 185
of all oaths observed and taken among the blessed gods,
that this is no bad new trick that I'm plotting against you;
no, my plans and considerations are such as I'd devise
for my own personal use, should such a need come on me.
My intentions are good, and the heart within my breast 190
is not made of iron, but compassionate."

With those words
Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, went on ahead,
at a brisk pace, and he followed in the goddess' footsteps.
They came to the hollow cavern, goddess and man together,
and there he settled himself on the same chair from which 195
Hermēs had risen, while the nymph set all kinds of food
before him to eat and drink, such stuff as mortals feed on,
and she herself sat down facing godlike Odysseus,
and her handmaids brought out for her ambrosia and nectar.
So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them. 200
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, was the first to speak:
"Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, most resourceful Odysseus,
are you really so set on making your way back home
to your own land at once? Yet I wish you well regardless! 205
If you only knew in your heart the full measure of trouble
it's your fate to incur before you reach your homeland,
you'd rather stay here with me, and keep this house,
and be immortal, despite your longing to see
your wife, whom you pine for always, day in, day out! 210
I may indeed rightly claim not to be her inferior
in either figure or stature, since no way is it seemly
for mortal women to rival a goddess in form or beauty."

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to her, saying:
"Don't resent this, my lady goddess: I myself know well 215
that prudent Penelopē is in every way less striking
in appearance than you, whether for stature or beauty,
since she's a mortal woman, whereas you're immortal, ageless!
Yet even so what I want and yearn for all my days
Is to make it back home, to see the day of my returning! 220
Though some god may wreck me again on the wine-dark deep,
I will endure: the heart in my breast can bear much trouble!
Before now I've suffered much, have labored greatly
amid waves and in warfare: to all that let this be added."

So he spoke: the sun went down, and darkness came on. 225
They repaired to the inmost recess of the hollow cavern
and made love with pleasure, clasping each other close.

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
Odysseus promptly put on a tunic and cloak, while she,
the nymph, also dressed herself in a long white robe, 230
fine-textured and beautiful, with an exquisite golden sash
about her waist, and placed a veil on her head. She then
began to plan the dispatch of great-hearted Odysseus. First
she brought him a large axe, well fitted to his grasp,
of bronze, sharp, double-bladed, with its splendid 235
handle of olive wood firmly attached. She also
gave him a finely made adze. Then she led the way
to the far end of the island, where there stood tall trees—
alder and poplar, and fir that reached sky-high,
dried out and seasoned, that would ride for him buoyantly. 240
But when she had shown him where the tall trees grew,
Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, went back home, while he
set himself to fell timber. The work progressed apace:
twenty trees he felled, and trimmed them with the bronze,
then skillfully smoothed them, made them true to the line. 245
Now Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, brought him augers:
he bored through all the timbers, fitted them to each other,
forced home and matched the joints, made them secure
with tree nails. Just as wide as the curve of the hull
that a skillful shipwright marks off for a broad-beamed freighter 250
was the width that Odysseus gave his raft. He fitted
deck beams in, matched them firm to the close-set ribs,

working away, and finished with lengthy gunwales.
Next he set up a mast and attached a yardarm to it,
and fashioned a steering oar with which to set his course. 255
Then he fenced the raft overall with osier wattles,
against the waves, and added a bed of brushwood dunnage.
Kalypsō meanwhile, bright among goddesses, brought him
cloth to fashion a sail from: this too he did with skill,
and added tackle—braces and sheets and halyards— 260
and used levers to shift the raft down to the bright salt deep.

It was now the fourth day, and all his work was finished.
On the fifth, bright Kalypsō saw him off from the island
when she'd bathed him and dressed him in fresh-scented garments.
On the raft the goddess put one skin of dark wine, 265
and another, a large one, of water, along with provisions
in a leather bag—cooked meat in plenty to boost his strength—
and raised a good following wind, warm and propitious.
Happily then to the breeze did noble Odysseus spread
his sail as he sat at the steering oar and skillfully 270
marked off his course;[5] nor did sleep fall upon his eyelids
as he steadily watched the Pleiades and late-setting Boōtēs
and the Bear, which men also know as the Wagon, that circles
in the place where it is, and keeps one eye on Orion,
and alone never dips below the baths of Ocean.[6] 275
Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, had instructed him
to keep this star on his left hand as he traversed the deep.
For seventeen days he sailed on over the sea, and on
the eighteenth there showed up the shadowy mountains

5. As Stanford 1971 (1: 300–301) observes, H. here lists "the four most striking constellations of the northern sky" (cf. *Il.* 18.487–89). This is H.'s sole reference to astronavigation: in most of the Aegean, sailors could take bearings from visible land. But, like the eastern Mediterranean, the sea surrounding Kalypsō's island was thought of as vast and landless. The Bear that Odysseus watched as a guiding beacon was Ursa Major, with a possible error of as much as 13°. (Ursa Minor, used by the Phoenicians, did much better at 4°.) The Pleiades and Boötēs were more often used to mark seasons: their functions in ancient navigation are uncertain. Cf. Hainsworth in *Comm.,* 1: 276–78.
6. While true in the context of stars that H. himself mentions, there were in fact one or two other stars that were circumpolar in antiquity (e.g., Draco in Ursa Minor and most of Cepheus). Today, owing to the precession of the equinoxes, most of the southernmost stars of Ursa Major now dip below the horizon for an observer in Greek latitudes (Hainsworth in *Comm.,* 1: 276–78).

of the Phaiakians' land, where it came closest to him, 280
resembling a shield laid out on the misty sea.

But the mighty Earth-Shaker, coming back from the Aithiopians,
saw him far off,[7] from the Solymoi's mountains, visible
sailing over the deep, and waxed wrathful at the sight,
and shook his head, and thus communed with himself: 285
"Damn it, the gods have certainly changed their minds
as regards Odysseus while I was away with the Aithiopians!
Now he's near the Phaiakians' land, where it's his destiny
to escape the great crisis of suffering that's come on him.
Even so, I think I'll yet give him his fill of trouble!" 290

So saying he gathered the clouds, and roiled up the deep,
wielding his trident; he urged on to gale force every last
wind in existence, he used the clouds to blot out
both land and sea: nightfall dropped down from heaven,
the east, south, and fierce west winds now drove together, 295
while the skyborne north wind rolled a huge wave before it,
and Odysseus' knees and heart gave way, and deeply
shaken he now addressed his own great-hearted spirit:
"Ah, wretch that I am, what's my ultimate fate to be?
All that the goddess told me, I fear, is true— 300
she said that out on the deep, before I reached my homeland
I'd get my fill of trouble, and now it's all happening!
Look at the clouds with which Zeus is obscuring the wide
heavens, the way he's roiled up the sea, how the blasts
of all the winds drive at me! Now my sheer destruction's 305
for certain! Thrice and four times blessed those Danaäns
who perished in Troy's broad land, bringing aid to Atreus' sons:
How I wish I too had died then, had met my fate that day
when a mass of Trojans pelted me with their bronze-tipped spears,
battling around the dead son of Pēleus! Then 310
I'd have had proper burial, and from the Achaians renown:
whereas now I'm doomed to suffer a most piteous death."

---

7. "Far off" indeed. Major Homeric deities (especially Zeus) are long-sighted: Poseidōn (cf. *Il.* 13.11) is no exception. But Odysseus is sailing in an easterly direction from western seas; and the Solymoi seem to have been located as far east as Lycia (Hdt. 1.173; Hainsworth in *Comm.,* 1: 279). This caused confusion in antiquity: Strabo (1.2.10, 28) used a far-fetched argument to suggest that H. was really referring to Ethiopia. Possibly we have here a survival from a very different variant return route of Odysseus.

As he spoke, a huge wave bore down on him from above,
with fearful force, and spun his raft clean around:
far from the raft he fell, the steering oar was torn 315
from his grasp, the mast cracked in two, hit squarely
by a gale-force gust from the winds in wild confusion,
so that sail and yardarm fell far off into the deep.
Him the sea long kept submerged, nor was he able
to come up at once from the great wave's onrush: the clothes 320
that bright Kalypsō had given him weighed him down.
He finally reached the surface, spat out the briny
sea water that streamed off his head; yet not even so,
for all his exhaustion, did he lose sight of his raft,
but pursued it amid the waves, somehow caught hold of it, 325
and clambered aboard and clung there, evading death's end,
while the great seas bore it onward, this way and that.
As when in autumn the north wind blows thistledown
over the plain, and the tufts cling close together,
so hither and thither the winds now carried the raft 330
over the sea: now south wind would toss it to north
to sweep onward, now east would yield it to west's pursuit.

But Kadmos' daughter caught sight of him, neat-ankled Īnō,
white goddess, who once was a mortal, and so spoke,
but now in the sea's depths had found honor from the gods. 335
She pitied Odysseus, so sea-tossed, so racked with troubles,
made her way up like a shearwater from the depths, then perched
on the strongly corded raft, and addressed him, saying:
"Poor man, why, pray, does Poseidōn the Earth-Shaker
hate you so much[8] that he afflicts you with all these troubles? 340
Yet despite his fury he shan't completely destroy you!
Now: do as I tell you: you seem not lacking in common sense.
Strip off those clothes, leave your raft for the winds to play with,
and yourself use your arms as a swimmer, strive to make it
to the Phaiakians' land, where your escape is destined! 345
And come, take this veil, bind it firmly about your body:
It's immortal, so have no fear that you'll come to harm, or perish!
But when your hands grasp the mainland, then untie it
and fling it far out into the wine-dark deep,
well away from the land, and yourself turn your back on it." 350

8. See 19.409 and note ad loc.

So saying, the goddess handed over the veil,
and herself plunged back down into the surging deep
like a shearwater: the dark wave hid her. Then noble
much-enduring Odysseus reflected, and, deeply shaken,
now addressed his own great-hearted spirit, saying: 355
"Alas, I fear some immortal is once more weaving a snare
against me, and that's why she told me to leave the raft!
I'll not obey her yet: with my own eyes I saw, far distant,
that land where she said I'd find my destined safety.
This is what I shall do, and to me it seems my best course: 360
So long as the timbers hold firm, their joints unbroken,
I shall stay put, and endure the troubles that I'm facing;
But when the waves have shattered the raft to pieces
then I'll swim for it, since there's no better plan."
While thus
he pondered the matter in mind and heart, Poseidōn, 365
the Earth-Shaker, now conjured up a gigantic wave—
fearsome and grim, overarching—and launched it at him.
As when a gusting wind whisks up a heap of dried-out
husks, and scatters some here, some there, just so
the wave strewed the raft's long timbers; and now Odysseus 370
sat astride one beam, like someone riding a horse,
stripped off the garments that bright Kalypsō gave him,
quickly tied round his body the veil, and flung himself
headfirst into the sea, both arms outstretched, prepared
to swim for his life. The mighty Earth-Shaker saw him, 375
and shook his head, and thus communed with his heart:
"So, after all your troubles, go drifting over the deep
until you meet with those men who are Zeus' nurslings!
Yet even so I don't think you'll underrate your hardships."

So saying, he whipped up his beautifully maned horses 380
and went on to Aigai, where he has his famed abode.

But Zeus' daughter Athēnē had a different notion:
the other winds she now stopped short in their tracks,
made them all die down and be lulled to sleep, but the swift
north wind she aroused, parting the waves before it, 385
to let Zeus' scion Odysseus get through to the oar-loving
Phaiakians, after escaping death and death's harbingers.

Two nights and two days now over the heaving swell
he pressed on: many times his heart saw destruction ahead.
But when fair-haired Dawn brought the third morning on, 390
then the wind dropped, and there followed a windless calm,
and he sighted land close ahead of him, as he took
a quick glance forward, lifted up by a swelling wave.
As most welcome appear to his children renewed signs of life
in a father who's laid on a sickbed, suffering agonies, 395
long wasting away, attacked by some hateful spirit,
but then, oh joy, the gods free him from his illness—
so welcome seemed to Odysseus the land and its forest,
and he swam on, longing to set foot on solid earth.
But when as close to land as a man's shout carries, 400
hearing the crash of the breakers against the reefs—
for the huge wave thundered as it smashed into dry land,
roaring terribly: all around was misted in salt sea spray,
and there were no harbors to dock ships, no roadsteads either,
nothing but jutting headlands, and reefs and rocks— 405
then the knees and heart of Odysseus gave way together,
and deeply shaken he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:
"Oh no, now Zeus has granted me an unlooked-for
glimpse of dry land, and I've plowed my way through this gulf,
no way of escape can I see from the grey brine, for offshore 410
are sharp rocks, and all around them the waves surge up
roaring, the cliff-face towers sheer above them; the seawater
runs deep close in to land, so there's no way to stand firm
on both feet and escape destruction: I fear as I'm coming ashore
some huge wave may scoop me up and dash me against 415
a sharp rough rock, putting paid to all my efforts.
But if I swim further along, to see if I maybe can find
bays where the waves strike aslant, or safe harbors from the sea,
I'm afraid that the storm winds may snatch me up once more,
and bear me back, groaning heavily, over the fish-rich deep, 420
or a marine divinity may send some huge monster against me
out of the sea, one of many that famed Amphitrītē breeds—
for I know how deeply the famed Earth-Shaker hates me."[9]

While he brooded upon these matters in mind and spirit
a great wave flung him forward against the rocky shoreline. 425

9. See 19.409 with note ad loc.

There would his bones have been crushed and his skin ripped off
had not grey-eyed Athēnē, the goddess, put a thought in his mind:
with both hands, plunging forward, he seized the rock,
and clung to it, gasping, while the great wave rushed by.
Thus this one he dodged, but its backwash caught and struck him 430
and carried him off, flung him far out to sea.
Just as an octopus, when dragged up out of its lair,
will have clusters of pebbles sticking fast to its suckers,
so from his powerful hands against the rock were scraps
of skin stripped off as the great wave went over him. 435
Beyond his fate, then, surely would wretched Odysseus
have died, had not grey-eyed Athēnē sharpened his wits.
Coming up out of the surge as it discharged on the shore
he swam outside, eyeing the land, to see if he could find
bays where the waves struck aslant, or safe harbors from the sea. 440
But when, as he swam, he came on the mouth of a flowing
river, this struck him as the best possible place,
being free of stones, and well sheltered from the wind.
He recognized the live current, and made a silent prayer:
"Hear me, lord, whoever you are, and to me most welcome: 445
from the deep I come to you, fleeing Poseidōn's threats—
Sacrosanct, even to the immortal gods, is that man
who comes as a wanderer, as I come now to your
current, and to your knees, after many hardships:
So pity me, lord: your suppliant I hereby declare myself." 450

Thus he spoke; at once the god stopped flowing, checked the waves,
created a calm before him, brought him safe and sound
to the river's mouth. Both knees now lost their strength
and his strong hands too: the salt deep had crushed his spirit,
all his flesh was swollen, seawater oozed in streams 455
out through his mouth and nostrils. Breathless, speechless
he lay, barely stirring: dire exhaustion had overcome him.
When he got his breath back, and the heart revived in his breast,
he then unwound the goddess' veil from his body
and dropped it into the seaward-flowing river. A great 460
wave now carried it back downstream, and Īnō quickly
gathered it into her hands. Odysseus turned from the river,
collapsed in the reeds, and kissed the grain-giving earth.
Deeply shaken he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:

"Ah, what must I suffer? What's my ultimate fate to be? 465
If I keep watch here by the river all the irksome night
I'm afraid the hard frost and the chilly dew between them,
because of my weakness, may quell my gasping spirit—
and the breeze off the river blows cold before the dawn.
But if I climb the slope to the shadowy forest 470
and lie down among the dense thickets, then even if cold
and exhaustion don't touch me, and I enjoy sweet sleep,
I fear I may end as the spoil and prey of wild beasts."

As he reflected, it struck him this last was the best course.
He set off into the maquis and found what he wanted near 475
the water, beside a clearing. He crept in under two bushes,
evergreen thorn and wild olive, that grew from the same spot.
Through these the damp winds' violence could never blow,
nor the rays of the bright sun penetrate, nor storms
of rain pierce their defenses, so densely they grew, 480
interlaced the one with the other. In under these
Odysseus crept, and with his hands briskly swept
a wide bed of leaves together. Dried fallen leaves were there
in abundance, enough to give shelter to two or three men
in the winter season, however severe the weather. 485
Seeing this, much-enduring noble Odysseus rejoiced:
he lay down in the middle, heaped fallen leaves over him.
As a man hides a smoldering log under dark embers
far out in the countryside, a man who has no neighbors,
to save a seed of fire, and not need to rekindle it, 490
so Odysseus piled leaves over himself, and Athēnē
shed sleep on his eyes, to free him as soon as might be
from toilsome exhaustion, wrap his eyelids in darkness.

Book 6

So Odysseus slept on there, godlike and much-enduring,
worn out by exhaustion and hardship; and meanwhile Athēnē
went off to the district and city of the Phaiakians, who
at one time made their home in spacious Hypereia,
and were neighbors to the Kyklōpes, rough arrogant men, 5
who kept raiding them, and were more powerful. Godlike
Nausithoös then uprooted them, led them to Scheria,
remote from bread-eating mortals, settled them there.
He ran a wall round the city, constructed houses,
made shrines for the gods, shared out the arable acres. 10
But by now he'd succumbed to his fate, gone down to Hades,
and Alkinoös was the ruler, who had wisdom from the gods.
To his dwelling now went the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē,
with her plan for great-hearted Odysseus' return home.
She entered the ornate bedroom in which there slept a girl 15
most like the immortals in form and appearance: Nausikaä,
daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös, with close by her
two handmaids, made beautiful by the Graces, one on each
side of the doorposts; and the bright doors were shut.

Like a breath of wind she now swept in to the girl's bedside, 20
and stood above her head, and addressed her, assuming
the form of the daughter of Dymas, famous for his ships—
a girl Nausikaä's age, and very dear to her heart.
In her likeness grey-eyed Athēnē spoke to her, saying:
"Nausikaä, how could your mother have so careless a child? 25
Your bright smart clothes are all lying about uncared-for,
yet your marriage is near, when you'll need fine clothes for yourself,
and garments, too, to provide for those who'll escort you.
This is the kind of thing that gets you well spoken of
among men, and pleases your father and lady mother! 30
So let's go and do the washing tomorrow at daybreak:
I'll come with you as helper, let you make yourself ready
as soon as may be: you won't be unmarried much longer!
Already suitors are courting you, the noblest Phaiakians

in these parts—and you share their lineage! So come now, 35
urge your far-famed father, first thing this morning,
to have mules and a wagon ready, to carry for you
the sashes and robes and bright coverlets. And for yourself
it's much better to travel this way than to go by foot:
the washing troughs are a long way distant from the city." 40

That said, the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, departed
for Olympos, where, they say, the gods have their abode
forever immovable, never shaken by gales nor wet
with rain, nor does snow ever visit them; the sky
stretches dazzling and cloudless, the upper air gleams white. 45
The blessed gods find enjoyment here all their days,
and here the grey-eyed one went, after speaking with the girl.

Now Dawn on her fine throne arrived, and woke up the latter,
the finely robed Nausikaä. She at once, amazed by her dream,
went off through the house to report it to her parents, 50
her own dear father and mother. She found them in:
her mother sitting there at the hearth with her handmaids,
spinning sea-purple yarn on a distaff; her father she caught
on the point of leaving to join the distinguished elders
in council, summoned there by the lords of Phaiakia. 55
She went up to her dear father, and addressed him thus:
"Dear Papa, won't you please have a wagon made ready for me—
the high one, with good wheels, so I can take the fine
clothes that are lying here soiled to the river for washing?
For you too it's proper, when you're with the chief men 60
debating in council, to be wearing fresh-laundered clothes,
and you've five sons living with you, here in your halls,
two married, but three lively bachelors, who always
insist on having fresh-laundered clothes to put on
for going to the dance: all this now needs my attention." 65

So she spoke, too embarrassed to mention lusty marriage
to her father; but he understood all, and responded, saying:
"I begrudge you neither the mules, child, nor anything else,
so off you go: the servants will ready the wagon for you—
the high one, with good wheels, and fitted bodywork." 70
With that he called to the servants, and they obeyed him.
They made ready the good-wheeled mule wagon outside,

and brought the mules, and yoked and harnessed them,
while the girl fetched out the bright garments from indoors,
and stowed them away in the polished cart, and her mother 75
added a box full of satisfying things to eat—
appetizers galore, and poured out a measure of wine
in a goatskin bottle. Nausikaä boarded the wagon,
and her mother gave her a golden flask full of soft oil, with which
she and her handmaids could massage themselves.[1] She now 80
took hold of the whip and the brightly polished reins,
and whipped up the mules to start them. They clattered off
at a smart trot, not pausing, with girl and laundry aboard—
not alone, for her handmaids all came along with her.

When they reached the sweet flow of the river, at the site 85
of the regular wash troughs—always enough clean water
from springs there or outflow to clean the dirtiest garments—
then they unhitched the mules, set them free from the wagon,
and shooed them off along the bank of the eddying river
to graze on honey-sweet clover, while they themselves 90
took armfuls of clothes from the wagon to the dark water
and trod them out in the basins, fast-moving, competitive.
Then after they'd washed them and got them clean again
they spread them in rows on the shoreline, where the surf
beating upon the strand had most clearly scoured the pebbles. 95
Then they bathed, and rubbed themselves down with oil,
and ate their lunch beside the banks of the river
while waiting until the clothes dried off in the bright sunlight.
When the handmaids and Nausikaä had eaten their fill
they then threw off their veils and turned to playing ball, 100
and white-armed Nausikaä was their leader as they sang.
Just as the archer Artemis roams across mountain ranges—
lofty Taÿgetos, say, or Erymanthos—exulting
in her pursuit of wild boar or of the swift-footed deer,
and country nymphs, daughters of Zeus the aegis bearer, 105
join the sport with her, and Lētō rejoices at the sight
of Artemis, head and brow higher than all the others,

1. At first sight this looks an odd provision; but in H. it invariably follows any kind of bathing, and we see below (line 96) that the girls took a dip before lunch when they'd finished the laundry.

and easily recognized, though each one is beautiful:
so amid all her handmaids shone out this unwed maiden.

But when she was on the point of starting back homeward, 110
with the mules yoked up and the fine clothes folded, then
the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, had another idea:
that Odysseus should wake, and see the sweet-faced girl,
and that she should escort him to the Phaiakians' city.
So when the princess next tossed the ball to a handmaid 115
she missed the handmaid, and sent it into a deep eddy.
They all cried out at length, and noble Odysseus awoke,
and sat up, wondering in his mind and heart: "Ah me,
among what sort of mortals have I now made landfall?
Are they wild and outrageous, men with no sense of justice, 120
or hospitable to strangers, a god-fearing people? An outcry
of women—young girls—just echoed round about me:
the nymphs, it could be, who haunt the sheer mountain peaks
and the rivers' springs and the grassy meadows! Or am I
somewhere near talking humans? Well, come on now, 125
let me take a look for myself, see what I can discover."

That said, godlike Odysseus came out from under the bushes.
Strong-handed, he broke off a leafy branch from the dense
maquis to cover his body, hide the male parts. He came forth
like some mountain-bred lion, confident in his strength, 130
who, beaten by wind and rain, still advances, both his eyes
ablaze, as in among cattle or sheep he hastens, or in
pursuit of wild deer: his ravenous belly drives him
to go after the flocks even inside the close-walled farmstead.
So Odysseus was set to mingle,[2] though naked, among these 135
fair-tressed young girls: such need had come upon him.
A terrifying sight they found him, all crusted with dried brine,
and they scattered in panic around the jutting sand-spits.
Alkinoös' daughter alone stood firm, for Athēnē had put
courage into her heart, and purged the fear from her limbs. 140
She stood still, holding her ground. Odysseus debated—should he
clasp the knees of this good-looking girl when making his plea,

2. The entire passage, simile and all, is designed to emphasize Odysseus' ultra-masculine appearance in erotic terms. A direct signifier is provided by the verb used here for "mingle," *mixesthai,* which is also the regular verb in H. for having sexual intercourse.

or should he stay put, just cajole her with honey-sweet phrases
so she'd give him clothes, show him the way into town?
As he thus reflected, he decided that it would be better 145
to stay put, just cajole her with honey-sweet phrases—
the girl might take offense if he grabbed her knees!
So he made an impromptu speech, both honey-sweet and crafty:
"By your knees I entreat you, lady—some goddess are you,
or mortal? If a goddess, one of those who hold broad heaven, 150
then to Artemis, great Zeus' daughter, I find you most
nearly akin in beauty and height and carriage; but if
you're mortal, one of those who dwell here on earth, then thrice
blessed indeed are your father and the lady your mother,
thrice blessed your brothers! Greatly warmed with pleasure 155
must their hearts always be on your account, as they see
so fine an offshoot taking her place among the dancers!
But blessed at heart, far above all others, is he
who'll dower you with bride-gifts and lead you to his home!
Never before have my eyes seen a mortal such as you are, 160
either man or woman: I'm awed at the sight of you!
On Dēlos once, beside Apollo's altar, I saw
something like you: a young palm-shoot springing up—
I put in there, along with a crowd of followers,
on the same journey fated to bring me such misfortune— 165
and likewise at that sight I was long in awe,
since never before had such a tree sprung from earth!
Just so, lady, I'm awed and amazed by you, and greatly
fear now to touch your knees. Much hardship has assailed me:
for twenty days—until yesterday, when I got clear 170
of the wine-dark sea—the waves and storm winds bore me
away from the isle of Ōgygia. Now some god's landed me here,
I guess, to suffer more trouble, for I don't suppose
it'll stop now: the gods have plenty in store for me still.
So, lady, show me compassion: after all my suffering 175
you're the first person I've met—not a single other one
do I know of all those who possess this city and this country.
Just show me the way into town, give me some rag to wear—
maybe you had a wrapper for the clothes you brought here?—
and may the gods grant you all that your heart desires, 180
husband, home, and like-mindedness—a precious gift,
for there's nothing greater or better, ever, than when two

like-minded people are keeping house together,
a man and his wife: much frustration for their ill-wishers,
much joy for their friends, but they two know it the best." 185

Then white-armed Nausikaä made him this answer: "Stranger,
you seem neither malicious nor witless: but it's Zeus,
the Olympian in person, who bestows good fortune on men,
the good and the bad, to each as he wills; I suppose
he chose this lot for you, and you just have to bear it. 190
But now, since it's our land and city that you've come to,
you'll not go short of clothing nor of anything else
that befits a long-suffering suppliant on arrival.
I'll show you the way into town, name the inhabitants:
it's the Phaiakians who possess this land and city, 195
and I am the daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös,
in whom the Phaiakians' power and might are vested."

That said, she snapped out orders to her fair-tressed handmaids:
"Come back here, girls! Scuttling off when you see a man?
Do you really suppose he's some kind of enemy? 200
There's no mortal alive, nor could there ever be one,
who'd show up in this land of Phaiakian men
with hostile intent, so dear are we to the immortals!
Remote is our dwelling, far off in the surging deep;
none further distant, other mortals don't mix with us. 205
No, this is some ill-starred drifter who's ended up here,
and we must now take care of, since from Zeus are all
strangers and beggars: any gift, though small, is welcome.
So come, girls, provide this stranger with food and drink,
and wash him off in the river, well sheltered from the wind." 210

So she spoke. They stopped, and encouraged one another,
and brought Odysseus to shelter, just as Nausikaä,
daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös, had told them to do,
and put beside him a mantle and tunic to wear, and gave him
the golden flask containing soft liquid olive oil, 215
and offered to wash him off in the flow of the river.
Then godlike Odysseus addressed the handmaids, saying:
"Handmaids, stand further off, leave me on my own
to scrub off the brine from my shoulders, rub myself over
with oil—indeed it's a long time since oil came near my skin. 220

I'm not going to bathe in your presence: I feel embarrassed
to be naked among all you fair-tressed young ladies."

So he spoke. They went back, told Nausikaä what he'd said.

Now godlike Odysseus scrubbed off with river water
the brine encrusting his back and his broad shoulders, 225
and wiped the unharvested sea's scurf from his head;
then when he'd washed all over, and rubbed himself with oil,
and had put on the clothes that the unwed girl provided,
then Athēnē, offspring of Zeus, made him in appearance
taller and stronger, made the hair spring from his head 230
in rich curls, like the flower of the hyacinth. As when a man
overlays silver with gold, a skillful artisan who's been
taught every craft by Hephaistos and Pallas Athēnē,
and thus turns out the most elegant handiwork,
such was the grace she shed upon his head and shoulders. 235
Then he took himself off, sat down on the seashore
agleam with beauty and grace: the girl stared, awestruck,
and addressed her fair-tressed handmaids, saying: "Listen,
my white-armed handmaids: let me tell you something!
Not without the gods' will—all the gods who hold Olympos— 240
has this man come here to mingle with the godlike Phaiakians!
Before, he seemed to me to be mean and shabby,
whereas now he resembles the gods who possess broad heaven!
If only a man such as this could be chosen as my husband—
could be domiciled here—might even want to stay here! 245
But come, girls, provide the stranger with food and drink."

So she spoke, and they readily heard and obeyed her,
and set before Odysseus both food and drink. So now
the much-enduring godlike Odysseus both ate and drank,
ravenously, since he'd gone a long time without food. 250

Now white-armed Nausikaä had one more thought. She folded
the clothes, and stowed them in the beautiful wagon,
and yoked the hard-hoofed mules, and climbed aboard herself.
Then she called out to Odysseus, addressed him directly:
"Get up now, stranger, and I'll guide you to town, direct you 255
to my wise father's house, where, I promise you, you'll make
the acquaintance of all the best of the Phaiakians.
But be sure to do as I say—and you don't strike me as witless.

As long as we're out in the countryside, fields and farmland,
come briskly along with my girls behind the mules 260
and wagon; I'll lead the way. But when we're about
to enter the city[3]—there's a high wall round it, a fine
harbor on either side of the city, with a narrow entrance,
and trim vessels are moored all along the way, each one
with a slip of its own, private docking for everyone; 265
there too is the place of assembly, by Poseidōn's fine precinct,
marked out with great deep-bedded quarried stones,
and it's there that they busy themselves with the black ships' tackle,
their cables and sails, and there that they trim their oar blades;
for bows and quivers are not the Phaiakians' concern, 270
but ships' masts, oars, and the trim vessels themselves,
in which with delight they traverse the sea's grey waters.
It's their rude comments I want to avoid, the chance that later
some man may blame me—there are unkind folk among us—
and one of the nastier sort might say if he met us: 275
'Who's this tall handsome stranger tagging after Nausikaä?
Where did she pick *him* up? Her husband-to-be, no doubt!
Some stray off a ship she'll be bringing in, I suppose,
from a foreign crew—there aren't any from hereabouts—
unless some god's come down from heaven in answer 280
to her endless prayers, and she'll keep him around for life!
Better, if she herself went off and found a husband
elsewhere, since she despises these men here in the district,
though many top-class Phaiakians are courting her.' So they'll say,
and such remarks would attach a scandal to my name. 285
I too would disapprove if another girl behaved thus—
one that in defiance of her dear father and mother
consorted with men before reaching the day of public marriage.
So, stranger, quickly grasp what I'm telling you, to ensure
prompt assistance from my father in getting you back home. 290
You'll find a fine grove of Athēnē near the road, a grove
of poplars; a spring gushes up in it, there's a meadow round it.
That's where my father's estate is, his flourishing orchard—

3. Nausikaä never completes this sentence directly, though the point of what she wants to stress becomes clear from line 273 on. The whole speech is a cleverly contrived fast nervous gabble: despite her control of the situation, the king's daughter is nevertheless embarrassed by the social situation (there's bound to be gossip) and its undeniably erotic—and marital—associations.

as far from town as the shout of a man will carry.
Sit down there and wait a while, long enough for us 295
to get to the city, arrive at my father's house. But when
you reckon we've made it home, then yourself go on
to the city of the Phaiakians, and ask around
where you can find the house of great-hearted Alkinoös.
It's easily recognized—even a child could guide you, 300
the merest infant, since the other Phaiakians' houses
aren't built on a scale to match the abode of heroic
Alkinoös! Then, when you reach that the house and courtyard,
go quickly through the main hall, until you come upon
my mother—you'll find her sitting in firelight by the hearth, 305
spinning sea-purple yarn on a distaff, a wonderful sight,
leaning against a pillar, her maids seated behind her;
and there is my father's throne, set close by her side,
where he sits and drinks his wine like an immortal.
Go on past him, throw your arms round the knees 310
of my mother, if you're to get a quick and happy glimpse
of your day of homecoming, no matter how far you've come:
it's if *she* looks on you with favor in her heart
that there's hope for you of seeing your people, of getting
back to your own strong house and your native country." 315

So saying, she lashed out with her shining whip at the mules,
and they quickly took off, away from the flowing river:
they trotted well, well did they ply their feet, and she drove
taking good care that Odysseus and her handmaids
could keep up on foot, used her whip very sparingly. 320
As the sun set they reached the famous grove, sacred
to Athēnē. Here godlike Odysseus sat himself down,
and at once made his prayer to great Zeus' daughter: "Hear me,
unwearying child of Zeus of the aegis! Listen now,
as you failed to listen before when I was stricken, 325
when the far-famed Earth-Shaker struck me! Grant that now
when I come among the Phaiakians I'm befriended and pitied."

So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athēnē heard him,
but did not yet show herself to him, for she respected
her father's brother, who continued to rage against 330
godlike Odysseus until he got back to his own country.

Book 7

So while Odysseus prayed there, godlike and much-enduring,
the strength of her two mules bore the girl back to town.
When she arrived at her father's renowned abode
she pulled up in the forecourt. Her brothers, men like immortals,
came out, crowded round her, unyoked the mules 5
from the wagon, carried the laundry indoors, while she
herself went to her room. There a fire was lit for her by
an old crone from Apeirē, her chambermaid, Eurymedousa.
Long ago the trim ships had brought her back from Apeirē,
and they'd chosen her as a prize for Alkinoös, since he ruled 10
over all the Phaiakians: the people obeyed him like a god.
She'd reared white-armed Nausikaä in his halls; now it was she
who lit her a fire and made ready her supper in her room.

Then Odysseus got up to go to the city, and Athēnē,
wishing him well, shed a thick mist round about him, 15
so that no great-hearted Phaiakian whom he encountered
should address him in uncivil terms, ask who he might be;
then, when he was about to enter the pleasant city,
the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, met him, in the guise
of a young virginal girl with a pitcher. She stopped before him, 20
and godlike Odysseus questioned her, saying: "My child,
could you not guide me to the house of a man by name
Alkinoös, who's the ruler among the people here?
I'm a long-suffering stranger, come from a remote
and far-off country, so I possess no knowledge 25
of the people who occupy this city and its land."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, answered him, saying:
"Yes, stranger, father, I can show you the house you want,
for this man's the neighbor of my own illustrious father!
Just keep silent and follow where I lead the way— 30
Don't catch anyone's eye, or ask them questions,
for the folk hereabouts have little patience with strangers,
and are short on welcome for those from another country.
They rely on the swiftness of the racing vessels in which

they traverse the sea's great gulf, a gift from the Earth-Shaker: 35
their ships contrive all the speed of a wing or a thought."

Having said this, Pallas Athēnē then led the way
briskly, and he followed in the goddess' footsteps.
Nor did the Phaiakians, famed for their ships, observe him
going through the city among them; fair-tressed Athēnē, 40
dread goddess, did not allow it: she shed a marvelous
mist over him, out of the kindness she bore him in her heart.
Odysseus gazed in wonder at the trim ships and the harbors,
the heroes' assembly places, the city walls long and high
and fitted with palisades, a marvelous sight to behold. 45

When they arrived at the king's magnificent dwelling
the first to speak was the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē:
"Here is the house, stranger, father, that you asked me to show you!
You'll find Zeus' nurslings, the princes, right inside there
eating their dinner. Go in, and don't let your heart 50
show alarm: a man whose every move speaks boldness
does better, even supposing he comes from some other country.
The first person you'll met in the great hall is its mistress:
Arētē's the name by which she's known, and she comes
of the very same stock that bred Alkinoös, the king. 55
Nausithoös first Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker,
sired on Periboia, a woman of matchless beauty,
the youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedōn,
who once ruled as king over the arrogant Giants,
but destroyed his reckless people and was destroyed himself. 60
With her Poseidōn lay in love and begot a son,
great-hearted Nausithoös, who ruled the Phaiakians,
and Nausithoös sired Alkinoös and Rhēxēnōr.
Apollo, the silver-bowed, struck Rhēxēnōr down
while a sonless bridegroom, who left one daughter only, 65
Arētē: her Alkinoös took as his wife, and honored
as no other woman upon this earth is honored
of all those who run their households subject to men,
so honored at heart is she, and ever has been,
by her dear children and by Alkinoös himself, 70
and by the people, who look upon her as a goddess
and so greet her when she goes abroad through the city;
for she herself is in no way lacking in judgment

and settles disputes with goodwill, even those between men.
So if she's well disposed toward you, then there's a chance 75
that you'll get to see your own people, make it back home
to your high-roofed house and your own native land."

So saying, grey-eyed Athēnē now departed, over
the unharvested sea, took off from delightful Scheria
and came to Marathōn and wide-streeted Athens, 80
and entered the close-set house of Erechtheus. But Odysseus
went to Alkinoös' splendid abode. Much his heart pondered
as he stood there, even before he reached its brazen threshold,
for there was a radiance as of the sun or the moon
over the high-roofed home of great-hearted Alkinoös. 85
Bronze walls stretched this way and that to the inmost
room from the threshold, framed by a cobalt frieze;
golden doors safeguarded the close-built inner domain,
with silver doorposts set in a threshold of bronze,
and silver the lintel above, and of gold the door-latch. 90
On either side of each door stood gold and silver dogs
created with consummate skill by Hephaistos and set there
to keep watch over the house of great-hearted Alkinoös:
immortal creatures and ageless all their days.
Inside, chairs were set on both sides along the wall 95
from the threshold through to the inmost chamber, and on them
were laid soft, fine-woven covers, the work of women,
and here it was that the Phaiakian leaders would sit,
drinking and eating: unfailing abundance was theirs.
Youths made of gold there were too, standing on solid 100
pedestals, who held blazing torches in their hands
to light up the night for those at dinner in the great hall.
And there were fifty house slaves there in the hall, women,
of whom some were grinding yellow grain in a mill
and others weaving on looms or twirling the distaff 105
as they sat there like a tall aspen's flickering leaves;
and from the close-woven fabrics dripped the soft oil.[1]
For just as Phaiakian men were skilled above all others
at steering a swift ship over the deep, so too their women

1. We learn from C. W. Shelmerdine, *The Perfume Industry of Mycenaean Pylos* (1985), 505–96, the perhaps surprising fact that fabrics treated with oil became "not greasy, but supple and shining," and remained so after washing.

were expert weavers: Athēnē had given them unsurpassed 110
understanding of exquisite handiwork, and clever minds.
Outside the courtyard, close to the doors, was a large
four-acre orchard, with a hedge in place all round it:
there fruit trees flourished, luxuriant and tall,
pears, pomegranates, ripe-fruited apple trees, 115
sweet fig trees and abundantly fertile olives.
The produce of these never failed or perished, either
in winter or summer, but lasted throughout the year:
some fruits the west wind's breeze grew, others it ripened;
pear mellowed upon pear here, apple on apple, 120
grape cluster upon cluster, fig upon fig. There too
was rooted a vineyard, richly productive, of which
one part was a warm sun-trap on level ground for drying,
while clusters elsewhere were being culled at vintage
or trodden; and grapes still unripe, out in front, were either 125
shedding their blossom or darkening to purple. There too,
by the last row of vines, grew well-planned vegetable beds
of every variety, bright green the whole year through;
and there were two springs, one discharging its water over
the whole garden, the other rising by the courtyard threshold 130
toward the high house. From this the townsfolk drew their water.
Such were the gods' fine gifts in Alkinoös' domain.

Much-enduring godlike Odysseus stood there and gazed;
But when in his heart he'd marveled at everything, then
he quickly stepped over the threshold and into the building, 135
where he found the Phaiakians' leaders and counselors pouring
libations from their cups to Argos' far-sighted slayer,
to whom they would pour the last drink when thinking of bedtime.
Much-enduring godlike Odysseus went through the hall, concealed
by the thick mist that Athēnē had earlier shed around him 140
till he came to where Arētē was, and the king Alkinoös.
About the knees of Arētē, Odysseus now threw his arms,
and then at once the divine mist lifted from him,
and all in the hall fell silent at the sight of the man, and they
stared at him in amazement as Odysseus made his appeal: 145
"Arētē, godlike Rhēxēnōr's daughter, after much hardship
I come as a suppliant to your husband and your knees—
and to those dining here—may the gods grant them plenty

in this life, and may each of them bequeath to his children
the wealth in his halls, and all honors his people gave him! 150
I beg you, give me an escort to get to my own country,
and soon: I've long suffered much, far from my dear ones."

So saying, down he sat at the hearth, among the ashes
close by the fire. They all were hushed and silent. At last
there spoke among them the elderly hero Echenēos, 155
a man who'd seen more years than any Phaiakian,
well skilled at speaking, well versed in ancient wisdom:
he with good intent now addressed the assembly, saying:
"Alkinoös, this is not the best way, nor is it seemly, to let
a stranger sit on the ground, at the hearth among the ashes— 160
but people are holding back, awaiting your word! Come then,
raise the stranger up, and give him a silver-studded
chair to sit on, tell the heralds to mix more wine
that we may pour libations to Zeus, hurler of bolts,
the protector of sacrosanct suppliants! And also let 165
the housekeeper give this stranger dinner from her store."

When Alkinoös, princely in power, heard these words, he took
the wise, subtle-minded Odysseus by the hand, and raised him
up from the hearth, and seated him on a shining chair—
making his son get up, the kindly Laodamas, 170
who sat next to him, and was the one whom he loved best.
A maid brought hand-washing water in a fine golden
pitcher, and poured it into a silver basin, so he
could wash, and drew up a polished table beside him.
The respected housekeeper brought and set out bread, 175
with many side dishes, giving freely of her supplies.
Much-enduring and godlike Odysseus drank and ate.
Then Alkinoös, princely in power, said to the herald:
"Pontonoös, mix a bowlful, serve wine to all in the hall,
that we may pour libations to Zeus, hurler of bolts, 180
the protector of sacrosanct suppliants!"
So he spoke,
and Pontonoös came and mixed the mind-honeying[2] wine

2. I owe this brilliantly ingenious translation of *meliphrona* to the late Albert Lord, who communicated it to me years ago, when we were working together in Chicago on a radio dramatization of the *Odyssey*.

and served it to all, with first drops for libation. But when
they'd made libation and drunk as much as the heart desired,
Alkinoös then addressed them, speaking as follows: 185
"Listen, you leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians,
while I tell you what the heart in my breast dictates.
Now that you've dined, go home and get your rest:
tomorrow, early, we'll summon more of the elders,
welcome this stranger here in our halls, and offer 190
choice sacrifice to the gods. Then we'll further consider
the matter of his conveyance, how without toil or trouble,
carried by us, he's to reach his native country—
however far distant that may be—soon and rejoicing;
nor on the way shall he suffer any harm or setback 195
until he sets foot on his own land—although thereafter
he'll suffer whatever his fate and the weighty Spinners[3] have spun
with his birth-thread right from the moment his mother bore him!
But if he's some kind of immortal, come down from heaven,
then this is a new gambit of the gods' contriving, since 200
always till now they've appeared to us plainly manifest
whenever we offer them our most lavish sacrifices,
and they feast among us, sitting where we sit ourselves.
What's more, if a solitary traveler should meet them on the road
they don't use disguise, since we're close kin to them, 205
like the Kyklōpes or the wild tribes of the Giants."[4]

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Alkinoös, don't let that bother you: I am not in any way
like the immortals who hold the broad heavens, either
physically or in nature: I look, and am, mortal, a man! 210
Whoever you know of mankind that shoulder the heaviest load
of grief, to them I might liken myself in my sorrows—
and indeed I could tell a yet longer tale of all

3. The Spinners (*Klōthes*) are mentioned as such only here by H.: the name is a personification taken from the verb *klōthein,* to spin, this being the action, real or metaphorical, performed to determine each individual's destiny by what were first in Hesiod identified as the three Fates, Klōthō, Lachesis, and Atropos (*Moirai,* Hes., *Th.* 218, 905).
4. A group of huge and monstrous beings, the offspring of Gē (Earth) and the blood of Ouranos (Hes., *Th.* 185; Apollod. 1.6.1). H. refers to them again at *Od.* 7.59. The great battle between Gods and Giants (Gigantomachy), won by the gods in an epic struggle, was one of the most popular Greek myths, and later came to symbolize the triumphant fight of civilization against barbarism.

the troubles I've endured by the will of the gods!
But first let me eat some dinner, grieving though I am: 215
for nothing exists more shameless than one's loathsome belly,
that forces a man to take notice of it at need, however
distressed he may be and stricken by grief at heart,
as I am grief-stricken at heart now; yet still unremittingly
it commands me to eat and drink, forces me to forget 220
everything I have suffered, insists on being refilled!
But will you please make haste, at daybreak's first appearance,
to set me, the ill-starred one, on the road to my own country
after all my troubles: let life leave me, once I've seen
my possessions, my servants, and my great high-roofed house." 225

So he spoke: they all applauded and approved the dispatch
of the stranger, since his request had been properly presented.
When they'd made libation and drunk as much as the heart desired,
they went, each man to his home, to get their repose;
and godlike Odysseus was left there in the hall 230
with Arētē and godlike Alkinoös sitting beside him,
while the maidservants cleared away the remains of dinner.
Then white-armed Arētē was the first to speak, for she
had recognized his mantle and tunic at first sight
as fine clothes she herself and her serving women had made; 235
so now she spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying:
"Stranger, this question I'll ask first myself: Who are you,
and from where? Who gave you these clothes? Did you not
say that you arrived here while wandering over the deep?"

Then, responding to her, resourceful Odysseus declared: 240
"It's hard, my queen, to render an exhaustive account
of my troubles: the heavenly gods have given me so many!
But this I will tell you, in response to your enquiry:
There's an island, Ōgygia, that lies far off in the deep,
and the daughter of Atlas, crafty Kalypsō, lives there, 245
a dread fair-tressed goddess; with her there's no one else
has intercourse, be it of gods or of mortal humans,
but unfortunate that I am, some god brought me alone
to her hearth, after Zeus struck my swift ship with a bright
bolt, and destroyed it in the midst of the wine-dark deep. 250
There all the rest of my staunch companions perished,
but I clutched in my arms the keel of my curved vessel

and was borne off for nine days: on the tenth dark night
the gods landed me on Ōgygia, where Kalypsō dwells—
that dread fair-tressed goddess! She welcomed me, took me in, 255
gave me food, treated me kindly, said she would make me
immortal and ageless all my days; but she never
could persuade the heart in my breast. There I remained
for seven unbroken years,[5] keeping ever damp with my tears
the immortal garments in which Kalypsō clothed me. 260
But when in its cycle the eighth year arrived for me, then
she urged and told me to be on my way once more—
either she'd had a message from Zeus or else her own mind
had changed—and sent me off on a well-bound raft, and gave me
plenty of bread and sweet wine, with immortal clothes to wear, 265
and raised a good tailwind for me, both mild and breezy.
For seventeen days then I sailed on over the deep,
and on the eighteenth your country's shadowy mountains
came into sight, and the heart within me rejoiced.
But I was out of luck: I still had plenty of trouble 270
to live with, directed against me by Poseidōn the Earth-Shaker,
for he raised up winds to confront me, delayed my journey
by horribly roiling the sea, with waves that would not
let me sail on, even miserably, aboard my raft: the storm
broke it up! Nevertheless, I still somehow managed 275
to swim my way through this great gulf of the sea, until
wind and wave carried me to your coast. Had I attempted
to land there, the waves would have hurled me upon the strand,
dashed me against great rocks at this cheerless site;
But I kept well clear, and swam on, until I reached the river, 280
and this seemed to me the best possible landing place,
being smooth of rocks and offering shelter against the wind.
Out then I stumbled, half dead, and ambrosial night
came on. I got clear of the heaven-fed river, lay down
to sleep in the bushes, heaped up piles of leaves 285
around me: some god shed over me limitless sleep.
So there in the leaves, much troubled at heart, I slumbered
the whole night through, and next morning until midday

5. One of several improbably lengthy delays necessitated directly by placing the commencement of Aigisthos' seven-year reign over Mykēnai *after* the murder of Agamemnōn on his return from Troy. See pp. 17–18 above.

and later—the sun was declining when at last sweet sleep
released me. Then I saw your daughter's maids at play 290
on the shore, and herself among them, like a goddess.
To her I appealed: she knew what was proper behavior—
a virtue you'd not expect to find a young casually met
person displaying: the young are always so thoughtless!
She offered me food in abundance and sparkling wine 295
and had me washed in the river and gave me these clothes.
Distressed I may be, but everything I've told you is the truth."

Then Alkinoös made him this answer, saying: "Stranger,
my child did not behave correctly in one respect: she should
have brought you here to our home, along with her handmaids, 300
since she was the first to whom you made your supplication."

Then in answer to him resourceful Odysseus declared:
"Hero, do not for this rebuke your blameless daughter!
She did indeed tell me to follow her with her handmaids,
But I would not, being scared and embarrassed, in case 305
you might be somehow offended by the sight; we're all
very suspicious-minded, we breeds of men here on earth."

Alkinoös again responded to him, saying: "Stranger,
the heart in my breast is not the kind to become irate
without good cause: due measure is always better. 310
No, I could wish—Zeus, Father, Athēnē, Apollo!—that you,
being the kind of man you are, with a mind like my own,
might have my daughter, be known as my son-in-law,
and be domiciled here: a house and property I'd give you
were you willing to stay! But against your will shall no 315
Phaiakian detain you—never be that Zeus the Father's wish!

For your convoy I set a day, that you may know it surely:
tomorrow. Then you'll lie down, overmastered by sleep,
and they'll row you over a calm sea until you arrive
at your country and home—or whatever place you fancy, 320
even if it's somewhere far more distant than Euboia,
the most remote of lands[6]—or so say those of our people

6. Scheria must be thought of as lying somewhere in the far west, since Euboia, the long island lying off the E. coast of Attika, could hardly be better known to either mainland or Ionian Greeks. In *Comm.,* 7: 339, Hainsworth also suggests the possibility of "some proverbial comparison predating the colonial era," but this seems unlikely.

who saw it when they conveyed the fair-haired Rhadamanthys
to go visit Tityos, son of Gaia.[7] Thither they voyaged,
without effort completed their journey, and came back 325
home that same day! So shall you too discover
by how much my vessels are the best, and my young men
at sweeping the salt sea with their oar blades."
So he spoke.
Much-enduring godlike Odysseus, rejoicing, uttered
a personal prayer, in these words: "Zeus, Father, grant 330
that he, Alkinoös, may accomplish all he's promised!
So shall his fame spread, unquenchable, over all
the grain-giving earth, and I get home to my own country!"

Such the words they exchanged in discussion with one another.

White-armed Arētē now instructed her handmaids 335
to set up a bedstead down in the colonnade, and on it
to spread fine purple blankets, with coverlets over them,
and on top of these fleecy mantles to wear as wraps. The maids
went out of the hall with torches held in their hands,
and after they'd finished draping the close-strung bedstead, 340
they came back to Odysseus, and addressed him, saying:
"Stranger, up with you now, your bed is made and ready."
Thus they spoke, and welcome he found it to lie down and rest.
There, then, he slept, much-enduring godlike Odysseus,
on the corded bedstead down in the echoing colonnade. 345
But Alkinoös took his repose in the high house's inmost room,
and beside him his lady wife now shared their bed and marriage.

7. Rhadamanthys, for H. (*Il.* 14.141–43) the son of Zeus and Eurōpa, did not die but went to Elysium, where, with his brother, Minōs, he was one of the judges over the dead. Tityos, son of Gē or Gaia (Earth), is best known in H.'s work for being seen by Odysseus in Hades (11.576–81) having his liver torn by vultures as punishment for the attempted rape of Lētō. The circumstances of the first's visit to the second are quite unknown (this passage remains the sole reference to such an incident), but were presumably connected in some way with the justice of Tityos' punishment.

Book 8

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
Alkinoös, princely in power, arose from his slumber,
and Odysseus, the Zeus-born sacker of cities, rose too.
Alkinoös, princely in power, now led the way to
the Phaiakians' assembly place, built for them near their ships: 5
On arrival there they sat down on the polished stones
side by side, while Pallas Athēnē went through the city
in the likeness of the herald of sagacious Alkinoös,
working on the return of great-hearted Odysseus. To each
man she met she would say, as she stood beside him: 10
"Come now, you leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians,
attend the assembly, and hear all about the stranger
who's recently come to the house of sagacious Alkinoös
from being lost on the deep—in form he's like the immortals!"

So saying she stirred up each man's heart and spirit, 15
and quickly the seats of assembly were all filled up
by gathering men, many of whom now marveled
at the sight of Laërtēs' sagacious son, for Athēnē had shed
a wondrous grace over his head and shoulders, made him
appear both taller and sturdier, so that he might 20
be welcome to all the Phaiakians, and inspire
awe and respect, and accomplish the numerous feats
in which the Phaiakians were to make trial of Odysseus.
When they were all in place and gathered together,
Alkinoös made a speech, addressed the assembly, saying: 25
"Listen, you leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians,
while I tell you what the heart in my breast dictates. This stranger—
who he is I don't know—has wandered here to my house,
whether from men of the east or the west. He wants
conveyance, and is begging us for assurance on that. 30
So let us, as in the past, provide him swift conveyance:
for no other man who's appeared at my house has had to wait
in misery overlong for the convoy that he needed!
So come, let's haul a black ship down to the bright sea

for its maiden voyage; let those fifty-two young men, 35
the best crew in the district, be chosen to serve aboard it;
and then, when each man has fastened his oar to its rowlock,
disembark, come up to my house, partake of a quick meal—
on me, I'll make ample provision for everybody involved!
That's my order to the young men. As for you others, 40
you sceptered princes, come on up to my beautiful dwelling,
so we can entertain the stranger as guest in our halls,
and let no man refuse me! Also fetch the divine minstrel,
Dēmodokos: for to him the god's granted an unmatched gift
of song, to please, however his spirit may bid him sing." 45

That said, he led the way, and the sceptered princes followed,
while a herald went off to fetch the divine minstrel,
and the chosen youths, two and fifty of them, obeyed
his orders, and made their way to the unharvested sea,
and when they reached the ship and the sea, they hauled 50
the black vessel down to deep water, and in its black hull
proceeded to step the mast, to set the sails, and secure
the oars to the leather straps of the rowlocks, all in due order.
This done, they spread the white sail, then anchored the vessel
well out in deep water. This done, they took themselves off 55
to the great abode of sagacious Alkinoös. There they found
all the courtyards and colonnades and chambers crowded
with the many guests that had gathered, both young and old.
For them Alkinoös slaughtered a dozen sheep and eight
white-tusked boars and a couple of shambling oxen: these 60
they skinned and dressed, and made ready a delectable feast.

Now the herald returned, bringing the trusty minstrel,
whom the Muse loved dearly, but gave him both good and ill:
she robbed him of eyesight, yet made him a sweet singer.
The herald Pontonoös set him a silver-studded chair 65
amid the feasters, leaned it against a tall pillar,
hung the clear-toned lyre from a peg up over his head,
and instructed him how to find it with his hands: so far
the herald. Beside him he placed a basket and fine table,
along with a cup of wine to drink from when so minded. 70

Now they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them;
but when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink

the Muse stirred the minstrel to sing of the famous deeds of men
from that lay the fame of which had reached the wide heavens—
the quarrel between Odysseus and Pēleus' son, Achillēs, 75
how once they contended at a sumptuous feast of the gods
with vehement words, and the king of men, Agamemnōn,
was glad at heart that the best Achaians were in contention,
for thus Phoibos Apollō had told him, when giving a response
in sacred Pythō, after he'd crossed the threshold of stone 80
to enquire of the oracle: then it was that the start of trouble
came rolling on Trojans and Danaäns on account of great Zeus' plans.

This theme the famous minstrel chose. But Odysseus
took his great purple mantle in his powerful hands
and pulled it down over his head, to hide his handsome face, 85
ashamed to be shedding tears before the Phaiakians.
Every time the divine minstrel had a pause in his singing
Odysseus would wipe off the tears, lift the mantle from his head,
take a two-handled cup and pour a libation to the gods;
but when he began again—the Phaiakian nobles would urge him 90
to sing more, for they took great pleasure in his lays—
then Odysseus would once more cover his head and sigh.
His weeping escaped the notice of all the others; only
Alkinoös was aware of it and took notice, since he sat
beside him, and could hear his heavy sighing. At once 95
he addressed himself to the Phaiakians, oar-lovers all:
"Listen, you leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians:
by now we've slaked our desire for the shared banquet
and the lyre that's the accompaniment to ample feasting;
now let's go out and make trial in every kind of athletic 100
contest, so that this stranger may tell his friends,
when he gets back home, how far we outstrip other men
in boxing and wrestling, in jumping and running."
That said,
he led the way, and they followed him. On its peg
the herald hung up the clear-toned lyre, and took 105
Dēmodokos by the hand, led him out of the hall
and followed the same road just taken by the other
Phaiakian nobles to watch the contests. They went
to the place of assembly: a large throng accompanied them,
countless in number; there stood up many fine young men. 110

Up got Akroneōs, Ōkyalos and Elatreus,
Nauteus and Prymneus, Anchialos and Eretmeus,
Ponteus and Prōreus, Thoōn and Anabēsineōs,
with Amphialos, the son of Polynēos, Tektōn's son;
up, too, Euryalos, peer of man-killing Arēs, 115
Naubolos' son, the best in looks and stature—
bar only peerless Laodamas—of all the Phaiakians;
and up got the three sons of matchless Alkinoös:
Laodamas, Halios, and godlike Klytonēos.
These then first made trial of themselves in the footrace: 120
the pace was hot from the start, they all raced together,
speedily kicking up the dust from the plain; but of them
peerless Klytonēos proved by far the swiftest runner,
and by the length of the furrow mules plow in fallow land
he got back first to the crowd, well ahead of all the rest. 125
Then they competed in the painful art of wrestling,
and here Euryalos outdid all the best competitors;
at jumping Amphialos had no rivals in the field,
while with the discus Elatreus was an easy winner,
and at boxing Laodamas, Alkinoös' splendid son. 130
But after they'd all enjoyed these athletic contests,
Laodamas, Alkinoös' son, had this to say to them:
"Come, friends, let us ask the stranger if there's any contest
that he knows and has practiced. In build he's not a weakling—
look at his thighs and calves, both arms above them, 135
his sturdy neck: great strength there! He's not lacking
in manly vigor, but just broken by many misfortunes:
for to my mind there's nothing worse than the sea
to break down a man, even though he be the strongest."

Then Euryalos in turn responded to him, saying: 140
"Laodamas, what you propose is rightly spoken!
Go challenge him now yourself, tell him what you told us."

When Alkinoös' good son heard this, he went and stood
in the midst, and addressed Odysseus as follows, saying:
"Come on, stranger, father: you too should try these contests 145
if haply you're skilled in any: and it's likely that you are
so skilled, for a man's life can show no greater glory
than what he achieves with his own hands and feet.
So come, make trial of yourself, scatter care from your heart!

Your journey won't long be delayed now, already your ship 150
is hauled down and launched, your companions all are ready."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Laodamas, why do you make me this mocking challenge?
My mind is far fuller of sorrows than of contests:
Before now I have suffered much, endured much hardship; 155
now here in your assembly I sit, and seek my homecoming,
making my plea to your king and to his people as a whole."

Euryalos then replied, taunting him to his face:
"No, indeed, stranger, you don't look to me like a man
familiar with contests, such as mankind has in plenty; 160
you're more the sort that goes to and fro with his many-
oared vessel, a captain of sailors who also are traders,
taking care of his freight, an overseer of cargo
and gain got by greed. You don't look to me like an athlete."

With an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus responded: 165
"Sir, that was not well said; you sound like some reckless
badmouth! It's true that the gods don't hand out gracious
gifts to all men, of either looks, or wit, or eloquence: one man
will make a less impressive appearance, and yet
the god crowns his speech with grace, people regard him 170
with admiring pleasure, his utterances are sure,
respectful and honey-sweet: he stands out in a crowd,
and as he goes through the city, men look on him as a god.
Another may be as handsome as the immortals, but
no crown of grace will be set on his public speaking— 175
and so with you: your looks are outstanding, not even
a god could improve them, but in mind you're inadequate.
You've provoked the heart in my breast by your mannerless
mode of address: I'm no novice at sporting contests
as you assert—no, I reckon I ranked among the first 180
while I could safely trust in my vigor and my hands;
but now trouble and grief possess me: much I've endured,
cutting my path through men's wars and the damaging waves.
Yet despite my great suffering I'll make trial of your contests,
for your words gnaw at my heart, what you said drives me on." 185

So saying, he sprang up, still in his mantle, and seized
a stone quoit—one bigger, thicker, and weightier by far

than those the Phaiakians used to compete against each other.
This he whirled about and let fly from his mighty hand,
and the stone whirred: down they crouched on the ground, 190
did the long-oared Phaiakians, men famous for their ships,
beneath the stone's flight. Past the marks of all it flew,
fast sped from his hand, and Athēnē—in the likeness of a man—
checked the length of the cast, and then addressed him, saying:
"Even a blind man, stranger, could distinguish this cast of yours 195
by feeling for it: it's not mixed up with the rest but well
ahead of them all. This contest at least should encourage you—
No Phaiakian will equal your cast, much less get past it."

So she spoke. Much-enduring godlike Odysseus rejoiced,
glad to have met with a friendly supporter at these contests. 200
Then, in a lighter mood, he spoke among the Phaiakians:
"Match that cast now, young men! I'll soon let fly another,
its equal in length, or maybe an even longer shot!
As for the rest of you, if anyone's heart and spirit
so bids him, come on, let him try me, since you've got me angry— 205
boxing, wrestling, or running, I don't care which,
any Phaiakian, except for Laodamas in person,
he being my host: who'd fight the one that befriended him?
Witless the man and worthless that would ever challenge
to a contest the host who gave him a kindly welcome 210
in some foreign country: he'd cut all his own hopes short!
But of the rest there's none I either refuse or slight:
I want to learn their strength, to test myself against them.
For I'm no slouch all round in the contests that men practice—
well do I know how to handle a polished bow, 215
and always I'd be the first to shoot and hit my man
in the thick of the enemy, though many of my comrades
were standing beside me, loosing off arrows at the foe.
Philoktētēs alone it was who excelled me at archery
in the land of the Trojans, when we Achaians were shooting! 220
Of the rest I can claim to be the best by far
of all mortals that now eat bread upon this earth,
though I have no wish to compete with those of former times,
with Hēraklēs or Oichalian Eurytos, such men
as competed in marksmanship even with the immortals. 225
For that was why great Eurytos died young, why no old age

caught up with him in his halls: Apollo, furious, slew him
because he'd challenged the god to an archery contest. What's more,
I can throw a spear further than any man can shoot an arrow!
In the footrace alone I fear I may be outrun by some 230
Phaiakian: I've been harshly battered by countless waves,
and aboard my ship I had no long-term care for my body,
which is why my limbs are now very badly out of trim."

So he spoke, and they all remained hushed in silence. Only
Alkinoös made him an answer, addressed him saying: 235
"Stranger, your words here among us were not ungracious,
but due to your wish to make clear your innate prowess—
being angered, because that man confronted you in this contest
and mocked you, in a way no mortal who was aware
of how to speak fittingly would disparage your prowess. 240
So come now, give heed to my words, that you may tell them
to some other hero, when in your own great hall
you're feasting, together with your wife and children,
and recall our feats, the achievements that to us too
Zeus has constantly granted since the days of our fathers. 245
Now we're not unmatched as boxers, or as wrestlers, but in
the footrace we run swiftly; we're the best of seamen,
and dear to us always are feasting, and dancing, and the lyre,
and changes of clothes, hot baths, and bed. So come,
all you Phaiakians who are our finest dancers, 250
foot it gaily, so that the stranger may report to his friends,
after getting back home, how far we surpass all others
in seamanship, fleetness of foot, and dancing and singing!
And let someone go at once and fetch for Dēmodokos
the clear-toned lyre that's lying somewhere in our halls." 255

So spoke godlike Alkinoös, and the herald got up
to go fetch the hollow lyre from the king's domain.
Then nine umpires arose, all chosen by popular vote,
whose job was to regulate every detail of the games.
They leveled a dancing floor, cleared a fine open space, 260
and the herald approached, bringing the clear-toned lyre
for Dēmodokos, who then went to the middle, and round him
stood young men in youth's first bloom, well skilled at dancing,
and performed the steps of the sacred dance. Odysseus,
marveling, watched the flash of their feet as they moved. 265

Dēmodokos now struck his lyre to introduce the fine lay
about Arēs' love for sweet-garlanded Aphrodītē[1]—
how they first lay together in the house of Hephaistos,
secretly, how he showered her with gifts, shamed the marital
bed of the lord Hephaistos, to whom Hēlios promptly came 270
with the news that he'd seen them making love. And when
Hephaistos heard his heart-rending tattle, he went
off to his smithy, secretly planning revenge,
and set on its block the great anvil, and hammered out bonds
unbreakable and unloosable, made to hold fast when set; 275
then, having fashioned this snare in his fury against Arēs,
he went to the chamber where his own dear bedstead stood
and circled the bonds round the bedposts from every angle:
many he hung overhead, attached to the rafters, as fine
as spiders' webs, so that none could see them, not even 280
one of the blessed gods, so craftily were they fashioned.
Then, when he'd placed his snares all around the bed, he made
as though he was going to Lēmnos, that well-built citadel,
of all lands on earth to him by far the dearest. And no
blind watch did golden-reined Arēs keep, but when 285
he saw the famed craftsman Hephaistos departing, he went
straight off to the house of the same famous Hephaistos,
his mind imagining sex with sweet-garlanded Kythereia.[2]
Now she from a spell with her father, the mighty son of Kronos,
had just arrived, and sat down: Arēs entered the house 290
and took her by the hand, and addressed her, saying:
"Come, my love, let's to bed and its pleasures: for no longer
is Hephaistos around here, but I think is on his way
to Lēmnos, off there visiting the rough-spoken Sintians."[3]

---

1. As Hainsworth says (*Comm.,* 8: 364), "the divine cast of this little drama are thoroughly humanized: they are made to behave, and also think, like the bourgeoisie of any place and age, and their role as *gods* . . . is at best implied." In this last context it is interesting that the divine adulterous pair were closely connected, not only in literature, but also, somewhat surprisingly, in cult. Their cohabitation was credited with (somewhat abstract) offspring: Phobos (Terror, Rout), Deimos (Fear) and, more amiably, Harmonia.
2. Aphrodītē acquired this epithet, according to Hesiod (*Th.* 198), "because she emerged from the sea-foam on the shores of Cythera" (*Comm.,* 1: 365).
3. The Sintians were early inhabitants of Lēmnos, allegedly Thracian in origin, which would explain their unfamiliar speech (*HE,* 3: 805, citing Strabo 10.2.17, 12.3.30).

Such his words, and she welcomed the prospect of bedding him. 295
They went to bed and lay down. But the crafty bonds devised
by artful Hephaistos immobilized them: they were unable
to move their limbs, let alone get up. Then they knew the truth,
that for them no longer was there any chance of escape.
So the far-famed double cripple came home and found them, 300
having turned back before he reached the land of Lēmnos,
since Hēlios kept watch for him, brought him the news.
He went to his house now, deeply troubled at heart,
and stood there in the forecourt, gripped by a wild fury,
and with a terrible shout cried out to all the gods: 305
"Zeus! Father! All you other blessed immortal gods!
Come see a sight both ridiculous and unseemly—
the way because I'm lame Zeus' daughter Aphrodītē
dishonors me constantly by loving destructive Arēs
because he's strong-limbed and handsome, whereas I 310
was born misshapen, for which there's no one to blame
but my two parents—would they'd never had me! Now you
shall see for yourselves the way they go to make love
in my own bed, to me a grievous sight—yet somehow
I don't imagine they'll want to lie thus a minute longer 315
however much they're in love: they'll soon lose the urge
for sleep—rather those crafty bonds will hold them tight
until her father pays back to me every single bride-gift
I lavished on him in return for his bitch of a daughter,
since the daughter's beautiful, but lacking in self-restraint." 320

So he spoke, and the gods came crowding to his bronze-floored
house: Poseidōn, the Earth-Embracer, along with Hermēs,
the helper, and Lord Apollō, the deadly archer; but
the female deities stayed, every one, at home for shame.
So there they stood in the doorway: gods, givers of good things, 325
and laughter unquenchable rose among the blessed gods
as they gazed at the crafty work of ingenious Hephaistos,
and thus would one of them say, with a glance at his neighbor:
"Ill deeds don't thrive! The slow catches the swift,
just as now Hephaistos the laggard has caught Arēs, 330
though of the gods holding Olympos he's the swiftest;
though lame, he caught him by guile. Now Arēs must pay
the adulterer's fine." So they spoke to one another.

But to Hermēs the lord Apollo, the son of Zeus, now said:
"Hermēs, Zeus' son, guide, giver of good things, would you 335
be ready, even if hard-pressed by such powerful bonds,
to sleep in a bed at the side of golden Aphrodītē?"

Then the guide, the slayer of Argos, answered him: "How I wish,
Lord Apollo, deadly archer, that this might come to pass—
with three times as many unshakable bonds set round me, 340
and you gods, with all the goddesses too, looking on—
that I might sleep at the side of golden Aphrodītē!"

At his words laughter arose among the immortal gods.
Poseidōn, though, was not laughing, but kept entreating
Hephaistos, the far-famed craftsman, to set Arēs free: 345
he spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Free him,
and I promise on his behalf, as you require, that he will
pay the full proper sum before the immortal gods."

Then the far-famed double cripple answered him thus:
"Do not demand this of me, Poseidōn, Earth-Embracer: 350
a pledge made on behalf of the worthless is a worthless pledge!
And how could I constrain you among the immortal gods
were Arēs to dodge both debt and bond and just vanish?"

Then Poseidōn the Earth-Shaker responded to him, saying:
"Hephaistos, even were Arēs to renege on the debt he owes 355
and take off in flight, I myself will pay the total sum."

The far-famed double cripple responded to this, saying:
"I cannot refuse your offer: that would not be seemly."

So saying, the mighty Hephaistos unlocked the snares,
and the two, once freed from the snares, despite their strength, 360
sprang up at once: he, Arēs, now took himself off to Thrace,
while she, smiling Aphrodītē, left for Paphos on Cyprus,
where she had her sacred precinct and fragrant altar.
There the Graces bathed her, anointed her with ambrosial
oil, such as soothes the skin of the gods who are forever, 365
and clothed her in elegant raiment, a wonder to behold.

This was the lay the famed minstrel sang; and Odysseus
listened with great enjoyment, as did the others,
the long-oared Phaiakians, men famous for their ships.

Then Alkinoös had Halios and Laodamas dance— 370
alone, since no one else could match their performance.
They took in their hands an exquisite purple ball,
that the skilled artist Polybos had fashioned for them,
and one would toss it high to the shadowy clouds,
leaning back, while the other would leap high off the ground 375
and easily catch it before his feet touched earth again.
But when they'd tested their skill at throwing the ball
straight up, then they danced upon the grain-giving earth,
quickly tossing the ball to and fro, while the other youths
stood beating time, and a din of stamping feet arose. 380

Then godlike Odysseus addressed Alkinoös, saying:
"Alkinoös, lord, most distinguished among all peoples,
you claimed that these your dancers were unrivaled,
and they've proved it true: I'm awed by the sight of them."

So he spoke, and Alkinoös, princely in power, rejoiced, 385
and at once addressed the oar-loving Phaiakians, saying:
"Listen, you leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians:
this stranger seems to me a man of the highest discretion!
Come then, let's give him a guest-gift, as is befitting:
twelve renowned princes hold sway in this our country 390
as rulers, and I myself am the thirteenth: let each
one of the twelve now bring him a fresh-washed mantle
and tunic, as well as a talent of precious gold,
and let's collect all this now, so that the stranger
may go happy to supper, holding our gifts in his hands— 395
and let Euryalos make amends to him in person,
with words and a gift: what he said was most unfitting."

So he spoke: they all approved, and endorsed the offer,
and each sent off a herald to fetch the gifts,
and Euryalos in his turn now responded, saying: 400
"Alkinoös, lord, most distinguished among all peoples,
I shall indeed makes amends to the stranger, as you bid me.
I'll give him this all-bronze sword, which possesses a hilt
of silver, and a scabbard of fresh-sawn ivory
encases it. It will be of great value to him."
That said, 405
to Odysseus he handed over the silver-studded sword,

and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Greetings, father,
stranger: if any word that's been uttered was improper,
may storm winds now snatch it up and carry it off! And may
the gods grant you see your wife, reach your own country: 410
Too long you've endured hardship far from your dear ones."

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to him, saying:
"Greetings to you too, friend! May the gods enrich you,
and may you never hereafter be seized by longing for
this sword you've given me—with a handsome apology." 415

That said, he hung from his shoulders the silver-studded sword,
and the sun went down, and the glorious gifts appeared.
Noble heralds now bore them to Alkinoös' abode,
where the sons of peerless Alkinoös took charge of these
exquisite presents, and set them before their revered 420
mother. Alkinoös, princely in power, led them,
and in they came and sat down on the high-backed chairs.
Then mighty Alkinoös addressed himself to Arētē:
"My wife, bring a fine chest here, the best we have,
and in it put a fresh-laundered mantle and a tunic, 425
and set a bronze cauldron to warm on the fire, heat water in it,
so that when the stranger has bathed and had a good look
at all the gifts the peerless Phaiakians brought here,
he may then enjoy the feast, and the minstrel's singing;
and I shall make him a present of this fine golden 430
cup of mine, that he may remember me all his days
when he pours in his hall libations to Zeus and the other gods."

So he spoke; and Arētē gave orders to her handmaids
to set over the fire a great cauldron as quickly as they could.
They settled the bathwater cauldron on the blazing flames 435
and filled it with water and under it kindled firewood.
Flames lapped the cauldron's belly, the water grew hot,
while Arētē fetched for the stranger an exquisite chest
from her storeroom, and in it placed the beautiful gifts—
the clothes, the gold—that the Phaiakians provided, 440
together with a mantle and fine tunic that she put in
herself, then addressed Odysseus with winged words, saying:
"Take care of the lid yourself, put a quick knot on it,

lest someone rob you during your homeward journey,
while you're traveling, sweetly asleep, aboard that black ship." 445

When much-enduring godlike Odysseus heard those words
he at once fitted the lid on, and quickly secured it with
a complex knot he'd once learned from the lady Kirkē.
Then promptly the housekeeper called him to go and be scrubbed
in the bathtub, and he rejoiced in his heart on seeing 450
the warm bath, since such care had been far from frequent
ever since he'd left the home of fair-tressed Kalypsō,
though till then he'd been cared for continually like a god.

So when the handmaids had bathed him, rubbed him with oil,
they dressed him in a splendid mantle and tunic, and he 455
stepped away from the bathtub and went to join the men
at their wine. And Nausikaä, whose beauty was from the gods,
stood by the pillar supporting the close-packed roof,
and marveled at Odysseus as she took in his appearance,
and spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying: 460
"Farewell, stranger: even when you're back in your own country
remember me: I was the first to whom you owed your life."

In answer to her resourceful Odysseus then said:
"Nausikaä, daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös,
so now may Zeus, Hērē's loud-thundering husband, 465
let me return to see the day of my homecoming!
There too I'll pray to you as I would to a god
all the days of my life: for you saved my life, my dear."
With that he sat down on the chair beside King Alkinoös.
By now they were serving out portions and mixing the wine, 470
and the herald came in leading the trusty minstrel
Dēmodokos, much honored by the people, set his chair
in the midst of the diners, backed against a high pillar.
Then resourceful Odysseus addressed himself to the herald
as he cut off a piece of the chine—more still was left— 475
from a white-tusked boar, with rich fat on either side:
"Here, herald, take this cut and give it to eat
to Dēmodokos: I salute him, despite my grief:
for among all men worldwide minstrels receive their share
of honor and reverence, since the Muse has taught them 480
the ways of song, and has love for the whole tribe of singers."

So he spoke: the herald took it and placed it in the hands
of the hero Dēmodokos. He accepted it with pleasure.
Now they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them;
but when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink, 485
then resourceful Odysseus addressed Dēmodokos, saying:
"Dēmodokos, higher than all mortal men I praise you,
whether it was the Muse, Zeus' daughter, or Apollō
that taught you, for you sing truly of the Achaians' fate—
all that they did and suffered, every hardship they endured, 490
as though you'd been there yourself, or were told by one
who had!
But change your theme now, and tell us about the Horse,
the Wooden Horse that Epeios made with Athēnē's help,
and Odysseus led up to the citadel, a deceptive trap,
after filling it with the men who sacked Ilion. If indeed 495
you perform this lay in right fashion, then I'll declare,
to all mankind, that the god, with a propitious heart,
has bestowed upon you the gift of divine song."
So he spoke.

Setting out from the god, the other began to narrate the tale,
from when the Argives embarked on their well-benched ships 500
and sailed away, after setting fire to the huts,
while those led by far-famed Odysseus were already sitting
in the Trojan place of assembly, concealed in the Horse.
The Trojans themselves had hauled it into the citadel, and
with it standing there they made many indecisive speeches 505
sitting around it. Three proposals found supporters:
to cut through its hollow timbers with the pitiless bronze,
to drag it up to the summit and push it over the edge,
or leave it as a great offering to propitiate the gods—
which in the event, was what was destined to happen, 510
for it was their fate to perish when the city enfolded
that great horse of wood, in which sat all the best
of the Argives, bringing the Trojans massacre and death.
How the Achaians' sons then sacked the city he sang,
as they poured from the horse, leaving their hollow ambush; 515
how they variously laid the steep city waste as they fought
through it: how Odysseus, like Arēs, together with godlike
Menelaös pressed on to the house of Deïphobos. There

it was, he said, that he dared his most terrible battle,
and won in the end through the aid of great-hearted Athēnē. 520

This was the lay the far-famed minstrel sang. But Odysseus
melted: tears from under his eyelids wet his cheeks.
And as a woman wails and clings to her dear husband
who's fallen fighting to save his city and his people,
warding off from township and children the pitiless day, 525
and she sees him dying and gasping for breath, collapses
on him, shrieking aloud, while enemies behind her
batter her back and shoulders with their spears,
and drag her away into slavery, to a life of toil and grief,
while with most pitiful sorrow her cheeks are wasted— 530
such pitiful tears Odysseus now shed beneath his brows.
His weeping escaped the notice of all the others; only
Alkinoös was aware of it and took notice, since he sat
beside him, and could hear his heavy sighing. At once
he addressed himself to the Phaiakians, oar-lovers all: 535
"Listen, you leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians,
and let Dēmodokos silence his clear-toned lyre,
for the lay he's singing does not please every listener.
Since we began our feast, and the divine singer arose,
he's never—I mean the stranger—ceased from heartfelt 540
lamentation: some great grief must have assailed his mind!
Then let the minstrel stop, so we all can enjoy ourselves,
both hosts and guest: this is much the better way, since
it's for our respected guest all this has been laid on:
his conveyance, the kindly gifts we've given him as friends. 545
Dear as a brother the stranger and suppliant is regarded
by any man whose wits have the slightest grasp of wisdom.
Do not, therefore, stranger, hide behind deceptive phrasing
the true answers to what I shall ask you: best to speak plainly.
Tell me the name by which your mother and father 550
called you back there, and the others in your town and district,
for there's none of mankind is wholly without a name,
neither common nor noble, from the time he was born,
but at their birth their parents fasten names on them all.
And tell me your country, your district and your city, 555
that our ships may convey you thither, steering by their wits—
for among the Phaiakians there exist no steersmen,

nor indeed steering oars, such as other vessels possess;
the ships themselves understand men's purposes and minds,
and know all the cities of men, their fertile plowland, 560
and the gulf of the salt deep they traverse most speedily,
hidden in mist and cloud; nor do they ever have
the slightest fear of encountering damage or shipwreck.
Yet once I heard a story related by my father,
Nausithoös: he used to say that Poseidōn was angry 565
with us, because we give safe convoy to all and sundry.
One day, he said, a most beautiful Phaiakian vessel
returning from escort duty out on the misty deep,
he'd smite, and hide our city with a great mountain round it.
So said the old man; the god will either fulfill this 570
or leave it unfulfilled, as the fancy takes him. But come,
tell me this, and give me a true account of it: where
have your wanderings taken you, to what countries
of men have you come, their people, their populous cities,
whether rough and wild and uncivilized, or those 575
that welcome strangers, and have god-fearing minds !
And tell me what makes you weep and lament at heart
as you hear the fate of the Danaän Argives, of Ilion:
this the gods fashioned, and spun the thread of destruction
for mankind, that there might be a song for those yet to come. 580
Did some kinsman of yours, perhaps, lose his life before Ilion?
Some fine warrior, wife's father or son-in-law, those
who are closest to you after your own flesh and blood? Or was it
a comrade maybe, one especially dear to you,
this fine warrior? For in no way less than a brother 585
is he who's a comrade and whose mind embraces wisdom."

Book 9

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Alkinoös, lord, most distinguished among all peoples,
it is indeed a good thing to listen to such a minstrel
as this man is, who resembles the gods in his singing!
There is, I'd say, no greater fulfillment of pleasure 5
than when all the people share a common enjoyment,
and those feasting in the halls are listening to a minstrel
as they sit there in order, and all the tables are loaded
with bread and meat, and the cupbearer draws off wine
from the bowl, and pours it into the cups. Indeed, 10
to me this seems the very best kind of occasion.
But your spirit has moved you to ask about my unhappy
troubles, that I may weep and sigh still further.
What then shall I tell you first, what later? The heavenly
gods have laid on me sorrows past counting. First, 15
now, I'll tell you my name, that you all may know it,
and afterwards, if I escape the pitiless day, I may
in turn be your host, far off though I make my home.
I am Odysseus, Laërtēs' son, well known to all mankind
for my crafty devices: my fame goes up to heaven. 20
My home is in sunny Ithákē: there's a mountain on it,
a landmark, Nēriton, leaf-clad; and around it are many
islands, set close each one to its next neighbor—
Doulichion, Samē, and forested Zákynthos.
Ithákē itself lies low in the sea, furthest out toward 25
night, but the rest are apart, nearer dawn and sunrise.[1]

1. The identity (on the assumption that H. has not simply invented here) of Ithákē and its neighboring islands has been an ongoing problem since ancient times. It seems reasonably certain that Zákynthos = modern Zante, while Doulichion probably = modern Kefallinía (Kefalonia; Cephalonia), or some part thereof. Samē seems originally to have been either another name for Doulichion, or else a town thereon misinterpreted at some early stage as a separate island. Ithákē itself is most often assumed to have been its modern homonym, Thiaki; but there are serious difficulties about this identification, and an attractive modern theory (Bittlestone 2005) identifies Ithákē with Palē (mod. Paliki) the near-island formation on the western coast of Kefallinía, on the assumption that the narrow link in this channel only became dry land at some early period.

It's rough land, but fine for raising young men. Myself,
I can't think of a sweeter sight than one's own country.
Kalypsō, bright among goddesses, kept me with her, it's true,
in her hollow caves, wanting me for her husband; 30
and Kirkē likewise detained me in her halls,
that wily Aiaian lady, wanting me for *her* husband;
but neither could ever persuade the heart in my breast—
so sure as nothing's sweeter than a man's own country
and forebears, though he may live far away in a rich home 35
in some foreign land, and quite remote from his parents.

"But come, let me tell you now of the grief-laden homecoming
that Zeus afflicted me with on my way back home from Troy.
From Ilion the wind drove me, brought me to the Kikones,
to Ismaros. There I sacked the city, slaughtered the men. 40
From the city we took both the wives and a heap of goods
and divided them. I made sure none got less than a fair share.
Then I was all for us light-footing it out of there,
and so urged; but the rest, the great fools, refused to listen.
Then much wine was drunk, and many a sheep they slew 45
along the shore, many crumple-horned shambling steers.
The Kikones meanwhile had gone and appealed to other Kikones,
their neighbors—more numerous, and more courageous too,
who dwelt on the mainland, and knew all about fighting
from chariots as well as, where necessary, on foot. 50
They came now, as thick as leaves and flowers in season,
at dawn: then indeed an ill fate from Zeus beset us,
out of luck as we were, brought us a mass of troubles.
By the swift ships they stood and fought: each side
attacked the other with their bronze-tipped spears. 55
While it was morning still, while the sacred day increased,
we stood firm and held them off, despite their numbers;
but once the sun had reached the hour for unyoking oxen,
then the Kikones broke the Achaians and overwhelmed them,
and six of our well-greaved comrades from each ship 60
died, but the rest of us dodged death and destiny. So
we sailed on from there, lamenting at heart, but glad
at having got clear of death, though we'd lost our comrades.
Nor did I let our curved ships proceed any further
until we'd all called out three times to each of our luckless 65

comrades who'd died on the plain, cut down by the Kikones.
Yet against our ships cloud-gathering Zeus still roused
the north wind, with an awesome tempest, and hid
both land and deep sea behind clouds: night sprang from heaven.
Our ships were driven on sidelong, fragments—three, four— 70
were ripped from the sails by the violence of the wind.
So, scared of destruction, we lowered them to the deck,
and rowed our way hastily landward. There for two
nights and two days continuously we lay to,
eating our hearts out with sorrow and sheer exhaustion; 75
but when fair-haired Dawn brought on the third day, then
we stepped the masts, hoisted the white sails, and took
our seats: the wind and the helmsmen steered our vessels.
And then unscathed I would have come back to my own country;
but as I was rounding Cape Malea the waves and the current 80
and the north wind drove me off course, sent me past Kythēra.
For the next nine days I was borne on by deadly winds
over the fish-rich sea; on the tenth I set foot
on the land of the Lotus-Eaters, who feed off a flowery food.
Here we went ashore and replenished our store of water, 85
and my comrades now had a meal, there by the swift ships.
But when we'd gotten our fill of food and drink,
then I sent out some comrades to go ahead and discover
what kind of people, among earth's bread-eaters, dwelt here—
two men I chose, and a third to go with them as herald. 90
They went straight off, and soon found the Lotus-Eaters;
and these Lotus-Eaters, far from wanting to kill
our comrades, offered them lotus to eat. Now none
who consumed the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus any longer
had the urge to bring news back or continue the voyage, 95
but were set upon staying right there, with the Lotus-Eaters,
munching lotus, their homecoming all forgotten.
These men I myself dragged weeping back to the ships,
and tied them up below deck in the hollow vessels,
and ordered all the rest of my trusty companions 100
to board the swift ships without delay, lest any
by eating the lotus should forget their homecoming.
So they quickly embarked, and, seating themselves at the rowlocks,
ranged in good order, struck the grey brine with their oars.

"From there we sailed on further, grieving at heart, until 105
we reached the Kyklōpes' country—an arrogant, lawless
people who, relying upon the immortal gods,
with their own hands plant nothing, nor do they plow;
but everything flourishes for them, unplowed, unsown:
wheat and barley, and vines that bear rich clusters 110
of grapes; and the rain of Zeus makes them grow. They have
neither assemblies for counsel nor established customs,
but make their homes near the summits of high mountains
in hollow caves, and each man lays down the law
to his children and wives: they care nothing for one another. 115

"A fertile island's spread out there, beyond the harbor,
neither near the Kyklōpes' land, nor yet remote from it,
well wooded: on it countless wild goats flourish,
for no human comings and goings get in their way,
nor do hunters disturb them, men who have it rough 120
tracking game in the woodland over the mountain tops;
nor is it grazed on by flocks or put under the plow,
but unsown and unplowed all its days it stays bereft
of humankind, supports nothing but bleating goats.
For the Kyklōpes have no vermilion-cheeked vessels, 125
nor in their land are there shipwrights, who might build them
well-benched ships that could answer all their needs,
take them to other men's countries (as often enough
men traverse the sea in ships to call upon one another)—
men who could also develop the island for them, 130
for it's far from poor and could grow every crop in season:
on it are meadows, beyond the banks of the salt-grey sea,
soft and well watered: vines would never lack moisture,
the earth's good for plowing, they could reap deep-standing
harvests in season, so rich is the subsoil. Here too 135
is a good safe harbor, with no need of moorings, either
anchor stones to throw out or stern warps to secure:
one can just beach one's vessel and wait till the crew are minded
to put to sea, and get a soft following wind.
At the head of the harbor there's bright water flowing, 140
a spring from under a cave, with poplars growing round it.
There we sailed in, and some god gave us guidance
through the murky night, for there was no light to see by:

a deep mist lay round the ships, nor did the moon
shed any light from heaven, but was obscured by clouds. 145
None got a glimpse of that island, nor could we see
the long breakers rolling in on the shore, until
we beached all our well-benched vessels, and, that done,
lowered the sails on each one of them, and ourselves
then disembarked on the seashore, and lay down 150
to sleep, and awaited the coming of dawn and brightness.

"When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
we went exploring the island, in amazement at it,
and the nymphs, the daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,
sent out the mountain goats, to give my comrades dinner. 155
At once we took from the ships curved bows and long-socketed
goat-spears, and forming ourselves into three groups
went hunting, and right off some god provided us
with a most satisfactory bag. Twelve ships came with me,
and each got nine goats by lot; for me alone they chose ten. 160

"So then for the rest of the day until the sun went down
we sat eating abundant meat and drinking the sweet wine,
for not yet was all the red wine in our ships consumed,
but some remained; each crew had drawn off a great deal
in jars, when we sacked the Kikones' sacred citadel. 165
Now we were looking across at the nearby Kyklōpes' country—
saw smoke, heard their voices, the bleat of their sheep and goats.
But when the sun had set and darkness came on,
then we lay down and slept along the line of the shore.

"When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered, 170
I called an assembly and declared before them all:
'The rest of you stay here now, my trusty comrades:
I with my own ship and my own crew will go over
and find out about these men—who they may be,
whether they're violent creatures, savage, and lawless, 175
or hospitable people, men with god-fearing minds.'

"That said, I boarded my vessel, ordered my companions
to embark themselves, and to cast off the stern warps.
They came aboard quickly, seated themselves at the rowlocks,
and sitting in order struck the grey salt deep with their oars. 180
But when we got to the place, quite near at hand, there at

the land's edge, close to the sea, we saw a cave,
high, overgrown with laurels, where abundant flocks
of sheep and goats spent the night. Around it a high
wall had been built, with stones sunk deep in the ground, 185
and long timbers of pine and lofty-crested oak.
There a monstrous man had his dwelling, who all alone
herded his flocks far off, consorted with no others,
but lived by himself, mind bred in lawlessness:
a monstrous wonder, resembling not so much 190
any bread-eating mortal, but rather the wooded peak
of some lofty mountain, standing out apart from the rest.

"Then I ordered the rest of my trusty comrades to stay there,
where they were, by the ship, and to stand guard over it;
but I, having chosen the twelve best among my comrades, 195
went on, taking a goatskin full of the sweet dark wine
that Marō gave me—Marō, Euanthēs' son and priest
of Apollō, the guardian of Ismaros—because we had
protected him, together with his wife and his child,
out of reverence: his dwelling was in a wooded grove 200
of Phoibos Apollō, and he gave me splendid gifts:
of fine-wrought gold he bestowed on me seven talents,
with a mixing bowl all of silver, besides the wine,
with which he filled a dozen large jars in all,
sweet and unmixed, a heavenly drink: not one 205
of his house servants or handmaids had knowledge of it,
only himself, and his wife, and one woman, their housekeeper;
and whenever they drank this honey-sweet red wine
he'd mix one cup of wine with twenty measures of water,
and from the bowl would rise an aroma of marvelous 210
sweetness—then indeed to abstain would be no pleasure!
With this wine I filled and took with me a sizable goatskin,
and a leather bag packed with food, for my sharp mind sensed
that the man we were going to encounter, clad in huge strength,
was wild, with no knowledge of justice or civil rights. 215

"So we quickly came to the cave, but did not find him
inside: he was out, tending his fat flocks at pasture.
Then we entered the cave, amazed by all we saw there:
baskets loaded with cheeses, pens full of lambs
and kids. Each age-group was sorted out separately— 220

the older ones by themselves, the middlers likewise,
the newborn too. All the pans were brimming with whey,
the buckets and bowls, well wrought, that he used for milking.
Right off, my comrades spoke up, implored me to take
some of the cheeses and leave, then quickly to drive 225
kids and lambs from the pens back to our swift ship,
and sail away over the deep salt sea. But I would not
listen—far better indeed had I done so!—for I wanted
to meet this man, find out if he'd treat me as a guest.
No joy was he to my comrades when he did appear! 230

"So we lit a fire, and made sacrifice, and ourselves
took some of the cheeses and ate them, sat there inside
waiting, till he returned with his flock, hefting a great
load of dry firewood to serve him at suppertime,
and dumped it down with a crash as he came inside. 235
We shrank back, terrified, into the back of the cave,
while he drove his fat flocks into the roomy cavern—
all, that is, that he milked; the males he left outside,
he-goats and rams, there in the deep yard. Then
he lifted and put in place a huge and massive 240
door stone: not twenty-two four-wheeled wagons,
strong ones, would have sufficed to raise it off the threshold,
such a towering mass of rock he set in the doorway!
Then down he sat and milked the ewes and bleating she-goats,
all in turn, and set each lamb and kid to its mother. 245
Next, once he'd curdled half the white milk, he collected
the curds in wicker baskets and put them aside.
The remaining half he left in the pails, so it would be handy
to take and drink, and be ready for him at supper.
But after he'd busied himself with these tasks, he rekindled 250
the fire, and caught sight of us, and questioned us, saying:
'So, strangers, who are you? From where was it you sailed here
over the watery ways? On business? Or do you rove at random,
cruising the sea like pirates, who, at risk of their own lives,
go around making trouble for men from other lands?' 255

"So he spoke, and we succumbed to panic in our hearts,
terrified by his deep voice and his monstrous person;
yet even so I responded, and addressed him, saying:
'We are, if you please, Achaians, driven wandering from Troy

by all the winds, across the great gulf of the sea, 260
seeking our homes, but blown on a different route,
the wrong paths: Zeus, I guess, must have planned it thus.
We are, we claim, men serving Atreus' son Agamemnōn—
whose fame now is unsurpassed under heaven, so great
a city he sacked, so many people he slew! But we 265
who come to you now are suppliants, clasp your knees,
hoping you'll treat us as guests, or in some other way
give us some kind of present, as is proper with strangers.
Kind sir, revere the gods! We are here as your suppliants,
and Zeus is the protector of suppliants and strangers, 270
the strangers' god, who looks after respectful guests.'

"So I spoke. And he with pitiless heart responded:
'You're a fool, stranger, or you must come from far away,
telling me either to fear or to steer clear of the gods!
The Kyklōpes pay no attention to Zeus of the aegis, 275
nor to the blessed gods—we're far mightier than they!
Nor would I, to avoid the wrath of Zeus, spare either
you or your comrades, unless the spirit so moved me!
But where, coming here, did you leave your well-built ship?
Far off was it, or nearby? Tell me: I'd like to know.' 280

"So he spoke, testing me; but I knew too much to be tricked,
and when I replied it was with guile of my own:
'My ship was broken up by Poseidōn the Earth-Shaker,
who cast it upon the rocks at the frontier of your country:
close to the headland he drove it: the wind brought it ashore. 285
But I, and these men here, eluded sheer destruction.'

"So I spoke. He, with ruthless heart, made me no answer,
but sprang up, laid hands on my comrades, grappled two,
and down on the ground, as though they were mere puppies,
dashed them: their brains spilled earthwards, wetted the floor. 290
Then limb from limb he tore them to prepare his supper,
and devoured them like a mountain-bred lion, leaving nothing—
innards and flesh, bones with the marrow in them,
while we, lamenting, reached out our hands to Zeus
at the sight of such bestial deeds. Helplessness overmastered 295
our hearts. When the Kyklōps had glutted his vast belly
by gobbling human flesh, washed down with unmixed milk,

he settled to sleep in the cave, stretched out among his sheep.
So I planned an attack on him in my great-hearted spirit:
I'd steal up close, draw the sharp sword from beside my thigh, 300
and drive it into his breast, where the midriff cups the liver,
finding the spot with my hand. But a second thought stopped me—
we too would have perished there, faced sheer destruction,
for we could never have thrust back from the lofty
entrance with our bare hands the huge stone he'd set there, 305
and so, lamenting, we lay there, awaiting the bright Dawn.

"As soon as Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
he rekindled the fire, and began milking his fine flocks,
all in turn, and set each lamb and kid to its mother.
Then after he'd briskly accomplished his various tasks 310
he again grabbed two men together, and readied his meal.
When he'd eaten, he drove his fat flocks out of the cave,
easily shifting the enormous door-stone, and afterwards
setting it back in place, like the lid on a quiver.
Then, whistling loudly, the Kyklōps steered his fat flocks 315
uphill, and I was left there, planning mischief deep in my heart—
to get back at him, have Athēnē let me boast of what I'd done!

"Now this was the plan that seemed, to my mind, the likeliest:
The Kyklōps had left a great club beside a sheep pen,
of green olive wood, that he'd cut to carry with him 320
when it had dried out. Eyeing this, we compared it
in size to the mast of a black ship of twenty oars,
a broad-beamed merchantman, one that crosses the great
sea gulf—so huge did its length and breadth look to us.
I went and chopped off a piece about a fathom long: 325
handed this to my comrades, told them to scrape it down,
and they made it smooth, while I stood there and sharpened
its point, then took and hardened it in the blazing fire,
and stowed it out of sight, hiding it under the dung
that was strewn throughout the cave in heaped-up piles. 330
I ordered the others to cast lots to decide
which ones would dare, with me, to hoist up this stake
and ram it into his eye, when sweet sleep overcame him.
The lot picked out the same ones whom I'd have chosen,
four of them; with these, as the fifth, I picked myself. 335

"In the evening back he came, herding his fine-fleeced flocks,
and straightway drove his fat flocks into the wide cave—
all of them, left none outside in the deep enclosure:
some idea of his own, perhaps—or a god's command?[2]
He lifted and put in place the huge and massive door-stone, 340
then sat down and milked the ewes and bleating she–goats,
all in turn, and set each lamb and kid to its mother.
Then after he'd briskly accomplished his various tasks
he again grabbed two men together, and readied his meal.
It was now that I spoke to the Kyklōps, going and standing 345
beside him, in my hands an ivy-wood bowl of dark wine:
'Here, Kyklōps, drink this wine, now you've fed on human flesh,
and learn what fine wine it is that's stowed aboard our ship:
I was bringing it as a libation, hoping you'd feel pity
for me, and send me on homeward; but your mad fury 350
is not to be borne! Cruel wretch, how in future will any man
in the world come near you? What you've done is an outrage.'

"So I spoke. He took the wine, drained it, was vastly pleased
as he swilled the sweet stuff, demanded a second bowlful:
'Quick, give me some more—and also tell me your name, 355
now, at once! I want to give you a guest-gift you'll enjoy!
For the Kyklōpes too the grain-giving earth bears vines
with rich clusters of grapes, and Zeus' rain makes them grow;
but this—this is a match for ambrosia and nectar!'

"So he spoke; and I once more brought him the bright wine. 360
Three bowlfuls I fetched and gave him, three times in his folly
he drained them. Then, when the wine had fuddled his wits,
I addressed him with honey-sweet words, saying: 'Kyklōps,
do you ask me my famous name? Very well, I will tell you—
and then you give me that guest-gift, just as you promised! 365
Nobody is my name, Nobody's what I'm called by
my mother and father and all my comrades.'
"So I spoke,
and at once he with pitiless heart responded: 'Nobody
I shall eat last of all, when I've had all his companions,
and the others first: so, that will be your guest-gift.' 370

2. Polyphēmos, by bringing all the animals, including the rams, inside on this occasion, enables Odysseus and his men to escape after blinding the Kyklōps, W. B. Stanford notes (1971, 1: 359).

"So saying, he swayed and fell on his back, lay sprawling
with his thick neck twisted sideways: overmastering sleep
possessed him, from his gullet there gushed out wine
and gobbets of human flesh, as he drunkenly vomited.
It was now that I thrust the stake deep into the embers 375
to let it get hot, and encouraged all my companions
with heartening words, lest any back off from fear.
Then, just as the olive-wood stake, though green, was about
to catch fire, and was glowing, intensely incandescent,
I leaned close, pulled it clear of the flames. My companions 380
crowded around me. Some god breathed great courage into us.
The others grasped the olive-wood stake, sharp-pointed,
and rammed it into his eye, while I leaned over it,
and twisted it round. As when a man with a drill
bores a ship timber, and those below keep it turning 385
with a strap held at either end, and the drill runs nonstop—
just so we grasped and in his eye kept turning
that fire-sharpened stake: round the red-hot orb blood ran.
Eyelids and eyebrows alike were singed by the fiery breath
from the burning eyeball: its roots now crackled in the heat. 390
As when a blacksmith plunges a great axe or an adze
in cold water to temper it, and it hisses loudly—
for this is how iron achieves its greatest strength—just so
did his eye now hiss around the olive-wood point. He gave
a terrible scream, that made the rock resound, 395
and we shrank back in terror. He tore the stake, all slobbered
with fresh-shed blood, from his eye, and with both arms
hurled it from him, maddened with pain, and screamed aloud
to the other Kyklōpes, those who were his neighbors,
dwelling in caves near the windswept mountaintops, 400
and they heard him cry out, and gathered from all around,
and stood by the cave and asked him what was the matter:
'What great hurt, Polyphēmos, is it makes you scream like that
through the ambrosial night, and rouse us all from sleep?
Surely no mortal is rustling your flocks against your will? 405
Surely you're not being murdered by guile or by force?'
"From within
the cave mighty Polyphēmos answered them thus: 'My friends,
Nobody's killing me by guile, not by force.' To this,

addressing him with winged words, they now responded:
'If no one is harming you, then, and you're alone, there's no 410
way you can dodge a sickness sent by great Zeus: you must
just offer up prayers to our father, Lord Poseidōn.'
"So they spoke,
and departed. I laughed in my heart at the way that name,
and my faultless planning, had so deceived them. Meanwhile
the Kyklōps, groaning and suffering agonies of pain, 415
groped with his hands, took the stone from the cave's entrance,
and sat there in the opening with both arms wide outstretched,
hoping to catch anybody who tried to slip out with the sheep—
did he really suppose I was going to be that stupid?
By now I'd figured out just what I would have to do 420
to find an escape from death both for my companions
and for myself: I'd thought of every trick and device
that might save our lives: the threat was great and immediate.
Now this, to my mind, looked the best of such plans:
There were the rams, well-nourished and thickly fleeced, 425
fine strapping specimens, the wool on them violet-dark.
These I silently tied together with pliable withies—
on which the Kyklōps, bred in lawlessness, would sleep—
taking three at a time: the middle one carried a man,
while the ones on each flank gave my comrades protection: 430
thus each three sheep bore one person. As for myself,
there was one special ram, the best in the whole flock:
him I grasped by the back, curled up under his shaggy belly,
and lay with my hands twisted into his marvelous fleece,
holding on tight, with great patience, never relaxing. 435
And so, lamenting, we lay there, awaiting the bright dawn.

"When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
then the males of the flocks sallied out of the cave to pasture,
while the ewes went bleating about their pens, unmilked,
with bursting udders. Their master, in agonizing pain, 440
kept feeling along the backs of all his sheep
as they stood before him. The booby never perceived
that under his rich-fleeced sheep there were men tied on!
Last of the flock the ram approached the entrance, heavy
with his thick wool—and with me and my quick thinking! 445
Groping his back, the strong Polyphēmos addressed him, saying:

'Dear ram, why do you come thus through the cave, the very
last of the flock? You used not to lag behind the others,
but were always first out, to graze on the lushest pasture,
striding ahead, the first to reach the flowing river, 450
the first that liked to head back into the sheepfold when
evening came on. But now you're the last of all. Are you mourning,
maybe, your master's lost eye, which a wicked man put out,
he and his wretched fellows, when he'd doused my wits with wine—
Nobody—who, I tell you, is not clear of destruction yet ! 455
If you only could think as I do and had the power of speech
to tell me where that creature is hiding away from my might,
then would his brains, dashed out, lie scattered over the ground
throughout the cave, and my spirit would be lightened
of all the ills which that nothing-worth Nobody's brought me.' 460
So saying, he let the ram go on out through the entrance.

"When we'd moved on a little way from the cave and the enclosure,
first I loosed myself from the ram, then untied my comrades.
Quickly then we drove off the fat, smart-stepping sheep,
glancing back all the time, until we reached our ship. 465
A welcome sight to our dear comrades were those of us
who'd escaped death: for the others they started wailing.
But this I stopped, with a silent upward jerk of the head
that said 'No' to their weeping. I told them to throw on board,
fast, all the fine-fleeced sheep, and to put to sea at once. 470
They came aboard quickly, each man to his rowlock, and seated
in proper order they struck the grey brine with their oars,
and when we had backed offshore as far as a man's shout
would carry, I called out to the Kyklōps with mocking words:
'Kyklōps, it was, then, no weakling whose comrades you planned, 475
by might and brute force, to eat in your hollow cave! In full
were your evil deeds to rebound on your own head, vile wretch,
who did not shrink from eating the guests in your house, for which
Zeus and the other gods have exacted requital from you.'

"So I spoke, and my words made him yet more angry at heart, 480
so that he wrenched off, and hurled at us, the peak of a lofty
mountain, that fell just in front of our dark-prowed vessel,
narrowly missing the end of the steering oar: the sea
surged up under the falling rock's impact, created

a wave that carried our vessel straight back shoreward, 485
a heaving swell from the deep, aimed directly at the land.
But I seized a very long pole in my hands and thrust us
clear once more, and urgently signed to my comrades
to row for dear life, and get us away from danger,
gesturing with my head. They bent to their oars, and rowed. 490
But when, working hard at the sea, we'd doubled the distance,
then I shouted again to the Kyklōps, though all around
my comrades with calming arguments tried stop me:
'Stubborn wretch, why so set on infuriating this savage?
Just now he flung some missile seaward, drove our vessel 495
back to land—indeed, we thought we were done for!
If he'd heard any one of us making a sound, or shouting,
he'd have broken our heads as well as the ship's timbers
with a cast of some sharp glinting boulder, so mighty his arm!'

"Thus they spoke, but could not shift my great-hearted spirit, 500
and I answered him back, irate and resentful at heart:
'Kyklōps, if any mortal, of all mankind, should ask you
about your eye's unseemly blindness, tell them it was
Odysseus, sacker of cities, who destroyed your eyesight:
Laërtēs' son, who calls Ithákē his home.'
"So I spoke, 505
and he groaned aloud, and then responded to me, saying:
'Alas, that ancient prophecy has indeed come true for me!
There once was a prophet here, a great gentleman too—
Tēlemos, Eurymos' son, a man unmatched in seercraft,
who grew old as a diviner among the Kyklōpes: he 510
told me that all these things would happen in time to come,
that by Odysseus' hands I'd be deprived of my sight.
But I always thought it would be some tall and handsome
hero who'd show up here, endowed with mighty strength:
But in fact it's this puny, no-account weakling who's 515
deprived me of eyesight after fuddling my wits with wine!
Come back here, Odysseus, and let me offer you guest-gifts,
and urge the famed Earth-Shaker to grant you conveyance home,
for I am his son, and he avows that he's my father.
He himself, if he so chooses, will heal me—he, and none other, 520
whether one of the blessed gods or some mortal human.'

"So he spoke, and I answered him, saying: 'How I wish
I had the power to strip you of breath and life, and send you
down to the realm of Hadēs, as surely as no one
will heal your eye, not even the Earth-Shaker himself.' 525

"So I spoke, and he then prayed to the lord Poseidōn,
reaching out both his hands to the starry heavens: 'Hear me,
Poseidōn, dark-haired Earth-Shaker, if I am truly
your son, if you avow yourself my father! Grant
that Laërtēs' son, whose home is on Ithákē, 530
Odysseus, sacker of cities, shall not reach home—
But if it's fated that he's to see his loved ones again,
to come back to his well-built house and his native land,
may he get there late, in bad shape, all his comrades lost,
in a ship not his own, and be met with trouble in his home!' 535

"So he spoke in prayer, and was heard by the dark-haired god.
Then once more he hefted an even greater rock
and swung and hurled it, putting huge force into the throw,
and it landed only a little behind our dark-prowed vessel,
narrowly missing the end of the steering oar: the sea 540
surged up under the falling rock's impact, created
a wave that carried our vessel straight on shoreward:
and so we came back to the island where all our other
well-benched ships lay together, and around them sat
our comrades in tears, forever awaiting our return. 545
When we got there we ran up our vessel onto the beach,
and ourselves disembarked upon the sandy strand.
The Kyklōps' sheep we fetched out from the hollow ship
and allotted them so that no one got less than his fair share.
But the ram my well-greaved comrades allotted to me alone 550
when the sheep were shared out, as a special prize: on the shore
this ram to Zeus, Kronos' son, dark-clouded, omnipotent,
I sacrificed, burned the thighs. But he ignored my offering:
he had in mind the destruction of all my well-benched ships,
and every last one of my trusty comrades. So then 555
the whole long day until the going down of the sun
we sat feasting on meat in abundance and sweet wine;
but when the sun had set and darkness came on
then we lay down and slept along the line of the shore.
When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered, 560

then indeed I aroused my companions and ordered them
to embark themselves, and to cast off the stern warps.
They came aboard quickly, seated themselves at the rowlocks,
and sitting in order struck the grey salt deep with their oars.

"So we sailed on from there, lamenting at heart, but relieved 565
at having got clear of death, though we'd lost our comrades."

Book 10

"To the isle of Aiolia then we came, where was the dwelling
of Aiolos, Hippotas' son, much loved by the deathless gods,
on a floating island: encircling it was a rampart
of unbreakable bronze: the rock ran up sheer and smooth.
Twelve offspring of his besides were established in his halls, 5
Six daughters there were, and also six lusty sons:
the daughters he gave to the sons to be their bedfellows.
These always eat with their dear father and loving mother,
and countless fine dishes are ready to hand before them.
The house smells of food, reechoes with their chatter 10
every day; but at nighttime, beside their modest wives,
they sleep under blankets upon their corded bedsteads.
It was, then, to their city and fine abode that we came,
and for a full month he befriended me, asked about everything—
Ilion, Argive vessels, the homecoming of the Achaians, 15
and I told him the whole story, just as it happened.
When I asked him about our own journey, wanted his help
in sending us on our way, he denied me nothing, furnished
conveyance, gave me a bag he'd made from the flayed hide
of a nine-year-old ox, in which he'd imprisoned the paths 20
of the blustering winds: Kronos' son had made him their steward,
empowered to calm or arouse them, as he might choose.
This he put in my hollow ship, tied fast with a shining cord
of silver, that let no breeze, however slight, escape.
For me, however, he sent a breath of the west wind to blow 25
that would bear ships and men home; but he wasn't destined
to bring this about: our own folly was what undid us.

"For nine days on end we sailed, both by day and by night,
and now on the tenth our homeland came into sight—
close enough indeed to see men tending their watch fires: 30
then it was that sweet sleep came upon me in my exhaustion,
for I'd handled the sheet throughout, wouldn't let any other
crew member have it, to get us back home the sooner.
But my comrades had started to mutter among themselves,

said I was bringing home gold and silver as presents 35
from Aiolos, Hippotas' great-hearted son; and thus
would one, with a sidelong glance, sound off to his neighbor:
'Look how this fellow is always loved and honored
by all men, whatever city or land he comes to!
Much rich treasure he's bringing back home from Troy 40
out of the booty, while we, who went through the selfsame
venture as he did, are returning empty-handed!
And now he's been given these further generous gifts
by Aiolos, out of friendship! So let's take a quick look
and see how much gold and silver there is in that bag!'

"So they spoke, 45
and this evil advice of my companions was accepted.
They opened the bag, and all the winds rushed out—
a storm wind instantly seized them, bore them seaward
weeping, away from their native land; and I,
waking, debated in my own blameless spirit 50
whether to plunge overboard, and perish in the deep,
or to endure in silence, remain among the living.
I held on and stayed, head covered, lying there
in my ship. By this evil gale our vessels were carried
right back to Aiolos' island, my comrades lamenting. 55

"There we went ashore and took aboard more water,
and my comrades at once ate a meal beside the swift ships.
But when we'd gotten a taste of food and drink,
then I, taking with me a herald and one companion,
made my way to Aiolos' famed abode, and found him 60
at dinner, along with his wife and children. We entered
his house, and sat by the doorposts, at the threshold.
They were amazed to see us, and questioned us, saying:
'Why are you here, Odysseus? What mean god assailed you?
We dispatched you with all kindness, to ensure you'd come 65
safely to home and country, or wherever you wanted.'

"So they spoke; and, grieving at heart, I then explained to them:
'My wretched companions undid me; they, and damnable
slumber! My friends, help me now: you have the power.'

"So I spoke, addressing them with conciliatory words; 70
but they remained silent. Then their father made this response:

'Leave this island at once, most abject of living creatures!
It's not proper for me to aid or provide conveyance
to a man whom the blessed gods abominate! Begone!
You come here as one marked out by divine hostility!' 75

"That said, he dismissed me, groaning heavily, from his domain.
So from there we pushed on still further, grieving at heart,
the men's spirit worn down by the hardship of rowing, since,
due to our folly, we no longer had a good wind behind us.
For six more days, then, we voyaged on, day and night, 80
and on the seventh we reached the steep citadel of Lamos,[1]
Laistrygonian Tēlepylos, where shepherd greets shepherd
one driving his flock back home, out to pasture the other.
There a man that needed no sleep could earn a double wage,[2]
by both herding cattle, and tending white sheep, so close 85
do the paths of the night and the day run on together.
When we reached the fine harbor there—a sheer cliff face
ran all the way round it from side to side, while two
projecting headlands, confronting each another, loomed large
at the mouth, leaving only a restricted entrance— 90
then all the rest went on in with their well-curved vessels.
and moored them there, snug inside the hollow harbor,
packed side by side, for no wave ever stirred there,
either great or small; all around was a bright calm.
But I alone held my black ship back outside 95
at the furthest edge, hitched my cables to a rock;
then climbed to a rugged lookout point, and stood there.

---

1. Lamos and Tēlepylos are both completely unknown factors. The most common assumption is that Lamos was the name of the city's founder, and Tēlepylos that of the city itself: so, e.g., Richmond Lattimore suggests, and faute de mieux I have opted for that myself. But Lamos could equally well be the city's name, and *tēlepylos,* small *t*, its qualifying epithet, meaning uncertain. Puzzles like this are a salutary reminder of how much, in the Homeric epics, still remains beyond our reach.
2. Since Hellenistic times, this apparent nightlessness has most often been taken as "a somewhat muddled reference to the short summer nights of high northern latitudes" (Stanford 1971, 1: 368). More recently this view has been dismissed as "untenable" and replaced by a somewhat vague mythological concept stressing "the topographical strangeness of the legendary country in the far east" (Heubeck in *Comm.,* 2: 48), where "the Laistrygonians live in a land of perpetual light just as the Cimmerians live in a country of unbroken darkness" (11.14–24). The problem of two such countries coexisting is somewhat mitigated by the fact that this does not in fact quite seem to be what H. is saying. But again, we are made uncomfortably aware of the limits on our knowledge.

Looking round, I saw no cattle, no human activity, nothing
except for a trace of smoke drifting skyward from the earth.
So I then sent out some comrades to go ahead and discover 100
what kind of men, among earth's bread-eaters, dwelt here:
two men I chose, and a third to go with them as herald.
They went ashore and followed a beaten track, by which
wagons would haul down wood to the city from the hilltops.
Outside the city they met a girl who was drawing water— 105
the strapping daughter, this, of a certain Laistrygonian,
Antiphatēs: she'd come down to the fair-flowing spring,
Artakiē, from which they carried their water into town.
So they approached her, spoke to her, asked her questions—
Who was king of these people, and who were his subjects? 110
She promptly showed them her father's high-roofed house.
When they entered this famed domain, they found his wife at home,
huge as a mountain peak, and were horrified by her.
She at once summoned famous Antiphatēs, her husband,
from assembly: he devised a miserable fate for them. 115
One of my comrades he grabbed, prepared him for dinner,
But the other two took to their heels, got away to the ships.
Then he raised a cry through the city, and when they heard it
the powerful Laistrygonians thronged in from all around,
thousands of them, resembling not human beings, but Giants! 120
From the cliffs with boulders—each one a man-sized load—
they showered us: a ghastly sound rose up from the ships
of men dying and tinber shattering. They speared them
like fishes, carried them off to have as their gruesome meal.
But while they were murdering those inside the deep harbor, 125
I meanwhile, drawing the sharp sword from by my thigh
with it cut the stern cables of my dark-prowed vessel,
and quickly called to my comrades, urging, commanding them
to row for dear life, get us clear of disaster. They all,
in terror of death ripped up the salt spume with their oar blades. 130
Ah, the joy of escaping those sheer cliffs, getting out to sea—
for my ship alone: all the rest now perished as they lay there.

"So we sailed on from there, lamenting at heart, but glad
at having escaped from death, though we'd lost our comrades;
and we came to the isle of Aiaia, that was the home 135
of fair-tressed Kirkē, dread goddess of mortal speech—

full sister was she to the evil-minded Aiētēs,
and both were begotten by Hēlios, bringer of light,
on Persē, their mother, whom Ocean had as his daughter.
There we put in to land with our ship, and silently steered her 140
into a well-sheltered harbor, with some god guiding us.
Then, after disembarking, we lay there two days and nights
eating our hearts with out with fatigue and sorrow;
But when fair-tressed Dawn ushered in the third day, then
I took my spear and my keen-edged sword, and quickly 145
climbed on up from the ship to a point with a good view
in my search for signs of field work or of human voices.
I got to a rocky outcrop, a lookout station, and stood there,
and glimpsed smoke wavering up from the wide-wayed earth
out of Kirkē's dwelling, through dense coppices and leafage. 150
So then I pondered, in my mind and spirit, whether—
having seen fire and smoke—I should go and find out more;
and as I reflected, it struck me that this was the best course:
to go back to my swift ship first, and to the seashore,
give my comrades a meal, but then send *them t*o investigate. 155
But as I went, and came close to my well-curved vessel,
then, too, some god, seeing me alone, felt pity,
and sent, right into my path, a huge high-antlered stag
on his way from his forest range to drink at the river,
since the sun's strong heat had got to him. As he emerged, 160
I speared him, in mid-back, piercing his spine: the bronze
spear now transfixed him, he uttered a dying cry
and collapsed in the dust. The spirit fled from him. Then,
one foot on his back, I tugged the bronze spear out
from the wound, left the carcass there on the ground, 165
while I plucked still-growing stems and osiers, wove them
into a fathom-long rope, well twisted at either end,
and, tying the feet of this monstrous beast together,
slung it across my back, and went on to the black ship
leaning upon my spear, since no way could I support it 170
with one hand upon my shoulder, so huge a brute it was.
I dumped it in front of the ship, and spoke encouraging words
to my comrades, addressing each individual in turn:
'Not yet, friends, for all our grief, shall we go down
to Hades' realm before our destined day arrives! 175

So come, while there's still food and drink in our swift ship
Let's think about eating, not waste away from hunger!'

"So I spoke: they at once paid heed to my words, uncovered
their faces,[3] and, on that shore by the unharvested sea,
stared in awe at the stag: a huge beast it was indeed. 180
But when they'd feasted their eyes upon this spectacle
they washed their hands and made ready a truly splendid feast.

"So the whole long day until the going down of the sun
we sat feasting on meat in abundance, drinking sweet wine;
but when the sun had set and darkness came on 185
then we lay down and slept along the line of the shore.
When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
I called an assembly and then addressed them all, declaring:
'Heed what I say, my comrades, for all your grim suffering!
Dear friends, we don't know where darkness lies, or dawn, 190
or where the sun that brings light to mortals goes down
under the earth, or rises; but let us take thought, quickly:
Is there any course open to us? Myself, I do not think so.
I climbed to a rugged lookout point and surveyed
the island. The boundless deep encircles it all around. 195
It's low-lying land: I did see smoke, in the middle,
wavering up through dense coppices and leafage.'

"So I spoke, and their inner spirit was broken, as they
recalled the deeds of Antiphatēs, the Laistrygonian,
and of the Kyklōps, that gross-spirited man-eater. 200
They wept aloud and shed thick-flowing tears,
but all their lamenting accomplished nothing for them.

"I divided my well-greaved comrades into two groups,
chose a leader for each of them: I myself took command
of one, put godlike Eurylochos in charge of the other. 205
Next, at once, we shook lots in a bronze helmet,
and out leapt the lot of great-hearted Eurylochos.
So he set off, and took with him twenty-two comrades,
all in tears; and the ones left behind were lamenting too.

---

3. Ancient Greeks covered their faces as a formal sign of great grief or of mourning.

"They found, in a woodland glen, the house of Kirkē, built 210
of polished stone, and set in a space with a wide vista.
Prowling around it were mountain wolves and lions
that she had enchanted by feeding them evil drugs.
These beasts did not rush to attack my men, but instead
fawned round them, rearing, swishing their long tails. 215
In the way that dogs, when their master's coming from dinner,
fawn round him, since he always has some tasty tit-bit for them,
so round my men now fawned these strong-clawed wolves
and lions. The men were afraid on seeing such scary monsters.
So there they stood in the sweet-haired goddess' forecourt 220
and heard Kirkē singing inside in an enchanting voice
as she went to and fro, weaving a great immortal web—
fine work, exquisite, charming, as is that of all goddesses.
First to find words was Politēs, leader of men, the dearest
to me of all my comrades, and the most devoted: 225
'Friends, there's some lady inside, going to and fro at the loom
and singing so sweetly that the whole floor echoes round—
goddess or woman, let's call out to her!'

"So he spoke,
and they all clamored, calling out to her. She at once
threw open the shining doors, came out herself, 230
and invited them in. They all, in their innocence, followed,
except for Eurylochos: he, suspecting a trap, hung back.
She escorted them in, sat them down on chairs and benches,
and offered them barley meal, cheese, and pale yellow honey
mixed with Pramnian wine; but she added to this mixture 235
baneful drugs to destroy their memory of their homeland.
When she'd given it them and they'd swallowed it, then at once
she struck them with her wand, and shut them away in sties:
they now all had pigs' heads, pigs' voices, and pigs' bristles,
pigs' bodies too; but their minds remained unchanged. 240
So they were penned in, weeping; and Kirkē threw them
oak nuts to eat, acorns, the fruit of the cornel tree—
such food as swine that sleep on the ground will feed on.

"Now Eurylochos came straight back to our swift black ship
to tell us the news of his comrades and their unkind fate. 245
But not one word could he utter, much though he longed to,
so stricken with great distress was he in his heart; his eyes

were brimming with tears, his spirit brooded on lamentation.
Only after we questioned him, in our amazement, did he
then inform us about the fate of his other comrades: 250
'We went through the wood as you told us, noble Odysseus,
and found, in a glen, a splendid house, constructed
of polished stone, and set in a space with a wide vista.
Someone inside was going to and fro at a great web, singing
sweetly, goddess or woman. We all called out to her. 255
She at once threw open the shining doors, emerged,
and invited us in. The rest, in their innocence, followed.
But I held back, suspecting a trap, and they then
vanished together—not one of them ever returned,
though I sat around long enough, watching out for them.' 260

"So he spoke. I now slung my silver-studded sword—
large, of bronze—from my shoulders, strapped on my bow
and quiver, told him to lead me back the way he'd come.
But he clutched at my knees with both hands, besought me, wept,
then addressed me tearfully with winged words, saying: 'Don't 265
make me go back, Zeus' nursling! Let me stay here!
I know you'll never come back yourself, or rescue
any of your lost comrades! Let's get out now, with those
that are here—we still may escape the day of doom!'

"So he spoke;
and I responded to him, saying: 'Eurylochos you, 270
yourself can remain here, right where you are, quite safe,
eating and drinking beside the black hollow ship; but go
I myself must; a most powerful need is upon me.'

"So saying, I went my way, up from the ship and the sea.
I'd passed through the sacred glens, and was near the great 275
house of Kirkē, that expert in the use of countless drugs,
when Hermēs met me, god of the golden wand,
on my way to the house, in the likeness of a young man
with the first down on his face, when the charm of youth
is greatest. He took my hand, and said: 'Where are you off to 280
again, you hapless man, in the highlands, all alone,
and ignorant of the country? Your comrades in Kirkē's house
are caged up as pigs in her imprisoning sties. Are you
coming here to release them? I tell you, you yourself

will never escape, you'll end up caught like the rest! 285
But see now, I shall free you from harm, and save you—
Here, take this potent herb, have it with you when you go
to Kirkē's house: it'll keep the evil day from your head!
And I'll tell you all Kirkē's malevolent wiles: she'll make you
a mixed posset,[4] adding in drugs along with the foodstuff. 290
Yet not even so will she contrive to bewitch you: the potent
herb that I'll give you won't let her. And I'll tell you all
you must do. When Kirkē strikes you with her long wand,
draw your sharp sword from beside your thigh, as though
with intent kill her. Then she, overcome by terror, 295
will invite you to bed down with her, make love together.
You must not, at this point, refuse the bed of the goddess
if you want her to free your comrades and provide for you;
but make her swear a great oath by the blessed gods
to plan no more nasty trouble against your person, 300
lest when she has you naked she'll weaken and unman you.'

"So saying, the slayer of Argos gave me the herb,
pulling it out of the ground, and showed me its nature.
At its root it was black, but its flower was white as milk:
Moly is what the gods call it: it's hard for mortal men 305
to dig up; but the gods can do whatever they've a mind to.

"Hermēs now departed to lofty Olympos, going
up through the tree-clad island, while I made my way
to Kirkē's house, my heart in a turmoil as I went.
I stood in the forecourt of the fine-tressed goddess 310
and standing there called to her. The goddess heard my voice,
at once came out, flung open the shining doors
and invited me in. Much troubled at heart, I entered.
She led me in and seated me on a silver-studded chair—
beautiful, finely crafted, with a footstool for my feet. 315
Then she mixed me a posset in a golden cup,
but slipped a drug into it, with malevolence in her heart.
When she gave it to me, and I drank it, yet was not bewitched,
she struck me with her wand, and had this word for me, saying:
'Off to the sty with you! Lie there with your other comrades!' 320

4. "A semi-liquid mess compounded of wine and other ingredients . . . but app. intended to be drunk" (Cunliffe, 241).

"So she spoke. I drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh,
and charged at Kirkē, as though with intent to kill her.
She gave a loud scream, slipped under my charge, embraced
my knees, and, sobbing, addressed me with winged words, saying:
'Who are you? From where? What city? Who are your parents? 325
I'm amazed that you drank my drug and were not bewitched!
No other man, ever, has failed to succumb to this drug
once he'd drunk it, once it had passed the barrier of his teeth!
Truly, the mind in your breast is proof against all enchantment.
You must be resourceful Odysseus, who—so the slayer of Argos, 330
he of the golden wand, always told me—would visit here
in his swift black ship, on his way back home from Troy!
So come, sheath your sword, let the two of us now go up
into my bed, and by mingling there together
in the passion of love, find trust, each one in the other.' 335

"So she spoke; but I answered her thus, with a question, saying:
'Kirkē, how can you tell me to come and make love with you,
when you've turned my comrades to swine, right here in your halls,
and now you have me here, with malign intent you want me
to go up into your chamber and your bed, so that when 340
you have me naked you can weaken and unman me?
Never would I agree to come anywhere near your bed
unless you, goddess, were to swear me a mighty oath
that you'd plan no more malicious trouble against my person.'

"So I spoke. She at once swore the oath as I requested. 345
But not till she'd sworn, and completed the oath in full,
would I agree to go up into Kirkē's sumptuous bed.
Meanwhile her handmaids were busy around the halls—
four of them, those who did all the housework in her home:
nymphs, these, daughters of the springs and the groves, 350
of the sacred rivers that flow to their outfall by the sea.
One was hanging fine purple cloths on the headrests
of chairs and under them spreading white linen foot mats;
another was setting up silver tables beside the chairs
and arranging golden baskets upon them; the third 355
of these serving women was mixing sweet mind-honeying
wine in a silver bowl and setting out golden goblets.
The fourth had fetched in water and lit a blazing fire
beneath a great cauldron: the water was getting hot.

When it reached boiling point in the bright bronze vessel, 360
she got me into a bath, sluiced me down from the cauldron,
mixing hot and cold to my taste, bathing head and shoulders
to ease from my limbs their heart-crushing weariness.
After she'd bathed me, and massaged me with rich oil,
she provided me with a splendid mantle and tunic, 365
brought me back, and seated me on a silver-studded chair—
elegant, finely wrought—with a footstool for my feet.
A maid brought hand-washing water in a beautiful golden
pitcher and poured it into a silver basin for me
to wash with and drew up beside me a polished table. 370
The respected housekeeper now set bread beside me,
with many side dishes, giving freely of her supplies.
Then she told me to eat, but I was not so minded:
I sat brooding on other things: my heart sensed trouble.

"Now when Kirkē saw me thus sitting, not reaching out 375
for food, and overmastered by deep-felt distress, she came
and stood close beside me, addressed me with winged words, saying:
'Odysseus, why are you sitting there like some voiceless person,
eating your heart out, touching neither food nor drink?
Do you maybe anticipate some new trick? You don't need 380
to be afraid: I've already sworn that powerful oath.'
"So she spoke:
but to her I then responded, saying: 'Kirkē, tell me,
what kind of man is it, in his right mind, could bear
to taste food or drink before he'd secured freedom
for his comrades, had seen them with his own eyes? If you 385
really mean it when you tell me to eat and drink, then free them!
And let me set eyes myself on these, my trusty comrades.'

"So I spoke. Kirkē now made her way out through the hall,
wand in hand, flung open the doors of the sty, and drove
my men out, embodied as hogs some nine years old. 390
They stood there before her, and she went in among them,
anointing each one with a different magic salve, so that
the bristles earlier grown there by the deadly drug
that the lady Kirkē had given them now sloughed off their limbs:
men they became again, more youthful than previously, 395
a great deal more handsome, much taller in their carriage.
They recognized me: each one of them clung to my hands.

A yearning for lamentation came on us all, and the house
echoed terribly round us: the goddess herself felt pity.

"Then she, bright among goddesses, approached me and said: 400
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
go down now to your swift ship, there on the seashore.
First thing of all, haul your vessel high up upon the beach,
then store all your goods and equipment in the caves,
then come back yourself and bring your trusty comrades.' 405

"So she spoke, and my proud spirit was persuaded.
I made my way down to the swift ship and the seashore,
and there by the swift ship I found my trusty comrades
lamenting piteously and shredding big tears. As country
calves will come frisking about a herd of cows 410
on their way back to the dung yard, replete with fodder—
in a mass they confront them, the pens no longer contain them,
and endlessly lowing they keep scampering round
their mothers—so these men, when they set eyes upon me,
thronged round me weeping: it seemed to them in their hearts 415
as though they'd got back to their homeland, to the actual
township of rugged Ithákē where they were born and bred.
Lamenting now they addressed me with winged words, saying:
'We're as delighted, Zeus' nursling, by your return, as if
we'd got back home to Ithákē, to our native country! 420
But come now, tell us the fate of our other companions.'

"So they spoke, and I gave them a reassuring response:
'First thing of all, haul our vessel high up upon the beach,
then store all our goods and equipment in the caves.
That done, you—all of you—come quickly along with me 425
to the sacred halls of Kirkē, where you'll see your comrades
eating and drinking, from a never-failing abundance.'

"So I spoke, and they were quick to obey my instructions.
Only Eurylochos tried to hold back all our comrades,
and addressed them with winged words, saying: 'You wretched 430
creatures, where are we going? Why long for these troubles,
when going down into Kirkē's domain will surely
transform each one of us into swine or wolves or lions,
condemned, under obligation, to guard her great abode?
That's how the Kyklōps acted when our comrades entered 435

his farmstead and headstrong Odysseus went in with them:
it was through this man's recklessness that they too perished.'

"So he spoke; I debated in my mind then whether I should
unsheathe the long sword from beside my sturdy thigh,
and cut off his head with it, lay him low, although 440
close kin by marriage he was to me; but my comrades
one after another with honey-sweet words restrained me:
'Scion of Zeus, give the order, and we'll leave this man here
to stay by the ship and to guard it; but as for us,
what we want is for you to lead us to Kirkē's sacred abode.' 445

"So saying, they started off then, up from the ship and the sea;
nor was Eurylochos left behind by the hollow ship,
but came with the rest of us, fearing my strong reproof.

"Meanwhile, back in her house, Kirkē with loving care
bathed the rest of my comrades, massaged them with rich oil, 450
and dressed them up in fine wool mantles and tunics;
we found them all having a good dinner there in her halls.
But when my men saw and recognized one another,
they wept and lamented: the house reechoed around them.
Then she, bright among goddesses, approached me and said: 455
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
no longer need you all raise this loud lament! I too know
the sum of the troubles you suffered out on the fish-rich deep
and every wrong that's been done you by hostile men on land.
But come now, eat your food and drink your wine, until 460
you once more recover that spirit you had in your breasts
to begin with when you set out from your native land
of rugged Ithákē—but now you're worn and dispirited,
forever recalling your rough wandering, nor has your heart
known any joy, since indeed you've suffered greatly.' 465

"So she spoke, and our proud spirits consented,
and day after day, for the course of a whole year
we sat there feasting on plentiful meat and wine.
but when a year had passed, as the turning seasons
of the months went by, and the long days came to an end, 470
then my trusty companions assailed me with their complaints:
'Are you out of your mind? High time to think of your homeland

if it's truly your destiny to be saved and to return
to your high-roofed house and to your own native country.'

"So they spoke, and my proud spirit consented. 475
So all day long until the setting of the sun
we sat there feasting on plentiful meat and sweet wine;
but when the sun went down and darkness came on,
and they retired to sleep along the shadowy halls,
then I myself went up into Kirkē's sumptuous bed 480
and clasped her knees in entreaty. The goddess heard
and listened. I addressed her with winged words, saying:
'Kirkē, fulfill for me now the promise you made, that you'd
convey me home: my spirit's eager to be on its way,
likewise the rest of my comrades, who nag me to death 485
as they grieve around me, whenever you're somewhere else.'

"So I spoke. Bright among goddesses, she at once replied:
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
you all need stay in my house no longer against your will;
but there is another journey you must accomplish first: 490
you must go to the realm of Hādēs and dread Persephonē,
to consult the ghostly spirit of Thēban Teirēsias,
blind seer, whose reasoning mind remains intact,
since on him alone, when dead, Persephonē bestowed
full mental powers: the rest are only flitting shadows.' 495

"So she spoke. But the spirit within me was shattered:
I wept as I sat on the bed, and my heart no longer
had any desire to live, to behold the sunlight.
But when I'd had my fill of weeping and agonizing,
I found the words to reply with, and addressed her, saying: 500
'Kirkē, who will serve as our guide upon this journey?
No one yet in a black ship has ever voyaged to Hādēs.'

"So I spoke. She, bright among goddesses, at once replied:
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
don't worry about installing a pilot aboard your ship— 505
Just set up your mast, spread your white sail, and then
sit down, and let the north wind carry you onward!
But when in your ship you've traversed the stream of Ocean,
and come to a wooded shore and the groves of Persephonē,

with their tall poplars, and willows that shed their fruit, 510
there beach your vessel, close by deep-eddying Ocean,
and yourself go on to the dank domain of Hadēs. There
it is that into Acherōn Pyriphlegethōn flows,
and Kōkytos, that branches off from the waters of Styx:[5]
a rock marks the confluence of these two loud rivers. 515
Go close in there, hero, exactly as I instruct you,
and dig out a pit, about a cubit deep and wide,
and around it pour a libation to all the dead—
first with milk and honey, then with sweet wine,
and thirdly with water: sprinkle white barley on it, 520
and entreat the weak heads of the dead with many vows—
that when you're back on Ithákē you'll sacrifice the best
barren heifer in your domain, load the pyre with good things,
and, just for Teirēsias, you'll make a sacrifice
of an all-black ram, the finest one in your flocks. 525
Then, when you've supplicated the famous tribes of the dead,
you must slaughter a ram and a black ewe, making them face
toward Erebos, while you turn your back on them, reach out
to the streams of the river. This is the place where many
ghosts of those who have perished will now gather. 530
At that point arouse your comrades, and command them
to take the sheep that lie there, slain by the ruthless bronze,
and flay and burn them, along with prayers to the gods—
strong Hadēs and dread Persephonē. You yourself,
drawing the keen-edged sword from beside your thigh, 535
must sit there, and not allow the weak heads of the dead
to get near the blood until you've questioned Teirēsias.
The seer will then quickly approach you, leader of men:
He will show you your route, explain your journey's stages,
your homecoming, how you're to traverse the fish-rich deep.' 540

"So she spoke; and at once the golden-throned Dawn arose.
She gave me a mantle to wear, and a tunic; and she, the nymph,
dressed herself in a long white robe, made of finely
woven and beautiful stuff, and around her waist
knotted a fine golden sash, set a veil on her head. 545
Now I went through the house and aroused my comrades

5. There were traditionally six rivers in the Greek Underworld; four of them are mentioned here. The two absent are Lēthē (Forgetfulness) and Aornos (? "birdless").

with kindly words, approaching each man in turn:
'Lie no longer in bed enjoying sweet slumber! Time
for us to be going! Lady Kirkē has briefed me fully.'

"So I spoke, and their proud spirits consented. Yet not 550
even from there could I get my comrades away
without loss. The youngest, Elpēnōr—neither outstanding
in battle nor yet particularly bright-minded—had
lain down apart from his comrades in Kirkē's house,
in search of cool air, being heavy with wine, on the roof. 555
Hearing the noise and clatter of his comrades stirring
he got up suddenly, and, quite forgetting that he should
make his way back down by way of the long ladder,
fell headlong off the roof: his neck was snapped through
at the spine, and his ghost went down to Hadēs' realm. 560

"As my men were bustling about I spoke among them, saying:
'You may think you're on the way to your own dear country,
but Kirkē's informed me we must first make another journey,
to the realm of Hadēs and of dread Persephonē, there
to consult the ghostly spirit of Thēban Teirēsias.' 565

"So I spoke, and their spirit was shattered within them, they
sat down wherever they were, and wailed, and tore their hair;
but all their lamenting accomplished nothing for them.

"While we were on our way to the swift ship and the seashore,
full of sorrow and shedding big tears, meanwhile 570
Kirkē had gone on ahead of us and tethered there,
by the black ship, a ram and a black ewe,
overtaking us easily; when gods don't desire it, who
can witness their passage, either coming or going?"

Book 11

"But when we came down to the ship and the sea, first off
we hauled our vessel into the bright salt water, and then
stepped the mast, set the sail in the black ship, and took
the sheep and put them aboard, and ourselves embarked,
full of sorrow and shedding big tears. For us 5
in the wake of our dark-prowed vessel a following breeze
that filled our sail, a trusty companion, was sent us
by fair-tressed Kirkē, dread goddess of mortal speech.
So when we'd secured the tackle throughout the ship we then
sat down, leaving wind and steersman to keep her on her course. 10
All day long her sail spread taut as she sheared through the deep,
till the sun went down and all the ways were in shadow.
She came to the boundary marked by deep-flowing Ocean,
where are the land and settlement of the Kimmerians,
enveloped in mist and cloud: upon them never 15
does the bright-gleaming sun look down with his rays,
either while he's climbing into the starry heavens
or when he turns back again from heaven to earth,
but deathly night's spread out over hapless mortals.

"There we now came, and beached our ship. Unloading 20
the sheep, we made our way beside the stream of Ocean
until we reached the place of which Kirkē had told us.
There Perimēdēs and Eurylochos held the victims,
while I unsheathed the sharp sword from beside my thigh,
and dug out a pit, about a cubit deep and wide, 25
and around it poured a libation to all the dead—
first with milk and honey, then with sweet wine,
and thirdly with water: I sprinkled white barley in it,
besought the weak heads of the dead with many vows—
that when I was back on Ithákē I'd sacrifice the best 30
barren heifer in my domain, load the pyre with good things,
and, for Teirēsias only, would offer a sacrifice
of an all-black ram, the finest one in my flocks.
Then, when with vows and prayers I'd made my entreaties

to the tribes of the dead, I took the sheep, cut their throats 35
over the pit. The dark blood flowed, there came up out
from Erebos[1] the shades of corpses dead and buried:
brides, still-unmarried youths, toil-worn old men,
tender young girls, their hearts still new to sorrow,
and many with wounds inflicted by bronze-tipped spears, 40
men slain while fighting, still in their bloodstained armor—
many crowding around the pit from every quarter
with an eerie clamor. Pale fear took possession of me.
But still I called my companions, gave them orders to take
the sheep that lay there, slain by the ruthless bronze, 45
and flay and burn them, along with prayers to the gods—
strong Hadēs and holy Persephonē. I myself,
unsheathing the sharp sword from beside my thigh,
sat there, and would not allow the weak heads of the dead
to come near the blood until I'd questioned Teirēsias. 50

"The first shade to come was that of my comrade Elpēnōr.
Not yet had he been interred beneath the wide-traveled earth,
for we'd left his body behind in Kirkē's hall, unwept
and unburied, since this other business was what now drove us.
On seeing him I wept, and my heart felt pity for him, 55
and speaking with winged words, I addressed him, saying:
'Elpēnōr, how did you come here through the murky darkness?
You traveled faster on foot than I in my black ship.'

"So I spoke. He groaned, and responded to me, saying:
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, 60
some god's ill-will undid me—that, and too much wine!
When I lay down to sleep in Kirkē's house I forgot
I must make my way back down by the long ladder,
so fell headlong off the roof: my neck was snapped through
at the spine; my shade went down to Hadēs' realm. 65
Now I beseech you, by those left behind who are not here,
by your wife, by the father who cared for you as an infant,
by Tēlemachos, whom you left as the sole child in your halls—
I know when you go on from here, leave the realm of Hadēs,
you'll put in, with your well-built ship, at the isle of Aiaia. 70
It's there, my lord, that I need your remembrance most—

1. In H., Erebos is the realm of darkness closely associated with Hadēs: see Gloss., s.v.

Don't abandon me there unwept, unburied, lest I
become the occasion of some god's wrath against you!
Burn me there, I beg you, with such armor as I possess,
and heap me a burial mound by the shore of the grey sea, 75
for those yet unborn to learn of an unfortunate man.
Do this for me, and set on my tomb the oar
with which I rowed, when alive, among my comrades.'

"So he spoke, and I then answered him, saying: 'All this,
unhappy man, I'll most surely carry out on your behalf.' 80

"So the two of us sat there, exchanging these grim words,
I on one side with my sword held over the blood,
on the other, addressing me, the wraith of my companion.

"Then there drew near the ghost of my dead mother,
Antikleia, daughter of great-hearted Autolykos, 85
whom I'd left alive when I first sailed for sacred Ilion.
On seeing her I wept, and pitied her in my heart;
Yet not even so, for all my deep sorrow, would I
let her come near the blood till I'd questioned Teirēsias.
And then he came, did the ghost of Thēban Teirēsias, 90
gold staff in hand, and he recognized and addressed me:
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
why, hapless man, have you turned your back on the sunlight
and come to gaze on the dead and their joyless region?
Stand back from the pit, and take your sharp sword away, 95
so I can drink of the blood, and speak words of truth to you.'

"So he spoke, and I drew back, returning my silver-studded
sword to its sheath; only when he'd drunk the dark blood
did the matchless seer address me, saying: 'Great Odysseus,
you want to know all about your sweet homecoming. 100
This a god will make hard for you: I do not foresee
you escaping the Earth-Shaker's notice. He holds a grudge
against you, is wrathful because you blinded his dear son.
Yet even so you can make it, though after much hardship,
if you're willing to curb your own and your comrades' spirits 105
from the moment you put in with your well-built ship,
forsaking the violet deep, to the isle of Thrinakiē
and find there at pasture the cattle and well-fed sheep
of Hēlios, the all-seeing, all-hearing sun. If you

leave these unharmed and take care over your return 110
you may still get home to Ithákē, after much suffering;
but should you harm them, then I foresee destruction
for your ship and your comrades. You yourself may escape,
but you'll get home late and in bad shape, your comrades all lost,
in a ship not your own, find troubles plaguing your house— 115
arrogant fellows installed there, devouring your livelihood,
wooing your godlike wife and sending her bridal gifts!
Indeed, when you come you'll avenge their violent conduct,
but when you've killed off the suitors in your halls,
whether by guile or openly with the sharp bronze, 120
then you must set out again, taking a well-shaped oar,
until you come among men who know nothing of the sea,
who eat their food without putting salt in it,
and have never set eyes on ships with purple cheeks
or on the well-shaped oars that serve as a ship's wings; 125
and I'll tell you a very clear sign, one that won't escape you:
when on the road you meet another man who believes
it's a winnowing-fan that you have on your sturdy shoulder,
then fix your well-shaped oar on end in the ground,
and offer a lavish sacrifice to the lord Poseidōn— 130
a ram, a bull, and a stud boar that mounts its sows.
Then go back home, and make rich sacred offerings
to the immortal gods who possess broad heaven,
in due order. Death will come to you from the sea,[2]
the gentlest of ends, but will take you only after 135
you've worn out a sleek old age, with your people round you
prospering. This that I tell you is the truth.'

"So he spoke, and I then responded to him, saying:
'Teirēsias, it may be that the gods have spun this thread.

2. The translation I give is the most obvious meaning of the Greek, and the text was so read by both Aeschylus and Sophocles (Stanford, 1: 387). But later critics and modern scholars (see Heubeck, *Comm.,* 2: 86), convinced that if Odysseus met a peaceful death, it must have been *away from* the sea, and that a death *from* the sea would have been anything but gentle (a view reinforced by later bizarre suggestions) supported their view by applying a rare interpretation to the simple phrase *ex halos* ("from the sea"). Why H. should have chosen a phrase so open to misinterpretation that it deceived two major fifth-century playwrights, they do not bother to explain. I have always found the more obvious meaning attractively haunting in its deliberate mystery.

But come, now tell me this, and answer me truthfully: 140
I see before me the shade of my departed mother,
sitting, silent, close to the blood. I am her own son,
yet she's not brought herself to look at me or address me!
Tell me, my lord, how may she know me for who I am?'
"So I spoke, and at once he responded to me, saying: 145
'Very simple the answer I'll give you and put in your mind:
Whosoever of those that are dead and gone you permit
to come up to the blood will converse with you truthfully;
but any that you refuse will go back to where they came from.'

"So saying, the ghost of the lord Teirēsias departed 150
back to Hadēs' domain, after stating the gods' decrees;
but I waited steadfastly there, until my mother
came up and drank the dark blood, and knew me at once,
and addressed me sorrowfully, with winged words, saying:
'My child, how did you penetrate this murky darkness 155
while alive? Hard for the living to get to see these realms,
for between them lie great rivers, awesome streams,
Ocean above all, which may in no wise be crossed
on foot, but only with a well-found ship! Have your
long wanderings after Troy still brought you no further 160
than this with your ship and your comrades? Haven't you yet
reached Ithákē, or seen your wife and your own domain?'

"So she spoke, and I then responded to her, saying:
'My mother, need brought me down here to Hadēs' realm:
I had to consult the shade of Thēban Teirēsias. 165
Not yet have I come near Achaia, not yet have I set foot
on my own land, I've been wandering, grief-stricken,
since I first followed the godlike lord Agamemnōn
to Ilion, home of fine horses, to fight against the Trojans.
But now tell me this, and give me a truthful answer: 170
What fated exit of death was it overcame you?
Some wasting disease? Or did Artemis the archer
with her gentle shafts assail you and lay you low?
Tell me, too, of the father and son I left behind there—
Are my privileges still with them, or does some other 175
man now possess them? Do they say I'll not return?
And what of my wedded wife? Her thoughts? Her plans?

Has she held on with her son? Kept everything as it was?
Or is she now remarried, to the best man of the Achaians?'

"So I spoke, and my lady mother answered me at once: 180
'Truly indeed she holds on with steadfast spirit
there in your halls: for her the nights and days
waste away in unending sorrow amid her tears.
As for your fine privileges, no man's assumed them, although
Tēlemachos now, unchallenged, possesses your acres, 185
and orders the common feasts, as is right for a lawgiver
whom all men acknowledge. But your father stays away
in the country, and never comes into town. He has
no bed with proper bedclothes, rugs and bright coverlets,
but sleeps in winter along with the slaves in the house, 190
in the ashes close to the fire, and wears old ragged clothes.
But when summer comes, and flourishing autumn, then
all over the rising slope of his vine-clad orchard
the ground is strewn with the fallen leaves for his bed.
There he lies in his sorrow, heart nursing one great grief, 195
yearning for your return: old age weighs heavy on him.
Thus it was that I too perished and met my fate:
Neither in our abode did the deadly archer goddess
lay me low in a visitation with her gentle shafts,
nor did any disease come upon me, the kind most likely 200
with loathsome wasting to sever the spirit from my limbs:
it was rather my yearning for you, illustrious Odysseus,
for your wisdom, your kindness, that robbed me of sweet life.'

"So she spoke, and I wanted, pondering in my heart,
to embrace the ghost of my mother, now dead and gone: 205
three times I moved to clasp her, as my heart urged me,
three times she eluded my arms, like some shadow or dream,
so that the pain in my heart grew ever sharper,
and I spoke, addressed her with winged words, saying: 'Mother,
why won't you stay here when I want to hold you, 210
so that even in Hadēs the two of us can cast arms
about one another, and get our fill of chill lamentation?
Is this some phantom set on me by holy Persephonē
to add yet more to the weight of my grief and sorrow?'

"So I spoke, and my lady mother answered me at once: 215
'Alas, my child, ill-fated beyond all other mortals,
Persephonē, daughter of Zeus, is in no way beguiling you.
No, this is the fixed law for mortals, when anyone dies:
The sinews no longer keep flesh and bones together,
they're destroyed by the powerful force of blazing fire 220
as soon as the spirit departs from the white bones
and the soul, like a dream, flies fluttering off, is gone.
But quick, hurry back to the light now, with all these things
stored in your mind, to tell your wife hereafter.'

"So we two conversed together, and now the women 225
approached us, those sent up by holy Persephonē,
all those who had been great chieftains' wives or daughters.
In throngs now they all gathered around the dark blood
while I considered how I should question each individual.
And this, to my mind, emerged as the best plan: 230
I drew the long sword from beside my sturdy thigh
and would not let them all drink the dark blood together.
So they approached me in turn, one after the other.
Each told me her lineage. I interrogated them all.

"Now the first one that I saw there was high-born Tyrō, 235
who said she was descended from peerless Salmōneus,
and declared herself the wife of Aiolos' son Krētheus.
She fell in love with divine Enipeus, the river,
loveliest of all rivers that discharge their streams on earth,
and she used to haunt Enipeus' beautiful waters. 240
Assuming Enipeus' form, the Earth-Shaking Earth-Supporter
lay with her at the outflow of the eddying river,
and the dark wave stood up round them like a mountain,
arching over, concealing the god and the mortal woman.
He undid her virgin sash, shed sleep down on her, 245
then, when the god had completed the actions of love,
he clasped her hand and addressed her, saying: 'Lady,
be glad of this lovemaking! As the time of the year comes round
you will bear fine offspring: not issueless are the couplings
of the immortals! Look after these children, raise them. 250
For now, though, go back home, keep quiet, say nothing.
But know that I am Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker!'

"So saying,
he plunged down into the billowing deep. And she
indeed conceived, gave birth to Pelias and to Nēleus,
who grew to become strong henchmen of mighty Zeus, 255
both of them: Pelias dwelt in Iolkos' broad terrain,
with a wealth of flocks, and Nēleus in sandy Pylos.
Other sons this queen among women bore to Krētheus:
Aisōn, Pherēs, Amythaōn the joyful chariot fighter.

"After her I saw Antiopē, daughter of Asōpos, 260
who boasted that she'd slept in the arms of Zeus himself,
and bore him twin sons, Amphiōn and Zēthos, who
first laid the foundations of seven-gated Thēbai,
and walled it about, since lacking walls they could not
dwell in broad-landed Thēbai, powerful though they were.[3] 265

"After her I saw Alkmēnē, Amphitryōn's bedfellow,
she who conceived Hēraklēs—bold fighter, lion-hearted—
when she embraced and coupled with mighty Zeus.
Megarē too I saw, high-spirited Kreiōn's daughter,
wife to Amphitryōn's son, a man of unwearied strength.[4] 270

"Oedipus' mother I saw, the beautiful Epikastē,
who unwittingly did a most terrible deed: she married
her own son: he wed her after killing his father.
Straightaway the gods revealed all this to mankind.
Yet he in his much-loved Thēbai, though racked with grief, 275
by the gods' grim design still reigned over the Kadmeians,
while she went down to the realm of Hadēs, strong gatekeeper,
after hanging a sheer noose from the lofty ceiling,

---

3. Zēthos was said to have undertaken the hard physical labor of hauling rocks and boulders for the walls, while Amphiōn helped by playing his lyre, which caused the rocks to move of their own accord. They had a common grave in Thēbai (Paus. 9.17.4). Zēthos married Pandareus' daughter Aidōn, who achieved notoriety by accidentally killing their son, Itylos (or Itys), and turning into a nightingale (below, 19.518–23). See *HE,* 3: 951–52. Amphiōn married Tantalos' daughter Niobē, whose six sons and six daughters were, bar one, shot to death by Artemis and her twin Apollo because she boasted about them in comparison to Lētō's two, the murderous twins themselves (*Il.* 24.599–620).
4. Hēraklēs was indeed "a man of unwearied strength" in that he killed his wife Megarē as well as their children while in a temporary state of madness induced by Hērē. The famous Twelve Labors were imposed on him by Eurystheus (q.v.) as a penalty for this act.

possessed by her grief, bequeathing him countless woes,
all that a mother's Furies might bring to pass.[5]

"And I saw 280
the exquisite Chlōris, that woman whom Nēleus once
wed for her looks, when he'd brought her endless bridal gifts;
youngest daughter she was of Amphiōn, Iasos' son[6]—
who once in Minyan Orchomenos ruled with a forceful hand—
and queen of Pylos too: she bore him illustrious children: 285
Nestōr and Chromios, Periklymenos the much-honored,
and besides these she bore gorgeous Pērō, a wonder to mortals.
Her all the men living round sought in marriage. But Nēleus
would bestow her on him alone who drove from Phylakē
the broad-browed crumple-horned cattle of powerful Iphiklēs— 290
a hard lot they were, and none but the matchless seer
undertook to drive them off; but a hard fate set by the god
hampered him: that, and tough shackles, and those country
cowherds.
Nevertheless, when the months and days were completed
of the circling year, and the seasons in turn came round, 295
he was let go by powerful Iphiklēs, once he'd told him
all the divine decrees. And a plan of Zeus was fulfilled.

"Lēdē also I saw, the bedfellow of Tyndareus,
who bore to Tyndareus a pair of stout-hearted sons,
horse-breaker Kastōr and Polydeukēs the skilled boxer. 300
Both these, though living, the life-giving earth enfolds:
even beneath the earth they have honor from Zeus—
in turn, on alternate days, they live and are dead.
The honors bestowed upon them match those of the gods.

"After her I saw Iphimedeia, Alōeus' bedfellow, 305
who claimed she'd coupled in passion with Poseidōn.

---

5. H. calls Oedipus' mother Epikastē: we know her better, mainly from Sophoklēs' play *Oedipus Tyrannus,* as Iokastē (or, in its Latinized form, Jocasta). The myth has bewildering variants prior to its standardization in Attic tragedy, though it is uncertain when certain features—e.g. the attribution of any children to the incestuous union, let alone the four, Eteoklēs, Polyneikēs, Antigonē and Ismēnē, known to us from Sophoklēs—were first introduced. In H.'s day, as we see here, Oedipus dies as ruler of Thēbai, and there is no mention of his self-blinding or exile, which may indeed have been fifth-century dramatic inventions.
6. Not the Amphiōn who was Zēthos' brother.

Two sons she bore, but both of them were short-lived:
Ōtos, a match for a god, and far-famed Ephialtēs,
who were the tallest men that this grain-rich earth yet bred,
and the best-looking by far after renowned Orīōn. 310
At nine years old they measured a full nine cubits
in breadth, and were nine fathoms tall. They even
made threats against the immortals on Olympos,
that they'd start up the conflict of impetuous warfare!
Ossa they longed to pile on Olympos, and on Ossa 315
leaf-rippling Pēlion, to scale the heights of heaven![7]
And this they'd have done, had they come to full adulthood;
But the son of Zeus, whom neat-haired Lētō bore, slew them:
both of them—this before the down grew beneath their temples,
or covered their chins with a thick and healthy stubble. 320

"And Phaidrē and Prokris I saw, and beautiful Ariadnē,
bloody-minded Minōs' daughter, whom Thēseus once
brought out of Krētē to take to the hill of sacred Athens,
but had no joy of her, since before that Artemis slew her
on sea-girt Diē, because of Dionysos' indictment.[8] 325

"Maira I saw, and Klyménē, and loathsome Eriphylē,
who took precious gold in exchange for her own husband—
But I neither can tell of nor name all the women I saw,
the wives and daughters of heroes; long before that
the immortal night would be gone. Now is the time 330
for sleep—either going aboard your swift ship to its crew
or here. My conveyance will be the gods' concern, and yours."

---

7. This, if read strictly, would seem to imply (despite line 313) that the realm of the gods was in fact somewhere up in the empyrean; but as Heubeck (*Comm.,* 2: 96) drily observes, "the Homeric conception is always a little vague," and the scholarly urge to delete these lines as a stupid interpolation is unnecessary. Pēlion (*BA,* 57, B 2), Ossa (ibid., A 2), and Olympos (ibid., A 1) are the three highest points (read in that order from SE to NW) of the mountain range running along the Magnēsian peninsula that faces the NW Aegean and the Thermaic Gulf.
8. A group here of Attic myths, which H. most often ignores (Stanford 1971, 1: 393). For Phaidrē (Phaedra) and Prokris, see Gloss., s.vv. Ariadnē helped Thēseus subdue the Minotaur in the Krētan Labyrinth, and he set out for Athens with her, but deserted her on the islet of Diē (Dia). According to the common version of the myth, she was rescued by Dionysos and became his lover on Naxos (Plut., *Thes.* 20). H. however relates an otherwise unfamiliar version in which Dionysos, far from making Ariadnē his lover, brings a mysterious indictment against her, on the basis of which she is slain by Artemis.

So he spoke: every one of them sat hushed and silent,
enthralled by his words, throughout the shadowy hall.
White-armed Arētē was the first to comment, saying: 335
"Phaiakians, how does this man's character strike you?
His looks, his stature, his equable inner mind?
Besides, he's my guest, though you all share that honor:
So don't rush to send him away, or to cut short our gifts
to one in such need; you have plentiful possessions 340
stored in your halls through the good will of the gods."

Then there spoke up among them the old hero Echenēos,
the most aged of all the Phaiakian elders, saying:
"My friends, not wide of the mark or of our own thinking
is what our wise queen just said: pay attention to it— 345
though it's on Alkinoös here that both word and deed depend."

Alkinoös then responded to him, saying: "Her words
shall indeed hold good, just as surely as I am alive
and lord over all the Phaiakians, those lovers of the oar!
But let our guest, despite his yearning to get back home, 350
bear to stay till tomorrow, until I can render all
our gift-giving complete. His conveyance shall be the concern
of all men, but mine above all, since I hold the power here."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Lordly Alkinoös, exalted above all people, should you 355
ask me to stay on here for a whole year, prior to
organizing my conveyance, and giving me splendid gifts,
that too would I accept: it would profit me far more
to return with a fuller hand to my own country: then
I would get a warmer and more respectful welcome 360
from all men who saw that I'd come home to Ithákē."

Alkinoös then responded to him, saying: "Odysseus,
on looking at you, indeed we do not suppose
that you're the kind of cheat or trickster that's bred
by the black earth in large numbers, itinerant men 365
who fashion false tales from what no man could really see!
But you have a way with words and an excellent mind,
and you told your tale skillfully, just as a minstrel does:
the grim troubles of all the Argives, and your own.
But come, tell me this, and give me a truthful answer: 370

Did you see any of those—your godlike comrades—
who went out to Ilion with you, and met their end there?
The night before us is long, near endless, it's not yet time
for sleep in the hall. Tell me more of your marvelous story!
I could hold out till bright dawn, if you'd only endure 375
to continue the tale of your troubles, here in the hall."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Lord Alkinoös, exalted above all people, there's
a time for long stories, and a time for sleep. But if
you're still eager to listen, I wouldn't begrudge you 380
the telling of other matters yet more piteous than these—
the troubles of my companions, who perished later,
after escaping the Trojans' grim battle cry: they died
on the way home, through a wicked woman's will.[9]

"After holy Persephonē scattered the female souls 385
of the women hither and thither, in all directions,
there came up the ghost of Atreus' son Agamemnōn,
grieving; and round him clustered the ghosts of all those
who'd died and met their fate with him in Aigisthos' house.
He knew me at once, as soon as he'd drunk the dark blood: 390
he was weeping aloud, and shedding big tears. He stretched
his hands out toward me, eager to reach and touch me,
but no longer did he have strength or vigor remaining
in his limbs as once, when they were live and supple.

"When I saw him I wept, and pitied him in my heart, 395
and spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying:
'Most renowned son of Atreus, Agamemnōn king of men,
what fate of long-grief-giving death was it overcame you?
Was it Poseidōn destroyed you aboard your vessels
by stirring up the dread blast of hard-blowing gales? 400
Or did hostile men work your destruction on dry land
when you were lifting their cattle and fine fleecy sheep
or fighting them for their city and for their women?'

9. Who was the "wicked woman" responsible for the deaths of Odysseus' comrades? Clearly the comrades are not those who accompanied him on his *nostos,* but in a more general sense his fellow-warriors at Troy. So read, the wicked woman can be—most probably given the context of the remark—Klytaimnēstra (associated with the murder of those who returned home with Agamemnōn); or, more broadly still, Helen, as the cause of the war itself.

"So I spoke; and he at once responded to me, saying:
'Scion of Zeus, Laërtēs' son, resourceful Odysseus, 405
neither did Poseidōn destroy me aboard my ships
by stirring up the dread blast of hard-blowing gales,
nor did hostile men work my destruction on dry land:
Aigisthos it was fixed my death and destiny, slew me—
he, with my damnable wife—as a guest in his house 410
for dinner, the way one slaughters an ox at its manger.
So I died a most piteous death, and round me all my comrades
were killed without mercy, like so many white-tusked hogs
in the house of a wealthy and highly powerful man
for a wedding or communal feast, or some sumptuous banquet. 415
Before now you'll have witnessed the killing of many men,
slain in single combat or the violent crush of battle,
but this sight would have stirred the most pity in your heart—
how all about the mixing bowl and the laden tables
we lay in that hall, and the whole floor swam with blood. 420
The most piteous cry I heard was that of Priam's daughter
Kassandrē, murdered by treacherous Klytaimnēstra
as she clung to me. I, fallen, raised my arms in self-defense
and, dying, flung them about the sword. That bitch
turned her back, could not be bothered, though I was on 425
my way to Hadēs, to close my eyes or my gaping mouth.
There's nothing more frightful or shameless than a woman
who conceives the idea of such misdeeds in her heart,
like the horrifying act that this woman planned, contriving
her own wedded husband's murder. I honestly believed 430
that my return home would be welcomed by my children
and household. But she, mind set upon utter evil,
has brought shame both on herself and on women yet unborn—
the whole female sex, even those of faultless conduct.'

"So he spoke, and I then responded to him, saying: 435
'Alas, far-seeing Zeus has nursed a fearsome hatred
against Atreus' whole line, by means of women's wiles,
from the start: for Helen's sake large numbers of us died,
and Klytaimnēstra ensnared you when you were far away.'

"So I spoke. He at once responded to me, saying: 440
'That's why you should never go easy, even with your wife!
Don't tell her every thought you have in your head:

Tell her some only, keep the rest of them well hidden!
Still, your own death, Odysseus, will not come from your wife:
thoroughly sensible, her mind full of virtuous thoughts 445
is Ikarios' daughter, prudent Penelopē, whom we left
behind there as a bride, a young wife lately wed,
when we went off to the war: she had a child at the breast,
a baby son, who now must sit numbered among the men
and is lucky, for his own father will return and see him, 450
and the boy will embrace his father, as is right and proper.
But that bedfellow of mine did not even let me feast
my eyes on my son: before that she'd murdered me.
Another thing, too, I'll tell you, and you lay it to heart:
In secret, not openly, hold your vessel on her course 455
to your native shore: no more is there faith in women.
But come, tell me this, and give me a truthful answer:
Have you heard any news of my son, that he's still alive
in Orchomenos maybe, or out at sandy Pylos
or perhaps with Menelaös in broad Sparta?—for not yet 460
has any place on this earth witnessed noble Orestes' death.'

"So he spoke, and I then responded to him, saying:
'Son of Atreus, why ask me this? I have no knowledge
of whether he's dead or alive. Empty guesses are pointless.'

"While we two stood together exchanging grim words, 465
with lamentation, and shedding many big tears,
there came up the ghost of Pēleus' son Achillēs,
and those of Patroklos, and of peerless Antilochos,
and Aias, unmatched for handsomeness and stature
among all the Danaäns save for Pēleus' peerless son. 470
The ghost of Aiakos' swift-footed grandson knew me,
and sorrowfully addressed me with winged words, saying:
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
rash man, what yet greater deed will your mind think up?
How dared you come down to Hadēs, where reside 475
the mindless dead, the phantoms of outworn mortals?'

"So he spoke; and I then responded to him, saying:
'Achillēs, Pēleus' son, most valiant of the Achaians,
I came out of need for Teirēsias, if maybe he could tell me
some plan that would get me home to rugged Ithákē. 480

Not yet have I come near Achaia, not yet have I set foot
on my own land, but have endless trouble. No man, Achillēs,
was more blest than you in the past, nor shall be hereafter;
for while you were living we Argives honored you equally
with the gods; and now you're here you exercise great power 485
over the dead. Your death is no cause for grief, Achillēs.'

"So I spoke. He at once responded to me, saying:
'Don't talk up death to me, illustrious Odysseus!
I'd rather work as a field hand, a hireling, for some other
landless man who could just scrape a livelihood together 490
than be lord over all the corpses who've ever perished!
But come, tell me the news about that fine son of mine—
has he gone off to war, and made it as champion, or not?
And have you had any news about Pēleus? If so, tell me—
Is he still honored among the mass of the Myrmidons? 495
Or do they show him no honor throughout Hellas and Phthiē
now that old age has crippled him, hand and foot,
and I'm no longer there to help him, out in the sunlight,
or strong, as once I was in the wide terrain of Troy
when I slew the best of their men while defending the Argives? 500
If I could come thus, only briefly, to my father's house
then I'd make my strength and invincible hands most bitter
to any who show him violence and diminish his honor.'

"So he spoke, and I then responded to him, saying:
'In fact I've heard no news regarding flawless Pēleus, 505
but about your dear son Neoptolemos I'll tell you
the whole truth, as you requested. I fetched him myself
aboard my trim hollow vessel, brought him out
from Skyros to join the ranks of the well-greaved Achaians.
And when we were planning action around the city of Troy 510
he was always the first to speak, had never a bad idea:
godlike Nestōr and I alone came up with better ones.
Whenever we fought with the bronze out on the Trojan plain
he'd never hold back among the main body of our troops,
but was always far out ahead, unrivaled in prowess, 515
and many the men he slaughtered in fearsome battle.
I couldn't recount or name all the victims he slew,
all the many men he dispatched when fighting for the Argives—
but one great man, Tēlephos' son, he felled with the bronze:

the hero Eurypylos, and with him a crowd of his Kēteian 520
comrades all perished because of a woman's gifts.[10]
No handsomer man I ever saw, except noble Memnōn.
And when we, the best of the Argives, were going into
the Horse that Epeios made, all under my command—
when to wait, when we should spring our close-built ambush— 525
then the other Danaän chieftains and counselors
had to wipe away tears, the limbs of all were trembling,
yet him I never once noticed with my own eyes
dabbing the tears from his cheeks, or his handsome features
losing their color; he kept on pleading with me 530
to let him out from the Horse, his hand was always
on his sword hilt or bronze-heavy spear, impatient to get at
the Trojans. But when we'd sacked the steep citadel of Priam,
he boarded his ship with a good prize-share of the booty—
and all unscathed, neither pierced by the sharp bronze 535
nor cut up in close combat, as so often happens
to men during battle: Arēs rages in wild confusion.'

"So I spoke. The ghost of Aiakos' swift-footed grandson
made off with long strides across the asphodel meadow,
happy because I told him his son had distinguished himself. 540

"The remaining shades of those who were dead and gone
stood sadly there, all asking about their own concerns;
of all of them, only the shade of Aias, Telamōn's son,
stood apart from the rest, still enraged by the victory
I'd won over him when we two competed by the ships 545
for Achilles' arms, a prize set up by his lady mother
with the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athēnē as judges.
Would that I'd never won the contest for such a prize,
since over so rare a head the earth closed because of it—
that of Aias, whose beauty and deeds done outshone those 550
of all other Danaäns save for Pēleus' peerless son.
To him I now spoke with words of conciliation: 'Aias,
great Telamōn's son, could you not, then, even in death,

10. For the killing of Eurypylos by Achilles' son Neoptolemos, see *Little Iliad,* arg. 3; West 2003, 122–23. "Kēteian" would seem to be equivalent to "Mysian" (*HE,* 2: 435). Tēlephos' wife, Astyochē, kept her son Eurypylos from fighting as an ally of the Trojans until bribed by Priam with the gift of a golden palm (Stanford 1971, 1: 399); this was the gift, comparable to the necklace of Eriphylē (*HE,* 1: 263).

abandon the wrath I roused in you over those fatal
arms, surely used by the gods to grieve the Argives, 555
such a tower of strength they lost in you! The Achaians
still ceaselessly mourn your death, as they do the lost life
of Achillēs, Pēleus' son. Yet no one's more to blame
than Zeus, with that terrible hatred he nursed against
the army of Danaän spearmen: this it was that doomed you. 560
Come close to me, lord, and listen to what I have to tell you!
Overmaster your great fury, your arrogant spirit!'

"So I spoke, but he made me no answer, went after the other
shades of the dead and departed to Erebos. Nevertheless
he might still, despite his wrath, have addressed me, or I him, 565
but the spirit within this breast of mine was still eager
to see the shades of those others now dead and gone.

"Thereafter I saw Minōs, Zeus' illustrious son,
holding a golden scepter, sitting in judgment over
the dead, as they, sitting or standing, brought each case 570
before their lord, in Hadēs' wide-gated realm.

"After him I became aware of gigantic Oriōn,
herding and driving across the meadows of asphodel
the wild beasts he'd killed himself on the lonely mountains,
with a club of bronze in his hands, forever unbroken. 575

"Tityos too I saw, Gaia's illustrious offspring,
lying on the ground, spread over nine whole acres,
a vulture on either side of him tearing at his liver
and pecking into his guts; he'd no hands to beat them off
after forcing himself on Lētō, Zeus' famed bedfellow, 580
in broad-lawned Panopeus, on her way to Pythō.[11]

"I also saw Tantalos suffering painful torment,
as he stood in a pool, the water lapping his chin:
he was maddened with thirst, yet couldn't ever reach it,
for whenever the old fellow bent down to drink 585
the water was sucked down and vanished, and around
his feet the black earth appeared, dried up by some god.

11. Pythō is H.'s name for Delphi (q.v. Gloss.). For the various explanations of this (e.g., that Pythō was the name of the snake killed by Apollo when he acquired the site for his future oracle), see *HE,* 2: 701–2.

Trees too, high and leafy, hung top-heavy with fruit—
pears, pomegranates, boughs laden with shining apples,
sweet figs, a profusion of olives. But every time 590
the old man reached out to grasp them, a gust of wind
would whirl them aloft toward the shadowy clouds.

"I also saw Sisyphos suffering most painful torment,
as he labored to raise a huge stone with his two bare hands:
scrambling with hands and feet he'd try to push it 595
up to the crest of the hill; but when he was on the point
of getting it over the top, its weight would defeat him:
bumpity back to the plain the shameless stone would clatter.[12]
Yet he kept straining and heaving, while the sweat streamed down
from his limbs, and the dust rose swirling around his head. 600

"After him I became aware of powerful Hēraklēs,
[his phantom, for he himself among the immortal gods
takes joy in the feast, and has the elegant-ankled Hēbē,
child of great Zeus and the golden-sandaled Hērē:][13]
around him arose a bird like clamor from the dead 605
as they scattered in terror, while he, as dark as night,
holding a bare bow with an arrow at the string,
kept glancing sharply round him, as though about to shoot.
A fearsome thing was the baldric girding his torso,
a belt of gold on which wondrous objects had been fashioned— 610
bears and wild boars, and lions with glinting eyes,
and fights and battles and murder and the slayings of men.
May he never have crafted, or again craft, another such,
the man who stamped that belt with his special craftsmanship!
Hēraklēs recognized me the moment he saw me, 615

---

12. This line is famous for its onomatopoeia: in the Greek (hard to match in English) you can hear the stone clattering down the slope: *authis epeita pedonde kulindeto laäs anaidēs*.

13. Lines 602–4 were regarded by some Hellenistic scholars as difficult (How could the presence of a ghost [*eidōlon*] of Hēraklēs in Hadēs be reconciled with his continued existence as heroic divinity on Olympos?) and thus dismissed as an interpolation by the sixth-century oracle-monger Onomakritos. As Heubeck (*Comm.,* 2: 114) concedes in a good discussion, excision would simplify matters; against that, he argues, H. may have been unwilling to gloss over Hēraklēs' divine status (which had been steadily gaining ground since the time of the *Iliad*), yet also was not going to forgo the scene he had in mind for 601–27, and thus risked an illogical compromise between popular belief and his own firm principle elsewhere, "that physical death is the precondition for the presence of an *eidōlon* in the Underworld."

and sorrowfully addressed me with winged words, saying:
'Son of Laërtēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
poor wretch, are you leading the kind of grim existence
such as I too bore beneath the rays of the sun?
I was Kronos' son Zeus' offspring, and yet I suffered 620
woes beyond measure, for I was placed in subjection
to a man far worse man than myself,[14] who laid hard labors on me.
He even once sent me here to get Hadēs' hound:[15] he could think
of no harder labor for me than this. Yet that hound I did
indeed carry off and bring up out of Hadēs— 625
I had Hermēs and grey-eyed Athēnē serving as my guides.'

"So saying, he went on his way, back into Hadēs' realm,
but I remained firmly there,[16] in case there might come up
any more of the heroes who'd perished so long ago;
and I might indeed have seen men of old whom I wanted to— 630
Thēseus, Peirithoös, famed progeny of the gods—
but before that, great swarms of the dead came thronging up
with loud eerie cries, and pale terror gripped me, the fear
that the head of the Gorgon, that ghastly monster, might
be sent against me from Hadēs by holy Persephonē. 635

"So at once I went back to the ship, and ordered my comrades
to embark again themselves, and cast off the stern warps.
So they came aboard quickly, and sat down on the benches,
and the current bore the ship fast down Ocean's river,
helped first by our rowing, and then by a following wind." 640

14. This was Eurystheus (see Gloss., s.v.), a great-grandson of Zeus, and Hēraklēs' own cousin.
15. "Hadēs' hound" is Kerberos (Cerberus). Here and in H.'s only other reference (*Il.* 8.368), Kerberos is not actually named. This was traditionally the last of Hērakles' Twelve Labors. To fetch Kerberos, he had to go down to Hadēs while he was still alive; "an implicit comparison to Odysseus' journey there"(*HE,* 2: 435) has been seen here.
16. A necessary reminder that the scene of Odysseus' interrogation of the ghosts from the Underworld is not, in point of fact, set in Hadēs itself, but at its approaches, by the stream of Ocean (11.21).

Book 12

"After our ship left the course of Ocean's river and came
to the swelling waves of the wide-tracked sea, and the isle
of Aiaia, where is the abode of Dawn, the early riser,
and her dancing floors, and the risings of Hēlios the sun,
then we beached our vessel, hauled her up on the sands, 5
and ourselves disembarked on the seashore. There we fell
asleep, and stayed thus, awaiting the bright dawn.

"When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
I sent my companions off to Kirkē's domain
to bring back the body of the deceased Elpēnōr. 10
Next we cut wood for his pyre and at the seaward tip
of the headland held his funeral, mourning and shedding tears.
Then after his corpse was burned—along with its armor—
We heaped up a burial mound, raised a marker on it,
and on top of the tomb set up his well-shaped oar. 15

"So we busied ourselves with these matters, nor was Kirkē
unaware that we'd got back from Hādēs: very promptly
she readied herself, and came out. The handmaids with her
brought bread and much meat, and tawny-red wine, and she,
bright among goddesses, now spoke in the midst of us, saying: 20
'Foolhardy men, who went down to Hādēs' realm alive,
and met death twice, when others die only the once!
But come now, you've food to eat and wine to drink
the whole day through! Then, at the coming of Dawn,
you'll set sail. I'll show you your route and brief you 25
on every detail. That way, no ruinous bad decisions,
at sea or ashore, will leave you in desperate trouble.'

"So she spoke: the proud spirit in us was persuaded.
The whole day long, then, till sunset we sat feasting
on abundant meat and sweet wine; but when the sun 30
went down, and darkness came on, then all the others

lay down to sleep beside the ship's stern warps;
but me Kirkē took by the hand, led apart from my comrades,
made me sit down, then questioned me in detail,
and I told her the whole story, just as it happened. 35
Thereupon the lady Kirkē spoke at length to me, saying:
'All that, then, has been accomplished. Now listen to what
I shall tell you: the god himself will remind you of it.
First off, you'll come to the Sirens. They bewitch
and beguile all mortals who come within earshot of them. 40
Any man who unwittingly gets close enough to hear
the Sirens' voices will never again be surrounded
by wife and children greeting him on his return home;
the Sirens will enchant him with their clear high singing
as they sit in a meadow, among great heaps of bones 45
from men's rotted bodies, the skin on them all shriveled.
Row on past them, and stop up the ears of your comrades
with beeswax—soften it first—so none of them can hear.
But as for yourself, if you're determined to listen,
have them tie you, hand and foot, while upright, against 50
your swift ship's mast, in its step, with rope ends lashed
to the mast itself, so you can hear and enjoy the Sirens.
But if you beg and command your comrades to release you,
they are then to bind you more firmly with yet more bonds!
Then, when your comrades have rowed you beyond the Sirens, 55
from that point on, I'll no longer tell you in full detail
which course is the one to follow, but you yourself
must make up your mind. I shall give you two options.
On the one side are crags, overhanging, and against them
crash the great breakers of dark-eyed Amphitrītē: 60
these crags the blessed gods call the Wandering Rocks.
That way not even winged creatures go, not even the shy
doves that carry ambrosia to Zeus the Father: the smooth-
worn rock always snatches one at least of these away,
and the Father sends in another to restore the numbers. 65
No mortal vessel that tried it has ever got past those rocks—
ship's timbers and human bodies are both together
carried off by the waves and gusts of destructive fire—
save that one seafaring vessel which alone escaped them:
Argo, of worldwide fame, sailing home from Aiētēs— 70

and she too would soon have been slammed into those great crags
had Hērē not steered her safe through, out of love for Jason.[1]

'Next are the two headlands. One of them towers up
to broad heaven, with a sharp peak. Dark clouds surround it,
that never disperse: its summit never enjoys clear air, 75
not even in spring or autumn. There's not a man alive
could scale that peak or set foot on its crest, not even
were he endowed with a score of hands and feet,
for the rock is as smooth as though it had been polished.
Halfway up this headland there's a murky cavern 80
facing west, toward the dusk and Erebos. It's that way
you should steer your hollow ship, illustrious Odysseus,
from which hollow ship not even the strongest man
could shoot an arrow up into that cave's interior.
There, in it, dwells Skyllē, yelping most fearsomely; 85
Her voice may be only as loud as that of a newborn puppy,
but she is an evil monster, the sight of whom would please
nobody, were it even a god who encountered her.
A dozen legs she has, all waving in the air,
and six necks, very lengthy, and on every one of them 90
a horrible head, with three rows of teeth in each,
close-set and crowded, all full of black death. From below
the waist her body is hidden inside the hollow cavern,
but her heads she stretches out from that fearsome abyss
and goes fishing there, searches all around the rock face 95
for dolphin or dogfish or whatever larger creature
she can catch of the thousands loud Amphitrītē breeds.
Past her no sailors yet can boast of having voyaged
unharmed, for with each of her heads she carries off
a man that she snatches out of his dark-prowed vessel. 100

'But the other headland, Odysseus, as you'll see, is lower—
the two are close together, within easy bowshot—
and on it grows a great fig tree with luxuriant foliage.
Beneath this divine Charybdis sucks in the dark water—
thrice daily she spews it out upward, thrice sucks it all back 105

1. The *Argo* was Jason's ship on the quest for the Golden Fleece. Cf. Ap. Rhod., *Arg.* 4. 920–65, with Green 1997, 350–52.

with fearsome effect—may you never be there then!
Not even the Earth-Shaker could save you from destruction.
Rather hold course close to Skyllē's headland and quickly
steer your ship past it, since it's far preferable
to lose six of your crew than for all of you to perish.' 110

"So she spoke, and I then responded to her, saying:
'Come, I beg you, goddess. Tell me this truthfully: Is there
any way I can both get clear of deadly Charybdis
and stop the other, when she tries to snatch my comrades?'

"So I spoke, and she, bright among goddesses, snapped back: 115
'Foolhardy man, once again you're set on deeds of warfare
and hardship! Will you not yield even to the immortal
gods? Because she's not mortal, but an immortal evil,
dread, disastrous, wild—and not to be fought with,
for there's no defense—best course is to flee from her. 120
For if you linger to arm yourself beside her rock
I fear she may once again dart out and assault you
with as many heads, and seize as many men as before.
So row past at speed, while calling upon Krataïs,
Skyllē's mother, who bore her to be a bane to mortals: 125
she then will stop her from making that second assault.

'So you'll come to the isle of Thrinakiē. There at pasture
are Hēlios' numerous cattle and well-fed flocks:
seven herds of oxen, and as many fine flocks of sheep,
with fifty head in each herd. They never bear young, 130
nor do they ever grow old. They're tended by goddesses,
fair-tressed nymphs, Phaëthousa and Lampetiē,
whom resplendent Neaira bore to Hyperiōn Hēlios.
These their lady mother, when she'd borne and reared them,
sent out to the isle of Thrinakiē, to a distant life 135
tending their father's flocks and crumple-horned cattle.
If you leave these unharmed and take care over your return
you may still get home to Ithákē, after much suffering;
but should you harm them, then I foresee destruction
for your ship and your comrades. You yourself may escape, 140
though you'll get home late, in bad shape, your comrades all lost.'

"So she spoke, and then, golden-throned, the Dawn came up.
She, bright among goddesses, departed up the island,

while I went back to the ship and aroused my comrades
to embark themselves and to cast off the stern warps; 145
they came aboard quickly and sat down at the benches,
and in good order struck the grey salt deep with their oars.
In the wake of our dark-prowed ship a following breeze
that filled our sail, a trusty companion, was sent us
by fair-tressed Kirkē, dread goddess of mortal speech. 150
So when we'd secured the tackle throughout the ship
we sat down: wind and steersman now kept her on her course.

"Then I finally, grieving at heart, addressed my comrades:
'Friends, since it's not right that one or two only should know
the gods' decrees that Kirkē, bright among goddesses, told me, 155
I shall now relate them to you: it will be in that knowledge
that we either die or escape, sidestepping death and fate.
First, the heavenly Sirens. She bids us keep well away
from them, their singing, and their flowery meadow.
Me alone she wanted to hear them: you are to tie me fast 160
with harsh bonds, keep me upright in place against the mast,
in its step, with rope ends lashed to the mast itself.
But if I beg and command my comrades to release me,
you are then to bind me more firmly with yet more bonds.'

"Thus I was passing on all the details to my comrades, 165
and meanwhile our well-built ship very soon arrived
at the Sirens' isle, driven on by a following breeze.
Abruptly the wind now dropped, and was replaced
by a windless calm. Some god lulled the waves to sleep.
My comrades stood up, took down and furled the sail, 170
stowed it down in the hollow ship, then sat at the benches
and whitened the water with their polished pinewood oars.
Now with the sharp bronze I cut a great wheel of wax
into small bits, which I kneaded in my strong hands.
Soon the wax grew warm under their great pressure 175
and the rays of the sun god, Hyperiōn Hēlios.[2]
With this wax I stopped up the ears of all my comrades,
and they bound me hand and foot, while standing, to the mast,

2. For Hesiod (*Th.* 371–74), Hyperiōn is a Titan and the father of Hēlios, and here too we have in the Greek the patronymic *Hyperionidēs;* but for H. in all other instances (so probably here too: *HE,* 2: 386) "Hyperiōn" is merely a vague epithet of the Sun.

in its step, with rope ends lashed to the mast itself,
and then sat down, struck the grey salt deep with their oars. 180

"But when we were as far off as a man's shout carries,
swiftly pursuing our course, the speeding ship did not,
as it neared, escape notice. The Sirens began their shrill song:
'Look in here on your way, famed Odysseus, the Achaians' pride:
put in with your ship, hear the song we two sing! Never yet 185
has any man rowed on past us in his black ship till he's heard
the honey-sweet music that issues from our mouths,
and he voyages on rejoicing, his knowledge increased, for we
know all the toil and suffering that in the wide land of Troy
Argives and Trojans endured through the will of the gods: 190
Indeed, we know all things that happen on the nurturing earth.'

"Such the words they uttered in their beautiful voices. My heart
yearned to listen. I signaled my comrades to release me—
a nod with my eyebrows. They bent to their oars, rowed on.
Eurylochos and Perimēdēs both at once stood up, 195
bound me with further lashings, made them all tighter.
But when they'd rowed past the Sirens, and no longer
were their voices or their singing within earshot, then
my loyal comrades at once removed the wax with which
I'd blocked their ears, and released me from my bonds. 200

"But after we'd left that island, then very soon I saw
smoke, and a heavy surf, and heard a thunderous noise.
The rowers were frightened, the oars slipped from their grasp
and hung clattering in the riptide; the ship came to a halt
now they were no longer plying their shapely oar blades. 205
But I went through the ship encouraging my comrades
with kindly words, approaching each man in turn: 'My friends,
we've not hitherto gone short on experience of trouble!
This danger we face now is no greater than when the Kyklōps
by brute force and strength shut us up in his hollow cave— 210
even then, my courage, invention, and presence of mind
freed us: this peril too, I think, we'll live to recall!
So now, please all do exactly as I command: you must
stay seated there at the rowlocks and with your oars
strike the deep surf of the sea, so that maybe Zeus 215
will grant that we escape, steer clear of this evil fate.

And to you, steersman, I give this command: store it well
in your memory—you control the hollow ship's helm!
Keep the ship well away from all this smoke and surf:
stay close to the headland, don't let her veer unnoticed 220
across to the other side, or you'll destroy us all.'

"So I spoke, and they promptly obeyed the commands I gave them.
But not yet did I mention Skyllē, that irremovable danger,
for fear lest my comrades, terrified, might abandon
their rowing, and cower together down in the hold. 225
It was now I forgot Kirkē's troublesome instruction
that for no purpose whatsoever should I now arm myself.
I put on my battle gear, I picked out two long spears,
and carrying them made my way to the vessel's foredeck,
from where, I figured, this rock-based Skyllē would first 230
be glimpsed as she brought disaster to my comrades.
But nowhere could I discern her, and my eyes grew weary
from searching every part of the murky rock face.

"So on through the narrow strait, lamenting, we sailed—and there
on one side was Skyllē, on the other bright Charybdis 235
fearsomely sucking in the salt seawater: when she
spewed it back out, like a cauldron over a blazing fire,
she was all seething turbulence, and the flying spray
was flung up so high that it rained down on the tops
of both headlands; when she sucked the salt seawater back, 240
she exposed her wild inner turmoil, while all around
the rock roared: beneath it the bottom was revealed,
black with sand. Pale fear now possessed my men,
we gazed at Charybdis in terror, fearing destruction.
Skyllē meanwhile snatched up from the hollow ship 245
six of my comrades, the strongest and most active.
Though my eyes were on the swift ship and my company,
I still caught a glimpse of their hands and feet above me
as they were whirled aloft. They cried out aloud,
called me by name one last time in their anguish. As when 250
a fisherman with his long rod on a jutting rock
throws down bits of bait as a lure when fish are scarce,
and lets down into the deep the horn of a country ox,
then grabs the hooked gasping victim, flings it ashore—
so they were carried up, gasping, toward the rocks. 255

There at her entrance she devoured them, as they screamed
and stretched out hands to me in their dire death struggle.
That was the most piteous sight of all that ever I endured
throughout my whole exploration of the paths of the deep.

"Then when we'd escaped the rocks and fearsome Charybdis 260
and Skyllē, soon after that we arrived at the god's
matchless island, where were the splendid broad-browed cattle
and numerous well-fed flocks of Hyperiōn Hēlios.
While still out at sea in my black ship, I could hear
the lowing of cattle on the way back to their farmstead 265
and the bleating of sheep; and into my mind now stole
the words of the blind seer, of Thēban Teirēsias,
and of Aiaian Kirkē, who most strongly advised me
to avoid the island of Hēlios, bright delight of mortals;
and then, grieved at heart, I spoke out among my comrades: 270
'Distressed though you are, my comrades, mark my words well
while I tell you of the prophetic warning Teirēsias uttered,
he and Aiaian Kirkē: they most strongly advised me
to avoid the island of Hēlios, bright delight of mortals,
for there, she told me, was our most dreadful danger. 275
So, row our black ship straight on past this island.'

"So I spoke,
and the spirit within them was broken. But at once
Eurylochos responded to me in chilling language:
'You're a hard man, Odysseus, with rare strength: your limbs
never tire, every last bit of you is fashioned of iron: 280
you won't let your comrades, worn out by sleeplessness
and toil, disembark, when we might indeed once more
on this sea-girt isle find the stuff for a tasty supper! But no,
you're making us wander on through the speeding night,
steering away from this island over the murky deep! 285
It's night that breeds dangerous winds, the wreckers of ships—
how indeed could we escape from utter destruction
should some sudden tearing gale bear down upon us
from the south or the storm-ridden west wind, which most often
break up ships in despite of the gods, their sovereign lords? 290
No, let us now rather yield to black night, put in,
stay close by the black ship to prepare our supper, and then
in the morning embark, sail out over the broad sea.'

"So Eurylochos spoke: the rest of my comrades applauded.
I saw now what kind of trouble some god had in store for us, 295
and so I spoke and addressed him with winged words, saying:
'Eurylochos, you force my hand: I'm one man only. But listen:
I want all of you here present to swear me a mighty oath,
that if we come on a herd of cattle, or a great flock
of sheep, no man will succumb to maleficent recklessness 300
and slaughter either a steer or a sheep. Rather show restraint
and eat the food that immortal Kirkē provided for us.'

"So I spoke. They at once swore not to, as I requested,
and when they had sworn and completed the oath, then we
moored our well-built ship inside the hollow harbor 305
near a freshwater spring, and my comrades disembarked
from the ship and expertly then set about preparing supper.
But when they'd put from them the desire for food and drink,
then they began to weep, recalling their dear shipmates
whom Skyllē had snatched from the hollow ship and devoured, 310
and sweet sleep came upon them while they were weeping.
But in the night's third watch, when the stars were setting,
Zeus the cloud-gatherer raised a blustering wind against us
with a tremendous tempest, sent storm clouds that hid
both land and sea: from heaven there sprang forth night. 315
When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
we dragged our ship to a roomy cave and made her fast there,
where the nymphs had their fine dance floors, held their meetings.
Then I called an assembly and addressed my comrades, saying:
'Friends, in our swift ship there is both food and drink: 320
so let's keep our hands off the cattle, lest we come to harm,
for these cows and well-fed sheep belong to a dread god,
Hēlios, who both sees and hears everything.

"So I spoke:
and their proud hearts were persuaded. But after that
for an entire month nonstop the south wind blew, 325
and no other wind arose, apart from the east and south.
Now so long as the men still were getting food and red wine
they kept their hands off the cattle, being anxious to stay alive;
but when the provisions in the ship were all exhausted,
and they were driven by need to go in search of game— 330
fish or fowl, whatever might come to hand,

angling with bent hooks, for hunger wore down their bellies—
then I went off up the island, to pray to the gods:
one of them possibly might show me the road to take.
So when going through the island I'd left my comrades, 335
I found shelter from the wind and washed my hands,
and prayed to all the gods that possess Olympos. But what
they did was to shed sweet sleep upon my eyelids,
while Eurylochos was giving bad advice to my comrades:
'Distressed though you are, my comrades, mark my words well: 340
All kinds of death are loathsome to wretched mortals,
but to die of starvation—that's the most pitiful of fates!
Come, let's rather drive off the best of Hēlios' cattle,
and sacrifice to the immortals who hold wide heaven!
And if ever we get to Ithákē, our native country, 345
we'll at once build a lavish temple to Hyperiōn Hēlios,
and fill it with plenty of high-class dedications!
And if he's angry with us because of his straight-horned cattle,
and wants to destroy our ship, and the other gods agree,
I'd rather gulp down seawater and get it over 350
than starve to death slowly here on this desolate island.'

"So Eurylochos spoke, and my other comrades assented.
At once they drove off the best cattle of Hēlios,
from nearby, since it wasn't far from our dark-prowed vessel
that his fine cows, broad of brow and crumple-horned,[3] 355
were grazing. Around these they stood and prayed to the gods,
with the fresh leaves they'd plucked from a tall oak's foliage,
since they had no white barley aboard the well-benched ship.
When they'd prayed and slit the cows' throats and flayed them,
they cut out the thighs, wrapped them up in a double layer 360
of fat, and placed above them cuts of raw meat. They had
no wine left that they could pour over the blazing sacrifice,
so they made libations with water, roasted the innards.
But when the thighs had been burnt and they'd tasted the entrails,
then they chopped up the rest and threaded it on spits. 365
It was now that sweet sleep retreated from my eyelids,
and I set off back to our swift ship and the seashore.

3. Horns straight, crumpled, or both? Since both epithets are formulaic, it seems probable that the poet, whose interests are unlikely to have included specific breeds of cattle, was not bothered by the seeming inconsistency.

But when, as I went, I came close to our shapely vessel,
the sweet aroma of roast meat filled the air around me,
and I groaned and cried out aloud to the immortal gods: 370
'Zeus, Father, and you other blessed gods that are forever,
it was indeed to my ruin that you lulled me with pitiless sleep
while the comrades I'd left behind committed this monstrous act!'

"At once to Hyperiōn Hēlios long-robed Lampetiē
came with the news that we had slaughtered his cattle. 375
Angered at heart, he at once spoke up among the immortals:
'Zeus, Father, and you other blessed gods that are forever,
take revenge on the crew of Odysseus, Laërtēs' son,
who have wantonly slaughtered the cattle in which I took
such pleasure each time I ascended the starry heaven 380
and when I turned back down again from heaven to earth.
If they don't compensate me fittingly for my cattle,
I shall go down to Hadēs and spread light among the dead.'

"Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer responded to him, saying:
'Hēlios, please go on shining among the immortals 385
and on mortal mankind upon the grain-giving earth!
These men's swift ship I'll soon hit with a bright thunderbolt
in the midst of the wine-dark deep and shatter to fragments.'

"This exchange I learned about later from fair-haired Kalypsō,
who said she herself had heard it from Hermēs the Guide. 390

"But when I came back down to the ship and the sea,
I rebuked all my men, confronting each one of them in turn;
but we found no solution. The cows were already dead.
Now too for my men the gods made a show of portents:
the hides crawled, the meat, both raw and roasted, mooed 395
on the spits, there was a sound like that of lowing cattle.

"For six days now my oh-so-trusty comrades dined
on Hēlios' best cattle that they'd driven off; but when
Zeus son of Kronos brought the seventh day upon us,
then the wind stopped blowing at gale force, and we promptly 400
boarded our ship and set forth into the wide sea, after
first stepping the mast and hoisting the white sail on it.
But once we'd left the island behind, and there was no other
land above our horizon, nothing but sky and sea,

then the son of Kronos conjured up a black cloud 405
over our hollow ship, and the deep beneath it darkened.
She ran on for no long time, since suddenly there came
a screaming west wind, a tempest blowing at full gale force.
The blast of that wind snapped the forestays holding the mast,
both of them—back fell the mast, and all its tackle 410
dropped pell-mell into the bilge; at the stern of the vessel
the mast struck the steersman's head, crushing all
the bones of his skull together. He like a diver fell
from the deck, and clear of the bones his proud spirit fled.
Zeus with a clap of thunder hurled his bolt at our vessel: 415
she shuddered her whole length, struck by the bolt of Zeus,
and was filled with the reek of sulfur. The crew all fell overboard,
and like shearwaters went bobbing around our black ship
borne up by the waves. The god deprived them of their return.
But I kept my foothold aboard until the surge tore sides 420
from keel. The stripped keel the waves now bore off, broke
the mast loose at keel level. Attached to the mast
was a backstay fashioned of oxhide. This I seized,
and lashed the two together, the keel and the mast.
Riding on these, I let the fierce winds sweep me away. 425

"But then the tempestuous gale-force west wind ceased,
and at once instead came the south wind, cause for alarm,
since it would carry me back to murderous Charybdis.
All night long it so bore me, until at sunrise I came
to the headland of Skyllē and to dread Charybdis, who now 430
sucked in the salt seawater; but I reached up
as high as I could, caught hold of the tall fig tree,
and clung to it like a bat. Yet I could in no way manage
to get firm foothold or to climb up on it, since
its roots were far distant, its branches high, out of reach, 435
long, massive, overshadowing Charybdis. So there
I clung on persistently, waiting for her to spew back
the mast and keel again. To my delight, back they came,
though late—at the hour a man leaves assembly for supper,
one who judges the many disputes of quarrelsome young men, 440
then it was that those timbers resurfaced out of Charybdis.
I let go my handhold and foothold, went plunging down,
hit the water ahead of the lengthy spars, and sitting

astride them steered my way onward with both hands.
But Skyllē the Father of gods and men did not permit 445
to see me again, or I'd not have avoided sheer destruction.

"Nine days I was carried from there, and on the tenth night
I was brought by the gods to the isle of Ōgygia, where
fair-haired Kalypsō dwells, dread goddess of human speech,
who befriended and cared for me. But why tell you this story? 450
I've told it already, just yesterday, here in your house
to you and your comely wife. I really dislike repeating
a tale that's been clearly narrated on a previous occasion."

Book 13

So he spoke: every one of them sat hushed and silent,
enthralled by his words, throughout the shadowy hall.
Then Alkinoös once again responded to him, saying:
"Odysseus, now you've come to my brazen-floored home
with its high roof, I don't think you'll be driven back *here* again 5
on your homeward journey, despite all your misadventures!
This I say along with a charge on each man here present—
all you who in my halls daily drink up the elders'
tawny-red wine, and sit on here, listening to the singer.
Clothes are laid by for the stranger in a polished chest, 10
and finely wrought gold, together with all those other gifts
that the counselors of the Phaiakians brought here. But come,
let's each one of us now present him with a great tripod
and cauldron: we'll recoup the cost by a public collection—
it's hard for one man to spend that much without repayment." 15

So spoke Alkinoös: what he said was pleasing to them.
They now retired to rest, each man to his own house.
When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
they went down to the ship with the bronze in which men delight.

Alkinoös, princely in power, himself ranged through the ship, 20
stowing gifts under the benches, to ensure they would not
get in the way of the rowers when they bent to their oars.
Then they went to Alkinoös' house and had their dinner.
Alkinoös, princely in power, sacrificed an ox for them
to Zeus of the dark clouds, son of Kronos, lord over all. 25
After burning the thighs, they sat down to the splendid feast
with great enjoyment. Among them a divine bard performed—
Dēmodokos, highly honored by the people. But Odysseus
kept turning his head toward the bright-shining sun,
impatient for it to start setting: he wanted to be gone. 30
As a man longs for supper, one with whose jointed plow
two wine-dark oxen have all day furrowed the field,
and gladly for him does the light of the sun go down

that lets him, weary-kneed, head home for supper—
so welcome to Odysseus was the arrival of sunset. 35
Then at once he addressed the Phaiakians, lovers of the oar,
to Alkinoös above all declaring his mind, in these words:
"Alkinoös, lord, most distinguished among all peoples,
pour libations, give me safe escort—and farewell to you all!
Each thing that my heart desired has already been arranged: 40
conveyance, and gifts of friendship—may the heavenly deities
make these turn out well for me! When I get home
may I find my wife truly faithful, my friends all safe and sound!
And may you who remain here give delight to your wedded
wives and children, may the gods grant you excellence 45
of every sort, may no ills ever come among your people."

So he spoke. They all approved, and endorsed the order
to give the stranger conveyance, since he'd spoken becomingly.
Then mighty Alkinoös made a request to his herald, saying:
"Pontonoös, mix us a bowl of wine and serve it to all 50
in the hall here, so we may pray to Zeus, the Father,
and then give this stranger conveyance to his own country."

So he spoke. Pontonoös mixed the mind-honeying wine
and served it to all in turn. They poured libations,
from where they sat, to the blessed gods who hold 55
broad heaven. Then noble Odysseus stood up,
and placed the two-handled cup in Arētē's hands,
and addressed her with winged words, saying: "O queen,
may you fare well, now and forever, until old age
and death, all mortals' common lot, come on you! 60
I'm on my way now, and I wish you all joy in this house
of your children and people, and of Alkinoös the king."

So spoke noble Odysseus, and stepped out across
the threshold, and mighty Alkinoös sent the herald with him
as his escort, down to the swift ship and the sea, 65
while Arētē sent serving women to accompany him,
one bearing a fresh-washed mantle and tunic, another
with orders to carry the close-packed chest, while a third
brought the food and the red wine. When they arrived
down by the ship and the sea, then quickly the noble 70
escorts took over these things and stowed them away

in the hold of the vessel, all the food and drink.[1]
For Odysseus they laid out a linen sheet and a blanket
on the hollow ship's deck astern to let him sleep soundly.
He now went aboard himself and lay down, not speaking. 75
The crew, each in his place, seated themselves at the rowlocks,
and cast off the hawser from the hole in the stone post.
They bent to their task then, flung up the brine with their oar blades,
and sweet sleep dropped on Odysseus, shuttered his eyelids,
sweet, deep, and sound, most closely akin to death. 80
The ship—like four yoked stallions on the plain
that all spring forward together under the whip's strokes,
and swiftly, high-stepping, gallop upon their way—
likewise lifted her stern: in her wake there surged a wave,
vast, dark-hued, of the roaring, many-voiced sea. 85
Safe and steady she ran—not even a falcon, the hawk
that's swiftest of all winged creatures, could fly faster,
so quickly she sheared her way through the waves of the sea,
bearing a man whose foresight matched that of the gods,
who in the past had suffered many sorrows at heart 90
both in men's wars and while braving the cruel sea,
but now slept undisturbed, his sufferings all forgotten.[2]

At the time of that brightest star's rising, which most clearly
comes to herald the light of Dawn,[3] early risen, then it was
that the seafaring vessel approached the island. There is 95
a certain harbor of Phorkys, that Old Man of the Sea,
in the land of Ithákē, with two protruding headlands,
each broken off short, and each crouched facing the harbor,
which they shield from those heavy waves whipped up outside
by powerful gales, while the well-benched ships lie within 100
unmoored, once they reach their position for anchorage.
At the head of the harbor there grows a long-leafed olive tree,

1. The omission of all the items bar the comestibles here is probably due, not, as is alleged at *Comm.,* 2: 168, and accepted by Dimock (7n8), to the careless misuse of a stock formulaic phrase, but to a line dropping out at an early stage in the transmission.
2. This marks the conclusion of Odysseus' wanderings: from now on "his destiny is to be worked out in Ithaca" (Stanford 1971, 2: 201).
3. The star (later known as Phōsphoros, or Lucifer), was almost certainly Venus, which "in its season is much the brightest of the stars and can even be seen in the middle of the day at certain times" (ibid., 201–2).

and close to this is a cave, very pleasant and well-shaded,
the sacred terrain of those nymphs who are known as Naiads.
Inside it are mixing bowls and two-handled stone jars, 105
and there too is where the bees deposit their honey.
In the cave there are long stone looms, at which the nymphs
weave their webs of sea-purple, a wonder to behold.
Springs, ever-flowing, are there, and the cave has two entrances,
one facing the north wind, accessible to mortals, 110
but the other, looking southward, is sacred, and men
do not use it: it is a pathway for the immortals only.[4]

Here they put in—they knew the place well—and the ship
ran half her whole length up the beach, so great was the speed
at which she was driven on by the arms of the rowers. 115
Then, stepping ashore from the well-benched ship, they first
lifted Odysseus out of the hollow ship, together
with the linen sheet and bright blanket, laid him down,
just as he was, on the sand, still fast asleep, and unloaded
the goods that the noble Phaiakians had given him, through 120
great-hearted Athēnē's prompting, as he set out homeward.
These things they left all together by the trunk of the olive tree,
away from the path, for fear some other traveler might
come upon them and filch them before Odysseus woke up.
Then they took off back home. However, the Earth-Shaker 125
did not forget the threats he'd made earlier against
godlike Odysseus, and now he questioned Zeus' purpose:
"Zeus, Father, no longer among the immortal gods
shall I be honored, when some mortals respect me not at all—
the Phaiakians, even though they share my own ancestry![5] 130
For lately I said that Odysseus would have a heap of trouble
before he got home—though I did not wholly deprive him
of his return: you'd promised that, sworn with your nod!
Yet those men bore him sleeping in their swift ship over the deep,
set him down on Ithákē, gave him countless gifts— 135
bronze, and plentiful gold, and woven garments,

4. "'Topographical' introductions to a new development are rather frequent in Homer. Vividly interrupting the normal flow of epic narrative, they focused the attention of the hearers on what was coming," Hoekstra points out in *Comm.,* 2: 169. In the *Odyssey,* beside the present passage, see, e.g., 15.403–14, 19.172–81.
5. Cf. 7.61–63: Poseidōn sired Nausithoös, lord of the Phaiakians, on Periboia.

more than Odysseus could ever have won from Troy
had he come home unscathed, with his fair share of the spoils."

Then Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, responded to him, saying:
"Well, wide-powered Earth-Shaker, what a speech that was! 140
The gods do you no dishonor! A harsh business it would be
to assail with demeaning slights our oldest and noblest!
But if any mortal, misled by his own forceful power, fails
to honor you, you can always be revenged on him hereafter.
Do as you wish, whatever gives your heart pleasure." 145

Then Poseidōn, Earth-Shaker, responded to him, saying:
"I'd act at once, dark-clouded one, in the way you describe,
but I always dread your wrath, and avoid it. Still, now I'd like,
as that so-beautiful vessel of the Phaiakians comes
back from its voyage as escort on the misty deep, 150
to smash it, make them desist, give up this conveyancing
of people! And hide their city with a great encircling mountain.

Then Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, responded to him, saying:
"My brother, this, to my mind, seems your best way to act:
When all the folk from the city are watching that ship 155
as she puts in, then turn her to stone, very close to land,
a stone like the swift ship, so that all mankind may marvel.
But don't[6] hide their city with a great encircling mountain."

Now when he heard this, Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker,
went off to Scheria, where the Phaiakians dwell, 160
and waited there, until that seafaring ship came close
inshore, moving fast. Then the Earth-Shaker approached.
He turned her to stone, and rooted her deep below
with one blow from the flat of his hand. Then he was gone.

They exchanged winged words then, one to another, did 165
the long-oared Phaiakians, men renowned for their ships,
and thus would one who'd seen it speak to his neighbor:
"Ah me, who was it that fettered our swift ship in the sea
on her homeward voyage, when she was in plain sight?"

6. Reading the convincing correction suggested by Aristophanes of Byzantion: cf. West 2014, 232 with n. 144.

So would one speak. How it happened they had no idea. 170
But Alkinoös made them a speech on the subject, saying:
"Well now, I do recall certain ancient predictions made
by my father: he used to say that Poseidōn was angry
with us, because we give safe convoy to all and sundry.
One day, he said, a most beautiful Phaiakian vessel 175
returning from escort duty out on the misty deep
he'd strike, and hide our city with a great mountain round it.
So said the old man, and now this is being fulfilled!
So come, let us all agree to do as I bid: we must cease
to provide conveyance for mortals, whenever a traveler 180
visits our city; moreover, we must sacrifice to Poseidōn
a dozen choice bulls, that he may have compassion for us
and not hide our city with a great encircling mountain."

So he spoke. They were terrified, got the bulls ready,
and were all of them busy praying to the lord Poseidōn, 185
all those leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians,
standing around the altar, when noble Odysseus awoke
from sleep in his native land, yet failed to recognize it,
so long had he been away; for about him the goddess Pallas
Athēnē, Zeus' daughter, had shed a mist, to make him 190
unrecognizable when she told him what was going on,
and so that neither his wife nor the townsfolk nor his friends
would know him until the suitors had paid the full price
for their wrongdoing. Thus everything he saw seemed strange
to their ruler—the unbroken paths, the bays with safe anchorage, 195
the steep rocky cliffs, the flourishing trees. So up he got,
and stood there, gazing round at his own native land.
After a moment he groaned, and struck both thighs
with the flat of his hands, and sorrowfully exclaimed:
"Alas, to what mortals' country have I come this time? 200
Are they wild and savage, devoid of notions of justice,
or hospitable to strangers, men with god-fearing minds?
Where am I supposed to be taking all this wealth? Where indeed
am I wandering to myself? I should have stayed put there with
the Phaiakians! Then I'd have met some other mighty king 205
who'd have befriended me, helped me with my homecoming!
Now I've no idea where to store this stuff— I can't leave it here,

lest it might become, to my cost, the spoil of others.
Not quite so intelligent or right-thinking, then, I reckon,
were those leaders and counselors of the Phaiakians who 210
dumped me in some strange country, when indeed they'd said
they would bring me to sunny Ithákē. They failed to do so.
May Zeus, the protector of suppliants, requite them,
he who watches over mankind, who punishes each wrongdoer!
So I'll count up the items here, examine them well, and see 215
if they took anything with them in their hollow ship when they left."

That said, he set about counting the surpassingly fine tripods
and cauldrons, the gold, the exquisite woven garments.
Of these he found nothing missing. But he mourned for his own land
as he slouched along its shore by the noisy, many-voiced sea, 220
with much lamentation. Athēnē now approached him,
in the likeness of a young man, a herder of sheep,
one delicately nurtured, as are the sons of princes:
round her shoulders she wore, double-folded, a well-made wrap,
on her sleek feet she had sandals, in her hands a hunting spear. 225

Odysseus saw her, rejoiced, went up and confronted her,
and addressed her with winged words, saying: "Good friend,
since you're the first person I've encountered in this country,
greetings, and may it be with no evil intent you meet me!
No, rather rescue these presents, and rescue me, for to you 230
I pray now as to a god, I come suppliant to your knees.
And tell me this truthfully, so that I can be certain of it:
What land, what region is this? What people dwell here?
Is it one of the sunny islands, or some promontory, sloping
down to the salty deep from the rich-soiled mainland?" 235

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"You're an ignoramus, stranger, or you must come from far away
to be asking about this country. It's very far from being
as nameless as all that! Indeed, many people know it,
both those who dwell nearer to the dawn and the sun, 240
and those further behind, out toward the murky darkness.
It's rough terrain, not fit for the driving of horses,
Yet not wholly worthless, even if lacking broad plains.
Grain grows there abundantly, wine too is a product,
there's always rain and dew to keep it fertile, it's good 245

pasture for goats and cattle, there's also fine ground cover
of every sort, together with all-year watering-places.
Thus, stranger, the name of Ithákē has spread even to Troy,
which, they say, is far distant from the country of Achaia."

So she spoke. Noble much-enduring Odysseus was glad, 250
taking joy in the land of his fathers as he heard the words
of Pallas Athēnē, the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus;
and he spoke, addressed her with winged words, yet did not
tell her the truth, held back his actual story,
making up as he went a plausible tale in his mind: 255
"I did hear tell of Ithákē, even when in broad Krētē,
far away over the deep, and now I myself have come here
bringing these goods of mine. I left as much more with my sons,
and I'm on the run, after killing a son of Idomeneus—
swift-footed Orsilochos, who in broad Krētē surpassed 260
for fleetness of foot all bread-earning men—because
he meant to deprive me of the plunder I'd won from Troy,
(to get which I'd suffered much agony, battling through
both the wars of men and the high seas), because I'd refused
to do his father a favor by serving as his henchman 265
in the land of Troy, while commanding other troops of my own.
So I ran him through with my bronze-tipped spear as he came
back from the fields. I lay in wait for him at the roadside
with one companion. A dark night obscured the sky:
nobody saw us. Unperceived, I robbed him of life. 270
But when I'd dispatched him with the sharp bronze, I went
at once to the lordly Phoenicians' ship, besought them—
giving them plunder enough to satisfy their desire—
to take me on board as a passenger, land me at Pylos,
or noble Ēlis, where the Epeians hold power. 275
But gale-force winds forced them away from there, though much
against their will: they had no plan to deceive me.
So, beaten off course by weather, we arrived here at night,
and quickly rowed into the harbor, nor did any among us
think at all about supper, though we needed it badly, 280
but just as we were, after landing, we all lay down, and sweet
sleep descended upon me in my exhaustion. But they
removed all my goods from the hollow ship, and put them
close to where I was lying, there on the sand, and then

themselves went aboard and departed for populous Sidon, 285
while I was left behind here, grieving at heart."

So he spoke.
The goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, smiled and stroked him
with one hand, and changed her appearance into the likeness
of a tall and beautiful woman, one skilled in fine handiwork,
and spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Sharp 290
and guileful he'd need to be, the man who'd outsmart you
in every trick, were it even a god who met you! Perverse,
devious-minded, obsessed with deceit, won't you ever,
even in your own country, abandon your deceptions
and the lying tales you adore from the very ground up? But let's 295
speak no more of these things—we're experts both
in craftiness: you are the best of all living mortals
for counsel and storytelling, while I among all the gods
am famed for contrivance and sharpness. You failed to recognize
Zeus' daughter Pallas Athēnē—I who always stand 300
at your side, I who guard you in all your tough endeavors—
and made sure that you were befriended by all the Phaiakians!
Now I have come once more to weave a new plan with you,
to hide all these treasures which the lordly Phaiakians
gave you for your homecoming—by my plan and urging!— 305
and to tell you all the troubles it's your destiny to endure
in your well-built home. And endure them you must, not reveal
to anyone, man or woman, that in fact it's you,
come back from your wanderings, but silently endure
a host of indignities, submit to men's violent acts." 310

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to her, saying:
"It's hard for a mortal, goddess, to recognize you on meeting,
however clever he is: you can assume any likeness!
But this I know well, you were kindly disposed toward me
back when we sons of Achaians were fighting at Troy. 315
But after we'd sacked the steep citadel of Priam,
and left in our ships, and some god then scattered the Achaians,
never since then, Zeus' daughter, have I seen you, or observed
you boarding my ship, to ward off some trouble from me!
It was indeed burdened with a torn heart in my breast 320
that I kept wandering on, until the gods rescued me
from my troubles—until, indeed, in the Phaiakians' rich land

you cheered me with your words, yourself led me to their city!
Now in your father's name I entreat you—for I don't
think it's to sunny Ithákē I've come, but some other 325
country I find myself in, and that this assertion of yours
was spoken in mockery, to deceive my mind—please tell me
whether in fact or not it's my native land I've come to."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"You always have some such idea in your head! That's why 330
I cannot abandon you in your unhappiness. Besides,
you're courteous, sharp-witted, discreet. Any other man
would gladly, on getting back after his wanderings,
have hurried home to see his wife and children; but you
aren't willing to ascertain anything or to make enquiries 335
until you've made trial of your wife, who, now as always,
sits in your halls, while for her the long nights and days
waste away slowly in sorrow with the tears she sheds.
But this I never doubted, and in my heart knew well—
that you'd make it home after losing all your comrades. 340
Still, I wasn't ready to quarrel on your behalf with Poseidōn,
my father's brother, who nursed a grudge in his heart
against you, enraged because you blinded his dear son.
But come now, I'll show you the realm of Ithákē, convince you!
This is the harbor of Phorkys, the Old Man of the Sea, 345
and here, at the head of the harbor, is the long-leafed olive tree,
and close to it the cave, very pleasant and well-shaded,
the sacred terrain of those nymphs who are known as Naiads.
This is the high-roofed cave where you used to honor
those nymphs with so many rich sacrifices; and yonder 350
forest-clad mountain is Nēriton."

That said, the goddess
dispersed the mist, and the landscape stood out clearly.
Then glad indeed was long-suffering noble Odysseus,
and rejoiced in his country, and kissed the grain-giving earth,
and at once, raising up his hands, made a prayer to the nymphs: 355
"You Naiad nymphs, Zeus' daughters, never once did I
think that I'd see you again! But now with friendly prayers
I greet you—and gifts I shall give you, as I used to do,
should Zeus' daughter, leader of hosts, be willing to let me
live on myself, and to bring my own dear son to manhood." 360

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē responded to him, saying:
"Be confident, don't let these matters bother your mind! And now
let's store your goods right away in the furthest recess
of the sacred cave, where they'll always be safe for you,
and ourselves plan how all may turn out for the best."

So saying, 365
the goddess made her way into the shadowy cave,
searching through it for hiding places, while Odysseus
brought all his treasures inside—the gold, the unworn bronze,
and the finely made clothing that the Phaiakians gave him.
These things he stowed well away, and Pallas Athēnē, 370
daughter of Zeus of the aegis, set a stone at the entrance.
Then they both sat down by the trunk of the sacred olive,
and discussed how to wreak destruction on the arrogant suitors.
The goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, began the discussion, saying:
"Scion of Zeus, Laërtēs' son, resourceful Odysseus, 375
take thought how to lay hands on these shameless suitors
who for three years now have been lording it in your halls—
courting your godlike wife, pressing wooers' gifts upon her,
while she, heart yearning sadly for your return, gives hope
to all, making promises to every last man of them, 380
and sending them messages. But her mind is on other things."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to her, saying:
"Indeed, I was like to have met the same evil fate
in my halls as did Agamemnōn, son of Atreus,
had you not told me, goddess, the whole truth of the matter! 385
So come now, weave me a scheme of revenge upon these men,
and yourself stand by my side, fill me with strength
and daring, as when we undid the bright diadem of Troy!
Were you, grey-eyed goddess, beside me, hot to fight,
I'd take on, with you, three hundred warriors, O my 390
sovereign goddess, given your free and ready support."

The goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"Assuredly I shall stand by you: you will not go unnoticed
when we are about this business: your broad floor, I think,
will be splashed with the blood and brains of more than one 395
of those suitors who are now devouring your livelihood!
First, let me make you unrecognizable to any mortal:

I'll shrivel the healthy flesh on your supple limbs,
destroy the fair hair on your head,[7] wrap you in rags so foul
as to make the mere sight of a man who's clad in them disgusting; 400
and I'll dim your eyes, that before were so attractive,
to make you look really shabby to all these suitors—
and to your wife, and the son you left behind in your halls.
Now what *you* must do first of all is seek out the swineherd—
he looks after your pigs, but also is well disposed toward you, 405
and loves your son, and discreet Penelopē. Him you'll find
stationed along with his pigs. These are out at pasture
close to the Raven's Rock and the spring of Arethousa,
feeding on plentiful acorns and drinking dark spring water,
those things that nourish the abundant fat of swine. 410
Stay there, and sitting by him, ask all your questions.
I meanwhile shall go to Sparta, land of fair women,
and summon Tēlemachos—your dear son, Odysseus—
who went to broad Lakedaimōn to visit Menelaös
and enquire about you, find out if you were still alive." 415

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to her, saying:
"Why didn't you tell him, you whose mind is all-knowing?
Was it so he too might suffer hardships traversing
the unharvested sea, while others devour his livelihood?"

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying: 420
"Don't let him be too heavy a weight upon your mind!
It was I who directed him, so he'd get a good reputation
by going there! He's suffered no hardship, he's relaxing
in the house of Atreus' son, enjoys his limitless bounty.
There are young men lying in wait for him in their black ship, 425
eager to kill him before he gets back to his native land;
but I don't see it happening. Before that the earth will cover
one or more of the suitors now devouring your livelihood."

So saying, Athēnē began touching him with her wand.
She shriveled the healthy flesh on his supple limbs, 430
destroyed the fair hair on his head, and over his whole
person now stretched the skin of an old and age-worn man.
She dimmed his eyes, that before were so attractive,

7. Odysseus is so bald at 18.351–55, presumably owing to Athēnē's work, that jokes are made about his shining pate.

and changed his clothes to a ragged cloak and tunic,
all threadbare and filthy, begrimed with foul black smoke; 435
and round him she cast the great hide of a speedy deer,
bald of its hair, and gave him a staff, and a leather bag
tattered and rent, that was held by a twisted cord.

Plans made, the two of them parted. The goddess now left
for lordly Lakedaimōn, in search of Odysseus' son.

Book 14

But the rough path up from the harbor was that which Odysseus
now took, by the woodland and heights, to where Athēnē
said he'd find the noble swineherd, who, of all the household
Odysseus possessed, devoted most care to his property.
Ensconced in his forecourt he found him, where the enclosure 5
had been built up high, at a point with a wide view round,
a fine big open courtyard, in a sheltered position. This
the swineherd had built himself, unknown to his mistress
or old Laërtēs, for the pigs of his absent master, using
quarried stones, topped off with a coping of prickly thorn. 10
Outside he'd driven in posts, right round in a circle,
strong and close, splitting them off from an oak's dark center;
inside the enclosure he'd fashioned a dozen sties
set close to each other, to serve as beds for the pigs:
in each of them fifty ground-sleeping swine were penned.
These were sows, for breeding; the boars bedded down outside, 15
and were fewer by far in number, for the godlike suitors
made inroads on them for feasting. The swineherd always
sent them the best of the fattened hogs: there were
three hundred and sixty of these, and there slept beside them 20
four guard dogs, as savage as wild beasts, specially reared
by the swineherd, leader of men. He himself was now busy
making a pair of sandals and fitting them to his feet,
cutting a piece of fresh-colored oxhide. The others
had gone off, one here, one there, with their droves of swine— 25
three of them, that is: the fourth he'd sent into town
with a hog, taken under constraint, to the arrogant suitors,
for them to slaughter and glut their appetites with the meat.

Odysseus was suddenly spotted by the ferocious guard dogs,
and they made for him, barking loudly. Odysseus, however, 30
showing presence of mind, sat down, letting go of his staff.
Yet there on his own farmstead he might have been badly hurt
had the swineherd not run up quickly, chasing the dogs
across the forecourt, dropping his oxhide as he came,

and, shouting loudly, had scattered them this way and that 35
with volleys of stones. He then addressed his master, saying:
"Old man, those dogs came so close to tearing you apart
in an instant, and you would have put the blame on me!
And the gods have brought on me other griefs and sorrows:
For I sit here lamenting, and mourning a godlike master 40
and fattening up these hogs for other men to devour,
while he may now be adrift, half-starved and in need of food,
in some town or country of aliens, foreign of speech—
that is, if he's still alive, and enjoying the sunlight!
But come indoors with me now, old man, and after 45
you've quietened your heart with food and wine, you too
can relate where you're from, all the hardships you've endured."

So saying, the noble[1] swineherd escorted him to his hut,
ushered him in, heaped up thick rough brushwood, and on it
spread the hide of a shaggy wild goat for him to sit on— 50
his own coverlet, large and hairy—and Odysseus was pleased
at being given such a good welcome, and addressed him, saying:
"My host,[2] may Zeus and the other immortal gods now grant you
what you most desire, since you gave me a ready welcome."

To him then, swineherd Eumaios, did you make answer, saying: 55
"Stranger, were one even meaner than you to come here,
I'd still have no right to reject him, for all strangers and beggars
are from Zeus, and a gift, however small, is friendly
from folk such as us; for that's always the lot of servants,
frightened when those who have the mastery over them 60
are the young. The gods, it's true, have blocked that man's return
who'd have treated me as a friend, would have given me possessions—
a home, a plot of land, a much-courted wife, such things
as a kind-hearted master gives to a servant of his

1. This may, at first sight, be thought a slightly inappropriate epithet for Eumaios, however decent his instincts. It is only later, at the beginning of a lengthy digression (15.413–84), that we learn that he is, in fact, nobly born, a king's son kidnapped as a child by traffickers and sold to Laërtēs. Whether or not his character, as H. draws it, is an instance of the popular belief in folktale that blue blood will out, whatever the circumstances, or proof that moral excellence can outshine humble surroundings, has been much, and pointlessly, debated.
2. Odysseus here manages a polite transition, since the word *xeinos,* here translated as "host," can elsewhere, as we have seen, commonly mean "stranger" (and also, to confuse matters still further, "guest," as Eumaios makes very clear in his response).

who works hard for him, whose labor a god makes prosper 65
just as this work prospers to which I'm now committed.
For me my lord would have done much, had he grown old here;
but he perished, as I now wish Helen's whole line had perished,
utterly, she who unstrung the knees of so many men!
For he too went out there to save Agamemnōn's honor, 70
to Ilion, rich in good horses, to fight against the Trojans."

So saying, he quickly girded his tunic with a belt,
and went out to the sties, where the droves of pigs were confined.
From there he chose two, brought them in, and killed them both,
singed them and cut them up and put the meat on spits, 75
and roasted it. Then he placed the cuts, hot and still spitted,
with a sprinkling of white barley, in front of Odysseus.
In an ivy-wood bowl he now mixed the honey-sweet wine,
and sat down facing his guest, and addressed him invitingly:
"Eat now, stranger! Enjoy the food that's the fare for servants— 80
cheap pork! The fattened hogs are kept for the suitors' meals,
men whose minds care nothing for the gods' wrath, or for pity.
The blessed gods do not favor reckless deeds, but rather
have rewards for justice and for men's righteous deeds.
Even the hostile and lawless, who invade the land of others 85
to get a living, and Zeus allows them their plunder, so that
they sail home with laden vessels—on their minds too
falls the strong fear of the gods' wrath. But these men here
must know something, must have had some word from a god
about *his* sorry death, since they will not court properly 90
or go back to their own possessions, but here at their ease
waste our goods wantonly, and restraint there is none,
for on every night and day that we get from Zeus they never
sacrifice just one victim, or even two, I think,
and our wine they waste, consuming it recklessly. 95
Great indeed, past telling, were his resources: no other
heroic warrior, either away on the dark mainland,
or on Ithákē itself, could match them. Not twenty men
together had as much wealth: I'll list you the sum of it.
On the mainland, twelve herds of cattle, twelve flocks of sheep, 100
as many droves of swine and wide-ranging troops of goats
are pastured alike by outsiders and his own herdsmen.
Eleven wide-ranging troops of goats browse at the farthest

end of the island, and over them good men watch,
each of whom daily drives off one of his troop for *them*— 105
whichever fattened goat looks to be the best that he has.
Myself, I guard and watch over these swine here, and choose
the best of the hogs to provide for them."
So he spoke.
His grateful guest was already downing the meat and wine
greedily, in silence, planning trouble for the suitors. 110
But when he'd had supper, and quietened his heart by eating,
the swineherd topped up with wine the bowl from which
he himself drank, and gave it him; he took it, glad at heart,
and spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Friend,
who was the man that bought you with his resources, 115
one as wealthy and powerful as you mentioned? You say
he perished upholding the honor of Agamemnōn: tell me,
since such a person I may perhaps recognize;
for only Zeus and the other immortal gods may know
whether I've seen and had news of him: much I've wandered." 120

The swineherd, leader of men, responded to him, saying:
"Old man, no wanderer who turned up with news of him
would ever convince his wife and son: far from it!
Vagrant fellows in need of comfort and sustenance
tell lies: they have no desire to offer a true account! 125
Anyone who in his wandering stops off at Ithákē
goes straight to my mistress and spins her a lying yarn;
and she entertains him kindly and questions him in detail,
while shedding tears of sorrow from beneath her eyelids,
as a woman will do when her husband has perished far away. 130
You too, old man, would be quick to concoct a story
If someone gave you for it a cloak and tunic to wear!
As for him, by now the dogs and swift birds of prey
will have torn the skin from his bones, and the soul's gone from him,
or fish in the deep sea have eaten him, and his bones 135
are now down under the sands of some mainland beach.
So he's perished out there, and on his friends hereafter—
all, but on me most of all—grief's been laid, for never again
will I find so kindly a master, however far I go,
not even if I went back to my parents' home, the place 140
where I was born, and they raised me themselves. Yet it's not

so much for them that I grieve—much though I now long
to set eyes on them again, to be in my own country—
no, it's Odysseus for whom I yearn, and he's gone!
To speak his name, stranger, even when he's absent, I find 145
presumptuous,[3] since he always loved and cared for me greatly:
'Honored master' I rather call him, even though he's far away."

Much-enduring noble Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Friend, since yours is a total denial, since you don't believe
that man will ever come back, and your heart's still incredulous, 150
then I'll not just make a plain statement, but swear an oath to it
that Odysseus *will* return! I claim the reward for good news
the moment that man sets foot inside his home—then clothe me
in a cloak and a tunic, fine garments! But until then,
however sore my need, I would not accept anything; 155
for as hateful to me as the gates of Hadēs is the man
who, yielding to poverty, concocts a deceitful story.
Zeus, first among gods, be my witness, and this guest's table,
and the hearth of peerless Odysseus, to which I have come,
that all these things indeed will come to pass as I tell you! 160
Within the current moon's sequence Odysseus will arrive here,
between this month's waning and the rising of the next.
He will come back home, and take vengeance on all those
here who dishonor his wife and his illustrious son."

To him then, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying: 165
"Neither shall I pay you this reward for good news, old man,
nor will Odysseus ever come home, so relax and drink,
and let's think about other matters—don't remind me of these!

---

3. This hesitation has occasioned some ludicrous explanations (including the idea, picked up by Dimock ad loc., that Eumaios is avoiding Odysseus' name because of its literal meaning "Man of Pain," when he's always been treated well). Perhaps this obtuseness should not surprise us in an age when complete strangers, especially in mass communications on the Internet, regularly refer to everyone by their first name. Eumaios in fact is showing the good servant's respect for social custom. For a servant, however well treated, for however long, to address his master in familiar terms was, then until comparatively recently, unthinkable. (Imagine the butler in *Downton Abbey* addressing the earl of Grantham as Robert, or, worse, Bob.) Eumaios has just, inadvertently, done the equivalent, and hastens to explain that he's not really presumptuous (all the more regrettable an offense because of his master's great kindness) and emphasizes the proper, if admiring, term of respect that he uses. Liberties are not to be taken behind the master's back, especially when no one is certain where that back is.

The heart in my breast suffers agonies whenever
anyone mentions my caring master. As for your oath, 170
we'll let that ride: may Odysseus indeed come back,
as I hope and desire, as indeed does Penelopē too,
and aged Laërtēs, and godlike Tēlemachos. Now
it's for him I ceaselessly grieve, the son Odysseus begot:
Tēlemachos. Him the gods bred up like a sapling: I thought 175
he'd grow to be no worse a man among men
than his own dear father, a marvel in form and looks.
But some immortal damaged the common sense within him,
or maybe some human: he went after news of his father
to sacred Pylos, and now the lordly suitors are lying 180
in wait for him on his way home, that Arkeisios' godlike
line may die out on Ithákē, leave no name behind.
But we'll leave him be now, whether he's to be ambushed
or escape with a helping hand from the son of Kronos.
Come now, old sir, inform me about your own misfortunes, 185
and make it a truthful account, one that I can rely on!
Who are you? From where? What city? Who are your parents?
What kind of ship did you come on? And how did sailors
bring you here to Ithákē? And who did *they* claim to be?
For I don't imagine you made your way here on foot." 190

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Very well, I'll give you a truthful account of these matters.
I only wish that we two had enough supplies of food
and sweet wine, here in your hut, enough to last a while,
that we could feast on in silence, while others did the work: 195
easily then could I take up the space of a whole year
and still not have finished the tale of my heartfelt sufferings—
sum total of all that by the gods' will I've endured.

"From broad Krētē, I claim, derives my family background:
I'm the son of a wealthy man, and numerous other 200
offspring were born and raised in his halls, legitimate
sons of his wife; but the mother who bore me was bought,
a concubine. Yet he honored me like his true-born sons,
did Kastōr, the son of Hylax, from whom I claim descent,
and who was revered like a god by the Krētans in their land 205
for his wealth and prosperity, his splendid sons. But still
the spirits of death pounced on him and carried him off

to the house of Hadēs. His property was divided
by his arrogant sons, who cast lots for it. But to me
they allotted a small portion only, house and all. 210
Yet I married a wife from a wealthy landowning family
on the grounds of my excellence: I was no good-for-nothing,
no coward in battle. Now all that strength is gone,
though I think when you look at the stubble you'll recognize
what the grain once was. Since then I've suffered greatly. 215
In the past Athēnē and Arēs endowed me with courage
and rank-breaking strength: whenever I chose for an ambush
our best men, sowing the seeds of trouble for the foe,
never did my proud spirit anticipate death: no, I
was always the first to spring forward, and with my spear 220
to lay low any opponent who lacked my speed of foot.
Such a man was I in warfare. Field work was not to my taste,
nor was running a household—the way to raise fine children.
Oared vessels were always my passion—that, and warfare,
arrows and well-polished javelins—deadly objects, 225
to which others, more often than not, react with a shudder;
but to me were welcome: maybe a god endeared them to me,
and different men take pleasure in different actions.
For before the Achaians' sons set foot in the land of Troy
I had nine times commanded troops and swift-sailing ships 230
against foreign fighters. Much plunder kept coming my way,
of which I chose what I fancied, and plenty afterwards
I obtained by lot. At once my house grew rich: thenceforward
I became respected and feared among the Krētans.

"But when
far-seeing Zeus devised that hateful expedition 235
which unstrung the knees of so many warriors, then
they ordered me, together with far-famed Idomeneus,
to lead ships to Ilion, nor was there any device
that would let us refuse, for the people's stern will compelled us.
There for nine years we Achaians' sons were at war, 240
but on the tenth we sacked Priam's citadel, and set out
for home in our ships. A god then scattered the Achaians,
and for wretched me Zeus the planner thought up more trouble.
One month I stayed home, taking pleasure in my children
and wedded wife and possessions. But after that 245

to Egypt my spirit drove me to make a voyage,
in ships that were well appointed, with my godlike comrades.
Nine ships I fitted out, and their crews assembled quickly.
For six days on end my trusty comrades feasted,
and I provided them with victims in plenty, so they 250
could sacrifice to the gods and have a feast themselves;
then on the seventh we boarded, sailed out from broad Krētē,
running on before a strong wind out of the north,
lightly, as though downstream: nor did any misfortune
befall my vessels: unscathed and free from sickness 255
we sat there, while the wind and the helmsmen steered them.

"On the fifth day we reached Egypt's fine-flowing stream
and in that Egyptian river I anchored my curved vessels.
Then I issued orders to my trusty comrades, to remain
there with the ships, and to be those ships' protectors 260
while I sent off scouts to find and man lookout posts.
But, trusting their strength, they yielded to wanton aggression,
and at once began ravaging the Egyptians' splendid
fields, and carrying off their wives and little children,
and killing the men. Word quickly reached the city, 265
and, hearing the shouting, people came out at daybreak.
The whole plain filled up with infantry and horses
and the bright glint of bronze. Zeus, hurler of thunderbolts,
cast a craven panic upon my comrades: nobody dared
to stand firm and face the foe, for trouble confronted us 270
on every side. Many of us they slew with the sharp bronze;
others they led off alive, to do forced labor for them.
But Zeus himself put this thought in my mind—how I wished
I had suffered death and encountered my destiny there
In Egypt, since yet more sorrow was waiting to welcome me! 275
At once I removed from my head the well-wrought helmet,
and the shield from my shoulders, and let fall my spear,
and made my way toward the horses of the king,
and clasped his knees and kissed them. He rescued and pitied me,
picked me up in his chariot, took me, weeping, to his home. 280
Numerous fighters ran at me with their ash-wood spears,
eager to kill me, for they were greatly angered;
but he warded them off, in concern for the wrath of Zeus,
the strangers' protector, the stern requiter of evil deeds.

"I stayed there for seven years, during which I acquired 285
great wealth from the men of Egypt, for they all gave me gifts.
But when the eighth year came round for me, there appeared
a man, a Phoenician, a fine expert in deceptions,
a sharp nibbler, who already had cheated many people.
By his cunning he talked me into accompanying him 290
to Phoenicia, where were located his home and his possessions,
and there I stayed with him till a year had run its course.
But when at length the months and days were completed
Of the circling year, and the seasons in turn came on,
he put me aboard a seagoing ship bound for Libya, 295
with a lying tale that we'd both be conveying a cargo,
but in fact to sell me there for a high price. I went with him
on the ship, though suspecting trouble, under constraint.
She ran on before a strong wind out of the north,
above central Krētē; but Zeus was planning their destruction, 300
and when we'd left Krētē behind us, and there was no other
land in plain view, but nothing save sky and sea,
then the son of Kronos conjured up a black cloud
over our hollow ship, and the deep beneath it darkened.
Zeus with a clap of thunder hurled his bolt at our vessel: 305
she shuddered her whole length, struck by the bolt of Zeus,
and was filled with the reek of sulfur. The crew all fell overboard,
and like shearwaters went bobbing around our black ship,
borne up by the waves. The god deprived them of their return.
But for me, in my heartfelt distress, Zeus himself at this moment 310
put into my hands the sea-going vessel's great mast,
so that once more I might escape destruction. And so,
clinging firmly to this, I was carried away by fierce winds
for nine days, but on the tenth, in the blackness of night,
a great wave rolled me ashore in Thesprōtian country. 315
There the Thesprōtian king, the hero Pheidōn,
cared for me without payment, for his son now found me
overcome by chill air and exhaustion, and took me home,
leading me by the hand, till he reached his father's abode,
and gave me clothing, a mantle and tunic. It was there 320
that I heard news of Odysseus, for the king now told me
he'd befriended and entertained him on his way to his native land,
and showed me all the possessions Odysseus had amassed—

bronze and gold, and iron, laboriously wrought,
enough to support his descendants to the tenth generation, 325
so great was the wealth stored for him there in the king's domain.
But Odysseus, he said, had gone to Dōdōnē, to discover,
from the deep-leaved sacred oak, what Zeus was planning,
and how he should make his way back to Ithákē's rich land
after so long an absence, whether openly or in secret. 330
And he swore to me at home, while pouring libations,
that the ship had been launched, and the crew were in readiness
to convey him to his own country. But me he sent off first,
since there chanced to be a Thesprōtian vessel ready
to set sail for Doulichion, that country rich in wheat. 335
He told them to ferry me there, to King Akastos, with proper
care; but an evil plan had found favor in their hearts
about me, so I'd still suffer at misery's nadir. When
the seagoing vessel had sailed a fair way from land, at once
they set about making ready the day of slavery for me. 340
My clothing, my mantle and tunic, they stripped off from me,
and replaced them with the vile rags and tattered tunic
that you can see now in front of you. That same evening
they reached the tilled fields of sunny Ithákē. Then
they left me bound fast in the well-benched ship with a rope 345
that they'd twisted tight, and themselves went off ashore,
and hastened to take their supper there on the seashore.
But the gods themselves took care of me, untied the knots
easily. Wrapping the rags around my head, I slid down
the polished gangplank, plunged breast first into the sea, 350
struck out with both arms, swimming fast, and very quickly
got back ashore, well away from where they were.
Then I went up and found a coppice in full bloom,
and lay cowering there, while they, complaining loudly,
went searching around; but when it seemed quite hopeless 355
to go on looking, they went back and reembarked
on their hollow ship. The gods themselves kept me hidden
easily, then brought me safe here to the farmstead
of an understanding man. So, it's still my fate to live."

To him then, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying: 360
"Ah, wretched stranger, indeed you stirred my heart deeply
with your detailed tale of how much you suffered and wandered!

But one part was not, I think, right, nor will you convince me—
what you said of Odysseus. Why should a man such as you
tell a pointless lie? Apropos my lord's homecoming, 365
this I know well: he got himself so hated by all the gods
that they would not allow his life to end among the Trojans
or in the arms of his friends, after winding up the war.
Then all the Achaians would have raised him a burial mound,
and great glory would have been his, and his son's, hereafter. 370
But now, ingloriously, the storm winds have swept him away.
I stay out here with the pigs, I don't go into town,
except those times when prudent Penelopē wants me,
when news has reached her from somewhere or other—then
folk sit round and keep querying every detail, 375
both those who grieve for their lord who's been so long gone,
and those who enjoy eating up his livelihood for free.
But I haven't fancied this business of questioning and enquiries
ever since a certain Aitōlian deceived me with his story.
He was someone who'd killed a man: after wandering far 380
he appeared at my house, and I gave him a friendly welcome.
He'd seen him, he said, with the Krētans in Idomeneus' company,
repairing his ships, severely battered by storms. He assured me
Odysseus would be back here by summer or harvesttime,
bringing much treasure, both he and his godlike comrades! 385
And you, grief-struck old man, since some god led you to me,
don't try to please me with lies, or to charm me in any way:
That's not why I shall respect and befriend you, but through fear
of Zeus, god of strangers, and because I feel pity for you."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying: 390
"The spirit you have in your breast is indeed distrustful,
one not to be won or persuaded even by my sworn oath!
Come, then, let's make an agreement, to which hereafter
the gods who hold Olympos can bear witness for us both:
If your master does in fact return to this house of his, 395
then give me a mantle and tunic to wear, and send me
on to Doulichion, which is where my heart's set on going;
but if your master does not come back home—as I tell you
he will—set your servants on me, have me thrown off a high
cliff,
as a warning to other beggars against telling lying tales." 400

Then the noble swineherd responded to him, saying:
"Stranger, that way I'd win a fine reputation for virtue
among men, both today and in time to come, were I,
who brought you into my hut and entertained you,
then to kill you, deprive you of the dear breath of life! 405
Very ready I'd be then to pray to Kronos' son Zeus!
But now it's time for supper. My comrades should very soon
be home, so we can make a tasty meal in the hut."

While the two thus conversed, the one with the other, the pigs
and the men who were herding them now drew near. The sows 410
they shut up for the night in their accustomed sties,
and a vast clamor arose from the pigs as they were penned.
Then the noble swineherd called to his comrades, saying:
"Fetch out the best of the hogs, so I can slaughter it
for the stranger—he's traveled far—and we'll share it too, 415
who have all the trouble of tending these white-tusked swine
while others devour our labor and pay nothing for it."

So saying, he split up wood with the pitiless bronze,
while the others brought in a five-year-old fattened hog
and set him down by the hearth. Nor did the swineherd 420
forget the immortals now, for his was a virtuous mind.
He cut off and cast in the fire as firstlings hairs from the head
of the white-tusked hog, with prayers to all the gods
that quick-witted Odysseus might return to his own home.
Then he lifted a billet of oak he'd kept from the splitting 425
and felled the hog. It died. They cut its throat and singed it,
then butchered it at once. The swineherd took cuts of raw flesh
from all its limbs as firstlings, wrapped them in rich fat,
gave them a sprinkling of barley, then threw them in the fire.
The rest they cut up, and threaded the pieces on spits, 430
and roasted them carefully, then drew all the pieces off
and heaped them on platters. The swineherd now
stood up to carve, an expert in fair sharing. The meat
he sliced into seven portions: one he set aside
for the nymphs and for Hermēs, son of Maia, together 435
with an accompanying prayer. Of the rest, each man got one.
But Odysseus he honored with the long cuts from the chine
of the white-tusked hog, and gladdened his master's heart.

Resourceful Odysseus now addressed him, saying: "Eumaios,[4]
I only wish you could be as dear to Zeus the Father 440
as to me, a poor man, whom you honor with such good things."

To him, then, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying:
"Eat, my strange guest, and enjoy what's offered here,
such as it is. A god will give one thing, but let another go,
just as the whim takes him. He can do anything ." 445

So he spoke, and offered the firstlings to the gods that are forever,
poured bright wine in libation, then put the cup in the hands
of Odysseus, sacker of cities, and sat down by his portion.
Bread was served to them by Mesaulios, whom the swineherd
had acquired by himself, during his master's absence, 450
unknown to his mistress and to the aged Laërtēs,
purchasing him from the Taphians with his own resources.
So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
Mesaulios took off the bread, and they hastened to retire, 455
filled to repletion with all the bread and meat they'd eaten.

Now night came on—bad weather, the dark of the moon. Zeus rained
the whole night through. A strong wet west wind kept blowing.
Then Odysseus spoke among them, making trial of the swineherd:
would he strip off his own cloak and give it him, or tell 460
one of his comrades to do so, since he cared for him so much?
"Hear me out now, Eumaios, and you, all his other comrades,
while I tell you a boastful story. It's the wine that's urging me—
mind-crazing stuff, that sets on even the quick-witted
to singing and gentle laughter, drives him to get up and dance, 465
or to make some remark better left unspoken. However,
now that I've opened up, I won't keep quiet about it.

---

4. As has often been pointed out, Eumaios has not in fact—at least, not in the narrative here presented—told Odysseus his name. This is not necessarily a mark of authorial carelessness. Odysseus is well aware of his swineherd's name and could, plausibly, use it without thinking. And Eumaios, too, may take its use for granted, without the old stranger's use of it striking him as odd. Or, he may indeed note it, but make no comment (apart from remarking that his guest is "strange," *daimonios*), while waiting for a possible explanation. Such cautious sparring is very much in evidence when the supposed beggar first encounters Penelopē, and there is no reason why this dramatic device should not be employed here too.

I wish I was young again and my strength still undiminished,
like the time we prepared an ambush, and led it beneath Troy's walls.
The leaders were Odysseus and Atreus' son Menelaös, 470
and I was the third in command, at their own invitation.
When we came up under the city and its sheer wall,
around the outskirts, in the thick brushwood, among
the reeds and marshes, crouching down under our arms
we lay. A bad night came on when the north wind dropped. 475
It grew chilly. Snow descended on us like hoar frost,
freezing cold. Ice crystals formed upon our shields.
Now all the rest were equipped with cloaks and tunics
and slept in peace, their shields pulled over their shoulders,
but when I set out I'd left my cloak behind with my comrades— 480
thoughtlessly, not supposing I'd ever get so cold,
so I'd come with only my shield and my shining waist-guard.
But in the third watch of the night, when the stars had turned,
then I spoke to Odysseus, who was lying close beside me,
nudging him with my elbow. He gave ear at once. 485
'Scion of Zeus, Laërtēs' son, resourceful Odysseus,
I shan't be among the living much longer, this wintry cold
is killing me, I've no cloak, some god beguiled me
into wearing a tunic only: there's no way out for me now.'

"So I spoke, and he then thought up the following scheme— 490
such a man he was both for planning and for fighting!—
and speaking in a low voice he addressed me, saying:
'Quiet now, in case some other Achaian might overhear you.'
With that, head propped on his bent arm,[5] he made a speech:
'Listen, friends: a god-sent dream came to me while I slept. 495
We've come too far from the ships. Is there someone who'd go
and ask Atreus' son Agamemnōn, his people's shepherd,
could he send us more of the troops from beside the ships?'

"So he spoke, and there stood up Thoas, Andraimōn's son,
with alacrity, laid aside his purple cloak, and set off, 500
running, back to the ships. I lay down in his clothing
gladly. Then Dawn, golden-throned, appeared. Would that

5. Cunliffe ad loc. correctly notes this as the primary meaning of *agkōnos.* Every translation that I have seen suggests that Odysseus rested his head on his elbow. I invite those responsible for this reading to try to duplicate such an action themselves.

I were young now, as then I was, my strength still unimpaired—
then would one of the hands in the farmstead lend me a cloak,
both from kindness and out of respect for a decent man. 505
But as it is they despise me for the rags I'm wearing."

To him, swineherd Eumaios, you then responded, saying:
"Old man, this tale you recounted was faultless: in it
nothing you said was unfitting or profitless. Hence
you'll not go short of clothing nor of anything else 510
that befits a long-suffering suppliant on arrival—
for now: but at first light you'll go back to your rags,
since here there aren't many cloaks or changes of tunic
to put on: no more than one for each man. But when
Odysseus' dear son returns, you can look to him 515
for clothing to wear, a cloak and a tunic too,
and he'll send you wherever your heart and mind desire."

So saying, up he got, and made up close to the fire
a bed, throwing on it the skins of sheep and goats,
and Odysseus lay down there, and over him he spread 520
a big thick cloak he kept by him to change into
whenever a really bad winter storm arose.

So there Odysseus slept, and alongside him slept too
the four young men. But the swineherd himself was not
content to bed down there, to sleep away from the hogs, 525
and made ready to go outside. Odysseus was glad
that he took such care of his absent lord's property.
First he slung a sharp sword from his sturdy shoulders,
then donned a very thick cloak to keep the wind out,
and over this draped the fleece of a well-fed goat, 530
and took a sharp hunting-spear as defense against dogs or men,
and went out to get some rest where the white-tusked hogs
slept, under a hollow rock, out of reach of the north wind.

Book 15

Now Pallas Athēnē was gone to spacious Lakedaimōn,
to remind Odysseus' great-hearted, illustrious son
about his return journey, to speed up his homecoming.
She found Tēlemachos and Nestōr's splendid son
bedded down in the forecourt of glorious Menelaös. 5
Now Nestōr's son was still overmastered by gentle sleep,
but sweet sleep had not taken Tēlemachos: worry about his father
had kept him wakeful throughout the ambrosial night.
Now grey-eyed Athēnē approached and addressed him, saying:
"It's not a good thing, Tēlemachos, this straying far from home, 10
neglecting your possessions, the overweening men
infesting your house, the risk they may share and consume
all your goods, while you're gone on this useless journey!
You must urge Menelaös, good at the war cry, at once
to send you back, if you want to find your blameless mother 15
at home still: already her father and brothers are at her
to marry Eurymachos—as a gift giver he outdoes
all the other suitors, is ratcheting up the bride-price!
And make sure she takes no item from the house without your consent—
for you know the kind of thinking that lurks in a woman's breast: 20
she wants to increase the estate of the man who marries her,
but of former children and previous wedded spouse
she takes no thought once he's dead, no longer asks after him.
No, you must go yourself, and entrust all your property
to whichever one of your maidservants seems most reliable 25
until the gods name to you your own noble bride-to-be.
And another thing I will tell you, and you take it to heart:
The best of the suitors are lying in wait for you, with intent,
in the strait between Ithákē and rugged Samē, determined
to kill you before you get back to your native land. 30
But I don't see it happening. Before that, the earth will cover
some one of the suitors now devouring your livelihood.
Still, keep your well-built ship far distant from the islands,
and sail by night: you'll get a good tailwind from that

one immortal it is who guards and protects you. But when 35
you make landfall at the nearest shore of Ithákē then,
send on the ship with all your comrades to the city;
you yourself, though, must first seek out the swineherd—
he looks after your pigs, and also is well disposed
toward you. Spend the night there, and tell him to go into town 40
with a message for prudent Penelopē: that you're unharmed,
and that you've made it back home successfully from Pylos."

This said, she went on her way to lofty Olympos.
Tēlemachos then awoke Nestōr's son from his sweet sleep
with a kick of the foot,[1] saying: "Rise and shine now, 45
Peisistratos, Nestōr's son! Bring out your whole-hooved horses,
harness them up to the chariot! We need to get going."

Peisistratos, son of Nestōr, responded to him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, however much we want to be on the road
no way can we drive through the dark night! It'll soon be dawn. 50
So wait until Menelaös—Atreus' hero son, famed spearman—
brings out his gifts and stows them aboard the chariot,
and sends us on our way with affectionate good wishes;
for a guest remembers with gratitude all his days
the man who was his host, who showed him kindness." 55

So he spoke, and promptly golden-throned Dawn arrived.
Menelaös, good at the war cry, came out to them then,
getting up from the bed that he shared with fair-tressed Helen,
and when Odysseus' son, the hero, caught sight of him, he
hurriedly clothed himself in his shining tunic, and flung 60
a great cloak over his sturdy shoulders, and went out
and approached Menelaös and stood before him and said:
[did Tēlemachos, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, saying:][2]
"Atreus' son Menelaös, Zeus' scion, leader of hosts,
send me back right away to my own dear country, 65
for already my heart is impatient for the homeward journey."

---

1. From Hellenistic times to today, there as been a misplaced determination to somehow make this arousal gentler and more polite, which blithely ignores the rough habits of young men (very much including those who are friends), so cleverly hinted at, in a single phrase, by the author of the *Odyssey.* Tēlemachos is also overimpatient to be on the road, of course, although it is not yet morning.
2. Most MSS omit "this superfluous line" (Stanford 1971, 2: 242).

Menelaös, good at the war cry, then responded to him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, I'll not press you to stay here overlong
when you want to go home: indeed, I'd blame any other man
who, as host, behaved in an overfriendly manner 70
as I would the downright unfriendly! Moderation in all things
is best. It's just as wrong to urge a guest's departure
against his will as to keep him when he's itching to be off.
Treat your guest well while he's there, let him go when he wants.
Just wait, though, until I bring your presents, and stow them— 75
fine ones—aboard your chariot, for you to see, while I tell
the women to get dinner ready from the rich store within.
For there's prestige and glory as well as profit when those
off to travel this boundless earth eat a square meal first.
And if you'd like a detour through Hellas and mid-Argos, 80
I'd be happy to come along with you, I'll harness up horses
and be your guide round the cities—no one will pass us on
empty-handed, they'll give us something to take with us,
a fine bronze tripod, perhaps, or maybe a cauldron,
or a team of two mules, or a golden drinking cup." 85

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"Atreus' son Menelaös, Zeus' scion, leader of hosts,
I want to go back to our place now: when I came here I left
no one to act as guardian over my possessions.
In seeking my godlike father I fear I may perish myself, 90
or some article of great value go missing from my halls."

When he heard this, at once Menelaös, good at the war cry,
gave instructions both to his wife and to her handmaids
to make ready a meal in the hall from the rich store within.
Eteōneus son of Boēthoös,[3] now approached him, 95
having just got up—he lived very close nearby—
and him Menelaös, good at the war cry, asked
to light a fire, and to roast some meat: he heard and did not
disobey. Menelaös now went to his fragrant storeroom,

3. The social status of Eteōneus is a little uncertain. He is described at 4.22–23 as Menelaös' *therapōn,* "a general denomination of servants" (Hoekstra in *Comm.,* 2: 237), but he lives elsewhere and is seemingly independent. Here, however, since he is accorded a patronymic, the mark of an upper-class person, we may take him to be Menelaös' esquire.

not alone, but together with Helen and Megapenthēs.[4] 100
When they came to where their valuables were stored
the son of Atreus chose a two-handled cup, and told
his son Megapenthēs to carry a mixing bowl, made of silver,
while Helen went and stood by the clothing-chests, where lay
the embroidered robes that she herself had fashioned. 105
One of these Helen, bright among women, chose
and lifted out—the largest, the most exquisitely embroidered,
that shone like a star and lay underneath all the rest.
They went on out from the house till they met Tēlemachos,
And fair-haired Menelaös then addressed him, saying: 110
"Tēlemachos, may the return that your heart so much desires
be brought to pass by Zeus, Hērē's loud-thundering spouse!
And of all the gifts that are stored away in my house
I'll give you the one that's most beautiful and most precious—
a finely wrought mixing bowl, one fashioned all of silver 115
except for its rim, that's finished off in gold,
the work of Hephaistos, a gift from the hero Phaidimos,
the Sidonians' king, at the time that his house gave me shelter
on my way home by that route. Now I'd like to give it to you."

So saying, Atreus' son, the hero, placed in his hands 120
the two-handled cup, and strong Megapenthēs brought
the shining mixing bowl, all silver, set it before him;
while fair-cheeked Helen came up to him, carrying
the robe in her hands, and now addressed him, saying:
"I too, dear child, now give you this gift, a memento 125
from Helen's hands, for your bride to wear at your longed-for
wedding. Till then, keep it stored in your halls, looked after
by your dear mother. And may you enjoy a safe return
to your well-built home and to your own dear country."

That said, she put it into his hands. He received it with pleasure. 130
The hero Peisistratos now took all the gifts and stowed them
in the luggage box, gazing at them in wondering admiration.
Fair-headed Menelaös now led them into the house
and had them all sit down upon chairs and benches,
and a servant brought hand-washing water in a beautiful 135

4. Megapenthēs was a bastard son of Menelaös, and a great favorite, about to be married: cf. 4.11–12.

golden ewer and poured it over a silver basin so
they could wash, and drew up a polished table for them.
The respected housekeeper brought in bread and served it
along with many side dishes, giving freely of what there was,
while, nearby, Boēthoös' son carved helpings of meat, 140
and the son of renowned Menelaös poured out the wine.
So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
Then Tēlemachos and the splendid son of Nestōr
harnessed the horses and boarded the fine-wrought chariot 145
and drove out from the forecourt and the echoing colonnade.
With them went Atreus' son, the fair-haired Menelaös,
his right hand holding enough mind-honeying wine
in a golden cup, so they might, on leaving, pour libations.
Now he stood in front of the chariot, and pledged them, saying: 150
"Farewell, young men—and to Nestor, shepherd of the people,
take my greetings: to me he was like a kindly father
when we sons of Achaians were warring in the country of Troy."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"All this indeed, Zeus' nursling, exactly as you say, 155
we'll recount to him on arrival. I only wish that as surely,
when I return to Ithákē, I'd find Odysseus at home,
and be able to tell him all the kindness I'd had from you
before coming, all the fine presents that I was bringing home."

Just as he finished speaking, a bird flew in on the right, 160
an eagle, grasping a great white goose in its talons,
a tame bird out of the yard, and a crowd of men and women
ran behind, shouting. The eagle swooped toward them
from the right, in front of the horses. They rejoiced at the sight,
and the spirits of all were comforted in their hearts. 165
Peisistratos, Nestōr's son, was the first to speak. He said:
"Consider now, Zeus' nursling, Menelaös, leader of hosts—
Was it for us that the god showed this sign, or for you yourself?"

So he spoke. Menelaös the warlike was figuring in his mind
the right way to think, what might be his best response, 170
when long-robed Helen got in ahead of him, saying:
"Listen to me! I shall prophesy now, as the immortals
put it into my heart, how I think it will come to pass.

As this eagle seized the goose brought up in our household,
swooping down from the mountain where he was born and bred, 175
so Odysseus—many ills borne, having wandered far—
will come back home and take vengeance, or maybe is home
already, and sowing the seeds of trouble for the suitors."

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to her, saying:
"So now may Zeus enact it, Hērē's loud-thundering husband! 180
Then there too I'd pray to you as I would to a god."
That said,
he gave the horses a touch of the whip: they at once
galloped eagerly out of the city toward the plain,
and strained all day at the yoke set about their necks,
till the sun went down and all the ways were in shadow, 185
and they came to Phērai, to the dwelling of Dioklēs
the son of Ortilochos, whom Alpheios begot, and there
they spent the night, and he entertained them as guests.

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
they harnessed the horses and boarded the inlaid chariot, 190
and drove out from the forecourt and echoing colonnade.
At a touch of the whip the pair, nothing loath, sped forward,
and soon made their way back to Pylos' steep citadel.
Then Tēlemachos spoke to the son of Nestōr, saying:
"Son of Nestōr, will you promise to do the thing I'll ask you, 195
and then in fact do it? We're friends of long standing ourselves
because of our fathers' friendship. Besides, we're the same age,
so this journey will simply establish our like-mindedness!
Don't take me on past my ship, Zeus' nursling, but leave me there:
I'm afraid the old man will detain me in his house against my will, 200
through an urge to befriend me. I need to get home quickly."

So he spoke; and the son of Nestōr debated in his heart
how he might properly give this promise and fulfill it;
and as he reflected, it struck him that this was the better course:
he turned his horses toward the swift ship and the seashore, 205
and there unpacked the fine gifts, laid them out in the ship's
stern—
the clothes and gold Menelaös had given Tēlemachos,
whom he now encouraged, addressed with winged words, saying:
"Embark now, quickly, and summon all your comrades

before I get home and break the news to the old man! 210
For this I know well, in my mind and heart: his spirit
is so overbearing, he just won't let you go—
he'll come out here in person to escort you back: I don't think
he'd mean to go home empty-handed! As it is, he'll be very
cross."

That said, he drove off his beautiful-maned horses 215
back to the Pylians' township, and quickly reached his home.
Tēlemachos meanwhile urged on his comrades, saying:
"Put all the gear on the black ship in order, my comrades,
and let's embark ourselves, and then be on our way."

So he spoke; they heard and promptly obeyed him, 220
and embarked at once, and seated themselves at their rowlocks.
Now while he was busy with prayer and sacrifice to Athēnē
by the stern of the ship, he was approached by a person
from a distant land, Argos—a fugitive murderer,
a seer, a man related by descent to Melampous, 225
who long ago was a dweller in Pylos, mother of flocks—
a wealthy Pylian, occupant of a very large house, but now
a stranger in other men's country, fleeing from his own land
and from great-hearted Nēleus, noblest of living men,
who for a full year had kept his great wealth from him 230
by main force, for Melampous lay shackled in Phylakos' halls,
under harsh constraint, and suffering grievous hardship
because of Nēleus' daughter, and the heavy infatuation
which the Fury—that ruinous goddess—put in his mind.
And yet
he escaped his fate, and drove off the loud-lowing cattle 235
to Pylos from Phylakē, paid out the godlike Nēleus
for his misdeed, and brought the girl home as a wife
for his own brother. He himself went to other men's land,
to horse-pasturing Argos, where it was destined that he
should dwell, and hold sway over numerous Argives. There 240
he married a wife and established a high-roofed house,
and sired Antiphatēs and Mantios, two sturdy sons.
Antiphatēs later begot great-hearted Oiklēs, and
Oiklēs sired Amphiaraös, rouser of hosts, whom Zeus
of the aegis and Apollo both held in great affection 245
and befriended in every way. Yet he never reached old age's

threshold, but died in Thēbai because of a woman's gifts.[5]
To him were born two sons, Amphilochos and Alkmaiōn,
while Mantios begot Polypheidēs and Kleitos. The latter
Dawn, golden-throned, snatched away because of his beauty, 250
so that he might be numbered among the immortals;
but high-spirited Polypheidēs Apollo made a seer,
by far the best of mortals, after Amphiaraös died.
He moved to Hyperēsēa when he fell out with his father,
and there he made his home, and prophesied to all mortals. 255
His son it was, Theoklymenos by name, who now
came up and stood by Tēlemachos. He found him pouring
libations and praying, there by his black ship,
and he spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying:
"Friend, since I find you at sacrifice in this place, 260
I entreat you by these burnt offerings, by the god, and by
your own head, and by the comrades who travel with you,
answer what I ask truly, and hold back nothing:
Who are you? From where? What city? Who are your parents?"

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying: 265
"So, stranger, let me answer your questions quite honestly:
I'm from Ithákē by birth, and my father is Odysseus—
if ever he was—who by now must have met his grim destiny—
which is why I've set out with my comrades in a black ship
and have come seeking news of my long-absent father." 270

Theoklymenos the godlike responded to him, saying:
"I likewise have left my country, after killing a man
of my own clan: many brothers and kinsmen he has
in horse-pasturing Argos, with great power over Achaians.
It's to avoid meeting death and black fate at their hands 275
that I'm on the run. It's my fate to wander among men.
Take me aboard your ship, as your suppliant fugitive,
lest they murder me, for I think they're hot on my trail."

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"I shall not, since you want it, debar you from my trim ship. 280

5. Amphiaraös' wife, Eriphylē, was persuaded with the gift of a golden necklace by Polyneikēs, Oedipus' son, to talk her husband into joining the expedition of the Seven against Thēbai, even though, Amphiaraös, a seer, knew very well that if he did so he would die (*HE,* 1: 42; cf. 11.326).

Come aboard! We'll look after you, with what little we have."

So saying, he took the other's bronze spear from him,
and laid it at length on the deck of the shapely vessel,
then he himself embarked on the seagoing ship,
and seated himself in the stern, and made a place beside him 285
for Theoklymenos too. His men cast off the stern warps,
and Tēlemachos now issued orders to his comrades
to belay the tackle, and they promptly obeyed him.
The fir-wood mast they raised up and stepped in the hollow
mast block, held it in place with the forestays, and then 290
hauled up the white sail with the halyards of plaited leather.
Grey-eyed Athēnē now sent them a blustery tailwind,
gusting through the bright air, so the ship might swiftly
complete her journey, speeding over the briny deep.
[They voyaged past The Springs, and sweet-streamed Chalkis],[6] 295
till the sun went down and all the ways were in shadow,
and the ship reached Pheai, driven on by the wind of Zeus,
then skirted bright Ēlis, where the Epeians hold sway.
Onward from there Tēlemachos made for the Sharp[7] Islands,
uncertain in mind if he was going to dodge death or be captured. 300

Back in the hut, Odysseus and the noble swineherd
were at supper: the other men were eating the meal with them.
When they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
Odysseus spoke among them, making trial of the swineherd,
to see if he'd still befriend him, invite him to stay there 305
in the farmstead, or urge him to try his luck in the city.

"Hear me out now, Eumaios, and all you other comrades!
In the morning I'm minded to make my way to the city,
to beg for food, and not be a burden on you and your fellows.
So advise me well, and give me a reliable guide 310
to take me there. But I'll need to wander through the city

6. This line is found in no MS, but is twice cited by Strabo (8.3.13, 27), who tells us that "The Springs" was the name of a stream in Triphylia (see Gloss., s.v. Ēlis).
7. The Greek is *thoēisin,* which normally = "swift." Strabo (8.3.26) argued that H. actually meant "sharp"—there is some linguistic evidence for the existence of such a homonym (Hoekstra, *Comm.,* 2: 25)—and identified the islands with the Southern Echinades near the outflow of the Acheloös river. Stanford (1971, 2: 252) accepted this; Hoekstra (ibid.) is dubious. There has been much speculation, but Strabo's explanation still seems the likeliest.

on my own, perhaps be given some bread, a cup of water.
I might even go to the house of noble Odysseus,
and impart what news I have to prudent Penelopē, mingle
in the company of the suitors, overbearing though they are, 315
to see if they'd spare me dinner from their limitless plenty.
I could offer them, there and then, services they might need—
let me list them, and you pay attention and hear me out!—
Through the favor of Hermēs the Guide, the god who endows
the endeavors of every man with elegance and renown, 320
in the matter of service, no other mortal could match me:
building a fire well, or chopping up dry firewood,
or carving and roasting meat, or pouring out the wine—
all such things in which the common folk serve their betters."

Deeply disturbed you then answered him, swineherd Eumaios: 325
"Oh my, stranger, what can have put such a notion
into your mind? You must be set on your own destruction
if you mean to go in among this company of suitors,
whose violence and arrogance go up to the iron sky!
Not such as you are the servants of these people: 330
no indeed: it's young men, well dressed in mantles and tunics,
their heads always slick with oil, their faces handsome,
who wait on them: their tables are kept well polished,
and are heavily laden with bread and meat and wine.
No, you stay here, where no one's irked by your presence— 335
neither I, nor any of the other men I have here.
But when the dear son of Odysseus comes back home,
he'll fit you out with a cloak and tunic, and send you
wherever your heart and spirit say you should go."

Much-enduring noble Odysseus responded to him, saying: 340
"Eumaios, I wish you could be as dear to Zeus the Father
as to me, whom you've saved from wandering and distress!
There's no worse evil for mortals than vagrancy; and yet
for the sake of their cursed bellies men incur grim hardship
[when wandering, grief, and pain assail any one of them]. 345
But now, since you're keeping me here, and want me to wait
for him, your master, now tell me of godlike Odysseus' mother
and father, whom he left here on the edge of old age—
are they perhaps still living beneath the rays of the sun,
or are they dead by now and in the realm of Hādēs?" 350

Then the swineherd, leader of men, responded to him:
"So, stranger, I'll give your question a truthful answer.
Laërtē*s* still lives, but constantly prays to Zeus
that the spirit may fade from his limbs within his halls,
because of his terrible grief for the son who's absent, 355
and for his wise wedded wife, who by dying caused him
most sorrow, and brought him to old age before his time.
She died of grief, lamenting her glorious son—
a miserable death, that I'd wish no man to suffer
that lived here as my close friend and treated me kindly. 360
So long as she lived, though it was in a state of sorrow,
It gave me pleasure to ask and enquire after her, since she
had raised me herself, together with long-robed Ktiménē,
her clever daughter, whom she bore as her youngest child.
With her I was reared, and she favored me scarcely less. 365
But when we both reached the longed-for prime of youth,
her they saw married on Samē, and she had countless bride-gifts;
but me she clothed in a mantle and tunic, both
of the finest stuff, shod me with sandals, and then sent me
out on the estate. Yet at heart it was me she cared for more. 370
These days I go short of such things, yet the blessed gods
prosper the work of my hands, at which I labor:
that lets me eat and drink, care for respected guests.
Yet from my mistress I hear nothing pleasant, either
by word or deed, for an evil has fallen on the household— 375
these arrogant men! The servants greatly need and want
to speak personally with their mistress, check each detail,
eat and drink, and then take some tid-bit back with them
to the fields—such are the things as warm a servant's heart."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying: 380
"Indeed, swineherd Eumaios, how little you must have been
when parted so far from your country and your parents!
But come now, tell me this, and give me the true answer:
Was the wide-wayed city of men destroyed in which
your father and lady mother had their dwelling? 385
Or when you were out alone with your sheep or cattle,
did hostile men carry you off in their ships for sale here
to your master's house, and he paid a good price for you?"
Then the swineherd, leader of men, responded to him, saying:

"Stranger, since you're questioning me about these matters, 390
listen in silence now at your ease, and drink your wine
while you sit here. These nights are endless: you can sleep,
you can also listen for pleasure. No need to bed down
before the time comes. Too much sleep can be exhausting.
If any one of the rest of you feels the urge to do so, 395
let him go out and sleep in the open: then, when it's dawn,
get a bite to eat, and take care of our master's swine.
But we two will drink and feast in the hut, and enjoy
hearing about each other's wretched misfortunes
as we recall them. A man looking back can find pleasure 400
even in grief, one who's suffered and wandered much.

"So now let me answer the questions that you asked me.
There's an island called Syria—you may have heard tell of it—
at the turning points of the sun, out beyond Ortygiē,[8]
It's not very populous, but possesses excellent terrain: 405
good for cattle and sheep, many vineyards, abundant wheat.
No famine ever afflicts this land, nor does any other
hateful disease appear as a plague to wretched mortals,
but when the tribes of mankind grow old in the city,
then comes silver-bowed Apollo, together with Artemis, 410
and assails and slays them with his gentle arrows.
Two cities there are: all the land's divided between them,
and over them both my father held sway as king—
Ktēsios, Ormenos' son, who was likened to the immortals.

"Thither Phoenicians came, men famous for their ships, 415
sharp traffickers, countless trinkets in their black vessel.
Now there was in my father's household a Phoenician woman,
tall and good-looking, highly skilled in fine handiwork,
and her these crafty Phoenicians set about to beguile.
First, while she was washing clothes near the hollow ship, 420
one of them made love to her, a thing that fuddles the senses

8. The Aegean island of Dēlos, a little to the west of Syros, was also known as Ortygiē ("Quail Island") in antiquity. Strabo (10.5.8) identified these as the places H. was talking about. If H. had real sites in mind—and there is no compelling reason to suppose he was inventing for the occasion—these are still the likeliest. But H. describes "Syria" as lying, in relation to Ortygiē, *kathuperthen;* and though this can be a vague term, it most often signifies "above" or "to the north of." H. may simply have made a mistake, of course, but with central Aegean islands this is unlikely.

of truly feminine women, even one that's well-behaved.
Then he asked her who she was and from where, and she at once
pointed out my father's high-roofed house, and declared:
'I come from Sidon, that bronze-rich city, and am 425
the daughter of Arybas, a man who had rivers of wealth;
but a bunch of Taphian pirates kidnapped me on my way
back from the fields, and brought me here. I was sold
to the man who lives up there, and he paid a good price for me.'

"Then the man who'd secretly had her responded to her, saying: 430
'Would you like to go back with us now and get to see
the high-roofed house of your father and mother?—them too,
for they're still alive, and the word is they're very rich?'

"Then the woman responded to him in these words, saying:
'This indeed might be done, if all you sailors were willing 435
to swear an oath that you'd deliver me home unharmed.'

"So she spoke, and they all swore the oath as she demanded.
But when they'd sworn, and completed the terms of the oath,
the woman addressed them again, in these words, saying:
'Keep quiet now, and let none of your crew accost me 440
if we chance to encounter each other, either out on the street
or at the well, in case someone goes to his dwelling
and tells the old man, so that he becomes suspicious
and keeps me closely confined, and plans your destruction.
So don't forget what I say, and be quick with the barter 445
for your homeward voyage! When your ship is fully laden,
then contact me up at the house, and I will come,
with any gold I can find; and there's one other thing
I'd be glad to give you in return for my passage—a son
of my master, whose house-nurse I am, a clever child 450
who trots along at my side when I go out: I'd bring him
aboard with me—he'd fetch you a gigantic price, wherever
you chose to sell him abroad to some foreign buyer.'

"So she spoke, and went off back to the splendid mansion.
They stayed there in our country for an entire year, 455
and by trafficking piled up the goods in their hollow ship.
But when the ship's hold was full-laden for their return,
they then sent a messenger to alert the woman.
A sharp-witted man it was that came to my father's dwelling,

bringing a golden necklace interlaced with amber beads. 460
So while in the hall the maidservants and my lady mother
were handling and looking at this and making their offer
to buy it, the man nodded silently to the woman,
and, having done this, departed, making for the hollow ship,
and she took me by the hand, led me out of the house. 465
There in the forecourt she found the cups and tables
of the men who'd been dining, associates of my father
who'd left for a council session, with public discussion.
She quickly hid three cups under the front fold of her dress
and carried them off. In my innocence I went with her. 470
So the sun went down, and all the ways were in shadow,
and we hurriedly made our way to the famous harbor
where these Phoenician men's swift ship was moored.
They now embarked, and sailed out over the watery ways,
with us two on board as well: Zeus gave us a tailwind. 475
For six days we sailed, both night and day; but when
Zeus, son of Kronos, brought on the seventh day,
then Artemis, divine archer, struck the woman down,
and she fell in the bilge like a sea tern, with a thud.
Her corpse they threw overboard to end as food for seals 480
and fishes, and I was left there, grieving at heart.
Now wind and wave in their passage carried us to Ithákē,
where Laërtēs bought me with his resources. Thus it was
that I first happened to set eyes on this country."
To him then Odysseus, Zeus' scion, responded, saying: 485
"Indeed, Eumaios, you've stirred the spirit in my breast
by telling me all the heartfelt sorrows you endured!
Yet surely you had some good along with the suffering
from Zeus? After all your troubles you ended in the household
of a decent man, who takes good care to provide you 490
with food and drink, and you have a good life; whereas I
got here as a vagrant, who'd strayed through many folks' cities."

These were the things they talked about to each other.
Now they lay down and slept—briefly, not long, for soon
came fair-throned Dawn. And meanwhile Tēlemachos' comrades 495
made landfall. They furled the sail, unstepped the mast,
smartly, and rowed the ship on till they reached their anchorage,
then belayed the stern warps, threw out the anchor stones,

and themselves, disembarking on the strand of the seashore,
prepared their meal, and mixed the bright red wine; 500
and when they'd satisfied their desire for food and drink,
sagacious Tēlemachos spoke first among them, saying:
"The rest of you now row the black ship on to the city.
I'm going out to inspect the fields and the herdsmen,
and I'll come into town this evening when I've seen to the estate. 505
Early tomorrow I'll give you, as wages for your journey,
a square meal of meat, with some sweetly drinkable wine."

Then godlike Theoklymenos addressed him, saying:
"Where should *I* go, dear child? To which particular house
of the men in authority over rugged Ithákē? 510
Or shall I go straight to your house—yours and your mother's?"

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"In different circumstances I'd tell you to go to our house,
where there's no lack of hospitality; but for yourself
that's not a good idea, since I'll be away, and my mother 515
won't see you: she seldom comes out in the house to face
the suitors, but works at her loom apart from them, upstairs.
But I'll tell you another man to whom you can go instead—
Eurymachos, glorious son of skillful Polybos,
whom nowadays the Ithákans treat like a god, for he 520
is their best man by far, as well as the most determined
to marry my mother, acquire Odysseus' privileges!
Yet Olympian Zeus alone, the sky-dweller, knows whether
he'll meet with his day of ill destiny before that wedding."

As he spoke, a bird flew by on the right: a falcon, 525
Apollo's swift messenger, clutching a dove in its talons,
and plucking its feathers, that were shed on the ground
midway between the ship and Tēlemachos himself.
Then Theoklymenos called him aside from his comrades,
and clasping him by the hand, exclaimed: "Tēlemachos, 530
not without some god's will did that bird fly on our right!
I knew, when I saw it, that this had to be an omen!
There is no other family that's more kingly than yours
in the whole realm of Ithákē: you'll hold power forever."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying: 535
"If only these words of yours, stranger, might be fulfilled!

Then would you quickly know friendship and gifts in plenty
from me, so that any who met you would call you blessed."

That said, he then addressed Peiraios, a faithful comrade:
"Peiraios, son of Klytios, in all else you're the most 540
reliable of the comrades who accompanied me to Pylos:
so now, please, take this stranger, give him a proper welcome
in your home, with all due honor, until I come back."

Peiraios, famous spearman, responded to him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, no matter how long you may stay out here, 545
I shall take care of this man: as a guest he'll lack for nothing."

So saying, he boarded the ship, and ordered his companions
to cast off the stern warps and to embark themselves.
They at once went on board, and sat down at their rowlocks.
But Tēlemachos shod himself in his well-made sandals, 550
and took his sturdy spear, tipped with sharp-pointed bronze,
from the deck of the ship. They cast off the stern warps,
pushed clear, and made for the city, just as Tēlemachos,
dear son of godlike Odysseus, had ordered them to do.
But him his feet bore on, briskly striding, till he reached 555
the farmstead where were pigs unnumbered, beside which
slept the good swineherd, with kind thoughts for his masters.

Book 16

The two in the hut, Odysseus and the noble swineherd,
had stirred up the fire, and were making breakfast at dawn,
and had sent out the herdsmen with droves of pigs to pasture.
Their usually noisy dogs now fawned round Tēlemachos,
not barking as he approached them. Noble Odysseus noticed 5
both the dogs' silent fawning and the sound of footsteps,
and at once he addressed Eumaios with winged words, saying:
"Eumaios, there's somebody coming here—one of your comrades,
or some other acquaintance, because the dogs aren't barking
but making up to him—and I can hear his footsteps." 10

He'd not yet finished speaking when his own dear son
appeared in the doorway. Amazed, the swineherd sprang up,
and the vessels fell from his hands with which he'd been busy
mixing the bright red wine. He went to greet his master
and kissed his head and his two bright shining eyes 15
and both his hands, tears falling thick and fast.
As a loving father welcomes his own dear son's return
from some distant land, after a ten-year absence—
his only son, late-born, for whose sake he's suffered much—
so now did the noble swineherd clasp godlike Tēlemachos 20
and kiss him all over, as though he'd escaped from death,
and, still weeping, then address him with winged words, saying:
"You're back, Tēlemachos, sweet light of my eyes! I thought
I'd never see you again when you sailed off to Pylos!
Come in now, dear child, and let me pleasure my heart 25
with the sight of you inside here, now you've arrived!
For you don't often make visits to the herdsmen on the estate,
but stay in town: these days it would seem your fancy is
to observe the baneful throng of these men, the suitors."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying: 30
"So it shall be, old fellow. It's on your account I'm here,
to see you myself, and have you tell me whether
my mother is still in the house, or by now some other man
has got her in marriage, so that maybe Odysseus' bed,

for lack of occupants, is full of foul spiders' webs." 35
Then the swineherd, leader of men, responded to him, saying:
"Indeed, she still holds on with an all too steadfast spirit
here in your halls, and always the sorrowful nights
and days too waste her away with ceaseless weeping."

After thus speaking he took the bronze spear from him, 40
and Tēlemachos entered, passing over the stone threshold.
As he approached, Odysseus, his father, offered him his seat,
But Tēlemachos, facing him, refused the offer, saying:
"Sit down, stranger: we'll find us another seat somewhere
in our own farmstead—here's the man's who'll set it for us." 45

So he spoke. Odysseus sat down again. For Tēlemachos
the swineherd spread green brushwood, put a fleece over it,
and Odysseus' dear son now seated himself, and the swineherd
set before each of them platters of roast meat
left over from what they'd eaten the day before, 50
and hastily put fresh cuts of bread in the baskets,
and in his ivy-wood bowl mixed some honey-sweet wine,
and then sat down himself, facing godlike Odysseus.
So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them;
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink, 55
Tēlemachos then addressed the noble swineherd, saying:
"Dad, where did this stranger come from? How did sailors
bring him here to Ithákē? Who did they say they were?
For I don't imagine he made his way here on foot."

To him then, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying: 60
"Very well, child: I'll tell you the whole true story. He claims
to be from broad Krētē by birth. He says he's wandered
all over, from one human settlement to another,
a vagrant: that's the fate some divinity spun for him.
But now he's run away from a vessel of the Thesprōtians 65
and come to my farmstead. I put him into your hands.
Do what you like with him. He says he's your suppliant."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"Eumaios, what you just said embarrasses me! For how
am I to give this stranger a good welcome in my house? 70
I'm only a youth still, I don't trust the strength of my hands
against any man who may pick a quarrel with me.

As for my mother, the heart in her breast is divided,
whether to stay there with me and run the household,
respecting her husband's bed and the voice of the people, 75
or to go off with whoever's the best of the Achaians
as a suitor there in her halls, who offers the richest gifts.
And regarding this stranger, since he's come to your home,
I'll clothe him in mantle and tunic, garments of quality,
and give him a two-edged sword and sandals for his feet, 80
and send him wherever his heart and spirit dictate.
Or, if you like, keep him here and care for him in the farmstead,
and I'll send him down clothes and all the food he needs
to eat, so he won't be the ruin of you and your comrades.
But up there I won't let him go, to sojourn among 85
the suitors, for they're overweening and wanton, and may
mock him: that would cause me the greatest embarrassment.
It's hard for one man to get anything done against many,
however strong he may be: they have far the greater power."

Much-enduring noble Odysseus now addressed him, saying: 90
"Friend—surely it's proper that I should reply—indeed
you rend my heart as I listen to all you tell me
of the reckless acts that these suitors are now committing
in your halls, against the will of one such as yourself!
Tell me, do you let yourself be oppressed? Or is it 95
that some god's word has led your countrymen to hate you?
Or is it your brothers you blame, whom a man relies on
in a tight corner, even when a major feud arises?
I wish I was really as young now as I am in spirit,
or the son of peerless Odysseus, or the man himself— 100
might return from his wandering: there's still room for hope:[1]
then might some foreign mortal at once cut off my head
if I didn't prove myself a disaster to all those fellows
when I came to the main hall of Laërtēs' son Odysseus!
Were they to overwhelm me, one man alone, by numbers, 105
I'd much rather go down fighting, killed in my own home,

1. Line 101 has often been omitted since antiquity, because (in the words of a scholiast cited by Hoekstra, *Comm.,* 2: 270) "it is superfluous and weakens the whole of the thought." I much prefer Paulus Cauer's dramatic defense of the line (referred to in the same note) that Odysseus is presented as coming dangerously close to revealing his identity prematurely and "hastily changes his tack."

than have to go on witnessing these unseemly actions—
strangers maltreated, women servants forcibly dragged
and manhandled everywhere in this beautiful building,
wine recklessly squandered, men devouring my food 110
without purpose or limit, no end to the business in sight."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"So, stranger, I'll give you a full and truthful answer.
The people in general do not hate or resent me,
nor have I brothers to blame, whom a man relies on 115
in a tight corner, even when a major feud arises.
The fact is, our line's been kept single by the son of Kronos:
Arkeisios sired Laërtēs, his one and only son;
Then he in turn had one son, Odysseus; and Odysseus
had only me, left me here in his halls, got no joy of me. 120
That's why countless enemies now occupy our house.
For all the highborn leaders who lord it over the islands—
Doulichion, Samē, and forested Zákynthos,
besides those who rule as princes in rugged Ithákē—
are all courting my mother, and wasting my property. 125
She neither rejects this hateful marriage nor is able
to end the business; so they go on eating up my estate
and waste it away—very soon they'll tear me to pieces too!
Yet indeed all these matters rest on the knees of the gods.
But now, dad, you go quickly, tell strong-minded Penelopē 130
that I'm safely back here for her, all the way from Pylos.
I'm going to stay on here, and you come straight back yourself
when you've told her, and only her: not a single other Achaian
should get wind of it. Many people are planning trouble for me."

To him, then, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying: 135
"Noted and understood. You're spelling it out for the wise.
But come, tell me this, and give me an honest answer:
Should I not, this same trip, also take the news to Laërtēs,
poor man? For a while, despite his great grief over Odysseus,
he'd still keep an eye on the fields, still eat and drink 140
with the servants at home whenever the mood so took him;
but now, from the day when you went off by ship to Pylos,
they say he no longer eats or drinks as before,
or goes out to the estate, but sits wailing and weeping
in lamentation, and the flesh is wasting from his bones." 145

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"That's too sad, but for now we'll leave him, despite our grief.
For if mortals somehow could have all they wanted, then
our first choice would be the day for my father's return.
When you've given your message, come back. Don't wander off 150
over the fields after him, but instruct my mother
to send off a servant, the housekeeper, as soon as may be,
secretly: she could take a message to the old man."

With that he sent off the swineherd, who found his sandals,
put them on, and left for the city. Nor did Athēnē fail 155
to see the swineherd Eumaios depart from the farmstead,
and herself approached now, in the likeness of a woman,
one tall and handsome, and skilled in fine handiwork.
She stood outside the hut's entrance, visible to Odysseus;
but Tēlemachos neither saw her in front of him nor 160
was aware of her presence: gods are not clearly manifest to all.
But the dogs, like Odysseus, saw her: they didn't bark, but
slunk—
terrified, whining—to the far side of the farmstead.
She nodded to noble Odysseus: he saw it, and went
out from the hall, past the great wall of the courtyard, 165
and stood before her. Athēnē then addressed him, saying:
"Laërtēs' son, Zeus' scion, resourceful Odysseus,
the time has come: say the word to your son, don't hide it,
so that you both may plot death and doom for the suitors
for when you go back to the far-famed city: I myself 170
shall not be slow to join you: I'm ready for this battle!"

That said, Athēnē touched him with her golden wand.
She dressed him first in a new well-laundered mantle
and tunic, made his body more youthful and powerful.
His complexion grew swarthy again, his cheeks filled out, 175
and the beard on his chin darkened once more. This done,
she took herself off, and Odysseus now went back
into the hut. His dear son was amazed at the sight,
and averted his eyes in alarm, lest this might be a god,
and spoke, and addressed him with winged words, saying: 180
"Stranger, you look quite different from what you did earlier:
you have different clothes on, your color isn't the same!
You must be one of the gods who hold broad heaven!

Be gracious, that we may bring you acceptable offerings
and golden gifts, finely wrought. Only spare us, be merciful!" 185

To him then much-enduring noble Odysseus responded:
"I am no kind of god! Why liken me to the immortals?
No, I am your father, for whose sake you are grieving
and suffering much from the violence of men."
So saying
he kissed his son, and the tears ran down his cheeks 190
that hitherto he'd always firmly held back; but Tēlemachos—
not yet convinced that this man was really his father—
once more spoke out, and responded to him, saying
"You can't be Odysseus, my father! No, this is some deity
that's deceiving me, so that I'll grieve more bitterly hereafter! 195
There's no way a mortal man could contrive all this
by his own unaided wit—it required a god to help him,
who could easily as he wanted make him either young or old.
For you, a moment ago, were an old man, meanly clad,
whereas now you resemble the gods who possess broad heaven." 200

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, it's not fitting, when your own father is here,
in the house, to be so astonished, indeed suspicious!
I tell you, no other Odysseus will ever come here—
It is I, such as I am, who have suffered much, wandered far, 205
and now, in the twentieth year, have come back home!
What you see here's the work of Athēnē, leader of hosts,
who transforms me however she wants, for she has the power—
sometimes to resemble a beggar, then again in the likeness
of a young man, his body decked out in expensive clothes! 210
Easy enough for the gods, who possess broad heaven,
both to exalt a mortal man, and to debase him."
That said, he sat down. Tēlemachos, shedding tears,
cried out, and flung his arms round his own good father,
and a longing arose in them both for lamentation: 215
their sobs came thicker and louder than the cries of birds,
vultures or sea eagles with hooked talons, whose chicks
hunters stole from their nests before they were full-fledged—
just as piteous were their sobs and the tears they shed.
And now the sun's light would have set on their lamentation 220
had not Tēlemachos asked a quick question of his father:

"On what kind of ship, dear father, was it that sailors
brought you here to Ithákē? And who did they claim to be?
For I don't imagine you made your way here on foot."

Much-enduring noble Odysseus answered him, saying: 225
"So then, my child, I'll tell you the whole true story.
The Phaiakians brought me here, men famous for their ships—
other men too they convey, whoever approaches them—
and ferrying me asleep in a swift ship over the deep
they set me down on Ithákē, and gave me splendid gifts, 230
bronze and gold in plenty, and woven clothing,
all of which by the gods' grace is lying stored in caves.
And now I've come here at Athēnē's instigation
so that we may make plans together for killing our enemies.
So come, count up and tell me the full tally of the suitors, 235
that I may know how many, and who, these fellows are,
and after thinking it over in my peerless mind, decide
whether we two are sufficient to stand against them alone,
without the aid of others, or will need to round up support."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying: 240
"Father, I've always been told about your great renown,
that you were both a tough combatant and a shrewd planner;
But what you just said is too much, I'm astounded! No way
could two men fight so many, and strong men too!
not just a group of ten suitors, or even twice that, 245
but many, many more! Let me tally them for you:
From Doulichion there are no fewer than fifty-two
chosen youths, with six servants to wait on them;
from Samē, the count lists two dozen individuals;
from Zákynthos, there are two score youths of the Achaians, 250
and from Ithákē itself, a dozen, all from the best families,
and with these Medōn the herald and the godlike minstrel,
and a couple of serving men, skilled at carving roast meat.
Should we encounter all these indoors, then bitter and desperate
would be the revenge that you're here to take on their violence. 255
So, is there any supporter that you can you bring to mind,
someone who'd gladly step forward to help the two of us?"

Then much-enduring noble Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Well now, I'll tell you, and you listen and pay attention,

and decide for yourself if Athēnē with Zeus the Father 260
will suffice, or if I should find some other defender too."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Good indeed are these two defenders whom you mention,
sitting high up there in the clouds: between them they rule
the rest of mankind, not to mention the immortal gods!" 265

Then much-enduring noble Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Not long, for sure, will those two remain mere spectators
of the fierce battle, when between the suitors and ourselves
where Ares' strength lies is decided, here in my halls!
But for now, at daybreak tomorrow you must be off 270
back home, and mingle there with the arrogant suitors.
As for me, the swineherd will escort me later into town,
in the likeness of a wretched and elderly beggar: and if
in the house they mistreat me, still let the heart in your breast
endure the sight of the pain I suffer; I may be dragged 275
by the heels through the house, and then thrown out, or pelted
with missiles—nevertheless you must look on and bear it!
You can tell them to give over their mindless folly, using
gentle words to dissuade them; but they won't take
any notice of you; for indeed, their fatal day is at hand! 280
And another thing I'll tell you, and you take it to heart:
When Athēnē, resourceful counselor, puts it into my mind,
I'll nod my head to you, and you, when you see that,
must gather up all the weapons that are lying in the halls
and stack them away at the back of the lofty storeroom, 285
all of them; disarm the suitors with soothing words when they
note their absence, and start to ask you about them; say:
'I stored them away from the smoke, since they no longer look
as they did when Odysseus left them on going off to Troy,
but are blackened with all the fire's breath that's got to them. 290
And there's a greater concern Kronos' son has put in my mind,
that when you're flushed with wine you may pick some quarrel
among you and wound one another, and so disgrace
your feast and your wooing: for iron of itself attracts a man.'

"But for us two alone leave behind two swords and two spears, 295
and a couple of oxhide shields that we can heft in our hands,
running up and seizing them; as for those fellows, Pallas

Athēnē and Zeus the Counselor will befuddle their wits![2]
And another thing I'll tell you, and you take it to heart:
If indeed you are my son and of our blood, then don't 300
let anyone know that Odysseus has come back home—
Don't break the news to Laërtēs, or to the swineherd, or
to any household servant—or to Penelopē herself!
You and I by ourselves will test the loyalty of the women,
and also make trial of the menservants, find out which ones 305
honor the two of us, have respect for us in their hearts,
and which are indifferent, and scorn you, man though you are."

Then his illustrious son responded to him, saying:
"My father, I think you'll find out the quality of my spirit
soon enough: I'm not enslaved by any slack-mindedness! 310
However, I really think this plan of yours would profit
neither one of us, therefore I urge you to reconsider.
You'd spend long hours, to no purpose, going round the estate
making trial of each individual, while in your halls
those arrogant men, at ease, go on squandering your goods! 315
Regarding the women, however, I do urge you to find out
which of them disregard you, and which ones are innocent;
but as for the hands at the farmsteads, I'd prefer that we don't
make trial of them now, but take care of that business later,
if it's true that you have some portent from aegis-bearing Zeus." 320

Such was the conversation they had with one another.
But meanwhile the well-built ship put in to Ithákē
that had brought Tēlemachos and all his comrades from Pylos;
and they, on coming into the deep-water harbor,
drove the black ship ashore, high up on dry land, 325
where proud attendants unloaded their gear and promptly
carried off the resplendent gifts to the house of Klytios.
They sent a herald ahead to the house of Odysseus,

2. As was recognized by ancient scholars, lines 281–98 are hard to reconcile convincingly with 19.5–13 and 22.101–15, and lines 286–94 are repeated almost word for word at 19.5–13. The present context seems premature for such instructions, and in any case they are inconsistent with the passage in bk. 22. Explanations of the inconsistencies include the possibility that we have here a survival from an older Odysseus saga (Woodhouse 1930, chs. xix–xx), and that bk. 16 was composed, perhaps for separate performance, before bk. 19, and not subsequently corrected effectively (Hoekstra, *Comm.,* 2: 278). But I am more inclined to agree with West 2014, 66, 248–49, who blames the composer's chronic, and characteristic, slapdash carelessness.

to deliver a message to prudent Penelopē—saying
that Tēlemachos had landed, but had ordered the ship 330
to sail on to the city—so that the noble queen
might not become worried, and shed tears of tenderness.
The two of them, herald and swineherd, encountered each other
on the same errand, both bringing the news to Odysseus' wife.
So when they arrived at the godlike queen's abode, 335
the herald spoke up in the midst of the handmaids, saying:
"By now, O queen, your dear son is back in this country."
But the swineherd went up to Penelopē, stood beside her,
and passed on all that her dear son had told him to say;
and when he'd delivered his whole message, he departed 340
the courtyard and hall, and went back among the pigs.

The suitors, however, were troubled, and downcast at heart,
and went out from the hall past the great courtyard wall,
and there, in front of the main gates, they sat down.
Eurymachos, Polybos' son, was the first to address them, saying: 345
"My friends, a great feat has been arrogantly accomplished
by Tēlemachos—this voyage, which we thought he'd never make!
So now let us launch a black ship, the best one we have,
and assemble a crew of sailors as oarsmen, who'll bring
word without delay to those others to sail back home at once." 350

He'd not finished speaking when Amphinomos, looking round,
saw a vessel there in the deep-water harbor, its crew
busy furling the sail, and with oars in their hands.
He, with a cheerful laugh, now addressed his comrades, saying:
"No need to send messages: here they are back home! 355
Either some god told them this, or they themselves observed
Tēlemachos' ship sailing past, but couldn't intercept it."

So he spoke. They now got up and went to the seashore,
and the crew drove the black ship ashore, high up on dry land,
where proud attendants unloaded their gear, while they 360
themselves all went to assembly, but would not permit
any others to sit with them, either young or old; and next
Eupeithēs' son Antinoös addressed them, saying: "Look here,
see how the gods have saved this fellow from harm!
Day after day our lookouts perched up on the windy heights, 365
one succeeding another; and when the sun went down

we never spent nights ashore, but out on the deep sea
cruised in a swift ship until the bright dawn came up,
lying in wait for Tēlemachos, to capture and do away with
the man himself: but some deity brought him safely home. 370
Now we here need to think up some other sorry end
for Tēlemachos, not let him escape us; I don't think
that while he still lives this business of ours will flourish.
He himself is no slouch at planning and ideas,
and the people here are no longer completely on our side. 375
We must act first, before this fellow brings all the Achaians
to assembly—for I don't think he'll let up on us one whit,
but will give full play to his wrath, stand up among them all
and report how we planned his murder, but failed to catch him;
and they won't approve of us on hearing of such low deeds, 380
and may take low action themselves, expel us all
from our homeland, so that we end up on foreign soil! We must
arrest him while he's on his estate, well away from the city,
or else on the road. We can then seize his property
ourselves, share it fairly between us—but leave the house 385
for his mother to occupy, and whichever man marries her.
Still, if you dislike this proposal, would rather choose
that he stay alive, and keep all his ancestral wealth, then we
should stop consuming his nice rich store of goods
gathering here: let each one of us rather court her 390
from his own halls with gifts, seek to win her; she'll then marry
whoever offers the most, who comes as her destined man."

So he spoke, and each one of them became hushed in silence.
Amphinomos was the next man to speak and address them,
the illustrious son of lord Nisos, Arētias' son. He led 395
the suitors who came from Doulichion, rich in wheat
and pasture; he was the one whose conversation
most pleased Penelopē: he had an intelligent mind.
He, with friendly intent, now spoke before the assembly:
"My friends, I'd myself prefer that we should not do away with 400
Tēlemachos: it's a most serious business, this spilling
of royal blood. No, we must first learn the will of the gods.
If the ordinances of great Zeus confer their approval,
then I will kill him myself and urge the rest to do so;
but should the gods dissuade us, then I say we must desist." 405

So spoke Amphinomos. They agreed with what he said,
so they now got up, and left for the house of Odysseus,
and on arrival sat down on the polished chairs there.

Now prudent Penelopē made a fresh decision: to show
herself to her suitors, so outrageous and arrogant; 410
for she'd learnt in her halls of the plan to murder her son
from Medōn the herald, who'd overheard their discussion.
Now she went down to the hall along with her handmaids;
and when, bright among women, she reached the suitors,
she stood by the pillar supporting the close-packed roof, 415
and, holding the shining veil in front of her face, upbraided
Antinoös, addressing him by his name, and saying:
"Antinoös, wantonly violent, deviser of evil! Yet they say
that you beat all those of your age in the land of Ithákē
as speaker and counselor! But such a man you are not! 420
You madman, why are you plotting death and destruction
for Tēlemachos? Why ignore those suppliants who have
Zeus as their witness? To plot evil against each other
is impious! Don't you know how your father came here in terror,
on the run from his countrymen, who were furious with him 425
because he'd joined up with a group of Taphian pirates
to raid the Thesprōtians, when these were allies of ours?
So they were hot to waste him, to rip out his life spirit,
and wholly devour his great and abundant livelihood.
But Odysseus held and restrained them, despite their urgency. 430
It's his substance you eat without payment, his wife you're courting,
his son whom you plan to kill. This distresses me greatly.
So stop it, I tell you, and make the others stop too."

Then Eurymachos, Polybos' son, responded to her, saying:
"Ikarios' daughter, prudent Penelopē, please don't worry! 435
You've no need to let these matters disturb your mind.
That man does not live, nor shall do so, nor shall ever be born
who'll lay violent hands on your son Tēlemachos
so long as I'm still alive and have sight upon this earth!
For this I'll declare to you, and indeed it shall come to pass: 440
straightway would his black blood gush out around my spear,
since indeed me too Odysseus, that sacker of cities,
used often to set on his knees, would put morsels of roast
meat into my hands, and hold the red wine to my lips.

So Tēlemachos is by far the dearest of men to me, 445
and he has no need, let me tell him, to fear death—not, at least,
at the suitors' hands. From the gods, there's no dodging it."

Thus he spoke,
to cheer her, while planning Tēlemachos' death himself.
She now went back to her shining upper chamber
and there wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until 450
grey-eyed Athēnē shed sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

At evening, the noble swineherd returned to Odysseus
and his son, and they set about preparing their supper,
having slaughtered a yearling pig. Then Athēnē approached,
and standing beside Odysseus, son of Laërtēs, tapped him 455
with her wand, and once more made him an elderly man,
and put threadbare clothing on him, for fear the swineherd
might recognize him at sight, and then go off and tell
prudent Penelopē, not keep the news to himself.

Tēlemachos was the first to address the swineherd, saying: 460
"You're back, noble Eumaios! What news is there from town?
Are the proud suitors returned by now from their ambush,
or still watching out for me on my homeward journey?"

To him swineherd Eumaios, you then responded, saying:
"I wasn't concerned to go wandering all through town 465
enquiring about this matter: my mind was made up
to hurry back here once I'd delivered my message. A swift
messenger from your comrades then met up with me,
a herald, who was the first to break the news to your mother.
And there's one other thing I know, which I saw for myself: 470
I was well up above the city—where the hill of Hermēs[3] is—
on my way, when I noticed a fast ship putting in
to our harbor: there was a crowd of men aboard her,
and she was loaded down with shields and two-edged spears,
and I thought that it must be them, but I can't be certain." 475

3. Usually interpreted simply as a hill where Hermēs was worshipped; but according to the *Etymologicum Magnum,* s.v. *hermaion* (cited by Hoekstra, *Comm.,* 2: 286) a "hill of Hermēs" was an upright stone marker surrounded by a heap of stones added to by passing travelers. One such monument, complete with a slab inscribed "of Hermēs" was found in the nineteenth century (Guthrie 1950, 90).

So he spoke; and Tēlemachos, princely in power, smiled,
with a quick glance at his father, but avoiding the swineherd's eye.

When they'd finished their work and got their supper ready,
they sat down to eat: no one lacked his fair share of the meal.
And when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink, 480
their minds turned to rest, and they welcomed the gift of sleep.

Book 17

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
Tēlemachos, dear son of godlike Odysseus, then
fastened under his feet his fine sandals, picked out
a sturdy spear, that was comfortably fitted to his grasp,
and, eager to leave for town, addressed the swineherd, saying: 5
"Old fellow, I'm off to the city now, so that my mother
may actually see me: I have a feeling she won't
give over her ghastly wailing and tearful lamentation
until she sees me in person! Here's what I want you to do:
Take this unfortunate stranger into town, so he can 10
beg there for his dinner: whoever so wishes can give him
a crust and a cupful. No way can I burden myself with
the rest of mankind, with these troubles of my own!
If this angers the stranger, so much the worse for him
will it be: it's my pleasure to speak the honest truth." 15

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to him, saying:
"Friend, neither do I myself want to be kept back here!
For a beggar it's better to beg for his dinner in town
than out in the country: whoever so wishes can feed me.
No longer am I of an age to hang on here at the farmstead 20
and do whatever some man in charge tells me I must!
Off you go: this fellow here will take me as you ordered—
when I've warmed myself at the fire, and the sun heats up!
For the clothes I have on are threadbare: I might be overcome
by the dawn frost. You say, too, it's a long way into town." 25

So he spoke. Tēlemachos went out through the farmstead
with rapid strides, busy thinking up trouble for the suitors.
When he reached his pleasantly sited dwelling, he stood
the spear he was carrying up against a lofty pillar,
and himself went in, stepping over the stone threshold. 30
The first to see him by far was the old nurse Eurykleia
as she spread fleeces over the richly decorated chairs.
Weeping, she rushed to greet him, and the other handmaids
of stout-hearted Odysseus now came crowding round them

and kissed his head and shoulders in loving welcome. 35
Now prudent Penelopē came down from her chamber,
in appearance like Artemis, or like golden Aphrodītē,[1]
and burst into tears as she hugged her own dear son,
and kissed his head and both his bright shining eyes,
and, between sobs, addressed him in winged words, saying: 40
"You're back, Tēlemachos, sweet light of my eyes! I thought
I'd never see you again when you sailed off to Pylos—
against my will, secretly, to seek news of your dear father!
So come now, tell me in detail what sightings you had of him."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to her, saying: 45
"Mother, don't make me cry, don't stir up my emotions
when I've only just escaped sheer destruction! Instead
go upstairs to your chamber, take your handmaids with you,
and wash yourself, put on a set of clean clothes,
then pray to all the gods, with full, perfect sacrifices, 50
that Zeus may one day enact deeds of retribution for us!
I shall now go to the place of assembly, and invite home
the guest that came with me on my voyage back from Pylos.
I sent him on ahead with my godlike comrades, and told
Peiraios to take him back to his house, and give him 55
a kindly welcome, look after him till I myself arrived."

So he spoke: her own answer remained unwinged.[2]
She washed herself, and put on a set of clean clothes,

---

1. Russo makes a good point here in *Comm.,* 3: 21. H. has previously applied the comparison to chaste Artemis to the young and beautiful bride-to-be Nausikaä (6.102, 149–52); Penelopē's twenty-year chastity is thus emphasized, but with an erotic twist. And she is also, by definition, a prospective bedfellow to the suitors who are now looking at her: hence the comparison to Aphrodītē. Tēlemachos takes a very different view of his mother: he tells her to wash and put on clean clothes (which Russo doesn't mention), and we see instantly the rather dirty drabness that went with prolonged mourning. Tēlemachos also shows a very filial distaste for the thought of Penelopē being eyed sexually, and his brisk dismissal should be viewed with this in mind.
2. Most scholars (and translators) have assumed that the "unwinged answer" is that of Penelopē (and in an identical formula, that of Eurykleia at 19.29, 21.386, and 22.398, in reaction to Tēlemachos and Eumaios): in each case orders are obeyed in slightly startled silence, without a response. But a recent trend has been to regard the *muthos,* the speech, as the orders given, and to then translate *apteros* not as "wingless" but as its opposite, "winged" or "swift," with the initial *a* intensive rather than privative. The line would then mean "So he spoke, and for her his words were winged/swift," hence she promptly obeyed them. I have to say that I far prefer both the sense and the psychological force of the older explanation and have adhered to it in my translation.

and vowed to make full, perfect sacrifices to all
the gods if Zeus would enact deeds of retribution for them. 60

Tēlemachos made his way out through the hall, his spear
grasped in one hand, two hunting dogs following at his heels,
and marvelous was the grace that Athēnē shed upon him,
so that all the people gazed at him in amazement as he came,
and the haughty suitors now gathered all around him, 65
speaking fair words, but privately plotting trouble.
He, however, avoided the main crowd, and went over
to where Mentōr, Antiphos, and Halithersēs were sitting,
men who from the start had been his father's comrades,
and sat with them, and they questioned him on every detail 70
of his trip. Peiraios, famed spearman, then came over,
bringing the stranger through the city to the assembly.
Tēlemachos was not slow to join his guest, but approached him.
First to speak was Peiraios, who now addressed him, saying:
"Tēlemachos, send women over to my house now, at once, 75
so I can deliver to you the gifts Menelaös gave you."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Peiraios, we don't yet know how this business may turn out.
If the haughty suitors secretly slay me in my own halls,
and share out all my family goods between them, then 80
I want you, not one of them, to keep and enjoy these things;
But if I contrive death and destiny for that lot, then
bring all the stuff to my house, and I'll be glad to get it."

That said, he took the stranger, so sorely tried, back home.
When they reached his pleasantly sited dwelling, they took off 85
their cloaks and laid them on the seats and the high chairs
and went off to the polished bathtubs and had baths.
After the handmaids had washed them, massaged them with oil,
and dressed them in woolen mantles and tunics, they came
out from the bathtubs and seated themselves on the chairs, 90
and a servant brought hand-washing water in a beautiful
golden ewer and poured it over a silver basin
so they could wash, and drew up a polished table for them.
The respected housekeeper brought in bread and served it
along with many side dishes, giving freely of what there was. 95
His mother sat facing Tēlemachos by the hall's main pillar,

settled back in her chair, spinning fine yarn on her distaff.
So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.
But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink,
it was prudent Penelopē who opened the conversation, saying: 100
"Tēlemachos, I'm going back now to my upper chamber,
to lie down on my bed, that's become a bed of sorrow,
always damp with my tears, ever since Odysseus set out
with the sons of Atreus for Ilion. Yet you couldn't be bothered,
before the haughty suitors arrived in the house, to tell me 105
any clear news you may have about your father's return."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to her, saying:
"Very well, mother, I'll give you a true and complete account.
We traveled to Pylos, to Nestōr, shepherd of the people,
who gave me a warm welcome in his lofty dwelling 110
as an honored guest, the way a father might treat his son
back home from a long spell abroad: with just such kindness
he looked after me, both he and his glorious sons.
But of steadfast-minded Odysseus, living or dead, he told me
he'd heard not one thing, from any man on earth. 115
He sent me to Atreus' son, famed spearman Menelaös,
in a carpentered chariot drawn by his own horses;
and there I saw Argive Helen, on whose account, and by
the gods' will, Argives and Trojans endured such hardship.
Then straight off Menelaös, good at the war cry, asked me 120
what it was I'd come in search of to lordly Lakedaimōn.
Whereupon I then told him the whole truth of the matter.
At this he responded to me with the following statement:
'I tell you, it was indeed in the bed of a brave warrior
that these fellows, cowards themselves, hoped they might lie! 125
As when in a thicket, the lair of a powerful lion,
a doe has laid to sleep her newborn suckling fawns
and goes off, traversing foothills and grassy glens
in search of pasture, and the lion returns to his den
and on both her fawns unleashes a ghastly fate—just so 130
will Odysseus unleash a ghastly fate on these men!
How I wish—by Zeus the Father and Athēnē and Apollo!—
that he, as strong as he was that time in well-built Lesbos
when he stood up and wrestled a bout with Philomeleidēs,
and threw him down forcefully, and all the Achaians cheered, 135

might come—he, Odysseus—in such strength among these suitors!
Then they'd all get a swift end and a bitter marriage!
As regards the business you're enquiring about, I shan't
veer off onto other subjects, nor will I mislead you—
of all that I heard from that forthright Old Man of the Sea 140
not one word will I keep back or conceal from you!
He said he'd seen Odysseus on an island, much frustrated,
in the halls of the nymph Kalypsō, who by constraint
detains him there, so he can't get back to his own country:
for he has no ships with oars, nor any comrades 145
to further his voyage over the broad back of the sea.'

"So spoke Atreus' son, the famed spearman Menelaös.
When I'd done all this, I set out: the immortals gave me
a following wind, and a speedy voyage to my own country."

So he spoke, and stirred the heart in her breast with his words. 150
Then the godlike Theoklymenos also addressed them, saying:
"Respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laërtēs, truly
your son knows nothing for certain!! Listen rather to me,
for I shall foretell the truth to you, hold back nothing!
Zeus, first of gods, be my witness, and this guest-friendly board, 155
and the hearth of peerless Odysseus, to which I have come,
that Odysseus is already here, in his own homeland, sitting
quiet or stealing about, learning of these misdeeds,
and planting the seeds of destruction for all the suitors:
such the bird portent I noted as I sat on the well-benched 160
ship of Tēlemachos here, and duly expounded to him."

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"If only these words of yours, stranger, might be fulfilled!
Then would you quickly know friendship and gifts in plenty
from me, so that any who met you would call you blessed." 165

Such was the conversation they had with one another.
Meanwhile, out in front of Odysseus' house, the suitors
were amusing themselves by throwing discus and javelin
on the leveled terrace as always, in their arrogance. But when
the time for dinner arrived, and the flocks were coming home 170
from the fields on every side, led by their usual herdsmen,
then they were summoned by Medōn—who pleased them best
of the heralds, and was present at their dinners—saying:

"Young men, now you've all pleasured your hearts with sport,
come on into the house, so we can get dinner ready, 175
for it's no bad thing to have meals at the proper time."

So he spoke, and they stood up and obeyed his summons.
When they entered the pleasantly sited house they took off
their cloaks and laid them down on the chairs and benches,
and set about slaughtering big sheep and fattened goats, 180
and plumped-up porkers, and a cow from the herd, as they
made ready their meal.

Now Odysseus and the noble swineherd
were preparing to leave the countryside, go in to town;
and the swineherd, leader of men, spoke first, declaring:
"Stranger, since you're so eager to go off into the city 185
today, as my master commanded—though I myself
would rather have left you here to watch over the farmstead—
nevertheless I respect him, and fear that he might
reprimand me later, and a master's rebukes can be harsh—
come on now, let's be going: the day is nearly over, 190
it will soon be evening, and a little too cold for you."

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to him, saying:
"Noted and understood. You're spelling it out for the wise.
But yes, let's be going. Be my guide all the way. And give me—
if there's one around that's been cut for your use—a strong 195
staff to support me. You said the road was uneven."

With that he slung over his shoulder his worn-out leather bag,
tattered and rent, which was held by a twisted cord,
and Eumaios gave him a staff that was to his liking,
and the two set out. Dogs and herdsmen were left behind 200
to look after the farmstead, while the swineherd led his master
into town, in the guise of a miserable aged beggar
propped on a staff, wearing mean and threadbare clothes.

But when, as they made their way along the stony path,
they'd come close to the city, and had reached a spring, from which, 205
paved and fair-flowing, the townsfolk got their water—
developed by Ithakos, Nēritos, and Polyktōr,
with a grove of black waterside poplars that encircled it
on every side, and the chill water came flowing down

from the rocks above, and up high there was built an altar 210
to the nymphs, where all travelers made offerings—there
Melanthios son of Dolios overtook them while driving
those she-goats that were the very best from all his herds
for the suitors' dinner; two herdsmen accompanied him.
When he saw them, he reviled them, addressing them personally 215
in aggressive, unseemly terms, that enraged Odysseus' heart:
"Now here comes a total no-good leading a no-good! As usual,
the god's bringing like and like together! Where, pray,
you wretched swineherd, are you taking this old bald pig,
this tiresome beggar, this walking blot on our feasts? 220
He'll stand and rub his shoulders at many doorposts,
begging for scraps, but never for swords or cauldrons!
If you gave me this dolt to be a guard on my farmstead,
to sweep out the pens and fetch green shoots for the kids,
then by drinking whey he could build up his thigh muscles! 225
But since all he's learned is bad stuff, he won't be willing
to do real work—he'd rather slouch his way through
this district begging, to feed his bottomless belly!
I'll tell you one thing straight, that will certainly come to pass:
if he hangs around the residence of godlike Odysseus, then 230
there'll be plenty of footstools shied by men at his head
that his ribs will splinter as he's pelted throughout the house."

So he spoke. As he passed, in his folly he kicked Odysseus
on the hip, yet failed to knock him clear of the path.
Odysseus stood there unshaken, pondering whether 235
he should attack with his staff, and beat the life out of him,
or collar him by the waist, dash his head on the ground.
But he steeled himself, and endured. The swineherd stared
in rebuke at this fellow, raised his arms, and prayed aloud:
"You nymphs of the spring, Zeus' daughters, if Odysseus 240
ever burned thigh pieces for you, wrapped in rich fat,
of lambs or kids, then grant me fulfillment of this prayer:
may that man, my master, return, and divinity guide him!
Then would he scatter all those glorious airs that you
flaunt in your arrogance now, always strutting around 245
this township, while useless herdsmen bring the flocks to ruin."

The goatherd Melanthios responded to him, saying:
"My oh my, how this dog rants, mind full of malice!

One day I'll carry him off in a well-benched black ship,
far away from Ithákē, where he might bring me a fortune. 250
Oh, I wish silver-bowed Apollo would strike down Tēlemachos
today in his halls, or the suitors would kill him, as surely
as for Odysseus, far off, the day of return's been lost."

So saying, he left them behind there, as they walked slowly on,
while he moved fast, and soon reached his master's house. 255
He went straight in, and sat down among the suitors,
facing Eurymachos, the friend whom he liked the best.
The carvers set before him a portion of roast meat, while
the respected housekeeper brought him bread, and placed it
ready to eat. Now Odysseus and the noble swineherd 260
stopped when they got near; about them rang the notes
of the hollow lyre, for Phēmios was preparing to sing for them.
Then Odysseus clutched the swineherd's hand, and said:
"Eumaios, surely this is Odysseus' fine house? It's easily
distinguishable from the rest, even when there are many. 265
One building's linked to another, and the courtyard's fitted
with wall and copestones, its doors are finely worked
and double-paneled: no man could furnish it better. And I
observe that within there's a feast for many in progress,
for the smell of roast meat rises from it, and within it echoes 270
the lyre, made by the gods an accompaniment to feasting."

To him then, swineherd Eumaios, you then responded, saying:
"Easily did you know it, for in all else you don't lack sense.
But now we have to think how we shall act next.
You could go first into this pleasantly sited house, 275
and mix with the suitors, while I stay out here. Or else,
if you like, you stay here, and I'll go in before you.
But don't linger outside too long, or someone might notice,
and hit you or chase you off. Do please be careful."

Much-enduring noble Odysseus responded to him, saying: 280
"Noted and understood. You're spelling it out for the wise.
You go on ahead, and I'll stay behind out here—
I'm not unused to being hit, or having things thrown at me.
My spirit is steadfast, for I've suffered many setbacks
from rough seas and in war: let this be added to them! 285
But a ravening belly there's no way of concealing—

an accursed plague, that brings many evils upon mankind.
For its sake, too, well-benched ships are armed and sent
out on the unharvested sea, bearing ills to their enemies."
Such was the conversation they had with one another. 290

Now a dog lying there raised its head and pricked up its ears—
Argos, stout-hearted Odysseus' dog, that he, years ago,
had bred up himself, but got no joy of, departing too soon
for sacred Ilion. Young hunters used to take Argos
to go in pursuit of wild goats, or deer, or hares; but now 295
he lay neglected, his master long since absent,
in the abundant dung of the mules and oxen left
outside the gates, until the servants of Odysseus
carted it off to manure his widespread estate. There lay
the dog Argos now, his body crawling with dog ticks. 300
But the moment he sensed that it was Odysseus nearby
he wagged his tail and laid back both ears, and yet
no longer had the strength to move any closer to
his master, who now looked away, and wiped off a tear
that he easily hid from Eumaios, then questioned him, saying: 305
"Eumaios, it's odd, this dog lying here in the dung—
he has a good body, but I still can't really be certain
if he once had the speed to match his fine appearance,
or was nothing more than one of those table dogs
that their masters take care of only to put on a show." 310

To him, swineherd Eumaios, you then responded, saying:
"This is indeed the dog of a man who died far away.
If he were such today, in body and performance,
as he was when Odysseus left him, and set out for Troy,
you'd at once be astonished on seeing his speed and strength! 315
No wild beast that he started in the thick woodland's depths
ever escaped him. He was also a keen-nosed tracker.
But now he's in a poor way, and his master has perished
far from his homeland. The women are heedless, can't be
bothered
to care for him. Servants no longer directed by their master 320
won't perform their duties properly any more,
for far-seeing Zeus strips away half the proper worth
from any man, once the day of slavery overtakes him."

So saying, he went on into the pleasantly sited building
and made straight for the hall to join the noble suitors. 325
But Argos the fated lot of black death overwhelmed
once he'd seen Odysseus again, in the twentieth year.

Godlike Tēlemachos was the first by far to notice
the swineherd advancing through the house, and at once
invited him with a nod. Eumaios looked round and seized 330
a nearby stool, on which the carver would sit to cut
all the portions of meat for the suitors feasting there
in the hall. This he took and placed at Tēlemachos' table,
opposite him, and sat down himself. A herald now set
a portion of meat before him, with bread from a basket. 335

Very soon after him Odysseus entered the building
as he was, in the guise of a miserable aged beggar
propped on a staff, wearing mean and threadbare clothes.
He sat down on the ash-wood threshold inside the doorway,
leaning back on the doorpost of cypress, which long ago 340
a craftsman had skillfully planed and made true to the line.
Tēlemachos now beckoned the swineherd over to him,
took a whole loaf from the exquisite basket, together
with all the meat he could pick up in both hands, and said:
"Take this, a gift for the stranger. Tell him he should himself 345
go round among all the suitors, begging. Embarrassed restraint
is not a useful emotion for a man who's in need."

So he spoke;
the swineherd, on hearing his order, went up to Odysseus,
and standing close, addressed him with winged words, saying:
"Stranger, Tēlemachos gives you this, says you should 350
go round among all the suitors, begging. Embarrassed restraint
is not a useful emotion, he says, for a man who begs."

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to him, saying:
"Zeus, lord, grant that Tēlemachos prosper among his peers,
and may all that his heart desires be accomplished for him." 355
With that he received the food in both hands and laid it
down at his feet on his tattered old leather bag and ate
while the minstrel was still performing there in the hall.
But when he'd eaten dinner, and the divine minstrel was done,

the suitors' noisy clamor resumed in the hall. Now Athēnē, 360
standing close beside Odysseus, Laërtēs son, urged him on,[3]
to go round among the suitors, collect his crusts of bread,
discover which were right-thinking, which lawless. Yet even so
she'd no plan to save a single one of them from destruction.
Off he went to beg of them, moving from left to right, 365
with outstretched hand all round, as though he'd long been at it.
They felt pity, and gave, and regarded him with wonder,
questioning who he might be, and where he came from.

The goatherd Melanthios now addressed them, saying:
"Listen to me, you suitors of our illustrious queen! 370
About this stranger: I've actually seen him before—in fact
it was the swineherd who brought him back here, but I
don't know the man himself, or who he claims as family."

So he spoke. Antinoös then chastised the swineherd, saying:
"You infamous swineherd, why did you bring this fellow 375
here into town? Don't we have enough vagrants already,
these tiresome beggars who disrupt our feasts? Is it not
enough for you that such men should cluster here and guzzle
our lord's livelihood, that you bring in this fellow too?"

To him, swineherd Eumaios, you then responded, saying: 380
"High-born you may be, Antinoös, but that was not well said.
For who'd himself seek out and invite any stranger
from abroad, except maybe some kind of public worker—
a prophet, a healer of sickness, a carpenter—even a godlike
minstrel, who gives delight with his singing? Such men 385
are invited worldwide on mankind's boundless earth,
but no man would bring in a beggar to devour his substance!
You're always too severe, more than the rest of the suitors,
on Odysseus' servants, on me above all—although
I don't care, so long as prudent Penelopē and godlike 390
Tēlemachos are here, both still living in these halls."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Silence! Never waste words in answering this man!

3. She is not in the likeness of any mortal here, but (exactly as at *Il.* 1.194–222, when she is curbing Achilles' anger) invisible to everyone except Odysseus—and perhaps to him as well, since all we are told is that she puts an idea into his head.

Antinoös has an old habit of meanly provoking people
with his rough language, and urges others to do the same." 395

That said, he addressed Antinoös with winged words, saying:
"Antinoös, truly you care for me like a father his son, the way
you tell me to drive this stranger away from our halls with words
of enforcement! May no god bring this about! Take something,
and give it him! Far from begrudging you, I command it! 400
Don't worry about my mother, or the rest of the household
servants resident here in the house of godlike Odysseus!
But in fact this isn't the kind of thought in your breast:
you'd far rather eat yourself than give to somebody else."

To him then in turn Antinoös responded: "Tēlemachos, 405
high-flown speaker, in anger unbridled, what's this you said?
If all the suitors would offer him just what I do, then
for three months this house would keep him at a distance!"

So saying, he seized and brought out from beneath the table
the footstool on which he rested his sleek feet while feasting. 410
The others, more generous, filled Odysseus' old bag
with crusts and meat. Now Odysseus was on his way
back to the entrance, after making free trial of the Achaians,
but he stopped by Antinoös, and said to him: "Give, friend!
You don't look to me like the meanest of the Achaians, 415
but rather the noblest, for you have the air of a king!
So it's right that you should give me an even larger portion
of food than the rest, and I'd spread your fame worldwide!
For I too once dwelt in my own rich house among other
prosperous men, and I often would give to a vagrant, 420
no matter what sort he was or what he might be lacking!
Countless servants I had, and much else in abundance
owning which men live well, and are known as wealthy.
But Kronos' son Zeus lost me all—on some whim, I suppose—
by inciting me to go off, with a bunch of roving pirates 425
to Egypt—a lengthy voyage—and meet my ruin there.
Well, in the river of Egypt I anchored my curved vessels.
Then I issued orders to my trusty comrades, to stay
there with the ships, and to be those ships' protectors
while I sent off scouts to find and man lookout posts. 430
But, trusting their strength, they yielded to wanton aggression,

and at once began ravaging the Egyptians' splendid fields,
carrying off their wives and their little children,
and killing the men. Word quickly reached the city,
and, hearing the shouting, people came out at daybreak. 435
The whole plain filled up with infantry and horses
and the bright glint of bronze. Zeus, hurler of thunderbolts,
cast a craven panic upon my comrades: nobody dared
to stand firm and face the foe, for trouble confronted us
on every side. Many of us they slew with the sharp bronze; 440
others they led off alive, to do forced labor for them.
But me they sent on to Cyprus with a chance-met stranger,
Dmētōr, Iasos' son, a powerful Cypriot prince.
From there I've come here, with much hardship on the way."

To him Antinoös then responded, saying: "What god 445
has delivered this nuisance, this spoiler of feasts, to us?
You, keep your distance, stand well away from my table,
or you'll soon find yourself in a bitter Egypt and Cyprus,
the right place for the bold and shameless beggar you are!
You make your pitch to each man in turn, and they give 450
thoughtlessly, since there's no restraint and no compunction
in handing out other men's stuff, and everyone has so much."

At this resourceful Odysseus took a step back, and said:
"I see your mind's no match for your looks! You wouldn't
spare even salt from your home store for your own suppliant, 455
and though at another man's table, you're still reluctant
to break off a crust and give it me! Yet there's plenty here."

So he spoke, and Antinoös grew yet more enraged at heart.
Staring angrily, he addressed him with winged words, saying:
"Indeed, you'll no longer get safely back, I think, 460
out through this hall, now you're bandying insults too."

So saying, he threw the footstool, struck Odysseus' right shoulder
at the base, where it joins the back; but he stood rock firm.
Antinoös' missile failed to floor him. He said nothing,
just shook his head, mind deeply pondering trouble. Then 465
he made his way back to the threshold and seated himself,
and set down his well-filled bag, and addressed the suitors, saying:
"Listen to me, you suitors of the illustrious queen,
to what the heart in my breast now urges me to tell you!

There's no pain felt by the mind, nor any sorrow, when 470
a man takes a hit who's fighting to save his own possessions—
cattle, maybe, or flocks of white sheep—but Antinoös
struck me because of my wretched belly, that damnable
plague, the source of so much trouble for mankind!
If beggars have their own gods or Furies, then may death's 475
end find Antinoös before ever he comes to marriage!"

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, responded to him, saying:
"Sit still and eat quietly, stranger, or go off somewhere else,
or the young men may seize you, by hand or foot, for the way
you talk, and tear you apart, and throw you out of the house." 480

So he spoke, indignant and headstrong, but they all rebuked him,
and thus would one of these overproud youths address him:
"Antinoös, you did wrong to strike this luckless vagrant!
If he turns out to be some god from heaven, you're done for!
And the gods do assume the form of some stranger from afar, 485
take on any shape, to wander through our cities
observing both good governance and its violent transgressions."

So spoke the suitors; but he paid no heed to their words,
and Tēlemachos nursed great sorrow at heart because
of the blow to his father, yet shed no tear on the ground 490
but just shook his head, mind deeply pondering trouble.

When prudent Penelopē was informed about the assault
on the man in the hall, she exclaimed, among her handmaids:
"May Apollo, renowned archer, so strike you yourself!"
To her then responded Eurynomē, the housekeeper, saying: 495
"Would that our prayers might find fulfillment! Then not
one of these men would live till another fine-throned Dawn."

Prudent Penelopē replied to her, saying: "Good mother,
they're all our enemies, since they're plotting trouble for us;
but Antinoös is the worst, he's like black death! 500
Some luckless stranger's been going round in the house
begging from all the men, driven to it by poverty.
All the rest gave him enough to fill his bag, but this man
threw a footstool and struck him, low down on his right shoulder."

Such her words while she sat in her room, conversing 505
with her handmaids, and noble Odysseus was eating his scraps.

Then she sent for the noble swineherd, and addressed him, saying:
"Go now, noble Eumaios, invite this stranger here:
I'd like to show him some kindness—and ask him if perhaps
he's had has some news of steadfast-minded Odysseus, 510
or has actually seen him: he seems to be widely traveled."
Then to her, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying:
"Indeed, my queen, I could wish these Achaians would be silent,
he spins such a tale as would enchant your very soul!
Three nights I had him with me, and three days I kept him 515
in my hut—he first came to me after he jumped ship,
but that wasn't the end of the tale of hardship he told me.
Like the man gazing rapt at a minstrel performing lays that
he's learned from the gods for the entrancement of mortals,
who are ceaselessly eager to hear him, whenever he sings— 520
that's how this fellow charmed me as he sat in my home.
He says he's a family guest-friend of Odysseus, and dwells
in Krētē, that place where the line of Minōs holds sway.
Now he's come here from there, with much hardship on the way,
wandering ever onward. He's had news of Odysseus, he says: 525
quite near, in the Thesprōtians' rich terrain, alive,
and bringing much treasure back with him to his home."

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"Go, summon him! He can tell me all this, face to face.
As for these men sitting outside or here indoors, enjoying 530
a good time, let them go on, since that's their fancy!
Their own possessions, bread and sweet wine, are left
untouched in their homes, and are eaten by their servants,
while they themselves, day in day out, flock to our house,
slaughter our cattle and sheep and fatted goats, hold feasts 535
at which they swill down our bright red wine without
any restraint. Most is gone now, for there is no man here
such as Odysseus once was, to keep ruin from our house.
But were Odysseus to come back home, then he and his son
would at once exact vengeance for these men's violent acts." 540

So she spoke. Tēlemachos now sneezed, loudly. The whole
house echoed ringingly round them. Penelopē laughed,
and at once addressed Eumaios with winged words, saying:
"Please go now and bring the stranger here before me!

Don't you see how my son just sneezed at everything I said?[4] 545
It follows that death shall not be unfulfilled for the suitors—
to the last man: not one shall escape death and the fates.
And another thing I will tell you, and you take it to heart:
If I find that in all he relates he speaks only truth,
then I'll dress him in mantle and tunic, the very best there are." 550
So she spoke. The swineherd went, on hearing her words,
to Odysseus, and addressed him with winged words, saying:
"Stranger, father, prudent Penelopē wants to see you—
Tēlemachos' mother: her heart bids her make enquiries
about her husband, although she's suffered much already. 555
If she finds that in all you relate you speak only truth,
then she'll dress you in mantle and tunic—things of which
you stand much in need! As for food, go beg through the land
to keep your belly well fed: those who so choose will give."

Much-enduring noble Odysseus responded to him, saying: 560
"In a moment, Eumaios, I'll be relating the whole truth
to Ikarios' daughter, the prudent Penelopē! My knowledge
of Odysseus is sound, and we've borne like hardships. But
I'm much afraid of this crowd of dangerous suitors,
whose aggression and violence reach up to the iron heaven! 565
For just now, as I went through the hall, doing no harm,
this man struck me, causing much pain, yet neither
Tēlemachos nor anyone else came out to protect me.
So tell Penelopē she must wait in the halls, however
impatient she may be, until the sun goes down: 570
then let her ask me about the day of her husband's return,
and give me a seat that's nearer the fire, since my clothes
are threadbare. You know this yourself: I appealed to you first."

So he spoke. The swineherd then, after hearing his words,
went back in. Penelopē at once addressed him, saying: 575
"You haven't brought him, Eumaios! What's this vagrant up to?
Is he scared without reason of someone, or maybe embarrassed
here in the house? Embarrassment makes a useless beggar."

---

4. "Sneezes, being inexplicable, involuntary and sudden actions, were commonly regarded as ominous in antiquity" (Stanford 1971, 2: 297; cf. Hdt. 6.107; Xen., *An.* 3.2.9).

To her then, swineherd Eumaios, you responded, saying:
"What he says is well chosen, as anyone else would agree: 580
he hopes to avoid the violence of these arrogant men,
so he wants you to wait to see him until the sun goes down.
For yourself too, my queen, it would indeed be far better
to speak with the stranger, and hear what he says, alone."

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying: 585
"This stranger's not witless: he figures how things may go.
For there may well be no other mortal men alive
who in their violence contrive such reckless acts as these."

So she spoke, and the noble swineherd then departed
and joined the throng of the suitors after he'd told her all. 590
At once he addressed winged words to Tēlemachos, head
held close, so that nobody else could hear him, saying:
"Friend, I'm off out there now to guard the pigs and the rest—
your and my livelihood. You take charge of everything here.
Above all, keep yourself safe, take good care you don't run 595
into trouble: many Achaians now have it in for you—
may Zeus destroy them utterly before harm can befall us!"

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Old fellow, so it shall be. Off you go when you've had some food.
But come back tomorrow with fine sacrificial victims! 600
All here will be cared for by me. And by the immortals."

So he spoke. The swineherd sat down again on a polished
chair, and when he'd satisfied his desire for food and drink,
he went back to his pigs, leaving the courts and the hall
full of banqueters. Now they began to enjoy themselves with 605
dancing and singing, for already the evening had arrived.

Book 18

Now there came up a public beggar, whose custom it was to beg
through the town of Ithákē, well known for his ravenous belly,
forever guzzling and swilling. There was no strength in him,
nor force; yet his great bulk made an imposing sight.
His name was Arnaios: this his lady mother had given him 5
at birth. But Iros was his nickname with all the young men
because he used to run errands for anyone who would ask him.[1]
Up he came now, bent on chasing Odysseus away
from his own home, and began, with winged words, to upbraid him:
"Out of this entrance, old man, before someone drags you off 10
by the foot! Don't you see how everyone's winking at me,
encouraging *me* to drag you? Yet I'm ashamed to do it.
So up with you now, or our quarrel will soon come to fisticuffs!"

With an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus responded, saying:
"Sir, neither by words nor by action am I causing you harm, 15
nor do I resent someone treating you—however large the helping!
This threshold has room for us both, nor is there need for you
to be jealous of others. It seems to me you're a vagrant
as I am. Prosperity is something the gods will allot. But don't
provoke me too much with your fists, lest you rouse my wrath, 20
and, old man though I am, I spatter your breast and lips
with your blood! Then I'd enjoy much greater peace and quiet
tomorrow, since I don't think you'd then come back
a second time to the hall of Laërtēs' son Odysseus."

Now Iros the vagrant grew angry, and addressed him, saying: 25
"Oh my, how glibly this bald old pig rants on,
like some crone by the oven! But I'll contrive trouble for him,
punch him out with both hands, scatter all the teeth

1. Both name and nickname are significant. "Arnaios," cognate with the verb *arnumai,* "to acquire," means "go-getter," while "Iros" seems to be a masculine version of "Iris," well-known as the messenger of the gods (Stanford 1971, 2: 300; Russo in *Comm.,* 3: 47).

from his jaws on the ground, as I'd treat a crop-rooting sow![2]
Come, gird yourself now, let all these men get to watch us 30
fighting! Yet how could you ever stand up to a younger man?"

So these two, there in front of the lofty doorway
on the polished threshold were taunting each other sharply;
Antinoös, princely in power, now noticed them at it,
and, with a light laugh, addressed the suitors, saying: 35
"Never before, my friends, has anything happened to match
the sport that some god's brought to this house! The stranger
and Iros are challenging one another to a fistfight!
so gather round quickly, let's make a real match of it!"

So he spoke. They all sprang to their feet, with laughter, 40
and crowded about this couple of tatterdemalion beggars.
Antinoös, son of Eupeithēs, then addressed them, saying:
"Listen, all you proud suitors, to what I have to say!
These goats' paunches over the fire, set there for our supper,
that we filled first with fat and blood[3] —let whichever of these two 45
emerges victorious, proves himself the better man,
stand up and take for himself the one that he chooses.
What's more, he shall always feast with us, nor will we allow
any other beggar to join us or to beg among us."

So Antinoös spoke: what he said was to their liking. 50
Then with crafty intent resourceful Odysseus declared:
"Friends, there's no way an old man worn out by grief
can fight with a younger opponent; and yet my belly,
that worker of evil, urges me to succumb to his attacks!
But come now, all of you swear me a mighty oath 55
that no one, backing Iros, will strike me a foul blow
in reckless mood, and use force to let this fellow beat me."

---

2. According to a scholiast, there was a Cypriot law decreeing that any landowner who caught a pig devouring his crops had the right to pull out its teeth; but how such a law became widely enough known for so casual a reference to be generally understood is less clear. Russo (*Comm.,* 3: 48) suggests that it may have been a guess, based on a widespread farming practice.
3. What we have here is a remote ancestor of the modern European blood sausage. Stanford (1971, 2: 301) writes that "such membranes, stuffed with fat . . . and blood, and doubtless with various flavourings, are well known in various forms—sausages, haggis, black-puddings, drisheens, boudin, Magenwurst."

So he spoke, and they all swore the oath as he requested.
But when they'd sworn, and completed the oath-taking, then
Tēlemachos, princely in power, addressed them once more, saying: 60

"Stranger, if your heart and proud spirit are urging you
to beat off this man, have no fear of any other Achaian:
any man who strikes you will be up against many more!
I myself am your host, accepted by these two princes,
Antinoös and Eurymachos, sagacious men both of them." 65

So he spoke, and they all applauded. And now Odysseus
girded his rags about his loins, revealing his thighs,
both muscled and large, and his broad shoulders appeared,
and his chest and his powerful forearms. Also Athēnē
came close and magnified the limbs of the people's shepherd, 70
so that even the suitors condescendingly admired them,
and thus would one of them speak, with a glance at his neighbor:
"Soon will Iros, un-Irosed, have a loss of his own making,
so muscled a thigh does the old man reveal beneath his rags."

So he spoke, and Iros' spirit was severely shaken. 75
Yet even so the serving men made him gird up his rags
and forced him out, terrified, the flesh shivering on his limbs.
Then Antinoös addressed a scathing rebuke to him, saying:
"Better for you, you braggart, had you never been born
if you tremble in front of this man and are so afraid of him— 80
someone so old, so broken by the hardship he's suffered!
I'll tell you this straight out, and it'll happen for sure:
if he's victorious, proves himself the better man,
I'll clap you in a black ship, send you off to the mainland,
to King Echetos, dangerous maimer of all mortal men alive, 85
who'll cut off your nose and ears with the pitiless bronze,
and rip out your privates, give them raw to the dogs to eat."[4]

So he spoke, and yet greater trembling seized on Iros' limbs
as they led him out to the middle. Both men put up their hands.
Much-enduring noble Odysseus was debating in his mind 90
whether to slam him so hard that life left him as he fell,

4. Echetos is mentioned only by H., and only in the *Odyssey* (below at 116, and at 21.308). He sounds uncommonly like the wicked giant or ogre of myth who murders all comers; but ancient commentators regarded him as historical, named his wife and daughter, and located him in either Epiros or Sicily.

or hit him just hard enough to stretch him out on the ground;
and as he reflected, it struck him that this was the better course:
to hit him lightly, and not arouse Achaian suspicions.
So after they raised their hands Iros led to the right shoulder, 95
but Odysseus struck his neck beneath the ear. The blow
crushed in the bones. At once red blood filled his mouth,
he fell in the dust with a cry, and gnashed his teeth,
and drummed on the ground with his feet. The lordly suitors,
arms raised, nearly died laughing. And then Odysseus 100
dragged him out by his foot through the doorway to the courtyard
and the gates of the colonnade. There he propped him sitting
against the courtyard wall, thrust a staff into his hand,
and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Now sit there,
to scare off the pigs and dogs! And stop pretending 105
to lord it over strangers and beggars, you wretch,
or you may well bring a yet worse disaster upon you!"

With that he slung over his shoulder his worn-out leather bag,
tattered and rent, which was held by a twisted cord,
and went back to the threshold and sat there. The suitors 110
came inside laughing gaily, and congratulated him, saying:
"May Zeus and the other gods, stranger, grant you all
that you most desire, the dearest wish of your heart,
for you've ended the begging routine of this insatiable fellow
in our neighborhood! Soon we'll send him across to the mainland 115
to King Echetos, dangerous maimer of all mortal men alive!"

So they spoke, and Odysseus rejoiced at the words of omen,[5]
and Antinoös set before him the great paunch, filled
with fat and blood, while Amphinomos chose two loaves,
took them out of the basket, and set these too before him, 120
and pledged him, holding a golden cup, and addressed him, saying:
"Your health, father and stranger: may prosperity hereafter
attend you, though now you're beset by many troubles."

To him resourceful Odysseus then responded, saying:
"Amphinomos, you strike me as a highly sagacious man, 125
such a one as your father was, whose reputation I knew of:

5. Of course, what Odysseus most desires, the dearest wish of his heart, is the destruction of the suitors, so the speaker is, without realizing it, invoking his own death: "words of omen," indeed.

Doulichian Nisos, a man both valiant and wealthy.
They say you're his son: you seem a well-mannered person,
so I've something to tell you: please listen and pay attention.
This earth nurtures nothing of less account than man 130
among all creatures that breathe and move upon it;
for he thinks he'll not suffer setbacks in the years ahead
so long as the gods grant him prowess and his knees are nimble;
and when the blessed gods bring him hard times, this too,
though against his will, he endures with a stubborn heart, 135
for the spirit of men on this earth will meet and match
the day that the Father of gods and men brings on them.
I too was once on the way to a good life among my fellows,
but, yielding to strength and violence, did many reckless deeds,
because I trusted my father and the rest of my kinsmen. 140
So no man should ever use lawlessness, on any occasion,
but accept in silence those gifts that the gods may give him.
Such reckless acts I now witness the suitors committing,
as they squander the goods and show no respect for the wife
of a man who, I tell you, won't be absent much longer 145
from his friends and country—he's close! May some god rather
lead you home out of here, so you don't encounter him
when he's back in his native setting, for not bloodless, I think,
will be the final reckoning between that man and the suitors,
once he's made it home and is under his own roof." 150

So saying, he poured a libation, and drank the honey-sweet wine,
and then returned the cup to the commander of the people.
But Amphinomos went through the hall deeply worried at heart,
head bowed, for his spirit clearly foresaw disaster.
Yet he still failed to dodge his fate, since Athēnē bound him 155
to be violently overwhelmed by Tēlemachos' hands and spear.
Now he sat down again in the chair from which he'd risen.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, put a thought in the mind
of Ikarios' daughter, the prudent Penelopē: that she
should appear now before the suitors, flutter their hearts 160
to the utmost, and thus win still greater appreciation
from her husband and son than they'd accorded her hitherto.
With an awkward laugh, she addressed her housekeeper, saying:
"Eurynomē, I'm now minded, as I've never been before,
to show myself to the suitors, hateful though I still find them. 165

And I want a word with my son, to tell him he'd do better
not to consort so much with these overweening suitors,
who treat him politely, but are plotting his downfall later."

Then Eurynomē, housekeeper, responded to her, saying:
"All this indeed, child, was well and properly spoken. 170
Go now, have a word with your son, don't hold it back!
But wash yourself first, and rub oil into your cheeks—
don't go as you are, leaving your face all tear-stained:
avoid indiscriminate mourning, day in day out! Your son
has now attained the age that you begged the immortals most 175
to allow you to see: he's become a bearded adult."

To her then prudent Penelopē now responded, saying:
"Eurynomē, don't, though you care for me, try to talk me
into washing my body or massaging myself with oil!
Any beauty I once had the gods, who possess Olympos, 180
destroyed, from the day when *he* left with the hollow ships!
But go tell Autonoë now, along with Hippodameia,
to come here: I want them beside me in the hall.
I won't go in to the men alone: I'd be ashamed to."

So she spoke, and out through the hall the old woman went 185
to take these handmaids the message, request their presence.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, had another idea:
on Ikarios' daughter she shed sweet sleep: she lay back
and dozed, there in her recliner; all her joints were relaxed.
While she slept, Athēnē, bright among goddesses, gave her 190
ambrosial gifts, to make her seem wondrous to the Achaians.
To begin with she cleansed her fine features with ambrosial
beauty, a salve[6] such as that which fair-garlanded Kythereia[7]
employs when she goes to join the Graces' delightful dance;
and she rendered her taller and fuller in appearance, 195
and of whiter complexion than freshly sawn ivory. When

6. It has often been noted that "beauty" (*kallei*) seems too abstract a concept to be a physical salve, even in the hands of a goddess. But a magical concentration of beauty, not too specifically defined, is in fact subtly effective: the text is sound.
7. Kythereia (= "she of Kythēra") is a regular titular epithet of Aphrodītē, most probably because she traditionally stepped ashore on the island of Kythēra after her mythical marine genesis from the bloody foam surrounding the severed genitals of Ouranos (Hes., *Th.* 10–306).

she'd done all this, she, the bright goddess, went on her way,
and the white-armed handmaids then approached from the hall,
chatting loudly, so that sweet sleep let Penelopē go,
and she sat up, rubbing her cheeks, and said to herself: 200
"In the depth of my misery soft oblivion stilled my senses!
How I wish that chaste Artemis would give me so soft a death
here and now, that I might no longer with heartfelt lamentation
waste my life away, ever yearning for the unrivaled virtues
of my dear husband, a man without peer among the Achaians." 205

So saying, she went down from her bright upper chamber—
not alone, for the two handmaids followed in attendance.
When she, bright among women, came where the suitors were,
she stood by the central post of the snugly timbered roof,
holding up her shining veil in front of her face 210
and flanked on either side by a devoted handmaid.
At once the men's knees were weakened, their hearts inflamed
by passion: each one of them prayed he might share her bed.
But she now addressed Tēlemachos, her dear son, saying:
"Your mind-set and thinking, Tēlemachos, have got unbalanced! 215
When you were still a child, you had more common sense!
But now you're grown, and are on the verge of manhood—
and outsiders, seeing only your stature and good looks,
would certainly think you the offspring of a successful man—
your mind and thinking no longer are on the proper track! 220
Look at this business that just took place in our hall,
the way you let this stranger be so badly mistreated!
And what if this same stranger, while sitting here in our house,
were to suffer real hurt from such grievous brutality? You
would then bear the burden of public shame and disgrace!" 225

Sagacious Tēlemachos now responded to her, saying:
"My mother, I cannot reprove you for becoming angry:
I myself now see and recognize all these things in my heart,
both the good and the worse, though before I thought as a child.
Yet I can't work out everything with sagacity, because 230
they drive me crazy, these men sitting all around me
cogitating their wicked schemes, while I have none to aid me.
Still, the contest between the stranger and Iros didn't go
as the suitors expected: the stranger turned out a better fighter.
How I wish—by Zeus the Father, by Athēnē and Apollo!— 235

that these suitors were likewise now beaten, here in our home,
heads lolling, some of them out there in the courtyard,
others inside the house, and the knees of all were unstrung,
as now that lout Iros sits at the entrance to the courtyard,
head lolling, his appearance much like that of a drunk, 240
unable to stand on his feet or to make his way home
to wherever he lives, since his limbs are quite unstrung."

Such was their conversation, the one with the other;
and Eurymachos now addressed himself to Penelopē, saying:
"Ikarios' daughter, most prudent Penelopē: could all 245
the Achaians throughout Iasian Argos see you now,
still more suitors would be feasting here in your halls
from early tomorrow, since you excel all other women
in beauty and stature—and indeed in your sensible mind."

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying: 250
"Eurymachos, any excellence of beauty and figure I had
the immortals destroyed at the time the Argives embarked
for Ilion, and among them went my husband, Odysseus.
Were he only to come back now, and give comfort to my life,
greater would be my renown, and finer too; but now 255
I grieve, so many sorrows has some god laid upon me.
Indeed, when he was leaving his native land, did he not
clasp my right hand at the wrist, and then address me, saying:
'My wife, since I don't imagine that the well-greaved Achaians
will all return safe and unscathed from the land of Troy— 260
for the Trojans, they say, are most redoubtable warriors,
as both spearmen and archers, and also as skillful charioteers
driving swift-footed horses, such men as can most quickly
decide who'll win the great contest of leveling warfare—
I don't know whether the god will bring me back, or if 265
I'll die out at Troy: the care of all here must rest with you.
Look after my mother and father at home as you do now,
or with even closer attention, while I'm far away;
but if the day comes when you see our son grown and bearded,
then wed the man of your choice, and leave this house.' 270

"So he spoke,
and now all this is being brought about. A night
will come when some hateful marriage will be the lot

of my unblest self, whom Zeus has deprived of comfort.
But in this matter sore grief has come on my heart and spirit,
for this was never the way that suitors wooed in the past, 275
when men wanting to court a fine lady and rich man's daughter
would all be in competition with one another, themselves
bringing along fat flocks and cows to provide a banquet
for the bride's friends and family, and giving her splendid gifts—
not devouring the substance of others, with no payment." 280

So she spoke, and noble much-enduring Odysseus rejoiced
because she coaxed gifts from these men, and charmed their hearts
with sweet words, while her mind was set on quite different things.

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithēs, once more addressed her, saying:
"Ikarios' daughter, most prudent Penelopē, presents—such as 285
any one of the Achaians might bring for you here—you should
accept, for it's never polite to refuse a gift! But we
shall depart neither back to our holdings nor anywhere else
until you marry the man who's the best of the Achaians."

So Antinoös spoke. What he said was to their liking, 290
and each man sent off a herald to fetch his presents.
A large and exquisite robe was what came for Antinoös,
finely embroidered: attached to it were a dozen brooches,
all of gold, and each fitted with smoothly rounded clasps.
There soon arrived for Eurymachos an elaborate golden 295
chain, strung with amber beads, as bright as sunlight.
Eurydamas' servants brought him a pair of earrings, with triple
clustering pendants: much grace shone from them.
From the house of the lord Peisandros, Polyktōr's son,
his servant now brought a necklace, an exquisite ornament. 300
Thus every Achaian provided some kind of lovely gift.
But she, bright among women, went back to her upper room,
while her handmaids accepted these beautiful presents for her.

The men now turned their attention to the dance and delightful song
for their pleasure, awaiting the arrival of evening; and while 305
they were still enjoying themselves, dark evening came on.
Then at once they set up three braziers in the hall
to give them light, and piled seasoned firewood round them,
dried out long since and sapless, newly split with the bronze,
and set torches between them. The maids of steadfast-minded 310

Odysseus took turns lighting them, and he himself, Zeus-born
resourceful Odysseus, now spoke among them, saying:
"You maidservants of Odysseus, your long-absent lord,
go back now up to the chamber where your revered queen is,
ply your distaffs beside her—and keep her cheerful while 315
you're sitting there in her room—or card the wool
with your hands: I myself will make light for all these men,
and even if they're determined to stay up till well-throned Dawn
they won't exhaust me, oh no: I'm a much-enduring fellow."

So he spoke. But the handmaids tittered, and glanced at each other, 320
and fair-cheeked Melanthō reproved him in shameful wise—
she whom Dolios sired, but Penelopē raised and cherished
like a daughter, and gave her all the toys she wanted.
Yet not even so did she share any part of Penelopē's sorrow,
but was having sex with Eurymachos, was his regular lover. 325
She now upbraided Odysseus in censorious language, saying:
"You miserable stranger, you must be clean out of your mind!
You're not willing to go get your sleep in a smithy, or some
public doss-house: oh no, you're busy speaking so boldly,
among all these gentlemen! Have you no proper respect? 330
Wine's surely fuddled your wits, or else your mind's
always like this, you're forever spouting nonsense!
Are you above yourself after beating that vagrant Iros?
Another man, better than Iros, may soon stand up against you,
beat you about the head with his powerful fists, befoul you 335
with streams of your own blood, and chase you from this house."

With an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus retorted, saying:
"You bitch, I'll go straight to Tēlemachos, tell him the way
you talk! Very likely he'll cut you up, there and then!"

So he spoke. His words sent the women scurrying off: 340
Away they went through the hall, the limbs of each one loosened
beneath her by fear: they thought he'd do what he said.
But Odysseus stood by the flaming braziers, fed them,
one eye on the crowd of suitors, while in his mind he pondered
other matters, not destined to go without fulfillment. 345

But these haughty suitors Athēnē would not permit at all
to back off from distressing outrage: she wanted its pain to sink

deeper still into the heart of Laërtēs' son Odysseus.
Now Eurymachos, Polybos' son, began to address them,
making fun of Odysseus, arousing laughter in his comrades: 350
"Listen to me, all you suitors of our glorious queen, while I
say what the heart in my breast impels me to tell you!
Not without the gods' will has this man reached Odysseus' home!
The torchlight does indeed appear to emanate from him—
from his head, that is, which lacks the least trace of hair upon it." 355
With that he addressed Odysseus, the city-sacker, saying:
"Would you come and work for me, stranger, as a hired day-laborer,
on my outlying estate—your pay would be adequate—
collecting stones for the field walls, and planting tall trees?
I'd provide you there with food the entire year through, 360
and keep you well clothed, and give you shoes for your feet.
But since all you've learnt are bad habits, you won't want
to set yourself to hard work; no, you'd rather beg your way
through the district, to keep your insatiate belly fed."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying: 365
"Eurymachos, how I wish we two might have a contest
in the season of spring, when the days are growing longer,
out in the meadow, and I had a well-curved scythe in my hands,
and you another one like it, for us to make trial of our work,
going without food until evening, and the grass was thick! 370
Or again, I wish we had teams of oxen to drive—the best,
big and tawny, both well fed on grass, both of an age,
both equal in drawing power, and of no slight strength—
in a four-acre field, the clods yielding to the plowshare:
then you'd see whether I could keep my furrows straight! 375
Or again, if the son of Kronos from somewhere brought an attack
upon us today, and I had a shield and two spears
and a helmet made all of bronze, snug against my temples,
then you'd see me out there among the foremost fighters,
and wouldn't abuse me in speeches because of my belly! 380
But you're so incredibly arrogant and rigid-minded—
I suppose you think you're a great and powerful fellow
because those you consort with are mean and common?
If only Odysseus might come, and return to his own country,
then at once these doors, however wide, would be 385
all too narrow for your flight out through the entrance!"

So he spoke. Eurymachos flared up in wrath, stared at him
with an angry glance, then addressed him with winged words, saying:
"You wretch, I'll soon punish you for the way you have of speaking
so boldly, among all these gentlemen! Have you no proper respect? 390
Wine's surely fuddled your wits, or else your mind's
always like this, you're forever spouting nonsense!
Are you above yourself after beating that vagrant Iros?"

So saying, he snatched up a footstool; but Odysseus
ducked down at Doulichian Amphinomos' knees in reaction to 395
Eurymachos, whose throw instead hit the wine bearer's
right hand, so that his pitcher fell to the ground with a clang,
while he himself groaned, collapsed backward in the dust.
The suitors now burst into uproar throughout the shadowy halls,
and thus would one of them speak, with a glance at his neighbor: 400

"I wish this stranger had died somewhere else in his wanderings
before he came here! Then he'd never have raised such a tumult!
But now we're at odds over beggars, there'll be no pleasure
in our privileged feasting, since meaner ways prevail."

Tēlemachos, princely in power, also addressed them, saying: 405
"Foolish sirs, you are crazy! You no longer hide the effects
of your swilling and guzzling—some god must be stirring you up!
You've feasted well: go home now, lie down and rest—of course
when the mood takes you: I chase no person away!"

So he spoke. Every one of them bit his lip and marveled 410
at Tēlemachos because of his bold outspoken manner.
But Amphinomos, illustrious son of Nisos, the lord
Arētias' son, now addressed them, saying: "Friends,
in response to what has been fairly and justly spoken
no man should take offense, make a hostile retort! 415
Do not abuse this stranger, or any one of the servants
now domiciled in the household of godlike Odysseus!
No, rather let's have the wine bearer pour drops in our cups
so we can make libations, and then go home to rest,
leaving the stranger behind here in the halls of Odysseus 420
for Tēlemachos to look after: it's to his house that he's come."

So he spoke: what he said was acceptable to them all.
Then a bowl was mixed up for them by the hero Moulios

from Doulichion, a herald and the squire of Amphinomos.
He gave it to all in due order: they made libations 425
to the blessed gods, and drank the honey-sweet wine.
Then, libations made, when they'd drunk all they'd a mind to,
they all departed to rest, each man to his own home.

Book 19

So noble Odysseus was left behind, there in the hall,
with Athēnē's aid contriving a plan to kill the suitors;
and now he addressed Tēlemachos with winged words, saying:
"Tēlemachos, we must lay up all our weapons of war inside
and disarm the suitors with soothing words when they note 5
their absence and ask you questions about them. Say:
'I stored them away from the smoke, since they no longer look
as they did when Odysseus left them on going off to Troy,
but are blackened with all the fire's breath that's got to them.
And there's a greater concern some god has put in my mind: 10
that when you're flushed with wine you may pick a quarrel
among you and wound one another and so disgrace
your feast and your wooing: for iron of itself attracts a man.'"[1]

So he spoke. Tēlemachos obeyed his own dear father,
and summoned his nurse Eurykleia, and addressed her, saying: 15
"Good mother, please keep the women confined to their quarters
while I put away in the storeroom the weapons of my father—
fine gear, left in the house uncared for, blackened with smoke
ever since my father's departure, when I was still a child.
But now I want to store them out of reach of the fire's breath." 20

His dear nurse Eurykleia responded to him, saying:
"Indeed, child, I could wish you were always so concerned
to take care of the house and to guard the possessions in it!
But who, pray, will go get a light and carry it for you?
The maidservants would have done it, but you won't let them." 25

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to her, saying:
"This stranger here; for I'll permit no man to be idle
who gets my rations, however remote the place he's from."

---

1. This sounds like a proverb, but as such has no surviving parallels. One ancient commentator, Eustathius, plausibly connected the statement with iron's known magnetic qualities; and from the earliest times iron has always been associated with magic. Meteoric iron was also the substance of Zeus' immensely powerful thunderbolts. Cf. Russo in *Comm.,* 3: 75, with refs.

So he spoke; but her answer remained unwinged,
and she barred the doors of the pleasantly sited halls. 30
Odysseus and his illustrious son now both set to work
carrying in the helmets and the embossed shields,
the sharp-pointed spears; and before them Pallas Athēnē
went holding a golden lamp that made resplendent light.
At once Tēlemachos spoke, and addressed his father, saying: 35
"Father, here's a great wonder that my eyes behold!
Really, the walls of the hall and its elegant panels,
the roof beams of fir and the tall posts holding them up
are glowing bright to my eyes, like a blazing fire!
Surely some god's in here, one of those who hold wide heaven." 40

Resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"Hush! Keep this to yourself, and ask no questions!
This is indeed the way of the gods who hold Olympos.
You go get your rest now: I shall stay here and provoke
more interest yet in the handmaids and your mother— 45
she'll weep, and question me about every detail."

So he spoke, and Tēlemachos now went out through the hall,
lit by the flaring torches, to bed down in his room,
where he always retired when sweet sleep came upon him.
Now once more he lay down there, to await the bright Dawn, 50
while noble Odysseus was left behind, there in the hall,
with Athēnē's aid contriving a plan to kill the suitors.

Now prudent Penelopē came down from her chamber,
in appearance like Artemis or golden Aphrodītē,
and for her they set a chair by the fire, where she always sat, 55
inlaid with spirals of silver and ivory: this was the work
of the craftsman Ikmalios, who'd fashioned a stool for the feet
that was part of the chair itself. A great fleece was spread on it.
On this, then, prudent Penelopē sat, while her white-armed
handmaids came in from the women's hall, and began 60
to remove all the leftover food, as well as the tables,
and the cups from which these haughty men had been drinking;
they threw out the ash from the braziers, heaped them up
with fresh firewood, to provide both light and warmth. And now
Melanthō began once again to scold Odysseus, saying: 65
"Stranger, are you still here? Are you going to annoy us

all night, prowling round the house, spying on the women?
Get out of here, you wretch, be content with your supper,
or you'll soon be thrown out, and beaten with firebrands too!"

With an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus responded: 70
"Woman, why reprimand me in so resentful a spirit?
Is it because I'm dirty and wear mean clothes and go
begging my way through the neighborhood? It's need compels me.
That's the way it is with beggars and vagabonds!
Yet I too once dwelt in my own rich house among other 75
prosperous men, and I often would give to a vagrant,
no matter what sort he was or what he arrived in need of!
Countless servants I had, and much else in abundance,
owning which men live well and are known as wealthy.
But Kronos' son Zeus wrecked it all—on some whim, I guess. 80
So take good care, woman, lest one day you lose all
that beauty for which you stand out among the handmaids,
lest your mistress may come to dislike you, and treat you harshly,
or Odysseus may return—there's still hope! But even if
he's actually dead, and will nevermore come back home, 85
yet already, thanks to Apollo,[2] his son's such a man as himself—
Tēlemachos! He doesn't miss it if one of the serving women
in the hall misbehaves—he's no longer the child he was."

So he spoke, and prudent Penelopē heard what he said,
and rebuked the maidservant, addressed her directly, saying: 90
"Bold woman, impudent bitch, none of your gross misconduct
has escaped me—on your own head you'll wipe it off![3]
Well did you know, since it was from me you heard it,
that I wanted to question the stranger here in my halls
about my husband, for whom my grief is great and ceaseless." 95

With that she also addressed the housekeeper Eurynomē, saying:
"Eurynomē, bring a chair here, and spread a fleece upon it,
so the stranger may sit down now and tell me his story
and also listen to me: I'm eager to question him."

---

2. Apollo *kourotrophos,* the guide and protector of young men: Stanford 1971, 2: 318.
3. Apparently a reference to the custom of wiping off the blood from the sacrificial knife onto the victim's head to transfer the guilt for the killing from the sacrificer to his victim (cf. Hdt. 1.155), but here the guilt is nontransferable. See Stanford 1971, 2: 318–19, developed further by Russo in *Comm.,* 3: 79, with refs.

So he spoke, and Eurynomē at once went off and fetched 100
a polished chair, and threw a fleece over it. Then
much-enduring noble Odysseus seated himself, and prudent
Penelopē was the first to start their discussion, saying:
"Stranger, I shall begin by asking you this question:
Who are you? From where? What city? Who are your parents?" 105

To her then resourceful Odysseus responded, saying:
"Lady, no mortal on this boundless earth could ever
find fault with you: your fame goes up to the wide heaven,
like that of some king, a blameless, god-fearing person
who reigns over many valiant men, and upholds 110
justice: one for whom the black soil bears in abundance
both wheat and barley, the trees are heavy with fruit,
the flocks bring forth young in season, the sea yields fish,
all from his good leadership, and his people thrive under him.
So question me here in your house about anything else, 115
but don't ask me about my background or my native country,
lest you fill my heart with yet more suffering as I
recall them; for I'm a man of deep grief. What's more,
it's not right that I should sit in someone else's house
weeping and wailing: such uncurbed sorrow's a bad thing. 120
I don't want one of your handmaids, much less you yourself,
saying I swim in tears since my mind's deep-sodden with wine."[4]

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"Stranger, any excellence of beauty and figure I had
the immortals destroyed at the time the Argives embarked 125
for Ilion, and among them went my husband, Odysseus.
Were he only to come back now, and give comfort to my life,
greater would be my renown, and finer too; but now
I grieve, so many sorrows has some god laid upon me.
All the highborn leaders who lord it over the islands— 130
Doulichion and Samē and forested Zákynthos,
besides those who rule as princes in rugged Ithákē—
all court me against my will, and squander my property.
And so I pay no attention to strangers and suppliants,

4. For obvious reasons, Odysseus makes some fairly specious excuses for not answering these very pointed questions. But it is also noteworthy that Penelopē is even more evasive in her reply, since Odysseus has made no reference whatsoever to his hostess' beauty.

or to heralds at all, who indeed are public officials, 135
but waste my own heart away in yearning for Odysseus.
So these men urge my remarriage, while I spin my deceits.
First, some god put in my mind the idea of a great web
in my halls: so I set up a big loom, and started weaving—
broad was the web, fine of thread—then addressed them, saying: 140
'You young men, my suitors now noble Odysseus is dead,
be patient, though eager to wed me, until I finish
this web: I should not want my woven work to be wasted—
a shroud for the hero Laërtēs, against that day
when the grim fate of pitiless death shall overtake him: 145
then the local Achaian women won't be able to blame me
for a man who'd won so much being left with no winding-sheet.'

"So I spoke; and the manly spirit was persuaded within them.
From then on, day after day, I'd weave at the great loom,
but at night I'd have torches set up, and undo my work. 150

"Thus for three years I convinced, and deceived, the Achaians;
but when the fourth year arrived, and the seasons came round,
and the months wore away, and day after day passed by,
then it was that, told by my handmaids, the uncaring bitches,
they stole up on me and caught me, reproached me loudly. 155
So against my will I was made to finish the job, perforce;
and now I can neither avoid this marriage, nor find
any other way of escape. My parents keep urging me
to get wed, my son frets as these men consume our estate—
something he understands, for now he's a man, well able 160
to look after a household to which Zeus still grants honor!
Yet even so tell me your family, where you come from—
you're not sprung from the oak of legend, nor from a rock!"[5]

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to her, saying:
"Respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laërtēs, 165
will you never quit questioning me about my background?
I'll tell you, then; though you'll give me over to yet more
griefs than I have already—but that's the way of it,

5. Penelopē's vaguely proverbial remark has widespread mythic paradigms, for which Russo lists refs. at *Comm.,* 3: 83. She's saying: "You must have some relatives, if you're not a freak" (Stanford 1971, 2: 321).

when a man's been absent from home as long as I have,
a vagrant who's suffered much on the road from city to city. 170
Nevertheless I'll answer your questions and enquiries![6]
There's a country called Krētē out in the wine-dark deep,
fine, rich-soiled, and sea-girt; it has in it many people,
so many they're countless: they have ninety cities,
and various tongues, one mixed with another—Achaians, 175
proud native Krētans, Kydōnians, all are established there,
with Dōrians in three settlements, and noble Pelasgians too!
Among their townships is Knōsos, a great city, in which Minōs
ruled from the age of nine, held converse with great Zeus,
and was father to my father, great-hearted Deukaliōn. 180
Deukaliōn sired both me and the lordly Idomeneus,
who'd set out for Ilion in his curved ships along with
the sons of Atreus. My own famous name is Aithōn;
I was the younger by birth, he my elder and better.
It was there I met Odysseus, gave him a guest-friend's gifts, 185
for a gale-force wind had brought him too to Krētē
as he made for Troy, driving him off course past Malea.
So he put in to Amnisos, site of the cave of Eileithyia,
in a difficult harbor, having barely escaped the storm.
He went up to the city at once, and asked for Idomeneus, 190
claiming to be his dear and respected guest-friend; but
it was ten or eleven days since Idomeneus had gone,
sailing away with his curved ships to Ilion. So I
escorted him to our house, and welcomed him properly,
with full entertainment from our rich household store; 195
and for the rest of the comrades who were with him I obtained
from public reserves both barley and bright red wine,
and sacrificial cattle, to keep them well satisfied.
There for twelve days the noble Achaians were delayed
by a north wind so powerful it wouldn't even let them stand 200

6. By now Odysseus should have got his fictitious cover story well worked out. For deceptive purposes, discrepancies must at all costs be avoided. Yet despite common elements, there are still inconsistencies between this version and those he has already given to Eumaios (14.199–359) and Antinoös (17.415–44). It looks as though this Odysseus—and his creator—simply enjoys telling tales for the fun of it and would have found unaltered repetition a bore. Cf. West 2014, 67.

upright: I suppose some maleficent deity roused it.[7]
But on the thirteenth day the wind dropped, and they put to sea."

Thus he told many lies, but made them seem like the truth,[8]
and her tears flowed as she listened, her stubborn heart melted.
As snow will melt on a high mountain's ramparts, where 205
the east wind thaws the snow that a west wind has sent down,
and, melting, it brims the fast-flowing rivers—just so
her fine cheeks streamed with the tears she shed as she wept
for the husband sitting beside her. But though Odysseus
pitied his sobbing wife in his heart, yet nevertheless 210
his eyes—as though made of horn or iron—remained
unwavering under their lids. Deceptively he concealed
his own tears. When she'd had her fill of tearful lamentation,
once more she responded to him, saying: "Now I think
I need to make trial of you, stranger, and discover 215
whether you and your godlike comrades did in fact
entertain my husband at home, the way you claim!
Tell me, what clothes was he wearing, what kind of person
was he himself, which companions did he have with him?"

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to her, saying: 220
"Lady, it's hard for one who's been so long abroad
to say for sure: it's now the twentieth year since he
departed thence, leaving my native country! However,
I'll tell you how my memory pictures him today:
noble Odysseus had on a woolen cloak, purple in color, 225
and double-folded, its fibula fashioned of gold,
with twin pin-sheaths. On its front was delicately incised
a hound with a dappled fawn gripped in its forepaws,
watching it writhe: and everyone thought it marvelous
how the dog, though of gold, eyed the fawn it was throttling, 230
while the fawn's feet were struggling in its efforts to escape.

---

7. This is not epic exaggeration. The wind in question, still known as the Bora (from Boreas, the ancient god of the north wind), can indeed knock people off their feet. When I lived in Molyvos (ancient Mēthymna) on the NW coast of Lesbos, we got the full force of the Bora coming down from the Black Sea and had a series of strong cords rigged through the narrow cobbled streets to cling to at need.
8. Odysseus is here likened to the Muses, who made an identical boast: see Hesiod, *Th.* 27: "We know how to tell many lies as though they were the truth."

I noted the tunic he wore, too—it shone all over,
like the sheen you see on the skin of a dried onion,
so soft and sheer it was, and as bright as sunlight,
and many indeed were the women who marveled at it. 235
And another thing I will tell you, and you take it to heart:
I don't know whether Odysseus wore such clothes at home,
or if some comrade gave him them on boarding that swift ship,
or a stranger perhaps, since to many Odysseus was
a good friend, and few Achaians could be called his equal. 240
I gave him a bronze sword myself and a double-folded
cloak—a fine purple one—and a tunic with a fringe,
and saw him off properly in his well-benched vessel.
And there was a herald with him, a slightly older man—
Let me describe him to you, as I recall he looked— 245
round-shouldered, dark of complexion, with curly hair,
and his name was Eurybatēs. Odysseus respected him more
than his other companions: they were a like-minded pair."

So he spoke, and stirred in her heart yet more the urge to weep,
since she recognized the sure signs that Odysseus had told her. 250
But when she had had her fill of tearful lamentation,
she then responded to him, saying: "Hitherto, stranger,
you've earned our pity; but from this time on in my halls
you'll receive the treatment that's kept for an honored friend!
I myself gave him those clothes, just as you describe them, 255
from the storeroom, folded them, attached that bright brooch
as an ornament for him! But himself I'll never welcome
returning back home to his own beloved country:
an ill-fated day it was, then, when Odysseus set out
in his hollow ship to ill Ilion—that unspeakable name!" 260

To her then resourceful Odysseus responded, saying:
"Respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laërtēs,
no longer mar your fair flesh, nor waste away your heart
in mourning your husband—though I cannot blame you:
for any woman will weep when she's lost her wedded 265
husband, to whom she's borne children, conceived in love,
though he'll not be an Odysseus, who they say was like
the gods. Now stop your crying, and attend to my words,
for I'm going to tell you the truth, and hold back nothing.
I recently heard news concerning Odysseus' return— 270

that he's near, in the rich country of the Thesprōtians,
still alive, and bringing with him much splendid treasure,
collecting it through the region. But his trusty companions
he lost, with his hollow ship, on the wine-dark deep
on his way from the isle of Thrinakiē, for Zeus and Hēlios 275
made him suffer[9] because his comrades had slaughtered Hēlios' cattle.
So they all perished in the surging deep; but him,
astride his ship's keel, the waves then cast ashore
in the country of the Phaiakians, who are kin to the gods.
These treated him like a god, paid him heartfelt honors, 280
gave him many gifts, and were themselves quite willing
to escort him home unscathed. Odysseus would have been
back here long since, had he not thought it more gainful
to amass a great deal of wealth by wide world travel:
for Odysseus excels all mortals in his knowledge of ways 285
to profit, a field in which no other man could match him.
King Pheidōn of the Thesprōtians told me as much. Moreover
he told me on oath, while pouring libations at home,
that the ship had been launched, and the crew were in readiness
to convey him to his own country. But me he sent off first, 290
since there chanced to be a Thesprōtian vessel ready
to sail for Doulichion, that country rich in wheat.
And he showed me all the possessions Odysseus had amassed—
enough to support his descendants to the tenth generation
were the treasures stored for him there in the king's domain! 295
But Odysseus, he said, had gone to Dōdōnē,[10] to discover
from the deep-leaved sacred oak what Zeus was planning
and how he should make his way back to Ithákē's rich land
after so long an absence, whether openly or in secret.
Thus, as I say, he is safe, he'll be here at any moment: 300
he's very near now, not much longer will he be absent
from his friends and his country! I'll give you my sworn word:
Zeus first, highest and best of gods, be my witness,
and the hearth of peerless Odysseus, to which I have come,
that all these things indeed will come to pass as I tell you! 305

---

9. See 409 with note.
10. It was believed that "Zeus's voice was audible from the sacred oak at Dōdōnē" (Russo, *Comm.,* 3: 91). Cf. Parke, 11–13, 20–33.

Within the current moon's sequence Odysseus will arrive here,
between this month's waning and the rising of the next."[11]

Prudent Penelopē then responded to him, saying:
"Would that these words of yours, stranger, might be fulfilled!
Then you'd soon know both friendship and gifts in plenty 310
from me—any man who met you would call you blessed!
But this is how, in my heart, I think it will be: Odysseus
will nevermore come home, nor will you obtain
conveyance—there are no longer such masters in this house
as Odysseus was among men—if he ever existed— 315
to welcome respected strangers or escort them on their way.
Nevertheless, my handmaids, bathe him, make his bed
with bedding and coverlets and bright-colored blankets, so he's
warm until he comes through to Dawn the golden-throned.
Then early tomorrow bathe him and rub him with oil, 320
so that in here beside Tēlemachos he may sharpen his appetite
as he sits in the hall. It will be the worse for any of these
men who rudely annoys him: such a man will have no future
here from now on, no matter how angrily he reacts!
For how will you learn about me, stranger, whether I 325
really excel other women in mind and prudent counsel
if you sit down to a meal in my hall unwashed
and in threadbare clothes? Men's span of life is brief.
Whoever is harsh himself, whose mind knows harshness,
on him all mortals invoke disaster for the future 330
while he lives, and the whole world mocks him once he's dead.
But whoever is blameless himself, and has blameless thoughts,
strangers will spread his renown both far and wide
among all mankind, and many will praise his nobility."

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to her, saying: 335
"Respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laërtēs,
coverlets and bright-colored blankets have been hateful
to me ever since I left Krētē's snow-clad mountains
behind me, and sailed away in my long-oared ship.

11. Odysseus' "prediction" of his own return is identical with that given to Eumaios earlier (14.161–62). To make sense of the timing requires taking the uncertain term *lukabas* as the "interlunar period" (the most probable translation); see Russo in *Comm.,* vol. 3.

I shall bed down as I've done on other sleepless nights: 340
many the nights I've spent on some wretched resting place,
lying there waiting for the brightly enthroned Dawn!
Nor does the washing of feet bring solace of any kind
to my heart: there isn't a woman that shall touch my feet
of all the servants you have here in this house—unless 345
there's maybe some aged woman, with a devoted heart,
who's suffered as much in her spirit as I have myself:
I wouldn't have any objection to her handling my feet."

Once more prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"Dear guest, never yet, of the strangers from distant places, 350
has a man so sagacious been more welcome in my home—
so well-phrased and responsible is everything you say!
I do have one such old woman, very sensible-minded,
who nursed and cared for that unfortunate man,
cradled him in her arms the day his mother bore him. 355
It's she who shall wash your feet, enfeebled though she is.
Come on, up with you now, my prudent Eurykleia,
and wash one of an age with your master: Odysseus, I'm sure,
must by now have just such feet and just such hands,
for too soon does the stress of ill-fortune age us mortals." 360

So she spoke: the old woman hid her face in her hands,
shed hot tears, then uttered words of lamentation, saying:
"Alas, child, for you I am helpless. Zeus must have hated you—
devout heart though you had—beyond all other men.[12]
Never yet to Zeus, hurler of thunderbolts, did a mortal 365
burn so many fat thighs, such splendid arrays of oxen
as you offered up, with prayers that you might achieve
a sleek old age and rear your illustrious son. But now
you alone he's wholly deprived of a day of homecoming!
He too, I imagine, was jeered at by the women 370

12. It is not immediately apparent—though the realization, when it comes, is very effective—that Eurykleia begins what one would expect to be a speech to the beggar (or possibly Penelopē) by apostrophizing the supposedly absent Odysseus. At line 370 she switches abruptly to addressing the beggar (who of course *is* Odysseus), and referring to her "absent master" in the third person. The problem of hidden identity is given a further twist when she ends by telling the beggar how closely he and Odysseus resemble each other. That they *are* one and the same will be almost immediately revealed by that tell-tale scar during the foot-washing session. H. squeezes the last drop of drama out of this confrontation.

of far-distant strangers, when he came to some house of renown,
just as these bitches here all together are making fun of you,
and it's to avoid their mistreatment and endless insults
that you won't let them wash you; so it's me, nothing loath, to whom
Ikarios' prudent daughter Penelopē's given the job. 375
So I'll wash your feet, for both Penelopē's sake and yours,
since the heart in my breast is stirred by sorrow. But now
take good note of what I'm about to say to you:
Many a travel-worn stranger's made his way here, but none,
I tell you, have I yet seen who bore so close a resemblance 380
as you do—voice, build, and gait—to Odysseus himself."

To her resourceful Odysseus then responded, saying:
"Old dame, that's what everyone says who's seen us both:
that we resemble each other closely—a likeness
that you too now have noticed, and remarked on."

So he spoke. 385
The old woman took the bright cauldron, and prepared
to wash him. She first poured out a lot of cold water,
then added some hot. But Odysseus sat down by the hearth,
and at once turned away toward the darker side, because
he'd suddenly realized that when she was handling him 390
she would notice the scar, and the truth would be revealed.
And indeed, as she settled in close to wash her lord, she did
at once know the scar, of a wound that a boar's white tusk
had made when he went to Parnassos, to Autolykos and his sons—
his mother's noble father, who outstripped all mankind 395
in thieving and artful oaths, a talent bestowed by a god—
Hermēs, to whom he burned acceptable thigh pieces
of lambs and kids, and so was quite ready to protect him.
Now Autolykos paid a visit to the rich land of Ithákē,
where he found the son of his daughter, recently born, 400
and Eurykleia placed the baby on his knees at the moment he
was finishing supper, then spoke, and addressed him, saying:
"Autolykos, up to you now to find a name to bestow on
your own child's dear child: he has been much prayed for." To her
Autolykos then responded, saying: "My daughter's husband,[13] 405
and you, my daughter, give him the name I shall tell you.

13. This is Laërtēs.

Since I come here as one who's dealt pain and grief to many,
men and women alike, over the fruitful earth,
let his name be Odysseus;[14] and I, for my part, when he
comes as a grown man to the great house on Parnassos 410
of his mother's family, where I keep my possessions,
will give him his share, and send him back rejoicing."

This was what Odysseus had come for, to get his splendid gifts.
Autolykos greeted him, and the sons of Autolykos too,
with handshakes and expressions of cordial welcome, 415
and his mother's mother, Amphitheē, embraced Odysseus,
and kissed his head and both of his beautiful eyes,
and Autolykos gave the word to his illustrious sons
to get dinner ready, and they responded to his call.
At once they brought in a male ox, five years old, 420
flayed it, dressed it, butchered the whole carcass,
expertly cut up the pieces and threaded them on spits,
roasted these carefully and then shared out the portions.
So all day long until the hour when the sun went down
they feasted, and no one lacked his fair share of the meal. 425
But after the hour of sunset, when darkness came on,
then they retired to rest, and embraced the gift of sleep.

When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered,
they sallied forth on the hunt, both the dogs and the sons
of Autolykos: and along with them noble Odysseus 430
went too. Up the steep slopes of the forest-clad mountain
Parnassos they climbed, and soon reached its windy ravines.
The sun was just striking the fields below on its way
up from the peaceful and deep-flowing stream of Ocean
when the hunters came to a forest glen. Ahead of them went 435
the dogs, pursuing a scent, and close behind them
Autolykos' sons, among them noble Odysseus, hard on
the heels of the dogs, and brandishing his far-shadowing spear.
There, in a dense thicket, was crouched a huge wild boar.

---

14. Throughout the *Odyssey* there is repeated punning with Odysseus' name (impossible to match effectively in English) on a verb only mentioned in the aorist or perfect, but with the base form *oduss-: odussamenos* here. The essential meaning seems to be "inflicting hatred, anger, or pain," though the sense can also, it seems, on occasion be passive as well as active. For the enormous bibliography, with variant meanings, see Russo in *Comm.,* 3: 97, and Stanford 1971, 2: 332–33.

The damp force of driving winds could not penetrate its lair, 440
nor the sun with its gleaming rays shine into it, nor the rain
pierce right through its protection, so thick it was; and the drifts
of fallen leaves had piled up in their abundance round it.
Now the boar heard the sound of footfalls, from men and dogs
pressing on in the hunt, and out from his lair he came 445
to face them, back all abristle, fire glinting from his eyes,
and stood close at bay. Then, first of them all, Odysseus
sprang forward, long spear raised high in his stout hand,
ready to strike; but the boar beat him to it, gored him
above the knee, tore with his tusk a long gash in the flesh, 450
attacking him slantwise, but failed to reach his leg-bone;
and Odysseus struck him squarely in the right shoulder,
so that the bright spear's point now drove clean through.
The boar gasped, and fell in the dust, and the life fled from him.
Autolykos' sons then busied themselves with the carcass, 455
and the wound that blameless godlike Odysseus had suffered
they skillfully bandaged, and stanched the flow of dark blood
with a charm,[15] then went straight back to their father's house.
So Autolykos, and the sons of Autolykos, healed him
fully and well, handed over his splendid gifts, and then 460
soon sent him back rejoicing to his native country,
to Ithákē; and there his father and lady mother
welcomed him home with pleasure, asked detailed questions
about how he came to be wounded; he told them the way
the boar's white tusk had gored him when he was out hunting 465
up on Parnassos, together with the sons of Autolykos.

This scar the old woman recognized when she felt it
in the palms of her hands, and she dropped his leg. It fell
shin first into the basin, with a clatter of bronze:
the basin tipped over, the water spilled out on the floor, 470
as joy and grief together invaded her heart, her eyes

15. This is not a persistent archaism but a reference (unusual for H.) to popular medical magic, surviving in Europe till comparatively recent times. "I have heard a circumstantial description of the process from a Russian cavalry officer who witnessed an immediate stoppage of blood from a sabre-wound in this way," Stanford writes (1971, 2: 334). "The *Odyssey* is closer than the *Iliad* to this popular world," Russo says (*Comm.,* 3: 98). Similar cases in the *Iliad* employ traditional medical applications, some of which are ascribed to Cheirōn (*Il.* 11. 832, 846–48), but eschew magic.

filled with tears, and her voice stuck in her throat.
Her hand reached out to touch Odysseus' chin, she gasped:
"It's you, Odysseus, dear child, and I didn't know you
until I'd handled the rest of my master's person!" 475
With that she turned her glance in Penelopē's direction,
wanting to show her that her dear husband was there,
but Athēnē distracted Penelopē's mind, so she could neither
meet her eye nor guess at her meaning. As for Odysseus,
he felt for Eurykleia's throat with his right hand, seized it, 480
with the other drew her close to him, and whispered, saying:
"Old nurse, are you trying to kill me? You yourself suckled me
at your own breast! And now, after suffering much,
I've come, in the twentieth year, back to my own country!
But since you've hit on the truth, and a god's alerted you, 485
hush now, don't let anyone else in the house find out!
For if you do, this I tell you, and it shall come to pass:
should some god let me put down these lordly suitors,
I shall not spare you, my nurse though you were, when I slay
those other serving women, here in my halls."

Then prudent 490
Eurykleia responded to him, saying: "My child,
what's this word that's escaped the barrier of your teeth?
You know how firm my strength is, how unyielding—
I shall keep your secret as close as hard stone or iron!
And another thing I will tell you, and you take it to heart: 495
If some god lets you put down these lordly suitors,
then I'll report to you on the women in your halls,
which ones dishonor you, and which remain innocent."

To her resourceful Odysseus then responded, saying:
"Old mother, why tell me of them? There's no need! I myself 500
shall take good note and discover the truth about each one.
No, just keep my secret, and leave the rest to the gods."

So he spoke. The old woman went off through the hall to fetch
fresh foot-washing water, for the first lot was all spilt;
and when she'd washed him, and rubbed him well with oil, 505
Odysseus once more drew his chair back nearer the fire
to warm himself, and concealed the scar beneath his rags.

Then prudent Penelopē started their conversation, saying:
"Stranger, there's one small thing I still must ask you,
since soon it will be the time for pleasant repose—at least, 510
for him whom sweet sleep possesses despite his cares!
But to me some deity's brought a sorrow that's measureless:
by day I find my pleasure in mourning and lamentation,
while I look to my household tasks, and those of my women;
but when night comes, and sleep catches everybody else, 515
I lie on my bed, and around my throbbing heart
sharp cares come crowding, to disquiet me as I lament.
Just as Pandareus' daughter, the greenwood nightingale,
at the fresh onset of spring sings sweetly, sitting
perched amid the thick foliage of the trees, and with 520
close variant trills pours forth her rippling song, a dirge
lamenting her dear son Itylos, the son of King Zēthos,[16]
whom once with the bronze she slew unwittingly—even so
my heart's torn in two directions, this way and that:
should I stay here with my son, keep everything unchanged— 525
property, serving women, this large and high-roofed house—
respecting the bed of my husband and public opinion?
Or should I now wed whoever's the best of the Achaians
courting me here in my halls, bringing me countless gifts?
So long as my son was thinking and behaving as a child, 530
he wouldn't let me abandon my husband's house to remarry;
but now he's full-grown and has come to manhood's stature
he even begs me to go back home, so concerned he's become
for his patrimony, which these Achaians are eating up.[17]

---

16. This is an earlier, and variant, version of a myth that we know better from its Attic version, for which see Apollod. 3.14.8. Later sources, chiefly H.'s scholia, help us to piece together the myth here referred to. Pandareus, king of Krētē, has a daughter, here personified as the nightingale (*aēdōn*), married to Zēthos, king of Thēbai and twin son of Antiopē by Zeus (11.260–65). Out of jealousy of the numerous children (six of each sex, *Il.* 24.604) of her sister-in-law Niobē (q.v.)—the daughter of Tantalos (q.v.) and wife of Zēthos' brother Amphiōn (q.v)—she attempts to kill Niobē's eldest son, but mistakenly in the dark kills her own, only, son, Itylos. Zeus, out of compassion for her resultant grief, metamorphoses her into a nightingale. This is "the only place in H. where bird *song* (as opposed to cries) is mentioned," Stanford notes, but then undercuts the literary effect by pointing out H.'s "flagrant error in natural history: the female nightingale does not sing" (1971, 2: 336).
17. As Russo reminds us (*Comm.,* 3: 101), "she also knows clearly that the increasingly open hostility between Tēlemachos and the suitors can lead to his death." See, e.g., 16.411–12, 418–33.

"But come, hear this dream of mine, and interpret it for me: 535
I had twenty geese round the house, they came up from the water
and I fed them on wheat: the sight of them warmed my heart.
But down from the mountain swooped a great eagle, with
curved beak,
broke all their necks and killed them. They lay scattered
all over the hall, while the eagle soared up in the bright sky. 540
I wept and wailed, although it was only a dream,
and the fine-tressed Achaian women gathered around me
as I grieved sadly because the eagle had killed my geese.
But then back it came, perched on a jutting rafter,
and with the voice of a human caught me short, declaring: 545
'Take heart, you daughter of far-famed Ikarios: this
is no dream, but a true vision, that will surely be fulfilled!
These geese are the suitors,[18] and I, who before was a bird,
the eagle, have now at last come back as your husband,
who'll unleash a grim fate on all the suitors.'
So he spoke. 550
Then honey-sweet sleep released its hold upon me,
and glancing around I saw the geese in my domain
pecking up grain by the trough, as they'd done previously."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to her, saying:
"Madam, no way is it possible, by twisting its clear meaning, 555
to interpret this dream any other way, since Odysseus himself
has shown you how he'll fulfill it! The doom of all the suitors
is clear! Not one of them will escape death and the fates!"

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"Stranger, dreams are hard to make sense of or interpret, 560
and not all of them reach fulfillment for us mortals.
For there are two gateways set up for fleeting dreams,
of which one is constructed from horn, the other from ivory.
Those dreams that come through the gate of sawn ivory
are deceptive, bringing words that remain unfulfilled; 565
but those that emerge from the gate of polished horn

18. "The symbolism of the dream is reinforced by the fact the single activity the characterizes the geese is *eating* (553), which is the most conspicuous activity of the suitors" (Russo in *Comm.,* 3: 102).

presage the truth for anyone who beholds them.[19] But for me
it was not, I think, from there that my own strange dream
came—welcome though that would have been to me and my son!
And another thing I will tell you, and you take it to heart: 570
The ill-starred day is approaching that's to remove me
from the house of Odysseus: for now I shall order a contest—
those axes that he used to set up here in his halls
in a straight line, like ships' props, twelve of them all told—
he'd stand at a distance, and shoot an arrow through them. 575
So now I shall order this contest for the suitors:[20]
whoever, handling his bow, shall string it most easily
and then shoot an arrow clear through all twelve axes,
with him I'd depart, leaving this house to which I came
as a wedded wife—a fine home, and full of rich possessions! 580
I think I shall always remember it, even in my dreams."

To her resourceful Odysseus then responded, saying:
"Respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laërtēs,
do not any longer delay this contest in your house,
for resourceful Odysseus will arrive here before that— 585
before these fellows can get to handle the polished bow,
or string it, or shoot an arrow clean through the iron."

Then
to him prudent Penelopē responded, saying: "If you
were only willing, stranger, to sit on here in my halls
and amuse me, sleep would never be shed upon my eyelids! 590
But no way can people possibly go without sleep forever;
and so to each one of us mortals on this grain-giving earth
the immortals have allotted a proper time for repose.
So I shall go on back to my upper chamber and lie
on my bed, though it's become a place of mourning for me, 595
always made damp by my tears, since the day when Odysseus

19. These famous lines (cf. Virg., *Aen.* 6.893–96) are rightly felt to hold a mysterious poetic power. Yet once again their force in Greek depends primarily on etymological paronomasia, connective punning: *keras* = "horn" and *krainō* = "fulfill"; *elephas* = "ivory," and *elephairō* = "deceive." But why connect horn with truth and ivory with deception? The essential distinction seems to be between dreams that are, or are not, fulfilled. Despite generations of scholarly discussion, the symbolism remains obstinately obscure.

20. On Penelopē's decision at this critical point, see pp. 9–10 above.

left to set eyes on ill Ilion—that unspeakable name!
That's where I shall lie; but you sleep here in the hall—
spread your own bedding, or have them make you up a bed."
So saying, she went off back to her bright upper chamber, 600
not alone, for her handmaids accompanied her. And after
she'd retired to her upper chamber with her handmaids, then
she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until
grey-eyed Athēnē cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Book 20

But noble Odysseus bedded down for sleep in the forecourt.
On the ground he spread out an undressed oxhide, above it
putting many fleeces from sheep the Achaians had sacrificed;
and when he settled, Eurynomē threw a cloak over him.
So Odysseus, brooding on evil for the suitors in his heart 5
lay there, still wakeful. And then from their hall the women
emerged—those who had taken to sleeping with the suitors—
laughing and chattering cheerfully one to another; and rage
erupted now in his breast, and much he debated,
emotion and reason competing for his decision, whether 10
to get up and rush them now, deal death to each one of them,
or leave them to couple one last and final time
with these arrogant suitors. And his inner heart was growling
as a bitch standing over her helpless puppies will growl
at some unfamiliar man, more than ready to fight him: so 15
his heart growled within him, enraged at their bad behavior.
But he beat his breast, and upbraided his heart, declaring:
"Endure, my heart! Worse than this you once endured
that day when the Kyklōps, unmatchable in his strength,
was eating my valiant comrades; but you held on, till my plan 20
brought you safe out of that cave where you thought you'd die."

So he spoke, addressing the dear spirit in his breast.
In full obedience to him, his heart now endured
without pause; but he himself kept tossing and turning.
As a man cooking a paunch chockful of fat and blood 25
on a fierce blazing fire will turn it to and fro,
determined to get it cooked through as fast as he can,
so Odysseus tossed this way and that, trying to work out
how he was going to lay hands on the shameless suitors,
one man against so many. Then Athēnē approached him, 30
down from the sky, in appearance like a woman,
and stood above his head, and addressed him, saying:
"Wakeful again, you most ill-fated of all mortals?

This is your own house, and in this house are your wife
and son—such a son indeed as anybody might pray for!" 35

To her then resourceful Odysseus responded, saying:
"Yes indeed, goddess, all you've said is right and proper.
But here is what the heart in my breast is debating:
how I'm going to lay hands on these shameless suitors,
alone, while they're always in a body when they're here. 40
What's more, there's this greater problem that I'm facing:
even if—both Zeus and you willing—I do kill them,
how then would I make my escape? Please consider that!"

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, responded to him, saying:
"Stubborn man! There are many who'd trust a weaker comrade— 45
a mortal, without any knowledge of such wisdom as mine!
But I am a god, one who guards you through to the end
in all your endeavors! And I'll tell you this openly:
if there were fifty troops of mortal men in ambush
all round us, firmly determined to kill us, nevertheless 50
even then you'd drive off with their cattle and fattened sheep!
But for now let sleep overtake you. To stay awake on watch
all night is a bad thing too. Soon you'll be free of troubles."

So she spoke, and shed sleep on his eyelids, but herself,
bright among goddesses, made her way back to Olympos. 55

While sleep, the limb-loosener, still had hold of him,
relaxing the cares of his heart, his affectionate wife
awoke and wept, sitting up there, still in her soft bed.
But when her spirit had had its fill of weeping, then she,
bright among women, first prayed to Artemis, saying: 60
"Artemis, lady goddess, daughter of Zeus, how I wish
you'd shoot a shaft into my breast and take away my life
now, at this instant, or a storm wind would snatch me up,
whirl me away along those dark murky pathways,
cast me forth at the mouth of refluent Ocean, as once 65
storm winds carried away Pandareus' daughters! The gods
had killed their parents, and they were left abandoned
as orphans there in the halls, and were cared for by Aphrodītē
with cheese and sweet honey and pleasant-tasting wine;
and Hērē bestowed on them, above all other women, 70
beauty and wisdom, while chaste Artemis gave them stature,

and Athēnē made them accomplished in elegant handiwork.
But while bright Aphrodītē was making for high Olympos—
to Zeus, with his joy in the thunderbolt, for well he knows all,
both the good fortune and the misfortunes of transient mortals— 75
to ask for these girls the fulfillment of a healthy marriage,
the storm winds' spirits meanwhile snatched them away
and surrendered them to the mercy of the loathsome Furies.[1]
So, I wish, might those powers whose homes are on Olympos
annihilate me, or fair-tressed Artemis strike me—Odysseus 80
would be in my mind's eye as I went under this hated earth,
and I'd never pleasure the thoughts of any lesser husband!
Yet the burden's endurable for anyone who weeps
in the daytime, constantly moved by deep distress at heart,
but is mastered by sleep at night, for sleep brings forgetfulness 85
of all things, both good and bad, once it's shrouded the eyelids.
Yet on me some god laid the burden of evil dreams as well,
for this night there lay in my arms one exactly like him,
as he was when he left with his troops, and so my spirit
rejoiced, for I thought it no dream, but rather a waking vision." 90

So she spoke, and straightway Dawn, the golden-throned, came up.
The sound of her voice, weeping, got through to noble Odysseus:
he tried to think, and it seemed to his half-asleep mind
that she'd recognized him and was standing there at his head.
Then he picked up the cloak, and the fleeces that he'd slept on, 95
put them down on a chair in the hall, and carried the oxhide
outside, and left it. Hands raised, he then made his prayer to Zeus:
"Zeus, Father, if willingly you gods have now brought me back
over dry and wet to my country, after troubling me so much,
let one of those waking inside speak a word of omen for me, 100
and out here a sign from Zeus be made manifest as well."

1. Like another myth (19.518–23) we have seen involving a daughter of Pandareus, this account is found in no other surviving source. Whether or not the metamorphosed nightingale was an exception to the general fate of Pandareus' daughters here described remains quite uncertain. Nor do we know for sure why both they and their parents were doomed to destruction. Pandareus himself is reported (see Stanford 1971, 2: 344) to have stolen a golden dog from a Krētan temple of Zeus, and though the lèse-majesté involved might suffice to trigger one of Zeus' sulfurous rages, this hardly seems an adequate offense to justify the wiping out of an entire family; or indeed why the Furies, mainly concerned with intrafamilial crimes, should also—in opposition to a consortium of the major Olympian goddesses—have claimed these wretched girls as their own victims.

So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus the Counselor heard him.
At once he delivered thunder from gleaming Olympos
on high out of the clouds, and noble Odysseus rejoiced.
And a woman, a grinder of grain, sent forth a word of omen 105
from the house nearby where the mills of the people's shepherd
were set. At these twelve women all told were workers,
grinding barley and wheat, men's marrow. By now the others
were all asleep, having ground their quota of wheat, and she
was the only one who'd not finished, for she was the weakest. 110
She stopped her quern now and uttered an omen for her lord:
"Zeus, Father, lord over gods and men, how loudly
you thundered out of the starry sky, yet nowhere is there
any trace of cloud: this must be a portent you're granting someone!
Then fulfill for poor me too the wish I shall now pronounce: 115
May this be the final and latest day on which these suitors
enjoy their delectable feast in the halls of Odysseus, they
who've weakened my knees with so much agonizing labor
grinding their grain: may this dinner be their last!"

So she spoke: noble Odysseus rejoiced at the words of omen 120
and the thunder of Zeus, as he planned revenge upon the guilty.

The other serving women in Odysseus' splendid house
were up now. They rekindled unwearying fire on the hearth,
and Tēlemachos rose from his bed, a godlike mortal,
put on his clothes, slung a sharp sword from his shoulder, 125
bound on a pair of fine sandals under his sleek feet,
picked out a sturdy spear, tipped with keen bronze, and went
and stood at the threshold, and then addressed Eurykleia, saying:
"Dear nurse, have you honored the stranger in our house
with a bed and food, or does he lie as he is, uncared-for? 130
Clever my mother may be, but that's her way: on impulse
she'll do the honors for some person who's entirely
unimportant, yet dismiss his better with no respect."

To him then prudent Eurykleia responded, saying: "Child,
in this case you shouldn't blame her, when she's blameless. 135
He sat there drinking wine as long as he'd a mind to,
but for food he said he'd no more appetite: she asked him.
Then later, when his thoughts turned to lying down and sleep,
she told her serving women to make up a bed for him;

but he—like some totally wretched and ill-fated person— 140
didn't want to sleep in a bed or under blankets, but chose
to doss down on an undressed oxhide and fleeces of sheep
in the forecourt: we had to throw a cloak over him."

So she spoke. Tēlemachos made his way out through the hall,
spear in hand, two hunting dogs at his heels, and went 145
to the place of assembly to join the well-greaved Achaians.
Now Eurykleia, bright among women—daughter of Ōps,
Peisēnōr's son—addressed the handmaids, saying: "To work!
Some of you busy yourselves with sweeping the house out,
sprinkling the floors, and dressing the well-made chairs 150
with their purple coverlets; others wipe off all the tables
with sponges, wash clean the mixing-bowls and the crafted
two-handled drinking cups; others go fetch water
from the spring—and move smartly, get it back here soon!
For the suitors won't be long absent from the hall: they'll return 155
good and early: this is a public feast day."

So she spoke,
and each one listened with care and did what she ordered:
twenty set off to the spring of dark water, while the rest
went knowledgeably about their various tasks in the house.

Then in came the spirited menservants and began 160
to split logs well and skillfully, while the women
returned from the spring; and after them came the swineherd
driving three hogs, the best ones of all that he had;
these he let out to graze in the lush enclosures,
and himself put a friendly query to Odysseus, saying: 165
"Stranger, do the Achaians show you more regard now?
Or are they still insulting you here in the hall, as before?"

To him resourceful Odysseus responded, saying: "Eumaios,
would that the gods might exact requital for the outrage
of these men, who in their arrogance behave so recklessly 170
in another man's house, and have no sense of shame."

Such was the conversation they had with one another.
Then up to them came Melanthios, the goatherd, driving
those she-goats that were the finest of all in his flocks
to make a meal for the suitors. Two herdsmen accompanied him. 175

The goats he tethered beneath the echoing colonnade,
then addressed Odysseus abusively, saying: "Stranger,
won't you ever stop making yourself a nuisance in this house,
begging alms from the men here? Can't you get out and stay out?
I'm pretty sure that we two won't part company until 180
we've sampled each other's fists, since your begging isn't done
in the proper way. And besides, there are other Achaian feasts."

So he spoke. Resourceful Odysseus made him no answer,
but shook his head in silence, mind brooding on trouble.

The third to arrive beside these was Philoitios, leader of men, 185
driving up for the suitors a barren heifer and she-goats
brought over by ferrymen, who also convey others,
travelers, whoever approaches them for passage.
The beasts he tethered with care in the echoing colonnade,
and then went up to the swineherd, and addressed him, saying: 190
"Who is this stranger, swineherd, who's recently arrived
here in our house? From what men does he claim descent?
Where is his family? What is the country of his birth?
Ill-fated, yes, but he still has the mien of a lord, a king—
though the gods do afflict men who wander far and wide, 195
spinning a wretched fate for them, princes though they be."

With that he turned to Odysseus, hand outstretched in greeting,
and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Stranger, father,
all hail to you! May prosperity be your lot hereafter,
though now you're weighed down by plentiful misfortunes! 200
Zeus, Father, no other god's more lethal than you are:
once you've created men, you show them no pity for
the hardship and miserable suffering they must endure!
I broke sweat at the sight of you, my eyes are full of tears
as I remember Odysseus, for I fancy he too must be 205
clothed in just such rags as he wanders among men—
that is, if he's still living, and sees the light of the sun!
But if he's already dead, down in Hades' realm, then woe
is me for peerless Odysseus, who put me in charge
of his cattle, when I was a boy still, in Kephallēnian country. 210
By now they've bred past counting: no other way
could you get a better harvest of broad-browed cattle!
But others now order me to drive these cows in for them

to eat! They pay no attention to the son of the house,
nor does the gods' wrath scare them: these days they're bent 215
on sharing out the possessions of their long-absent lord!
Here is a problem that the heart in my breast turns over
endlessly: it would be wrong, while the son's still alive,
to take off, cattle and all, to the district of others,
to alien folk: yet it's worse to stay on here, and suffer 220
misery tending steers now claimed by somebody else!
Long since, indeed, I'd have fled to some other strong prince,
since life here's no longer endurable; but I still think
of that unfortunate man, who might yet come back
from wherever, and scatter the suitors throughout his house." 225

To him resourceful Odysseus responded, saying: "Cowherd,
since you seem neither ill-intentioned nor witless, and I
can recognize for myself the good sense of your mind,
I will speak out, and swear a great oath in confirmation:
Zeus, first of gods, be my witness, and this guest-friendly board, 230
and the hearth of peerless Odysseus, to which I have come,
that indeed while you are here Odysseus shall come home,
and with your own eyes you shall see, if you're so minded,
the slaughter of the suitors, now lording it here."

To him
then responded the herder of cattle, saying: "How I wish, 235
stranger, that Kronos' son would fulfill these words of yours—
Then you'd discover my strength, and how my hands enforce it!"

In like manner Eumaios now prayed to all the gods
that quick-witted Odysseus might come back to his own home.
Such was the conversation they had with one another. 240

Meanwhile the suitors were busy plotting death and doom
for Tēlemachos, when a bird came close to them on the left,
a high-flighted eagle, clutching a tremulous dove. At this
Amphinomos addressed them, saying: "This plan of ours,
to murder Tēlemachos, will not, I fear, end well 245
for us, my friends: let us rather be busy with our feasting."

So Amphinomos spoke, and his words were pleasing to them.
They made their way to the house of godlike Odysseus,
took off their cloaks, laid them down on the chairs and benches,

and began the slaughter for sacrifice of large sheep, 250
plump goats, and fattened hogs, with a heifer from the herd.
They roasted the innards and served them, and mixed the wine
in bowls, and the swineherd passed drinking cups around,
while Philoitios, leader of men, served them with bread
in beautiful baskets, and Melanthios poured their wine. 255
So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them.

Now Tēlemachos seated Odysseus—exploiting his advantage—
in the well-built hall, but close to the stone threshold,
set a mean stool for him, beside a little table,
laid a helping of innards beside him, poured him wine 260
in a golden cup, and then addressed him, saying:
"Sit here among these men now, and drink your wine:
I myself will protect you from the mockery and the blows
of all the suitors, since this is no public resort
but the house of Odysseus—his legacy to me! 265
And you suitors, restrain your urge to utter insults
or use your fists, lest strife—and a fight—arise between us."

So he said. Every one of them bit his lip and marveled
at Tēlemachos, because of his bold outspoken manner;
and Antinoös, son of Eupeithēs, now addressed them, saying: 270
"Hard though it is, Achaians, we must now accept this speech
of Tēlemachos, however boldly his words threaten us—although
had Kronos' son Zeus not forbidden it, we should by now
have stopped him short in his halls, clear speaker though he is."

So Antinoös spoke; Tēlemachos paid no heed to what he said. 275

Heralds meanwhile were leading beasts through the city
for a lavish sacrifice, and the long-haired Achaians gathered
beneath a shady grove of Apollo, the deadly archer.
When they'd roasted the outer meat and drawn it off the spits
they shared out the portions and enjoyed a splendid feast; 280
and beside Odysseus the servers set a portion equal
to that which they got themselves: such was the command
of Tēlemachos, own dear son of godlike Odysseus.

Athēnē, however, would not let these haughty suitors back off
at all from their grievous conduct: she wanted its pain to sink 285
still deeper into the heart of Laërtēs' son Odysseus.

There was among the suitors a man bred in lawlessness,
Ktēsippos by name, who had his home on Samē.
He, confident in his possession of prodigious wealth,
was courting the wife of the long-absent Odysseus. 290
Now he addressed himself to the arrogant suitors, saying:
"Give ear, you proud suitors: I've something to say to you.
His portion the stranger's long had, as is right and proper—
an equal one: it's neither decent nor just to short-change
any guest of Tēlemachos who may come to this house! 295
I too, then, will give him a present, so that he in turn
may offer it as a prize to the foot washer or some other
servant here in the house of godlike Odysseus."

So saying,
he hurled with strong hand the hoof of an ox, that he seized
from the basket where it was lying; but Odysseus dodged it, 300
quickly ducking his head, and masked his inner anger
with a bitter grimace. The ox hoof struck the solid wall.
Tēlemachos addressed Ktēsippos in harsh words, saying:
"Ktēsippos, this business only let you escape with your life
since you didn't in fact hit the stranger: he dodged your missile! 305
Otherwise I'd have run my sharp spear through your body,
and instead of a wedding your father would have been busy
fixing your tomb! So let no man be seen misbehaving
here in my house: I now note all, and grasp each detail,
good or bad, where, before, I was only a child. Yet still 310
we are forced to endure the spectacle of such actions
as the slaughter of sheep, the endless consumption of wine
and food, since it's hard for one man to hold back many.
Come then, harm me no further in your ill-will—though even
should you be determined to murder me with the bronze, 315
that too I'd rather choose: it would be far preferable
to die than to go on witnessing these unseemly actions—
strangers maltreated, women servants forcibly dragged
and manhandled everywhere in this beautiful building."

So he spoke, and they all were hushed in silence. At last 320
Agelaös, son of Damastōr, addressed them, saying: "Friends,
in response to what has been fairly and justly spoken
no man should take offense, make a hostile retort.
So don't treat this stranger roughly, or indeed any

of the servants here in the house of godlike Odysseus! 325
To Tēlemachos and his mother I'd like to say a word
as a friend, that might just appeal to them both at heart:
So long as you in your breasts still nursed the hope
that quick-witted Odysseus might yet return to his home,
there could be no objection to your holding on, and keeping 330
the suitors at bay in your house, since this was the better course
were Odysseus to return, back as lord in his own domain;
but it's clear enough now that he's never going to return—
so, Tēlemachos, sit by your mother and tell her this:
she should wed the best of these men, who offers her most: 335
that way you'll enjoy your inheritance undiminished,
eating and drinking, while she can keep house for someone else."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"No, Agelaös, by Zeus, and by the sufferings of my father.
who may have died, or be wandering yet, far from Ithákē, 340
no way am I delaying my mother's marriage—I've told her
to wed any man she wants to: I'll give them countless presents!
But I'd be ashamed, were she unwilling, to force her
out of this house—may no god ever bring such a thing to pass!"

So Tēlemachos spoke. But Pallas Athēnē now stirred in 345
the suitors laughter unquenchable, sent their wits astray:[2]
the jaws from which laughter issued seemed not their own,
and the meat they were eating bloodstained, while their eyes
were brimming with tears, and their minds imagined wailing.
Then godlike Theoklymenos spoke up among them, saying: 350
"Wretched men! What's this horror you're suffering? Your heads
and faces, your knees beneath them, are shrouded in night—
lamentation's afire, all dabbled with tears your cheeks,
blood-bespattered the walls and elegant panels;
crowded with ghosts is the forecourt, crowded the yard, 355

2. This famous scene, one of the eeriest in all Greek literature—over and forgotten almost as soon as it has happened—is a terrifying conversion by Athēnē, to hysteria, weeping, and imagined bloodstains, of the cheerful laughter that has greeted Tēlemachos' announcement that his mother will, at long last, be free to remarry whichever of the suitors she wishes (well analyzed by Stanford 1971, 2: 353–54). Theoklymenos' outburst is also a characteristic ecstatic prophecy (Dodds 1951, 64–101), unparalleled elsewhere in H., with symptoms—darkness, vanishing sun, and dripping blood—common in European folk belief (Russo, *Comm.,* 3: 224–25, with refs.) and with Greek parallels (see, e.g., Hdt. 7.140: Aesch., *Eum.* 378–80).

all flocking in darkness to Erebos, for now the sun
has perished from heaven, a foul fog's swept over all."

So he spoke; but all of them crowed with laughter at him,
and Eurymachos, Polybos' son, made the first comment, saying:
"He's out of his mind, is this stranger just come from elsewhere! 360
Quick, boys, out of the house with him, have him go down
to the marketplace, since he finds it dark as night in here."

To him godlike Theoklymenos then responded, saying:
"Eurymachos, I'm not asking you to provide me with guides!
I still have my own eyes and ears and both my feet, 365
and a mind in my breast in no way wrongly fashioned.
Using them I shall quit this house, for I sense trouble coming
upon you that none of the suitors may escape or avoid
who here in the house of godlike Odysseus abuse
other men with violence, commit acts of reckless folly." 370

So saying, he walked out of that pleasantly sited house,
and went to Peiraios, who gave him a friendly welcome.

Now all the suitors, glancing at one another, tried
to provoke Tēlemachos by mocking his guests. And thus
would one of these haughty youths harangue him, saying: 375
"Tēlemachos, no one has worse luck than you with his guests!
Like this vagrant here, brought in, whom you maintain—
always wanting food and wine, no good at work,
no strength, nothing but a mere burden on the earth!
And now this other fellow, who stood up and prophesied! 380
If you took my advice, you'd do far better to let us
throw these strangers aboard a ship of many rowlocks
and send them off to the Sikels:[3] they'd fetch you a good price."

So spoke the suitors. Tēlemachos paid no heed to what they said,
but sat silently watching his father, always ready 385
for the moment when he'd lay hands on the shameless suitors.

---

3. This, with the reference to Laërtēs' woman servant (24.211, 366, 389) is the earliest surviving literary reference to Sicily and its earlier inhabitants, known to the Greeks who colonized the island as Sikels (see bk. 24, n. 5, to 24.307). They clearly had a bad reputation as slavers and worse: Echetos, the mainland ruler to whom the suitors also threaten to send Iros (18.85), is described in H.'s scholia as "tyrant of the Sikels."

Ikarios' prudent daughter Penelopē had set down
her elegant chair so it faced them: she could now hear
what each man was saying, there in the hall. For while
they were laughing, they'd also been readying their dinner— 390
sweet and satisfying, since they'd slaughtered so many beasts.
Yet no more unpleasant supper could there have been
than the one that a goddess and a powerful man
would soon serve to those who'd started such vile misdeeds.

Book 21

The goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, now put it into the mind
of Ikarios' daughter, prudent Penelopē, to bring out
and set before the suitors the bow and the grey iron
in Odysseus' halls: a contest, and the start of the slaughter.
She climbed the high ladder that led to her own chamber, 5
and with her strong hand picked up the neatly hooked key[1]—
bronze, finely wrought, with a fitted ivory handle—
and made her way, with her handmaids, to the very furthest
storeroom, where were laid up her lord's rich treasures:
items of bronze and gold and carefully worked iron. 10
There too was stored his back-bent bow and the quiver
that held the arrows, and many the hurtful shafts packed in it,
gifts that a guest-friend gave him when they met in in Lakedaimōn—
Iphitos, Eurytos' son, in appearance like the immortals:
the two had encountered one another in Messēnē 15
at the house of skillful Ortilochos. In fact Odysseus
was after a public debt then owed by the people:
for the men of Messēnē[2] had come in their many-oared ships
and lifted three hundred sheep from Ithákē, with their shepherds.
It was for these that Odysseus had traveled far on a mission 20
while still a youth, dispatched by his father and other elders.
Iphitos too was there in search of horses he'd lost:
a dozen brood mares, with sturdy suckling mules—
though these afterwards brought about his destined murder,

---

1. How Homeric keys and locks worked—whether, indeed, they even merited those names in our broad sense—is still largely a matter of speculation. Anything like a modern revolving key only appeared in Roman times. Stanford claims (1971, 2: 357) that H.'s "key" was probably "little more than a long hook for pulling back an inside bolt"; whether this was the so-called swastika-shaped "temple key" depicted in later Greek art (*OCD*[4], 784–85) remains uncertain. For how H.'s primitive device may have been operated, see n. 4 to lines 46–48 below.
2. For H., Messēnē is the region of Messēnia, not the city, which was not founded until 369 B.C.E., by Epaminondas. H.'s few references to Messēnē tend to be used as a key to the date of the passage in question, since after the First Messēnian War (ended c. 680–670), Messēnia became part of Spartan territory. Here the Messēnians are clearly still very much independent.

when he came to that stout-hearted son of Zeus, the mighty 25
Hēraklēs, well acquainted with violent labors, who
killed him, guest though he was, and in his own house—
merciless man!—regardless of the gods' wrath and the table
he'd set before Iphitos. The man himself he slaughtered,
and the strong-hoofed mares he kept in his own domain.[3] 30
It was on his quest for these that Iphitos met Odysseus,
and gave him the bow once carried by great Eurytos, who
left it after his death to his son in his high abode;
while Odysseus gave to Iphitos a sharp sword and a sturdy spear,
the start of a binding guest-friendship, yet they never 35
knew one another at table; before that, the son of Zeus
slew Iphitos, Eurytos' son, in appearance like the immortals,
who gave the bow to Odysseus. But Odysseus never
took it with him when he went to war aboard the black ships:
he left it to lie there at home, a memento of a good friend. 40
He only ever carried it while still in his own country.

When Penelopē, bright among women, reached the storeroom,
and stepped up to the oaken threshold—which a carpenter once
had expertly planed and fitted true to the level,
and set up the doorposts on it, and the shining doors on them— 45
at once she briskly detached the thong from its hook,
and thrust in the key, and shot back the bolts from the doors
with a sure aim: they groaned loudly, the noise a bull makes
as it grazes in pasture: so groaned the beautiful doors,
attacked by the key, and swiftly flew open for her.[4] 50
She made for a high platform, where stood various chests
in which fragrant garments were stored. There, reaching up

3. While Hēraklēs' "violent labors" obviously puts one in mind of the famous Twelve Labors to the accomplishment of which he was condemned, it also refers to the kind of amoral criminal spree to which—not only in his occasional fits of insanity—he was all too prone, and one of which (the murder of his wife Megarē and their children) had got him saddled as punishment with the Twelve Labors in the first place.
4. The door had a bolt on the inside. This could be shot shut by means of a leather thong or strap attached to it through an aperture, and then tied to a hook outside. Eurykleia does this after seeing Tēlemachos to bed, but leaves the thong untied so as not to lock him in (1.441–42). The thong could not open the door from the outside. To do this the key had to be inserted (? through a second aperture), and aimed so that it engaged a groove or slot in the bolt, which could then be drawn back. See Stanford 1971, 2: 359; Fernández-Galiáno in C*omm.,* 3: 149; *OCD*[4], 784–85. The exact physical details of this procedure remain obscure.

on tiptoe, she grasped and removed from its peg the bow
together with the bright bow-case in which it was held.
This done, she sat down, with the case placed across her knees, 55
and burst into loud sobs as she took out her husband's bow.
Then, when she'd had her fill of tearful lamentation,
she made her way to the hall, where the haughty suitors were,
carrying in her hands the back-bent bow, with the quiver
that held the arrows, and many a hurtful shaft within it. 60
Serving women came with her, bearing a chest in which
much iron and bronze lay stored, her husband's prizes.
When she, bright among women, came where the suitors were,
she stood by the central post of the snugly timbered roof,
holding up her shining veil in front of her face 65
and flanked on either side by a devoted handmaid,
and at once she addressed the suitors, saying: "Hear me,
you overbold suitors, you who've been using this house
as a base for feasting and drinking—continually, endlessly—
while its master's been so long absent; nor could you think up 70
any other excuse to offer in support of your presence
except your urge to wed me, make me your wife!—now come,
since here, plain as day, is a contest for all you suitors
that I'll set before you: the great bow of godlike Odysseus!
Whoever, handling this bow, shall string it most easily, 75
and then shoot an arrow clear through all twelve axes,[5]
with him I'll depart, leaving this house I first came to
as a wedded wife—a fine home, and full of rich possessions!
I think I shall always remember it, even in my dreams."
So she spoke, and then ordered Eumaios, the noble swineherd, 80
to set up for the suitors the bow and the grey iron.

Weeping, Eumaios took and arranged them: the cowherd too
burst into tears at the sight of his master's bow. But now
Antinoös spoke in reproof, and addressed them, saying:
"Stupid yokels, only concerned with things of the day! 85
Why, wretched pair, are you blubbering? It only agitates
the heart in your mistress' breast! And that heart, as it is,
lies grief-stricken, since she's lost her beloved bedfellow!

5. it is quite possible that H. himself did not know exactly how the shot was performed and adopted it as a traditional part of the narrative, simply not bothering (as so often elsewhere) about the physical details. See Intro., p. 15.

Either sit here and feast in silence, or, if cry you must,
go and do it outside. But the bow you must leave back here, 90
a decisive test for the suitors, for I don't imagine
this polished bow will prove an easy one to be strung:
among all this crowd here there's not a single man
such as Odysseus was—for I saw him myself,
and remember him well, though then I was only a child." 95

So he spoke; but the heart in his breast still hoped that he
himself
would string the bow, shoot a shaft clear through the iron.
In fact, he would be the first to sample an arrow shot
by that same peerless Odysseus, whom, as he sat in the hall,
he was now insulting, and urging his comrades to do likewise. 100

Then Tēlemachos, princely in power, addressed them, saying:
"Surely Kronos' son Zeus must have rendered me witless!
My own
dear mother, sensible though she is, declares
she'll abandon this house and go with another husband—
and yet I, in my witless mind, laugh and enjoy the fun! 105
But come now, you suitors, since here's the prize before you:
a lady the like of whom there's none now in all Achaia,
or sacred Pylos, or Argos, or Mykēnai, or even Ithákē
itself, or on the dark mainland. But you yourselves
know all this: what need for me to praise my mother? 110
So, don't sidetrack the matter in hand with excuses, stop
putting off the bow's stringing: let's get to see it now!
Indeed, I myself might make trial of the bow—and if
I should string it, and shoot an arrow through the iron,
I shan't have to worry about my lady mother leaving 115
this house with another man: I shall still be here, one now
well able to win my own father's splendid contests."

With that he stripped off the scarlet cloak from his shoulders,
unslung his sharp sword, and sprang to his feet. He then
first of all set up the axes. He dug a trench, a single 120
long trench for them all, cut true to a line, and tamped
the earth down round them. All watching him were amazed
that he set them up right, having never seen them before.
This done, he went to the threshold, to make trial of the bow.

Three times he made it quiver in his effort to bend it; 125
three times he gave up, though privately he still hoped
to string the bow and to shoot an arrow through the iron.
At his fourth attempt, indeed, he'd have drawn and strung it,
so determined he was; but Odysseus shook his head,[6] and
stopped him.
Tēlemachos, princely in power, again addressed them, saying: 130
"Oh damn it, even in time to come I'll be mean and feeble,
or else I'm too young still, can't rely on the strength of my hands
to defend me against some man who starts a quarrel!
So come now, all you whose strength is greater than mine,
make trial of the bow, and let's wind up this contest." 135

So he spoke and grounded the bow, left it standing against
the close-fitting, well-polished door panels; and there too
he propped a swift arrow against the elegant door hook.
Then he sat down again on the fine chair from which he'd risen.

Antinoös now addressed them, the son of Eupeithēs, saying: 140
"All of you up in order, my comrades, from left to right,
beginning from where the cupbearer pours the wine."

So spoke Antinoös, and what he said found approval.
The first to stand up was Leiōdēs, son of Oinōps,[7]
their diviner, who always sat at the back of the hall 145
by the beautiful mixing bowl: to him alone their reckless
conduct was hateful. He disapproved of all the suitors.
He now was the first to take the bow and swift arrow:
he went and stood at the threshold, made trial of the bow,
but failed to bend it. His hands—tender, unhardened— 150
too soon wearied of pulling. He addressed the suitors, saying:
"Friends, I'm unable to bend it—let another man now try!
Many the lordly men this bow is going to deprive
of spirit and life, since indeed it's far preferable to die

6. The verb here used, *aneneue,* literally means "nodded upwards," a vivid gesture still current today in Greece to indicate "No."
7. It is generally agreed (see, e.g., *Comm.,* 3: 163–64) that the more correct spelling is "Lēodēs," and most editors print it thus; but as Stanford points out (1971, 2: 362), this spoils a neat pun on a "Significant Name," since Leiōdēs son of Oinōps can be construed as "Smoothy son of Wineface," i.e., an effeminate son of a drunken father (*leios* = "smooth"). Given this, and the fact that "Leiōdēs" is the almost unanimous reading of the MSS, I prefer to retain it.

than live on after failing at that in pursuit of which 155
we continue assembling here, in daily expectation!
At present a man can still not only want but hope
to marry Penelopē, the bedfellow of Odysseus;
but when he's made trial of the bow, and seen the result,
then let him court with his gifts some other finely costumed 160
Achaian woman, and let Penelopē marry whoever
makes her the best offer, and comes as her fated spouse."

So he spoke and grounded the bow, left it standing against
the close-fitting, polished door panels; and there too
he propped a swift arrow, against the elegant door hook. 165
Then he sat down again on the fine chair from which he'd risen.
But Antinoös spoke in reproof, and addressed him, saying:
"Leiōdēs,
what's this word that's escaped the barrier of your teeth,
so fearful and grievous an utterance? To hear it enrages me!
if it's true that this bow will deprive many lordly men 170
of spirit and life, because you yourself can't bend it,
even so, though your lady mother didn't bear you to be
strong enough to string bows or shoot arrows, nevertheless
other proud suitors there are who'll bend it soon enough!"

So he spoke, and gave orders to Melanthios the goatherd: 175
"To work, Melanthios! Get the fire going here in the hall,
and beside it put a large chair with a fleece spread on it,
and fetch out the big wheel of tallow you'll find inside,
so that we youths may warm the bow, and grease it with fat,
and so get to make trial of it, and conclude this contest." 180

So he spoke. Melanthios rekindled the unwearying fire,
fetched, and set close by, a chair with a fleece spread on it,
then brought out the large wheel of tallow he found inside.
With this the youths warmed the bow, then tried it, but still
failed to bend it. They had nothing near the needed strength. 185
But Antinoös still held back, as did godlike Eurymachos:
they were the leading suitors, and far the best in prowess.

Two men now left the hall, going out together,
the cowherd and swineherd of godlike Odysseus; and he,
noble Odysseus himself, went close behind them. 190
But when they were all outside the gates and the courtyard,

then he spoke, and addressed them in friendly manner, saying:
"Cowherd, and you too, swineherd, shall I tell you something
or keep it to myself? Oh, my heart impels me to speak!
How would you feel about supporting Odysseus, were he 195
suddenly to appear from somewhere, brought by some god?
Would you be on the side of the suitors, or of Odysseus?
Tell me whatever your heart and spirit dictate!"

In answer
the herdsman who cared for the cattle responded, saying:
"Zeus, Father, would that you might fulfill this wish! Now grant 200
that man his return, and a god to escort him! Then
you'd learn what strength I have, and how my hands employ it!"

Eumaios in the same way likewise prayed to all the gods
that quick-witted Odysseus might return to his own home.
So when he'd found out for certain how these two were minded, 205
Odysseus once more responded, and addressed them, saying:
"Back home now indeed I am! After suffering much hardship
I've returned, in the twentieth year, to my native country!
I know that to both of you, alone of all my servants,
my arrival is truly welcome: of the rest I've not heard one 210
pray that I might return, make it back to my home!
So to you two I'll speak the truth, how it's going to be:
if a god grants me victory over these haughty suitors,
I'll find wives for you both, and give you possessions,
and houses built close to my own; and for me thereafter 215
you'll be Tēlemachos' comrades, indeed his brethren!
And look, I'll show you another manifest sign
by which you may know me for sure and trust what I say—
the scar of the wound that I got from a boar's white tusk
long ago, when I went up Parnassos with Autolykos' sons." 220

So saying, he pulled back his rags from over the great scar.
When the two had examined it carefully, in detail,
weeping they flung their arms about skillful Odysseus
and kissed his head and his shoulders in loving welcome,
while Odysseus likewise was kissing their heads and hands. 225
And now the sun would have gone down on their tears
had not Odysseus himself put a stop to it, saying: "Quit
your weeping and wailing! Somebody coming out here

from the hall might see us and report back to those inside.
Now, you two go on in, but separately, not together— 230
I'll go first, you after me. And let's have this as a signal:
all the others, the whole crowd of these haughty suitors,
won't agree to me being given the bow and the quiver;
but you, noble Eumaios, as you go through the house
with the bow, put it into my hands—and order the women 235
to bar the close-fitting doors at the entrance to their quarters;
and if any of them hear groans, or the thud of falling
men within our walls, they're not to go out, but remain
just where they are, keep silent, and go on with their work.
And to you, noble Philoitios, I entrust the task of bolting 240
the courtyard gates, and quickly roping them shut as well."

So saying, he made his way into the pleasantly sited house,
and went and sat down on the chair from which he'd risen;
godlike Odysseus' two servants then followed him inside.

Eurymachos was now turning the bow about in his hands, 245
warming it, this side and that, in the fire's glow; yet not even
thus could he bend it: his lordly heart was sore vexed,
and, deeply troubled, he now addressed them, saying:
"Alas, here's distress for myself and for all of you too!
It's not this lost marriage that I lament so much, 250
grieved though I am; there are many Achaian ladies,
some here on sea-girt Ithákē, and more in other cities.
But if we're so far lacking in strength compared
to godlike Odysseus that we can't even bend and string
his bow—that's a disgrace that men yet unborn will hear of." 255

Antinoös, son of Eupeithēs, then responded to him, saying:
"It will not be so, Eurymachos, as you know very well!
Throughout the region this is the god's solemn feast day—
who'd be bending a bow now? Today we'll take things easy,
so put that aside! And why don't we leave all the axes standing 260
where they are? No one, I think, is going to come here, to the hall
of Odysseus, Laërtēs' son, and remove them! So for now
let the wine steward pour the initial drops in our cups
so we can offer libations, and lay the curved bow aside;
then early tomorrow morning tell the goatherd Melanthios 265
to bring the very best she-goats in all the herds, so we

may offer thigh-pieces to Apollo the famous archer,
and then make trial of the bow and conclude the contest."

So spoke Antinoös, and what he said found approval.
Now the heralds poured water over their hands, and youths 270
filled up the mixing-bowls with drink, poured drops
into the cups for libation, then served wine to all.
After they'd offered libations and drunk all they'd a mind to,
resourceful Odysseus addressed them, with deception in mind:
"Listen to me, you suitors of the illustrious queen, 275
to what the heart in my breast now urges me to tell you!
To Eurymachos most of all, and to godlike Antinoös
I appeal, since the latter got it right when he said
that for now you should put the bow by, let the gods decide—
In the morning the god will confer the power where he wishes! 280
But come, give the polished bow to me, that here among you
I may try out my hands and strength, see whether the force
is still there, as when my limbs were supple, or whether
by now lack of care and vagrancy have destroyed it."

So he spoke, and they all expressed high indignation, 285
afraid as they were that he might string the polished bow.
So Antinoös spoke in reproof, and addressed him, saying:
"Ah, wretched stranger, devoid of even the slightest sense!
Is it not enough for you that you dine at ease among us,
your betters, that you're barred from none of the feast, sit in 290
on all our conversation, when there's no other stranger
or beggar who gets to listen to everything we say?
It's the wine, the honey-sweet wine, that damages you, just as
it harms anyone who swills it, who drinks to excess! It was wine
that infatuated the Centaur, far-famed Eurytiōn, 295
in the hall of great-hearted Peirithoös, when he went
to visit the Lapiths: there, wits fuddled with wine,
in his madness he wrought evil in Peirithoös' house.[8]
Outraged, the heroes sprang on him, dragged him outside
through the forecourt, cut off his ears and nose 300
with the pitiless bronze; and he, now stupefied in mind,

8. This is a reference to the beginning of the famous war between Centaurs and Lapiths. Peirithoös was the king of the Lapiths; at his wedding feast Eurytiōn got very drunk and tried to rape the bride, Hippodameia. Cf. *Il.* 1.268, 2.741–44: H. refers to Centaurs as "mountain-laired beast-men."

went about with his unstable spirit bearing that fatal burden.
Hence sprang the feud between the Centaurs and mankind;
but he first for himself met trouble, when heavy with wine.
And for you I foresee great misery should you indeed 305
bend and string this bow: you'll find no courtesy here
in our district—we'll send you straight off in a black ship
to King Echetos, maimer of all mortal men alive,[9]
from whom you would have no escape. So now sit quiet,
drink your wine, don't contend with men younger than yourself." 310

Prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying: "It's neither
decent nor just, Antinoös, to deprive Tēlemachos' guests
—whoever may come to the house here—of their proper due!
Do you expect, if this stranger, trusting his hands and strength,
strings the great bow of Odysseus, that he'll then take me 315
off to his home, and make me his bedfellow? I'm sure
that he himself now nurses no such expectation!
So none of you need to worry on that account, or let it
spoil your appetite here: that indeed would be unseemly."

Eurymachos, Polybos' son, then responded to her, saying: 320
"Ikarios' daughter, prudent Penelopē, we don't think
this man will make off with you—yes, that *would* be unseemly!—
but the gossip of men and women could embarrass us: some low
Achaian lout may well later start saying this kind of thing:
'Oh yes, far weaker men now are courting the bedfellow 325
of a faultless man—they can't even string his polished bow!
But some other fellow, a vagrant beggar, who turned up here
strung the bow easily, and shot clear through the iron.'
So men will talk, and this would be a reproach to us all."

Then prudent Penelopē once more responded to him, saying: 330
"Eurymachos, no way can good report spread in public
about those who devour, and so dishonor, a nobleman's
household goods! Why make this, then, a matter for reproach?
The stranger's a very big fellow, and strongly built; he also
claims he's the son of a father of excellent ancestry. 335
So give him the polished bow now, and let's see what happens!
For this I'll declare to you, and it shall come to pass:

9. See 18.85–87 with note ad loc.

if he does string the bow, and Apollo lets him triumph,
I'll dress him in cloak and tunic, fine quality garments,
and give him a sharpened javelin, to ward off dogs and men, 340
and a double-edged sword, and sandals to strap on under
his feet, and send him wherever his heart and spirit dictate."

Then sagacious Tēlemachos responded to her, saying:
"There's not one Achaian, my mother, more entitled than myself
to give, or refuse, this bow to whomsoever I please— 345
not any of those who hold power here on rugged Ithákē,
or lord it over the islands toward horse-pasturing Ēlis!
Of these none will thwart my will, even if I choose to make
an outright gift of the bow, for this stranger to carry off!
Into the house with you now, attend to your own tasks— 350
the loom and the distaff! And give orders to your handmaids
to stick to their proper work! The bow shall be men's business—
all men's, but mine above all: in this house *I* hold the power."

Astonished, Penelopē went back into the house,
and took to heart her son's sagacious remarks. 355
she climbed to her upper chamber with her handmaids,
and there she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until
grey-eyed Athēnē shed sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

The noble swineherd now picked up the curved bow,
and was bearing it off; but the suitors all clamored in the hall, 360
and thus would one of the arrogant younger men exclaim:
"Where, wretched swineherd, are you taking that curved bow?
Are you crazy? The hunting dogs you bred yourself will soon
wolf you down, all alone among your pigs, if Apollo
looks kindly upon us—he, and the other immortal gods." 365

So they spoke. Right there he dropped the bow where he stood,
terrified: they were so many, the noise in the hall so loud.
But Tēlemachos shouted threateningly from the other side:
"Old fellow, keep on with the bow! Obey them, and you'll be sorry!
Though I'm younger than you I'll chase you out to the fields 370
with a shower of stones! At least I'm stronger than you!
I only wish I was tougher, and a better man with my fists,
than all the suitors arrayed here in these halls: then I'd
soon send some of them packing from our house
in a dire state, because of the trouble they make here." 375

So he spoke, but the suitors all laughed cheerfully at him,
forgetting the bitter resentment that they'd long nursed
against Tēlemachos. The swineherd carried the bow
through the hall to skillful Odysseus, placed it in his hands,
then summoned the nurse Eurykleia, and addressed her, saying: 380
"Orders for you from Tēlemachos, prudent Eurykleia:
you're to bar the close-fitted doors at the entrance to your quarters,
and if any of you hear groans or the thud of falling
men here within our walls, they're not to go out, but remain
just where they are, keep silent, and go on with their work." 385

So he spoke; but her answer remained unwinged. She went
and barred the doors of their pleasantly sited quarters,
while Philoitios said nothing, but hurried out of the house,
and barred the gates to the well-walled courtyard. Down
in the colonnade there lay coiled a shapely vessel's 390
fiber cable: with this he secured the gates, and himself
went back in, sat down on the chair from which he'd risen,
and watched Odysseus, who was already handling the bow,
kept turning it round, made trial of it this way and that,
to see if worms had eaten the horn in its master's absence; 395
and thus would an onlooker speak, with a glance at his neighbor:
"He must be a connoisseur, some kind of expert in bows!
Either he himself has such fine bows stored back home,
or else he intends to make one, the way he turns it about
this way and that—evildoer and vagrant that he is!" 400

And another of these haughty youths would speak up, saying:
"I wish just as much good fortune for this old fellow
as he's likely to get in the contest for stringing the bow."

Such was the talk of the suitors. But resourceful Odysseus,
as soon as he'd got his great bow and viewed it all over— 405
just as a man, a professional lyre player and singer,
will easily stretch the string around a new peg, secure
the twisted sheep gut at either end, so now
Odysseus without hard effort strung the great bow,
and took it in his right hand, and tested the string, 410
which sang good and high at his touch, like a swallow's voice.
The suitors were much distressed. The faces of them all
changed color. Zeus thundered loudly, making plain his signs,

and much-enduring noble Odysseus now rejoiced
that sly-counselling Kronos' son had sent him an omen. 415
He picked up the swift shaft that lay there on the table,
ready (the rest were still stored in their hollow quiver—
those arrows that the Achaians were soon to experience),
set it on the bow's hand grip, then—still seated
there in his chair—drew the string with the notched arrow, 420
took careful aim, and let fly. He did not miss one helve base
of all the axes: clean through and out at the end
flew his bronze-heavy shaft. He addressed Tēlemachos, saying:
"The stranger that sits in your hall, Tēlemachos, does you no
discredit: I neither missed the mark, nor spent 425
much labor on stringing the bow. My strength is still there—
not gone, as these suitors insult me by claiming so mockingly!
But now it's time to get dinner ready for the Achaians—
in daylight. And after that there's other entertainment,
songs and the lyre, the accompaniment to feasting." 430
Then godlike Odysseus signaled them with his eyebrows,
and his dear son Tēlemachos strapped on his keen-edged sword,[10]
and put out a hand to the spear, tipped with gleaming bronze,
that was standing close to him, propped up beside his chair.

10. Reading Protodikos' emendation *kekoruthmenon* rather than the reading of the MSS, *kekoruthmenos.* As Fernandez-Galiano (*Comm.,* 3: 206) points out, in recommending it, Tēlemachos does not actually don full armor until 22.113, so cannot appear in it here; and Odysseus is at the door, not in his chair, until 22.99. It may, of course, be true that a popular early version of this scene simply missed the inconsistency; but the textual change is minute and solves the problem neatly.

Book 22

Now resourceful Odysseus stripped himself of his rags
and sprang up on the great threshold, taking the bow
and the shaft-packed quiver. He poured out the swift arrows
there at his feet, and addressed the suitors, saying:
"This contest's over, decisively ended; and now 5
I'll go for another target, reached by no man hitherto,
to see whether I can hit it, and Apollo grant me glory."
He spoke, and then aimed a bitter shaft at Antinoös,
who was on the point of raising an elegant cup to his lips—
golden, twin-eared—had it in his hands, was intending 10
to drink wine from it: in his mind was no thought of death.
For who amid fellow feasters would ever imagine
that one man, however strong, alone against many,
would contrive for him a bad death and black fate? But Odysseus
took aim and struck him in the throat with his arrow, 15
and clear through the tender neck the point was driven,
and he slumped to one side, the cup dropped from his hand
when he was hit, and up through his nostrils at once
came a thick spurt of human blood; a kick of his foot
sent the table flying, scattered all the food on the floor, 20
bread and roast meat in the dirt together. The suitors
made an uproar throughout the hall when they saw the man
fallen: sprang from their seats, panic-stricken, in the hall,
looking all round at the solid walls, but nowhere
was there a shield or strong spear that they could grab. 25
So they abused Odysseus in furious words, declaring:
"It's an outrage, stranger, for you to shoot men! You'll never
compete in another contest! Now you've sealed your fate!
The man you killed was by far the noblest of the youths
on Ithákē: because of that the vultures shall eat you here." 30

So said each of them, for indeed they supposed he'd not
killed the man on purpose: poor fools, they had no notion
that over them all the bonds of destruction were set.
Then, with an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus replied:

"You dogs, you thought that I'd never come home again 35
from the Trojans' land, the way you ravaged my house,
and forcibly bedded my women servants, and while
I was still alive, underhandedly courted my wife,
with no fear of the gods who own broad heaven,
or of any human reproof that might come hereafter! 40
Now over you all the bonds of destruction are set!"

So he spoke. Pale dread possessed them all: each man
looked round for a way to escape from sheer destruction.
Only Eurymachos now responded to him, saying:
"If you indeed are Odysseus, come home to Ithákē, then 45
what you say about all the Achaians have done is just—
many their wanton acts, here in the house, out afield!
But the man lies dead who was to blame for it all—
Antinoös! He it was who instigated these deeds,
not so much out of desire or need for the marriage, 50
but with a different aim, not fulfilled by Kronos' son:
that over well-ordered Ithákē he might himself
be king—and lie in wait for your son and kill him!
Now *he's* been fairly slain, spare these people: they are
your own! And hereafter we'll collect you reparation 55
for all that's been drunk or eaten here in this hall,
each man providing you with the worth of twenty oxen!
We'll requite you in bronze and gold until your heart is softened;
but until that time comes no man could blame you for your anger."

Then. with an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus responded: 60
"Eurymachos, were you to give me all you had from your fathers,
all that you now possess, plus what you could find elsewhere,
not even so would I stay my hands from slaughter
until the suitors had paid the full price for their wrongdoing!
Now it's your choice whether you'll stand and fight me 65
or run—if anyone here can dodge death and its spirits;
but none of you, I think, will escape from sheer destruction."
So he spoke: there and then their knees and hearts gave way.
But Eurymachos now spoke again, and addressed them, saying:
"Friends, this man won't restrain his invincible hands! 70
Now he's got control of the polished bow and its quiver
he'll shoot from the smooth-worn threshold until he's killed
every last one of us! We must think about how to fight him!

So draw your swords now, hold the tables in front of you
against his swift deadly arrows, and then let's all go for him 75
in a body, try to shift him from the threshold and doorway,
then get to the city, raise a quick hue and cry. Do that,
and this fellow will soon have shot his last shaft."

So saying,
he now unsheathed his sharp sword, fashioned of bronze,
with its double edge, and made for Odysseus, yelling out 80
his fearsome war cry. At the same instant noble Odysseus
let fly another arrow. The swift shaft struck his breast
under the nipple, drove into his liver. He dropped his sword
on the ground, and fell, doubled up and sprawling, over
the table: the food all went flying to the ground, along with 85
his two-handled cup. His forehead smashed agonizingly
into the ground; both feet kicked out at his chair,
dislodging it. A mist closed down over his eyes.

Amphinomos next attacked renowned Odysseus, charging
straight at him, keen-edged sword ready and drawn, to see 90
if he could force him back from the doorway. Tēlemachos
was too quick, aimed from behind with his bronze-tipped spear,
and hit him between the shoulders, drove right through
his breast. He fell with a thud, hit the ground forehead first.
But Tēlemachos sprang back, left his far-shadowing spear 95
there in Amphinomos, much afraid that some Achaian—
while he was busy prising that long spear loose—might rush up
and give him a sword thrust, catch him still stooping. So he
set off at a run, quickly reached his dear father, stood close
and addressed him with winged words, saying: "Father, 100
I'll go now and fetch you a shield and a couple of spears,
and an all-bronze helmet, close-fitting at the temples.
I'll arm myself too while I'm gone, and get arms for the swineherd
and the cowherd too: for sure, to be in armor is better."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying: 105
"Run, fetch them, while I still have arrows for my defense,
lest they force me away from the doors, all alone as I am."

So he spoke, and Tēlemachos, in obedience to his father,
made his way to the storeroom where their fine arms were kept,

and from there collected four shields, eight spears, and four 110
bronze-plated helmets, decked with thick crests of horsehair.
Carrying these, he quickly returned to his dear father.
Then, first, he armored his own body in bronze,
and the two servants likewise put on their splendid gear,
and stood there flanking clever, subtle-minded Odysseus. 115
He, while he still had arrows for his defense, went after
the suitors, one by one, never stopping, there in his house,
aiming, then shooting. They kept falling, thick and fast.
But when the master had no more arrows to shoot,
the bow he propped up against the pleasantly sited hall's 120
doorpost, to stand by the bright inner walls. He now
slung from his shoulders a fourfold shield, and on
his powerful head next settled a well-made helmet
with a horsehair plume nodding fearsomely up above,
and took two sturdy spears, both tipped with bronze. 125

There existed a side postern set in the solid wall,
flush with the top of the pleasantly sited hall's threshold,
that led into a corridor and had a close-fitting door.[1]
On this corridor Odysseus ordered the noble swineherd
to keep a close watch (one man only could rush it at a time), 130
since Agelaös had called out to all the suitors, saying:
"Friends, won't one of you now slip out by that side postern,
get word to the people, raise a quick hue and cry? Do that,
and this fellow will soon have taken his last shot."

Then Melanthios, herder of goats, responded to him, saying: 135
"That won't work, Agelaös, Zeus' nursling: the fine courtyard
doors are dangerously close, and the corridor is narrow:
one man, if a good fighter, could hold off all comers. So let me
go fetch armor for us to put on, from his private storeroom;
for that, I'm certain, and no place else, is where 140
Odysseus and his illustrious son have stowed their gear."

1. This sentence has occasioned a vast amount of controversy; but as Stanford (1971, 2: 378) rightly says, unless the reader "is particularly interested in house-planning" discussion is pointless, since H. is uncertain regarding the detailed topography of Odysseus' home, and in any case "this exit serves no purpose in the plot."

So saying, Melanthios, herder of goats, went up
by the steps of the hall to the storerooms of Odysseus.[2]
From there he took twelve shields, and a dozen spears,
and as many bronze helmets with thick horsehair crests, 145
and made his way back, and quickly gave them to the suitors.
Then Odysseus' knees and courage both wilted as he saw them
girding themselves in armor and brandishing long spears
in their hands, and huge his task now appeared to him,
and at once he addressed Tēlemachos with winged words, saying: 150
"Tēlemachos, it must be one of the women in the halls
is backing this bad fight against us—or maybe Melanthios."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying:
"I myself, father, made the mistake here—no one else
is to blame! It was I who left the close-fitting door 155
of the storeroom ajar: they kept a sharper watch than I did!
You go now, noble Eumaios, and shut that storeroom door,
and see if it's one of the women who's behind this, or,
as I suspect, Melanthios, Dolios' son."
Such was
the conversation between them, one to the other. 160

But Melanthios, herder of goats, went back to the storeroom
to fetch more fine armor. The noble swineherd saw him,
and at once addressed Odysseus, close by him, saying:
"Scion of Zeus, Laërtēs' son, resourceful Odysseus,
there's that dangerous busybody—the one we ourselves 165
suspect—off back to the storeroom! So tell me truthfully,
am I to kill the man, if I prove the better fighter,
or bring him here to you, to pay for the misdemeanors,
all of them, that he's committed here in your house?"

---

2. The house plan (and indeed the passage as a whole) is very uncertain: cf. West 2014, 106. The word I (like Murray) have tentatively translated as "steps" (*rōgas*) occurs once only elsewhere, being identified by Hesychios as the equivalent of *rēxeis,* "clefts" or "vents." This is not helpful, and indeed may well be a false etymological guess. Some translators, nevertheless, have dutifully suggested that Melanthios ascends (we aren't told how) by means of the hall's "clefts" or "slits", though exactly what they may be we aren't told either. That Melanthios *does* ascend (*anabainei*) is certain, though the storerooms are generally assumed to be on the ground floor. Also, the amount of gear that he carries is an impossible load for one person. Mythical lack of realism (here, but seldom so blatant elsewhere) can only be pressed so far as an explanation; but to account for such obvious inconsistencies by assuming gross rhapsodic carelessness is equally unconvincing. The enigma remains.

To him
Resourceful Odysseus then responded, saying: "For sure, 170
I and Tēlemachos will hold off these haughty suitors,
keep them shut in the hall here, however hard they struggle!
You two should force both that man's hands and feet
behind his back, lash them to boards there, dump him
into the storeroom, attach a braided rope to his body, 175
hoist him up the tall column until he's near the roof beams:
that way he'll stay alive longest and suffer real agony."

So he spoke. They listened carefully and obeyed him.
To the storeroom they went, unnoticed by the man inside,
who was searching for armor far in the back. The two 180
lay in wait for him, standing on either side of the doorway.
When Melanthios, herder of goats, was crossing the threshold—
in one hand a splendid helmet, and in the other
an old broad shield, that was all befouled with mildew
and belonged to the hero Laërtēs, who'd carried it when young, 185
but it had long been laid up, the seams of its straps were rotted—
the two sprang, seized him, dragged him in by his hair,
flung him down, sore anguished at heart, on the ground.
They lashed his hands and feet tight with agonizing bonds,
forcing them right behind his back, exactly the way 190
that Laërtēs' son, much-enduring noble Odysseus
had told them to do. They attached a braided rope to his body,
and hauled him up the tall column until he was near the roof beams.
Then, swineherd Eumaios, you made mock of him, saying:
"This way, Melanthios, you'll keep watch the whole night, 195
lying there on the kind of soft bed that's proper for you;
nor shall Dawn, early risen, coming up from Ocean's streams
in gold-throned splendor escape your notice as you
bring the suitors your she-goats to set up a feast in the hall."

So he was left there, stretched tight in his deadly bonds, 200
while the two put on their armor, closed the bright door,
and made their way back to clever, subtle-minded Odysseus.
There they stood on the threshold, breathing courage,
four men against a crowd of good fighters in the feast hall.
Then Zeus' daughter Athēnē came up close to them, 205
assuming the likeness of Mentōr, in both voice and person.
Odysseus rejoiced at the sight of her, and addressed her, saying:

"Mentōr, defend us from harm, remember your dear comrade
who used to do you good turns: you and I are the same age."

So he spoke: but he guessed it was Athēnē the host-rallier. 210
The suitors across from him made an uproar in the hall
and the first to rebuke Athēnē was Damastōr's son Agelaös:
"Mentōr, don't let Odysseus sidetrack you with his glib talk
into fighting against the suitors and giving aid to him!
For this is how I think our purpose will be accomplished: 215
when we kill these men, both father and son, you too
will be slain along with them, for the deeds you're so eager
to perform in these halls: with your own head you'll pay for them!
And when with the bronze we've stripped you of your violence,
all the possessions you have, whether indoor or outside, 220
we'll add to those of Odysseus! We won't let your sons live
in your halls, nor grant your daughters or your good wife
the right to move freely about Ithákē."

So he spoke,
and Athēnē grew even more furious at heart,
and upbraided Odysseus with angry words: "No longer 225
is your courage steadfast, Odysseus, nor that fine prowess
you showed when over Helen—high-born, white-armed—
for nine years you fought the Trojans unceasingly,
and many fighters you killed in that dread conflict—
it was your advice brought down Priam's broad-wayed city! 230
Why then now, when you're back to home and possessions,
do you wail at the thought of facing up to the suitors?
So come here, my friend, stand beside me, watch me at work,
and see the way, when up against hostile fighters,
that Alkimos' son Mentōr repays your good services!" 235

She spoke, yet still did not give him enough strength to prevail
in his battle, was still making trial of the might and valor
both of Odysseus himself and of his illustrious son.
And now she flew up to a roof beam of the smoky hall
and perched there in plain view, in the likeness of a swallow. 240

Agelaös, Damastōr's son, was now urging the suitors on,
with Eurynomos, Amphimedōn, Dēmoptolemos,
Peisandros, Polyktōr's son, and skillful Polybos;
for these were by far the most valiant of the suitors

who were still alive and fighting for their survival: the pick 245
of the rest had already fallen to the bow and constant arrows.[3]
Agelaös then spoke among them, addressing them all: "My friends,
this man by now must surely hold up his invincible hands!
After all those empty boasts his friend Mentōr's deserted him,
and they're left by themselves there at the outer doorway! 250
So don't now throw your long spears at them all together,
but you six throw first, see whether Zeus will maybe
grant that Odysseus be hit, and we win the glory—
once he's fallen, there's no need to worry about the others."

So he spoke. They all threw their spears as he suggested, 255
with force; but Athēnē made all their efforts unsuccessful.
One of them hit a doorpost of the well-built feast hall,
a second the close-fitting door itself; another's
bronze-weighted ash spear ended up against the wall.
So when the suitors' spears had missed them, much-enduring 260
Odysseus at once addressed them, saying: "My friends,
this, I'd say, is the moment for us too now to hurl
our own spears into the thick of these suitors, who are so eager
to kill and strip us, on top of their earlier misdemeanors."

So he spoke, and they all now threw their keen-edged spears 265
with careful aim. Odysseus hit Dēmoptolemos;
Tēlemachos, Euryadēs; the swineherd, Elatos; while
the cowherd who cared for the cattle killed Peisandros.
These then all together bit the wide earth with their teeth,
and the suitors retreated to the innermost part of the hall, 270
while the others rushed forward and pulled their spears from the dead.

Then once more the suitors threw their keen-edged spears
with force,[4] but Athēnē made their efforts mostly unsuccessful.
one of them hit a doorpost of the well-built feast hall,

3. We have come a considerable distance from the absurd total of 110 suitors listed at 16.245–53, where the dramatic effect was obtained by positing a vast opposition, which, as Fernández-Galiano points out (*Comm.,* 3: 263), "would not fit in the *megaron* [feast hall]." Now it is assumed that the majority have already fallen: it is the most important ones who are actually named. Antinoös, Eurymachos, and Amphinomos, the group's spokesmen, have already been killed (above, 16, 82, 93). Six more are mentioned here (241–43), and another nine at various points. Of these fifteen, eleven are individually noted (at 266–68, 284–85, 293–94, and 328). The numbers, both accounted for and assumed, are now manageable.
4. Thus exhausting the supply brought for them from the storeroom by Melanthios (144).

a second the close-fitting door itself; another's 275
bronze-weighted ash spear ended up against the wall.
but Amphimedōn hit Tēlemachos on the arm at his wrist,
a glancing blow, the bronze scraping the surface of the skin,
and Ktēsippos with his long spear grazed Eumaios' shoulder
above his shield, but the spear flew on, ended in the ground. 280
Then once more those with the sharp and subtle-minded Odysseus
flung their own keen-edged spears into the thick of the suitors,
and once more Odysseus, city-sacker, scored a hit,
on Eurydamas; Tēlemachos on Amphimedōn; the swineherd
on Polybos, while the herder of cattle struck Ktēsippos 285
square in the breast, and boasted over him, saying:
"Polythersēs' son, insult-fancier, nevermore, ever, again
thoughtlessly talk big, but leave any kind of comment
to the gods, since they are far mightier! Here is a guest-gift
for you, a return for that ox hoof you lately presented 290
to godlike Odysseus, on his begging round in the house."

So spoke the crumple-horned cattle's herder; but Odysseus
now wounded Damastōr's son with his long spear, close up,
and Tēlemachos wounded Leōkritos, Euēnōr's son,
with a spear in the nether belly, drove the bronze through: 295
he fell prone, hitting the ground squarely with his forehead.
Then Athēnē held up her aegis, the destroyer of mortals,
from on high in the roof: the suitors were terrified,
and stampeded through the hall like a herd of cows
that the darting gadfly descends on and drives to distraction 300
in the season of spring, when the days are lengthening;
and just as vultures, with crooked talons and hooked beaks,
come out from the mountains and swoop down on other birds,
that fly fast over the plain, and avoid the clouds, but still
the vultures pounce and destroy them: they have no defense 305
or way of escape, and men enjoy watching the hunt—
so now did they harry the suitors throughout the hall,
striking them right and left, and hideous cries went up
as their heads were cracked, and the whole floor ran with blood.
Leiōdēs rushed forward and clasped Odysseus' knees 310
and with winged words entreated him, saying: "I beg you
by your knees, Odysseus, respect me and pity me! Never,
I tell you, have I offended any woman here in your halls

by improper word or deed: in fact I did my best
to stop any other suitor who began to behave that way! 315
But they took no notice, wouldn't restrain their hands from mischief,
and through such wanton misconduct have met a ghastly fate.
Yet I, their soothsayer, who have done no wrong, will die
along with them: there's no gratitude for benefits received!"

With an angry glance, resourceful Odysseus responded, saying: 320
"If, as you claim, you in fact are their soothsayer, then surely
many times you'll have made a prayer in my halls that the end
of a sweet homecoming might be kept far from me, that you
might be the one with whom my dear wife went, bore children!
For that you won't escape a most bitter death." 325

So saying,
he seized in his sturdy hand a sword that lay nearby:
Agelaös had dropped it at the moment when he was killed.
With this sword Odysseus now slashed through Leiōdēs' neck.
The man was still speaking as his head rolled in the dust.
Terpēs' son too, the minstrel, was still trying to avoid black fate— 330
Phēmios, who was compelled to perform among the suitors.
He now stood holding the clear-toned lyre in his hands,
close to the postern door, uncertain in his mind
whether to slip from the hall and sit at the well-built altar
of Zeus of Enclosures, on which Laërtēs and Odysseus 335
had burnt in his honor so many thighs of oxen,
or whether to run to Odysseus, entreat him at his knees.
And as he reflected, it struck him that this was the better course:
to run up and clasp the knees of Laërtēs' son Odysseus.
So he laid down his hollow lyre upon the floor 340
between the mixing-bowl and his silver-studded chair,
and himself ran forward and clasped Odysseus by the knees,
and addressed him with winged words, saying: "By your knees
I entreat you, Odysseus! Respect me and pity me! On you
hereafter shall sorrow be laid, if you choose to kill a minstrel 345
such as I am, who performs for both gods and mankind!
I am self-taught, but the god has planted in my heart
lays of all kinds: I'm equipped to perform before you
as I would for a god—so don't be too ready to cut my throat!
Tēlemachos too, your dear son, could testify to the fact 350
that it was against my will, with no desire on my part,

that I came to your house to sing for the suitors at their feasts—
they were stronger, and far more of them: they made me come."
So he spoke. Tēlemachos, princely in power, heard him,
and at once he addressed his nearby father, saying: 355
"Whatever you do, don't maim this innocent man with the bronze!
Let's also spare Medōn the herald, who used to look after me
here in our house while I was still a child—that is,
if Philoitios or the swineherd hasn't already killed him,
or he ran into you when you were storming through the house." 360

So he spoke, and Medōn, sagacious at heart, overheard him.
He'd ducked down under a chair, and wrapped himself in
the fresh-flayed hide of an ox, trying to avoid black fate.
At once he got up from the chair, quickly threw off the oxhide,
rushed forward, clasped Tēlemachos by the knees, 365
and uttering winged words then entreated him, saying:
"Friend, here I am, it is I! Stay your hand, speak to your father,
lest in his great strength he hurt me with the sharp bronze
while incensed against these men, the suitors, who wasted
his goods here in his halls, and—the fools!—paid you no honor." 370

But resourceful Odysseus smiled, and then addressed him, saying:
"Relax! Tēlemachos here has protected you and saved you,
so you may know in your heart, and pass the word to others,
how much better kind actions are than mean ones! But for now
leave the feast hall, go sit down outside in the courtyard, 375
away from the slaughter, you and the lay-rich minstrel,
until I've finished the work I need to do here indoors."

So he spoke. The two now went off, out of the feast hall,
and sat themselves down by great Zeus' altar, glancing
in all directions, still half-expecting to be murdered. 380
Odysseus too looked around, in his domain, to see whether
any man, still alive, was hiding, in an effort to dodge black fate.
But what he saw was each one of them in the blood and dust—
the whole crowd, fallen, dead, like fish that fishermen
have drawn in their fine-meshed net up from the grey sea 385
onto some crescent beach, and they all are lying there
heaped up on the sand, sorely missing the waves of the sea;
but Hēlios, the bright sun, now heats the life out of them—
just so the suitors all lay there, heaped up upon one another.

Resourceful Odysseus now addressed Tēlemachos, saying: 390
"Tēlemachos, go and summon the nurse Eurykleia to me:
There's something I have on my mind that I need to say to her."

So he spoke, and Tēlemachos, in obedience to his father,
went and opened the door, and called to Eurykleia, saying:
"Up with you now, old woman—you who are in charge 395
of all the serving women we have in our hall—come here!
My father is calling for you, he wants to say something to you."

So he spoke. Her own word remained unwinged: she opened
the doors of the well-built feast hall, and came out, Tēlemachos
leading the way before her. She found Odysseus 400
standing amid the bodies of the men he had killed,
bespattered with blood and gore, like a lion that's come
from the farmstead where it's been feeding on an ox, and all
its breast and its jowls on either side are beslobbered
with blood, so that it is a terrible sight to behold— 405
just so was Odysseus bespattered, hands and feet alike.
But she, on beholding the corpses and the widespread bloodshed,
began a cry of triumph, for the mighty deed she saw;
but Odysseus stopped her, cut short her enthusiasm,
and uttering winged words, addressed her, saying: 410
"Keep your joy to yourself, old woman—don't exult aloud!
It's not decent to vaunt over men that have been killed.
These dead were destroyed by divine fate and their own
dastardly acts: they honored no mortals on this earth,
either high or low, of those that came among them, 415
and so through their wanton deeds they met a sorry end.
Now tell me about the women in this household—both those
whose conduct dishonors me, and those that are innocent."

Then his dear nurse Eurykleia responded to him, saying:
"Very well, my child: I'll tell you the truth of the matter. 420
Fifty women there are that live here in your halls,
handmaids we taught to perform their various tasks,
carding the wool while enduring a lifetime of servitude:
of these there are twelve who chose the path of shamelessness,
showing no respect for me or Penelopē herself— 425
Tēlemachos, though, only lately came of age: his mother
hasn't allowed him control over the women servants.

But now, please, let me go to that bright upper chamber
and break the news to your wife, whom some god's kept asleep."

To her resourceful Odysseus then responded, saying: 430
"No, don't wake her yet. But go and tell those women
who've been guilty of shameful behavior to come in here, to me."

So he spoke. The old woman went out through the hall
to bring the women his message, and order them to come;
while Odysseus summoned Tēlemachos, as well as the cowherd 435
and swineherd, and addressed them with winged words, saying:
"Start removing the corpses now. Get the women to help you.
Then have them clean off these elegant chairs and tables,
washing them down with water, using porous sponges.
When you've put the whole hall in proper order, then 440
take these maidservants out of the well-built hall, to a spot
midway between the round house and the courtyard's flawless wall,
and cut them up with your long sharp swords till you've taken
the life from them all and they've forgotten their Aphrodisiac
pleasures under the suitors, lying with them clandestinely." 445

As he spoke, the women arrived in a body, all sobbing
desperately, all shedding big tears. So first of all
they bore out the bodies of the slain, and stacked them
under the colonnade of the well-walled courtyard,
propped up against one another, while Odysseus directed 450
their work himself, hurrying them. They were forced to carry
the corpses. Then they cleaned off the elegant chairs and tables,
washing them down with water, using porous sponges.
Tēlemachos meanwhile, with the cowherd and the swineherd,
scraped off the floor of the close-built house with shovels, 455
and the women collected the scrapings, deposited them outside.
Then, when they'd put the whole hall in proper order,
they took the maidservants out of that well-built hall, to a spot
midway between the round house and the courtyard's flawless wall,
and shut them in a tight corner, with no possible escape. 460
Sagacious Tēlemachos now spoke first to the others, saying:
"A clean death isn't the way by which I want to end
these women's lives: they poured insults on my own head
and my mother's too, all while they were sleeping with the suitors."
So he spoke, and taking the cable of a dark-prowed vessel, 465

hitched one end to a tall pillar, the other about the round house,
stretching it high, so no woman could touch the ground with
her feet.[5]
As when long-winged thrushes or doves are caught in the snare
that's been set for them in a thicket, as they're flying back
to their roosts, and hateful the bed that now welcomes them, 470
these women's heads bobbed in a line, and round their necks
nooses were set for all, to give them most piteous deaths:
they jerked with their feet a little, but not for long.

Then they brought Melanthios out, through the forecourt
and yard,
and cut off his nose and ears with the pitiless bronze, 475
and ripped out his private parts for the dogs to eat raw,
and in their fury chopped off his hands and his feet.
That done, they washed their own hands and feet, and went
into the house to Odysseus, and their work was over.
But he now addressed his dear nurse Eurykleia, saying: 480
"Bring sulfur, old woman, that cleanses pollution, and bring me
fire, to make fumes that will purge the hall; then tell
Penelopē to come down now, she and her handmaids,
and have all the women servants in the house assemble here."

Then his dear nurse Eurykleia responded to him, saying: 485
"Yes indeed, my child, all this you've requested is in order.
But please, let me bring you a mantle and tunic to wear—
don't stand like that in your hall with your broad shoulders
clad only in rags: that would be just cause for censure."

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to her, saying: 490
"First of all, see that a fire is lit for me in the hall."

So he spoke; and his dear nurse Eurykleia did not
disregard him, but fetched fire and sulfur; and Odysseus
thoroughly purified hall and house and courtyard. Then
the old woman went back through Odysseus' fine domain 495

5. Characteristically, the narrator notes the hanging of these women without paying any attention to the physical details implied. The weight on the rope, one end of which seems only to have been looped round a column, will have been, at a minimum, about 1,200 lbs., and the looping of a dozen nooses—from another rope?—is glossed over without description. Still, the hanging is described, memorably, in a famously vivid line (473).

to bring word to the women, and order them to assemble;
and out they came from their quarters, torches in their hands,
and crowded round Odysseus, and embraced him,
and clasped and kissed his head and his hands and shoulders
in affectionate greeting, and a sweet longing possessed him 500
for crying and tears: each one of them was familiar to him.

Book 23

Chuckling, the old woman ascended to the upper chamber,
to bring her mistress the news that her dear husband was there,
in the house: her feet hobbled, but her knees moved briskly,
and she stood at Penelopē's head, and addressed her, saying:
"Wake up, Penelopē, dear child, so you may see 5
with your own eyes what you've longed for all this time!
Odysseus is here, back at last, late though his return!
He's slaughtered the haughty suitors who were preying on
his household, devouring his property, bullying his son!"

Then prudent Penelopē responded to her, saying: 10
"Dear granny, the gods have crazed you—those who are able
to change even the sharpest-witted into a nitwit, or take
a halfwit and set him well on the road to wisdom!
It's they who've crazed you—you, who were once so sensible!
Why do you mock me thus, when my heart's full of sorrow, 15
talking in that wild way, arousing me from sleep—
sweet sleep, that bound me fast, enfolded my eyelids? Never
have I slept so soundly since that day when Odysseus
left to set eyes on ill Ilion—that unspeakable name!
Off with you now, back down to the women's quarters— 20
and if any other woman, of all those who belong to me,
had come to me with this story, and woken me up, for sure
I'd have quickly sent her packing, back downstairs,
in a way she'd regret! But here your old age shall save you."

Eurykleia, loyal nurse, then responded to her, saying: 25
"Dear child, I'm not mocking you! What I said is the truth!
Odysseus is here, back home, exactly as I informed you:
the stranger that all the men were insulting in the feast hall—
that's him! Tēlemachos learned who he was a while back,
but he was discreet, kept his father's plans well hidden 30
till he could punish the violence of these overbearing men."

So she spoke. Rejoicing, Penelopē sprang from her bed,
and hugged the old woman, shedding tears from her eyelids,

and, uttering winged words, addressed her, saying:
"Come now, dear granny, please will you tell me truly, 35
if he's in fact come back home, as you say, how he contrived
to lay hands on this crowd of shameless suitors—alone,
while they always stay together when they're in this house."

Eurykleia, loyal nurse, then responded to her, saying:
"I neither saw nor was told of it. I only heard the groaning 40
of men being killed. We sat, terrified, at the back
of our well-built quarters, behind the close-fitting doors,
until your son came in from the hall and called us—
his father had sent Tēlemachos over to fetch us out.
I found Odysseus standing among the slaughtered corpses: 45
they lay all around him, filled the hard-trodden floor,
heaped on each other. To see him would have warmed your heart—
all bespattered with blood and gore, like a lion, he was!
All the bodies are now collected at the gates of the courtyard,
in one pile, and he's purifying his fine home with sulfur, 50
after kindling a large fire. He's sent me to summon you.
So come, that the hearts of you both may enter upon
true happiness, after all the troubles that you've endured!
Now at long last what you hoped for has been fulfilled:
he's come back himself, alive, to his own hearth, and found 55
both you and his son in his halls. As for those who mistreated him,
the suitors, he's been revenged on all of them in his house!"

Then prudent Penelopē responded to her, saying: "Dear granny,
don't laugh out loud, don't exult in triumph over them yet:
you know how welcome his appearance here in these halls 60
would be to us all, but most to me, and the son born to us.
But this is no true account, the way you tell it: no,
some immortal's slaughtered the haughty suitors, in wrath
at their heartbreaking wantonness and their wicked deeds;
for they had no respect for any dwellers upon this earth 65
whether high or low, whoever might come among them;
so they've come to grief through their own mad folly. But Odysseus
has lost, far away, his return to Achaia—and his life."

Eurykleia, loyal nurse, then responded to her, saying:
"My child, what's this word that's escaped the barrier of your teeth, 70
saying your husband—who's here, by the hearth downstairs!—

will never return home? Your heart's always so mistrustful!
Look, here's another clear proof that I'll now tell you: the scar
from that wound the white tusk of a boar dealt him long ago:
I saw it while washing his feet, and wanted to break the news 75
to you yourself, but he put his hand over my mouth
and in his great shrewdness of mind wouldn't let me tell you.
So come with me now, and I'll put my own life at hazard:
if I'm deceiving you, kill me, in the most painful manner!"

To her prudent Penelopē responded, saying: "Dear granny, 80
it's hard for you to fathom the thoughts of the gods
eternal, however intelligent you may be. Even so,
let's go down and join my son, for me to see these men,
the suitors, dead, and whoever it was that killed them."

So saying, she set off downstairs, debating in her heart 85
whether to keep at a distance from—her own dear husband?
or rather go to him, clasp his head and hands and kiss them?
But when she'd come in, passing over the stone threshold,
she sat down facing Odysseus, in the light from the fire,
by the opposite wall. He was sitting against a tall pillar, 90
looking down, and waiting to see if his comely bedfellow
would make any comment when she'd had a good look at him.
But she sat long in silence, heart possessed by wonder,
now with her eyes scrutinizing his face intensely,
then failing to recognize him in the mean rags he wore. 95
Tēlemachos took her to task, and addressed her, saying:
"Mother, my cruel mother, so unyielding at heart,
why do you thus hold back from my father? Why not sit
beside him, interrogate him, ask him questions?
No other woman would thus, with obdurate heart, 100
hold aloof from a husband who, much hardship suffered,
had, in the twentieth year, come back to his own country;
but your heart is always harder than any stone."

To him
Prudent Penelopē now responded, saying: "My child,
the heart in my breast is lost in wonder, I cannot 105
find words with which to address or question him,
or look him straight in the face. But if in actual truth
he's Odysseus, come back home, then undoubtedly we two

possess better ways of recognizing each other:
signs known only to us—no one else has access to them." 110

So she spoke. Noble much-enduring Odysseus smiled,
and at once addressed Tēlemachos with winged words, saying:
"Tēlemachos, let your mother now make trial of me here,
in my own domain: soon enough she'll understand much better.
But at present, because I'm filthy, and clad in mean clothing, 115
she treats me with disrespect, won't yet say I am he.
For now, we need to consider how best to settle matters.
A man who's killed only a single soul in his district,
even one without many to avenge him when he's gone,
still flees into exile, abandoning kin and country; 120
but we've slain the city's mainstay, the very noblest
of the youths on Ithákē: this you need to bear in mind."

Sagacious Tēlemachos then responded to him, saying:
"Look to it yourself, dear father: they say yours is the best
counsel of all mankind, that there's no other mortal, 125
not one living person, that could compete with you!
As for us, we'll follow you eagerly, and I don't think
we'll fall short in prowess, insofar as we have the power."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"So, I shall tell you the best course as I see it. 130
First all go and wash yourselves, then put on tunics,
and tell the maids in their quarters to choose their dresses,
and let the godlike minstrel with his clear-toned lyre
act as our leader in the pleasures of dancing,
so that any person outside who hears the sounds— 135
a neighbor or passerby—will assume it's a wedding-feast.
That way the news of the slaughter of these suitors
won't spread abroad through the district before we've gone
out to our wooded farmstead, where we can then
establish whatever advantage the Olympian may grant us." 140

So he spoke. They all were listening, and readily obeyed him.
First they went and washed and put on their tunics,
and the women decked themselves out, and the godlike minstrel
took up his hollow lyre, and aroused a longing in them
for the pleasures of song and fine dancing. So the great hall 145
resounded all about with the noise made by the feet

of dancing men, and well-dressed women, and thus
might a person outside the house who heard them declare:
"For sure, someone must have married the much-wooed queen!
Hard-hearted she was, had no stomach to keep her wedded 150
husband's domain right through, until he returned."

So they'd say,
but knew nothing of the events that had in fact taken place.
So now great-hearted Odysseus was washed in his own house
by his housekeeper, Eurynomē: she massaged him with oil,
and dressed him in an elegant mantle and a tunic, 155
while over his body Athēnē shed an abundance of beauty,
making him taller and sturdier, and from his pate
she conjured hair, thick and curling, like the hyacinth blossom.
As happens when some craftsman overlays silver with gold—
an expert, to whom Hephaistos and Pallas Athēnē have taught 160
every kind of technique, to embellish the works he creates—
so she now shed grace over his head and shoulders,
and he came from the bath in appearance like the immortals,
and sat down again on the chair from which he'd risen,
facing his wife; and he then addressed her, saying: 165
"Strange lady, to you, beyond all womankind, those
who make their home on Olympos have given a stubborn spirit!
No other woman would thus, with obdurate heart
hold aloof from the husband who, much hardship suffered,
had, in the twentieth year, come back to his own country! 170
Well, granny, spread me a bed, so that I can settle down
here by myself, for the heart in her breast is of iron."

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"Strange sir, I'm being neither haughty nor indifferent,
nor am I oversurprised. I know well what you looked like 175
when you sailed from Ithákē in that long-oared ship of yours.
Come then, Eurykleia, make up the solid bedstead for him,
outside the well-built bedroom that he himself constructed!
There set the solid bedstead, and put bedding on it—
fleeces, blankets, bright coverlets."

So she spoke, 180
making trial of her husband. But Odysseus in response
burst out in anger, and addressed his true wife, saying:

"Woman, this word you've said embitters my heart!
Who's moved my bed elsewhere? A hard job that would be,
even for a skilled worker, unless some god came down 185
in person, and chose to shift it: easy enough for him!
But of mortals no man alive, however young and strong,
could dislodge it, for a great token was embodied
in the bed that I fashioned—I, and no other man! There was
a small long-leafed olive-tree that grew there in the courtyard, 190
flourishing, in its prime. Its girth was like a pillar.
Round this I built our chamber, till it was finished,
with close-set stones, and a sound roof overhead,
and dovetailed doors I added, made to fit closely; then
I lopped off the foliage of the long-leafed olive, trimmed 195
the trunk from the root up, made it smooth it with a bronze
adze, well and expertly, shaped it true to the line,
making it into a bedpost, bored holes in it with my auger.
Beginning with that, I worked till I'd finished the whole bed,
adorned it with inlays—gold, silver, ivory—then latticed 200
the bed frame with thongs of oxhide, dyed bright purple.
Thus I describe this token to you—though I've no idea
if this bed of mine's still in place, wife, or whether by now
some man's severed the olive's trunk, and moved it elsewhere."

So he spoke. Her knees and heart were undone on the spot, 205
since well she knew the sure tokens that Odysseus had described.
Then she ran straight to him in tears, and flung her arms
about his neck, kissed his face, and addressed him, saying:
"Don't be angry with me, Odysseus! In all other matters
you've been the wisest of men—the gods it was brought us grief, 210
begrudging that we two should remain one with the other,
enjoy our joint life together from youth to the brink of old age.
But please don't now get cross or take me to task because
at first sight I didn't, as now, give you a loving welcome!
The heart in my breast was always terrified lest some man 215
might turn up here, beguile me with his specious story—
many there are who scheme for their own low profit!
Not even Argive Helen, Zeus' progeny, would have coupled
in love and bed with that foreigner had she but known
the Achaians' warlike sons were going to fetch her back 220
to her own home and country. In her case a god

incited her to commit her improper act: not till then
did she put in her mind that ghastly act of mad folly,
that first brought such grief upon us as well. But now—
since you've already recounted, clear and plain, the tokens 225
of this bed of ours, seen by no other living mortal
except you and me alone, and one solitary handmaid,
Aktōr's daughter, a gift from my father, before I came here,
the doorkeeper of our close-built bridal chamber now—
you've convinced my heart, all too stubborn though it was." 230

So she spoke, and stirred in his heart yet more the urge to cry,
and he wept as he held in his arms his loyal beloved wife,
and welcome as is the appearance of dry land to men swimming,
men whose strong ship Poseidōn has wrecked out on the deep,
as it's driven on by the gale and the cresting waves, 235
and few have made it to land out of the grey salt sea
by swimming, and thick is the brine that's crusted on their bodies,
and glad they are to have got ashore, and escaped disaster—
so welcome to her was her husband as she looked upon him,
never relaxing the hold of her white arms round his neck. 240
Indeed, rosy-fingered Dawn would have risen while they wept
had the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, not planned things otherwise.
The night's last stage she prolonged, while holding up
golden-throned Dawn at Ocean, and not permitting her
to yoke up her swift-footed horses, bringing light to mankind— 245
Phaethōn and Lampos, the colts that draw Dawn's chariot.

Then resourceful Odysseus addressed his wife, saying: "Not yet
have we reached the conclusion, my wife, of all our trials:
there's a measureless task still awaiting us in the future,
both long and hard: I need to accomplish this in full. 250
That's what the ghost of Teirēsias prophesied to me
on the day I ventured down into the realm of Hadēs
to enquire about my comrades' homecoming, and my own.
But come, my wife, let's to bed, so that now, at last, soothed
by sweet sleep, we may find our joy and comfort together." 255

Then prudent Penelopē responded to him, saying:
"Your bed shall be ready for you whenever your heart
is so inclined, now the gods have managed your return
to your well-built home, and to your native country:

but since you've thought of this, and a god's put it in your mind, 260
tell me what this trial is—I fancy I'll learn its nature
soon enough: no bad thing to know of it in advance."

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to her, saying:
"Strange lady, why do you now so urgently want me
to tell you this? Well, I'll do so, I'll keep nothing secret. 265
But your heart will get no joy of it, nor am I myself
happy about it. Teirēsias said I must travel to numerous
cities of men, while holding a well-shaped oar in my hands,
until I come among men who know nothing of the sea,
who eat their food without flavoring it with salt 270
and have never set eyes on ships with purple cheeks
or on the well-shaped oars that serve as a ship's wings;
and he told me a manifest sign, one that wouldn't escape me:
when on the road I encounter another man who believes
what I have on my sturdy shoulder is a winnowing-fan, 275
I'm to fix my well-shaped oar on end in the ground,
and offer a lavish sacrifice to the lord Poseidōn—
a ram, a bull, and a stud boar that mounts its sows.
I then must come back home, make rich sacred offerings
to the immortal gods who possess broad heaven, 280
in due order. Death will come to me from the sea,
the gentlest of ends, that will take me only when
I've worn out a sleek old age, with my people round me
prospering. All of this, he told me, would come to pass."

Prudent Penelopē then responded to him, saying: 285
"If indeed the gods are allowing you a better old age,
then there's hope that we'll get a chance to escape our troubles."

Such was the conversation between them. All this while
the nurse and Eurynomē were making up their bed
with soft bedclothes, under the light of flaming torches; 290
and when they'd hastily readied the solid bedstead,
the old nurse went off to sleep in her own quarters,
while Eurynomē, maid of the bedchamber, conducted them
on their way to bed, holding a torch on her hand.
After escorting them there she too retired, while they 295
happily rediscovered the world of their old-time bed.
Tēlemachos and the cowherd and the swineherd now

stopped their feet from dancing, stopped the women too,
and lay down to sleep themselves, in the shadowy halls.

When the couple had had their fill of passionate lovemaking, 300
they got pleasure from conversation, chatting to one another.
She, bright among women, told of all she'd borne in the halls,
having to watch the destructive crowd of suitors, those who,
with her as excuse, had slaughtered many cattle and fat sheep,
while too much wine was drawn from the storage jars; while he, 305
Zeus-born Odysseus, recounted all the woes he'd inflicted
on others, and all he'd endured with pain himself;
and she heard him out with delight, and sweet sleep never
was shed on her eyelids until his whole tale was told.

He began with how he'd first overcome the Kikones, 310
then came to the rich terrain of the lotus-eating men;
and all that the Kyklōps did, and the price he made him pay
for those of his sturdy comrades he'd pitilessly devoured;
and then how he came to Aiolos, who readily welcomed him,
and gave him conveyance—but he was not yet fated to reach 315
his own land: once again the storm wind snatched him up
and bore him, heavily groaning, over the fish-rich deep;
then how he'd come to Tēlepylos, where the Laistrygonians
destroyed his ships and all his well-greaved comrades,
Odysseus alone escaping in his black ship. He next 320
recounted all of Kirkē's deceits and contrivances,
how he'd gone in his many-oared ship to Hadēs' dank domain,
to consult the spirit of Theban Teirēsias; and how
there he'd seen every one of his former companions,
besides the mother who bore him, and nursed him as a child; 325
how he'd heard the voice of the Sirens, unceasing singers;
how he'd come to the Wandering Rocks, and to dread Charybdis
and Skyllē, from whom till then no man had escaped unscathed;
and how his comrades had slaughtered the cattle of Hēlios;
and how his swift ship had been struck by a smoldering bolt 330
from high-thundering Zeus, and his fine comrades died together,
all of them: he alone got clear of the grim death spirits;
how he came to the isle of Ōgygia and the nymph Kalypsō,
who kept him there, longing to have him as her husband,
in her hollow caves, and looked after him, and declared 335
she would make him immortal and ageless all his days,

yet never could win over the heart in his breast; and how
after many hardships endured he reached the Phaiakians,
who treated him with high honor, as though he were a god,
and conveyed him home in a ship to his native country 340
with presents of bronze and gold and apparel. This concluded
the tale as he told it and was when sweet limb-loosening
sleep sprang on him, dissolving his heart's anxieties.

The grey-eyed goddess Athēnē now had another idea.
When she figured Odysseus had had his fill of pleasure 345
from bedding his wife and sleeping, she at once aroused
from Ocean the Dawn, early risen and golden-throned,
to bring light to mankind; and now Odysseus arose
from his soft bed, and gave a charge to Penelopē, saying:
"My wife, by now we've had a surfeit of endless trials, 350
both of us, you here weeping over my troubled homecoming,
while Zeus and the other deities hobbled me with hardships
far from my own country, though I longed to be back!
But now we've come at last to the marriage bed we yearned for,
you'll care for such possessions as I have here in the halls; 355
and as for the flocks that these haughty suitors have wasted,
I'll get a good many by raiding, and others that the Achaians
will give me, until we've replenished every last empty stall!
My first task now is to visit my wooded farmstead and see
my sturdy old father, who's so distressed on my account. 360
And on you, wife, I lay this charge, as a sensible woman:
Beginning at sunrise the word will very soon get around
concerning these men, the suitors, whom I slew in our halls;
so both you and your women servants must go upstairs
to your chamber and sit there: no peeping, don't ask questions." 365

That said, he arranged his fine armor about his shoulders,
woke up Tēlemachos and the cowherd and the swineherd,
and ordered them all to lay hands on their war gear. They
did not disregard him, but donned their bronze body armor,
and opened the doors and went out, with Odysseus leading. 370
Light already was over the earth, but Athēnē concealed them
in darkness, and led them out quickly from the city.

Book 24

Hermēs, god of Kyllēnē, now summoned forth the ghosts
of the men who'd been suitors: he held the staff in his hands—
exquisite, golden—with which he bemuses the eyes
of those he wishes, while others he conjures out of their sleep.
This he used to herd and to lead them: they followed him, squeaking. 5
As in the furthest recesses of some vast cave the bats
flit about squeaking when one of them falls down the rock face
from the chain they form, clinging closely one to another,
so these went along with him, squeaking. Hermēs the healer
conducted them down dank and moldering pathways: 10
by the streams of Ocean they went, and the White Rock,
they went by the gates of the sun and the region of dreams,
and quickly they now arrived at the meadow of asphodels,
where ghosts dwell, the shades of those whose toils are over.
There they found the ghost of Pēleus' son Achillēs, 15
and those of Patroklos and of peerless Antilochos,
and of Aias, unmatched for handsomeness and stature
among all the Danaäns, save for Pēleus' peerless son.

So these gathered round Achillēs. Close to them now
there came the ghost of Atreus' son Agamemnōn, 20
grieving; and round him clustered the ghosts of all those
who'd died and met their fate with him in Aigisthos' house;
and the first ghost to address him was the son of Pēleus, saying:
"Son of Atreus, we had this belief that Zeus, the hurler of bolts,
loved you above other heroes, for all your days, because 25
you were lord over many brave men out there in the land
of the Trojans, where we Achaians suffered much hardship.
Yet on you as well there was fated to come too early
that deadly destiny which no mortal born can avoid—
Would that, while still enjoying your royal power, 30
you'd encountered your death and fate in Trojan country!

"Then all the Achaians would have made you a burial mound,
and great glory would have been yours, and your son's, hereafter,
whereas now you've been doomed to suffer a most piteous death."

Then the ghost of the son of Atreus responded to him, saying: 35
"Ah, fortunate son of Peleus, godlike Achilles: you died
out at Troy, far from Argos, and around you others were slain,
the finest sons of the Trojans and the Achaians,
fighting over your body; amid the swirling dust
great in your greatness you lay, your horsemanship forgotten. 40
That whole day we battled; we'd never have quit fighting
had Zeus not unleashed a hurricane, and stopped us.
But when we'd carried you out of the battle to the ships,
we laid you on a litter, and cleansed your splendid body
with warm water and unguents, and the Danaäns shed 45
many warm tears over you, cut off locks of their hair.
Your mother came up from the sea with her immortal sea nymphs
when she heard the news: a cry echoed over the deep,
a strange cry, and panic now seized on all the Achaians:
they'd have taken off and run for it, back to the hollow ships, 50
had they not been checked by a man versed in ancient wisdom—
Nestōr: even before this his counsel had seemed the best.
He with friendly intent now addressed the assembly, saying:
'Stop this, you Argives! Don't flee, you Achaian youths!
It's his mother, come from the sea with her immortal sea nymphs 55
in her concern for the death of her own son.'

"So he spoke,
and the great-hearted Achaians abandoned their panic flight.
Round you gathered the daughters of the Old Man of the Sea[1]
lamenting piteously, wrapped you in ambrosial clothing;
all the Nine Muses with their sweet antiphonal voices 60
now led the dirge—there wasn't a single tearless Argive
to be seen, so deeply did the clear-toned Muse affect them.
So for seventeen days, by night as well as by day,
we mourned you, immortal gods and mortal men together;
then on the eighteenth we surrendered you to the fire, 65
and many fat sheep and crumple-horned oxen we slaughtered
around you; you were burned in the gods' own clothing
with a wealth of sweet honey and unguents: many Achaian heroes

1. Here, Nēreus, son of Pontos (Hes., *Th.* 233–64: the deep sea personified), and father of the sea nymph Nēreïds (q.v. Gloss.) by Ocean's daughter Dōris. H. never mentions him by name. The title "Old Man of the Sea" is one he also applies to Prōteus and Phorkys. Cf. *HE,* 2: 570.

footed it round the pyre in their war gear while you burned,
foot soldiers and horsemen both: a great clamor arose. 70
But when Hephaistos' flames had finished their work,
at dawn we collected your white bones, Achilles,
in unmixed wine and fine oil. Your mother had given us
a golden two-handled jar: a present from Dionysos,
she said, and the work of renowned Hephaistos. In this 75
your white bones now lie, illustrious Achilles,
mingled with those of dead Patroklos, Menoitios' son;
separate are those of Antilochos, whom you honored
above all your comrades, save only dead Patroklos. Over them
we heaped up a huge and matchless burial mound— 80
we, the sacred army of Argive spearmen—on
a prominent headland by the broad Hellespont,[2]
to be visible far out at sea both to men now living
and those yet unborn hereafter. And your mother
sought and obtained from the gods most exquisite prizes 85
and set them in mid-arena to be won by the best Achaians.
Before now you've been present at the funeral games of many
heroes, when on the occasion of a king's demise
young men gird themselves up and prepare to compete
for prizes; had you seen these ones you'd have been astounded 90
by the sheer beauty of the prizes the goddess, silver-footed
Thetis, set up in your honor: most dear to the gods you were!
So not even in death did you lose your name, but forever
your noble renown, Achilles, shall be known to all mankind.
But what pleasure had I from this—that I wound up the war? 95
For on my return Zeus contrived me a most miserable end,
at the hands of Aigisthos and my accursed wife."

Such was the conversation between them, one to the other.
The Escort, the slayer of Argos, now approached them,
leading down the ghosts of those suitors whom Odysseus had killed; 100
The two, amazed by the sight, went straight to meet them.
The ghost of Agamemnōn, Atreus' son, recognized
Melaneus' dear son, far-famed Amphimedōn, who
had his home on Ithákē, and whose guest-friend he'd once been.

2. Just such a tumulus still exists on a headland at the site of ancient Sigeion in the Troad, identified by later writers as the Achilleion referred to here: whether the association was early or a later assumption is uncertain. See Heubeck in *Comm.,* 3: 369.

Atreus' son was the first to speak, and addressed him, saying: 105
"Amphimedōn, what befell you, all picked men of like age,
to bring you here, down below the dark earth? Not otherwise
would one make one's list if selecting the best men in the city!
Was it Poseidōn destroyed you aboard your vessels
by stirring up the dread blast of hard-blowing gales? 110
Or did hostile men work your destruction on dry land
when you were lifting their cattle and fine fleecy sheep
or fighting them for their city and for their women?
Answer my question! I declare that I'm your guest-friend—
Don't you recall the time I came there to your house 115
with godlike Menelaös, to persuade Odysseus
to accompany us to Ilion on the well-benched ships?[3]
A whole month the journey took us, crossing the broad deep,
for hard it was to persuade Odysseus the city-sacker."

Then the ghost of Amphimedōn responded to him, saying: 120
"Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnōn, king of men,
I recall these events, Zeus' nursling, just as you recount them;
and now I in turn shall tell you, truthfully and in full,
what led to our nasty death, how the whole thing happened.
We were courting the wife of the long-absent Odysseus: 125
she neither rejected nor made this marriage that she hated,
but—while planning death and black fate for us—
privately conceived this other trick in her mind.
In her halls she set up a great loom, and started weaving—
very broad was the web, fine of thread—and said to us then: 130
'You young men, my suitors now noble Odysseus is dead,
be patient, though eager to wed me, until I finish
this web: I should not want my woven work to be wasted—
a shroud for the hero Laërtēs, against that day
when the grim fate of pitiless death shall overtake him: 135
then the local Achaian women won't be able to blame me
for a man who'd won so much being left with no winding-sheet.'

"So she spoke; our proud hearts assented to what she said.
From then on, day after day, she'd be weaving at the great loom,

3. I suspect a tacit allusion here to the feigning of insanity by the young, recently married, Odysseus—not yet the city-sacker—to avoid going to Troy: *Cypria,* arg. 5.8–10 (West 2003, 70–73).

but at night she'd have torches set up, and undo her work. 140
Thus for three years she beguiled and persuaded the Achaians;
but when the fourth year arrived, and the seasons came round,
and the months wore away, and day after day passed by,
then one of her women, who knew the truth, informed us,
and we caught her undoing her work at that splendid loom. 145
So she finished it off perforce, though against her will,
and showed it to us when she'd woven it on the great web
and washed it: it shone like the sun or the moon. It was then
that some evil spirit brought Odysseus from who knows where
to the border of his estate, where the swineherd lived. 150
Thither too there came the dear son of godlike Odysseus,
on his way back in his black ship from sandy Pylos;
and the two of them, after planning a nasty death for the suitors,
returned to the famous town, Odysseus later,
but Tēlemachos going on ahead of him. Now the swineherd 155
brought in Odysseus, meanly garbed, and made
to look like a miserable beggar, of a great age
and propped on a staff. The clothes he wore were ragged.
No man among us, not even the older ones, when he
appeared out of nowhere could tell who he really was: 160
we all assailed him with insults, threw things at him.
He for a while, set firm in his purpose, put up
with being pelted and taunted there his own domain;
but when the intent of Zeus of the aegis stirred him,
with Tēlemachos' help he removed all the first-class war gear, 165
stowed it away in a storeroom and bolted the door.
Then, in his crafty planning, he instructed his wife to set
before the suitors his bow and the grey iron, as a contest—
and the beginning of death—for us ill-fated men.
Not one of us was able to draw and notch the string 170
of his powerful bow: we all fell far short of that.
But when the great bow was passed into Odysseus' hands,
then we all of us made a great outcry, shouted aloud
not to give him the bow, whatever he might say.
Only Tēlemachos urged him on, and told him to try it. 175
So the noble much-enduring Odysseus grasped the bow,
and easily strung it, and sent an arrow through the iron.
Then he went and stood on the threshold, and emptied out
his swift shafts, glancing round fiercely, and shot the prince

Antinoös, then let fly at the others his hurtful arrows, 180
taking sure aim. The men fell thick and fast, and now
it became very clear that some god was his helper,
for suddenly sallying forth they raged from room to room
killing men on all sides, and a ghastly clamor went up
as heads were stove in, and the whole floor ran with blood. 185
So we all died, Agamemnōn; and even now our bodies
are still lying there, uncared-for, in the halls of Odysseus,
since the dear ones in each man's home as yet know nothing of it—
those who'd wash the black gore away from our wounds,
and lay us out, keening: the proper privilege of the dead." 190

Then the ghost of the son of Atreus responded to him, saying:
"Ah, fortunate son of Laërtēs, resourceful Odysseus!
Truly endowed with great virtue was the bedfellow you won!
How excellent was the mind-set of Ikarios' daughter,
blameless Penelopē, how well she remembered Odysseus, 195
her wedded husband! And so the renown of her great virtue
shall never perish, because the immortals shall make a charming
song for men here on earth, about constant Penelopē!
Not such was Tyndareus' daughter, who did a wicked deed,
killing her wedded husband: loathsome the song about her 200
left to posterity, and vile the repute she bequeathed
to all womankind, even those who conduct was virtuous."

Such was the conversation they had with one another,
standing in Hadēs' domain, deep down below the earth.

The others now, leaving the city, soon arrived at Laërtēs' 205
farmstead, fine and well-cultivated, which he'd acquired
long ago, and heavy the labor that he'd expended on it.
This was his home. All round it ran the outhouses in which
there ate, sat, and slept those who were his servants
out of necessity, working at whatever he wanted. Inside 210
the house lived an old Sikel[4] woman, who took good care
of the old man himself, on his farmstead, far from the city.

Odysseus addressed his servants and son, saying: "You go now
into his well-built house, and quickly choose and slaughter
for dinner the very best of the hogs; but as for me, 215

4. See 20.383 and n. 3 ad loc.

I mean to make trial of my father, find out whether he
will recognize me, know who I am when he sees me,
or fail to know me, since I've been away so long."

So saying, he handed over his war gear to his servants.
They then hastened into the house, but Odysseus 220
went off to the flourishing vineyard to carry out his test.
As he entered the large orchard he did not find Dolios,
or any of his slaves or his sons: they'd all gone off
collecting stones to make a wall for the vineyard,
with the old man leading the way. Instead he found 225
his father alone in the well-constructed vineyard,
digging around a plant, in a filthy tunic,
patched and shabby, and round his shins he'd fastened
stitched leggings of oxhide, to stop him getting scratched,
with gloves on his hands against the thorns, and above them 230
on his head a goatskin cap—all fostering his sorrow.
When much-enduring noble Odysseus saw him thus,
worn out by old age, and with great grief in his heart,
standing below a tall pear tree he shed tears, as he
debated in mind and heart what it was he should do next: 235
should he kiss and embrace his father, tell him all
about how he'd returned, come back to his own country;
or should he first ask him questions, test him on details?
And as he reflected, it struck him that this was the better course:
to make trial of him to begin with, use bantering language. 240
With this in mind noble Odysseus went directly to him.
Laërtēs, head down, was still digging around the plant:
his illustrious son came up and addressed him, saying:
"Old man, you've no lack of skill, the way you tend this orchard!
You take good care of it all, there isn't one thing here— 245
plant or fig tree, vine, pear tree, olive, or even
the vegetable plot—that lacks proper cultivation!
But I do have to tell you, and please don't take offense:
your person is not well cared for: you endure a wretched
old age, you're unpleasantly filthy, you wear foul clothes. 250
Why doesn't your master look after you? Not, clearly, because
you're idle! There's nothing slavish about your appearance,
in bearing or stature: you're like a man who's a king—
the kind of person who, when he's bathed and eaten,

should sleep soft. And that's the proper way for the old! 255
Now come, tell me this, and answer me truthfully:
What man's servant are you? Whose orchard is this you tend?
And tell me this truly also, so I may be certain:
Is this really Ithákē I've come to, as a man informed me
whom I encountered just now as I made my way here? 260
He wasn't very clear-headed: he didn't manage to tell me
any particulars, or listen to what I said when I asked him
about a guest-friend of mine: does he still live, exist?
Or is he dead already, and in Hādēs' domain? I shall
speak plainly to you: pay attention and hear me out! 265
I once, in my own country, entertained a man
who'd come to our house, and no other mortal yet
of all remote-dwelling strangers was more welcome there.
By descent he was, he said, from Ithákē: he told me
his own father was Laërtēs, the son of Arkeisios. 270
I escorted him to our house, and welcomed him properly
with full entertainment from our rich household store;
and I offered him gifts of guest-friendship, such as are fitting—
of fine-wrought gold I bestowed on him seven talents,
and a mixing-bowl all of silver, adorned with flowers, 275
a dozen plain cloaks, the same number of rugs and blankets,
and as many beautiful mantles, with matching tunics;
women I also gave him, skilled in fine handiwork,
four of them, very attractive, the ones he fancied himself."

Then his father responded to him, shedding tears: 280
"Stranger, indeed you've come to the land about which you ask;
but outrageous and reckless men are now masters of it,
and these countless gifts you bestowed were given in vain,
for if you'd found him alive in this land of Ithákē
he'd have sent you on your way with ample gifts in exchange, 285
after generous entertainment, the due right of the one
who began it. Come, tell me this, and give me a truthful answer:
How many years is it now since you entertained that guest,
your unfortunate guest—my son, if he ever existed,
my ill-fated son! Far from friends and homeland, either 290
fish have doubtless devoured him out in the deep, or else
he's fallen prey on land to wild beasts and birds. Neither
his mother nor I, his parents, mourned and enshrouded him;

nor did prudent Penelopē, his well-dowered wife,
keen over her own husband, as was fitting, on his bier 295
after closing his eyes—the proper entitlement of the dead.
And tell me this truly also, so I may be certain:
Who are you? From where? What city? Who are your parents?
Where is the swift ship moored that brought you hither
with your godlike comrades? Or did you pay your passage 300
aboard another's vessel, so they put you off, and sailed on?"

Then resourceful Odysseus responded to him, saying:
"I will give you a full and truthful account of these things.
I come from Alybas, where I live in a well-known house,
and I'm the son of Apheidas, Lord Polypēmōn's son: 305
my own name is Epēritos. Some god drove me off course
from Sikaníē,[5] landed me here against my will. My ship's
out there, beached off farmland, far distant from the city.
But as for Odysseus, this is now the fifth year since
he departed from there and left my native country— 310
ill-fated man! Yet he had good omens on setting out—
birds on the right: I was glad of them as I sent him on his way,
and he was glad at departure. We both had high hopes
of meeting again as guest-friends, and exchanging splendid gifts."

So he spoke. A black cloud of grief now covered Laërtēs: 315
with both hands he gathered up the dark grimy dust,
poured it over his grizzled head, ceaselessly groaning.
Odysseus' heart was stirred, and up through his nostrils
rose a strong sharp pang as he looked at his dear father.
He sprang forward, embraced and kissed him, exclaiming: "Father, 320
I myself, here, am the man about whom you ask,
come back in the twentieth year to my own country!
So stop your weeping and tearful lamentation,
for I'll explain everything. But we urgently need to hurry—
I've killed the suitors who were occupying our house, 325
in revenge for their outrageous conduct and wicked acts."

5. Hdt. (7.170) tells us that Sikaniē was the ancient name for Sicily. The native Sikani seem to have been driven to the west of the island by invading Sikels from Italy; these in turn were forced to the island's inland center by colonizing Greeks. Alybas (?) ("Wandertown") is a fictitious name, like most of those Odysseus produces here; their meanings are uncertain. See Stanford 1971, 2: 423, and Heubeck in *Comm.,* 3: 395–96.

Then Laërtēs responded to him, saying: "If it's true
that you who've come here are indeed my son, Odysseus,
then give me some certain proof that will convince me."

To him resourceful Odysseus responded, saying: "Firstly, 330
take a close look at this scar, from a wound I was dealt
by the white tusk of a boar out up on Parnassos, when
I went there because you sent me, you and my lady mother,
to my mother's father Autolykos, to collect the gifts
he'd agreed and promised to give me when he came here. 335
Look, I'll also tell you the trees that you once gave me
in our well-laid-out orchard: I asked for each one as I
accompanied you through the garden—I was still a child.
It was these very trees we passed by, and you named them for me,
and told me about each one. Thirteen pear trees you gave me, 340
ten apple trees, forty fig trees. Rows of vines too you named,
and promised me fifty of these, to ripen at different times,
with clusters of grapes upon them at every stage, depending
on when Zeus' seasons brought them to their heaviest weight."

So he spoke, and his father's knees and heart gave way 345
as he recognized the sure signs that Odysseus had given him.
He embraced his dear son; but then noble much-enduring
Odysseus caught and held him close as he fainted. But when
he came round again, and the spirit revived in his breast,
he responded once more, and spoke, saying: "Zeus, Father, 350
you gods indeed still exist on high Olympos, if it's true
that the suitors have paid the price for their wanton violence!
But now I'm terribly scared at heart that very soon all
the men of Ithákē will come here against us, and send
urgent messages out to the Kephallēnian cities." 355

Resourceful Odysseus now responded to him, saying:
"Never fear, don't let these matters disturb your mind!
And now let's go to your house near the orchard, for I sent
Tēlemachos on ahead, with the cowherd and swineherd,
to quickly prepare a meal there."

So the two of them spoke, 360
and now made their way to Laërtēs' fine house; and when
they reached his pleasantly sited dwelling, there they found

Tēlemachos and the cowherd and the swineherd
carving plentiful meat up and mixing the bright wine.

Now great-hearted Laërtēs was bathed there in his house 365
by the Sikel servant. She rubbed him down with oil,
and dressed him in a fine mantle; and Athēnē stood close,
and filled out the limbs of the shepherd of the people
and made him of greater stature and sturdier to behold.
Out of the bath he came, and his dear son was astonished 370
to see him look so like the immortal gods; and he spoke,
and addressed him with winged words, saying: "My father,
it must be that one of the gods who are forever
has improved your looks, made you taller and more handsome!"

Then sagacious Laërtēs responded to him, saying: 375
"How I wish, by Zeus the Father, by Athēnē and Apollō,
that—as strong as I was when, as lord of the Kephallēnians,
I took Nērikos' well-built citadel, on the mainland cape—
in our domain yesterday, my armor about my shoulders,
standing beside you I'd helped to beat back those men, 380
the suitors! Then indeed I'd have unstrung the knees of many
there in your halls: the sight would have gladdened your heart."

Such was the conversation between them, When the others
had finished their work, and the meal was made and ready,
they sat down in order on the benches and chairs. As they 385
were reaching their hands to the food, there now came in
the elderly Dolios, and with him the old man's sons,
all tired from their field work: their mother, old Sikel servant,
had gone out and called them in, she who'd brought them up,
and took good care of Laërtēs, now great age was on him. 390
They, when they saw Odysseus, and realized who he was,
stood still, in dumbstruck amazement. But Odysseus
in conciliatory language now addressed them, saying:
"Old man, sit you down to dinner, and you others, give over
your wonder—we wanted to start on the food, but we've 395
been waiting a while, expecting you any moment."

So he spoke; but Dolios made straight for him, with both
arms outstretched, caught and kissed Odysseus' hand at the wrist,
then addressed him with winged words, saying: "Dear master,

you're back! We missed you so much, we never thought 400
we'd see you again! The gods themselves brought you here!
Good health to you, a warm welcome, may the gods bless you!
Oh, and tell me this truly, I want to be quite certain:
Does prudent Penelopē already know for sure
that you're back home, or shall we send her a messenger?" 405

Resourceful Odysseus then responded to him, saying:
"She already knows, old man: what need for you to do this?"

So he spoke. Dolios sat down again[6] on his polished chair.
In the same way, his sons now gathered round famous Odysseus
made him welcoming speeches and clasped his hands in theirs, 410
and then sat down in order beside their father, Dolios.

While they busied themselves with dinner, there in the hall,
Rumor the messenger sped through the city's every quarter,
reporting the hideous death and fate of the suitors. Those
who heard it now hurriedly gathered from all directions, 415
sobbing and wailing, there in front of Odysseus' domain.
Out from it each of them fetched their own dead for burial,
and all those from other cities they now sent homeward,
in the charge of seamen aboard swift ships; they themselves
went, grieving at heart, in a body to the place of assembly. 420
Then, when they were all assembled and met together,
Eupeithēs stood up and addressed them, incurable sorrow
a great weight on his heart on account of his own son,
Antinoös, the first man that noble Odysseus had slain.
Shedding tears for him, he now addressed the assembly, saying: 425
"A foul act it was, my friends, that this man committed
against the Achaians! Many fine men he took in his ships,
and the hollow ships he lost, and the men all perished;
and others, the best of the Kephallēnians, he slaughtered
on his return. So come, before he runs away to Pylos 430
or sacred Ēlis, where the Epeians hold sway,

6. There has been no indication that Dolios had stopped to sit down before approaching his master. The line is semi-formulaic: see 17.602, where it is said (correctly) of Eumaios. Similarly, line 407, as Heubeck (*Com.,* 3: 404) rightly observes, "sounds more abrupt than intended"; but then it is modeled on *Il.* 13.275, where it is wholly appropriate.

let's get going, or hereafter we shall be disgraced forever:
this matter will be a reproach for men yet unborn to hear of
unless we're revenged on the killers of our sons and brothers!
For me there would certainly be no pleasure in clinging 435
to life—I'd rather die now, join the departed shades!
So lets get going, before they cross the sea and escape us."

So he spoke, shedding tears. Pity seized on all the Achaians.
Then they were joined by Medōn and the godlike minstrel
from Odysseus' domain, for sleep had now let them go. 440
They stood there among them: amazement gripped every man.
Then Medōn, thoughtful and sensible, addressed them, saying:
"Hear me out now, men of Ithákē! Odysseus did not
perform these deeds without the immortal gods' support!
I myself saw a deathless god, who stood beside him, 445
in all ways resembling Mentōr, yet as an immortal
god he appeared there, in front of Odysseus, now
encouraging him; now again, alarming the suitors
he'd storm through the hall, and they fell thick and fast."

So he spoke, and pale fear now seized upon them all. 450
Then among them there spoke the aged hero Halithersēs,
son of Mastōr: he alone saw both before and after.
He with friendly intent now addressed the assembly, saying:
"Give a hearing, you men of Ithákē, to what I shall tell you!
It's your own fault, my friends, that all these actions happened! 455
You wouldn't listen to me or to Mentōr, the people's shepherd,
and make your sons give over their mindless stupidity!
In their criminal folly they perpetrated a monstrous wrong,
squandering the possessions and insulting the bedfellow
of a most noble man, saying he would never return. 460
Let it be this way, then, and do as I tell you: we should not
strike back—he that does might bring trouble upon himself."

So he spoke. More than half of them now sprang to their feet
in a great uproar—the rest stayed together where they were,—
for this speech aroused their displeasure, they were convinced 465
by Eupeithēs, so that now they rushed off for their armor,
and when they'd clothed their bodies in gleaming bronze,
they assembled then in a body in front of the spacious town,

with Eupeithēs in his folly leading them: he imagined
he was going to avenge his son's murder. He was not destined 470
to come back himself, but rather to meet his fate there.

Athēnē now spoke to Zeus, the son of Kronos, saying:
"Son of Kronos, our Father, supreme above all rulers,
will you answer my questions? What's your mind now hiding?
Will you promote further warfare and the vile din of battle, 475
or rather make friendship between the opposing sides?"

Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer responded to her, saying:
"My child, why ask me questions about these matters?
Was it not you yourself who thought up this whole plan,
for Odysseus to come home and be revenged on these men? 480
So, do as you please—but I'll tell you what's fitting. Now
that noble Odysseus has worked his vengeance on the suitors,
they must swear a solemn oath: let him be king for life,
while as to the killing of their sons and brothers, let us
enforce a forgetting of it. Let them, as previously, 485
be friends with each other; let wealth and peace abound."

So saying, he roused Athēnē, who was eager already, and she
went on her way, darting down from Olympos' heights.

When his group had assuaged their desire for mind-honeying food,
much-enduring noble Odysseus quickly spoke to them, saying: 490
"Someone has to go out and see how near they're getting."

So he spoke. One of Dolios' sons now went out, as he ordered,
stood at the threshold and saw them, all close at hand,
and at once addressed Odysseus with winged words, saying:
"It's them, they're close! We need to arm ourselves at once!" 495

So he spoke; they stood up and donned their armor. Odysseus
and his men were four, with the six sons of Dolios, while
Laërtēs, and Dolios too, both armed themselves as well,
grey-haired though they were, now forced to be warriors.
Then, when they'd clothed their bodies in gleaming bronze, 500
they opened the doors and went out. Odysseus led them.

Athēnē, daughter of Zeus, now joined their company,
likening herself to Mentōr in both voice and appearance.

Much-enduring noble Odysseus rejoiced at he sight of her,
and at once he addressed his dear son Tēlemachos, saying: 505
"Tēlemachos, you'll now learn for yourself—having come
where battle picks out the truly best men fighting—
not in any way to disgrace your fathers' ancestors, who
long ago excelled the world over in manly strength and valor."

Sagacious Tēlemachos responded to him, saying: 510
"You'll see me, if you so wish, dear father—such is my spirit—
in no way, as you say, disgracing your ancestry."

So he spoke. Laërtēs was glad, and made this declaration:
"What a great day for me, you kind gods! I've joy past measure!
Here are my son and my grandson contending over valor!" 515
Grey-eyed Athēnē now came up and addressed him, saying:
"Ah, son of Arkeisios, of all my friends the dearest,
pray first to the grey-eyed maiden and to Zeus her father,
then at once whirl up your far-shadowing spear and throw it!"

So spoke Pallas Athēnē, and breathed great strength into him. 520
He made his prayer to Pallas Athēnē, and at once
whirled up his far-shadowing spear, and threw it, and struck
Eupeithēs through the bronze cheek piece of his helmet,
which did not hold up the spear: the bronze passed through,
and he fell with a thud, and his war gear clattered on him. 525
Then on their front rank fell Odysseus and his illustrious son,
striking at them with swords and twin-edged spears.
And now they'd have killed them all, cut them off from home,
had not Athēnē, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus,
shouted aloud, and stopped dead all the combatants, saying: 530
"Cease this disastrous warfare, you men of Ithákē,
so you may part the sooner, and without bloodshed."

So spoke Athēnē, and pale fear now seized upon them.
In their abject terror the arms now flew from their hands
and dropped to the ground as the goddess uttered these words, 535
and they turned toward the city, longing to save their lives.
Much-enduring noble Odysseus now gave a fearsome shout,
and gathered himself and swooped like some high-flying eagle;
but then Kronos' son flung down a smoldering bolt, which landed
right in front of the grey-eyed child of the mighty Father. At this 540

she, grey-eyed Athēnē, addressed Odysseus, saying:
"Scion of Zeus, Laërtēs' son, resourceful Odysseus,
hold back now, abandon the strife of leveling battle,
or Kronos' son, far-seeing Zeus, may get angry with you."

So spoke Athēnē: he obeyed, and was happy. A sworn 545
treaty for time to come was now made between both sides
by Pallas Athēnē, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus,
likening herself to Mentōr, in both voice and appearance.

Synopsis

BOOK 1

1–95: Invocation of the Muse; brief (and incomplete) synopsis of Odysseus' adventures prior to his return to Ithákē; the hostility of Poseidōn (1–21). Assembly of the gods (Poseidōn absent). Zeus criticizes human readiness to blame the gods for their own faults, and cites the willfulness of Aigisthos in ignoring Hermēs' warnings and killing Agamemnōn (22–43). Athēnē makes the case for rescuing Odysseus from Kalypsō's island (44–62). Zeus explains the anger of Poseidōn (Odysseus has blinded his son the Kyklōps) but agrees that the gods should facilitate Odysseus' homecoming, and that Poseidōn must be induced to relent (63–79). Athēnē asks for Hermēs to be sent to tell Kalypsō to let Odysseus go, and herself prepares to travel to Ithákē to see Tēlemachos (80–95).

96–320: Athēnē's discussion with Tēlemachos. She flits from Olympos to Ithákē in the likeness of Mentēs, lord of the Taphians, a family friend; the first introduction of the suitors, and their extravagance (96–112). Tēlemachos greets the stranger and arranges for hospitality; the suitors come in and indulge themselves; the minstrel Phēmios performs (113–55). Tēlemachos complains to his guest about the suitors, and enquires as to the guest's identity; Athēnē tells her cover story as Mentēs, claims guest-friendship going back a generation, gives us our first picture of Odysseus' old father, Laërtēs, suggests that Odysseus himself may still be alive, and tells Tēlemachos how like his father he is (156–212). Athēnē now questions him about the suitors; Tēlemachos laments his father's presumed death, and explains about Penelopē's dithering over remarriage (213–51). You certainly need him back, the goddess exclaims angrily: Would that he might return as I remember him: that would mean a quick death and a bitter marriage for these men [the first of a number of "prophecies" based on private or divine knowledge]—but all this is on the knees of the gods [including herself] (252–67). Athēnē now gives him instructions regarding his mother and the suitors and tells him to go to Pylos and Sparta to seek news of his father from Nestōr and Menelaös. She also reminds him of the fame Orestēs acquired by killing his father's murderer, Aigisthos. He thanks her, and offers further hospitality; no, she tells him, it's time to go, and she flies up like bird. He suspects that his guest was a god (268–320).

321–444: The minstrel sings; Penelopē comes down and listens, but tells him to choose another lay, since the return of the Achaians makes her sad. Tēlemachos chides her for this, and sends her back to her room (322–64). Tēlemachos also makes a very tart speech to the suitors about their extravagances, and they are duly surprised. One of them, Antinoös, rounds on him, saying, May you never get to be king! Tēlemachos backs off a little, but insists he's going to be lord in his own house (365–98). Eurymachos says kingship rests on the knees of the gods, but reassures Tēlemachos about his possessions. Then he asks about the stranger: who was this? Mentēs, says Tēlemachos; although privately he's convinced it was a god. The suitors continue merrymaking till it is dark, then go home. Tēlemachos is escorted to his own bedroom by the old nurse Eurykleia, introduced here for the first time, and lies sleepless, thinking about his coming journey (399–444).

BOOK 2

1–259: Tēlemachos has an assembly of the Ithákans summoned. The first speaker is old Aigyptios, one of whose sons has fallen victim to the Kyklōps while serving Odysseus after the war. Who, he asks, has called this meeting, the first ever since Odysseus left for Troy? And why has the meeting been called? I called it, Tēlemachos says, for two reasons: I've lost my father—I'm sure he must be dead by now; and there's no man such as he was to protect us. And now these suitors are after my mother and eating us out of house and home! (1–79) Antinoös points out that his mother has been putting them off for, literally, years, claiming to be weaving a shroud for old Laërtēs, which she then secretly undoes at night. So the suitors' word is this: she can go back home and wed someone her father chooses, but as long as she stays here dillydallying, we'll go on freeloading off your estate till she marries one of us Achaians (80–128). Tēlemachos responds: I can't pay back the vast bride-price to my mother's father, Ikarios, and anyway I can't throw out my own mother. You should be eating your own stores! Of course, I can't make you stop freeloading; all I can do is hope for requital from Zeus. At which point Zeus sends an omen of two eagles, duly interpreted by an old seer, Halithersēs: Odysseus will indeed soon come home, may indeed be near already, and planning death for the offenders! (129–76) Eurymachos pooh-poohs all this: Odysseus is already dead. Go home [Halithersēs] and prophesy to children! Not all birds are ominous. You're just after a gift for saying what would please! Penelopē should go back to her father, have him set up the wedding. Otherwise, here we stay, freeloading, till she makes up her mind and marries one of us! Tēlemachos replies: Enough! No more discussion! Now the gods know what's up, and so does everybody. Right: I want a ship and a crew, to go get news of my father. If he's alive and on his way home, I can last a year longer. If he's dead, I'll have a proper funeral for him, and let my mother marry again. Mentōr speaks after him, condemning the Ithákans for saying nothing against the suitors, though they far outnumber them. He gets an angry retort from Leokritos: even were Odysseus to come back, he'd be outnumbered and killed. And Tēlemachos will probably never

make his journey, just sit at home listening to rumors. The assembly then breaks up (177–259).

260–434: Tēlemachos prays to Athēnē and complains of the suitors' reactions to his proposals. Athēnē tells him to ignore the suitors and arrange his journey (260–95). Tēlemachos returns to the hall; Antinoös, contemptuously, tells him to sit down and enjoy himself; the ship and all else he wants will undoubtedly be provided for him. Tēlemachos retorts that he's now a grown man, he'll do what he can to finish off the suitors, and whatever it takes, he'll make the journey. He angrily withdraws his hand from that of Antinoös. The suitors jeer at him among themselves: oh, him, he'll maybe bring men or drugs to kill us, ha ha, or maybe he'll be shipwrecked and drowned, and then we'll have to share out his property—though his mother and her new husband get the house (261–336). Tēlemachos goes to the storeroom, calls old Eurykleia, gives her instructions for supplying food and wine for his journey to Pylos and Sparta. Eurykleia tries to dissuade him from going. Tēlemachos persists (the trip has divine backing): she is not, above all, to tell his mother for eleven or twelve days (or till she notices he's gone). Reluctantly, she promises, and sets about readying the supplies (337–81). Athēnē, disguised as Tēlemachos himself, goes round arranging for a ship and a crew, then makes the suitors drunk-drowsy, and ready to go home. It's now dark. She then tells Tēlemachos that the ship's ready for his departure. Tēlemachos goes aboard and gives the orders for sailing. Athēnē provides a west wind. They put out to sea and sail all night (382–434).

BOOK 3

1–228: After sunrise they reach Pylos, where a public sacrifice to Poseidōn is taking place. Athēnē, as Mentōr, tells Tēlemachos to go straight to Nestōr and question him. Tēlemachos is shy about approaching his distinguished elders. Athēnē tells him not to worry: between natural breeding and divine guidance (hers, though she doesn't say so), he'll be fine (1–28). They now join the company. The feast is being prepared. Nestōr's son Peisistratos welcomes them as guests, and invites "Mentōr" to offer a libation and prayer to Poseidōn, as being the older of the two. Athēnē does so, pleased by his sense of decorum: she invites Poseidōn to grant renown to Nestōr and his sons, and a successful trip to Tēlemachos. (H. can't resist adding that she herself was fulfilling these prayers.) Tēlemachos then also prays and pours a libation, and the feast begins (29–66). When the eating is over, Nestōr properly asks the strangers who they are, and what they're doing (business or piracy?). Tēlemachos, encouraged by Athēnē, makes a nervous, rambling request for news of his father (67–101). To this Nestōr replies with an even longer, more rambling disquisition: he is clearly a master of aged reminiscence. He goes back over the ten-year Trojan War, with compliments to Odysseus for wiliness, but concentrates on the ill-fated returns (*nostoi*) of the Greeks, and the divinely inspired quarrel between Menelaös—who wanted to sail at once, and had Nestōr's support—and Agamemnōn, who wanted to stay and sacrifice further, and was later joined by Odysseus. Nestōr himself got home

safely, as did the Argives, as well (he had heard) as the Myrmidons, Philoktētēs, and the Krētans. He ends by reminding Tēlemachos of Agamemnōn's murder by Aigisthos, and (relevance at last) what a good thing it is for a man to leave a son to avenge him in such cases. Agamemnōn had Orestēs; Odysseus (presuming his death) had—Tēlemachos, and a fine young man you are too! Tēlemachos says gloomily he's had no help from the gods and must endure. Ah, says Nestōr, if only Athēnē would favor you as she did your father! No man was shown such divine favor as he had from Athēnē! Not a hope, says Tēlemachos. It won't happen for me, even if the gods will it (102–228).

229–328: At this, unsurprisingly, Athēnē—still as Mentōr—rounds on Tēlemachos: a god who so wishes can easily get a man home, however far it may be! I'd rather suffer beforehand and make it back than be killed on my return, like Agamemnōn! Though of course—remembering reality—not even the gods can postpone a man's fated death. No return is possible for Odysseus, says Tēlemachos; and then, switching tack, I'd like to ask Nestōr about the truth of Agamemnōn's death—what really happened? And where was Menelaös? (229–52) Nestōr duly obliges. At first Klytaimnēstra resisted; but Aigisthos marooned the minstrel guarding her on a desert island, and she went with him willingly. Meanwhile, shipwreck and wandering kept Menelaös from home, so that Aigisthos ruled Mykēnai for seven years. In the eighth, Orestēs came back from exile and killed both his mother and Aigisthos; Menelaös got back home on the day of the funeral. So, Nestōr concludes, don't you stay away from home for too long! And go to Menelaös: he'll tell you all (253–328).

329–404: The sun sets, darkness comes on. Athēnē compliments Nestōr on his narrative, but advises him to make last libations to Poseidōn and then go home to bed: gods' feasts should not be prolonged too long after dark. Nestōr obeys. Athēnē (as Mentōr) and Tēlemachos make to return to their ship to sleep. Nestōr seeks to bed them in his own house. Yes, says Athēnē, keep Tēlemachos; but I'll go back to the ship and brief my comrades; then tomorrow we'll leave by sea, I have a debt to collect. You should lend Tēlemachos a chariot and horses, and send your son with him to Sparta (329–70). Athēnē now departs as a sea eagle, to general amazement. Nestōr at once guesses who this is, tells Tēlemachos he must be of consequence if the gods look after him, and himself prays to her, promising rich sacrifice. Then he leads his guests indoors: they pour libations, pray to Athēnē, then retire to sleep, and Tēlemachos and Peisistratos bed down in the colonnade. (371–404).

405–97: Early next morning Nestōr, his sons, and Tēlemachos meet outside. Nestōr gives immediate instructions for his promised sacrifice to Athēnē. There is to be a feast; Tēlemachos' crew is to be summoned for it. Action follows at once: a heifer is fetched, and the goldsmith to gild its horns. Everyone plays a part. The heifer is slaughtered, cut up, and roasted. Tēlemachos is bathed and dressed by Nestōr's daughter. They feast. Nestōr gives the word for chariot and horses to be made ready for the guest. Tēlemachos and Peisistratos mount and leave. After a night's stop at Phērai, they drive on to Sparta.

1–218: The travelers reach Menelaös' domain while he is celebrating a double marriage feast, for a son and a daughter. They are met by Eteōneus, Menelaös' squire, who's not certain whether to admit them or send them on, given the circumstances; Menelaös emphasizes his hospitality by saying, of course, bring them in, what were you thinking? (1–36). The horses are taken care of. The new guests admire the house. They are bathed and massaged and dressed, join the feast, and are welcomed by Menelaös himself, who hears Tēlemachos whisper to Peisistratos about the splendor of this establishment (37–77). He then launches into a verbose reminiscence about where this wealth came from, mixed up with references to the murder of his brother, Agamemnōn, and the fact that he had lost much wealth too (probably what Paris and Helen took with them when they eloped together), so that he didn't get unalloyed pleasure from it. But he mourns most of all, he says, for Odysseus, alive or dead, as his father, wife, and son must do (78–112). This naturally brings tears to Tēlemachos' eyes, and Menelaös notices: should he question him about his father, or let him bring the subject up himself? (Has he recognized him? We're not directly told.)

In any case, at this point in comes Helen, with expensive spinning equipment, and the first thing she says to her husband is: This young man is the spitting image of Odysseus! Yes, says Menelaös, now you say so, I see it too. Peisistratos then cuts in on behalf of the shy Tēlemachos, saying, Yes, it is he, and he's very shy! We've just come from my father, Nestōr. Tēlemachos is after news of his father. He's facing trouble all on his own at home. Menelaös then lists all the things he'd have done for Odysseus if he *had* come home. But the gods must have been jealous, and granted him no return (113–82). They all weep at this. Peisistratos says, Nestōr always said you were understanding. I now weep for my brother Antilochos, though I was too young to know him. Menelaös praises Nestōr, then says, No more weeping, let's think about supper. I'll talk to Tēlemachos in the morning. They return to the food (183–218).

219–305: Helen now puts a pleasure-giving and relaxing drug from Egypt into the wine. This done, she recounts her own ambiguous dealings with Odysseus in Troy, ending with regret at having abandoned her husband and family (219–63). Menelaös then caps this by telling how Helen had tried to tempt the occupants of the Wooden Horse to talk by imitating their wives' voices, but they were kept quiet by the canny Odysseus. Yes, says Tēlemachos, and not even that was enough to save him from destruction! And now it's time for bed. He and Peisistratos are again bedded down in a colonnade; but Menelaös sleeps beside Helen (264–305).

306–409: Next morning Menelaös gets up, dresses, goes out, and sits down beside Tēlemachos. Why has he traveled here? he asks him. Public or private business? Tēlemachos says he's come for news of his father and explains the trouble with the suitors that is going on at home. Don't be kind to me out of pity, he says; tell me the truth, if ever Odysseus kept any promise to you at Troy (306–31). Menelaös rages against the suitors, saying Odysseus will return like a lion and bring doom upon them! How I wish, he says, that Odysseus would come among them—as strong as he

was when he won that wrestling match on Lesbos! They'd meet a quick death and a bitter marriage then! As to what you ask, I swear I'll tell you all the Old Man of the Sea told me! (332–50) He then explains how his ship had been kept in harbor at the island of Pharos, by Egypt, for over twenty days by adverse winds, and he was afraid he and his crew would run out of food. But he was saved by Prōteus' daughter Eidotheē, to whom he explained that they must have been marooned there through having offended against some god. Could she—whichever all-knowing goddess she was—tell him what god had done it, and how he could get home? (351–81) She replied: Since you ask, I'll explain. My father is Prōteus, the Old Man of the Sea, servant of Poseidōn. He comes here regularly. If you can catch him, he'll show you how to get home and relate all the good and bad that's been done there while you were away. Menelaös said: It's hard for a mortal to catch a god! Can you tell me a way to do it? The goddess said: Yes! The Old Man comes here from the sea about noon, to sleep, and with him a pack of malodorous seals. I'll take you to the spot at daybreak, with three of your best men, and lay you down there (382–409).

410–80: Now, she went on, about the Old Man: he'll count the seals, and then lie down among them. When he's asleep, seize hold of him and hang on however hard he struggles to escape—he can assume all sorts of shapes! But hold him firm, and when he returns to his own form and questions you, then release him, and ask him what god is angry with you and how you're to get home (410–24). With that she plunged back into the sea, and Menelaös went back to his ships. Next morning, he says, I took my three chosen comrades and returned. She meanwhile came back with the new-flayed skins of four seals, and scooped out four pits in the sand, and made us lie in them, covered with the sealskins. The smell was horrible, but she overcame it by placing ambrosia under our noses (425–46). Later seals emerged from the sea in droves, and at noon came Prōteus. He counted them—including us and our sealskins in his tally—and lay down to sleep. We then rushed him and held him down while he changed to wild beasts, water, a tree, and so on; but presently he wearied and asked me which god had told us how to ambush him and what it was we wanted. I said: You're a god, you know how long I've been here, the whole story! So, tell me, what god keeps me here, and how can I get back home? Well, said Prōteus, you should have made proper offerings to Zeus and the rest before you set out! Now, before you can reach home you have to make another trip to Egypt and offer the gods rich sacrifices: only then will they grant you a safe homecoming (447–80).

481–569: Heartbroken, Menelaös said: I'll do all this. But tell me, did the Achaians whom Nestōr and I left all make it home? Or did some perish? Prōteus said: Why ask such questions? It's not your business to know, and you won't be happy knowing, for many were killed and many left behind, though only two leaders died on the homeward journey, and there's one who may be alive still but is held back somewhere far off across the sea (481–98). Aias [2] was lost on the voyage, driven onto the rocks by Poseidōn and drowned, because he boasted he'd escaped shipwreck despite the gods. As for your brother, [Agamemnōn,] he got safely home with Hērē's help. But

his arrival was told to his cousin Aigisthos by a watchman who'd been well paid to look out for him; Aigisthos chose twenty men to kill him at a feast welcoming him home, and he was slaughtered like an ox in the stall (499–537). At this news Menelaös wept and wanted to die, but Prōteus said to him: Don't weep; just get home as soon as you can. You may find Aigisthos alive still, or Orestēs may have got ahead of you and killed him, and you'll just be in time for the funeral feast. Comforted by this despite his grief, Menelaös now said: So, I now know about these two, but who's the third one, who may be alive somewhere overseas and unable to return? Prōteus answered him: That's Ithákan Laërtēs' son! I saw him on an island, kept there by the nymph Kalypsō: he's got no comrades, no ships. But you yourself, Menelaös, are destined not to die in Argos but to be conveyed by the immortals to the peaceful haven of the Elysian Fields, since as Helen's husband you're son-in-law to Zeus (538–69).

570–624: With that Prōteus dove into the sea, and Menelaös went back with his comrades to the ships and to sleep. Next morning they relaunched the ships in a sunny sea, restepped the masts, set the sails, and rowed back to Egypt. After appeasing the gods with sacrifices, Menelaös set up a burial mound for Agamemnōn and set out for home. The gods gave him an easy voyage.

This concluded his reminiscence to Tēlemachos, to whom he now said: Stay another twelve days or so, and then I'll send you home with splendid gifts, horses and a chariot, and a fine cup, for you to pour libations from and remember me by (570–92). Tēlemachos said: I'd love to stay on with you, but my comrades in Pylos are anxious to be moving; and as for gifts, Ithákē's not good terrain for horses and chariots. Menelaös smiled and said: The way you talk shows you're well bred. I'll change the gifts. I'll give you my best and richest treasure—a beautifully made silver and gold mixing bowl, the work of Hephaistos. While they talked, dinner guests were coming to Menelaös' abode with contributions of sheep and wine and bread (593–624).

625–95: Meanwhile the suitors were sporting with discus and javelin outside Odysseus' house. Their leaders, Antinoös and Eurymachos, sitting there, were now approached by Phronios' son Noēmōn, who asked Antinoös if he knew when Tēlemachos was getting back from Pylos, since he, Noēmōn, had lent him a ship and now needed it back to go over to Ēlis. This surprised them: they had no idea that Tēlemachos had gone to Pylos; they thought he was somewhere out on his estate. Antinoös said: When did he go? With whom? Friends or servants? And did he commandeer the ship, or did you lend it him freely? Noēmōn said: I lent it him freely, and it was some of the best young men in Ithákē who went with him. And I saw either Mentōr, or a god who resembled him exactly, boarding with them as their leader—and that was odd, because he was also here yesterday at sunup, though by that time he'd already sailed for Pylos. That said, he left (625–57). The other two, angry, called the suitors together, and Antinoös addressed them in a fury, saying: We never thought Tēlemachos would actually do it, but now he has, and taken good

men with him! He'll soon start making trouble for us. May Zeus destroy him before he reaches full manhood! So give me a ship and a score of men, and I'll ambush him in the strait between Ithákē and Samē! They all approved what he said, and went to the house. Now Medōn the herald heard what they were plotting and at once took the news to Penelopē. As he approached, she asked him why the suitors had sent him: Was it to tell the maidservants to drop their work and prepare a feast for them? Oh, may they do no more wooing and feasting! she cried. All of you! Wasting my son's wealth! None of you listened when told by your fathers what a just and virtuous king Odysseus was, never treating any man outrageously! Oh, your improper deeds are in plain view, and today good conduct earns no thanks! (658–95)

696–757: Medōn replied: I wish there was nothing worse than that! But these suitors are plotting a vile action, something I pray Zeus never lets happen! Tēlemachos went to Pylos and Sparta after news of his father, and they're planning to murder him on his return journey. Penelopē was shocked into tearful speechlessness but finally said: Why did my son do this? There was no need! Won't even his name be remembered? Medōn said: I don't know whether he himself had the idea of finding out his father's fate, or if maybe a god drove him to it. He then left, and Penelopē sank down on the floor in misery, and said, sobbing, to her handmaids: Zeus has visited more grief on me than on any other woman of my age. I lost, long ago, my lion-hearted husband, of great fame; and now the storm winds have swept away my son too, without my knowledge (696–728). None of you thought of waking me, though you all knew he was leaving! Had I known his intentions, I'd have stopped him or died in the attempt! Now find and send me Dolios, my gardener—he must go and tell Laertēs, who may have some plan, may go and make a weeping plea to the people who are determined to destroy this family, his and that of Odysseus (729–41). At this point the old nurse, Eurykleia, spoke up, saying: You may kill me, but I must tell you: I knew about this; I gave him food and wine for the trip. He made me swear not to tell you for twelve days, or till you missed him yourself—didn't want you to spoil your beauty by weeping! Now, you go bathe, and put on clean clothes, and go upstairs with your maidservants, and pray to Athēnē to save him from death. And don't lay more burdens on that overburdened old man: I don't think the gods so hate his family line that they'll wipe it out! (742–57)

758–847: So she comforted Penelopē and stopped her weeping. Penelopē bathed, put on clean clothes, went upstairs with her maids, and prayed thus to Athēnē: Hear me, goddess! If Odysseus ever burned rich offerings for you, remember that now! Save my dear son, protect him from these evil suitors! The goddess heard her prayer. Meanwhile the suitors were in an uproar, saying things like: Oh, the much-courted queen is busy about our marriage; she's no idea that her son's death has been ordered. But it was they who had no idea how things would turn out. Antinoös now reprimanded them, saying: Don't talk so openly or confidently! Someone inside the house may hear you. Rather, keep silent, and let's carry out the action we've planned and are all agreed on (759–77). With that he chose twenty reliable men, and they

went down to the shore, launched their ship, rigged her, armed themselves, moored her in the channel, disembarked, and waited till evening. Meanwhile Penelopē lay upstairs, not eating or drinking, wondering till she fell asleep whether her son would be killed by the suitors or escape. Then Athēnē had another idea. She made a phantom in the likeness of Penelopē's sister, Iphthīmē, and sent it to her. It entered her bedroom, stood over her, and said: Are you asleep, sister? The gods don't want you to weep or be distressed: Your son will come back; in no way do they see him as a wrongdoer (778–807). Penelopē answered her as she slept: Why are you here, sister? You've not come before; you live too far away. And now you tell me to stop lamenting, despite all that I suffer. I've lost my lion-hearted husband, and now my son's sailed away—a mere child still, who knows nothing about the ways of grown men. It's for him I'm most concerned, in case he's either killed or drowned: there's a plot to murder him on his way home. The phantom responded: Cheer up, for he has a guide such as men pray for: Pallas Athēnē! She pities your grief, and it is she who sent me to you. Penelopē said: If you're a god, and have heard the goddess' word, tell me about that other sorrowful man: Is he alive? or dead? But the phantom answered: No, of him I shall not speak openly: windy talk is worthless. With that the phantom vanished, and Penelopē woke, comforted by so plain a vision. Meanwhile the suitors embarked and set sail, murder on their minds. Between Ithákē and Samē is a small, rocky islet, Asteris, with a good harbor. It was here they waited in ambush for Tēlemachos (808–47).

BOOK 5

1–174: At a council of the gods, Athēnē reminds Zeus that Odysseus is being constrained by the nymph Kalypsō on her remote island; and not only is he not on his way home, but there's a plot being hatched by the suitors to kill his only son. Zeus replies that she herself already has a plan for Odysseus to come home and revenge himself on the suitors, and has his, Zeus', approval for a scheme to take care of Tēlemachos and frustrate the suitors' plot (1–27). Zeus now recaps the plan for Odysseus' return to Hermēs: he's to reach the land of the Phaiakians on a raft on the twentieth day; they will show him all honor and convey him home together with more gold, bronze, and clothes than he'd ever have been awarded as spoils at Troy. All this Hermēs is to repeat to Kalypsō, who is to do nothing to hinder his return, and indeed must facilitate it in every way. Hermēs takes off; his flight is described, as are the delightful amenities of Kalypsō's home when he arrives at her island (28–74).

75–147: Hermēs confronts Kalypsō, but Odysseus is away on the seashore, gazing out miserably and resenting his (very comfortable) fate. Kalypsō greets Hermēs, is curious about his visit: he doesn't often come her way. Hermēs gives her a quick rundown on the unfortunate returns of the Achaians from Troy, with a peremptory order from Zeus that she's to release the one that's ended up with her (75–115). Kalypsō complains, with examples, about the way the gods resent it when any female divinity makes out with a mortal, and says what a good time she's given Odysseus.

But she knows Zeus can't be crossed; however, she has no ships or crews for Odysseus. He's got to figure out a way himself. She can only advise him. With a warning to her not to do anything to provoke Zeus' wrath, Hermēs takes off on his homeward journey (116–47).

148–268: Kalypsō now goes to Odysseus with the news. Odysseus is desperate for his return, since (as H. snidely points out in an aside) "the nymph no longer pleased him." Cheer up, she tells him. I'm going to send you on your way. You make a raft, and I'll give you supplies, and off you go! But Odysseus is suspicious of this (unexplained!) change of heart, and won't act unless she swears a great oath that she's not planning some kind of mischief against him. Fine, she says, and swears the oath, saying it's advice that she herself would follow. They go back to her cave and have a meal: mortal food for him, ambrosia and nectar for her. She makes a last sad bid for his company. (Surely I'm as attractive as your wife? Don't you want to be immortal?) Odysseus replies: Don't be cross. I know a mortal woman can't compete with a goddess. I'm just homesick. And if some god shipwrecks me again, I'll just have to put up with it. It gets dark. They go to bed and make love. (There's something very realistic about this sequence.) (148–227) Next day the work of building a raft starts. Odysseus is given an axe, an adze, and augers (probably also a saw, though that we aren't told). Over the next three days, he fells twenty trees (!!) and trims them. He's obviously skilled. He equips the raft with gunwales, a sail, sheets, and halyards, and a steering oar. On the fourth day, all is done. Kalypsō now bathes him and dresses him and gives him his supplies, and, finally, orders up a good tailwind for him. He sets sail (228–68).

269–364: For seventeen days Odysseus sails peacefully, steering by the Bear, as Kalypsō had instructed him. On the eighteenth day, he actually sights the Phaiakian coastline. But then he is spotted by Poseidōn, on his way back to Olympos from his visit to the Aithiopians. He knows that Phaiakia is where Odysseus is fated to arrive eventually on his destined homecoming. But, muttering that the gods must have had a change of heart in his absence, Poseidōn decides that, nearing home though Odysseus is, he, Poseidōn, can still give him plenty of trouble before he actually gets there, and unleashes a great storm on him. Odysseus wishes he'd died at Troy; at least he'd have gotten a proper funeral then (269–322). A huge wave now flings him off the raft, breaks his mast, and washes away his steering oar. He manages to get back on what's left of the raft, but he and it are now mere playthings of the winds, which toss them about every which way. The sea nymph Īnō (Leukothea, "white goddess") takes pity on him, tells him to leave the raft and swim for it, and gives him her magic veil to keep him afloat. He has to return it to the sea when he's safely ashore. Even now Odysseus suspects a possible trap. So he decides to stick with the raft till it breaks up, and only then to swim for it (323–64).

366–493: Poseidōn now sends an ultra-powerful wave that does indeed break up the raft. Odysseus bestrides one plank as though riding a horse, strips off his waterlogged clothes, and binds on Leukothea's veil, ready to swim. Poseidōn shakes his head, tells Odysseus to go on wandering till he gets where Zeus has ordained: he'll still have

plenty of trouble en route! He then whips up his horses and drives off to his domain at Aigai. Athēnē promptly moves in and dissipates the storm. Even so the waves still buffet Odysseus about for two days and nights (365–89). On the third day the gale ceases, and Odysseus scans the shore. Dangerous crags and crashing breakers: he might be killed trying to land. But if he swims on he may be carried out to sea again by the storm. He makes an unsuccessful attempt to land and skins his hands. Prompted by a suggestion put into his head by Athēnē, he retreats from the surge, and swims on till he sees the outflow of a river. He prays to the river god, who creates calm for him. He struggles ashore and lies there, crushed by seawater, breathless, exhausted (390–457). When he recovers he returns the magical veil to the sea. But what to do? If he stays where he is, frost and dew may finish him off. But if he goes inland and hides under bushes, wild beasts may get him. In the end, he decides this last is the lesser of two evils. He finds a hollow under two bushes, thick with fallen leaves, digs himself in, covers himself snugly with leaves, and Athēnē puts him into a deep sleep (458–93). He has reached Scheria, as he was fated to do.

BOOK 6

1–109: While Odysseus sleeps, Athēnē goes to the Phaiakians' city (briefly described) and enters the house of the king, Alkinoös, in furtherance of Odysseus' eventual homecoming. She chooses the bedroom of his young daughter, Nausikaä, goes through the closed doors "like a breath of wind," and stands over the girl in the likeness of a local shipwright's daughter, a close friend of Nausikaä's, and proceeds to reproach her for not having bothered to do the laundry lately—the kind of thing, she says, that gets you a good reputation, makes you marriageable! You have suitors, good ones, already! So ask your father this morning for a wagon to go to the washing troughs! I'll come with you! (1–40). This said, Athēnē goes back to Olympos, which gets a brief, unexpected, and striking tribute as a kind of radiant, windless and cloudless Shangri-la. Nausikaä wakes, is impressed by her "dream," and asks her father for a wagon to do the laundry, but modestly says nothing about marriage, only what an amount of dirty clothes her bachelor brothers get through. No sooner said than done; the wagon is set up with mules, mama packs a picnic lunch, with oil for after bathing, Nausikaä takes the whip and drives, and she and her handmaids set off (41–84).They arrive at the troughs, do the laundry, and spread the clothes out to dry. While the clothes are drying, they bathe, rub themselves with oil, and eat their lunch. Then they play ball: Nausikaä looks like Artemis (85–109).

110–250: When the girls are packing the dry laundry to go home, Athēnē decides to wake Odysseus and bring him into their presence, intending that Nausikaä will lead him home to her parents. The ball goes into a deep eddy, the girls all shout, and Odysseus wakes, recognizes the voices as those of girls. He decides to investigate, and emerges, naked except for a leafy branch held in front of his private parts, looking like a wild mountain lion (110–34). The girls are scared and run: only Nausikaä holds her ground. Should he clasp her knees or stay apart and supplicate her? Better to stay

apart. He does so, and makes a flattering appeal: Are you goddess or mortal? If a goddess, you're most like Artemis! If mortal, lucky your parents, and even luckier the man who marries you! You're like a young palm shoot I saw on Dēlos once! I've been shipwrecked—give me some rags to wear, and show me the way into town! May the gods grant you a happy marriage! There's nothing better in this world! Nausikaä coolly responds: You seem a good man, but Zeus decides one's fate, and you just have to endure it. However: clothes you shall have, and I'll show you the way into town. This is the land of the Phaiakians, and I'm the daughter of Alkinoös, their king (135–97). Nausikaä then calls to her handmaids not to run—this is no enemy! He's an unfortunate wanderer, and we must offer him proper hospitality! So give him food and drink, and go bathe him in the river, out of the wind! The girls take him to a sheltered spot, give him clothes, tell him to bathe. He tells them to retire to a distance, it's not right for him to go naked among ladies! They report this to Nausikaä (198–223). Odysseus now bathes, rubs himself with oil, and puts on the clothes given him. Athēnē, as on other occasions, makes him look splendid. Nausikaä is astonished: the gods must be taking care of this man! Before he looked mean and shabby, but now he resembles a god! Oh, if I could marry someone like *him!* Might he just want to stay here awhile! H'm, girls, give him food and drink! They do. Of course, after what he's been though, he's ravenous (224–50).

251–331: After folding and stowing the clothes, she yokes the mules, boards the wagon, and gives Odysseus instructions. While they're still in the country, he's to follow the wagon behind, along with the handmaids. But when they're on the edge of town—she breaks off and describes it, following up with a brisk (and vivid) report of the kind of gossip there'll be if they come into town together—he's to stop at a grove of Athēnē, and wait there till he reckons they'll have got home. Then he must walk into town, ask for directions to her father's residence, and when he gets there, go in and supplicate, not Alkinoös, but his wife: if *she* approves of you, Nausikaä concludes, you have the best chance of getting home again! (251–315). With that she whips up the mules and takes off. Odysseus and the handmaids follow. The sun sets. He duly waits at Athēnē's grove, praying to the goddess that the Phaiakians will give him a friendly reception. Athēnē hears him, but doesn't (yet) appear before him face to face: she respects her uncle Poseidōn, who continues raging against Odysseus until he gets home (316–31).

BOOK 7

1–77: While Odysseus prays, Nausikaä arrives home. Her brothers look after the mules and the laundry. Her old nurse, Eurymedousa, a captive from Apeirē, lights a fire in her room and gets supper ready for her. Odysseus now goes to the city, made invisible by Athēnē to avoid awkward questions. Then she herself meets him on the outskirts, in the likeness of a young girl with a water pitcher. Odysseus asks her the way to Alkinoös' house. She offers to take him, with a warning that he shouldn't talk to anyone: they don't take kindly to strangers here. As they go, Odysseus admires the

harbor and its ships. They reach Alkinoös' house (1–47). Go on in, says Athēnē: you'll find the royals feasting inside. The first person you'll encounter is the queen, Arētē. Athēnē now gives a quick rundown on Arētē's ancestry, from which two key points emerge: she's descended from Poseidōn, and her husband, Alkinoös, is also her paternal uncle. She is greatly honored and respected by the people, like a goddess. She is highly intelligent. Once again Athēnē emphasizes that if *she* approves, Odysseus has his best chance of getting home (48–77).

78–132: Athēnē leaves Scheria, goes to Marathon and then Athens, where she enters the shrine of Erechtheus. Meanwhile, Odysseus approaches Alkinoös' magnificent palace. The bronze walls and threshold gleam, the doors are golden, the lintels of silver. On either side of the entrance are gold and silver dogs fashioned by Hephaistos. Inside are wall seats covered with rich fabrics, and golden statues of youths holding torches. There are fifty women servants there, some grinding grain, others weaving or spinning. Just as the men are master shipmen, so the women excel at all handicrafts (78–111). Outside is a large hedged orchard, with a variety of trees—pears, pomegranates, apples, figs, olives, all designed to ripen and bear fruit at different times. There are also vegetable beds that flourish the whole year through, and two springs, one that irrigates the garden, the other by the house with public drinking water (112–32).

133–225: Odysseus now goes in. Athēnē makes sure he is unnoticed until he reaches Arētē and embraces her knees: at this point everyone sees him and is amazed. He supplicates Arētē, wishes all happiness to the other banqueters, and prays for conveyance home after his many trials. He then sits in the ashes by the fire. After a long silence, the elder Echenēos reproaches Alkinoös (who seems to have done nothing): This won't do, raise the suppliant stranger up, have the housekeeper give him food, and a herald mix wine so we can pour libations. This spurs Alkinoös into action: he lifts Odysseus up, makes his son Laodamas give up his chair, and seats Odysseus. A handmaid brings Odysseus water to wash his hands, the housekeeper serves him food, while Alkinoös tells the herald Pontonoös to mix and serve wine, which he does (133–85). Alkinoös speaks: Now you've feasted, it's time to go home and sleep. Tomorrow we'll look after the stranger and think about his conveyance, and ensure he comes to no harm while he's in our care (afterwards he'll suffer whatever his destiny may be). But if by any chance he's a god, this is something new: hitherto the gods have always been manifest to us, sitting among us or acknowledging us on the road. After all, we're kin to them—like the Kyklōpes or the Giants! To this Odysseus responds, assuring Alkinoös that he is no god but a mortal, who's suffered more than most; and, please, now let him eat, since his hungry belly conquers any grief he may have. But early tomorrow, he says, please, take care of my transportation—once I've seen my home and possessions, I'm ready even for death (186–225).

226–347: Everyone says he's spoken properly, and should get transport. After last libations they leave him alone in the hall with Alkinoös and Arētē. While the

handmaids clear away dinner, Arētē—who's recognized the clothes Odysseus is wearing—now asks him who he is, and from where, and where he got the garments he has on. He responds that it would be hard to tell her the sum of his troubles, since the gods have given him so many. H. then launches into an immediate account of events since Odysseus was wrecked, lost all his comrades, and was taken in by Kalypsō on her island of Ōgygia. He explains that for seven years, she kept offering to make him immortal, but could never persuade him, but then either changed her mind or was overridden by a god, and let him go off on a raft. Odysseus describes everything since then—how he came within sight of Phaiakia, but had his raft shattered by Poseidōn, the perils of his landing, his sleep in the bushes, and his eventual encounter with Nausikaä and her girls, who not only fed him but gave him the clothes he's now wearing (226–97). Alkinoös says his daughter should have brought him home with her. Don't be cross with her, says Odysseus: she did invite me, but I refused, thinking you might be angry at my forwardness if I did. Alkinoös says: No, I'm not a man to be angry without cause. Moderation is best! Then he adds: By Zeus, you're my kind of man, and I wish you would marry my daughter and become my son-in-law! I'd give you a house and possessions if you chose to stay! But no Phaiakian will keep you here against your will, heaven forbid! Now: about your conveyance: we'll take care of that tomorrow. We'll carry you sleeping wherever you want to go—even if it's further than Euboia! You'll see what good sailors our young men are! (298–328). Odysseus prays: Zeus, grant fulfillment to all he says! Arētē now tells her handmaids to make up a bed for him and put it in the colonnade. They do this and then invite Odysseus to retire. He does, and sleeps soundly. Alkinoös beds down with his comforting wife (329–47).

BOOK 8

1–130: Next morning, Alkinoös, with Odysseus, goes early to the place of assembly, while Athēnē, in the likeness of a herald, goes round the leading men, inviting them to come and hear about the newly arrived stranger, a shipwrecked wanderer who's "like the immortals"! They all show up and are duly impressed, since she's made him not only better-looking but also stronger, so as to triumph in those physical feats in which the Phaiakians are going to make trial of him. When they're assembled, Alkinoös addresses them, saying: This stranger, identity unknown, is asking for conveyance. We've done this for others; let's do it for him. So, young men, prepare a ship, pick a crew, then come to my home and get a feast ready. And you, the princes, come and join with me in entertaining our guest. No refusals, please! And summon the minstrel Dēmodokos to perform for us (1–45). They all do as he commands. Fifty-two youths (the future crew) get a ship ready for sailing, and then go to Alkinoös' residence. The princes are there already. Alkinoös provides and slaughters twelve sheep, eight hogs, and two oxen for the feast. These are flayed and prepared. Dēmodokos, the blind minstrel, is brought in and settled, with wine at hand. They all now feast. After they have eaten, the minstrel performs for them. The lay he chooses recounts a quarrel—otherwise unknown—between Achillēs and Odysseus

at a feast, welcomed by Agamemnōn since he had been told at Delphi that such a quarrel would signify the beginning of the conflict between Danaäns and Trojans. This theme makes Odysseus sad: he sheds tears. Only Alkinoös, sitting close to him, notices (46–95). Tactfully, he says: We've feasted and enjoyed the minstrel's performance: now let's go out and try some physical contests, so that our guest, when he gets home, will be able to say how good we are at these things! Out they go, and the Phaiakians vie in the footrace, wrestling, discus, and boxing (96–130).

131–233: The king's son Laodamas now says: This stranger looks pretty fit and strong: let's ask him if he's skilled in any of these sports—he hasn't lost his strength, he's just been broken by the sea: there's nothing will exhaust a man more, however strong he is. To which Euryalos responds: Well said! Go and challenge him, make it public! So Laodamas invites Odysseus to show his physical skill, saying, It's likely you're good at these things, there's no greater glory than in physical achievement. And there needn't be much delay: your ship's already launched and waiting! To which Euryalos adds: No, to me you don't look like an athlete! You're more like a merchant, mainly concerned with his freight and greedy for profit! (131–64). To which Odysseus replies: This was not well said! From the gods some men get eloquence, but a mean appearance; others look very handsome, but have no skill with words, and that's you. You look very distinguished, but your mind's defective. Your mannerlessness stirs me. I'm no beginner at sporting contests; I used to be among the best. But I've suffered and endured much, from men and the sea alike. Still, I'll give it a shot: your words have really stung me. So he jumps up, seizes a really big quoit, and hurls it. It ends far ahead of all those thrown so far. Athēnē, in the likeness of a man, says that even a blind man could tell his mark, it's so far out ahead of the rest! No Phaiakian's going to match it! (165–98). Odysseus, glad to have a supporter, now says: All right, you youngsters, beat that one! Or wait till I throw an even longer shot! Or—you've really got me riled—try me at boxing, wrestling, running, I don't care! Any of you except Laodamas—who in his right mind would compete with his host? I'm no weakling! I'm one of the best archers there was at Troy—only Philoktētēs was better! Of course, I wouldn't challenge the great archers of the past, like Hēraklēs or Eurytos! And Eurytos died prematurely, because he challenged Apollo to a contest with the bow. I can throw a spear further than most men shoot an arrow! The only contest in which one of you might beat me is the footrace: the sea took its toll of me, and I've had no chance to practice (199–233).

234–65: Everyone is silent at this. Then Alkinoös responds, saying: Stranger, you don't speak ungraciously, you just want to emphasize your prowess—and you're angry at the way this man taunted you! No one who knew how to speak properly would talk like he did! So listen to me now, and when you're back home with your family feasting, recall our expertise: we may not be first-class boxers or wrestlers, but we're unbeatable as runners, and seamen, and we love banquets and dance and song! And hot baths! So let someone now get Dēmodokos' lyre for him! And all of you show the stranger what expert dancers we are! Officials now mark out a dancing

ring, and fetch the lyre, and the young dancers move fast and skillfully, and Odysseus marvels at them (234–65).

266–366: Dēmodokos strikes up with the lay of Aphrodītē's adulterous affair with Arēs. [This shocked ancient moralists, who wanted it omitted; but as W. B. Stanford sensibly observes (1971, 1: 338–39), the adulterers are punished and, worse, made to look ridiculous; there is no obscenity; and the episode is handled with wit and humor.] Hephaistos, the cuckolded husband, hears about the affair early on and fashions a series of fine snares to trap the guilty parties. [Like a good deal of practical detail in the *Odyssey,* from the contest of the bow to the hanging of the servant girls, these snares are simply related as a fact, and not explained: how in fact they could have worked, or have deceived the lovers, is virtually impossible to imagine.] But Hephaistos sets his trap, and invokes the gods in an impassioned speech both lamenting his own ugly lameness and relishing the way he's going to get his own back on a classier and more attractive rival (266–320). The lovers are duly caught by his devices; the gods are all invited to come and observe the spectacle, and come they do, though the goddesses stay away out of modesty. There is much laughter and some moral comment about the slow catching the swift. Apollo asks Hermēs whether he'd bed Aphrodītē even if it meant being ensnared. Yes, Hermēs says, even if all the goddesses were watching too, yes, I would bed golden Aphrodītē! There is much laughter at this, except from Poseidōn, who's embarrassed for Arēs, and asks Hephaistos to free him, saying he'll guarantee that Arēs recompenses him properly. Hephaistos refuses. Right, says Poseidōn, then I swear I'll recompense you myself. And Hephaistos reluctantly says, That I can't refuse, and releases them. Arēs leaves for Thrace, and Aphrodītē for Paphos, where she's bathed, anointed, and dressed by the Graces (321–66).

367–417: Both Odysseus and the Phaiakians enjoy this lay. Then Alkinoös makes two of his sons do a special dance with a ball they throw between them. This gets loud applause. Odysseus says: You told me your dancers were the best, and this proves it. Alkinoös is pleased, and now addresses the Phaiakians, saying: This stranger is a man of the highest discretion! Let's give him gifts of friendship: there are twelve royal princes here, and I'm the thirteenth. I want each of us to give him a new mantle and tunic, and a talent of gold, and have them with him by supper time today! And Euryalos needs to make amends for the uncalled-for and improper way he spoke to him, with an apology and a gift. They all agree to this, and Euryalos promises to give him the silver-studded bronze sword in an ivory sheath that he's wearing: he takes it off, puts it into Odysseus' hands, with an apology and good wishes. Odysseus thanks him in kind, and puts on the sword. The gifts are brought to him. The sun sets (367–417).

418–520: They all return to Alkinoös' feasting hall and sit down there. Alkinoös tells his wife, Arētē, to find a chest and put a fresh-washed mantle and tunic for the stranger in it, and to heat a cauldron of water so that he can take a bath. Then, when

he's looked at his gifts, it's time for feasting and song. Alkinoös also promises to give him a gold cup to remember him by when he pours libations. Arētē at once does what she was told in meticulous detail, putting all the gifts in the chest. She advises Odysseus to tie down the lid of the chest with a special knot so that there's no pilfering aboard the ship while he's asleep during the passage. He does so—with a knot he learned from Kirkē! He now bathes with pleasure: it's the first (hot, freshwater) bath he's had since leaving Kalypsō (418–53). He's now bathed, rubbed with oil, and put into fresh clothes by the handmaids. He comes out looking his best, and on his way to join the men drinking wine is greeted by Nausikaä, who wishes him well and tells him to remember that he first and foremost owed his life to her. May Zeus grant I get home! he responds. Then I'll pray to you as a god always: you saved my life. He goes in and sits in his chair of honor beside the king. Dēmodokos is brought in by the herald. Odysseus cuts off a good piece of the chine, and sends it to the minstrel. Let him eat, he says, and I salute him, despite my grief: minstrels win honor and reverence for their knowledge and art. Dēmodokos is glad to get the meat. The feast begins. When they've eaten their fill, Odysseus asks Dēmodokos for the lay of the Wooden Horse (454–98). Dēmodokos obliges, telling how the Achaians burned their huts and sailed away as far as Tenedos, while after debate the Trojans dragged the Horse into the city and up to the citadel, and how at night the warriors inside the Horse poured out and signaled the fleet to return, and how they all then sacked the city; how Odysseus went with Menelaös to the house of Deïphobos and was embroiled in a terrible fight, won eventually with Athēnē's help (454–520).

521–86: This lay greatly moves Odysseus. As a woman weeps over the corpse of her husband, without whose support she's being dragged as a captive into miserable slavery, so Odysseus weeps and groans, again unnoticed by all save Alkinoös, who now speaks to the company generally, telling Dēmodokos to stop performing, because his lay is not pleasing everyone: since he began, the stranger has been lamenting and weeping. Best to stop, and let everyone be happy together. After all, it's for the stranger that these gifts have been collected and transport is being arranged, and strangers and suppliants are dear to any man of sense! Then he turns to Odysseus, and says: So don't give me evasive answers to my questions! Who are you? Who are your parents? Which are your country, your city? Our ships have to take you there—though they need no steersmen, they get there by instinct! My father, Nausithoös, told me Poseidōn was angry with us because we ferried all and sundry on request. One day, he said, a Phaiakian ship returning from such a voyage would be destroyed by Poseidōn, and our city would be hidden by a great mountain. So he said: the gods will fulfill his prediction, or not, as they please. So, tell us where you've wandered, which cities were friendly, which hostile. And why do you weep when you hear about the fates of the Argives, and of Ilion? These things the gods brought about. Did some kinsman or close comrade of yours die before Ilion? A fine comrade is as great a loss as a brother (521–86).

1–38: Odysseus reassures Alkinoös that he takes pleasure in listening to a minstrel such as Dēmodokos, especially at a good feast. But Alkinoös wants to hear about his troubles. They are many. First, he says, my name: I am Odysseus, son of Laërtēs, from Ithákē. (He describes it.) There's nothing sweeter than one's own land! True, both Kalypsō and Kirkē kept me by them, wanting me as their husband; but they couldn't persuade me. Nothing, I say, is better than home, and family! But now I'll tell you of the wretched homecoming to which Zeus doomed me (1–38).

39–151: First, the Kikones. We were driven to their city, Ismaros, and sacked it, divided up the treasure and women, and I recommended getting away fast, but the others wouldn't listen. They drank the wine and killed the sheep and cattle to eat. Meanwhile the Kikones called on their inland neighbors. They came, and there was a hard-fought battle. At first we held our own, though outnumbered; but after midday they beat us, with losses; we who survived got away and sailed on. Then Zeus hit us with a huge storm. We put in to shore for two days. After that we sailed again, but the current and north wind drove me off course at Cape Malea—I'd have got home fine otherwise (39–81). After nine days' sailing, we came to the land of the Lotus-Eaters. We went ashore and sent out scouts, who were fed lotus by the natives and wanted to stay there forever! We dragged them back, weeping, and hurriedly sailed. Next we came to the land of the Kyklōpes, a savage people who plant nothing and have no laws or assemblies, but live in mountain caves without regard for one another (82–115). There's a fertile unoccupied island just off from their territory, with numerous goats—the Kyklōpes have no ships, so don't go there—with good meadows for pasturage, rich plowland, and a harbor with safe anchorage and a flowing spring. We sailed in there at night, disembarked, and slept on the beach till morning (116–51).

152–306: Next morning we explored the island. The local nymphs sent goats our way for food, and between us—the crews of twelve ships—we killed enough goats for each ship to have nine, except for mine, which got ten. So the rest of the day we cooked and fed on goat, together with wine—there was plenty left, jars we'd filled in Ismaros. Looking across to the land of the Kyklōpes, we saw smoke, heard voices, and the baaing of sheep and goats. Next morning I told the crews that I and my ship alone would sail across and explore, find out whether the Kyklōpes were savage or law-abiding. The rest were to stay and guard the ships (152–76). I then boarded my ship, and we sailed across. We saw a high cave near the shore, with many penned sheep and goats, and a walled courtyard. Here lived a monstrous man, herding his flocks, on his own. He was more like a wooded mountain peak than a human being. I chose the twelve best of my crew to come with me, and left the rest to guard the ship. I took with me a large skinful of the Ismaros wine (that the priest Marō had given me, with other gifts, because I'd protected him during the sack [of Ismaros]), and a bagful of food, because I figured this man we were going to meet was strong, savage, and unacquainted with justice (177–215). We entered the cave: he was away

with his flocks. It was full of penned lambs and kids, and crates of cheeses, and pails of milk and whey. My comrades wanted us to go straight back to the ship with some cheeses, and one or two lambs, whereas I wanted to stay and see the Kyklōps, find out if he'd treat me as a guest, give me gifts. It would have been better if I'd listened to them (216–30). We lit a fire, ate some cheese, and waited for him. He appeared with a load of dry firewood and dropped it with a crash. He drove in all the flocks save the males, then put a huge stone in place in the doorway. He milked the ewes and goats, and put their young to the teat. He curdled half the milk, kept the rest to drink (231–50). Then he rekindled the fire and saw us in the back of the cave, and asked who we were? Mariners on business, or pirates? His monstrous presence and deep voice scared us. I told him we were Achaians, Agamemnōn's men from Troy, trying to get home, driven hither and thither by Zeus. We were, I said, appealing to him for help as suppliants, asking him to reverence Zeus as god of strangers and wanderers. No way, he said. We Kyklōpes pay no attention to gods, Zeus included! Nor would I spare you or your men to avoid Zeus' wrath! And tell me: where did you moor your ship? Not to be fooled, I told him Poseidōn had wrecked it on the rocks, but we few had escaped. He said nothing, but seized two of my men, dashed out their brains, and ate them raw, bones and all. Then he drank milk, and lay down to sleep. I was going to stab him to death, but realized in time that we could never shift the door-stone. So we could do nothing but wait for morning (251–306).

307–413: When dawn came the Kyklōps relit the fire and milked his flocks. Then he seized two more of my men and ate them. After that he drove his flocks out to pasture, removing and replacing the great door-stone as easily as the lid on a quiver. Off he went to the hills, whistling. How could I get us out of this? Now there was a staff of green olive wood he'd cut and was drying, the size of a freighter's mast. I cut off about a fathom's length, my men trimmed it smooth, and I sharpened its end to a point, then hardened it in the fire, and hid it under the dung. We cast lots for the four who'd help me grind it into the Kyklōps' eye when he fell asleep. The lot chose those I'd hoped it would. Back he came at evening, and this time he drove all the flocks into the cave, males included. Did he suspect something, or was it a god that urged him? He put the door-stone in place, did his milking, and seized and ate two more of my men (307–44). Now I went up to him, holding an ivy-wood bowl full of our wine, and invited him, now he'd had a meal of human flesh, to taste this wine. It had been meant as an offering, I told him, in the hope he'd send me on my way home; but his cruelty went beyond all bounds. He just took the bowl, drained it, liked what he drank, and asked for more. And tell me your name, he said, so I can give you a stranger's gift. This is ambrosia and nectar! Three bowlfuls he demanded, and drained. When he was thoroughly fuddled, I said to him: You ask my name: it's Nobody! that's what everyone calls me: Nobody. He said: The gift is that I'll eat Nobody last of all! With that he collapsed, passed out, vomiting gobbets of flesh with wine (345–74). Then I heated the stake red-hot in the fire and we drove it into his one eye, whirling it round like a drill. The eyeball hissed, and its roots crackled. The Kyklōps screamed, and we scattered. He tore the stake from his eye, and shouted

to the other Kyklōpes. What's the trouble? they asked him. Nobody's killing me by trickery! he responded. If no-one's killing you, then it's sickness sent by Zeus, and you must pray to your father, Poseidōn. With that they left, and I laughed to myself (375–413).

414–566: The Kyklōps removed the stone from the door, and sat there groaning, hoping to catch us sneaking out with the sheep and goats. I racked my brains, and came up with this scheme to escape: I took the rams and tied them together in threes with the withies on which the Kyklōps slept: under each middle ram was carried a man. For myself, I clung under the shaggy belly of one big ram, the best of the flock. Like that, we waited till morning. Then the males crowded out to pasture, while the ewes bleated, unmilked. The Kyklōps felt along the backs of the rams nearest him, but missed my men. Last of all came my big ram, and the Kyklōps addressed it, saying, Why are you the last? You always used to be the first! You must be sorrowing for my lost eye, which Nobody put out by trickery! If only you could talk, and tell me where he is! I'd dash his brains out on the floor! With that he let the ram pass on through the doorway (414–61). A little way from the cave I freed myself from the ram and untied my comrades. We drove off the sheep, back to the ship. The crews were glad to see us, but when they started to groan for those we'd lost, I stopped them, indicated they should get the sheep on board at once, and put out to sea quickly. A little way out I called to the Kyklōps that it was no weakling whose comrades he'd sought to devour! Zeus ensured he got what he deserved for abusing guests in his own house! Furious, the Kyklōps broke off the peak of a mountain, and hurled it after us. It barely missed the steering oar, and the wash drove the ship back to land, but I shoved it off with a pole, and we all rowed frantically, saying nothing. But when we were twice as far out as before, again I wanted to shout to the Kyklōps, though all my comrades tried in vain to stop me. I told him my real name, and he replied that there had been a prophecy that I'd rob him of sight, but he'd been expecting a tall good-looking man, not a puny good-for-nothing who blinded him when he'd fuddled him with wine. Come back here, Odysseus, he shouted, I have a guest-gift for you! And I'm Poseidōn's son: no other god or man will heal my eye, but he will (462–521). I replied that I wished I could kill him, as surely as not even Poseidōn could heal his eye. He then prayed to Poseidōn that if I was fated to get home, let it be late, after losing my ship and all my comrades, and with trouble at home. He then heaved another huge rock after us, but it fell just behind us and drove us on. We landed at our island, and unloaded the Kyklōps' sheep, and I sacrificed to Zeus. But he was already planning my ship's and crew's destruction. So we feasted all day, slept that night, and put to sea next morning, glad to have escaped, but sad for our lost comrades (522–66).

BOOK 10

1–132: We next came to the island of Aiolia, home to Aiolos, his wife, and six sons and six daughters, whom he'd married to each other. They led an enjoyable life. I told

him about our journey hitherto, and asked him for conveyance. He agreed. He gave me a leather bag with all the winds tied up tightly inside it, except for a west wind to speed us home. We sailed thus for nine days, and were in sight of Ithákē. All that time I'd been tending the sheet, to be sure we reached our destination. So I was exhausted and needing sleep (1–33). Relaxed, I now slept. But my comrades, figuring I was a greedy cheapskate and the bag was full of gold and other treasure, opened it, and out rushed all the winds. I woke, but decided to wait. The winds blew us straight back to Aiolos' island. We went ashore, ate, and drew water. Then I went to Aiolos' house with a comrade and a herald. He was amazed to see us, asked what cruel god had been at us, didn't they send us off in good order? I said I'd been done for by my comrades and ill-timed sleep, and appealed to Aiolos to put things right. But Aiolos told us angrily to be gone at once, we were clearly hated by the gods. So back to the ship we went, and sailed, grieving, not hoping for any help (34–80). On the seventh day we reached the land of the Laistrygonians, where the paths of day and night are close—a man could earn a double wage by tending both cattle and sheep: one herdsman going out meets another coming back in. There was a harbor with high cliffs all round and a narrow entrance. The other ships went in, but I moored my ship outside, and looked around, but saw no signs of life, so sent two men and a herald to spy out the land and the people (81–102). They found a smooth road, and near the city met a girl who'd come to draw water, and asked her who these folk were and where could we find their king? She directed them to her father Antiphatēs' house. They went there and found his wife, a huge monster of a woman. She called her husband, and he ate one of my men. The other two came hurrying back to me. Antiphatēs raised the alarm. Laistrygonians came in from all quarters and began pelting the ships with great rocks and spearing the crews for food. I cut the stern cables and had my crew row fast to get away. They did. We escaped, but all the other crews and ships were lost (102–32).

133–202: We sailed on and came to Kirkē's island. Here we put in to a harbor very quietly, disembarked, and did nothing for two days, weary and sorrowful. The third day, I went up to a lookout point, and saw smoke rising through the trees. I decided to go back, let the men have a meal, then send out some to investigate (133–55). But when almost at the ship I ran into a big stag going down to drink at the river. I speared him dead, made a rope of withies, and carried him on my back. My crew were amazed by the stag, but they skinned and quartered the carcass, roasted it, and the rest of the day we sat and feasted on it and drank our wine. When dark came we slept. Next morning I told them we were lost, had no idea where east or west was, informed them about the smoke I'd seen. They were scared, recalling the Laistrygonians and the Kyklōps. But their groaning achieved nothing (156–202).

203–301: I divided my men into two groups, with Eurylochos heading the second. We shook lots for which group went exploring. Eurylochos won. They found Kirkē's house in a forest clearing, with wolves and lions that she'd charmed with drugs playing round it. They didn't attack, but fawned on our men like dogs. Inside, Kirkē was

singing as she worked at her loom. Politēs suggested calling to her (204–29). They called, and she came out, invited them in. They all innocently followed her except Eurylochos, who suspected a trap. She sat them down inside, and offered them a posset of cheese, barley, and honey, mixed with wine. But she'd also mixed in drugs to make them forget home. When they'd swallowed this, she struck them with her wand, turned them into swine, and penned them in her pigsties. But they kept their human minds. Kirkē threw them acorns and other pig food (229–44). Meanwhile Eurylochos hurried to me, so distressed he couldn't explain till I questioned him. Then he said how she'd invited them in, and they vanished, though he'd waited a while. So I took my bow and sword, and told him to guide me back. He begged me not to, said I'd vanish too, said we, and my group, should get out fast, and might just escape. I said: you stay here eating and drinking if you want: I need to go there (245–72).

So I went. But when I was near Kirkē's house I was met by Hermēs, in the likeness of a youth just starting a beard. He said: Where are you off to, alone and ignorant of the country? You've come to free your comrades: they're shut away as swine. Take this magic herb, and go to Kirkē: it'll protect you. I'll tell you all her tricks. She'll give you a drugged posset, but the herb won't let it harm you. When she strikes you with her wand, draw your sword and make as though to kill her. She'll be scared and invite you to bed her. Don't accept until she swears a great oath not to harm or trick you, especially when she's got you naked. Then he gave me the herb—moly, white flower, black root—and went back to Olympos (273–307).

308–405: Pondering much darkly, I went to Kirkē's house, and called to her. She came out and let me in, sat me down, and gave me the drugged mixture in a gold cup. I drank it, but was not bewitched. Then she struck me with her wand, and told me to be off to the pigsties, and join my comrades. I then drew my sword and made as though to kill her. She screamed, clasped my knees, and cried out: Who are you, that you drank this potion and were not bewitched? No one else has done that! You must be Odysseus—Hermēs told me you'd be here on your way back from Troy! Sheath your sword, and let's go to bed, make love, and get to trust each other more (308–35). But I said: You've just turned my men into swine—how can I trust you not to do the same to me when you have me naked? I'll not bed with you unless you swear a mighty oath that you're not plotting fresh mischief against me. She so swore on the spot, and we bedded together. Meanwhile her four handmaids, nymphs of springs and groves, were busy in the hall. They set chairs, laid table, mixed wine, lit a fire, and heated water in a great cauldron.

Kirkē then bathed me, soothing my weariness, dressed me in a fine mantle and tunic, brought me into the hall, and sat me down. A handmaid brought hand-washing water, put a table by me. The housekeeper set out bread and various dishes, and invited me to eat. But I was worried, had no appetite (335–74). Kirkē asked me what the matter was, reminded me that she'd sworn not to harm me. I said, What man could face food till he'd seen his comrades freed? Kirkē took her wand, went and opened the pigsties, and out came my comrades as hogs. She rubbed each one with a new salve, the bristles fell off, and they became men again and clung to me,

sobbing and homesick. Kirkē now told me to go to my ship, draw it up on land, and stow its contents in the caves there. Then I was to return, bringing the rest of my comrades (375–405).

406–86: I obeyed Kirkē's request. At the ship I found my comrades as glad to see me as calves their mother cows. They'd been afraid they'd never see Ithákē again, but now, seeing me, were as glad as though they'd got home. They asked me about the fate of the others. I told them first to draw up the ship, unload her contents, and stow them in the caves. Then I would take them to see their comrades, eating and drinking in Kirkē's hall. They listened gladly. Only Eurylochos held back, saying: Where are you going? Do you want to be changed to swine or wolves or lions, doomed to guard her house forever? Remember our comrades who went with reckless Odysseus to the Kyklōps, and what happened to *them.* At this I pondered beheading him, near kin by marriage though he was. But the others all pleaded with me to leave him behind as guard of the ship while the rest of us went to Kirkē's house. So we went, and Eurylochos, fearing my disapproval, came along too (406–48). Meanwhile Kirkē had bathed the rest of my comrades, massaged them with oil, and fitted them out with good clothes, so that we found them all eating and drinking. When the two groups recognized each other, they wept with relief. Kirkē now said to me: The time for tears is over. I know how much you all suffered. Come now and eat and drink and restore your spirits! So for a whole year we feasted. But after a year, as the months went by, my comrades admonished me: Don't forget your homecoming! So we feasted by day, but at night I went to Kirkē's bed and besought her to remember her promise to send us home: my comrades were getting restive (449–86).

487–574: Kirkē responded: I'm not holding you here against your will; but before your homecoming there's another journey you must complete: to the realm of Hadēs and Persephonē, to learn the prophecy of the blind seer Teirēsias, whose mind remains firm even after death, thanks to Persephonē; whereas the other dead flit about as mere shades. I wept at the news, and said: Who'll guide us? No man ever went to Hadēs in a black ship (487–502). Kirkē said: Don't worry about a guide. Set sail and sit down: the north wind will carry you. When you cross the stream of Ocean, beach your ship on that level shore by the groves of Persephonē, and continue by land toward the realm of Hadēs. When you reach the rock that's the meeting-point of two rivers of Hadēs, Pyriphlegethōn and Kōkytos, stop there. Dig a pit a cubit square. Pour three libations, of honey, wine, and water sprinkled with barley meal. Entreat the dead, promise a barren heifer, your best, and ample gifts. To Teirēsias alone, promise your best black ram. After your prayer to the dead, sacrifice a ram and a black ewe, their heads facing Erebos, while you turn back and face the streams of Ocean (503–29). Then many dead will appear. Tell your comrades to skin and burn the slaughtered sheep lying there. Pray to Hadēs. Draw your sword and keep the ghosts of the dead from the blood until you've questioned Teirēsias. He'll come to you quickly and tell you how to complete your return by sea and land. It was now dawn: Kirkē put a mantle and tunic on me, and herself wore a white robe, with

a girdle and veil. I went back to the hall and told my men to wake up: Kirkē had told me everything. They arose now. Even here, though, my crew didn't go unscathed. There was a youth, Elpēnōr, not very warlike or bright, who'd gone to sleep, drunk, on the cool roof. When he woke, he forgot the long ladder, fell headlong. and broke his neck. Now I told my men: You may think you're now going home. Not so. Kirkē says we must first go to Hadēs to consult Thēban Teirēsias. Their spirit was broken, they lamented, but to no avail. And while we were on our way to the ship, Kirkē overtook us with the ram and the black ewe—invisible, as a god can always arrange to be (530–74).

BOOK 11

1–137: So we launched our ship, and put the sheep aboard. and embarked, grieving. Kirkē gave us a good tailwind . We rigged the tackle and sat down. We sailed all day: the wind and helmsman steered us. So we came to Ocean, near the Kimmerians' sunless realm. We beached the ship, unloaded the sheep, and advanced beside Ocean's stream till we reached the spot Kirkē had described. Perimēdēs and Eurylochos held the victims while I dug a cubit-square pit, made libation three times, with milk and honey, wine, and water, then prayed to the dead with the promises Kirkē had prescribed, including those to Teirēsias (1–34). Then I took the sheep and cut their throats over the pit: the blood flowed, and the ghosts of the dead gathered from Erebos: brides, youths, careworn old men, battle-worn casualties still in their bloody armor, pressing in round the pit with eerie cries. I told my men to skin and burn the sheep that had been sacrificed, and to pray to Hadēs and Persephonē. Then I drew my sword and wouldn't let the ghosts near the blood till I'd seen and questioned Teirēsias. The first ghost was that of Elpēnōr, whom we'd left unburied in Kirkē's house, with more pressing things on our minds. I asked him how he'd got there so fast, ahead of us. He said he'd been undone by some god and too much wine, had broken his neck and so come down to Hadēs. He now implored me, by my wife and son, to do right by him when we were back at Kirkē's island of Aiaia. Burn me with my armor, he said, raise a burial mound, and fix my oar on top of it. All this I promised to do (35–80). The next ghost was that of my mother, Antikleia, still alive when I sailed for Ilion. I wept to see her, but still wouldn't let her near the blood before Thēban Teirēsias. But he, Teirēsias, now came up, golden staff in hand, and he knew and addressed me, saying: Odysseus, why have you come down to this joyless place to look at the dead? Stand back from the pit, hold off your sword, let me drink the blood and speak the truth to you. So I stepped back and sheathed my sword. When he'd drunk the blood, he said: You want to know about your homecoming, Odysseus. Poseidōn will make this hard for you: he is furious because you blinded his son. Yet you and your comrades may still make it home, through hardships, if, on the island of Thrinakiē, you refrain from slaughtering the cattle and sheep of Hēlios. Should you harm them, you'll still reach Ithákē, but after losing your ship and all your comrades, in a ship that's not yours, and find trouble at home—men devouring your possessions and courting your wife! You will take vengeance on

them. When you've killed them, you'll still have to make a long journey abroad, carrying an oar, till you reach a land where men know nothing of the sea or ships, and don't eat salt with their food. A sign will be when you meet a man who thinks the oar you're carrying is a winnowing-fan. Then plant your oar in the ground, and sacrifice a ram, a bull, and a stud boar to Poseidōn. Return home, and make lavish sacrifice to the gods. Death will come to you gently, from the sea, (see note ad loc.), when you've reached a comfortable old age and your folk are prospering round you. This is the truth I tell you (81–137).

138–224: I said: The gods surely destined all this. But tell me this: my mother's spirit is sitting there, silent, near the blood, but isn't looking at me or speaking to me. How can she recognize me? He said: Easy: Those you let approach the blood will speak to you, those you don't will go back to Hadēs. Then he departed to Hadēs himself, having prophesied. I waited till my mother came and drank the blood. She at once knew me, and said: How did you get here while still living? It's a hard journey. Have you only now got here after much wandering from Troy? Have you not reached Ithákē and seen your wife and son? (138–62). I said: Need brought me here, to hear Teirēsias, prophesy. No, I've not yet got back home. But tell me, how did you die? Sickness, or Artemis' arrows? What about Tēlemachos and Laërtēs? Has some man usurped their control? And is my wife still in charge at home or has she remarried? My mother replied: Your wife remains true to you and laments your absence. No other man has yet taken your authority. Tēlemachos still holds your land and is accepted as a social leader. But Laërtēs stays out of town, lives meanly with his farmhands, misses you sadly, is getting old. And it was the same with me: I didn't die of sickness, no, but of longing for you (63–203). I tried to embrace her three times, but she slipped away like a shadow, and my grief grew. I said, why don't you stay for my embrace? Why can't we hug and lament? Is this some phantom, sent by Persephonē? She said: No, this is how the dead are—no sinews left to hold the body together, fire destroys all, leaves only a shade, a dream! So hurry back to earth, and remember all this to tell your wife (204–24).

225–332: So we talked. Then the wives and daughters of famous men came crowding up, but I drew my sword and only let in one at a time. I questioned them all. I saw Tyro, who loved the river god Enipeus and was seduced by Poseidōn, who revealed who he was, and told her to care for the splendid children from their coupling, then plunged into the sea. She bore Pelias and Nēleus to him and had other children. Then I saw Antiopē, who said she'd been had by Zeus and bore him Amphiōn and Zēthos, who built seven-gated Thēbai. After her I saw Alkmēnē, Amphitryōn's wife, who bore great Hēraklēs to Zeus, and Kreiōn's daughter Megarē, who wed Amphitryōn's son, and Oedipus' mother, Epikastē, who in ignorance wed her own son, who'd likewise killed his own father. He was fated still to rule the Kadmeians, though she hanged herself. And I saw Chlōris, who, as queen in Pylos, wed Nēleus and bore Nestōr, as well as Pērō, whom Nēleus would only let marry the man who drove mighty Iphiklēs' cattle from Phylakē. The seer Melampos did it, but Iphiklēs

imprisoned him until he'd told him all Zeus' oracles (225–97). And I saw Lēdē, who bore Kastōr and Polydeukēs, who live and are dead on alternate days; and Iphimedeia, who also claimed to have been had by Poseidōn, and bore the Titans Ôtos and Ephialtēs, huge beings that died young after warring against the Olympians and attempting to pile Ossa on Olympos and Pēlion on Ossa, but Zeus' son by Lētō killed them both before they were fully grown (298–320). And I saw Phaidrē and Prokris and Ariadnē, whom Thēseus tried to bring from Krētē to Athens, but she before that was killed by Artemis. And I saw Maira and Klymenē and Eriphylē, bribed with a gold necklace to forfeit her husband's life—but to list all the women I saw would take all night, and it's now time for me to sleep, either back in the ship, or here (321–32).

333–464: So he spoke, and they were all silent, spellbound. Finally, Arētē said: Phaiakians, what do you make of this man? Looks, bearing, mind-set? He's my guest, so don't dismiss him, or stint your gifts to him! He's in need, and we have plenty to spare! Old Echenēos supported this, but reminded them that the last word was with Alkinoös, who then said: I agree: she's right! But our guest should stay till tomorrow, and get all his gifts. Odysseus said: If you wanted me to stay a year, and would then give presents and convey me, that too I'd agree to! I'd win more respect at home! Alkinoös said: We don't take you for the kind of lying tale-teller that abounds these days! You have real grace and style, like a minstrel. But tell me, did you meet any of your war comrades from Ilion? The night's still young, and I could listen to you till dawn. Odysseus said: There's a time for talk and a time for sleep. But if you want to hear, there's the still more pitiful story of those comrades of mine who survived the war but perished on their return through the wiles of a wicked woman (333–85). Now Persephonē dispersed the ghosts of women, and up came the ghost of Agamemnōn, surrounded by the ghosts of men who'd died with him in Aigisthos' house. He knew me, and reached out to me, but the old strength wasn't there, he was a shade. I wept for pity, and said: Agamemnōn, how did you die? Shipwreck? Enemies on land, when you were lifting their cattle or battling for their cities and women? (386–403) He said: None of these. Aigisthos and my accursed wife killed me at a feast they gave for me. My comrades were slaughtered like hogs at a wedding feast. We lay there, and the floor ran with blood. Klytaimnēstra killed Priam's daughter Kassandrē as she clung to me, crying piteously. I died reaching out past Aigisthos' sword. My bitch-wife turned away, didn't even close my eyes or mouth as I died. Nothing more awful than a spouse-murdering wife! Shame on her! And I was looking forward to seeing her and my children again!(403–54). I said: How Zeus has used women's wiles to afflict the house of Atreus! First it was Helen, and now your wife! He then warned me, saying: So, never be over trusting, even of your own wife! Yet she'll not cause your death. Penelopē is loyal and true. Remember how we left her, with a baby at her breast? You'll embrace them both when you get home! More than my wife let me do!

But when you return, land secretly: there's no faith in women! And is my son still alive? Do you have news of Orestēs? I said: Why ask me this? I don't know if he's alive or dead (455–64).

464–540: Now the ghosts of Achillēs, Patroklos, Antilochos, and Aias came up. Achillēs said: Odysseus, how dared you come down among the phantoms of the dead? I said: I came to learn my future from Teirēsias, whether he'll foretell my homecoming, for I'm still enduring sorrow and haven't got back yet, whereas no one's luckier than you, Achillēs, then or now! We honored you when you lived, and now you rule the dead! He said: Never try to reconcile me to death! I'd rather be a day-laborer on earth than king of the dead! What news of my son? Did he become a war leader? Or of my father, Pēleus? Do men disrespect him because he's old? If I had the strength that was mine at Troy, I'd soon pay out such men! (464–503). I said: No news of Pēleus, but your son, Neoptolemos, was a great fighter. I brought him from Skyros. He was always among the foremost fighters, and killed many; his advice was always prompt and good. He distinguished himself in the Wooden Horse; and after the war he went off with his share of booty, the handsomest man there after Memnōn. Achillēs now strode off, glad that his son had done so well (504–40).

541–640: The others asked about those dear to them—all except Aias, who stood apart, still wrathful with me because of the victory I'd won over him in the contest for the arms of Achillēs. I wish now I'd never won, over so noble a man as Aias! To him I now said: Still furious with me even in death? The gods made those arms accursed! A tower of strength we lost in you! It was all Zeus' fault! Oh, come here and listen! But he said nothing, went on down to Erebos (541–68). Then I saw Minōs giving judgment, and Oriōn herding wild beasts, and Tityos spread out hugely on the ground, vultures pecking at his liver, after his rape of Lētō; and Tantalos standing in water amid fruit but unable to eat or drink; and Sisyphos hopelessly pushing that great rock up a hill (541–98). Then I saw mighty Hēraklēs, glaring round, an arrow ready to shoot, who said to me, weeping: Are you suffering as I once did, laboring for a lower man than myself? Once he sent me to fetch the hound of Hadēs, and that I did, helped by Hermēs and Athēnē. With that he went back into Hadēs. I was hoping to see others, such as Thēseus and Peirithoös, but the eerie cries of the dead scared me: I was afraid Persephonē might send the Gorgon's head against me. So I went down to the ship, and we embarked and set sail, back by Ocean's stream (599–640).

BOOK 12

1–72: When we returned from Ocean to Aiaia, we beached our ship and waited till morning. Then we went to Kirkē's house to collect Elpēnōr's body and give it proper burial. We heaped up a burial mound and set his oar on the top of it, as he'd told us to. Kirkē meanwhile welcomed us with food and wine, saying: Eat now, and tomorrow you'll set sail. I'll now tell you the route and its problems to save you from making unanticipated errors! We agreed. So we feasted that day. At night, when the others lay down to sleep, Kirkē took me aside and made me tell her all that had happened. I did so (1–35). Then she said: Now listen to me. First, you'll come to the Sirens. Those who hear them never see their families again. They sit in a meadow

among the rotting bones of their victims. Knead wax for your rowers' ears, and have them row on past the Sirens. But if you want to hear them yourself, make your men tie you to the mast and ignore your pleas to untie you. Next, you will have a decision to make. You'll come to a narrow strait. On the one side are the terrible Wandering Rocks: no ship but one, Jason's *Argo,* ever navigated through them, but all were wrecked; and *Argo* only made it with Hērē's aid (36–72).

73–126: On the other side are two headlands, one with a high, permanently cloud-covered and unscalable peak. Halfway up is a cave, facing the dusk—the way you must steer. No man could shoot an arrow up from his ship that would reach that cave. In it lives Skyllē, a yelping monster with twelve legs and six necks, on each neck a head with three rows of teeth. Up to the waist she's hidden in the cave; with her upper parts, she goes fishing for big creatures such as dolphins. No crew has ever got past her without her snatching a sailor from their ship (73–100). The other headland is lower (though they're within bowshot of each other), and there's a large leafy fig tree on it, and beneath is the whirlpool Charybdis, that thrice daily sucks in the water, and thrice spews it out again. Don't be there when she sucks it in! Nothing could save you! Instead, hug close to Skyllē's headland and get past as quickly as you can: better to lose half a dozen rowers to Skyllē than all perish. I asked her: Isn't there any way I could both escape Charybdis and stop Skyllē from snatching my men? She said: Skyllē's immortal: there's no defense against her but flight. Get past as fast as you can, and pray to her mother, Krataïs. That at least will stop her making a second sweep at your men (101–26).

127–225: Next, you'll come to the island of Thrinakiē. On it are the cattle and flocks of Hēlios Hyperiōn: seven herds of each, and fifty head in each herd. These are immortal and don't breed. They are herded by nymphs, daughters of Hēlios and Neaira. If you leave these untouched, you'll be all right. But if you harm them, you'll lose your ship and all your comrades, and get home late and in trouble (127–40). By now it was dawn, and Kirkē went back up the island. I went to the ship, roused my men, and we embarked and set sail. Kirkē gave us a good tailwind. We sat and let the wind and helmsman steer us. Then I told the crew what I'd heard from Kirkē about the Sirens: wax for their ears, and me tied to the mast. As we approached their island, the wind fell. We furled the sail and rowed. I cut up wax, warmed it, and put it in my men's ears. They then bound me to the mast. The two Sirens saw us, and sang, calling me to come to them, for they knew everything, on this earth, including the saga of the Achaians and Trojans. My men bound me tighter and rowed on (141–96). When we were out of earshot they removed the wax and untied me. But soon we saw spume and surf and heard a thunderous sound, and my men became scared and stopped rowing. I went among them, warned them of dangers greater than that from the Kyklōps, but said we'd overcome these too. So, they were to sit firm and row fast, and hug the headland close, stop the ship being carried over to the other side. But I said nothing about Skyllē, in case they panicked and stopped rowing (197–225).

226–302: Now I forgot one strict command of Kirkē, that on no account should I arm myself. I put on armor, and took two spears, and stood on the foredeck, thinking that thus I'd spot Skyllē soonest. But I couldn't see her anywhere. So we sailed into the narrow strait. Skyllē lurked on one side; on the other Charybdis sucked and spewed the water, with seething and bubbling and high spray, like a boiling cauldron, when she spewed, and a terrible roaring, with the exposure of the black muddy bottom, when she sucked. While we were dodging destruction from her, Skyllē reached down and seized six of my men, all shrieking to me as she whirled them aloft, and devoured them, the most horrible thing I ever saw in my wanderings (226–59). When we got clear of Skyllē and Charybdis, we soon reached Hēlios' island. I heard the cattle lowing while still at sea and remembered Teirēsias' warning. I said to my men: Both Teirēsias and Kirkē told me to avoid terrible danger at Hēlios' island, so row on, don't land there! Eurylochos said: You're iron-hearted, Odysseus! We're worn out and sleep-starved: here we could land, make a good supper, and rest. But you're making us wander on into the night! And we might well be wrecked by a gale! No, let's put in here, and we'll be rested for tomorrow. Everyone agreed, and I realized some god had it in for us. I said: I'm one man, I can't argue with you all. But swear a great oath that you won't kill any sheep or cattle on the island, but make do with the food Kirkē gave us (260–302).

303–453: They swore the oath. We moored near a freshwater spring and disembarked. We made our supper. Then, after weeping for the comrades we'd lost to Skyllē, the men bedded down. Late in the night Zeus sent a great storm. In the morning, we dragged our ship ashore and into a cave. I repeated my warning about not touching Helios' cattle. But an east wind arose, and for a month we got nothing but strong east and south winds. When all our stores were eaten, my men tried fishing and fowling but were near to starving. I went up the island and prayed to all the gods for a way out, but all they did was put me to sleep (303–38). Meanwhile, Eurylochos addressed the men, saying: Starvation is the most wretched kind of death. Let's drive off the best cattle of Hēlios! If we ever get to Ithákē, we'll build Hēlios a fine temple! If he's angry with us and wrecks our ship, I'd rather drown quickly than have a lingering death from starvation! They agreed, and they drove off the cattle. Then they sacrificed and roasted them (339–65). Coming back after I woke, I smelt the cooking meat. Zeus, it was to my ruin that you lulled me asleep, I cried. The word soon reached Hēlios that his cattle had been slaughtered. He addressed the gods, saying: Zeus and you other gods: Take revenge on Odysseus' comrades who slew my cattle! If they don't requite me in full, I'll stop shining on earth and go down to Hadēs! (339–83). Zeus said: Hēlios, don't stop shining on gods and men! I'll blast their ship with a thunderbolt, shatter it to bits! (This I heard from Kalypsō, who said Hermēs had told her.) When I got to the ship, I cursed my men, but it was too late, the thing was done, the cattle were dead. There were portents: the hides crawled, the meat bellowed on the spits, there was a sound of lowing. Six days my crew feasted on Hēlios' cattle. On the seventh, the wind dropped, and we went aboard and sailed. But when we

were out of sight of land, Zeus sent a fearful tempest. The mast fell and killed the helmsman. A thunderbolt followed, shattering the ship and hurling the crew overboard. I straddled mast and keel, and was carried off by the gale (384–425).The wind shifted to the south, and I was carried back to Skyllē and Charybdis. I sprang up and clung like a bat to that fig tree, but couldn't get a grip anywhere, so waited till Charybdis spewed up keel and mast again, and rode them. On the tenth day, I reached Kalypsō and Ōgygia. That's where I started my story yesterday (426–53), so I'll stop there for now.

BOOK 13

1–69: Odysseus stopped speaking, and all were silent. Alkinoös then said: I don't think you're going to be driven back *here!* [Then, to the Phaiakians:] Clothing, gold, and suchlike already awaits the stranger. But I suggest that we also each give him a tripod and cauldron, and recoup the cost with a public levy. This would be too expensive if we were not reimbursed! They agreed. All then retired to bed. Early next morning, each brought the bronze, which Alkinoös stowed carefully himself so as not to interfere with the rowing. Then they turned to feasting again. Odysseus, like a weary plowman, was impatient for sunset, so that he could be on his way. Finally, he made a farewell speech of thanks—hint, hint—to Alkinoös (1–46), who still first wanted wine poured for a final libation. This was done, and when Odysseus got the cup, he offered special thanks and parting good wishes to the queen, Arētē. Then he was escorted to the ship waiting for him by a herald, with servants carrying his remaining gifts (47–69). The goods were stowed. A bed was spread for Odysseus on the afterdeck. They put out to sea, and Odysseus slept soundly. The ship sped as fast as a four-horse chariot. They reached Ithákē just before dawn, and put in at the harbor of Phorkys, with its safe mooring, olive tree, and roomy cave, sacred to the Naiads. They ran the ship ashore, lifted Odysseus, still sleeping, and put him on the beach, then grouped the gifts under the olive tree, and set off back home (70–125).

125–87: Poseidōn did not forget his threats to Odysseus. He now addressed Zeus: I know you promised him eventual return, and I bow to that ruling, but I promised him a rough passage, and here he is being ferried home asleep, by men who are our kin, with more and better gifts than he'd have gotten had he stayed in Troy! This is bringing me into disrespect! Zeus said: The gods aren't showing you disrespect: you're our oldest and best! But if you think these men are insulting you, do what you like to them. I would have done so already, said Poseidōn, except I'm always afraid of your wrath! I have it in mind to smite this Phaiakian ship as it goes home and hide their city with a huge mountain. Zeus says: Yes. What I think is, turn that ship to stone, where they can always see it, but no, don't hide their city with a huge mountain (125–58). So Poseidōn went and did just that to the Phaiakian ship. The Phaiakians were astonished. Alkinoös said: There's an old oracle, that Poseidōn would be angry because we gave conveyance to all and sundry, and would smite one of our ships

returning home and hide our city! Well, there goes the ship! We should stop escorting travelers and make lavish sacrifice to Poseidōn, in the hope that he won't hide our city with a mountain! Fear-stricken, the Phaiakians at once did what he suggested (159–87).

187–286: Odysseus woke, but didn't recognize Ithákē. Athēnē also made him unrecognizable to everybody, including his wife, till the suitors had been paid out for their crimes. To himself he said: Where am I? Not home! Curse the Phaiakians, for not keeping their word, for dumping me in a strange country! Where can I store all my rich gifts? Let me count them, make sure the crew didn't pilfer some of them! He then did, but found nothing missing. He now met Athēnē in the likeness of a well-bred young herdsman. To her he said: Friend, I supplicate you as the first-met here! Help me save my treasure! And tell me where I am! Island or mainland? (187–235) Athēnē said: You're either ignorant or from far away, stranger! It's too rugged for chariots, but good for grain and vines and pasturage, with never-failing springs. That's why the name of Ithákē has reached Troy! Odysseus was glad, but cautiously told her a cover story, not the truth. He said: I heard of Ithákē even in Krētē. I fled from there after killing Idomeneus' son, who planned to rob me of my booty from Troy, because I wouldn't play squire to his father! So I killed him one dark night, and shipped out with some Phoenicians, hoping to be put off at Pylos. But a gale blew us on to here, and they left me sleeping, and sailed on to Sidon (235–86).

287–328: Athēnē smiled, changed herself to the likeness of a tall handsome woman, stroked him, said: A man would need to be really cunning to outsmart you in deceitful tales! But enough of this! You're the craftiest of men, and I'm the wisest and wiliest deity! Yet you didn't know me—Pallas Athēnē, I'm always at your side, your guardian! I made all the Phaiakians love you! Now I'm here to plan with you how to deal with the suitors! So don't tell a soul you're back! (287–311). Odysseus replied: You can take whatever shape you like, so it's hard for a mortal to keep up with you! You were always kind to me at Troy. But after we sacked Troy and started for home I never saw you, in my ship or wherever, till you comforted me on Scheria, and led me to the Phaiakians' city. But now—I think you're mocking me saying this is Ithákē—tell me where I really am! (288–328).

329–440: Athēnē said: You're so careful and subtle! Any other man would have gone straight home, but you need to test your wife further, however much she's missed you! But I knew you'd make it back! Still, I'm not going to argue with Poseidōn, whose son you blinded. Now to convince you: I'll show you Ithákē. Here is the harbor, and the olive tree, and the cave of the nymphs. So saying, she dispersed the mist, and Odysseus recognized his own land, rejoiced, and prayed to the nymphs, saying: I never thought I'd see you again, but now I greet you! And I'll give you gifts, as before, if Zeus' daughter lets me live, and my son come to manhood! (329–60). Athēnē said: Cheer up, don't worry!

Let's now stow your stuff safely in the back of the cave here, and plan to make all turn out for the best. Athēnē now entered the cave and looked for good hiding places, and Odysseus brought all his goods in and stored them. Then they sat down and planned death for the suitors. Athēnē said: You need to think how you'll lay hands on them. For three years they've been squandering your property and courting your wife. She offers hopes to them all, but is mourning and longing for you. Odysseus said: I'd have died like Agamemnōn had you not told me all! Now work out a plan for me to requite the suitors, and stand by me yourself, as you did at Troy! Do that, and I'd face three hundred of them! (360–91). Athēnē replied: I'll be with you, and many a suitor will pay with his blood! Now I'll make you old and shriveled, in filthy, mean clothes, unrecognizable to everyone. First, go to the swineherd, and stay with him, question him about everything, while I go to Sparta to fetch your son, Tēlemachos. Odysseus said: You know everything, why didn't you tell him before? Did you want more sorrow for him? Athēnē said: I told him to go there and be well thought of for doing so! He's enjoying himself in Menelaös' domain. There's a plan to waylay and kill him, but that won't come to anything. She then touched Odysseus with her wand, and made him into an aged beggar in mean, threadbare clothes, with a tattered leather bag. They then parted, and she went to Sparta to fetch Odysseus' son.

BOOK 14

1–108: Odysseus made his way to the hut of the swineherd Eumaios, as Athēnē had instructed him to do. He found Eumaios sitting outside his house, in the courtyard that he'd built himself, along with the pigsties, without telling Penelopē or Laërtēs. The courtyard wall was of large stones with oak stakes and a thorn coping. There were a dozen pigsties, with fifty sows in each: the boars whose meat the suitors ate slept outside. There were three hundred and sixty of them, guarded by four savage watchdogs. Three of the four hands were out with the droves of pigs; the fourth was taking that day's fatted hog into town. The swineherd was cutting up oxhide to make himself a pair of sandals. When Odysseus approached, the dogs went for him, barking. Odysseus sat down, and Eumaios called the dogs off, showering them with stones. Eumaios said: Old man, the dogs could have torn you to pieces—another reproach for me! As it is, I grieve for my absent master, who—if he's still alive—may be wandering and hungry, while I fatten hogs for other men to eat. So come in with me, and eat, and then tell me about yourself and your troubles (1–47). So he took Odysseus in, and spread his own goatskin for him, and Odysseus thanked him. Eumaios said: Strangers are from Zeus, and must be welcomed, however poor our resources. Even a poor gift helps. We servants go in fear of young masters. The gods have hindered the return of my true master, who would have treated me generously: he went to Ilion with Agamemnōn to fight the Trojans. With that Eumaios fetched two piglets from the sties, killed, dressed, spitted, and roasted them. Offering Odysseus the meat to eat and wine to drink (48–79), he said: This is what we

servants eat, the suitors get the fatted hogs! Even enemies and pirates have some respect for the gods, but these men waste my master's property, his pigs and wine, without restraint! He was wealthy, too: endless herds of goats, droves of pigs, both here and on the mainland! (80–108).

109–90: Odysseus ate and drank gratefully, then asked: who was this wealthy man who bought you? You say he died serving with Agamemnōn. Maybe I knew him, or have news of him. I've traveled widely. Eumaios said: His wife and son aren't going to believe anyone now! Every wanderer who shows up here goes to my mistress with a lying tale in hope of reward! You too, old man, would do so if it'd win you a cloak and tunic! No, he's dead, for sure, and eaten by dogs and birds of prey. I'll never find another master as kind as he was! It's him I mourn for, more even than for my own parents (109–47). Odysseus said: I tell you, on oath, Odysseus *will* return! Reward me when he does, but not before: I hate a man who lies out of poverty. I swear to you, this very month he will come back, and take revenge on these suitors! Eumaios said: I won't reward you, and Odysseus won't return. So sit and drink, and talk about other things: when I'm reminded of him I get so sad!

Well, may he return, as we all hope: me, Penelopē, Laërtēs, Tēlemachos! It's Tēlemachos I worry about: he's off at Pylos after news of his father, and they're lying in wait for him when he returns, planning to kill him! But never mind about him now: tell me about yourself: who are you, and how did you come here? (148–90).

191–320: Odysseus then said: Were I to tell you all my troubles, we could sit here for a year! I'm from Krētē, son of a rich man by his concubine, but he honored me like his legitimate offspring. However, he died, and I got a small share only. Then I married an heiress, winning her by my valor as a soldier, though that strength is now gone. I had no time for farming. I preferred warfare, and got much booty that way. I went to Troy with Idomeneus and fought there for nine years. Then, after a month only back home I went on an expedition to Egypt (191–247). While I was sending out scouts, the comrades I'd left to guard the ships began raiding, raping, and killing. A strong Egyptian force came out against us, and we were defeated. I surrendered as a suppliant to the king, who saved and looked after me well (258–84). I stayed there seven years and acquired much wealth. But then I went with a cunning Phoenician merchant, who put me on board a ship for Libya, saying I was to convey the cargo, but in fact planning to sell me for a good price. The ship was destroyed, however, by a great storm. I escaped on the mast and was washed ashore among the Thesprōtians, where I was rescued by the king's son (285–320).

321–408: There I heard about Odysseus. The king said he'd stayed there on his way home, and he showed me all the treasure he'd left stored there. Odysseus, he said, had gone to consult the oracle of Zeus at Dōdōnē: should he, after being away so long, go home openly or in secret? The ship to convey him was ready. But he put me aboard a ship first, that was sailing to Doulichion. When we were well out to sea, the crew overpowered me, stripped me of my clothes, leaving me the rags I'm wearing now. At

evening they reached Ithákē, tied me up, and went ashore for their supper. I got loose, swam ashore away from them, and hid in a thicket. When they couldn't find me, they sailed on, and the gods brought me here to you (321–59). Eumaios said: I'm sorry for your suffering! But I'm not convinced by your tale about Odysseus. Why lie to no purpose? The gods hated him: they didn't let him die in Troy after the victory, when his friends would have raised him a proper burial mound. As it is, he was swept away by some storm: no name, no glory. So, I stay out here with the pigs, I don't go in to town, unless Penelopē asks me to do so, when she gets news, and people question the informant. But I've given up that, ever since I was conned by an Aitolian, on the run after killing a man, who said he'd seen Odysseus at Idomeneus' house, repairing his ships after a storm. Back by summer or autumn he'd be, I was told, with a lot of treasure. So don't you try to win me over with that kind of story! I treat you with kindness out of pity for you, and respect for Zeus, as the god of strangers (359–89). Odysseus replied: You're incredulous, even when faced with an oath! Look: the gods be my witness! If your master returns, clothe me and send me to Doulichion. If he doesn't, have me flung off the cliff as a warning to other lying beggars. Eumaios said: A fine reputation I'd get, if I first gave you hospitality and then killed you! Come, it's near supper time. My herders will soon be back, and we'll have a good meal (390–408).

409–533: The herdsmen returned with the droves of pigs and shut the noisy sows in their sties. Eumaios told them: Bring in the best hog for slaughter to feed the stranger and ourselves. We've worked long hours, while those others have freeloaded! They brought in a fat hog, and Eumaios killed it, praying that Odysseus might return. After offerings they cut up, spitted, and roasted the hog. Eumaios carved, gave a portion to the nymphs, and the chine to Odysseus, who thanked him gratefully. Eat and enjoy! said Eumaios. It's the god who gives, as he chooses. After libations, the cup passed to Odysseus. Eumaios' own slave served them. After eating and drinking their fill, they retired to sleep (409–56). With night there came a gale and rainstorm. Odysseus wanted to see if Eumaios would give him his cloak, or tell one of the hands to do so. He said: Wine prompts me to tell a boastful story! Once when I was strong we were planning an ambush outside Troy's walls, led by Odysseus, Menelaös, and myself. It was cold and frosty outside. The rest had cloaks, but I'd come without mine. Late in the night I whispered to Odysseus that the cold was killing me. Odysseus then said to the rest: I've had a dream. We're too far from the ships. Will someone go to Agamemnōn and ask for reinforcements? (456–98). So Thoas got up, stripped off his cloak, and ran to the ships, and I lay in his cloak till morning. Would that I were as strong as I was then! One of your hands would give me a cloak out of kindness and respect. But as it is they despise me for my mean and ragged attire. Eumaios said: Fairly spoken! For this night you'll lack no cloak, a suppliant's due. But tomorrow you'll have to go back to your rags: here each man has only one cloak! Still, when Odysseus returns, he'll give you clothes and send you wherever you want. He then laid hides by the fire for Odysseus to sleep on, and covered him with a thick cloak he kept for bad weather. So

Odysseus slept warm. But Eumaios himself went out to sleep in a sheltered spot close to his hogs (499–533).

BOOK 15

1–181: Athēnē went to Sparta to tell Tēlemachos it was time to be going home. She found him lying wakeful in Menelaös' colonnade, while Peisistratos still slept. She said: You've been away too long! These suitors will soon have devoured all your resources! Tell Menelaös you need to be off to be sure of finding your mother still at home—her father and brothers are urging her to marry Eurymachos, who's upping the bride-price and making the most generous gifts! You need to be careful, too, that she doesn't leave and take some of your property with her! You should put your most trustworthy maidservant in charge of all your possessions, until you yourself marry. Oh, and the pick of the suitors are planning to ambush and kill you in the strait between Ithákē and Samē, though I don't think they'll succeed. So sail well away from the islands, and when you reach the nearest coast of Ithákē, send the others on to town, but stay with the swineherd yourself, and tell him to inform Penelopē that you're back safe! With that she left for Olympos (1–43). Tēlemachos now kicked Peisistratos awake, telling him to yoke up the chariot, it was time for them to be off. Peisistratos said: It's still dark! We can't go yet, however much you want to. And wait till Menelaös brings out gifts for you, and wishes you a kind farewell! Dawn came not long after, and with it, bright and early, Menelaös. Tēlemachos hurriedly dressed, and approached Menelaös, saying: Menelaös, let me go home now, I really need to. Menelaös said: I shan't keep you any longer than you want, and I'd blame anybody who did! Just hang on till I put gifts in the chariot for you and have the women make you a last meal! A traveler needs to eat before starting out. And if you plan to go by way of Argos, I'll come with you, and supply horses, and we'll stay with people who'll give us good presents (44–85). Tēlemachos said: I'd rather leave at once—there's no one watching over my property! I'm afraid that my quest for my father is going to cost me my possessions, even maybe my life! On hearing this, Menelaös at once told his wife and her maids to prepare a meal, and his squire Eteōneus to light a fire and roast some meat. He then went with her and a son to his storeroom, and chose a two-handled cup, while Helen selected a splendid robe that she'd made herself. Then they met Tēlemachos, and Menelaös said: May Zeus grant you the homecoming you want! And I shall give you a truly precious gift, a silver mixing-bowl, the work of Hephaistos. He put the cup in Tēlemachos' hands, and told his son to bring the mixing-bowl. Then Helen brought the robe, and told Tēlemachos it was a bridal dress for his future wife, but till that day it should be stored away in his mother's keeping. Peisistratos now took the gifts, admiringly, and stowed them in the chariot (86–132). Then Menelaös led them inside for the meal that awaited them. When it was over Tēlemachos and Peisistratos mounted the chariot and drove to the gateway. Menelaös had wine brought for libations. He stood by the horses and told them: My greetings to Nestōr, who was like a kind father to me at Troy. Tēlemachos said: We'll be sure to tell him! And how I wish I could find my father at home, to tell him how

kind you've been to me! At this point an eagle flew by on the right, clutching a large white tame goose. And Peisistratos said: well, Menelaös, was the omen for us or for you? While Menelaös pondered, Helen said: As the eagle came from the mountain, and snatched the house-bred goose, so shall Odysseus return and exact his vengeance—he may even be home already! Said Tēlemachos: May Zeus grant this, and I'll pray to you as a god! (133–81).

182–300: Off they went, and drove all day. They spent the night in Phērai, as guests of Dioklēs, and next day soon came near Pylos. Then Tēlemachos said to Peisistratos: We're old friends and of an age. Would you drop me off at my ship? I need to get home, and I'm afraid old Nestōr will insist on my staying longer as a guest regardless. Peisistratos pondered: How to manage this? He drove to the ship, stowed all the gifts aboard, and said: Board with your crew, and set sail, at once, before I get home and tell Nestōr! He's sure to come in person to make you stay. He won't like going home without you: he'll be cross. With that he left for Pylos, and Tēlemachos and his comrades prepared to sail (182–221). While he was making sacrifice, he was approached by a descendant of the seer Melampous [whose history and lineage are described in a long digression] Theoklymenos, who was on the run after killing a man (222–59).

He asked Tēlemachos his identity, and Tēlemachos told him, saying he'd been seeking news of his father. Theoklymenos said he'd killed a kinsman in Argos and was fleeing to escape death. He asked, as a suppliant, for passage on Tēlemachos' ship, because he was being pursued. Yes, Tēlemachos replied, come aboard, and we'll give you such entertainment as we can. Theoklymenos boarded, and they at once set sail. Athēnē gave them a following wind. It got dark. They sailed on, both wondering if they'd escape or be caught (260–300).

301–50: Odysseus, Eumaios, and the four assistant swineherds had supper together. Odysseus, trying to find out if they'd invite him to stay on with them, or send him off to make his own way as a beggar in the city, said: I plan to go off and beg tomorrow morning, so as not to be a burden on you. So, advise me, and send one of you with me as guide. But when I'm there I'll take care of myself: beg for food, maybe take news to Penelopē, mix with these suitors, see if they'll give me dinner. I've got all a servant's skills—I can make a fire, chop firewood, carve meat, pour wine (301–24). Eumaios said: You must be crazy! They're violent, and they have young men serving them. No, you stay here, no one's bothered by you. And when Tēlemachos comes, he'll give you decent clothes, and send you wherever you want. Odysseus said: I'm so grateful, you've saved me from wandering and hardship! Nothing's worse than homelessness. So, since you're keeping me here, tell me about Odysseus' parents—are they still alive? (325–50)

351–402: Eumaios said: Laërtēs is still alive, but is aged by grief over his absent son. But Odysseus' mother died of sorrow. She brought me up together with her youngest daughter, and treated me like one of her own. But when we were grown, she sent the daughter to Samē to be married, with bridal gifts, but me she fitted with mantle and

tunic and sandals, and sent out to work in the fields. I think she loved me best, though. Yet now, even though the gods prosper my work, I have to go short so that I can eat and drink and entertain strangers. I hear nothing good from my mistress because of this plague of suitors. Servants like to talk with their mistress, and not only get their food, but take a snack to the fields as well (351–79). Odysseus said: You must have been a young child when you were taken from your home and parents. Was your city sacked? Or were you kidnapped from the fields and shipped out and sold? Eumaios said: So, listen, and drink your wine: no need to sleep yet! The rest of you, go out and sleep, and tomorrow eat early and herd the droves of swine! But we two will drink and enjoy each other's sad stories. And I'll tell you, stranger, what you want to know (380–402).

403–95: Eumaios' reminiscence. An island, Syria, near Ortygia: rich in flocks, vines, wheat, never subject to famine or illness: in old age people are killed by Apollo's and Artemis' gentle shafts. Two cities, both ruled by Eumaios' father, Ktēsios. Cunning Phoenician traders came there by ship. In Ktēsios' house, there was a tall, attractive Phoenician woman, bought as a slave from Taphian pirates. The Phoenicians seduced her and offered to take her back to her Sidonian parents. She made them swear they'd do this. They so swore. Then she told them not ever to address her in the street: her owner the king was suspicious. They were to fill their hold speedily with goods, then send her a message, and she'd come with what gold stuff she could lift, plus a child she was nurse of (Eumaios) who'd fetch them a good price (403–56). It took them a year. Then the messenger came, offering the maidservants in the house a necklace, and nodded to the Phoenician woman. She came, bringing three gold cups and Eumaios, and they set sail. But after six days the woman died, and her corpse was thrown overboard. The ship put in at Ithákē, and Laërtēs bought Eumaios as a child. Odysseus said: Very moving. But at least you ended with a good master who took care of you, whereas I've come here as a wanderer. They then slept till dawn (457–95).

495–557: Meanwhile, Tēlemachos and his crew rowed their ship to an anchorage nearby, disembarked, and had a meal. Tēlemachos then told them to row on to the city, while he himself checked his estate. He'd walk into town the following day, and give them a good meal as their reward. Theoklymenos said: What about me? Whose house should I go to? Or should I go straight to yours and your mother's? Tēlemachos said: Normally I'd say go to ours, but that won't suit you because I'll be away, and my mother never comes out among the suitors. No, go to Eurymachos' house—he's highly respected, a leading figure, and wants to marry my mother (495–522). But Zeus only knows whether he'll meet his day of doom before such a wedding. At this a hawk flew by, plucking the feathers from a dove. Theoklymenos took him aside and said: This was an omen! No line is more kingly than yours here in Ithákē! You will rule forever! Tēlemachos said: Would that your prediction might be fulfilled! I'd certainly favor and reward you! He then told his faithful comrade Peiraios to take this stranger home as a guest and look after him. Peiraios agreed to do so. They embarked and set out. But Tēlemachos took a spear and made for the swineherd's farmstead (523–57).

1–67: Odysseus and Eumaios, alone in the hut after the herdsmen left with their droves of pigs, relit the fire and prepared breakfast. Tēlemachos approached outside: the dogs fawned on him, didn't bark. Odysseus heard his footsteps, told Eumaios some comrade of his must be coming. Tēlemachos came in, to be lovingly greeted by the swineherd, who said, sobbing: I thought I'd never see you again when you left for Pylos! Come in, come in! You don't often visit; I suppose you prefer the suitors' company! Tēlemachos said: I came to ask you if my mother's still here, or has remarried and left (1–35). Eumaios said: She's still here, still weeping. And he took his spear and ushered him in. Odysseus stood up and offered him his place. Tēlemachos refused, saying there was a man there who'd fix him one. Odysseus sat down again, and the swineherd made a seat for Tēlemachos and served up yesterday's leftovers, with bread and wine. After eating, Tēlemachos said to Eumaios: Dad, where did this stranger come from? What sailors brought him? He can't have come on foot. Eumaios said: He's a wanderer, from Krētē. He ran away here from a Thesprōtian ship. He's your suppliant. Up to you (36–67).

68–153: Tēlemachos said: How can I give this stranger proper welcome? I'm still young, and I'm not yet sure I can defend myself against an unreasonably angry man! My mother can't decide whether to keep house here, as people would prefer, or to marry the most lavish of these suitors! As for this stranger, I can give him clothes and a sword and sandals and send him wherever he wants. Or you can have him here at the farmstead, and I'll pay for his keep. But I won't let him go up among the suitors—they might mock him, and I'd be embarrassed. Hard for me to get anything done: I'm only one man, and there are so many of them (68–89). Odysseus replied: I should answer this! This account of the suitors' wanton behavior is heartbreaking! Do you just put up with it? Do the people hate you? Is it your brothers' fault? I wish I were younger, or a son of Odysseus—or that Odysseus himself would return [there's still hope]! Then behead me if I don't make trouble for the suitors! But even if they overwhelmed me by force of numbers, I'd rather die thus than go on seeing strangers abused and maidservants raped and men endlessly squandering my goods! Tēlemachos said: Then I'll tell you. No, the people don't hate me. Nor do I blame any brothers—Zeus has made our ancestry a one-son line! From Arkeisios to Laërtēs to Odysseus to me, we were all only sons. That's why all these suitors are courting my mother and wasting my property (90–125). My mother neither says no to remarriage nor does she decide on it. So they'll go on feasting and devouring my goods, and soon they'll ruin me. So, Eumaios, go tell Penelopē that I'm back safe from Pylos. And don't tell anyone else, and come straight back here when you've told her—I've got enemies round here. Eumaios said: Got it! But shouldn't I tell Laërtēs too? He's so miserable and never comes into town now. Tēlemachos said: No, you come straight back. My mother could send her housekeeper over with the news (126–53).

154–219: Eumaios now left. Athēnē noted this, and came to the door of the hut in the likeness of a tall, handsome woman, invisible to Tēlemachos, but seen by

Odysseus and the dogs, which whined and shrank away in fear. Odysseus went outside and stood by her. Athēnē said: Now tell your son who you are, and together plan the suitors' destruction. Then both of you go into town. I'll soon be with you there. She touched him with her wand, made him bigger, younger-looking, firm of flesh, dark of beard, better dressed. Then she left, and Odysseus went back inside. Tēlemachos, amazed at his changed appearance, took him for a god. Odysseus said: I'm no god: I'm your father, for whom you're suffering the attentions of these men! He then embraced his son and wept (154–91). Tēlemachos said: You can't be my father! Some god's tricking me! Just now you were an old beggar in rags, but now you're like a god! Odysseus replied: Don't be incredulous. I am indeed Odysseus. No other Odysseus will come here! This transformation is the work of Athēnē. He then sat down. Tēlemachos embraced him, and they both wept, like vultures robbed of their chicks (192–219).

220–65: Tēlemachos asked: What ship did you come on? Where were the crew from? Odysseus said: The Phaiakians, regular transporters, brought me as I slept, together with rich gifts, now stowed in caves. I'm here at Athēnē's bidding to plan the destruction of our enemies with you. So list the suitors for me. We must decide whether we can take them on alone or need help. Tēlemachos said: I always knew you were a great fighter, but this is too much! Two men can't fight them. There are fifty-two from Doulichion, with six servants; twenty-four from Samē; twenty from Zákynthos; and twelve of the noblest from Ithákē itself, plus Medōn the herald, and the minstrel, and two meat carvers. If we go against all these in the hall, we'll have a bad time of it. We'll need any helpers you can think of. Odysseus said: Do you reckon Zeus and Athēnē will do, or shall we need more? Tēlemachos said: Good indeed! They rule the other gods, as well as mankind (220–65).

266–320: Odysseus said: Those two won't be absent when things get going! Now: you go home in the morning, join the suitors. The swineherd will escort me in later, disguised as an elderly beggar. If they abuse me, you must put up with it. You can ask them politely, but they won't listen. Also, when I give you the nod, you start removing all the weapons from the hall, to be stowed away in the back of the storeroom. If the suitors ask you about this, say you're taking them away from the grime and smoke, and as a safety precaution, in case when the suitors are drunk, quarrels start (266–94). But leave two swords, spears, and shields for us: Athēnē and Zeus will bewitch the suitors. And don't tell *anyone* that Odysseus is back home! We'll see then which of the servants is loyal. Tēlemachos said: You'll see I'm no slacker! But it'd take too long to go about the estate testing all the farmhands: you can do that afterwards. Still, I agree about the women (266–320).

321–92: Meanwhile, Tēlemachos' ship arrived. They offloaded the gifts, and sent a herald to tell Penelopē that her son was home safe. The herald coincided with Eumaios on the same errand, and merely reported Tēlemachos' return: Eumaios told her all that Tēlemachos had instructed him to say, after which he returned to his pigs. The news depressed the suitors. Eurymachos said: We thought Tēlemachos would never

complete this journey! Now we need to send a ship to tell the ambushers to come back! (320–50). But a ship was seen putting in, and it proved to be the ambushers. No message needed! A god had perhaps told them. Or perhaps they'd seen Tēlemachos' ship. The suitors now went first to the harbor, to pick up the ambushers, then to the place of assembly, where they would not let anyone else join them. Antinoös addressed them: The gods must have saved Tēlemachos from destruction! We were keeping watch, but he eluded us! We need to arrange his sure death: the man's no fool, and he'll work against us! Also, the people have turned completely against us. Tēlemachos will be furious and tell them how we plotted to kill him, but failed. We need to take care they don't drive us out! We have to catch him on the road or in the countryside. Then we can share out his property and estate, though the house has to go to his mother and whoever she weds. But if you'd rather that he lives and keeps all his inheritance, then we need to stop devouring his livelihood, and each of us should court Penelopē from his own home and compete with bridal gifts for her hand (361–92).

393–449: Amphinomos of Doulichion then spoke: I'm not for killing Tēlemachos: slaying royals is a serious matter. Let's learn the gods' will first. If they approve, we'll do it; if not, not. General approval. End of meeting. Move to Odysseus' house. Meanwhile, Penelopē had learned of the murder plot from Medōn the herald, and decided to confront the suitors. From the doorway she addressed Antinoös: You violent mischief-maker! Yet you're thought the best speaker and counselor of your age here! Not so! Why are you planning to murder Tēlemachos? Why ignore suppliants? Your father came here as a fugitive! He'd been raiding Thesprōtians when they were our allies, and they wanted to kill him and consume his property, but Odysseus held them off—and it's *his* estate you're devouring without payment now, *his* wife you're courting, *his* son you want to kill! You're causing me great distress. Stop it, and make the others stop too! (393–433). Eurymachos answered her, saying: Don't be distressed! No man lives who'll touch your son—I'd spear him first! Odysseus used to sit me on his knee and feed me as a child, so Tēlemachos need have no fear of death—not from the suitors, anyway; the gods are another thing! So he said; but he was himself plotting the boy's death. Penelopē now went back upstairs to her room (434–49).

450–81: That evening, the swineherd returned to Odysseus and Tēlemachos, who were making supper. [Before he got there, however, Athēnē came and once more made Odysseus an aged beggar in ragged clothing to make sure the swineherd didn't recognize him and tell Penelopē.] Tēlemachos asked Eumaios: What news in town? Have the suitors returned from their ambush, or are they still watching out for me? Eumaios answered: It wasn't my business to wander round asking for news. I wanted to deliver my message and come straight back. But on my way home I did notice a ship put in. It may have been them: I don't know. Tēlemachos glanced at his father and smiled, but avoided the swineherd's eye. So then they ate supper, and after it retired to sleep.

1–60: Next morning early, Tēlemachos told Eumaios: I'm going into town to see my mother. She won't stop lamenting my absence till she actually sees me. I want you to guide this stranger into town to beg for food. I'm so worried I can't bother with this kind of thing myself. If that angers him, too bad. I prefer to be honest. Odysseus then said: Friend, I'm not eager to be left here. Better for a beggar to be in town! I'm too old to be a farmhand. So go! This man you detailed to guide me will do so, as soon as the sun's higher and I've warmed myself—these threadbare clothes are no help against frost, and it's a long way to the city (1–25). Tēlemachos left, walking briskly. Old Eurykleia was the first to see him arrive at the house. She and the handmaids gathered round and welcomed him. Penelopē came down, hugged and kissed him, and said: I thought I'd never see you again! Tell me what you heard about your father. Tēlemachos said: Don't remind me of the death I just escaped! You go take a bath and put on clean clothes. Then you and your handmaids vow a full sacrifice in the hope of revenge! I'm going to assembly: I've a guest who came with me from Pylos—I sent him on ahead to be looked after by Peiraios till I arrive myself. Penelopē said nothing, but did all that he'd asked (26–60).

61–149: Tēlemachos now went to the place of assembly. The suitors were polite, but evil was in their hearts. He avoided them and went to join his father's old friends. Peiraios now brought his guest over and told Tēlemachos to send women to his house to collect Menelaös' gifts. Tēlemachos said: Depends how things go. If the suitors kill me and share out my inheritance, I'd rather you had those things. But if *I* destroy *them,* yes, fine, bring the gifts to me. He then escorted his guest home. They bathed, were massaged with oil, dressed in clean mantles and tunics, and went in to the hall, ready for a meal. Penelopē sat across from Tēlemachos, and they had dinner. Penelopē then said: Tēlemachos, I'm going back upstairs, to lie down and mourn! But couldn't you be bothered, before the suitors arrive, to tell me anything you'd heard about your father? (61–107). Tēlemachos said: All right, mother, here it is. We went to Pylos, and Nestōr entertained me generously, but said he'd heard nothing about Odysseus, living or dead. Then we went to Menelaös, where I met Helen. Menelaös asked why I'd come. I told him. Menelaös said: Cowards themselves, they wish to lie in the bed of a brave-hearted man! As a lion destroys two fawns he finds in his lair, so Odysseus will destroy them! I wish he'd come, as strong as he was when he wrestled Philomeleidēs down in Lesbos, and take on the suitors—then they'd all be in for a nasty death and a bitter marriage! I'll tell you all I heard from the Old Man of the Sea. He said he'd seen Odysseus, suffering greatly, on an island, kept there perforce by the nymph Kalypsō, unable to get away because he had neither a ship nor comrades. That's what Menelaös said. After this I set out for home, and the gods gave me a good wind, and a quick voyage (108–49).

150–253: Theoklymenos then said: He [Tēlemachos] lacks true understanding! Listen to me, and I'll make you a true prophecy! Odysseus is here already, learning

what the suitors are up to and planning their downfall! I saw a clear bird-omen on Tēlemachos' ship, and so told him. Penelopē said: Would that what you say were fulfilled! You'd soon know my gratitude and kindness then (150–65). Meanwhile the suitors were sporting with quoits and javelins. But when it was mealtime and the flocks came home, Medōn the herald said to them: Now you've had your sport, come in and eat. Punctuality at meals is a good thing. They obeyed him, went in, and set about slaughtering sheep, goats, hogs, and a heifer (170–82).

Now Odysseus and Eumaios were preparing to go into town. The swineherd said: Me, I'd rather have left you here to watch the farmstead; but you want to go in, and so my master commanded, and his word is dangerous to disregard. So, let's go! It's late in the day, and the evenings can get cold. Got it, said Odysseus, and you show me the way. If you have a staff cut, could I borrow it to lean on? You said the road was rough. Eumaios found him a staff, and they set out, leaving the farmhands and dogs behind (183–203). When they were near town, by the spring, they met Melanthios, driving his she-goats in for the suitors' dinner, with two herdsmen. He started insulting them, infuriating Odysseus: Here's one no-good leading another! You wretched swineherd, where are you taking this dirty greedy-guts of a beggar? He could do real work for me, but oh no, he'd rather slouch round begging food to fill his ravenous belly! I tell you, if he shows up at Odysseus' house, he'll be pelted with footstools (204–32). As he passed Odysseus, he kicked him. Odysseus thought of killing him, but restrained himself. The swineherd prayed aloud for some god to bring his master back—then he'd fix your insolence! Melanthios sneered: How he talks big! One day I'll ship him out and get a good price for him! Oh, would that Apollo, or the suitors, were to slay Tēlemachos, as surely as Odysseus' day of return's been lost in a distant land! (233–53)

254–327: Melanthios went on ahead of them, entered the hall, sat down by Eurymachos, and was served food. Phēmios, the minstrel, was beginning to play. Odysseus and Eumaios followed. Odysseus said: This fine place must be Odysseus' house, and there's a feast with music going on. Eumaios said: Correct! Either you go in first, and I'll follow, or I'll go first and you come afterwards. But don't linger outside too long, or someone may assault you or throw something at you. Odysseus said: You go first, I'll follow. I'm used to hard knocks, I can endure much. Hunger drives men implacably (254–89). Now there lay on the dung heap an old dog, Argos, that Odysseus had bred for hunting before he left for Troy, its good hunting days now long past, its strength gone. But at the sight of Odysseus it pricked up its ears. Odysseus shed a surreptitious tear, and said: This is, was, a fine-bodied dog! Was it a hunter, or just a pet? Eumaios said: It was Odysseus' dog, a fine hunter and tracker. But he's long absent, and the women have neglected the dog now it's old. Then he went in. But the dog, Argos, died after seeing Odysseus again in the twentieth year (290–327).

328–408: Tēlemachos saw Eumaios, and beckoned to him. Eumaios took a stool and joined him. A herald brought him food. Then in came Odysseus, as an old ill-clad

beggar leaning on a staff, and paused at the threshold. Tēlemachos gave Eumaios a loaf and two fistfuls of meat, and said: Give this to the stranger. Tell him to go round and beg from all the suitors. Embarrassment doesn't suit a beggar. Eumaios did so. Odysseus said: Zeus grant to Tēlemachos blessed prosperity! He took the food, and set it on his bag. Then he ate while the minstrel sang. When he stopped, and a roar of conversation started, Athēnē went to Odysseus and put it into his head to go round the suitors begging and find out which of them were decent and which lawless. So he began, stretching out his hand like a beggar born. So they pitied and gave, wondering who he was (328–68). Melanthios said: I've seen him before: the swineherd brought him here. Antinoös rebuked Eumaios, saying: Why bring him into town? Don't we have enough beggars already to ruin our meals? Eumaios said: Who ever seeks out and invites anyone from abroad, except an expert of some sort—seer, physician, builder, minstrel? Such men are sought after worldwide. No one would invite a beggar, to burden himself! But you're always harsh to Odysseus' servants, me in particular. But I don't care so long as Penelopē and Tēlemachos are still here. Tēlemachos said: Don't waste words on this man! Antinoös is always making harsh remarks to provoke dissension, and encouraging others to do the same (369–95). To Antinoös he added: You really care for me like a father, telling me to throw a stranger out! No, you give him something! I don't grudge it him. Don't mind my mother or Odysseus' servants. But what you're really thinking is you prefer stuffing yourself to giving to someone else. Antinoös replied: Oh, bravely said! If the other suitors give him what I would, you won't see him around here for three months (396–408).

409–91: With that he grabbed the footstool from under the table. But the others filled the beggar's bag with bread and meat. On his way out Odysseus stopped by Antinoös and said: Friend, give me something! You look like a king, so you should give more than the others! I too was once a rich man in a splendid house, with many servants, and gave to wandering strangers. But Zeus ruined me, sent me with pirates to Egypt. I sent out scouts, and told my comrades to guard the ships. But they laid the fields waste and began robbing and raping and killing. So a strong force came out from the city, killed many, took the rest prisoner. But me they gave to a friend, to take to Cyprus, and from there I made my way here, much distressed. Antinoös said: What god brought this pest here to bother our feast? Get away from my table, you shameless beggar, or you'll come to a bitter Egypt and Cyprus! You dun everyone, and they give—no reason not to give other men's food, when it's plentiful (409–52). Odysseus said: Your brains don't match your looks. You wouldn't give a suppliant so much as a grain of salt, and here you won't spare even a crust of bread, though there's plenty. Antinoös, angered, said: You complain? You won't get out unscathed! With that he threw the footstool, and it hit Odysseus at the juncture of neck and shoulder. Odysseus stood firm, just shook his head and pondered trouble. Then he sat at the threshold, put down his full bag, and addressed the suitors, saying: There's no grief or heartache when a man's hit while defending his possessions. But Antinoös has struck me because of my hungry belly. If beggars have gods, may they slay him before his marriage! Antinoös replied: Sit still and eat, or get out! Otherwise the young

men here will haul you out and flay you! At this they grew indignant, and told him he was wrong to strike the wanderer. Suppose this was a god from heaven? Gods do visit cities in disguise, noting the offenses of mortals! But Antinoös ignored them. And Tēlemachos, much offended that his father had been struck, nevertheless shook his head, said nothing, and brooded on trouble (453–91).

492–550: When Penelopē heard about the beggar being struck, she apostrophized Antinoös, saying, among her handmaids: So may you yourself be struck down by Apollo! Eurynomē the housekeeper said to her: If our prayers were granted, not one of these men would survive till tomorrow! Penelopē said: They're all bad, but Antinoös is worse: there's some stranger going round the suitors begging, and the rest gave him food, but Antinoös threw a stool at him, hit his shoulder. So she spoke, while Odysseus was eating his dinner. To Eumaios she then said: Tell the stranger to come here to me: I want to ask him if he's had word of Odysseus, or even seen him. He looks as though he's wandered widely (492–511). Eumaios replied: He's a real charmer, the way he talks. I had him three days and nights in my hut after he'd escaped from a ship, and he still hadn't ended his tale of hardship! He enchanted me the way a minstrel does. He's an old friend of Odysseus, he says. He's come here from Krētē on his wanderings. He's heard that Odysseus is alive, and near, in Thesprōtia, and is bringing much treasure home. Penelopē said: Call him here! I want him to tell me this himself. As for these suitors, let them enjoy themselves here—their servants are scoffing their own food and wine at home, while they slaughter our beasts and swill our wine! Unchecked, because there's no man like Odysseus here to stop them. If only Odysseus could come home, then he and his son would soon be revenged on them! At this Tēlemachos sneezed loudly. Penelopē said, laughing, An omen! My son sneezed at what I just said! Death will overtake all these suitors! If the stranger speaks truly, I'll give him a fine mantle and tunic (512–50).

551–606: Hearing this, the swineherd went to Odysseus, and told him Penelopē wanted to ask him about her husband, and of the reward she'd give him if he proved to be telling the truth, and her permit for him to beg anywhere in the land. Odysseus answered: Eumaios, I'll tell her the truth about Odysseus. I know him well, and we've suffered through similar hardships. But I'm afraid of these violent wanton suitors. When I was in the hall, doing no harm, one of them struck me, and neither your son nor anyone else stopped him. So tell Penelopē to wait till after sundown to ask me about her husband, and then to seat me near the fire, because of my threadbare rags (551–72). Eumaios went back to Penelopē, who said: You didn't bring him! Is he afraid of something or someone? It's no use a beggar being shy! Eumaios replied: Actually, he's right. It's better for you, too, to hear what he has to say when you're both alone. Penelopē said: So, he's no fool: he knows how things can be. I daresay there are no more wickedly aggressive men than these. Eumaios then left her, and went to Tēlemachos and the suitors. He whispered privately to Tēlemachos: I'm off to guard the pigs. You look after everything here—above all, take care of yourself! Watch out that you don't run into trouble. There are many evildoers about, may

Zeus finish them before they harm us! Tēlemachos said: Off with you when you've eaten! Bring fine beasts in tomorrow morning. I—and the gods—will look after things here. Eumaios ate, then returned to the pigs, leaving the suitors to their merrymaking.

BOOK 18

1–87: A public beggar now showed up, a bulky glutton known as Iros, because he ran errands for anyone, all set to drive Odysseus from his own house, saying: Shift it, old man! Out of the doorway if you don't want to be dragged out! They're all winking at me to do that, but I'm ashamed to! So move, or we may come to blows! Odysseus stared angrily, saying: I haven't troubled you, and I don't mind people giving you handouts, even big ones! This threshold's big enough for both of us, you don't need to be jealous. You seem to be a vagrant like me, and the gods will see that we prosper. But be careful how you challenge me: old I may be, but if I get angry, I'll bloody your mouth! That'd give me peace; I don't think you'd come back for second round (1–26). Iros said, angrily: See how this dirty fatso runs on, like a kitchen maid! I'll punch him up and knock out his teeth! You, gird yourself, let these men see how we fight! But how could you face a younger man? So they spoke to each other, and Antinoös, laughing, called out: Here's something new! The stranger and Iros are at each other! Let's set up a match! So they all gathered round, and Antinoös said: Whoever wins the bout can choose one of these hot goat paunches that we filled with fat and blood! And he can always feast with us, the only beggar we'll let join us. They all agreed (27–49). Odysseus then said: A sad old man can't match a younger one, but hunger drives me on! And will you all swear that none of you will hit me a foul blow, and so let Iros win? They so swore, and Tēlemachos then said: Stranger, if you're determined to fight this fellow, you needn't worry about anyone else! If anyone hits you, he'll have to fight me, your host! The princes are agreed! Odysseus then stripped down, showing a fine muscular physique, despite his age. And Athēnē buffed up his sinews, so that the suitors were amazed, and said Iros was asking for trouble. Iros quaked, but the servants tucked up his clothes and led him out by force, scared and trembling. Antinoös reproved him, saying: Well, braggart, if you're scared of this broken old man, you're in for trouble! If he beats you, I'm going to ship you out to King Echetos, who'll cut off your nose and ears and rip out your genitals and give them, raw, to the dogs as food (50–87).

88–157: At this Iros trembled even more. Odysseus debated whether to knock him out flat, or to give him a light blow, and decided on the second, so as not to attract too much attention. But he hit him below the ear, crushed in the bones, and he fell, bleeding and kicking. The suitors nearly died laughing. Odysseus dragged him out, sat him against the courtyard wall with a staff, and said: Now scare off pigs and dogs, and stop messing with strangers and beggars. He then sat down at the threshold (88–110). The suitors greeted him saying: Zeus grant you your wishes! Thanks for stopping this braggart. We'll ship him out to King Echetos! Antinoös gave him the

great paunch. Amphinomos added two loaves, and pledged him, saying: Good luck in the future, however downtrodden you are now! Odysseus said: Amphinomos, you seem a sensible man, like your father. So listen to this. There's nothing weaker on earth than a man. He thinks, as long as the gods smile on him and he's young and healthy, he'll never have trouble. Even when the gods turn against him, he bears it patiently. I too was once prosperous and valiant, trusting my kin. So, let no man ever be lawless! These suitors are wanton and reckless. But the man whose wife they insult won't be long absent, he's very near! So may some god take you home, so as not to meet him when he comes, because his coming will mean bloodshed. Odysseus then poured a libation and drank the wine. Amphinomos went back through the hall uneasy, mind anticipating trouble, and sat down. But Athēnē ensured he was killed by Tēlemachos (110–57).

158–242: Athēnē then prompted Penelopē to make herself look attractive to the suitors and win more renown than before from her husband and son. With an awkward laugh, she said to the housekeeper: Eurynomē, my heart impels me to show myself to the suitors, much though I detest them. And I need to tell Tēlemachos not to consort with them so much—they feign respect, but are plotting his downfall. Eurynomē said: Yes, good. Tell your son this. But wash and clean your face first. Don't go round tear-stained. Your son is now what you prayed for, a grown man. Penelopē said: You may love me, but don't soft-talk me into washing and using oil! Any beauty I had I lost when Odysseus sailed to Troy. Just tell my two handmaids to come, I'd be embarrassed to face all those men alone. The housekeeper went out and did so (158–86). But Athēnē put Penelopē to sleep, relaxed her, made her taller, more beautiful, and left. Then the chatter of her maids woke her, and she thought: Would that Artemis might kill me now, I'd no longer waste my life bemoaning the absence of my incomparable husband! With that she went to the hall, and stood in the doorway with her maids, veiled. The suitors were enchanted, all hoped to bed her (187–214).

215–303: To Tēlemachos she said: You're not as sensible as you were! Even as a child you behaved better—you'd be called a prosperous man's son only by some stranger who judged you just by your good looks! Look at the way you let this stranger be abused! Suppose he were to be manhandled? You'd be disgraced. Tēlemachos replied: Mother, I don't blame you for being cross. I know what's good and bad; it was before that I behaved childishly. And the fight with Iros didn't turn out as the suitors expected: the stranger won! How I wish they were all like Iros is now—dazed, head lolling, unable to walk or go home (215–42). Eurymachos said: Penelopē, if all the Achaians in Argos could see you now, you'd have even more suitors, you're so beautiful and clever! Penelopē said: Any beauty I had I lost when Odysseus sailed for Troy. If he could now come and care for me, my fame would be more and fairer. Before he left he clasped my hand and said: I don't think all Achaians will make it back from Troy. The Trojans are famous warriors. So, you must take care of everything here, including my parents. But if I'm not back by the time my son's a bearded adult,

then you're free to remarry and leave this house (243–70). Well, now all that's happening! I'll yet have to face that loathsome wedding night! And suitors never used to court like this: they competed with gifts and banquets, they didn't freeload off the prospective bride. Odysseus noted with pleasure the way she beguiled them into gift-giving and confused them, while her mind was directed elsewhere. Antinoös said to her: Any gifts that are brought here you should take: it's not proper to refuse them. But we're not going to shift from here until you marry the best candidate. They all liked this, and each suitor sent off for gifts. Antinoös ordered a fine robe with brooches; Eurymachos, a gold and amber chain; Eurydamas, triple-drop earrings; Peisandros, an elegant necklace. All the suitors gave something. She went back upstairs, and her handmaids carried the gifts (271–303).

304–45: The suitors danced and sang till it was dark, and then set up three braziers with firewood, and torches in between them, and the handmaids kindled the flames. To them Odysseus now said: You maids, go join your mistress, and I'll take care of the light. Even if they stay up till dawn, they won't outlast me! I can endure a lot. The maids looked at each other and giggled. Then Melanthō, reared by Penelopē, and now sleeping with Eurymachos, said to Odysseus: Why aren't you out of here, dossing down in a smithy or somewhere? Here you stay instead, chattering away in the company of gentlemen, not at all embarrassed! You must be drunk, or maybe you're always like this, talking nonsense! Are you getting above yourself because you downed Iros? You'd better look out that someone tougher doesn't beat you bloody and throw you out! Odysseus stared at her wrathfully and said: I'll soon go to Tēlemachos, you bitch, and tell him what you're saying. He'll cut you into bits! At this the women fled, thinking he meant what he said. Odysseus stood there by the flaming braziers, pondering things that would be fulfilled (304–45).

346–428: Athēnē kept the suitors outrageous to sharpen Odysseus' resentment. Eurymachos thus jeered at him to amuse his fellow suitors, saying: The gods must have sent him here, there's a gleam of torchlight from him—from his bald pate! Then to Odysseus he said: Stranger, would you work for me on a farmstead, gathering stones for walls, planting trees? I'd pay you, feed you, clothe you. But no, you won't work, you'd rather slouch round begging for food! Odysseus said: I wish we two could have a spring mowing contest, deep grass, each with a scythe, working till evening. Or plowing with oxen in a four-acre field to see who kept the straightest furrow! Or a war would come, and I had helmet and shield and two spears, out in the front line—you wouldn't taunt me with my belly then! I suppose you think you're someone because you move among a crowd of no-goods. If Odysseus came home, these doors, however wide, would be too narrow for your flight (346–86). Eurymachos got angry and said: I'll punish you for talking like that, quite shameless among gentlemen, You must be drunk. Or do you always talk this kind of nonsense? Maybe you're getting above yourself after beating that vagabond Iros? He then threw a footstool at Odysseus, who ducked it, and it hit a cupbearer, who fell, dropping his wine jug with a crash (387–400). The suitors burst into an uproar, saying they

wished he [Odysseus] had perished elsewhere, and now here they were, quarrelling over beggars and spoiling the feast. Tēlemachos said they were mad and should go home and sleep it off. Not that he turned anyone away, of course. Amphinomos then said: No one responds in anger to what's been fairly said. Don't abuse this stranger or any of Odysseus' servants any more! One more libation, and we'll go home, and leave this stranger here, to be looked after by Tēlemachos! They all agreed. The libation was poured, they drank their fill, and then went home.

BOOK 19

1–64: Odysseus now said to Tēlemachos: You must hide away the weapons of war that are in the hall. When the suitors ask you why, you must say they're not as clean as when Odysseus left, they're grimy with smoke from the fire, so you're stowing them away. Also because of possible quarrels when the suitors have been drinking. . . Tēlemachos agreed. He called Eurykleia and told her to shut the women in their quarters while he put the arms away. Eurykleia said: I wish you were always as careful about your property! And who will give you a light for this? The stranger, Telemachus replied. She said nothing, but locked the doors (1–30). Odysseus and his son then started removing the arms. Athēnē went ahead of them with a golden lamp. Tēlemachos said: There's a wonderful light, it must be some god. Odysseus said: Hush, no questions. Yes, this the way of Olympian gods. You go to bed now. I'll test your mother, and the maids. She's going to question me too. Tēlemachos now went to his room by torchlight, leaving his father alone in the hall, planning death for the suitors (31–52). Penelopē now came in, and sat in her favorite chair by the fire. The maids now entered from the women's quarters, cleared away the remains of the suitors' feast, and fed the braziers with fresh firewood (53–64).

65–103: Melanthō started attacking Odysseus again, saying: You still going to be a nuisance here, roaming through the house and spying on the women? Get out now, be content with supper, or you'll get beaten with a lit torch! Odysseus said angrily: Why are you attacking me? Because I'm ragged and dirty, a beggar? I've no other choice! I too was once a wealthy house owner, with servants and property, who gave to vagrants. But Zeus, for his own reasons, took it all away. So you too watch out: you may lose your beauty, become repulsive to your mistress, or Odysseus still may return, and even should he not, Tēlemachos is a true son of his, and knows what's going on: he's not a child any more (65–89). Penelopē heard this, and said: I know what you've been up to, you bitch! And you knew I wanted to question the stranger, I said so myself! At this Eurynomē brought another chair, with a fleece covering, and Odysseus sat on it (90–103).

104–63: Penelopē said: Let me first ask you: who are you, and from where? Tell me your city, name your parents! Odysseus said: No mortal could fault you, you're renowned as some good king is renowned, for justice and fertile crops and prolific flocks and seas swarming with fish! But don't ask me about myself—it's not polite to

weep and wail as a guest, and your servants might say I wail because I'm drunk. Penelopē replied: Any beauty I had the gods destroyed when Odysseus sailed for Troy! Things would be better were he back here to look after me! Not only am I mourning his absence, but all the island princes are courting me against my will, and devouring our property! I take no notice of strangers or suppliants or public heralds, but I have ways of keeping them at arm's length (104–37). I set up a great web on my loom for weaving and told the suitors, Odysseus may be dead, but have patience while I weave a shroud for Laërtēs! They agreed to. So for three years I wove during the day and at night by torchlight undid most of what I'd done. But in the fourth year, alerted by my handmaids, they caught me. So I had to finish the shroud, and now I have no other tricks to postpone this marriage, my parents and my son want me wed, while the suitors are squandering our flocks and wine. So, tell me your background! (138–63).

164–250: Odysseus said: Will you never stop questioning me about my lineage? Well, I'll tell you, sad though it'll make me. There's this great island of Krētē, with a famous city, Knōsos, where Minōs reigned: he was my grandfather. My father was his son Deukaliōn, who sired both me and Idomeneus. It was there I saw Odysseus: he'd been driven to Krētē by a storm, and sought harbor at Amnisos, the port of Knōsos. He asked for Idomeneus, but he'd sailed for Ilion ten days or so earlier. So I took him home and entertained him and his comrades. The wind kept them ashore for twelve days, but then it dropped and they put to sea (164–202). Thus Odysseus spun a farrago of lies like the truth, and Penelopē wept as she listened, mourning the husband who was sitting there beside her. He pitied her, but held back his tears and kept an impassive face. But then Penelopē pulled herself together and began to test the story she'd been told. What kind of clothes had he [Odysseus] been wearing? What did he look like? What about his comrades? Odysseus said: it was nearly twenty years ago, hard to recall. He had on a double-folded woolen cloak, with a gold brooch, and on the brooch was a hound holding a struggling fawn. His tunic was of sheer stuff, and shone like dried onion skin. I don't know if he had these clothes as a gift, or from home. I myself gave him bronze sword and a purple cloak and a fringed tunic. And he had a favorite attendant, a herald called Eurybatēs—dark-complexioned, stoop-shouldered, curly-haired. Penelopē recognized the tokens and wept still more (203–50).

251–308: Penelopē said: Before I pitied you; now I shall honor you too. I gave him the clothes you describe! But he's dead, he'll never come back from Troy! Odysseus said: I don't blame you for weeping, any wife would when she lost her husband! But recently I heard from Pheidōn, the Thesprōtian king, that Odysseus was back, and near, bringing much treasure, even though he'd lost his ship and crew in a storm—they'd killed Hēlios' cattle! He escaped the wreck, and washed up in the country of the Phaiakians, who honored him and gave him rich gifts and transport. Pheidōn said there had been a ship ready to bring him home and showed me his treasure. He said Odysseus had gone to Dōdōnē to ask the oracle whether he should return

openly or in secret. So, he's safe and near: I swear to you, this very month he'll be home! (251–307).

308–85: Penelopē said: How I wish this were true! But Odysseus will never return, and there's now no one here like he was who'll give you conveyance, either. But we can and will look after you! She then told her handmaids to make him up a good bed, and in the morning to bathe him, so that he'd look forward to dinner with Tēlemachos. And if anyone here give him trouble, so much the worse for him! How will you know if I deserve my reputation, stranger, if you're left to sit and eat in my house in mean, threadbare rags? Man's life is short. A hard man is cursed while he lives and mocked when he's dead. But a decent man is much praised, and his guests spread his fame. Odysseus said: I got to detest comfortable beds when I left Krētē aboard my ship! Nor do I much love baths, though if there's a loyal old woman here who's suffered as I have, her I'd let wash my feet (308–48). Penelopē said: You're the most understanding and sensible guest we've had here, stranger! I do have the kind of old servant you mention. Eurykleia, come and wash the stranger's feet—he's the same age as your master, and Odysseus' hands and feet must be much like his! Eurykleia wept, face in hands, and said sadly, apostrophizing Odysseus: I'm old, I can do nothing. Zeus has cut off the day of your [Odysseus'] returning, despite all your lavish sacrifices to him, praying you might raise your son and reach a prosperous old age! [Then she said to the "stranger":] I suppose women mocked him, too, when he came to a famous man's house, just as these hussies here mocked you! That's why you won't let them wash your feet! But Penelopē has told me to wash them, and for her sake and yours, I will! And I have to tell you: of all those who've come here, you're most like Odysseus in every respect—feet too! Odysseus said: Yes, a lot of people have noticed that (349–85).

386–466: Eurykleia poured water in the cauldron. Odysseus suddenly figured she might recognize him from an old scar, and he backed into the shadows. In fact, she recognized him at once. This scar he'd been given by a boar's tusk when he went up Parnassos on a visit to his mother's father, Autolykos, a sharp trickster who'd learned his skill from Hermēs, and on whose knees Eurykleia had laid the newborn and yet unnamed Odysseus, asking him to give the child a name. Autolykos chose the name Odysseus, since he himself had brought trouble to plenty in his time. He also said when the child was grown he should come visit, and get the legacy waiting for him (386–412). So Odysseus went, when grown, to collect the gifts, and was warmly welcomed, and went hunting on Parnassos with Autolykos' sons. This was where he got the gash in his thigh and killed the boar in response. They bound the wound, healed him, and sent him home with his gifts. He told his parents the whole story (413–66).

467–558: Eurykleia recognized the scar instantly. She dropped his leg in the basin, spilling the water. In joy and grief, she exclaimed tearfully, eyes on Penelopē: You're Odysseus! And I didn't know you till I handled your body! But Penelopē wasn't looking: Athēnē had distracted her. And Odysseus caught the old woman by the

throat, drew her close, and whispered: You want to destroy me? Yes, you nursed me, and in the twentieth year I'm home! But keep quiet, someone might hear! My nurse you may be, but I won't spare you, if I do away with the suitors, when I come to deal with the other women! Eurykleia said: What a way to talk! I'm tough, I won't tell! And if you do finish off the suitors, I'll tell you which women have misbehaved. Odysseus said: Why you? I'll know for myself. Just keep quiet. She went and fetched more water and washed him. Then he drew his chair nearer the fire, hiding the scar under his rags (467–507). Penelopē now said: Stranger, I have one question for you before bedtime. Days, I mourn while working and directing my servants. Nights, I lie awake and worry. Like the nightingale mourning for Itylos, I can't decide whether to stay here and guard our possessions or marry the best of these suitors! Now my son's grown, he's worried about his patrimony, and says I should perhaps do this and leave! (508–34. But I had this dream: can you interpret it for me? I have twenty tame geese around the house. I dreamed that a great eagle swooped down and killed them all, leaving them scattered about the hall. I wept for their loss, but then the eagle returned and said, in a human voice: This is a true vision! The geese are the suitors, and I who was the eagle am your husband, who will destroy them. Then I woke, and there were the geese, as usual. Odysseus said: The meaning is plain: Odysseus will return, the suitors will perish (535–58).

559–604: Penelopē said: Dreams can be ambiguous and deceptive. They have two gates, of horn and ivory. Those that come through the ivory gate are deceptive and unfulfilled. But those that come through the gate of horn come true. I don't think my dream was that kind, much though I and my son would have welcomed that. And the day will soon be here when I'll have to leave this house. I'm going to set the suitors a contest. Odysseus used to line up twelve axes and shoot an arrow clean through them. The suitor who does this, and most easily strings his bow, him I'll marry, though I think I'll always remember this house in my dreams (559–80). Odysseus said: Do this! Odysseus will be here before any of them have a chance to string the bow or shoot through the axes. Penelopē said: I wish you could sit here forever and give me pleasure! But men can't always go sleepless: there's an appointed time for everything. I shall lie down and weep for my husband, as I've done since he left. You sleep here in the hall: get the servant girls to make you a bed. She then left, lay down in her room, and wept till Athēnē put her to sleep (581–604).

BOOK 20

1–55: Odysseus lay down to sleep in the forecourt, brooding trouble for the suitors. The servant girls who slept with the suitors came out laughing from the hall. Should he kill them all now, or leave them to it one last time? His heart growled, like a bitch over her puppies. Endure, he told himself, you've borne worse than this. He tossed and turned, like a man cooking a full paunch over the fire. Then Athēnē came and stood over him and said: Why are you wakeful? This is your house, and your wife and son are here (1–35). Very true, said Odysseus, but I'm still wondering how to

destroy the suitors, being one against many; and even if with your help I do, how should I escape the dead men's kinsmen? Athēnē said: Many trust those who are mortal, and weaker; but I'm a god! I tell you, even were fifty troops around us, to kill us, you'd end by driving off their cattle! Now go to sleep—your troubles are nearly over! Athēnē shed sleep on him, and left for Olympos (36–55).

56–121: While Odysseus slept, Penelopē woke and prayed to Artemis, saying: I wish you'd slay me now with an arrow, or else that a storm wind would carry me off like Pandareus' daughters, snatched by the spirits of the storm and given as servants to the Furies! Then I'd never give pleasure in marriage to a lesser man than Odysseus—and though sleep brings forgetfulness, the gods give me evil dreams too: I dreamed that one like him when he left lay beside me, and I thought it no dream but the truth (56–90). So she spoke, and dawn came. To Odysseus it seemed that she knew him and was standing by him. Then he put aside his bedding and prayed to Zeus, saying: If you gods have kindly brought me home, after all my suffering, may someone here utter an omen, and give me a sign outside too! So Zeus thundered, and a woman still grinding grain—the others were asleep—exclaimed: Zeus, you thundered from a clear sky! And fulfill my wish: may this be the last day of life for the suitors who've been overworking me! Hearing this, Odysseus was glad, planning as he was to be revenged on the guilty (91–121).

122–84: The handmaids were up and relighting the fire. Tēlemachos rose, dressed, and said to Eurykleia: Did you feed and provide bedding for the stranger? Or is he still uncared for? That's my mother for you: she looks after the riffraff, but sends the good men away. Eurykleia said: She's not at fault! He sat with her and drank, but said he wasn't hungry when she asked him. And he wouldn't sleep on a proper bed, but out in the forecourt on an oxhide and sheepskins: someone threw a cloak over him. Tēlemachos then went out to assembly, and Eurykleia told her handmaids to sweep the hall, scrub the tables, wash the cups and dishes, and fetch water: the suitors would soon be back. The suitors' servitors came in and began chopping firewood. The women came back with water. The swineherd returned, driving three fine hogs, and left them to feed in the courtyard (122–64). He asked Odysseus if the suitors were still insulting him, or treating him with more respect. Odysseus said: I wish the gods would punish them for the shameless way they abuse another man's house! Melanthios came in, tethered his goats in the forecourt, and said to Odysseus: Still bothering us, eh? Still begging? Won't you ever get out? We'll end up fighting! Besides, there are other local feasts for you to beg at. Odysseus said nothing, but shook his head, brooding (165–84).

185–239: The cowherd Philoitios now came in driving a heifer and she-goats, ferried over from the mainland, which he tethered in the colonnade. He asked the swineherd: Who's this stranger who looks like a royal prince? The gods, he said, make trouble for any man, regardless of rank. Then he greeted Odysseus, saying: Good luck in your troubles! There's no god more lethal than Zeus! Seeing you, I think of Odysseus, who's probably also a ragged vagrant, if he's still alive. But if he's

dead, bad luck for me! He put me in charge of his Kephallēnian cattle when I was a boy, and they flourished. But now strangers are making me supply these cattle for them to eat, and sharing my absent master's property. I don't want to take my cattle and go elsewhere; but this is still worse! I would indeed have gone had I not hoped that unfortunate man would return and scatter these suitors! (185–225). Odysseus said: You don't seem a bad man or a fool; indeed, I can see you're sensible, so I'll tell you, on my oath, that Odysseus will return while you're here, and you'll see the suitors killed! The cowherd said: Ah, if only! Then you'd see what kind of strength I have. And Eumaios too prayed for Odysseus' return (226–39).

240–319: While the suitors were plotting in assembly against Tēlemachos, an eagle flew past on the left, clutching a dove, and Amphinomos said: This idea of killing Tēlemachos won't turn out well! Let's rather think about feasting! What he said met with approval. They all went to Odysseus' house. Men slew animals, roasted and served the innards, mixed wine. Philoitios served bread, Melanthios poured wine (240–56). Tēlemachos now sat Odysseus near the threshold with a stool and a little table, gave him innards and wine, and said: Sit here and drink! I'll keep off their insults and blows from you—this is not a public venue, but Odysseus' house, and my inheritance! You suitors! No violence, no insults! We don't want quarrels or fighting here. Antinoös said: We have to go by Tēlemachos' bold words, hard though that may be! Zeus refused to let us silence him! Tēlemachos took no notice and made them give Odysseus a share of roast meat equal to their own. However, Athēnē refused to stop the insults, wanting to sharpen Odysseus' resentment (257–87). A wealthy man, Ktēsippos of Samē, who'd been courting Penelopē, now said: The stranger's had an equal portion, as a guest of Tēlemachos. Fair enough! Now I'll give him a stranger's gift, and he can pass it on to the bath woman or any other servant of Odysseus! With that he picked up an ox hoof and threw it at Odysseus, who ducked, smiling grimly, and it hit the wall. Tēlemachos then remonstrated with Ktēsippos, saying: Ktēsippos, you were lucky! The stranger dodged your shot—otherwise I'd have speared you, and your father would have had a wake on his hands rather than a wedding feast! So, I'm warning you all! No misbehavior in this house! I was a child before, but now I'm grown, and understand right and wrong! Yet we're still seeing food devoured and wine drunk, because it's hard for one man to fight a crowd! So stop harming me out of enmity! I'd rather be killed than have to go on witnessing your outrageous behavior! (288–319).

320–70: There was a silence. Then Agelaös said: Fair enough. No one can contest that! So, no more violence against the stranger or to any servant in Odysseus' house! And a friendly word to Tēlemachos and his mother, if they'll listen! While there was still hope that Odysseus would return, it was reasonable for you to hold on and restrain the suitors. But now it's plain he will never come back, tell your mother she must marry the best suitor, and leave you to enjoy your remaining patrimony, while she leaves to run another man's house. Tēlemachos replied: No, I wouldn't stop my mother remarrying any man she chose: indeed, I'd give her rich presents were she to

do so! But I can't and won't drive her out against her will: heaven forfend! (320–44). Athēnē now aroused helpless laughter, that seemed not their own, among the suitors, and fuddled their wits. Their eyes streamed with tears, they seemed to be wailing, thought that the walls were blood-bedabbled. Theoklymenos said: Wretched men, what's happening to you? Wrapped in darkness are your heads and knees, there's wailing, you're weeping, the walls are bloodstained, the forecourt's crowded with ghosts making for Erebos, sunlight's vanished from the sky (345–57). So he said, but they just laughed. Eurymachos said: This newly arrived stranger is crazy! Boys, take him down to the assembly, since he finds it dark in here! Theoklymenos said: I don't need guides while I'm here! My eyes, ears, feet, and mind are all sound! Using them, I'm off! I see trouble coming on you abusers of Odysseus' house, that none of you will be able to avoid (358–70).

371–94: With that he left, and went to Peiraios, who welcomed him. The suitors tried to annoy Tēlemachos by laughing at his guests, one of them saying: Tēlemachos, you're so unlucky in your guests! Here you have this dirty vagrant, always after food and wine, and unskilled in the arts of both warfare and of peace, a mere freeloader! And now there's this other fellow, spouting prophecies! If you take my advice, you'll ship these guests to the Sikels; at least you'd have cash for them then! Tēlemachos took no notice: he was watching his father for the sign to attack the suitors, while Penelopē had put her chair where she could hear everyone in the hall. Amid their laughter, they had got a good dinner. But no dinner could have been less enjoyable than the one a goddess and a strong man were soon to offer them for having done wrong first.

BOOK 21

1–83: Athēnē now made Penelopē think of setting the suitors the contest of the bow and the axes, that would be the beginning of death for them. She took the key and went with her handmaids to the storeroom in the back of the house where her husband's treasures were: gold, bronze, wrought iron—and his bow and quiver and arrows, a gift from Iphitos, whom he'd met in Messēnē, when on an embassy as a youth to collect a debt from the community. Iphitos too was there to recover some brood mares and suckling mules (which caused his death later, when Hēraklēs killed him for them, guest though he was). The bow had belonged to Iphitos' father, Eurytos: Odysseus never took it to Troy (1–41). Penelopē now unlocked the creaking storeroom doors, went to where the bow hung in its case, and took it down, and the quiver, and the arrows. Then she carried these back to the hall, and one of the handmaids carried a chest with the axes. To the suitors she said: Listen now, you who in the absence of my lord are devouring our resources without cease, with no better excuse than wanting to wed me! Now here's your prize in plain view: whoever strings the bow and shoots an arrow through all twelve axes, him I will marry, and leave this home of my first marriage. So saying, she told Eumaios to set out the axes. He did, weeping; and the cowherd, watching, wept too, at the sight of his master's bow (1–83).

84–129: Antinoös rebuked them, saying: Why cry now, and disturb your mistress? She's sad enough already at the loss of her husband! Either sit quiet or go outside to cry and leave the bow for the contest—and it won't be easy to string: there's no man here now as strong as Odysseus was, and I saw him myself, when I was a child. So he spoke, but secretly still hoped to win the contest. Yet he would be in fact the first victim of the Odysseus whom he was now dishonoring. Then Tēlemachos said: Remarkable! Zeus must have addled my wits. My sensible mother says she'll remarry and leave this house, and here am I, laughing like an idiot! All right, you suitors, here's your prize—a lady unmatched in Pylos, Argos, Mykēnai, or here on Ithákē ! I think I'll try for it myself. If I win, I'll not mind her going—I'll be left here with the reputation of winning my father's contests! (84–117). With that he stripped off his cloak, dug a long trench, and stood the line of axes upright in it, tamped into the earth. Then he tried to string the bow. At the fourth attempt he was on the point of stringing it, but his father shook his head (118–29).

130–85: Tēlemachos said: Maybe I'm just a weakling, can't trust myself against any angry opponent! So, you stronger fellows, proceed with the contest! With that he put down the bow, and sat down again. Antinoös said: Go to it from left to right, starting from where the cupbearer pours wine. All agreed. First came Leiōdēs, the soothsayer, who disapproved of the suitors' wanton behavior. But his unworn delicate hands were too weak. He said: Many princes will this bow kill! Better to die than live on and fail at that for which we're here. Still, those who fail can then court some other Achaian woman, while Penelopē marries the suitor who offers her most (130–62). He then sat down. Antinoös said: What a thing to predict, that the bow will kill many because you can't string it! You can't, but others here soon will. He then asked Melanthios to light a fire and bring out a large wheel of tallow, for the contestants to rub and warm the bow with. This Melanthios did. But even so none was strong enough to string the bow (162–85).

186–244: Meanwhile the swineherd, the cowherd, and Odysseus had all left the hall, and when they were outside the courtyard, Odysseus said: If Odysseus were to return now, would you side with him or the suitors? The cowherd said: Zeus grant that! Then you'd see how strong I was! Eumaios echoed him. At this Odysseus said: I am he, back home in the twentieth year! Of all my servants you're the only ones I've heard wanting me back! If a god lets us overcome the suitors, I'll give you wives, land, and homes, you'll be to me like brothers of Tēlemachos! And as proof, see the scar I got from a boar on Parnassos! (186–220). They looked, and saw, and embraced Odysseus, weeping. He stopped them, saying: Don't let anyone see us! We'll go back in separately, me first. The suitors will be against letting me have the bow. But you, Eumaios, as you carry it through the hall, give it to me, and tell the women to shut themselves in their quarters, and not to come out when they hear shouts and groans, but sit quiet. And you, Philoitios, are to close the courtyard gate, and rope it tight shut. With that he went back in to his seat, and the other two followed him (221–44).

245–310: Eurymachos now tried, but even when the bow was warm he could not string it. Angrily he said: It's not so much for the lost marriage I'm sorry—there are other women. It's that we're so much weaker than Odysseus! This is something that'll be held against us in time to come! Antinoös said: That's not true, and you know it! Look, today's a feast day—no time for bow-bending! Let's leave the bow and the axes for now. Let's rather pour libations, and drink! Tomorrow morning Melanthios will bring us goats for sacrifice. We'll burn thigh-pieces to Apollo, the archer god, and then finish the contest (245–68). All agreed. They poured libations and drank. When they'd drunk all they wanted, Odysseus said: To Eurymachos and Antinoös—who's right to tell you all to postpone the contest till tomorrow—I now say: let me try the bow, and see if I still have the strength I used to have! They were all angry, scared he might string the bow. Antinoös said: Isn't it enough for you to feast in our company and, like no other beggar, hear our discourse? Your trouble is you've had too much wine! Like the Centaur Eurytiōn when he got drunk at Peirithoös' wedding feast. So sit still, and drink, and don't try to vie with your youngers and betters, or we'll ship you out to King Echetos, who'll maim and kill you! (269–310).

311–434: Penelopē now said to Antinoös: It's not good to deprive Tēlemachos' guests of their due ! Do you really suppose that even if this stranger strings Odysseus' bow, he means to cart me off and wed me? I doubt if this improper thought's so much as occurred to him! Don't let that disturb your feasting! Eurymachos replied: We don't think he'd carry you off—that *would* be improper—but we feel embarrassed at the low gossip that might go round, like, these suitors are a feeble lot, they're courting the wife of a strong man, yet can't even string his bow, yet here comes some vagrant beggar, strings the bow and shoots an arrow through the axes! That would really put us to shame! Penelopē replied: Can there be *any* good report on men who abuse and devour a nobleman's house? Why pick on this one thing? This stranger is tall and sturdy, and he says he's well-born. Give him a shot at it! And if he strings the bow, I'll give him fine clothes, and sandals, and a sword and javelin, and send him wherever he wants to go (311–42). Tēlemachos said: No man has a better right to give or withhold the bow than I do! No one will stop me, even if I choose to give it to the stranger as a gift. But you go to your room and do your own work, you and your women. The bow is men's business, and mine in particular. Amazed, she obeyed him. Meanwhile Eumaios had picked up the bow, and the suitors were in an uproar, threatening that dogs would devour him, so that he put the bow down, alarmed. But Tēlemachos told him to pick it up again, or he'd chase him with stones. If only, he added, he was a match for the suitors! They all now laughed at Tēlemachos, thinking him a joke rather than an enemy. So Eumaios took the bow and gave it to Odysseus. Then he called Eurykleia and gave her Tēlemachos' instructions: She and the women were to stay in their quarters, and not to come out when they heard cries and groans, but stick to their work. She said nothing, but went, shutting and barring the doors behind her (343–87). Now Philoitios hurried out, barred the courtyard gates, and roped them together with a ship's cable. Then he came back and watched Odysseus, who was checking the bow. Suitors, watching, commented: He must be a dealer, or

an archer, the way he handles the bow. And: May he get as much profit from it as the likelihood he'll ever string it! (388–403). When Odysseus finished checking the bow, he strung it as easily as a musician adds a string to his lyre, tested it, and the string sang, sweet as a swallow. The suitors were alarmed. Zeus thundered. Odysseus took an arrow, aimed carefully, and shot it clean through the twelve axes. To Tēlemachos he said: The stranger hasn't embarrassed you! Nor is his strength broken, as these men think! Now it's time for supper for the Achaians, while it's still light, with song and dance to follow. He nodded to Tēlemachos, who took his sword and spear, and stood beside him (404–34).

BOOK 22

1–115: Odysseus now sprang to the threshold with the bow and a quiverful of arrows, exclaiming: The contest's over, and now I'll try for another target, hitherto untouched! He aimed at Antinoös, who, all unawares, was drinking from a gold cup. The arrow pierced his throat clean through. He fell, kicking over his table, and there was uproar in the hall. The suitors looked to the walls for weapons, but all were gone. They shouted at Odysseus: No more contests for you! You've killed the best young Achaian! You'll be food for vultures! They did not know their fate was sealed. Odysseus cried out: You thought I'd never return! You devoured my goods, seduced my maidservants, and came courting my wife while I was still alive! Now your fate's certain! (1–41). They quaked with fear, looked round for some way of escape. Eurymachos said: If you're really Odysseus come home, what you say about outrage in your home is true. But the man responsible for that, Antinoös, who wanted to kill your son and be king, is dead! Look, spare your own people! We'll repay you for all that was squandered here, in bronze and gold, twenty oxen's worth for each man! Short of that, no one could blame you for your rage! Odysseus replied: Not even in return for every man's patrimony would I hold back from killing every one of you! You can fight or run. I doubt that will save you! (42–68). They were all terrified. Eurymachos spoke again: The man has the bow. He won't stop till he's killed us all. So, draw your swords, and go for him, holding up the tables as shields! Get him away from the doorway, and we can get to town and raise the alarm. He'll soon have shot his last arrow then! He drew his own sword, rushed at Odysseus, who shot him at close range: the shaft pierced his liver. He dropped in agony. Amphinomos also charged, but Tēlemachos was too quick for him and speared him from behind. The spear drove right through to his breast, and Tēlemachos left it stuck in him, fearing a blow from behind as he tried to retrieve it. To his father he said: I'll get armor from the storeroom for you and me and the two herdsmen! Odysseus said: Yes, and quickly, while I still have arrows to hold them off! Tēlemachos hurried to the storeroom, returned with armor. They armed and lined up beside Odysseus (69–115).

116–240: While he had arrows, Odysseus kept shooting: the suitors fell thick and fast. When the arrows were finished, he put down the bow, and armed. He also ordered Eumaios to guard the corridor leading out from a side-postern: it could only

let through one man at a time. Someone should get out by it and raise the alarm, Agelaös suggested, but Melanthios pointed out that this wouldn't work: one good fighter could hold it against all comers. But he'd go to the storeroom and fetch armor for them, and he did so, enough for a dozen fighters (116–46). Odysseus, seeing them arming, guessed Melanthios was responsible. Tēlemachos apologized to his father, said he'd accidentally left the storeroom door open, and told Eumaios to go check for Melanthios. Eumaios saw Melanthios going back for more armor, and said: Shall I kill him or bring him back here? Odysseus said: Tēlemachos and I will hold them! You two go catch him, tie him up, hang him up there near the roof, hands behind his back. That'll hurt. Leave him there. They went, trapped Melanthios, tied him up, and swung him aloft. Eumaios said: A nice soft bed for you! Then he and the cowherd armed and rejoined Odysseus and Tēlemachos, four against many (147–204). Athēnē now approached in the likeness of Odysseus' friend Mentōr, and Odysseus, knowing it was she, called out: Mentōr, help us! But the suitors saw only Mentōr, and Agelaös cried out to Athēnē: Mentōr, don't let Odysseus trick you into joining him against the suitors! When we've killed him and his son, we'll kill you too, and get all your possessions to share, as well as those of Odysseus! And we'll not let your sons and daughters live on in Ithákē ! (205–23). Athēnē said angrily to Odysseus: Where's the courage you displayed at Troy? How is it, now you're back home, you weep at the thought of showing your strength against these suitors? Come stand by me, and witness my deeds, and know what kind of man Mentōr is, how he repays kindness! She still wasn't giving him full strength, was still testing him and his son. Now she flew up to the roof as a swallow, and sat there (224–40).

241–329: The suitors were now led by Agelaös, Eurynomos, Amphimedōn, Dēmoptolemos, Peisandros, and Polybos—the best of the suitors still surviving: most had succumbed to arrows. Agelaös said: We have him now! Mentōr's gone, they're alone up there. So don't attack all at once—you six throw your spears first, and Zeus grant you get Odysseus! Once he's down, it's over. So they threw, but Athēnē made every shot miss. Odysseus then ordered an attack. Between them they knocked out Dēmoptolemos, Euryadēs, Elatos, and Peisandros: the suitors retreated to the back of the hall, while Odysseus and his men advanced and retrieved their spears from the corpses. Then the suitors threw again, and again Athēnē made them miss, except for two that grazed Tēlemachos and Eumaios, respectively. But when Odysseus and his men threw again, they downed Eurydamas, Amphimedōn, Polybos, and Ktēsipppos (241–84). Philoitios boasted over Ktēsippos, saying his downfall was a return gift for the ox hoof he'd thrown at Odysseus. Odysseus now wounded Agelaös, and Tēlemachos, Leokritos. At this point Athēnē displayed her aegis, and the suitors fled like gadfly-plagued cattle in spring. Odysseus and his men now charged, striking them down right and left, and blood ran everywhere (285–309). Leiōdēs now supplicated Odysseus, saying that he, their soothsayer, had done no wrong. But Odysseus said: You must have prayed that I'd never return! and severed Leiōdēs' head from his shoulders while he was still talking (285–329).

330–80: The minstrel, Phemios, also supplicated Odysseus, saying everyone would be sorry if deprived of his songs, and Tēlemachos could testify that he'd only played for the suitors under compulsion. Tēlemachos confirmed this, and also put in a plea for Medōn, the herald, who heard him and emerged from hiding, clasped his knees, and urged him to tell his father to spare him. Odysseus said: All right, he's saved you, now you and Phēmios go outside and sit in the courtyard till I've finished this business. The two of them obeyed him, and went out, still scared they'd be killed (330–80).

381–445: Odysseus looked round to see if any suitors were left alive. But they were all dead, lying in heaps like netted fish. So then he told Tēlemachos to fetch in Eurykleia. Tēlemachos went and summoned her, saying his father had something to tell her. In she came, and there was Odysseus, all bloodstained and filthy, like a lion after feeding. When she saw the dead and the blood, she started to ululate in triumph, but Odysseus stopped her, saying it was wrong to gloat over corpses, and these men had died through their own wanton folly (381–409). Then he asked her for the names of women guilty of misconduct. She said: Of the fifty here, twelve have erred, with no respect for me or Penelopē. And Tēlemachos is only lately full-grown: his mother wouldn't give him authority over the women servants. Now let me break the news to your wife, who's asleep! Odysseus said: Don't wake her yet, but send me the misbehaving women! She went out and did this. Meanwhile, Odysseus told his son and Eumaios and Philoitios: Start carrying out the bodies. Get the women to help you. Then clean off the chairs and tables. When all is done, take the women out to the yard, and put them to the sword: let them forget the sex they enjoyed with the suitors (410–45).

446–501: The women now came in, weeping and wailing. They carried out the corpses and stacked them in the colonnade. Odysseus directed the work and made them perforce work fast. Then they washed the chairs and tables. Tēlemachos and the two herdsmen scraped the bloody filth off the floor, and the women carried it out. When all was done they led the women out to the back of the courtyard, and penned them in a narrow corner. Then Tēlemachos said: These women slept with the suitors and insulted me and my mother. They don't deserve a clean death. So they strung up a ship's cable, attached nooses to it, and hanged them all, feet clear of the ground. Their feet twitched a little, but not for long (446–73). Then they brought out Melanthios, ripped out his genitals and fed them to the dogs, and cut off all his extremities. That done, they washed off their hands and feet, and went back in. The work was done. Odysseus now said to Eurykleia: Bring sulfur and fire for me to purify the hall of pollution. And tell Penelopē and her handmaids to come here. Eurykleia replied: But let me bring you a mantle and tunic to put on, you don't want to stand there in rags, that would be shameful. Right, said Odysseus, but fire and sulfur first! She brought them, and Odysseus purified the hall and the courtyard. Then she told the women to come out of their quarters, and they all gathered and kissed and embraced him. And he felt tearful, for he remembered them all (474–501).

1–95: Then Eurykleia went upstairs, chuckling, to break the news to Penelopē that her husband was there, in the house. She stood over Penelopē and said: What you longed for has come about. Odysseus is home at last. And he's killed the wanton suitors! Penelopē replied: The gods have made you mad! I'm sad enough; why mock me with this wild tale, wake me from the sweetest sleep I've had since Odysseus left for Troy? Go back down to the women's quarters! If any other woman had told me this, she'd have suffered, but you're saved by your age. The nurse replied: He's really here! He's that stranger that was insulted in the hall. Tēlemachos knew, but kept quiet till his father's revenge was complete. Penelopē rejoiced, sprang up, and hugged Eurykleia. She said: Then tell me, if he's really home, how did he deal with all those suitors single-handed? (1–38). Eurykleia replied: I saw nothing, was told nothing—just heard groans and crashes from behind shut doors, where we women sat terrified. Then Tēlemachos came and called me in, and there was Odysseus, amid a heap of corpses, all bloodstained and filthy, like a lion. But the bodies are now all stacked by the gate, and Odysseus has got a fire and is purifying the place with sulfur. Come then and be reunited! He's home, he's found both you and his son, and he's requited the suitors! Penelopē said: Don't gloat over them yet! You know how welcome he'd be, most of all to me and his son! But your story isn't true, it's some god that has punished the suitors for their wanton acts, and Odysseus himself is lost somewhere far distant (39–68). Eurykleia replied: What a thing to say! Your own husband's home, and you say he'll never return! And I have proof—that scar he got from being gashed by a boar on Parnassos—I saw it when I was washing his feet, but he swore me to silence! So come! I swear on my life he's here! Penelopē said: The gods are hard even for a wise person to understand! Still, let's go see my son, the dead suitors, and whoever killed them. So she came down, wondering whether she should embrace her husband or sit apart and question him. She chose to sit apart. He stood waiting to see how she'd react when she saw him. She sat there. saying nothing, eyes taking in both his face and his wretched rags, not recognizing him (69–95).

95–151: Then Tēlemachos said: Cruel mother, why hold back thus? Why not sit by my father, even to question him? What other woman would thus keep apart from a husband back home in the twentieth year? Your heart is harder than stone! Penelopē said: I'm amazed, I can't speak or question him or even look him in the face! But if he really is Odysseus, we two have secret signs known to no one else. At this Odysseus smiled and said to Tēlemachos: Let your mother test me! She'll soon see more clearly. Because I'm filthy and in rags she won't admit that I'm her husband! Meanwhile we have a problem. Killing one man is bad enough: avoiding revenge sends the killer into exile. But we've killed all Ithákē's noblest defenders! Think about that! (95–122). Tēlemachos replied: No, you think about it! You're the resourceful man! We'll support you as far as our strength permits! Odysseus said: This is what I think's best. Go bathe and dress up. Tell the handmaids to put on their best dresses, and the minstrel to strike up dance music. Then passers-by will think it's

a wedding feast, and the death of the suitors won't be known till we've got away to our country farmstead, where we'll work out our next move. They agreed, and did what he proposed. Sure enough, passers-by said, not knowing the truth, someone must have married the queen—cruel woman, she hadn't the heart to hold the house till her husband came back (123–51).

152–246: The housekeeper now bathed, massaged, and put new clean clothes on Odysseus, and Athēnē made him look taller and stronger and more handsome, and made his hair flow in hyacinthine curls, the way a clever artist overlays silver with gold. So he came from the bath looking like an immortal, head and shoulders beautified, and returned to his chair. He said: Strange lady, the gods have given you a truly stony heart! No other woman would behave as you've done! Old nurse, spread me a couch where I can sleep on my own, since she's iron-hearted (152–72). Penelopē replied: Strange sir, I'm not proud, or indifferent or overamazed: I recall clearly how you looked when you sailed! Still, Eurykleia, do what he asks: take his bedstead and make a bed on it somewhere outside the marital bedroom. She said this as a test. Odysseus responded angrily: Who's moved our bed? That would be a hard job even with a god's help! I built it to be immovable, constructed the bedroom around that strong olive tree, which I made into the bedpost! This was the start of the bed, and I inlaid it with gold and silver and ivory, and used purple-dyed oxhide for the bed thongs. That was our sign, but for all I know someone since has sawn through the olive's trunk and moved our bed (173–204). At that she ran and embraced him, sobbing, and said: Don't be angry! You've always been understanding! It's always been the gods who begrudged us a happy life together. Don't be cross now because I didn't welcome you at once—I was always scared some man would try to sweet-talk me for his own gain! Even Helen would not have done what she did had she known the Achaians would fetch her home again—and anyway she only did what a god made her do! And now you've told me the sign that only we two and one handmaid knew, you've convinced me, stubborn though I was (205–30). So they wept, and held each other close, gazing on each other with the joy that swimmers from a shipwreck feel when they see dry land. Athēnē then prolonged the night and held back the dawn for them (231–46).

247–98: Odysseus said: We're not at the end of our trials yet. I still have a long hard task I need to accomplish: so Teirēsias foretold to me. But for now let's to bed and enjoy repose and sleep together. Penelopē replied: Your bed's ready whenever you want! But tell me about this last trial: no harm in knowing it in advance. Odysseus said: Why do you want to hear about it now? Well, I'll tell you. You'll get no joy from it; nor do I. Teirēsias said I had to make a journey carrying an oar, till I reached men who knew nothing of the sea, and thought my oar was a winnowing-fan. Then I must sacrifice to Poseidōn, return home, and sacrifice to all the gods. Death would come to me from the sea, a gentle end, only when I was weighed down by age, with my people prospering round me. All this would happen, he said. Penelopē replied: If the gods are bringing you a better old age, you truly may reach the end of your

troubles (247–87). Meanwhile, the housekeeper and nurse made up their bed by torchlight. Eurykleia then went to bed herself, while Eurynomē escorted them to their bedchamber, and they returned to the joyful world of their former bed. Tēlemachos and the two herdsmen stopped the dancing, sent the women to their quarters, and themselves bedded down in the hall (288–98).

300–372: After lovemaking, the two caught up with each other. She told of watching while the suitors slaughtered her livestock and squandered the wine. Odysseus recounted all his troubles and suffering, and she listened with pleasure, not sleeping until he'd finished. He told her about the Kikones, and the Lotus-Eaters, and how the Kyklōps had made havoc of his comrades, and the storm winds had undone the good work of Aiolos, and the destruction of all the ships but his own by the Laistrygonians. Then he told of guileful Kirkē, and the voyage to Hadēs to consult the ghost of Teirēsias, and the episode of the Sirens, and the Wandering Rocks, and Skyllē and Charybdis, and the killing of Hēlios' cattle by his remaining comrades, and how Zeus destroyed his ship and its crew in requital, and his rescue and compulsory retention by the nymph Kalypsō. Finally, he recounted his coming to Scheria, and how the Phaiakians gave him rich presents and conveyed him sleeping to Ithákē (300–343). When Athēnē saw that Odysseus had finished lovemaking, and had had enough sleep, she brought up the Dawn. Odysseus woke, and said to his wife: Now we've finally been reunited, you need to take charge of the house and my riches. The depletion of livestock will be made good by requital and booty. I need to go and see my father. Meanwhile, soon after sunup the word will spread of the killing. So you must shut yourself in your quarters with your handmaids and stay there: don't ask questions, don't come out. He then armed himself, roused Tēlemachos and the herdsmen, and told them to arm themselves too. Then they went out, Odysseus leading. It was light, but Athēnē hid them till they were out of town.

BOOK 24

1–97: Hermēs now summoned the ghosts of the suitors, using the golden staff with which he wakes or puts to sleep those he chooses to assemble and lead. They followed him, squeaking like bats in a cave, and he led them down to the meadows of asphodel where the shades of the dead reside, and there they met the ghosts of Achillēs, and Patroklos, and Antilochos, and Aias. There now approached them the shade of Agamemnōn, with those of all the men who'd died with him in Aigisthos' house (1–22). Achillēs' shade said to him: We thought you were a favorite of Zeus because you commanded so many men at Troy. But you met a premature fate! Better if you'd died honorably fighting the Trojans: then you'd have had a famous tomb and have won glory for yourself and your son, but as it is you've suffered a most pitiful death. Agamemnōn replied: Lucky you: you died fighting at Troy, with other fine men! We gave you a beautiful funeral, and your mother came to it from the sea, with her nymphs, who uttered strange scary cries at the news, so that everyone would have

panicked had old Nestōr not explained it was only the nymphs, and stopped the rout (23–57). The nymphs gathered round you keening, and wrapped you in immortal garments. The Muses led the dirge, and all of us wept to hear them. For seventeen days we mourned you, gods and mortals together. On the eighteenth we burned your body, and many warriors paraded round your pyre. Afterwards we gathered your bones, treated them with wine and oil, and put them, mingled with those of Patroklos, in a gold jar given by your mother; those of your honored comrade Antilochos were separate. We heaped a great burial mound over them. For your funeral games, Thetis got beautiful prizes from the gods: you'd have marveled at the sight of them. So even in death you kept your fame. Whereas Zeus served me a dire fate at the hands of Aigisthos and my accursed wife (58–97).

98–146: Now Hermēs approached, leading the ghosts of the suitors killed by Odysseus, and Achillēs and Agamemnōn, surprised, went to meet them. The shade of Agamemnōn recognized Amphimedōn, who had been his host, and said to him: What happened to send all you picked men down here? Shipwreck? Some skirmish over cattle? Remember when I came to your house with Menelaös to urge Odysseus to come with us to Troy! A tough job that was: took us a month all told (98–119). Amphimedōn replied: Yes, I remember all this, and I'll tell you the whole business of our grim death, just as it happened. We were all courting long-absent Odysseus' wife: she neither rejected such a marriage outright nor would she decide between us. In fact, it was our fate she had in mind. And she set up a great web on her loom, and said to us: My suitors, now Odysseus is dead, be patient, until I finish what I'm weaving—a shroud for old Laërtēs. So we agreed. By day she would weave, but at night she'd undo by torchlight what she'd woven. For three years she did this; but in the fourth year one of her women told us what she was up to, and we caught her at it, and forced her to finish the shroud (120–46).

147–202: So she finished the shroud, and washed it, and showed it to us. But now some malicious spirit brought Odysseus back, to the swineherd's remote farmstead. He was joined there by his son, Tēlemachos, on his way back from Pylos, and the two of them planned a nasty end for the suitors. Then they came into town, Tēlemachos first. Odysseus followed later, in rags, disguised as an old beggar, with the swineherd. No one recognized him, not even the older men. We flung insults and missiles at him. He put up with this. He and his son also removed all the war gear from the walls and shut it in a storeroom (147–66). Then he had his wife set up a contest involving his bow and some axes: that was the beginning of death for us. None of us could string the bow. When Odysseus got hold of it, we all shouted not to let him have it, but Tēlemachos encouraged him. He strung the bow and shot an arrow through the iron. Then he went to the threshold, poured out the arrows, and started shooting. His first victim was Prince Antinoös, and after him men fell thick and fast. Some god was helping him for sure: he and his men rampaged through the hall, striking right and left, and the floor was awash with blood. That's how we perished, Agamemnōn. Our bodies still lie in Odysseus' home—no one knows

about this yet, those who could wash us and lay us out properly (167–90). Agamemnōn said: Lucky Odysseus! How excellent was the wife you won! What a woman was blameless Penelopē—how well she kept the memory of her wedded husband! The fame of her loyalty will never perish, the immortals will fashion a song in her honor! How different from her was Tyndareus' daughter, who killed her husband, and loathsome the song commemorating her! (191–202).

203–79: So they conversed, deep in the realm of Hadēs. Meanwhile, Odysseus and his men, leaving town, soon reached Laërtēs' well-ordered farmstead, into which he'd put much work. Round it were the huts where his hands ate and slept; an old Sikel woman lived inside and looked after him. Odysseus told his son and the herdsmen to go in and kill a fine hog for dinner. He himself, he said, was going to see if his father recognized him after so long. He gave them his battle gear, went alone to the vineyard, and found his father there, also alone: Dolios and his sons were off collecting stones for a new wall (203–25). He saw his father digging, bent with age and sorrow, in patched old clothes and gloves and shin pads, with a goatskin hat, head down, digging a plant. When Odysseus saw him he debated whether to embrace him, tell him all, or question and test him first. He decided to test him (225–43). He said: You're a skilled gardener: everything here's well tended! But you don't look after yourself: you're filthy, and dressed in mean, ragged clothes! It can't be because of laziness that your master neglects you: and in build you look more like a king than a slave, someone who when bathed and fed should sleep in comfort. So tell me, whose servant are you, and who owns this orchard? And is this Ithákē? I asked someone I met, but he seemed half-witted when I wanted to know about a friend of mine, was he living or dead? I once had a guest in my own country, none more welcome, who said he was from Ithákē, the son of Laërtēs. I treated him well, gave him rich gifts—gold, a silver bowl, clothing, women servants (244–79).

280–360: Laërtēs said: Yes, this is Ithákē, but wanton men now rule it! And it was in vain that you gave those gifts! Had your friend still been alive he'd have requited you amply with entertainment and gifts. How many years is it since he was your guest? This was my ill-fated son, who must have died long ago, prey to fish or wild beasts, lacking a proper funeral from parents and wife! And who may you be, and where's the ship you came in, your own or another's? (280–301). Odysseus said: I'm from Alybas, my name's Epēritos, son of Apheidas: a god drove me here from Sikania against my will. My ship's moored out down there away from the city. Oh, and it's five years now since Odysseus left my country, ill-fated maybe, but he had good omens when he sailed, and we both hoped to meet again as guest and host. At this Laërtēs sobbed and mourned, and Odysseus, heart-torn, embraced and kissed him, saying: I am he, father, back home in the twentieth year! Cease your lamentation, and I'll explain. But we must hurry! I've revenged myself on the suitors, killed them all for their outrageous behavior (302–26). Laërtēs said: If you're really my son Odysseus, give me some proof to convince me! Odysseus replied: First, there's the scar, see, that I got when you sent me to Autolykos, and I was gashed by that boar on

Parnassos. And there are the trees you gave me as a child, when I was trailing after you in our orchard—thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees, forty fig trees. Also rows of vines, fifty of them, that matured at different times, with clusters whatever the season. At this proof, Laërtēs broke down, and Odysseus caught him as he passed out. But as he came to again, he said: If the suitors have indeed paid for their crimes, Zeus, you and the other gods still reign on Olympos! But I fear we'll have all the Ithákans against us, and they'll send messages to the other islands as well! Odysseus said: Relax, don't worry about such things! Let's go in to your nearby house: I sent Tēlemachos and the swineherd and cowherd in to get our dinner ready quickly (327–60).

361–412: They went in together and found Tēlemachos and the herdsmen carving meat and mixing wine. Now the Sikel servant woman bathed and massaged Laërtēs and dressed him in good clothes, and Athēnē came and made him taller and handsomer: when he came out from the bath Odysseus was amazed to see him looking like an immortal, and said: Father, some god has been improving your appearance! Laërtēs said: I wish I'd been at your side yesterday—as strong as I was when I captured Nērikos—in armor, and had helped you to overwhelm the suitors! I'd have finished off many of them, and you'd have been happy (361–82). When the meal was ready they sat down, and were just starting to eat when old Dolios and his sons came in from work, summoned by his wife, the old Sikel, who looked after their meals, and cared for old Laërtēs. When they recognized Odysseus, they stared in amazement. Odysseus said: Come in, sit down! Don't be surprised! We've been waiting an age for you lot, not starting. But Dolios went to him, arms outstretched, and kissed his hands, saying: You're back! We longed for you, but never thought we'd see you again! May the gods who've brought you grant you happiness! And does Penelopē know you're here yet, or shall we send someone to tell her? Odysseus said: Don't trouble yourself: she knows already. Dolios sat down. His sons too now pressed round Odysseus, clasped his hands. Then they all sat down to dinner (383–412).

413–71: Meanwhile Rumor had rapidly spread word round town of the suitors' violent deaths, and those who heard it gathered, wailing, outside Odysseus' house. They fetched away their dead and buried them; those from other islands put the bodies on ships to be ferried home, but themselves went to the assembly place, mourning. Antinoös' father, Eupeithēs, grieving for his son, spoke to them: This man's committed vile acts against the Achaians! First he lost many men who crewed his ships. Then he came back and slaughtered the best of the Kephallēnes! Let's get after him before he slips away, to Pylos or Ēlis: we'll be disgraced forever, if we don't avenge our sons' and brothers' deaths! It'd be no pleasure for me to go on living otherwise: I'd sooner die (413–37). Medōn and Phēmios arrived. Medōn said: Odysseus had divine backing for what he did. I saw one god, who stood by him and joined the killing in the likeness of Mentōr: he scared the suitors, and dispatched many of them. At this fear gripped them. Then old Halithersēs, the seer, spoke: What happened was your own fault! you wouldn't listen to me or Mentōr, and stop

your sons' criminal folly, wasting the substance and abusing the wife of a nobleman they said would never return. So don't let's take violent action, don't bring disaster on yourselves. At this more than half sprang up shouting angrily (the rest sat tight, said nothing), because they agreed with Eupeithēs. They rushed to get arms, then reassembled outside the city, with Eupeithēs leading, thinking he'd avenge his son's murder (438–71).

472–548: Athēnē now questioned Zeus, saying: What purpose do you have in mind now? Do you mean to foster civil war? Or will you reconcile the two sides in friendship? Zeus replied: Why question me thus? Wasn't it you who arranged for Odysseus to take revenge on these men when he returned? So please yourself, but I'll tell you what's fitting. Now that Odysseus has paid back the suitors, let them [the Ithákans/Kephallēnes] all swear this oath: He's still to be king, for life. They and he are to be friends as before—our part will be to make them forget the killing of their sons and brothers, and to have wealth and peace abound. So saying, he encouraged Athēnē (who was eager enough already), and she swooped down from Olympos (472–88). Meanwhile, when they'd finished their meal, Odysseus said: Someone go outside and see if they're near. A son of Dolios went to the doorway, looked, and said: They're coming! We need to arm. They all got up and donned their armor. Odysseus and his men were four; there were six sons of Dolios, as well as Laërtēs and Dolios himself, both of whom armed themselves perforce, despite their age. Then they went out, Odysseus leading. Now Athēnē approached them, in the likeness of Mentōr. Odysseus was glad to see her. To Tēlemachos he said: Son, you're now where battle reveals the bravest. This is where you learn not to disgrace our ancestors, who in time past have shone in strength and bravery worldwide. Tēlemachos replied: Watch me! If my courage holds, I'll bring no disgrace on our ancestry! Laërtēs said: What a day, gods! My son and grandson arguing about who's the braver! (489–515) Athēnē stood by him and said, breathing great strength into him: Son of Arkeisios, of all my comrades the dearest, pray to the grey-eyed maiden and to Zeus, then throw your spear! He prayed and threw, piercing Eupeithēs through his helmet, felling him. Odysseus and Tēlemachos now charged the front-rank fighters, attacking with sword and spear, and would have killed them all had Athēnē not stopped them, shouting: Stop fighting, men of Ithákē! You need to part without bloodshed! Terrified, they dropped their weapons, and turned back toward the city, trying to save their lives. Odysseus now gave a fearsome shout and went for them like an eagle. But Zeus then flung down a smoldering thunderbolt, that landed in front of Athēnē, who said to Odysseus: Hold off, stop fighting, or I fear Zeus may become angry with you! He obeyed, and rejoiced at heart. Then a solemn oath of peace for the future was imposed on both sides by Pallas Athēnē, likening herself to Mentōr in both voice and appearance (516–48).

Glossary

NOTE: This glossary omits all characters, and many minor locations, that are solely referred to in the text of the *Odyssey* itself.

ACHAIA, ACHAIANS In general, H. treats "Achaians," "Argives," and "Danaäns" as interchangeable terms for the Hellenes who fought at Troy, but in the *Iliad,* he seems to have regarded Achaia as the northern Achaia in Phthiōtis, home of Achillēs. In the *Odyssey,* Achaia is extended, incorrectly, to include Odysseus' island kingdom of Ithákē.

ACHERŌN For H., a river of Hadēs (10.513). There was an actual river of that name in Thesprōtia (southern Epiros).

ACHILLĒS Achaian warrior from Phthiōtis in Thessaly, the central figure in the *Iliad,* son of Pēleus (q.v.) and the sea nymph Thetis (q.v.). In the *Odyssey,* we see Achillēs only as a resentful shade in Hadēs (11.467–540); he is famous for his remark (488–91)—in striking contrast to the honor code to which, with only fleeting doubts, he adheres in the *Iliad*—that he would rather be a hired day-laborer on earth than rule as king over the dead. He is glad to hear a tactfully edited account of his young son Neoptolemos' success as a warrior at Troy from Odysseus, who omits the boy's brutal murder of Priam (q.v.) at Zeus' altar (*SI,* arg. 2; West 2003, 144–45).

AEGEAN SEA The extension of the Mediterranean delimited to the west by the Greek mainland, to the south by the great island of Krētē (Crete), to the east by the coast of Asia Minor, and to the north by Macedonia and the Chalcidic peninsula, and enclosing numerous islands, in particular those of the archipelago in the southern Aegean known as the Kyklades (Cyclades).

AEGIS A magical object, the exact nature of which is never fully clarified, but which possesses some of the qualities of the blazon on a shield: these include the deadly features of the Gorgon (q.v.). It is strictly a divine appurtenance, versions of it being possessed by Athēnē and Zeus. It is made of goatskin, fringed with gold tassels (*Il.* 2.447–49), and most often borne into battle, where it is shaken out like a standard (*Il.* 15.229–30, 17.593–96).

AGAMEMNŌN Son of Atreus, brother of Menelaös, married to Helen's sister, Klytaimnēstra, and father of Orestēs and at least three sisters, including

Iphigeneia (or Iphianassa). Overall commander of the Greek expedition against Troy. Like Achillēs, this leading figure of the *Iliad* in the *Odyssey* appears only as a ghost in Hadēs, bitterly recounting (11.405–34, 24.95–97) his assassination by his wife and her lover, Aigisthos, an episode also more than once recounted by others (1.28–43, by Zeus; 4.512–37, by the Old Man of the Sea), contrasting Klytaimnēstra's infidelity with the loyalty of Odysseus' wife, Penelopē. We note that Odysseus (who first learns the details of Agamemnōn's death from his angry ghost) takes his warning advice to heart: go home in secret anonymity, and don't trust anyone, even Penelopē, till you've thoroughly tested them.

AGELAÖS Son of Damastōr, one of the chief suitors for the hand of Odysseus' wife, Penelopē, and their spokesman during the killing (22.131–34, 212–23, 248–54). He himself is killed by Odysseus (22.293).

AIAIA The island of Kirkē, daughter of Hēlios, the sun god (10.138), located by H. in the east (12.3–4), but in the vicinity of the stream of Ocean, according to Kirkē's account (10.507–8). Later sources, beginning with Hesiod (*Th.* 1011–15) favored the west as its location, perhaps to fit better with other landings of Odysseus, by then associated with Italy and Sicily (see Romm in *HE*, 1: 19).

AIAKOS A son of Zeus, possibly by the nymph Aigina; father of Pēleus and thus grandfather of Achillēs.

AIAS (1) Son of Telamōn, and the greatest Achaian warrior at Troy after Achillēs. When Achillēs was killed, Aias and Odysseus successfully rescued his body and brought it back to the Achaian camp for burial (*Aeth.,* arg. 3–4, fr. 3; *LI,* arg. 1, fr. 2; West 2003, 112–13, 120–21). At Achillēs' funeral games, the prize for bravery was awarded to Odysseus rather than Aias, who never forgave his rival, even when they met in Hadēs (11.543–64).

AIAS (2) Son of Oileus, a Lokrian, often described as "the lesser" to distinguish him from Aias (1). He was notorious for the rape of Kassandrē at the sack of Troy (*SI,* arg. 3; West 2003, 154–55), not mentioned by H.; Poseidōn caused him to be wrecked and killed on the rocks of Gyrai (q.v.) in the Kyklades when nearly home from Troy.

AIĒTĒS Son of Hēlios by Ocean's daughter Persē; thus brother of Kirkē (10.135–39; cf. Hes., *Th.* 956–57): king of Kolchis. H. does not refer to his connection with Jason and the myth of the Golden Fleece, but from the reference at 12.70 to the ship *Argo,* it is clear that he was acquainted with it.

AIGISTHOS Son of Atreus' brother, Thyestēs, and thus Agamemnōn's cousin. His liaison with Agamemnōn's wife, Klytaimnēstra, and seven-year rule over Mykēnai (q.v.), their subsequent murder of Agamemnōn on his return from Troy, and Aigisthos' own murder by Agamemnōn's son, Orestēs, in revenge, form a leitmotif throughout the *Odyssey* (1.29, 35–43, 299–300; 3.193–98, 234–35, 249–75, 301–10; 4.512–37; 11.387–434; 24.20–22, 95–97). His motive in the myth (revenge for the crimes of Atreus against his own father and brothers) is not stressed by H., who rather sets the fate and actions of these various Atreïds in repeated moral contrast to those of Odysseus, Penelopē, and Tēlemachos as the royal dynastic

family of Ithákē. As Friedrich says (*HE,* 1: 21–22), "the contrast highlights the deserved good fortune of Odysseus and his family; and the similarity underscores this in that it connotes the possibility that things could have turned out in Ithaca the same way as in Argos."

AIOLOS, AIOLIA Aiolos son of Hippotas is a human appointed by Zeus as keeper of the winds: he lives on a floating island (Aiolia), which for H. is of uncertain and essentially imaginary location (10.1–79), and makes Odysseus a present of the winds themselves, shut into a leather bag. This is in striking contrast to the winds in the *Iliad,* where the west and north winds are minor gods (*Il.* 23.198–211; cf. Mackie, *HE*, 1: 23, who also points out that in Virgil's *Aeneid* 8.416, Aiolia is clearly identified with Lipari, off the north coast of Sicily).

AISŌN Son of Tyro and Kretheus (11.258–9), father of Jason (q.v.) and half-brother to Pēlias and Nēleus, Tyro's sons by Poseidōn (11.241–57); king of Iolkos prior to Pēlias, who succeeded him (11.256) by usurpation (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.109–10).

AITHIOPES, -IANS A mysterious and remotely located race, not necessarily to be identified with Ethiopians in the historical sense, though generally regarded in antiquity as being dark-skinned. In the *Iliad* (23.205), H. places them by the stream of Ocean; in the *Odyssey* (1.22–24), they are two groups, dwelling respectively in the furthest east and west, at the points of sunrise and sunset. Their main function in both epics for H. is to play host to the Olympian gods when the narrative requires them to be remote from the action and unaware of what is going on (e.g., Poseidōn in bk. 1 when Zeus and Athēnē are planning Odysseus' homecoming; cf. Romm in *HE*, 1: 10–11). See also s.v. Memnōn.

AKARNANIA Region of western Greece, NW of the Corinthian, and S of the Ambracian, gulfs (*BA,* 54, C–D 4), directly facing the Ionian Sea and the island of Leukas.

ALEXANDROS An alternative name in antiquity for the better-known Paris.

ALKINOÖS King of the Phaiakians on Scheria; his father, Nausithoös, a son of Poseidōn, was the founder of their city (6.7–10). He is married to Arētē, and by her the father of Laodamas and other sons and one daughter, Nausikaä (6.62–63). His function in the *Odyssey* is to provide the background of hospitality against which Odysseus narrates his previous adventures (on which he comments with what has sometimes been taken as a certain deadpan irony, 11.363–76), and subsequently to convey him, together with generous guest-gifts, to his homeland of Ithákē. This act, viewed in the context of his familial link with Poseidōn, always hostile to Odysseus, results in the petrification of the ship that conveyed the latter, while the city itself is only saved by timely prayer and sacrifice (13.174–83).

ALKMAIŌN Son of Amphiaraös (q.v.) and leader of the expedition of the Epigonoi against Thēbai: famous for the murder of his mother, Eriphylē (q.v.), whom he held responsible (with good reason) for the premature death of his father (11.326, 15.244–48, with note ad loc.)

ALKMĒNĒ Daughter of Elektryōn, wife of Amphitryōn, and mother of Hēraklēs by Zeus, who seduced her by assuming the likeness of her husband (*Il.* 14.323–24). One of the heroines of old whom Odysseus gets to see in the Underworld (11.266–68). Determined to thwart Zeus' plan for Hēraklēs to become king of the Argolid, Hērē held up his birth until after that of his cousin Eurystheus (*Il.* 19.95–125). Antinoös rates Penelopē as shrewder than Alkmēnē (2.120–21); he mentions her conceiving Hēraklēs by Zeus, but without any reference to the god's deception.

ALPHEIOS The largest river in the Peloponnese, and the eponymous god identified with that river, twice mentioned by H. (3.489, 15.187) as the grandfather of Dioklēs, overnight host to Tēlemachos and Peisistratos on their journey between Pylos and Sparta.

AMNISOS A harbor town on the N. coast of Krētē, near modern Iráklion (Hērakleion), mentioned by Odysseus (19.188) in the fictitious cover story he tells Penelopē. It was the site of a Minoan settlement. Linear B tablets found there record dedications of honey to Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth.

AMPHIARAÖS A famous seer, descended from Melampous (also a seer), married to Eriphylē (q.v.), the father of Alkmaiōn (q.v.), and much favored by Zeus and Apollo.

AMPHIMEDŌN Son of Melaneus, and one of the half-dozen most distinguished of Penelopē's suitors (22.241–45). He is also one of the last to survive, being killed by Tēlemachos after having slightly wounded him (22.277–84). Recognized by Agamemnōn (who had once been his guest-friend) as a shade in the Underworld (24.102–4), he gives him the suitors' version (understandably slanted) of their recent slaughter (120–90).

AMPHINOMOS Son of Nisos, from Doulichion (16.395–96): one of the less objectionable suitors. He is against the plan to murder Tēlemachos (16.400–406, 20.240–47), and Penelopē enjoys his intelligent conversation (16.397–98). He treats Odysseus, in his disguise as an old beggar, well enough for Odysseus to give him a veiled warning of the fate in store for the suitors (18.125–50); but nevertheless Athēnē dooms him to die with the rest, and he is killed by Tēlemachos (22.89–96), as has been foreseen (18.154–56).

AMPHIŌN Son of Zeus and Antiopē, daughter of Asōpos, and twin brother of Zēthos, with whom he built Thēbai's city walls. He married Niobē (q.v.), the daughter of Tantalos, on whom he sired six sons and six daughters, a rich progeny that, through their mother's boasting, incurred famous, and fatal, divine jealousy.

AMPHITRĪTĒ In H.'s few references to her (3.91, 5.422, 12.60, 97), Amphitrītē is little more than the sea personified, mother of dolphins and dogfish, and there is no hint of Poseidōn's Nēreïd (sea nymph) bedmate, treated as very real by Hesiod (*Th.* 243, 930).

ANTIKLEIA Daughter of Autolykos (q.v.), married to Laërtēs, and mother of Odysseus. She figures in the *Odyssey* only as a shade with whom Odysseus converses in the Underworld (11.84–89, 141–224). From her he learns that his pro-

longed absence has led to her premature death from grief, and had then driven Laërtēs to retire to the country in misery and live a mean and solitary existence (cf. Nancy Felson in *HE,* 1: 60). Odysseus tries to embrace her, but as an insubstantial ghost, she can no more be embraced than the air in which she moves (11.205–7; cf. 218–22).

ANTILOCHOS The son of Nestōr, a fine warrior and an elegant young aristocratic friend of Achillēs' to whom he famously breaks the news of Patroklos' death in the *Iliad* (18.2–21). He is the only character in the entire epic who, just once (23.785–97), makes that testily solipsistic hero smile. In the *Odyssey,* by contrast, he is already dead. Casual references by Nestōr at Pylos and Menelaös at Sparta recall his death at the hands of Memnōn (q.v.), king of the Aithiopians, and son of the Dawn (3.108–12, 4.106–8); we also learn (24.71–84) that his ashes were interred in the same tumulus as those of Achillēs and Patroklos, though separately; his shade is glimpsed, along with theirs, in the Underworld (11.467–70). All this shows that H. was well acquainted with the main elements of the *Aethiopis,* a poem of the Trojan part of the Epic Cycle now lost (for testimonia, argument, and fragments, see West 2003, 108–17: Antilochos' death is recorded in arg. 2–4.).

ANTINOÖS Son of Eupeithēs, and one of the two leading suitors, with Eurymachos, for Penelopē's hand in marriage. He is a prominent, outspoken, indeed aggressive, character throughout the poem. In response to the early complaints of Tēlemachos (2.84–128), he blames the suitors' incursions into the latter's domain entirely on Penelopē's inability or unwillingness to make up her mind over the matter of remarriage. He is furious when he learns of Tēlemachos' trip to Pylos and Sparta and is the leading proponent of ambushing and murdering him on his way home (4.660–72, 777–78) or on Ithákē after his return (16.363–92). He treats the old beggar who is in fact Odysseus (17.448, 462–66, 479–80, etc.) with particular abuse and violence. After a couple of nervously jocular interventions during the bow contest (21.256–68, 287–310), he is understandably Odysseus' first target after the axes (22.8–23). For a good survey, see Louden in *HE,* 1: 61–62.

ANTIOPĒ Daughter of the river god Asōpos and mother (by Zeus) of Amphiōn and Zēthos. She is one of the heroines of old seen as a shade in the Underworld by Odysseus (11.260–65).

APHRODĪTĒ According to H., perhaps by way of bowdlerization, the daughter of Zeus and Diōnē (*Il.* 5.370–417); but in an older, more primitive version recorded by Hesiod (*Th.* 190–206), born of the foam (*aphros*) round the severed genitals of Ouranos, thrown into the sea near Paphos (q.v.) on the W coast of Cyprus, by the latter's son Kronos after he had cut them off. Aphrodītē's frequent appearances in the *Iliad* (where she figures, appropriately enough, as a disconcerting mixture of dangerous power and adolescent silliness, with a weakness for Trojans) are not matched in the *Odyssey.* The few references to her here are for the most part (4.14, 261; 17.37; 19.54; 20.68, 73; 22.444) restricted to erotic euphemisms and as a

yardstick for comparisons of beauty. But she takes center stage in a lay sung by the minstrel Dēmodokos about her adulterous affair with the war god, Arēs, and its embarrassing exposure by her husband, Hephaistos (q.v.), the lame smith, god of fire, narrated at length, and wittily, in bk. 8 (266–366). This was the object of much scholarly objection in the ancient world on grounds of its indecency and social impropriety—"an obvious ironic resonance with the themes of the *Odyssey,*" Currie says in *HE*, 1: 63, but is today more remarkable for its hints of aristocratic class prejudice (the cuckolded husband is clearly seen as a social joke) than for any overt impropriety.

APOLLO Son of Zeus and Lētō, Apollo plays a more substantial role than Aphrodītē in the *Iliad* (like her, he is consistently on the side of the Trojans), but in the *Odyssey* he is restricted to a two-line question to Hermēs (8.335–37) in Dēmodokos' account of her affair with Arēs. All other references to him are casual allusions or invocations, the latter often in oaths.

ARĒS Son of Zeus and Hērē, Arēs is the god of the more brutal and thuggish aspects of warfare, but hardly a distinguished fighter (on the side of the Trojans: *Il.* 5.859–61, 21.406–14). He is disliked and despised by his divine father (*Il.* 5.887–93), and the other gods who come to witness his capture *in flagrante* by Hephaistos (8.325–27) jeer at him—but also, as good aristocrats, at the cuckolded, and unsightly, artisan husband.

ARĒTĒ The sole daughter of Rhexēnōr, married to his brother Alkinoös (q.v.), and thus both her husband's niece and queen of the Phaiakians. She is the mother of five sons, Laodamas, Halios, Klytōnēos, and two others (6.62, 8.118–19), and one daughter, Nausikaä (q.v). Both Arētē and Alkinoös are great-grandchildren of Poseidōn (7.55–66, 146). It becomes clear during Odysseus' time at the Phaiakian court that Nausikaä's earlier advice to him (6.308–15) that he should approach her mother, Arētē, rather than Alkinoös, the king, is sound: several touches highlight his comparative weakness and her overriding authority. In a clever analysis, Felson observes that "the poem is self-conscious about gender hierarchy, especially in a royal marriage" (*HE,* 1: 83).

ARGOLID Extended peninsula south of Korinthos (Corinth) and west of the Saronic Gulf, mostly mountainous except for its coastal region and the large, fertile, Argive plain at the head of the Gulf of Argos. This plain was the site of several major Mycenaean sites, including Mykēnai (Mycenae) and Tiryns. For H., the Argolid was divided into two dominant kingdoms, which extended beyond its boundaries: Diomēdēs ruled from Argos, and Agamemnōn from Mykēnai (q.v.).

ARGOS, ARGIVES Argos was a city at the southern end of the Argive plain in the NE Peloponnese. It was not occupied by Dorians until post-Mycenaean times, and it remains unclear how much of its Mycenaean past, as known to H., was appropriated by these newcomers. "Iasian Argos" (*Od.* 18.246) was in antiquity thought to allude to an ancient king, Iasos (*HE,* 2: 390, s.v. Iasos [4]). H. calls the Greek troops overall at Troy "Argives," as well as "Achaians" or "Danaäns." For him, Argos, with Tiryns, was the domain of Diomēdēs, while Mykēnai (q.v.) was

that of Agamemnōn; but heroic epic also treats Argos as representing the Peloponnese, or, in a vaguer sense, mainland Greece as a whole.

ARIADNĒ Daughter of Minōs and sister of Phaidrē (Phaedra), mentioned by H. in the *Odyssey* only as an old-time heroine in the Underworld (11.321–25) who is killed by Artemis on the testimony of Dionysos, an outcome unmentioned elsewhere. H. has no reference to her better-known relationship with Thēseus in connection with the Minotaur and the Krētan Labyrinth.

ARTEMIS The virgin daughter of Zeus and Lētō, and twin sister of Apollo. She plays a minor part only in the *Iliad,* being, like her mother and brother, very much on the side of the Trojans, and she does not appear directly in the *Odyssey* at all. Here Penelopē is compared to her for beauty; we get a glimpse of Artemis as a mountain huntress (6.102–4), but most often she is mentioned as a source of death; her arrows are often invoked as a kind of euthanasia. It is hard to forget that in the *Iliad* (24.602–9), she and Apollo, for the benefit of their mother, dispatch all of Niobē's brood of twelve children, Apollo shooting the boys and Artemis the girls. A similar division of victims is recorded by Eumaios (*Od.* 15.410).

ASŌPOS The eponymous god of the largest river in Boiotia (*Il.* 4.383, 10.287, described, correctly, as "deep in reeds" and "with grassy banks"). Asōpos is mentioned in the *Odyssey* (11.260) as the father of Antiopē.

ATHĒNĒ Famous daughter of Zeus, born, according to myth, from his head, without a mother (Gantz, 51–52, with refs.), but H. avoids mentioning this. Early established, she is very probably present in the Linear B tablets, and some of her puzzling epithets (e.g., *glaukōpis,* which can be plausibly translated as either "grey-eyed", "bright-eyed", or "owl-eyed") also testify to her antiquity. As Laura Slatkin remarks in a percipient survey (*HE,* 1: 109–12), in the *Iliad* no less than the *Odyssey,* "Athene is known for keeping a vigilant eye on her protégés" (110). But her relationship with Odysseus in the *Odyssey* is something special. According to Nestōr (3.218–22), this was already apparent during the Trojan War, when she showed him greater favor than any other Greek hero (she was throughout vigorously pro-Greek, having been mortally offended by being passed over in favor of Aphrodītē at the Judgment of Paris). Athēnē's anger at the Achaeans for unspecified offenses at the time of the sack of Troy (probably the rape of Kassandrē (*SI,* arg. 3.; West 2003, 146–47) is not stressed in the *Odyssey,* which throughout emphasizes her loyalty to Odysseus, and where Odysseus' troubles are primarily ascribed to Poseidōn. She manifests herself in the likeness of various characters, both male and female, magically ringing the changes on Odysseus' own appearance, from decrepit ragged old beggar to handsome hero and back, as well as comforting and beautifying Penelopē (4.795–837, 18.187–96). Again and again, it is her actions that develop the epic's narration and drive its plot: her intrusive divine intervention in human affairs is a dominant theme throughout, and at times can become an irritant, sorely testing the reader's will to suspend disbelief in the reality of H.'s narrative. She even helpfully delays the coming of dawn when Odysseus

and Penelopē are finally reunited and retire to bed (23.243–46). Slatkin is right: Athēnē "is *the* divinity of the *Odyssey*. . . . Insofar as she and Zeus are entirely like-minded in this epic, no other Olympian, so to speak, is needed." And that despite the hostility of her uncle Poseidōn.

ATLAS A Titan, son of Iapetos by Klymenē, Promētheus' brother, and the father of Kalypsō (7.245). He "knows the depths of every sea" and "shoulders those lofty pillars that keep earth and firmament apart from each other" (1.52–54).

ATREUS King of Mykēnai (q.v.), son of Pelōps, from whom he inherited his royal scepter, and brother of Thyestēs, to whom he passed it on, and who in turn bequeathed it to Agamemnōn (*Il.* 2.104–9). H. is well aware of Agamemnōn's murder by his cousin Aigisthos (q.v.), but he is either ignorant of, or, more probably, chooses to ignore (ibid.), the deadly feud between Atreus and Thyestēs, still very much alive in Aigisthos' generation, and at least a contributory cause of his killing Agamemnōn. Atreus himself is known in the *Odyssey* only by a formulaic phrase in which he is commemorated as the father of Agamemnōn and Menelaös.

AULIS A small harbor on the coast of Boiōtia, facing Euboia; famous from the Epic Cycle (*Cypr.,* arg. 6, 8; West 2003, 72–75) as the assembly point for the Achaian armada that sailed against Troy and the site of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia to placate Artemis and obtain a favorable wind.

AUTOLYKOS The maternal grandfather of Odysseus (father of his mother, Antikleia), notorious for trickery and fraud (and thus identified in some sources as a son of Hermēs). Characteristically, we learn that the boar's- tusk helmet lent to Odysseus by Merionēs for his night raid in bk. 10 of the *Iliad* (261–71) was stolen from its original owner by Autolykos. His main appearance in the *Odyssey* is in bk. 19 (392–412), in connection with the visit to his home by the young Odysseus (whom he had named at birth), and the expedition of the latter on Mount Parnassos with his sons, where he is gashed in one thigh by a boar, leaving a scar that, years later, lets Eurykleia (q.v.) recognize him on his much-delayed return from Troy.

BEAR, THE The constellation known to the Greeks as Arktos, comprising in H.'s day the seven brightest stars of Ursa Major. In the *Odyssey* (5.270–77), the Bear, also known as the Wagon (*hamaxa*) from its shape, is mentioned in connection with the sailing instructions given to Odysseus by Kalypsō. It is a circumpolar constellation, never sinking below the horizon (cf. *Il.* 18.489). How far it could in fact be used for navigation is uncertain; but H.'s passage (and others like it) testify that it was so used, and the belief (see, e.g., Hannah in *HE,* 1: 96–97) that "the north celestial pole was crucial to ancient navigation" suggests how.

CHALKIS One of the two main cities, with Eretria, on Euboia: listed in the Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.537), mentioned in the *Odyssey* (15.295) as a landmark, and prominent in early Mediterranean colonization.

CHARYBDIS The violent whirlpool in the narrow strait across from the cave of Skyllē (12.101–26, 235–43, 431–46), described as having a powerful movement

three times daily, spewing up a mass of water and, more dangerously, sucking it back down, something against which, H. tells us, no ship was proof. In accordance with the growing tradition of placing much of Odysseus' wandering in the west, later sources (e.g., Thucydides 4.24.5), locate Charybdis in the Straits of Messina.

CHIOS One of three large islands off the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea, between Lesbos and Samos: Nestōr tells, in his account of the voyage home from Troy, of having to decide whether to sail north or south of Chios (3.170–72). One famous tradition has the blind Homer living there (*HHAphr.* 172–73, quoted by Thucydides 3.104.3).

CYPRUS, CYPRIOT The third largest Mediterranean island (*BA,* 72 and 1 J 3–4), located in that sea's NE corner. H. refers (8.362–63) to a precinct and altar of Aphrodītē' there, on the SW coast of the island (see s.v. Paphos). The goddess was thus sometimes referred to (though not by H.) as Cypris.

DANAÄNS One of the three (metrically variant) terms—"Achaians" (q.v.) and "Argives" (q.v.) being the other two—used by H. to describe the Greek invaders at Troy. Though they are associated in tradition with the Pelasgians (q.v.) and the Argolid, and their existence is attested in Egyptian sources, their precise historical provenance remains obscure.

DAWN (EŌS) Goddess notable for her erotic encounters with mortals, e.g., with Tithōnos (5.1), by whom she has Memnōn, and Oriōn (5.121). She plays a leading role in the Epic Cycle as the mother of Memnōn (*Aeth.,* arg. 2; West 2003, 110–13; *Od.* 5.1–2; cf. Currie in *HE,* 1: 253). H. clearly knows her myths, but his references to her are mostly limited to a formula combining sunrise with "rosy-fingered" Dawn.

DEÏPHOBOS Son of Priam and Hekabē, and a leading fighter in the *Iliad* (see, e.g., 12.94; 13.156–64, 402–539). In the Epic Cycle, he marries Helen (? a levirate marriage) after the death of Paris *(LI,* arg. 2; cf. schol. *Od.* 8.517*),* but is killed by Menelaös at the sack of Troy. The marriage to Helen was disputed by some Hellenistic scholars, but the two references to Deïphobos in the *Odyssey* (4.276, 8.517) suggest that H. knew the tradition.

DĒLOS A small barren rocky island between Mykonos and Rheneaia, renowned as the birthplace of Apollo (it was the only place that offered refuge to the pregnant Lētō). H. refers to it once only (*Od.* 6.162), when Odysseus, talking with Nausikaä (q.v.), compares her to a young palm tree he once saw there, en route to Troy.

DELPHI One of the four great Panhellenic sanctuaries (the others being located at Olympia, Nemea, and the Isthmus of Corinth). Delphi, on the southwestern slope of Mount Parnassos (*BA,* 55, D 4), was also, from about 800 B.C.E., the site of a prestigious oracle of Apollo. H. mentions it twice (8.80, 11.581) but never by name: instead he refers to the shrine as Pythō (q.v.), a term (to judge by the number of explanations offered for it in antiquity) as obscure then as today.

DĒMĒTĒR Major goddess of agriculture and fertility, but almost completely absent from H.'s epics: the single reference in the *Odyssey* (5.125–28) occurs in a

list designed to illustrate the resentment of male deities at goddesses having sexual relations with mortals. H. reports that Dēmētēr lay with a mortal named Iasiōn on Krētē "in thrice-plowed fallow soil," which suggests some kind of fertility ritual. The product of this coupling was Ploutos, the god of wealth (Hes., *Th.* 969). Zeus, however, killed Iasiōn with a thunderbolt. Cf. Currie in *HE,* 2: 390. Similar mortal victims of divine displeasure include Oriōn (q.v.) and Tithōnos (q.v.).

DĒMODOKOS The blind minstrel who is shown performing at the Phaiakian court of King Alkinoös on Scheria. Alkinoös summons him to perform for Odysseus (8.43–47). He is treated with great respect: both his blindness and his artistic skill are described as gifts of the Muse, who loves him. He performs three lays: an otherwise unknown episode (8.72–82) of how Odysseus and Achillēs quarreled at a feast of the gods, to the delight of Agamemnōn, who recalled a Delphic oracle about such a quarrel between "the best of the Achaians"; the famous episode of Arēs and Aphrodītē being caught in adultery by Aphrodītē's husband, Hephaistos (8.266–366); and, at Odysseus' request, the lay of the Wooden Horse (8.487–520). Unlike Phēmios (q.v) on Ithákē, Dēmodokos plays no part in the narrative, but is simply there to perform. There are various theories, none especially cogent, of how these episodes may perhaps allude to Odysseus' own predicament.

DEUKALIŌN Son of Minōs and father of Idomeneus (q.v.): *Il.* 13.450–55. In one of his fictitious accounts (*Od.* 19.180–81), Odysseus claims to Penelopē to be his son.

DIOMĒDĒS Son of Tydeus, and one of the leading Achaian warriors in the *Iliad,* with a contingent of eighty ships from his domain of Argos and Tiryns. In the *Odyssey*, however, Diomēdēs only rates mentions for his safe postwar return home (3.167, 3.180–81) and as one of the warriors sent to Troy in the Wooden Horse (4.280–84).

DIONYSOS Son of Zeus by Semelē. Like Dēmētēr (q.v.), Dionysos is used far less by H. than one might expect; the *Odyssey* contains two references only (11.325 and 24.74) to him, and though wine is a constant topic, this major attribute of Dionysos gets no mention. We are given one otherwise unknown version of the myth concerning his dealings with Ariadnē (q.v.), in which, rather than rescuing and marrying her, he brings a mysterious indictment against her, on the basis of which she is slain by Artemis; the second, equally unfamiliar, claims that the golden two-handled jar provided by Thetis (q.v.) to hold Achillēs' bones was "a present from Dionysos."

DIOSKOUROI (DIOSCURI) See s.v. Kastōr.

DŌDŌNĒ Site of the famous oracle of Zeus in Thesprōtia (Homeric Epiros), where responses were given by way of the rustling of the leaves of sacred oaks, interpreted by priests of the oracle known as Selloi (14.327–28, 19.296–97). In both these passages, Odysseus is describing, first to Eumaios (q.v.) and then to Penelopē (q.v.), a visit that he supposedly made to consult the oracle about his return home.

DOLIOS An old servant of Penelopē's, originally belonging to her father, Ikarios, but sent with her on her marriage to join the household of Odysseus (4.735–36). His duties include agricultural labor (with his six sons), inter alia looking after Laërtēs' garden (24.387–88, 4.735–37). He and his sons join Odysseus and

Tēlemachos to fight the relatives of the dead suitors (24.397, 409–11, 492–99). But he is also the father of the goatherd Melanthios (17.212, 22.159) and the handmaid Melanthō (18.322), both of whom side with the suitors and are killed as a result.

DOULICHION Describing his homeland to Alkinoös (9.21–26), Odysseus speaks of a group of islands situated close to Ithákē: "Doulichion, Samē, and forested Zákynthos." Samē is Kephallēnia, modern Kefallinía, or Cephalonia, and Zákynthos is normally identified with today's island of the same name (known earlier as Zante); but Doulichion remains a puzzle. Both the Catalogue of Ships in the *Iliad* (2.625–26) and Strabo (8.2.2, 10.2.10, 19) connect it with the Echinades, and place it across from Ēlis. In the *Odyssey* (14.336, 16.247), it is ruled by one Akastos, and furnishes no fewer than fifty-two of Penelopē's suitors, as well as being grassy and rich in grain; but the description to Alkinoös is, as has often been remarked (see, e.g., Haller in *HE,* 1: 219), very hard to equate with a position in the vicinity of the Echinades and seems to refer to a far larger, less rugged island. Of the various suggestions for a location, part of Kephallēnia (q.v.) is perhaps the likeliest; but the possibility that the poet was simply offering a vague description of an area with which he was personally unfamiliar should not be dismissed out of hand.

ECHINADES A group of small islands at the mouth of the Acheloös River in western Greece. Strabo (8.2.2, 3.26) claims that the "Sharp" Islands of *Od.* 15.299 are the southernmost Echinades. Thucydides (2.102.3–5) noted that already in his time some of these islands were silting up, becoming part of the Acarnanian mainland.

EGYPT, EGYPTIANS There is both Egyptian and Greek Linear B evidence for contacts between Egypt and Bronze Age Mycenaean Greece as far back as the Egyptian Old Kingdom (c. 2600–2100). Mycenaean warriors in boar's-tusk helmets (already obsolete) feature in papyrus illustrations from Amarna c. 1400 (Powell in *HE,* 1: 240). Communication was not completely severed during the Dark Age (c. 1150–800). There are references in the lying tales told by Odysseus (see, e.g., 14.199–359, 17.415–44) to raids on wealthy Egypt ("Aigyptos" is used to signify both the land of Egypt and the Nile River, which H. never names). Heroes such as Menelaös (q.v.) trade there (3.300–303, 4.125–32, 14.240–386). For H., Egypt is a land of advanced medicine and mood-enhancing drugs (4.220–34). His vague knowledge is exactly right for an age when regular Greek trade with Egypt was slowly beginning to recover under the pharaoh Psammētichos (Psamtek) I (c. 664– 610).

EILEITHYIA Ancient goddess of childbirth, already mentioned in the Linear B tablets: her sacred cave at Amnisos is referred to by Odysseus (19.188).

ĒLIS The coastal plain (*BA*, 58, A–B 1–2) in the northwest Peloponnese, bordered at its eastern extremity by the great mountains of Achaia and Arcadia, and to the south by Messēnia. Ēlis is bisected horizontally by two major rivers, the Pēneios in the north, where the eponymous city of Ēlis, home of the Epeians (q.v.), lies in the valley near where the river emerges from the mountains, and the Alpheios in

the south, marking off the district of Triphylia. All mentions in the *Odyssey* are casual: it is not always clear whether region or city is meant.

ELYSIUM, ELYSIAN FIELDS The earliest mention of this paradise at "the furthest ends of the earth" for the privileged few—exceptional heroes or, later, the exceptionally virtuous—as an alternative to Hadēs, is in the prophecy of Prōteus (q.v.) to Menelaös (4.561–69). There is no bad weather there, but a sunny, easy existence, peaceful and temperate, fanned by cool breezes. Elysium is clearly a parallel to the Isles of the Blest in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (167–73).

EPEIANS A quasi-mythical ethnic group associated by H. in the *Odyssey* with the region of Ēlis (q.v.): 13.275, 15.298, 24.431.

EPEIOS Identified as the builder of the Wooden Horse in both references in the *Odyssey* (8.492–93, 11.523–24; cf. *LI,* arg. 4; West 2003, 122–23). Epeios does well as a boxer at the funeral games for Patroklos, but fails at the shot put (*Il.* 23.664–99, 839–40). Though a great-grandson of Aiakos (q.v., *Il.* 23.695), he is undistinguished in battle.

EPHIALTĒS See s.v. Pēlion.

EPHYRĒ A city in Thesprōtia twice mentioned in the *Odyssey* (1.258–62, 2.328–30), both times as a source of drugs or poison: Odysseus is reported as going there to obtain poison for his arrows, while Antinoös jeeringly suggests that Tēlemachos was looking for drugs with which to poison the suitors' wine.

EREBOS For H., the dark and gloomy area region to the west (12.81, 20.356) under the earth, populated by the ghosts of the dead (11.37, 564) and closely associated with Hadēs (10.528). For Hesiod (*Th.* 123), Erebos is personalized as a son of Chaos.

ERECHTHEUS An early mythical king of Athens. In the Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.547–51), he is described as "earthborn" and cared for by Athēnē (q.v.) in her temple. In the *Odyssey* (7.80–81; cf. Plut., *Thes.* 25.3), Athēnē leaves Scheria for Marathon and Athens, where she enters the "house of Erechtheus," that is, the Erechtheion, on the Acropolis. Both passages (whether genuine or not) suggest a false claim to autochthony.

ERIPHYLĒ One of the mythical "heroines" observed in the Underworld by Odysseus (11.326–27; cf. 15.247). She was the wife of the seer Amphiaraös (q.v.). She knew (as did he) that he was fated to die in the expedition against Thēbai, but nevertheless, bribed by Polyneikēs with the promise of a golden necklace, persuaded him to join it. He did so, and duly died. Eriphylē was afterwards murdered in revenge by their son Alkmaiōn (q.v.).

ERYMANTHOS Mountain range in the NW Peloponnese (6.102–5), between Ēlis and Arkadia (*BA,* 58, B 2), famous in antiquity for its plentiful large wild game, in particular boar and deer, and thus as a hunting venue for Artemis.

EUBOIA The next-largest Aegean island after Krētē, some ninety miles in length, but no more than thirty at its widest, lying directly off the east coast of Attika, from which it is divided by a channel of varying width. Nestōr refers to it as a landmark on his homeward voyage (3.174); Alkinoös (who has not himself been

there) reports it, on information given, as "the most remote of islands" (7.321, with n. 5 ad loc.), a curious piece of misinformation, since it could hardly have been more central to the Aegean world. But Scheria (later identified with Kerkyra, modern Corfu) is described as remote, and thus marginal, even if not mythical.

EUMAIOS The loyal swineherd, prominent from bk. 14 on: he offers the still-unrecognized Odysseus hospitality (after calling off the farmstead's dogs), takes him into town, and joins Odysseus in the attack on the suitors after learning who he is. As Thalmann says (*HE*, 1: 270–71), he "condenses many of the moral and social issues that are central to the poem." He highlights the abuses of the suitors' regime by his need to supply them with hogs for their feasts. His deeply felt memories of Odysseus as a good and kindly master emphasize how much has been lost by that master's long absence. He also seemingly offers a paradigm of the "virtuous slave"—until, that is, it transpires at 15.413–14 that before enslavement, he was of noble, indeed of royal, lineage, thus changing the paradigm at a stroke to the hierarchical upper-class belief, so popular in myth, that blue blood implies an innate noble character, which will always reveal itself in the end.

EUPEITHĒS Father of Antinoös (q.v.), whose wanton disregard of Odysseus' property contrasts unfavorably with the latter's generous earlier treatment of Eupeithēs when he came to Ithákē as a fugitive, on the run from the Thesprōtians, whom he had been raiding as a pirate (16.424–30). After the slaughter of the suitors, beginning with Antinoös, he persuades some of the Ithákans to take up arms in revenge, and is killed by Laërtēs while leading them before Athēnē puts an end to further bloodshed (24.469–71, 522–25).

EURYKLEIA Like Eumaios (q.v.), Eurykleia is a longtime servant in Odysseus' household, having been bought in her youth by his father, Laërtēs, for twenty oxen. Not wishing to offend his wife, Antikleia (q.v.), however, Laërtēs never exercised his prerogative of having sex with her (1.432–33). Like Nestōr, she also enjoys some of the privileges that go with great age. She has been the nurse of both Odysseus and Tēlemachos, and she connives at the latter's going to Pylos and Sparta to seek news of his father, providing him with supplies and, more important, keeping his departure a secret from Penelopē. As Felson points out (*HE,* 1: 274), her relations with Odysseus highlight "both their intimacy and their inequality, as master and slave."

EURYLOCHOS Odysseus' second-in-command during his travels, one of his few comrades both named and characterized. Throughout, with one exception, he is the consistent voice of caution and wariness, often to Odysseus' annoyance. He urges against trusting Kirkē (10.429–48). He blames Odysseus for the deaths of six crew members at the hands of the Kyklōps (10.429–37). He makes sure Odysseus is firmly lashed to the mast while passing the Sirens (12.195–96). But it is also he who talks the crew into ignoring their leader's prohibitions and killing and eating the cattle of Hēlios, the sun god (12.327–51).

EURYMACHOS Son of Polybos. After Antinoös (q.v.), he is the main leader of the suitors and always the second actor in any of their activities. His most notable

characteristic is his lying hypocrisy: he offers smooth, but false, reassurances both to Penelopē (16.435–47) and to Tēlemachos (1.399–404). His jeering dismissal of Theoklymenos' (q.v.) prophecy of the coming destruction of the suitors (20.359–62) is duly followed by his death (22.44–88), though not before a vain attempt to put all the blame on Antinoös and to placate Odysseus by offering compensation for the suitors' wasteful inroads on his property.

EURYNOMĒ An elderly (17.499, 18.185) woman servant of Penelopē's, apparently subordinate to Eurykleia, although the fact that she, like Eurykleia, is referred to (e.g., at 17.495) as "housekeeper" (*tamiē*) has caused some scholars to assume that there was a version in which she occupied Eurykleia's position.

EURYSTHEUS Son of Sthenelos, and thus great-great-grandson of Zeus. Hērē's trickery (*Il.* 19.91–133) obliges Zeus to make Eurystheus lord of the Argolid, rather than the latter's cousin Hēraklēs, as Zeus had planned, and Hēraklēs suffers yet further at his cousin's hands, being forced by him to perform the Twelve Labors. This was probably a penalty for Hēraklēs' murder (though while mentally deranged by Hērē) of his own wife and children.

EURYTIŌN The Centaur who got drunk at the wedding of Peirithoös and Hippodameia (21.295) and attempted to rape the bride, thus triggering the war between Lapiths and Centaurs (most famous today from its depiction on the south-facing metopes of the Parthenon).

FURIES (ERINYES) "[D]ivine beings exacting retribution for wrongs and blood-guilt especially in the family. . . . Individually they carry out the curses of a mother or father, or personify those curses" (*OCD*[4], 535). In the *Odyssey,* the nearest they come to direct intervention in the narrative is when Tēlemachos fears their attention (1.134–36) were he to dismiss his mother from the house. Other references are their invocation against Oedipus, also by his mother, on learning of their incest (11.279–80); the blind folly they inflict on the seer Melampous (15.234); Odysseus' speculation on the existence of Furies who protect beggars (17.475); and, most curiously, storm Harpies reported as carrying off Pandareus' daughters and giving them to the Furies as their servants (20.77–78), one more case of H.'s familiarity with recondite myths otherwise unknown to us.

GERAISTOS Promontory at the southernmost tip of Euboia (q.v.). Homecoming Greeks land there after crossing the Aegean and sacrifice to Poseidōn in gratitude for a safe voyage (3.176–79). A famous temple of Poseidōn still existed at Geraistos in Strabo's day (10.1.7).

GERĒNIA(N) A formulaic epithet of Nestōr (q.v.), of uncertain origin (see Finkelberg in *HE,* 1: 312), as indicated by the most ancient attempt to explain it, in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women,* fr. 35.6–8 Merkelbach-West, which suggests that at the time of Hēraklēs' raid on Pylos, during which Nestōr's eleven brothers were killed, he himself survived through being then a guest of "Gerēnian horse-tamers": an improbable reason for an ethnic or geographical title. Later tradition linked the title with Gerēnia, near Phērai, in Messēnia (Strab. 8.4.4).

GIANTS In Hesiod's *Theogony* (178–87), the Giants, like the Furies (q.v.), are the progeny of Gaia (Earth) and blood from the severed genitals of Ouranos, god of the sky: they are best known from the famous Battle of Gods and Giants (Gigantomachia), narrated in detail by Apollodoros (1.6.1) and a favorite theme for sculptors. But H. shows little concern for the Giants, nor any convincing familiarity with the detailed mythology of the Gigantomachia: he uses them primarily as examples of mindless violence, with one instance from a characteristically obscure myth (7.56–62) where they are described as "arrogant" and "reckless" and destroyed (how we are not told) by their king, Eurymedōn, who himself perishes as well. Alkinoös (7.205–6) refers to their "wild tribes" as "close kin" to the Phaiakians, together with the Kyklōpes. H.'s only other mention of them is when Odysseus (10.119–20) describes the murderous Laistrygonians as "resembling not human beings, but Giants"—and indeed, the king's wife, who is "as huge as a mountain peak" (10.113), could well be a Giant herself.

GORGON There were three mythical Gorgon sisters, daughters of Phorkys (q.v.), Sthenō, Euryalē, and Medousa. The first two were immortal; but Medousa, the best-known, whose gaze could turn humans to stone, was mortal. Nevertheless, her eyes could still petrify even after Perseus had decapitated her and presented her head to Athēnē, who added some version of it to her aegis (q.v.). H. refers to it only once in the *Odyssey* (11.633–35), when Odysseus beats a retreat from the Underworld in fear that Persephonē (q.v.) may send it up to work destruction: H. seems to have known some version of the myth in which the head itself was kept in Hadēs.

GORTYN A city in south-central Krētē (Crete), in the Messara plain (*BA, 60, C 2*), mentioned by Nestōr when describing (3.291–94) how some of Menelaös' ships were wrecked at the frontier of its territory, on what, from his account, was clearly the jutting headland at the SE corner of the Gulf of Messara, probably while trying to make it to the harbor still known as Kali Limenes ("Fair Havens").

GRACES (CHARITES) Minor goddesses embodying, and capable of bestowing, charm, elegance, and beauty. H. refers to them as performing this function for the maidservants of Nausikaä (6.18) and—employing what sounds like modern salon treatment—for Aphrodītē at Paphos, after her entrapment by Hephaistos (q.v.) with her lover Arēs (8.362–65). H.'s third and last mention of the Graces (18.192–96) comes when Athēnē is beautifying the sleeping Penelopē, and employs a divine salve, like that used by Aphrodītē, presumably on herself, "when she goes to join the Graces' delightful dance."

GYRAI, ROCK(S) OF Site (4.499–511) of the death of Aias (2) en route home from Troy, located, according to early ancient sources, in the channel between the Kykladic islands of Mykonos and Tēnos.

HADĒS The name applies to both the god of the Underworld (son of Kronos and Rhea; brother to Zeus and Poseidōn) and the realm over which he reigns, to which the ghosts, or shades, of the dead are regularly described as descending; but for H., especially in the *Odyssey,* references are almost always to the latter. This is

represented as a dark and sunless region of the Underworld, somewhere beneath the earth; but its exact nature remains vague and is bedeviled by H.'s inconsistencies and modern misunderstandings. It is, for example, generally, and falsely, stated that Odysseus visits Hadēs in bk. 11 of the *Odyssey,* and surprise is expressed at his journey thither being without descent, by ship to the stream of Ocean and from there on by foot to the land of the Kimmerians (q.v.). But in fact he never reaches Hadēs itself: he digs a pit for blood sacrifice near Ocean: the shades gather *up out of* (*hupex,* 11.36–37) Erebos (the area associated with Hadēs) to drink the blood. They come up; Odysseus does not go down. But H. can contradict himself too: according to the shade of Patroklos (*Il.* 23.71–74), the soul can reach Hadēs only after proper burial rites have been performed, but the arrival of the still-unburied suitors with Hermēs (*Od.* 24.1–24) challenges this assumption. And all we learn from H. in the *Odyssey* about Erebos (which might be supposed to contain the residence of Hadēs the god and Persephonē) is that it has fields of asphodel (11.539, 573; 24.13).

HARPIES The name means "snatchers," and they are semi-personalized embodiments of powerful storm winds, represented as winged women (Hes., *Th.* 267). H. does not name them: he twice uses them as an explanation for the prolonged absence of Odysseus (once by Tēlemachos, 1.241; once by Eumaios, 14.371) and has Penelopē describe, in one of his many recherché mythical allusions (20.77) how they swept away the daughters of Pandareus and gave them as servants to the Furies (q.v.).

HELEN Daughter of Zeus—though her official father was Tyndareus (q.v.)—by Lēdē; sister of Klytaimnēstra (q.v.), Kastōr, and Polydeukēs; married to Menelaös and, by him, mother of Hermionē. She fled to Troy with Paris/Alexandros (taking much property), and was thus the cause of the Trojan War. Recovered at the city's sack by her furious husband (who nevertheless dropped his sword when she bared her breasts at him (*LI,* fr. 28; West 2003, 138–39), she reappears in the *Odyssey* with him, now middle-aged and comfortably married (4.120–304), entertaining Tēlemachos (who is suitably impressed, 17.118), putting a magic stimulant in their wine, and, with wit and relish—and a routine apology to Menelaös—reminiscing (4.235–64) about her secret wartime meeting with Odysseus. In fact, despite everything, Menelaös does very well out of the relationship: as the Old Man of the Sea reminds him (4.561–69), after death he'll go not to Hadēs, but to Elysium (q.v.), since as Helen's husband he's a son-in-law of Zeus.

HĒLIOS/HYPERIŌN The personified Sun, mainly notable in the *Odyssey* for his fury when, in their blind recklessness (*atasthaliē,* 1.7–9) the crew of Odysseus' ship, in defiance of their commander's strict orders, slaughter and eat the cattle of Hēlios on the island of Thrinakiē: indeed, unless Zeus and the other Olympians guarantee their destruction as proper punishment for this infringement of his honor, Hēlios threatens to remove his light from the earth and take it down to Hadēs instead (12.377–83; cf. Friedrich in *HE*, 2: 337–38). His only other personal mention is in a lighter vein and has to do with his all-seeing, all-hearing nature

(11.109, 12.323): in the lay of Dēmodokos about Arēs and Aphrodītē, Hēlios observes the guilty couple at it, and promptly informs Hephaistos (8.266–302). "Hyperiōn" is used both as a title and as an alternative name.

HELLAS, HELLĒNES In the *Iliad,* Hellas is a small region in SE Thessaly, close to Phthiē (9.478); by the time of the *Odyssey* (1.344, 4.726, and often), however, it has expanded to include all of northern Greece, as opposed to the Peloponnese, referred to as "Argos" (q.v.). Finally, with the strengthening of the sense of ethnicity, Hellas came to be (as it remains today) the Greeks' own name for their country as a whole, and "Hellēnes" the term for themselves as its inhabitants.

HELLESPONT The strait (now known as the Dardanelles) dividing Europe from Asia (24.82), and connecting the Aegean (q.v.) with the Black Sea.

HEPHAISTOS A son of Zeus and Hērē, married to Aphrodītē (8.305–20), the god of fire, and, uniquely among the Olympians, a highly skilled divine blacksmith, artisan, and architect, the "famed craftsman" (*Il.* 1.571; 18.143, 391) whose creations, some disconcertingly modern, are scattered through both Homeric epics. His position on Olympos is socially ambiguous, accurately mirroring that of his human counterparts on earth, where technical expertise, far from enhancing status, attracts a built-in class contempt for the banausic. Hephaistos' aristocratic fellow deities, though more than ready (again like their human counterparts) to exploit his skills at need, deride both his lameness and his plebeian activities; when he traps his wife in bed with Arēs, the other gods' mockery is directed at least as much at the comic vulgar cuckold as at the adulterous pair, impeccably blue-blooded divinities like themselves, who indeed attract more than a little covert sympathy. In contrast to his appearances in the *Iliad,* this episode, related as a lay by the minstrel Dēmodokos (8.266–366), is the only major treatment of Hephaistos in the *Odyssey.* It is nevertheless charged with vast, and surely deliberate, social significance.

HĒRAKLĒS The greatest of all Greek heroes, and, like so many of the best of them, sired by a god on a mortal woman: in this case Zeus on Alkmēnē (q.v.). He belongs to an earlier generation than that of the Trojan War, and so plays no direct part in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey,* though the narrative of both shows a broad familiarity with the myths concerning him. These include the Twelve Labors (e.g., *Il.* 8.363, 19.132–33), though the one place where a specific Labor is mentioned is at the conclusion of Odysseus' vision of the great figures of the past in the Underworld (11.601–26: see nn. 13–15 ad loc.). Here Hēraklēs puts in a brief but terrifying appearance and recalls being sent down to Hadēs by Eurystheus (q.v.) to fetch up Kerberos (11.623–26). Odysseus also sees Hēraklēs' ill-fated wife Megarē (11.269–70). Though H. does not mention the fact that Hēraklēs killed her and his children by her—probably the reason for the imposition of the Labors by Eurystheus—he does at this point draw attention to the hero's "unwearied strength"(see n. 3 ad loc.). Like Hēraklēs and Eurytos, Odysseus is an archer (though he modestly declines to compete against such old-time heroes—very sensibly, considering the anachronism involved). Like Hēraklēs,

too, Odysseus is given to fits of excessive violence (arguably including the massacre of the suitors).

HĒRĒ Although she is Zeus' wife, Hērē never appears in the *Odyssey* and rates only a handful of casual references there, in sharp contrast to her prominent role in the *Iliad.* She is mentioned as endowing Pandareus' daughters with beauty and elegance (20.70); as having saved Agamemnōn from mishap during his homeward voyage (4.513) and Jason's ship *Argo* from the Wandering Rocks (12.72); and as the mother of Hēbē (11.604). She figures in formalized wishes (15.112, 180; 8.465) too, but then only because Zeus, whose aid is being invoked, is identified as her husband. It is as though H. was carefully clearing the stage to give Athēnē (q.v.) unrestricted scope.

HERMĒS A minor deity in the Olympian pantheon, a son of Zeus by a nymph, Maia, born in a cave on Mount Kyllēnē in Arcadia. Hermēs was well established in the Bronze Age, and is mentioned on the Linear B Tablets. This is consonant with his ancient and often enigmatic epithets, e.g., as "slayer of Argos." His later reputation as a classic trickster and sly thief is less to the fore in the Homeric epics, though glanced at, in 19.395–98, in his role of patron god of the thievish Autolykos (q.v.), Odysseus' grandfather. Here his more prominent role is to act as Zeus' messenger (e.g., to warn Aigisthos, 1.38–43) and as a guide to mortals. He is sent to obtain Odysseus' release from Kalypsō (1.80–87, 5.26–147) and provides him with magical help against Kirkē's wiles (10.275–306). One other special function of Hermēs, that of *psychopompos,* or escort to the dead, is seen later (24.1–14),when we find him conducting the unburied ghosts of the slaughtered suitors to the Underworld.

IASIAN See s.v. Argos, Argives.

IASIŌN See s.v. Dēmētēr.

IDOMENEUS A son of Deukaliōn and commander at Troy of the contingent from Krētē (Crete; *Il.* 2.645–50), regularly mentioned as one of the "best of the Achaians" (e.g., *Il.* 2.404–5, and often). He is recalled in the *Odyssey* by the reminiscing Nestōr (3.191), by Odysseus in cover stories (13.159; 14.237; 19.181–84, 190–93), and by Eumaios' reporting an Aitōlian's sighting of Odysseus in Krētē (14.382–84),

IKARIOS Though often mentioned as the father of Penelopē, he is a virtually unknown figure, and his parentage debated—some alleged, hopefully, that he was a brother of Tyndareus (see *OCD*[4], 1102, s.v.), which would make Penelopē Klytaimnēstra's cousin. The name of his wife is uncertain, and his home was located in either Akarnania or Sparta. More than once it is assumed that should Penelopē intend to remarry, she would be best advised to do so from her father's house (e.g., 1.275–78, 2.52–54); but where was that?

ILION An alternative, and very ancient, name for Troy: Hittite texts mention a treaty addressed to Alaksandu [? Alexandros] of [W]ilusa, generally accepted as the equivalent of Ilion, with a characteristic, later obsolete, initial digamma (the w-sound). Hissarlik, the probable site of Troy, was known as Ilium in historical times and under Rome.

IOLKOS Modern Volos in SE Thessaly, on the gulf of Pagasai, Iolkos was the homeland of Jason (q.v.) and the place from which the Argonauts set out (*BA,* 55, D 2). In the *Odyssey*, H. refers to it as "broad-landed" (11.256), and as the home of Nēleus' brother, Pelias, the uncle of Nestōr.

IPHIGENEIA A daughter of Agamemnōn, never mentioned by H., and elsewhere possibly identical with Iphianassa (but see *Cypr.,* fr. 20; West 2003, 98–101) or/and Iphimēdē. In the Epic Cycle (*Cypr.,* arg. 8; West 2003, 74–75), she is sent to Aulis at her father's request on the pretext that she is to marry Achillēs, but in fact to be sacrificed to Artemis, on the recommendation of Kalchas (q.v.), to placate the goddess' wrath at Agamemnōn and obtain a favorable sailing wind. Whether the sacrifice was in fact carried out (as Aeschylus believed) or a deer was substituted, and Iphigeneia was spirited away to serve Artemis in the Crimea, remains uncertain. The episode in any case provides one very telling reason for Klytaimnēstra's willingness to betray Agamemnōn and ultimately collude in his murder.

IPHIMEDEIA See s.v. Pēlion.

ITHÁKĒ (ITHACA) The home (and kingdom) of Odysseus and his family, Ithákē is one of the Ionian islands; but whether his was the island still traditionally so named (*BA,* 54, C 5), or one of the other nearby ones, or the Palē (modern Paliki) peninsula (once an island) of Kephallēnia/Kefalonia (*BA,* 54, B 5), as Bittlestone et al. 2005 argues, remains an open question (but this is the only solution consistent with H.'s description at 9.25–26 of Ithákē as the "westernmost" of the group). H.'s other descriptions of the island can be checked at 4.605–8, and 13.242–47. For a balanced assessment favoring the traditional identification, see Haller in *HE,* 2: 423–24.

JASON Son of Aisōn (q.v.) and great-nephew of Pelias (q.v.); leader of the Argonautic expedition to Aia in Kolchis to recover the Golden Fleece. H.'s only mention of him is at *Od.* 12.69–72, where he and his famous ship, the *Argo,* are reported as the only ones hitherto to have successfully navigated the Wandering Rocks (*Planktai*), and they only through the assistance of Hērē because of her affection for Jason.

KADMOS, KADMEIANS In the *Iliad* (4.385 and elsewhere), the Thebans are referred to as "Kadmeians," while Kadmos himself (*Od.* 5.333) is mentioned only as the father of Īnō and was not regarded by H. as Thēbai's founder (see s.v. Amphiōn). Herodotus (5.58–61) says he introduced the Phoenician alphabet (*Phoinikeïa* or *Kadmeïa grammata*) to Hellas, and linguistic evidence confirms his origins in the Near East (cf. West 1997, 448–50).

KALCHAS Chief diviner of the Achaian expeditionary force and "of the seers by far the finest: / he knew events present and future as well as from the past, / and had brought the Achaians' fleet safe to landfall by Ilion / through the diviner's art he had from Phoibos Apollo" (*Il.* 1.69–72). He correctly predicts that the war will last ten years (*Il.* 2.299–332) and pinpoints the cause of the plague bedeviling the Achaian camp as Agamemnōn's refusal to ransom Chryseïs, daughter of a priest of Apollo (ibid., 93–106). Kalchas also identifies an earlier offense by Agamemnōn,

his boast that he is a better hunter than Artemis, familiar from the Epic Cycle (*Cypr.,* arg. 8; West 2003, 74–75). In retribution, Artemis withholds a sailing wind for Troy, and Kalchas says that in atonement, and to get a good wind, Agamemnōn must sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia (q.v.). Agamemnōn does so, whereupon the wind changes and the fleet is able to sail. This may be the reason for Agamemnōn's apparent dislike of Kalchas (*Il.* 1.105–8). H. carefully ignores the whole episode.

KALYPSŌ The genesis, background, and familial details of the nymph Kalypsō ("Concealer") vary so much from source to source (see Alden in *HE,* 2: 431–32) that there is much to be said in favor of the theory that she was H.'s own creation. She conceals Odysseus against his will for seven years (4.556–60, 5.13–17); his release in the eighth year ties in chronologically with a similar delay in Menelaös' return home from Troy (4.83); and it is vital to H.'s story (see 4.91 with n. 3) that they do not reappear prior to Orestēs' revenge (3.36) on his mother and Aigisthos for the murder of his father, Agamemnōn. Furthermore, Kalypsō's island is defined by its extreme remoteness, and it seems to have no other occupants. Also, Kalypsō herself has a suspicious amount in common with Kirkē (both live in a wood on a remote island; both keep Odysseus off-scene with hospitality; both are beguilers, dread goddesses with human voices and habits: see Alden, ibid.). It is a fair presumption that both originally had a similar function: to ensure that Odysseus remains away from Ithákē long enough for everyone to forget what he looks like, and, in particular, for Agamemnōn's murder, and his son's revenge, to take place before Menelaös gets back home.

KASSANDRĒ (CASSANDRA) Daughter of Priam and Hekabē (Hecuba), she was raped by Aias (2) at the sack of Troy (*SI,* arg. 3; West 2003, 146–47), but then brought back to Hellas by Agamemnōn as his concubine and slain with him by Aigisthos and Klytaimnēstra (11.421–23). H. gives no indication of knowing about Kassandrē's power of prophecy, though this is already mentioned in the Epic Cycle (*Cypr.,* arg. 1; West 2003, 68–69).

KASTŌR Twin son (with Polydeukēs) of Zeus by Lēdē. The two are brothers of Helen and Klytaimnēstra and sometimes described as "sons of Tyndareus," Lēdē's husband and the "official" father of her offspring when occasion demanded. The twins were also regularly referred to as the Dioskouroi (Dioscuri), i.e., the "sons of Zeus."

KEPHALLĒNIA, -ĒNES The Ionian island known to H. as Samē, or Samos (*BA,* 54, B 5), was also called Kephallēnia (modern Kefalonia, or Cephalonia). The force brought by Odysseus to Troy included men from Samē, Zákynthos, and "the mainland opposite" (probably Akarnania), as well as from Ithákē itself (*Il.* 2.631–36; cf. *Od.* 20.210, 24.355, 429). The ancient Kephallēnes were subject to Odysseus and before him to his father, Laërtēs (*Od.* 24.378).

KIKONES A Thrakian tribe (9. 39, 47, 59, 66, 165; 23.310) who fought on the Trojan side (*Il.* 2.846–47). Their chief place (9.40, 198) was Ismaros, on the mainland northeast of Thasos. This was the first landfall of Odysseus and his contingent—

blown somewhat off course by the wind—on their return from Troy; they sacked it, with much slaughter, but lost many men themselves in a counterattack by the natives.

KIMMERIANS A mysterious mythical race dwelling near the boundary of Ocean, close by the Underworld, in sunless gloom: referred to briefly by Odysseus (11.14–19). Their exact location (like much of H.'s description of the environs of Hadēs) is uncertain, and has been debated: for an excellent brief survey, see Romm in *HE,* 1: 167. Whether they are identical with the historical Kimmerians (Assyrian Gimirri, the "Gomer" of the Bible), who briefly terrorized Phrygia and Ionia in the eighth century B.C.E., after being driven out of S. Russia, remains unknown, but seems highly unlikely, if only for geographical reasons.

KIRKĒ (CIRCE) Daughter of Hēlios, the sun god (q.v.), sister of Aiētēs (q.v.) and thus an aunt of Medea (10.135–39; Hes., *Th.* 956–57). Kirkē is a powerful sorceress with many magical drugs at her disposal, who, like Kalypsō (q.v.), lives seemingly alone, apart from maidservants (and variously drugged animals) on a remote island, Aiaia (q.v.). Odysseus and his crew (by now the only survivors of his original contingent; see s.v. Laistrygonians) spend a year with her. Having earlier acquired the magical plant moly from Hermēs (q.v.), he is proof against her magical wiles. When she can't bewitch him, she invites him into her bed, and, after he has made her swear a great oath not to harm him, he makes love to her. Again like Kalypsō, she then becomes his helper—but also lays on them, before they can hope to make their way home, the journey to the Underworld, where Odysseus must consult the ghost of the seer Teirēsias (10.483–551). On the way back from the Underworld, they briefly rejoin her, and now are briefed about the dangers (Sirens, Skyllē and Charybdis, the Wandering Rocks) they will encounter and given a clear warning against killing or otherwise molesting the famous cattle of her father, Hēlios (q.v.). The various parallels with Kalypsō are many and striking (see, e.g., Felson in *HE*, 2: 441). Both are described as wanting him for a husband; in the last resort, both are there to forward the narrative and (as Felson stresses) to test the strength of Odysseus' longing for home (which here even outmatches the promise of immortality). Tactfully, when recounting his adventures to Penelopē, Odysseus makes no mention of the sex.

KLYTAIMNĒSTRA Daughter of Tyndareus and Lēdē; sister of Helen and the Dioskouroi; wife of Agamemnōn; mother of Orestes and several daughters, including Iphigeneia (or Iphimēdē, or Iphianassa). She is mentioned once only in the *Iliad* (1.113–15), where her husband compares her, unfavorably, to his current prize captive, Chryseïs. But in the *Odyssey,* she is referred to several times, with varying degrees of condemnation (most vehemently by Agamemnōn's ghost), as the example of a faithless wife, ultimately complicit in her husband's murder (3.263–72, 11.409–34, 24.199–202).

KNŌSOS (CNOSSOS) Major city of Krētē (Crete), on a hill near modern Iráklion (Hērakleion), dating back at least as far as 1900 B.C.E. Knōsos acquired its modern fame from the excavations and imaginative reconstructions carried out by Sir

Arthur Evans from 1900 on. H. refers to it once only in the *Odyssey,* as a great city ruled by Minōs, during a quick sketch of Krētē, delivered by Odysseus to Penelopē in one of his fictitious cover stories (19.173–81).

KRĒTĒ (CRETE), KRĒTANS The "great island" (still known as such—*to megalónīsī*—by modern Greeks) that lies like a rugged mountainous bar, about 160 miles in length, across the southern entry to the Aegean Sea (q.v.). The brief sketch of the island given at 19.173–81 (see s.v. Knōsos) offers a fair notion of the degree of knowledge concerning it and its inhabitants available in H.'s day. The Catalogue of Ships shows a major contingent of eighty ships sailing to Troy from the island (*Il.* 2.645–52) under Idomeneus (q.v.), which is consonant with modern knowledge of a Mycenaean takeover of the island c. 1450; but Idomeneus is listed as the grandson of Minōs via Deukaliōn, which hints at the real mythic gap in later Greek recollections of Krētē's past. Odysseus locates several of his fictitious cover stories there and poses as a Krētan himself: it is tempting to argue that H. made him do so having in mind the old proverb that "All Krētans are liars," later made famous by the paradox of the philosopher Epimenidēs (sixth century B.C.E.). It is the kind of mischievous joke that would be very much in character.

KRONOS Youngest of the Titans, son of Ouranos (Heaven/Sky) and Gaia (Earth). By his sister Rhea he sires the Olympian family of deities; for H. he is mostly (and in the *Odyssey* exclusively) mentioned in formulaic terms as the father of Zeus (1.45, 81, 386, etc.).

KYDŌNIA, -ANS A settlement (modern Chania) and ethnic group of western Krētē (Crete): a part of Menelaös' fleet puts in there after a storm (3.292). Linked with Knōsos (Cnossos) and Gortyn as one of Krētē's major cities.

KYKLŌPES A "species of one-eyed giants, pastoral and primitive, who live in caves, isolated from each other, and are violent towards men" (Hernandez in *HE,* 1: 186–87). Odysseus' description of them in bk. 9 is our major source, and there are signs that H. may have modified the evidence of folktales for his own purposes. Surprisingly, though "wild" (*agrios*), they, and the Giants, like the Phaiakians (7.205–6), are close kin to the gods.

KYKLŌPS See s.v. Polyphēmos.

KYTHĒRA An island off the southernmost tip of the Lakonian peninsula in the Peloponnese (*BA* 57, D 5 and inset), referred to by H. in the *Odyssey* (9.81) as a sailing landmark missed by Odysseus when blown off course—and into regions better known from myth—during his homeward voyage. Kythēra was also associated with Aphrodītē (see 8.288 with n. 2 ad loc. and 18.193).

KYTHEREIA Titular epithet for Aphrodītē (8.288, 18.193), reflecting her cult on that island.

LAËRTĒS Son of Arkeisios (in a one-son sequence, 16.117–21), married to Antikleia (q.v.), and the father of Odysseus. He has already seemingly resigned his kingship to Odysseus before the latter leaves for Troy, and he is shown throughout the *Odyssey* living away on his farmstead in neglected squalor, mourning his son's

absence. He is sufficiently rejuvenated by Athēnē after Odysseus' return, however, to join in the fighting and to kill Antinoös' father, Eupeithēs (24.520–25).

LAISTRYGONIANS The most lethal of Odysseus' off-the-map encounters (cf. Louden in *HE,* 2: 454) is with these brutish quasi-mythical cannibals (10.81–133, 23.318), who destroy the whole of his flotilla, save his own ship, and proceed to devour the crews. The episode shows Poseidōn's malign curse (after the blinding of his son the Kyklōps) already taking full effect. The details of the episode (Louden, ibid.) bear a striking resemblance to some pre-Homeric version of the Argonautica legend.

LAKEDAIMŌN (LACEDAEMON) The long valley of the Eurōtas River, running NW up the inner, western part of the easternmost of the three southern Peloponnesian peninsulas, between the Parnon and Taÿgetos mountain ranges (*BA,* 58, C–D 3–4): the equivalent of modern Lakonia, including Sparta. For H., it was the realm of Menelaös (3.326; cf. *Il.* 2.581–87), who took a contingent of sixty ships to Troy from the region. Sparta's conquest of eastern Messēnē (q.v.; c. 700–670) is implied (*Il.* 9.149–53 = 291–95) by Agamemnōn's offer to Achillēs of seven cities actually located in Messēnian territory (cf. Eder in *HE,* 2: 452–53), with implications for the dating of both Homeric epics.

LAPITHS An Achaian clan from Thessaly: they brought a forty-ship squadron to Troy, led by Leonteus and Polypoitēs (*Il.* 2.738–47). The latter was the son of Peirithoös and Hippodameia, at whose wedding the Centaur Eurytiōn (q.v.) got drunk and tried to rape the bride (21.293–98).

LĒDĒ (LEDA) Daughter of Thestios, married to Tyndareus, king of Sparta, and by him (or Zeus) mother of the Dioskouroi (Kastōr and Polydeukēs), Helen, and Klytaimnēstra. Her coupling with Zeus when the god assumed the likeness of a swan became famous in art. H.'s sole reference to her in the *Odyssey* (11.298–300) is when she is included among the famous women of the past whose shades are seen by Odysseus in the Underworld.

LĒMNOS A volcanic island in the NE Aegean (*BA,* 56, A 1–2), where Philoktētēs was left behind during the voyage to Troy because of a foul-smelling wound caused by a bite from a water snake (*Il.* 2.721–24), and where Hephaistos landed after being flung down from Olympos by Zeus during a domestic dispute (*Il.* 1.590–94), thus causing his lameness. The island's smoking fumeroles probably suggested a connection with Hephaistos' smithy and furnace; his association with Lēmnos was general, and established early (8.283, 294, 301).

LESBOS Large island in the NE Aegean (*BA,* 56, B–D 3–4), close offshore in the Gulf of Adramyttion to the Troad. Nestōr and Menelaös both stopped off there en route home from Troy (3.168–69); Odysseus had a wrestling bout there, watched by "the Achaians" (4.342–44, 17.133–35).

LĒTŌ Daughter, surprisingly, of Titans (Koios and Phoibē [Hes., *Th.* 404–06]), and, by Zeus, mother of the twins Apollo and Artemis (6.106). In the *Odyssey,* she is mentioned in connection with the punishment meted out to Tityos, a giant son of Gaia (Earth), in the Underworld for raping her (11.576–81).

LEUKAS One of the larger Ionian islands, directly facing the coast of Akarnania (*BA,* 54, C 4) and partially linked to it at times by a sandbar in a very narrow, and shallow, strait. Notorious for the sheer 2,000-ft. drop from its SW promontory, Cape Leukatas. Traditionally, criminals were thrown down from there, and picked up in waiting boats if they survived the fall.

LIBYA A part of North Africa roughly congruent with its historical homonym, and famous for its rich fertility (4.85–89). Odysseus also mentions it as a popular slave market in one of his fictitious cover stories (14.295–97).

LOTUS-EATERS (*lōtophagoi*) Ever since Herodotus (4.177) named a people on the Libyan coast *lōtophagoi* (without identifying them with those of the *Odyssey*), there have been efforts to identify the real-life originals of H.'s happily passive race of lotus-eaters (9.82–104) and, in particular, the "lotus" involved, regarded by some as a kind of jujube. Like Helen's nepenthe (4.219–34), this "lotus" may have had an actual original, but in either case it is unlikely that H. was familiar with it.

MAIA A daughter of Atlas (Hes., *Th.* 938–39), and mother of Hermēs by Zeus (14.435).

MALEA The promontory at the southernmost tip of the eastern, Lakedaimonian peninsula of the Peloponnese (*BA,* 58, E 5), slightly NE of the island of Kythēra, and notorious from earliest times for dangerous, sudden, and unpredictable gales and storms. In the *Odyssey,* Menelaös, Agamemnōn, and Odysseus are all blown off course on their homeward voyage from Troy as they round Cape Malea (3.287, 4.514, 9.80, 19.187), the last geographically recognizable point for Odysseus before his passage into the quasi-mythical world of the Phaiakians (q.v.).

MARATHŌN A coastal deme of Attica, across the strait from Euboia: H. describes Athēnē as passing that way (7.80–81) en route to Athens: see also s.v. Erechtheus.

MEDŌN A herald, loyal to Odysseus, who performs duties for the suitors out of necessity (16.251–52, 17.172–73) but informs Penelopē (4.677–715, 16.411–13) of their plot to waylay and kill Tēlemachos; he is therefore spared by Odysseus (22.358–80), along with the minstrel Phēmios (q.v.).

MELAMPOUS A famous seer in the early heroic tradition. From Messēnia he came to Argos, where he cured the daughters of the king, Proitos, of madness, married one of them, became king himself, and sired a line of seers that included his great-grandson Amphiaraös (q.v.) (15.238–42; Finkelberg in *HE,* 2: 502). But H. is especially interested, for some unfathomable reason, in a seemingly irrelevant myth he tells twice in the *Odyssey* (11.288–97, 15.225–38), of how Nēleus (q.v.) of Pylos had a beautiful daughter, Perō, whom he would only give in marriage to the man who lifted and drove off the cattle of Iphiklēs from Phylakē in Thessaly. Melampous undertook to do so on behalf of his brother Bias, but was caught by Iphiklēs and imprisoned for a year, during which Nēleus seized his property. Freed by Iphiklēs in return for revealing Zeus' oracles to him, Melampous drove the cattle to Pylos, was revenged on Nēleus, and duly claimed Perō as Bias' bride.

MELANTHIOS A goatherd, son of Dolios (q.v.), who serves the suitors; notable, among many such figures, mostly near-anonymous, for the striking way in which

he is individualized as a three-dimensional character. His utterances are trenchant and vivid, remarkable for their "bold metaphors . . . colloquial color, proverbial expressions, and earthy realism" (Thalmann in *HE,* 2: 503). He also apes the aristocratic speech, manners, and outlook of the suitors (17.220, 222; 20.180–82), and his insults foreshadow those of Eurymachos (Thalmann, ibid.). His death, at the hands of Tēlemachos and his assistants (22.474–77) is peculiarly unpleasant, and all of a piece with the (equally excessive) vengeance carried out on the suitors.

MELANTHŌ Melanthios' sister, who becomes Eurymachos' mistress. This is especially shameful because she was brought up by Penelopē like her own child, indeed spoilt by her (18.321–25). Melanthō is the only one of the twelve serving girls hanged for fornicating with the suitors (22.461–73) who is characterized in detail, like her brother, whose talent for colorful verbal abuse she shares (e.g., at 18.321–42, 19.65–95).

MEMNŌN King of the Aithiōpes (q.v.), son of Priam's brother Tithōnos (q.v.) and Eōs (the Dawn) (4.186–88; 11.522). He kills Antilochos (q.v.) at Troy, but is then himself killed by Achillēs (*Aeth.,* arg. 2; West 2003, 110–13).

MENELAÖS King of Sparta, married to Zeus' daughter Helen. He is Atreus' son, Agamemnōn's younger brother. In the *Iliad,* he is a brave warrior, but older than most and never in the top rank. Aphrodītē makes him look a complete comic fool in his duel with Paris/Alexandros, who provoked the Trojan War by cuckolding him and carrying off his wife (3.369–76, 448–54). He is captivated by Helen's striptease at the fall of Troy (*LI,* fr. 28; West 2003, 138–39). When we meet him in the *Odyssey,* he and Helen (q.v.) are both middle-aged, wealthy from his profitable sojourn in Egypt (4.43–46, 71–75, 81–82, 90–93), and only mildly uneasy with each other. The way they combine to impress the visiting Tēlemachos is one of the great comic set pieces of ancient literature (4.59–305).

MENTŌR Son of Alkimos, a friend and coeval to whom Odysseus entrusts the care of his household before departing for Troy (2.224–27). Although Mentōr also appears in his own right (e.g., at 2.229–41, where he addresses the assembly, and at 17.67–70), he is regularly impersonated by Athēnē (e.g., at 2.267–69, 399–401; 3.13–28, 229–38; 4.653–56). Suspicion that this might be a divine likeness is aroused at 22.205–40, where Athēnē ends her impersonation with an extra flourish, flying up to the roof, seemingly unnoticed, and sitting there as a swallow, and 24.443–49, 502–3, 516–48, where she abruptly winds up not only the feud caused by the slaughter of the suitors, but also the poem. It is not surprising that his doppelgänger should attract attention.

MESSĒNĒ The westernmost, and shortest, of the three great southern peninsulas of the Peloponnese (*BA,* 58, B–C 3–4), bounded in the north by Triphylia, to the east by the Taÿgetos mountain range, and to the south and west by the sea. Originally, to H. and his successors, "Messēnē" meant the whole region, better known as Messēnia. Both its central plain and its coastal strip were well watered and highly fertile: after the First Messēnian War (c. 700–c. 670), eastern Messēnia was conquered by Sparta and its inhabitants turned into agricultural serfs. The

city of Messēnē was not built on Mt. Ithōmē until the fourth century B.C.E. (after Messēnia's liberation from Sparta).

MIMAS A prominent mountain range on the peninsula of Ionia immediately across the strait from N. Chios (*BA,* 56, C–D 4), a sailing landmark described by H. as "windy" (3.172).

MINŌS Legendary king of Krētē (Crete), traditionally the son of Zeus and Eurōpa, brother of Rhadamanthys, married to Pasiphaē, and father of Deukaliōn and Ariadnē. He is seen sceptered and sitting in judgment over the dead in the Underworld by Odysseus (11.568–71). The pre-Hellenic inhabitants of Crete (whose actual name remains uncertain) are called "Minoans" today with reference to Minōs.

MINYAN, -S Epithet applied by Odysseus in the Underworld to the inhabitants of what was later known as Orchomenos in Boiotia, notably to Amphiōn, father-in-law of Nēleus (11.284).

MUSES Traditionally nine in number, the Muses were the divinities of song and music, invoked at the beginning of both Homeric epics, and were thought to guarantee the truth of poems they approved. H. has them sing in chorus for the Olympians and elsewhere, including a funeral lament in honor of the dead Achillēs (*Il.* 1.603–4; *Od.* 24.60–62) that moves all who hear it to tears. Unlike later authors, H. does not differentiate their individual functions. In the *Odyssey,* they inspire Dēmodokos (8.64) to choose as his theme a famous quarrel between Achillēs and Odysseus (8.72–82).

MYKĒNAI (MYCENAE) A city at the NE edge of the Argive plain, closely associated in the *Iliad* with Agamemnōn and mentioned in the *Odyssey* in relation to the seven-year rule there of Aigisthos (q.v.). Mykēnai (*-ai* only in the *Iliad*) is strategically situated on a rocky eminence, protected on two sides by ravines. It looks toward Argos (cf. 3.263) and is linked with neighboring areas by traceable roads. The famous Lion Gate was added comparatively late, c. 1270 B.C.E.

NAUSIKAÄ The sole daughter (among six brothers, including Laodamas) of the Phaiakian ruler Alkinoös (q.v.) and his wife, Arētē (7.64–77), Nausikaä is by descent a great-granddaughter of Odysseus' dangerous divine enemy Poseidōn (7.53–66). Thus behind her obvious qualities of innocent kindness, maidenly decorum, and devoted affection for her parents, there lurks potential danger, kept at arm's length by her strength of character and aristocratic poise, evident throughout her first meeting with Odysseus on the beach. She has marriage on her mind, but keeps quiet about it; she is clearly attracted to Odysseus (6.240–45)—like many young girls, she prefers experienced older men, and she has no time for the younger sprigs of Scherian nobility who court her (8.34–35, 6.283–84)—but her arrangements for this stranger, however much she fancies him as a potential husband, are carefully designed to avoid any suggestion of scandal (6.273–99), quite unlike the sophisticated sexual advances made to him by Kalypsō and Kirkē. It is noteworthy that Alkinoös (who may well have already noted Nausikaä's fussiness over those courting her) very early on openly declares to Odysseus (7.311–14) that

he would dearly like him as a son-in-law. Nausikaä's farewell to him, when arrangements have been made to convey him home to his wife, is loaded with unspoken feeling (8.461–69); and we recall, at this point, that it is to Nausikaä, on the beach, that Odysseus delivers, as part of his wish for her, one of the most beautiful, and penetrating, descriptions of a happy marriage ever written (6.180–85).

NĒLEUS King of Pylos (3.4), a son of Poseidōn, married to Chlōris (11.281–87), and father by her of various sons, including Nestōr (q.v.), and a daughter, Perō, over whose marriage he exercises peculiar restrictions (see 15.228–38, and s.v. Melampous).

NEOPTOLEMOS Also known as Pyrrhos; the sole child of Achillēs, by Deïdameia, daughter of King Lykomēdēs of Skyros. On learning that their young son, Achillēs, was fated to die in the Trojan War, Thetis and Pēleus sent him to Skyros to be brought up disguised as a girl among the children of King Lykomēdēs. He was discovered there by a search party led by Odysseus and Nestōr, but not before he had used his advantageous position to impregnate Deïdameia (*Cypr.,* fr. 19; West 2003, 96–99, where it is noted that the story was well known in the Epic Cycle. Odysseus brought the boy—still an adolescent—to Troy after his father's death, and gave him Achillēs' armor (*LI,* arg. 3; West 2003, 122–23). Having been chosen as one of the warriors in the Wooden Horse (11.523–32), he showed a sharp taste for savagery at the sack, killing Priam as a suppliant the altar of Zeus (*SI,* arg. 2; West 2003, 144–45), and hurling Hektōr's infant son, Astyanax, down from Troy's battlements (*LI,* frs. 18, 29; *SI,* fr. 3; West 2003, 136–41, 148–49). H.'s few references to him are careful: e.g., Odysseus, reporting on his prowess to Achillēs in Hadēs (11.504–37) carefully omits the killing of Priam, which Pindar, *Paean* 6, says led to Neoptolemos' death at Delphi in retribution for violating the sanctity of Zeus' altar.

NĒREÏDS Daughters of Nēreus (q.v.) by Dōris, daughter of Ocean, these sea nymphs are generally treated as a group (but see s.v. Amphitrītē). They are much given to play and dancing, but also connected with mourning and lamentation (e.g., for Achillēs, *Il.* 18.35–69, 24.78–84; *Od.* 24.47–59). Their leader, Thetis (q.v.), Achillēs' mother, is a major and well-individualized deity, married to Pēleus (q.v.).

NĒREUS One of several "Old Men of the Sea" referred to in the *Odyssey* (see also s.vv. Phorkys and Prōteus). Married to Dōris, daughter of Ocean, and father of the Nēreïds, including Achillēs' mother, Thetis (24.58; Hes., *Th.* 240–64).

NĒRIKOS The identity and exact location of this "well-built citadel, on the mainland cape" (24.377–78)—captured by Laërtēs (as he himself recalls) back in the days when he was "lord of the Kephallēnes"—are quite uncertain. Various sites on Leukas or in Akarnania have been suggested, perhaps near the shallow channel linking Leukas to the mainland (*BA,* 54, C 4).

NESTŌR Youngest son of Nēleus, king of Pylos, and Chlōris. He and his father are the sole survivors of Hēraklēs' raid on Pylos (*Il.* 11.687–93). He is the oldest

Achaian leader at Troy, outstanding both for his great age—he has outlived two generations—and the wise persuasiveness that it has brought him (*Il.* 2.247–52). His rambling anecdotal loquaciousness is wittily drawn, especially in the *Odyssey* (3.118–29), when he is a good decade older than in the *Iliad*. Nestōr's sons include Antilochos and Peisistratos (*Od.* 3.36–42, 411–15; 4.155–67). Tēlemachos, who visits him to seek news of Odysseus, conspires with Peisistratos to dodge Nestōr's relentless, long-winded hospitality by avoiding a second stop at Pylos on his homeward journey (15.195–201).

OCEAN (ŌKEANOS) An extreme example of the archaic personification of natural phenomena. At one level, in the *Iliad,* Ocean is the remote circular stream thought to encompass the frontiers of a disc-shaped world (*Il.* 3.5; 14.200–201; 18.607–8), and neighbor to distant, little-known, and thus fantasized peoples (e.g., Pygmies, 3.4–6; and Aithiopians, 1.423, 23.206). But in the *Iliad,* Ocean is also the son of Ouranos (Sky) and Gē, or Gaia (Earth), married to Tethys (14.201–2), and progenitor of all the gods (14.246), as well as of every sea, river, and spring (21.195–97). He has a house, and Hērē plans to visit him and Tethys there (14.301–11). In the *Odyssey,* however (one more indication of its later genesis than that of the *Iliad*), there is only one humanizing reference (10.139, where he sires Persē) to over a dozen treating Ocean simply as the remote world stream; and by Herodotus' day (2.23, 4.36), the very idea of a circumambient stream embracing the world was challenged.

ODYSSEUS Son of Laërtēs (q.v.) and Antikleia, daughter of the thievish trickster Autolykos (q.v., 19.392–466); married to Penelopē, father of Tēlemachos, and lord of a small kingdom centered on the Ionian island of Ithákē (q.v.). Despite this marginal background and dubious ancestry, he is one of the most distinguished leaders at Troy: a fine warrior (see, e.g., *Il.* 11.310–488; *Aethiopis,* arg. 3; West 2003, 112–13), a quick, clever thinker (*Il.* 2.269–335), and a persuasive diplomat (*Il.* 9.223–306). Antēnōr gives us a vivid picture of him (*Il.* 3.209–24): short, yet broad-shouldered and massively built, with a great booming voice, "the words resembling some driving wintry snowstorm." Yet his reputation for trickiness and deceit is not unknown at Troy (*Il.* 3.200–202; 4.33), and emerges more fully in his ruthless dealing with Dolōn (*Il.* 10.371–458). It is significant that in the *Iliad* there is no mention of his extraordinary skill with the bow (*Od.* 21.366–430): he does not even compete for the archery prize at the funeral games of Patroklos (*Il.* 23.850–83). The reason is clearly because this weapon was shunned by aristocratic heroes as operating at a comparatively safe distance from its target, and thus not compatible with true hand-to-hand valor: doubly so, if the arrows were smeared with deadly poison (as Agamemnōn fears: *Il.* 4.149–50). In the *Odyssey* (1.260–64), Athēnē remarks on Odysseus (her special favorite throughout the poem) having once gone to Ephyrē in search of poison for his arrows—and being refused it by a man who feared "the wrath of the gods," which suggests that poisoned arrows, like lethal gas after World War I, had already been outlawed as an unacceptable combat weapon—and that Odysseus was unscrupulous enough to

ignore the ban. There is, too, scant justification for his lying tales on Ithákē, which (as Athēnē again remarks, 13.291–95) he retails for the fun of it. Yet it is striking how well, throughout, however justified the criticisms of him by Eurylochos (q.v.) and others, he contrives to retain the sympathy of his audience. For all his trickery, rash curiosity, lying fantasies, excesses (the slaughter of all the suitors, etc.), and solipsistic self-indulgences, there is a huge streak in this survivor of the decent and the humane: when he is finally reunited with Penelopē, it is his disquisition on marriage (6.180–85; see s.v. Nausikaä), spoken from experience, that we remember, not his dalliances with Kalypsō, whose offer of immortality he has refused, and Kirkē. Like Walt Whitman, he is large, he contains multitudes: between Troy and Ithákē, we get a generous survey of his powerful, multifaceted character. Athēnē's persistent (and often irritated) liking for him becomes steadily more understandable as the epic moves on.

ŌGYGIA The rugged wooded island that is the home of Kalypsō (q.v.) It is clearly mythical, and its location (as described by H.) confirms this: it lies "where the sea's navel is" (*Od.* 1.50)—but what sea? and what does "navel" mean here, if not "center"? It is also remote and isolated (*Od.* 5.55, 101–2). That would suggest Ocean, but "Ocean had no known boundaries and therefore no center," as Romm says in *HE,* 2: 594. The etymology of the name Ōgygia is likewise uncertain; in antiquity it was treated adjectivally as an epithet meaning "primordial" or "of great antiquity," and this makes sense (Kalypsō was the daughter of the Titan Atlas).

OLYMPOS, OLYMPIANS At nearly ten thousand feet, Mount Olympos is the highest peak in Greece, an impressive natural landmark, often veiled in clouds, and snow-capped annually from late fall to spring. For H., most notably in the *Iliad,* it is also the abode of the gods, who not only use Olympos and Mount Ida as vantage-points from which to observe human activities but have houses and workshops there, built by Hephaistos. Olympos is their home: most of them feast and sleep and quarrel there "in a kind of rowdy extended family" (*HE,* 2: 600–601). In the *Odyssey*, partly because of its later appearance, the gods play a far more limited role. Criticism of their misbehavior in the *Iliad* by early critics such as Xenophanēs (cf. *OCD*[4], 1580; West 2014, 48–49) had clearly had a considerable effect. As West says, the "gods of the *Odyssey* show a collective concern for morality that they lack in the *Iliad*." And except for Poseidōn, whose Iliadic-style persecution of Odysseus at least has an arguable justification in the blinding of his son the Kyklōps, the *Odyssey*'s general sense of rather dull divine concord contrasts strikingly with the competing, quarrelsome individualism it has replaced. Apart from Athēnē, ubiquitous and interfering, none of the Olympians, even Zeus himself, constitute more than a vague and intermittent background to the human narrative, even—indeed, especially—when this strays into the world of fantasy.

ORCHOMENOS City of NW Boiōtia overlooking Lake Kopaïs, and powerful and wealthy in the Bronze Age (hence known as "Minyan" Orchomenos, 11.284). In historical times, a competitor with Thēbai for the control of Boiōtia.

ORESTĒS Son of Agamemnōn and Klytaimnēstra, reared in luxury as a child in Mykēnai (q.v.) during his father's absence at Troy (*Il.* 9.142–43, 284–85), who fled when Aigisthos (q.v.) moved in as his mother's lover. With Klytaimnēstra's connivance and help (3.235, 4.91–92, 11.380–84, 409–11, 24.96–97, 199–200), Aigisthos murdered Agamemnōn on his return from Troy (1.32–43, 24.20–22). On coming of age, Orestēs returned from exile in Athens and avenged his father's death (1.30, 40–41, 298; 3.306–10; cf. 4.546–47) by killing both Aigisthos and his mother. H. finds it undesirable, though he is well aware of it, to emphasize Orestēs' matricide: he gets round this by saying that "he held a funeral feast for the Argives / over his hateful mother and the cowardly Aigisthos" (3.309–10): even enemies and criminals are entitled to proper burial. Orestēs is used regularly in the *Odyssey* as a model for Tēlemachos to follow in dealing with his mother's invasive suitors, so to stress this aspect of his vengeance would hardly be appropriate.

ORIŌN Mythical hunter, allegedly of women as well as wild beasts (see *OCD*[4], 1048). He was famously handsome (11.310), and when Eōs, the Dawn, took a fancy to him (5.121–22), Artemis slew him. Odysseus saw him in the Underworld, herding the shades of the game he had killed in life (11.572–75), and later he was catasterized into the constellation that bears his name (5.272–74 = *Il.* 18.487–89).

OSSA: See s.v. Pēlion.

ŌTOS See s.v. Pēlion.

PAIĒŌN For H., a healing deity (4.232), later assimilated to Asklēpios or Apollō.

PALLAS A name, or epithet, of Athēnē: its origin or derivation is quite uncertain, as the wild guesses of Apollodorus (1.6.2, 3.12.3) make obvious.

PANOPEUS A town in Phōkis, on the plain of Chaironea (*BA* 55, D 3–4), where Tityos raped Lētō on her way to Pythō (Delphi, 11.580–81).

PAPHOS Old Paphos, or Kouklia-Palaipaphos (*BA,* 72, B3)—a s distinct from modern (Nea) Paphos (*BA,* 72, A 3)—on the SW coast of the island of Cyprus, immediately below the Troödos mountain range, was the site of a precinct and shrine of Aphrodītē dating back to the Late Bronze Age. Striking remains survive at the site, which reveal clear connections with Minoan civilization (see s.v. Minōs). H. refers to it casually at 8.362, indicating that it was already well known throughout the Mediterranean.

PARNASSOS Mountain range west of Lake Kopaïs and the plain of Chaironea (*BA,* 55, C–D 3), famous in myth and linked to Apollo and the Muses, but mentioned by H. (19.394, 411, 432, 466; 21.220; 24.332) solely in connection with Odysseus' wounding by a boar there in his youth, when out hunting with the sons of his grandfather Autolykos. This wound left the scar on his thigh by which his old nurse, Eurykleia (q.v.), was able to recognize him on his anonymous return to Ithákē more than twenty years later.

PATROKLOS Son of Menoitios, of Opoeia in Lokris. Fiery-tempered (as a boy he kills a playmate over a game of dice), he is exiled, taken in by Pēleus (q.v.), and brought up with the (slightly younger) Achillēs, to whom he is devoted. At Troy he dons the armor of Achillēs when Achillēs himself still refuses to fight, but is

slain by Hektor, who takes the armor. Once dead, Patroklos is the instrument of Achilles' return to the battlefield, and, ultimately, of his concessions to Priam. In the *Odyssey* he has a brief moment as a ghost in the Underworld (23.68–92), notable chiefly for a series of peevish complaints and demands about his treatment there. The last word on him is that his bones are mingled with those of Achillēs (24.73–77).

PEIRITHOÖS A Lapith prince, son of Zeus, notable for his marriage to Hippodameia, recalled by Nestōr (*Il.* 1.263–75; cf. *Od.* 21.295–304). The Centaur Eurytiōn (q.v.) got drunk at their wedding and tried to rape the bride, thus starting the great conflict between Lapiths and Centaurs (see, e.g., Diod. Sic. 4.70.3–4).

PEISISTRATOS The youngest of Nestōr's six living sons (3.413–15), too young to marry (3.400–401), or to remember his older brother Antilochos (q.v.), who died at Troy (4.187–202). Slightly older than Tēlemachos, he escorts him to Sparta, and tactfully helps him to avoid a second stay with the garrulous and demanding Nestōr (15.195–214).

PELASGIANS For H., a generic term for any notable pre-Greek ethnic group: the one mention in the *Odyssey* (19.177) refers to such a group in Krētē (Crete).

PĒLEUS Son of Aiakos and thus a grandson of Zeus: the wealthy king of the Myrmidons in Phthiē, and married to the immortal nymph Thetis (q.v.), by whom he is the father of Achillēs. The sole reference in the *Odyssey* is a hopeful, but unanswered, query as to his well-being by the ghost of his son in the Underworld (11.494–503).

PELIAS Twin brother of Nēleus (q.v.), and son of Tyrō by Poseidōn. Tyrō later married Krētheus, lord of Iolkos (q.v.), by whom she had a son, Aisōn. On Krētheus' death Pelias usurped his nephew's claim to the throne of Iolkos: he is connected to the Argonaut legend through his relationship to Aison's son, Jason (q.v.).

PĒLION Mountain range on the Magnēsian peninsula (*BA,* 57, A–B 2), facing the NW Aegean: the furthest SE of three famous ranges, the other two being Ossa (ibid., A 2) and Olympos (ibid., A 1), west of the Thermaīc Gulf. In the Underworld, Odysseus recounts (11.305–20) seeing Iphimedeia, whose two giant sons by Poseidōn, Ôtos and Ephialtēs, planned to scale the heavens by piling Ossa on Olympos and Pēlion on Ossa, and would have done so had they not been killed, when still young, by Apollō.

PENELOPĒ Daughter of the elusive Ikarios, married to the long-absent Odysseus, who may or may not be dead, mother of a nervous (and possibly fatherless) son who is just coming of age, and persistently courted by an unpleasant group of well-connected young males who are more than ready to take every possible advantage of her unprotected vulnerability. She is probably in her mid-thirties and clearly an attractive woman: the suitors eagerly imagine themselves in bed with her (1.365–66; 18.210–13). Her brief married life, before Odysseus leaves for Troy, has been rewarding, to judge by her husband's moving encomium of the married state to Nausikaä (6.180–85) and the fact that he (unsuccessfully) feigns

insanity in order to avoid joining the expedition (*Cypr.,* arg. 5; West 2003, 70–73). She is in no position to evict her would- be suitors by force; instead, she stalls them with endless promises and devices, most notably the assertion that first she must finish the shroud she is making for Laërtēs, which she works at by day, but unweaves secretly at night (2.87–110; 19.138–56; 24.125–48). (That it takes the suitors three years to spot this simple ruse, and even then only when alerted to it by one of Penelopē's maids, does not say much for their intelligence.) She is running out of excuses: her parents are urging her to remarry, Tēlemachos is of age, and worried by the wanton inroads on his patrimony, so that now (19.157–58), as she tells the stranger who is in fact her husband, "I can neither avoid this marriage, nor find / any other way of escape." Worst of all, Odysseus himself had told her, before he left, that if he was still absent "when you see our son full-grown and bearded, / then wed the man of your choice, leave this house for good." It is now, following the dream of the eagle and the geese (19.535–553), that she decides to set up the bow contest (19.570–81) as a last hope of escape. Could the stranger be Odysseus? After his interpretation of the dream, just possibly. If he is, he'll win the contest. If he isn't, she'll settle for "hated marriage" with whoever else wins it (at least he'll have to be strong). And she is craftier than her husband: it isn't until 23.205–8, when she's tested him with the question about their unique bed, that recognition is complete and she finally falls into his arms. This was the woman for whom Odysseus turned down an offer of immortality, and one can see why.

PERSEPHONĒ Daughter of Zeus and Dēmētēr, wife (after abduction) of Hadēs, and in that capacity queen of the Underworld. As such she is referred to a dozen times, mostly as "dread goddess," in the *Odyssey.*

PHAIAKIANS (PHAEACIANS) The inhabitants of the (probably mythical) island of Scheria (q.v.), where Odysseus is, with the aid of Athēnē, royally entertained and then conveyed home to Ithákē aboard one of their ships, loaded with expensive guest-gifts. The Phaiakians are both near kin to the gods (19.279) and dear to them (6.203); the gods attend their feasts (7.201–4). Their remote existence is idyllic, indeed quasi-paradisal: it seems to be eternal spring there, they have no wars, and are devoted to feasts, music, and dancing. Their luxuriousness is emphasized by their liking for hot baths, comfortable beds, and frequent changes of good clothes (8.248–49). Though unmilitary and not very athletic, they are nevertheless first-class seafarers (7.34–36 and elsewhere) with remarkable ships (8.556–63) and a tradition of conveying any who ask their help—a habit that, in Odysseus' case, gets them into serious trouble with Poseidōn (13.125–64, 172–87), from whom their royal family (see s.vv. Alkinoös and Arētē) is directly descended.

PHAIDRĒ (PHAEDRA) Daughter of Minōs and Pasiphaē, and sister of Ariadnē (q.v.): mentioned by H. only as the shade of an old-time heroine in the Underworld (11.321). Her best-known role, that of would-be lover of her stepson, Hippolytos (made famous by Euripides in his play of that name), has no place here.

PHAROS Name of an island adjacent to the coast of Egypt at what later became Alexandria, and the site of a great Ptolemaic lighthouse, which survived until

shaken down by an earthquake in the Middle Ages. H. betrays his hit-and-miss knowledge of Egypt when he claims (4.355–57) that Pharos is a day's sail from land: it is now part of the coastline. "Pharos" became a synonym for "lighthouse" in several European languages.

PHĒMIOS The resident minstrel at the house of Odysseus. He entertains the suitors (1.154–55, 325–27), but not Penelopē (1.337–52; brusquely corrected by Tēlemachos), with a lay describing the ill-starred return home of the Greeks; later, he does so again while they are feasting (17.261–63, 270–71), watched by Odysseus disguised as a beggar. After the slaughter of the suitors, he claims (backed up by Tēlemachos) that he only performed for them under duress (22.344–60), and says Odysseus would sorely miss his repertoire and god-given skills were he put to death. As Jenny Strauss Clay points out, his status "appears more precarious and less idealized than that of Dēmodokos" (*HE,* 2: 653), but both are credited by H. with a serious love for the poetics apparent in the *Odyssey* itself.

PHILOKTĒTĒS Best known for being bitten by a water snake on Tenedos en route to Troy and abandoned by the Greeks on Lemnos because of the foul-smelling wound that results (*Cypr.,* arg. 9; West 2003, 76–77). However, when Helenos prophesied that Troy would never fall without the bow of Hēraklēs, which was in Philoktētēs' possession, Odysseus and Diomēdēs fetched Philoktētēs and the bow from Lemnos: his wound was healed (probably by Podalirios), he killed Paris in single combat, and Troy fell (*LI,* arg. 2; West 2003, 120–23). H. mentions only that he came home safe after this, and that he was the one Greek archer who could outshoot Odysseus at Troy (3.188–90; 8.219–20).

PHOENICIA, -ANS Phoenicia is the Greek name (source uncertain) for a region including the city-kingdoms of Sidon, Byblos, and Tyre, roughly the E. Mediterranean coast occupied by modern Lebanon (*BA,* 69, B C 1–3). H. sometimes uses "Sidon" as a synonym for Phoenicia as a whole (e.g., at 4.83–84), but elsewhere he uses "Phoenicia" to indicate a specific location (e.g., at 14.290–91).

PHORKYS An Ithákan harbor (13.96, 345) named after, and associated with, a homonymous Old Man of the Sea (1.72), a probably pre-Greek sea god, traditionally the father of Skyllē (q.v.) and Thoōsa, the mother of Polyphēmos.

PHTHIĒ The traditional kingdom of Achillēs and his Myrmidons (11.496), of uncertain extent, but centered on the area of SE Thessaly by the Spercheios River (*BA,* 55, C 3), N. of the Malian Gulf, looking out E. toward Euboia.

PHYLAKĒ The Thessalian town of E. Phthiōtis (*BA,* 55, D 2) from which Melampous (q.v.) set out to drive the cattle of Iphikles to Pylos (15.235–36).

PIERIA The stretch of mountainous coastline (*BA,* 57, A 1) that includes Olympos: facing the Thermaīc Gulf N. of the Magnēsian peninsula, and bounded at its upper end by the Haliakmōn River. Pieria was where the gods descending from Olympos normally alighted (5.50; the Greek here is ambiguous as to whether Hermēs made a landing in Pieria en route to Kalypsō's isle or simply flew over it).

PLANKTAI Better known to modern readers as the Wandering Rocks.

PLEIADES This famous star cluster (of seven or eight stars, half a dozen large enough to be seen by the naked eye) has been recognized since remote antiquity. Its Greek name is of uncertain derivation but has been plausibly associated with *peleiades* (doves) thought of as scattering before the pursuit of the hunter Oriōn (q.v.). Their movements have been linked by modern scholars both to the agricultural calendar (*Il.* 18.486) and to astronavigation (*Od.* 5.272) as part of Kalypsō's sailing instructions to Odysseus (see *HE,* 3: 675).

POLYDEUKĒS See s.v. Kastōr.

POLYPHĒMOS An outsize, one-eyed, and voraciously cannibalistic giant of folktale (see also s.v. Kyklōpes), who is, as Zeus relates it (1.63–79), a son of Poseidōn by the nymph Thoōsa. His blinding by Odysseus and his desperate comrades (9.307–542) is the motive for Poseidōn's persistent (though circumscribed) malign wrath against them.

POSEIDŌN The second of Kronos' three sons by Rhea (the other two being Zeus and Hadēs), who share Earth and Olympos. Poseidōn has the sea as his personal domain; Zeus gets the heavens; Hadēs, the Underworld. Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker, an ancient deity, is also closely associated with earthquakes. In the *Iliad,* he is consistently anti-Trojan. In the *Odyssey,* unlike the other Olympian deities, he has undergone no evolution toward an ethical morality. In his implacable pursuit of Odysseus for blinding of his son Polyphēmos, he is totally impervious to justice or fairness, to the fact that this was done in self-defense, literally as a lifesaver: "all that counts is the *factum brutum* of the blinding and the violation of his honor that it constitutes" (Friedrich in *HE,* 2: 687–88; and see citations ad loc.). Though Zeus (1.63–79; 13.128–33) ensures that Poseidōn cannot disrupt Odysseus' predestined return to Ithákē, the sea god can, and does, make that return as difficult and uncomfortable as possible; and even after his return, Odysseus must still, to satisfy the god's Iliadic sense of honor, make the long journey predicted by Teirēsias (11.119–34) and establish a cult of Poseidōn at the end of it. Poseidōn's wrath extends even to his own kin, the Phaiakians, when he learns how generously they have treated Odysseus (13.134–58). Zeus concedes his right to punish them for besmirching his honor: Poseidōn then petrifies the vessel that conveyed Odysseus home, and is only stopped from encircling the Phaiakians' city with a huge mountain by frantic prayer and sacrifice and a decision to no more offer sea passage to those who request it (13.172–87).

PRIAM King of Troy, son of Laomedōn, married to Hekabē (Hecuba), and the father of numerous offspring, including Hektōr, Paris/Alexandros, and Kassandrē (Cassandra). Long dead at the time of the *Odyssey,* he is mentioned there mostly in some variant of the phrase "Priam's city" as a synonym for Troy.

PROKRIS One of the odder, and more enjoyable, Attic heroines of olden time, seen by Odysseus as a shade in the Underworld (11.321). Daughter of Erechtheus and married to Kephalos, a mutually suspicious union that delighted Ovid (see *Met.* 7.690–892 and *AA* 3.687–746). A skilled herbalist, she reportedly cured Minōs (q.v.) of a tendency to ejaculate snakes and scorpions, which, not surpris-

ingly, had rendered him infertile (and sounds like a classic case of acute gonorrhea). On Prokris generally, see Gantz, 245–47, and Green 2004, 250–63.

PRŌTEUS One (4.365, 382–93, 397–586) of various "Old Men of the Sea" mentioned in the *Odyssey:* see also s.vv. Nēreus and Phorkys. He cares for a flock of seals, can take various shapes at will, and has the gift of prophecy: Menelaös (q.v.) induces him (4.454–61) to reveal (4.491–569) much about the fate of various Greeks after leaving Troy, and some of what the future holds for him, Menelaös, including the fact that after death he is destined for Elysium rather than Hadēs, since as Helen's husband he is also Zeus' son-in-law.

PSYRIĒ Later known as Psyra, the modern Psara, a small landmark (3.171) island about 20 kms due W. of northern Chios (*BA,* 57, D 3): most famous for the heroic conduct of its inhabitants during the Greek War of Independence, whose massacre left the island deserted.

PYLOS The coastal kingdom of Nēleus (q.v.) and his long-lived son Nestōr in the western Peloponnese, located roughly between the Gulf of Messēnia in the south and the Alpheios River in the north, with an uncertain eastern frontier in the mountains with Arkadia (*BA,* 58, B 2–4). The actual royal city, "sandy Pylos," was on the coast (3.4–6), and for long it was assumed—in all likelihood correctly—that the Mycenaean palace excavated by Carl Blegen in 1939 down south at Anō Englianos, overlooking Navarino Bay, indicated its site. But more recent archaeology has opened up the possibility that one Pylos—Strabo (8.3.7) says there were several cities of that name—may have existed further north.

PYTHŌ The ancient, and mysterious, name for Delphi (q.v.) or the oracular shrine there (8.79–81 is H.'s only mention of the shrine itself). Various explanations, none conclusive, were given for it in antiquity, which suggests that it may have been the site of an earlier, perhaps Mycenaean, sanctuary. The site reveals late Bronze Age occupation (*OCD*[4], 427).

RHADAMANTHYS Brother of Minōs, son of Zeus by Eurōpa, daughter of Phoinix (*Il.* 14.321–22). These were "obscure figures with pre-Greek names who presumably came into Greek traditions from Crete" (Powell in *HE,* 3: 745). Why the Phaiakians should have conveyed him to Euboia to visit Tityos (7.321–24) is as obscure as the reason for his residence in Elysium (4.563–64). He is not recorded as a judge of the dead until Plato's day (see Powell, ibid.).

SAMĒ (OR SAMOS) H.'s name for the Ionian island of the Kephallēnes (modern Cephalonia, or Kefallinía), where the town on the E. coast of the island is still known as Sami. Doulichion, Samē, Ithákē, and Zákynthos all formed part of Odysseus' domain (*Il.* 2.631–37; *Od.* 9.21–27).

SCHERIA The land of the Phaiakians: as described to Odysseus by Nausikaä (6.204–5), it is remote and sea bound, so probably an island, though this is never actually stated. The climate seems to be one of eternal spring. The inhabitants are great sailors. The royal court is by and large a happy institution, and its king, Alkinoös (q.v), and his family—not least his wife, Arētē, and daughter, Nausikaä—are memorable individuals. A final fairy-tale touch is provided by the gold and silver

dogs, the work of Hephaistos, that stand guard on either side of the entrance doors (7.91–94): "immortal creatures, and ageless all their days," a semi-formulaic line that cleverly leaves us in doubt as to whether the immortality is metaphorical or, as with Hephaistos' speaking and thinking gold robots in the *Iliad* (18.417–21), magically actual. Scheria itself similarly hovers between fantasy and reality.

SIDON, SIDONIANS The leading city-kingdom of Phoenicia, located some 35 kms N. of Tyre on the coast of Lebanon (*BA,* 69, B 2): attested as early as the fourteenth century B.C.E., and a key Mediterranean trading center. Its importance is evident from the fact that for H., Sidonians are often synonymous with Phoenicians (see, e.g., 4.618; 13.285; 15.118), and their city is associated with wealth and fine craftsmanship (615–19; 15.425; cf. *Il.* 6.289–92, 23.740–45; *HE,* 3: 798).

SIRENS Curiously, H. "gives the Sirens no names, no genealogy, no appearance, and no story" (Scodel in *HE,* 3: 805): all we know from Odysseus' version of his encounter with them is that they are two in number (12.52, 167), live on an island not too far from Skyllē and Charybdis (12.39, 54, 158–200), possibly are able to still local winds (12.168–69) in order lure passing sailors to their deaths by their singing (12.39–44, 184–88), lay claim to omniscience (12.189–91), and are pictured as sitting in a flowery meadow among the rotting corpses of their victims (12.45–46). H.'s reticence to let us know more about them may well be due to the fact that the evidence, from both literature and the visual arts, is not only vast but wildly contradictory (see Scodel, ibid., and *OCD*[4], 1272, for illuminating samples). They have also been allegorized as representing anything from fleshly lusts to the thirst for knowledge.

SISYPHOS Son of Aiolos, and mythical founder and king of Ephyrē (later Korinthos/Corinth), seen by Odysseus in the Underworld (11.593–600) as one of the three great sinners, hopelessly pushing a huge boulder uphill. We are not informed there what the specific offense was that led to this. In the *Iliad*, Sisyphos is described (6.152–54) as unrivaled for wiliness, and the copious mythical anecdotes about him (inter alia, he contrived to cheat death, both actual and personified: see *OCD*[4], 1373) confirm his portrayal as a classic trickster.

SKYLLĒ (SCYLLA) As in the case of the Sirens (q.v.), H.'s description of Skyllē is highly selective; though in both cases it is impossible to be certain what are archaic beliefs and what later literary accretions. As described by Kirkē (12.83–100, 118–26) and glimpsed by Odysseus (12.245–59), Skyllē is a ravenous, immortal quasi-marine monster, lurking in a cave high (12.83–84) on the cliff face, from where she reaches out with six long flexible legs and arms, with at the end of each of the latter a head bristling with three rows of teeth, to prey on large fish such as dolphins, and also, it turns out, on passing sailors—"like a kind of multiple moray eel" (*OCD*[4], 1335). (For later developments, see, e.g., Alden in *HE,* 3: 807–8.) She is impossible to fight or escape, except possibly (a somewhat anticlimactic concession) through appeal to her mother, Krataïs (12.124–26).

SKYROS The easternmost, and furthest south, of the northern Sporades islands in the Aegean (*BA,* 55, G–H 2–3), off the SE coast of Euboia. Mentioned in the *Odyssey* (11.509) as where Odysseus fetched Achillēs' son, Neoptolemos, from to join the fighting in Troy. Skyros is thus also the site of the young Achillēs' concealment, disguised as a girl, by his mother, Thetis, to save him from his foreordained early death. But masculinity will out: while in hiding among the girls at the Skyrian court of King Lykomēdēs, Achillēs contrives to impregnate the king's daughter Deïdameia (see Gantz, 581–82), and Neoptolemos is the result.

SOUNION (SUNIUM) Southern cape of the Attic peninsula (*BA,* 59, D4), described by Nestōr—in a rare reference (3.278) to anywhere in Attika other than Athens—as "sacred Sounion, the headland of Athens."

SPARTA In the *Odyssey,* the equivalent of Lakedaimōn (q.v.) as defining the post-war realm of Menelaös and Helen (see, e.g., 1.93; 2.214, 32, 359, etc.). How far that realm reflects a distant historical reality at a plausible date for the Trojan War and its aftermath remains uncertain, though the post-Mycenaean Dorian newcomers do seem to have taken an interest in the region's existing mythical traditions.

TANTALOS Wealthy legendary king of Sipylos, on the border of Phrygia and Lydia, a son of Zeus and father of Pelōps and Niobē. Seen after death by Odysseus in the Underworld as one of the great exemplary sinners (11.582–92), up to his chin in water, yet unable ever to get a drink or to reach the fruit so tantalizingly (hence the epithet) close to him. As with Sisyphos, we're told the punishment but not the crime. Tantalos in life, as one of the first generation of mortals, had successfully petitioned Zeus for the privilege of living as well as—and, in particular, dining with—the gods. Presumably his offense had something to do with this, but exactly what is disputed. In any case, Zeus hung a rock over his head to limit his enjoyment. The most tempting theory is that he invited the Olympians to dine with him and served them up the cooked body of his son, Pelōps, to see if, in their divine omniscience, they would recognize it and refrain from eating such fare. All of them did, except Dēmētēr, who was mourning the loss of her daughter, and consumed one shoulder of Pelōps without noticing. When the gods magically reconstituted the boy, he thus needed an ivory prosthesis to replace it (see Gantz, 531–35, with refs.).

TAPHOS, TAPHIANS Mentioned only by H. in the *Odyssey,* these seagoing raiders and traders evidently ranged far and wide across the eastern and central Mediterranean, dealing in iron, copper, and, especially, slaves (14.449–52; 15.427–29). Their activities "read like a virtual primer for a new breed of Late Bronze and Early Iron Age entrepreneurs" (Papadopoulos in *HE,* 3: 839). No convincing location has been suggested for Taphos, though one of the islands of the Echinades (q.v.) is possible: a kind of ancient Hispaniola.

TAÏGETOS The high, sheer, mountain range (6.103; *BA,* 58, C 3–5), running the entire length of the central southern peninsula of the Peloponnese, ending in the Tainaron promontory, and separating Lakedaimōn from Messēnia.

TEIRĒSIAS Blind Thēban seer designated by Kirkē (q.v.) as the key figure to be summoned by Odysseus in the Underworld, whom he must consult in order to learn all the details and obligations of his homeward journey (10.490–95; 11.90–99; 23.322–23). Teirēsias also tells Odysseus what he must do to placate his angry nemesis, Poseidōn (11.100–149; 23.248–53, 269–84). The audience of the *Odyssey* was clearly assumed to know the principal facts of Teirēsias' extraordinary—and extraordinarily lengthy—life: in particular how he acquired his prophetic expertise, and how he came to be blinded. Apparently, when out walking on Mount Kyllēnē in Arkadia, he had attacked two copulating snakes with his stick and found himself turned (by an angry Hērē) into a woman. Some years later, he met these snakes again and the sex change was reversed. Because of this experience, Zeus and Hērē invited him to arbitrate their dispute: did men or women get greater pleasure from sex? Definitely women, Teirēsias said: at which (to the modern reader's surprise) it was the furious Hērē who blinded him, and Zeus who compensated for this by granting him the gift of prophecy (see Gantz, 528–30).

TĒLEMACHOS The only son of Odysseus and Penelopē (for the one-son pattern in the family, see Tēlemachos' own account, 16.113–20, though of course in his case Odysseus' absence at Troy was primarily responsible). He plays a major, and necessarily bildungsroman-style, part in the *Odyssey,* "with the narrative showing his development from a timid and unenterprising youth, quite unable to restrain the unruly suitors, to a self-reliant and resourceful young man who helps his father to kill them" (*OCD*[4], 1436). In the process, aided by a sometimes impatient (1.252–55, 2.274–76) Athēnē, he occasionally overdoes his mood swings (e.g., in his behavior to his mother, 1.346–59, 17.46–56), at least once (17.48) with a detectable distaste for the effects of prolonged mourning—her unwashed person and dirty, unlaundered clothes. He finally proves he is his father's son in the bow test (21.120–30): he sets up the axes correctly despite "having never seen them before," and at his fourth attempt (stopped by a warning sign from Odysseus), he is on the point of stringing the great bow.

TEMÉSĒ On the Tyrrhenian coast of S. Italy, at the mouth of the Sabutus River (*BA,* 46, D 3): a well-known source of copper, in search of which H. has the Taphians (q.v.) put in there (1.184).

TENEDOS A small Aegean island off the coast of the Troad (*BA, 57, E 2*), mentioned by Nestōr (3.159) as where some homeward-bound Greeks stopped off to sacrifice, but better known both as where Philoktētēs (q.v.) got his wound and where, after feigning to sail for home, the Greek fleet anchored until those who had penetrated Troy with the Wooden Horse signaled it to return and attack (*Cypr.,* arg. 9; *LI,* arg. 5; *SI,* arg. 2; West 2003, 76–77, 122–25, 144–45) .

THĒBĒ/-AI (THEBES), THĒBAN: With a single exception (4.126), emphasizing its wealth, H. does not mention Egyptian Thēbē (modern Luxor) in the *Odyssey:* all references are to the seven-gated (11.263) Greek city of Boiōtia (*BA,* 55, E 4) in the plain north of the Asōpos River and the mountain ranges of Kithairōn and Parnēs

that separate Boiōtia from Attika. For H. it was Amphiōn and Zēthos (qq.v.) who founded the city (11.262–65); though Kadmeians are mentioned by H. (e.g., at *Il.* 5.804 and 10.288; *Od.* 11.276), and the ancient citadel was known as the Kadmeia, Kadmos himself is mentioned only as the father of Īnō (5.333). And though H. is familiar with the rich Thēban cycle of myth, from Amphiaraös (15.244–47) to Oedipus (11.271–80), "Thēban" in the *Odyssey* occurs almost exclusively as a formulaic title of Teirēsias.

THEMIS As a concept, the notion of proper and sanctioned conduct; when personified (as always for H.) a minor goddess representative of such conduct, and responsible in particular for the convening and dissolving of divine assemblies. As such she is invoked by Tēlemachos (2.68) in the *Odyssey*'s sole reference to her.

THEOKLYMENOS An Argive prophet, son and descendant of seers, including Melampous (q.v.), who is given protection by Tēlemachos when on the run after killing a man, and, while a guest on Ithákē, makes a series of correct interpretations and predictions about Odysseus: that Tēlemachos' line will continue to rule (15.525–38); that Odysseus is already in the neighborhood and planning his revenge on the suitors (17.151–61); and that the suitors will all be slaughtered (20.345–57), this last accompanied by a vision of blood-bedabbled walls and an outburst of wild hysteria among the suitors themselves, and reminiscent (so, rightly, Watson, *HE,* 3: 865) of Hēlios' dead cattle lowing while being spit-roasted and their skinned hides crawling (12.394–96).

THĒSEUS Legendary son of Aigeus, king of Athens, by Aithra, he traditionally grew up in Troezēn, on the Argolid peninsula, and came to Athens as a young man. After a series of adventures (including the killing of the Minotaur in the Krētan Labyrinth, and his subsequent escape with the aid of Ariadnē), he became king, on a somewhat dubious claim. No matter: he "came to embody many of the qualities Athenians thought important about their city" (*OCD*[4], 1464). As a result most of the few references to him in the Homeric poems (including the two in the *Odyssey,* 11.321–25, 630–31) have been questioned since antiquity, generally as Peisistratid insertions.

THESPRŌTIA, -ANS A somewhat indeterminate mountainous region of NW Greece, roughly coterminous with historical SW Ēpiros (*BA,* 54, B–C 2–3), but for H. always including Dōdōnē (q.v., *BA,* 54, C 3), Zeus' famous oak-tree Oracle of the Dead, alleged destination of Odysseus in a fictitious cover story told both to Eumaios (14.314–59) and to Penelopē (19.269–99), and the chief reason for mentioning the Thesprōtians at all.

THETIS A more than usually privileged sea nymph, daughter of Nēreus (q.v.), married to, but mostly separate from, a mortal, Pēleus, and by him the mother of Achillēs. As Thetis well knows (*Il.* 18.88–96), her son's death is fated to follow close upon that of Hektōr. It is not until the very end of the *Odyssey,* in Hadēs (24.35–94), that we finally get closure, when the shade of Agamemnōn recounts Achillēs' funeral, with Thetis, silver-footed and immortal, leading Muses and

Nēreïds in the dirges, providing elegant prizes (including Achillēs' armor) for the funeral games, and finally committing her son's ashes, mingled with those of Patroklos, to a golden urn (*larnax*).

THRACE The region dividing the SW corner of the Black Sea from the Propontis, narrowing eastward to form the western shore of the Bosporos, the channel dividing Europe from Asia (*BA,* 53, A–D 1–2). From H.'s time onward the often red-headed tribal inhabitants had a reputation for warlike primitivism and deep drinking: that Arēs should find comfort there (8.361) after the public embarrassment caused by the exposure of his affair with Aphrodītē is understandable.

THRINAKIĒ The island where Hēlios, the sun god, keeps and pastures his cattle. Despite the warnings of both Kirkē and Teirēsias not on any account to slaughter them for food, Odysseus' crew are driven by exhaustion (and encouraged by Eurylochos) to land on the island (12.279–93), and then kept there by contrary gales and bad weather till long after their food supplies are exhausted, when (again backed by Eurylochos) they kill and roast the cattle (12.327–65), with the inevitable consequences. The island is seemingly uninhabited (12.351), yet nymphs, daughters of Hēlios, and their dancing floors, are mentioned (12.131–33, 317–19), though never encountered. In antiquity the name of the island was often confused with—and sometimes emended to—Trinakria ("three-cornered"), an alternative name for Sicily, which fitted well with the Hellenistic tendency to locate Odysseus' off-the-map adventures in that part of the Mediterranean.

THYESTĒS Son of Pelōps, brother of Atreus (q.v.) and father (4.517) of Aigisthos (q.v.). How far H. was cognizant of the bitter feud between the brothers is uncertain (see *Il.* 2.104–6).

TITHŌNOS Priam's brother, descended from Zeus (*Il.* 20.215–37). In the *Odyssey* he is remembered only in a formulaic phrase (5.1) as the bedfellow of the Dawn (Eōs), who leaves him at daybreak.

TITYOS A giant son of Gaia (Earth). One of the famous sinners whom Odysseus observed as a shade in the Underworld (11.576–81), having his liver torn by vultures in punishment for his rape of Lētō. He is also mentioned (7.320–24) as living in Euboia and being visited by Rhadamanthys.

TROJANS, TROY Often mentioned in the *Odyssey,* but only in recollection, as the city that was the center of the Trojan War, and its inhabitants, particularly, the men who fought to defend it.

TYDEUS The short, fierce (*Il.* 5.801) father of Diomēdēs (q.v.): in the *Odyssey* mentioned only in a formulaic phrase (3.167, 181; 4.280) establishing Diomēdēs as his son.

TYNDAREUS King of Sparta, and the husband of Lēdē (q.v.). By her he is, for H., the father of Kastor and Polydeukēs (11.298–99) and Klytaimnēstra (24.199), though Helen's paternity is attributed to Zeus (4.184 and elsewhere).

TYRŌ The first of the famous heroines of old whose shade Odysseus sees in the Underworld, and about whom, unusually, he then reports much of what we know of her (11.235–59), not least how she was in love with the river god Enipeus, whose

likeness Poseidōn assumed, coupled with her, and begot both Nēleus (q.v.) and Pelias.

UNDERWORLD At the allocation by lot of the Olympian universe after the fall of Kronos, of his eligible sons, Zeus, was given the heavens, Poseidōn (who reports the occasion, *Il.* 15.185–93) the sea, and Hadēs (q.v.) the eponymous realm, or house, or place, that bears his name, while all three shared Earth and Olympos. It is important, however, to distinguish the Underworld as a whole from the ill-defined domain over which Hadēs ruled. When Odysseus visits the Underworld to consult Teirēsias, he never in fact reaches Hadēs: the ghosts come up out of Erebos (q.v., 11.36–37) to drink the blood he has ready for them. It is this procession that includes all the old-time heroines that he describes (11.235–332). It is by the blood trench, too—when Persephonē has dispersed the women (11.385–86)—that he meets, and talks to, the shades of Agamemnōn, Achillēs (who incidentally reveals the presence of fields of asphodel, 11.338–40), Aias, and other dead fellow combatants from Troy (11.386–567). But there follows a sequence of famous shades (568–635)—Minōs, Oriōn, Hēraklēs, and, in particular, the three famous sinners, Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos—whose location Odysseus does not mention, but whom it is patently impossible to visualize at the trench. Minōs, indeed, he reports as sitting in judgment actually in Hadēs (11.571); Oriōn is herding game across the asphodel meadows (11.572–75); Tityos is spread out over nine acres being tormented (11.576–81); Tantalos is up to his chin in a pool surrounded by fruit trees (11.582–92); Sisyphos is rolling a monstrous boulder uphill (11.593–600). Only Hēraklēs is just imaginable as parading with his bow at the ready by the trench (11.601–27). Odysseus, of course, is under no compulsion to explain his movements. Either we have to assume a quick tour of a wide and ill-defined park-like region, or else conclude that, once again, H.—well aware of the uncertainty of the Underworld's topography—has made Odysseus succumb to the temptation to add a few traditional items to his narrative to increase the entertainment of his all-too-willing audience.

WOODEN HORSE The famous episode of the Wooden Horse—created by an Achaian, Epeios (11.523–24) in the tenth year of the war, filled with chosen warriors, and left behind for the Trojans to consider while the main Greek expeditionary force hides out at the nearby island of Tenedos—goes back to earliest times, both iconically and in literature. Yet though it is the ruse that finally brings about the defeat and sack of Troy, there is not a word about it in the *Iliad*. On the other hand, it is several times referred to in the *Odyssey*. Menelaös mischievously reminds his wife of how she tried, by imitating the voices of their wives, to make the warriors she was sure were hidden inside betray their presence by crying out (4.271–89). Odysseus, who commands those in the Horse (8.492–515; 11.524–25) recalls how cool the young Neoptolemos was inside it (11.523–32). It is an integral part of the Trojan epic.

ZÁKYNTHOS The southernmost of the main Ionian islands (*BA,* 54, A 5 inset), in the *Odyssey* grouped in a formulaic phrase with Doulichion and Samē (1.246,

9.24, 16.123, 19.131). Unlike theirs, its identification—as modern Zante—is reasonably secure.

ZĒTHOS Amphiōn (q.v.) and Zēthos.

ZEUS The criticisms of the Iliadic gods by Xenophanēs and others (see s.v. Olympos, Olympians) had clearly had an effect by the time the *Odyssey* in its present form was composed. The rampant spite and petty quarrelsomeness have been replaced by an emergent divine concord and sense of general moral awareness. Zeus' opening speech complaining that men make the gods responsible for things for which they only have themselves to blame (1.32–43)—while introducing a theme, the crime of Aigisthos, that will recur throughout the poem—is also a kind of answer to the critics. At the same time, though Zeus does not enjoy the prominence in the *Odyssey* that he did in the *Iliad,* he is still very much the original all-powerful Indo-European divine patriarch, who, as Strauss Clay's percipient survey reminds us (*HE,* 3: 952–54), "is equally crucial to the development of the plot." All major decisions are referred to him: he approves Athēnē's petition on behalf of Odysseus (1.63–79) but balances this, diplomatically, against satisfying the consequent complaints by Poseidōn (still a fiercely Iliadic deity) about his diminished honor (13.128–64). It is Zeus who dispatches Hermēs to tell Kalypsō to release Odysseus (5.28–42), who grants Hēlios permission to destroy the crew members that have killed and eaten his cattle (12.375–88), who sends warning portents (e.g., thunder in a clear sky, 20.114) to the heedless suitors, and who brings the final fighting to an abrupt conclusion (24.539–40) by delivering a well-aimed thunderbolt smack in front of his not strictly obedient daughter Athēnē, who promptly takes the hint. There is, after all, a sizable Iliadic streak still left in this lord of gods and men.

Select Bibliography

NOTE: Basic texts apart, these titles, mostly in English, are chosen for beginners, the especially useful ones being marked with a star (*), and their bibliographies leading to further reading; but a few advanced studies of particular value are also included, and identified by a dagger (†).

Albinus, L. *The House of Hades: Studies in Ancient Greek Eschatology.* Aarus, Denmark, 2000.

Allen, T. W., ed. *Homeri Opera.* 2nd ed. Oxford Classical Texts, vol. 3: *Odyssey Bks 1–12* (Oxford, 1917); vol. 4: *Odyssey Bks 13–24* (Oxford, 1919).

Austin, N. *Archery at the Dark of the Moon.* Berkeley, CA, 1975.

———. "Nausikaa and the Word that Must Not be Spoken: A Reading of Homer's *Odyssey,* Book Six." *Arion* (3rd ser.) 25.1 (2017): 5–36.

*Barker, E., and J. Christensen. *Homer: A Beginner's Guide.* London, 2013.

Bittlestone, R., with J. Diggle and J. Underhill. *Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca.* Cambridge, 2005.

Brain, Peter, and D. D. Skinner. "Odysseus and the Axes: Homeric Ballistics Reconstructed." *Greece & Rome* 25, no. 1 (April 1978): 55–48.

Burgess, J. S. *The Death and Afterlife of Achilles.* Baltimore, MD, 2009.

Carpenter, R. *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics.* Berkeley, CA, 1946.

Casson, L. *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World.* Princeton, NJ, 1971.

*Clay, J. S. *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the* Odyssey. Princeton, NJ, 1983. 2nd ed., 1997.

Cook, A, trans. and ed. *Homer: The Odyssey: A New Verse Translation; Backgrounds; The Odyssey in Antiquity; Criticism.* New York, 1974.

Cunliffe, R. J. *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect.* London, 1924.

Dalby, A. *Rediscovering Homer: Inside the Origins of the Epic.* New York, 2006.

Dimock, George E. See below under Murray, A. T.

Dodds, E. R. *The Greeks and the Irrational.* Berkeley, CA, 1951.

*Finkelberg, M., ed. *The Homer Encyclopedia.* 3 vols. Oxford, 2011.

Finley, M. I. *The World of Odysseus.* 2nd rev. ed. Harmondsworth, England, 1979.

Foley, J. M., ed. *A Companion to Ancient Epic.* Oxford, 2005.

Fowler, R., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Homer.* Cambridge, 2004.

Frazer, J. G. *Apollodorus: The Library.* 2 vols. Cambridge, MA, 1921.
*Gantz, T. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources.* Baltimore, MD, 1993.
Green, P. M. *From Ikaria to the Stars: Classical Mythification, Ancient and Modern.* Austin, TX, 2004.
———, trans. *Apollonios Rhodios: The Argonautika.* Berkeley, CA, 2007.
———, trans. *Homer: The Iliad.* Berkeley, CA, 2015.
*Griffin, J. *Homer on Life and Death.* Oxford, 1980.
———. *Homer: The Odyssey.* Cambridge, 1987.
Guthrie, W. K. C. *The Greeks and Their Gods.* London, 1950.
Heath, J. T"elemachus ΠΕΠΥΜΕΝΟΣ: Growing into an Epithet." *Mnemosyne,* 4th ser., 54 (April 2001): 129–57.
Heath, M., trans. and ed. *Aristotle: Poetics.* Harmondsworth, England, 1996.
Heubeck, A., S. West, J. B. Hainsworth, et al., eds. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey.* Vol. 1: *Introduction and Books i–viii.* Oxford, 1988.
Heubeck, A., and A. Hoekstra, eds. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey.* Vol. 2: *Books ix–xvi.* Oxford, 1989. For vol. 3, see Russo et al., below.
Hughes, B. *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore.* New York, 2005.
Johnston, S. I. *The Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece.* Berkeley, CA, 1999.
Jong, I. J. F. de. *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey.* Cambridge, 2001.
Kahane, A. *Homer: A Guide for the Perplexed.* London, 2012.
*Latacz, J. *Homer: His Art and His World.* Trans. J. P. Holoka. Ann Arbor, MI, 1998.
Leaf, W., ed. *Homer: The Iliad.* 1886–88. 2nd ed. 2 vols. London, 1900–1902.
Lattimore, R., trans. *The Odyssey of Homer.* New York, 1965.
Lloyd-Jones, H. *The Justice of Zeus.* Berkeley, CA, 1971. Rev. ed., 1983.
Long, A. A. "Morals and Values in Homer." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 90 (1970): 121–39.
Lord, A. B. *The Singer of Tales.* Cambridge, MA, 1960.
Malkin, I. *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity.* Berkeley, CA, 1998.
Mendelsohn, D. *An Odyssey: A Father, a Son, and an Epic.* New York, 2017.
Marincola, J. "Odysseus and the Historians." *Syllecta Classica* 18 (2007): 1–79.
Monro, D. B. *Homer's Odyssey: Books XIII–XXIV.* Oxford, 1901.
Most, G. W., trans. and ed. *Hesiod.* 2 vols. Vol. 1: *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia.* Vol. 2: *The Shield, Catalogue of Women, Other Fragments.* Cambridge, MA, 2006–7.
*Murray, A. T., trans. and ed. *Homer: Odyssey.* 1919. 2 vols. 2nd ed., rev. George E. Dimock. Cambridge, MA, 1995.
———, trans. and ed. *Homer: Iliad.* 1924. 2 vols. 2nd ed., rev. William F. Wyatt. Cambridge, MA, 1999.
Murray, G. *The Rise of the Greek Epic.* 4th ed. Oxford, 1934.
Nagy, G. *Homer's Text and Language.* Urbana, IL, 2004.
Olson S. D. *Blood and Iron: Stories and Storytelling in Homer's Odyssey.* Leiden, 1995.

*†Onians, R. B. *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate.* 1951. 2nd ed. Cambridge, 1954.
Osborne, R. *Greece in the Making: 1200–479 BC.* London, 1996.
The Oxford Classical Dictionary. 4th ed. rev. Ed. S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow. Oxford, 2012.
Page, D. L. *The Homeric Odyssey.* Oxford, 1955.
Parke H. W. *The Oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia, Ammon.* Oxford, 1967.
Parry, A. A. *Blameless Aegisthus: A Study of* Amymon *and Other Homeric Epithets.* Leiden, 1973.
Parry, A. M., ed. *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry.* Oxford, 1971.
*Powell, B. B. *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet.* Cambridge, 1991.
Raaflaub, K. A., and H. van Wees, eds. *A Companion to Archaic Greece.* Oxford, 2009.
Radice, W., and B. Reynolds, eds. *The Translator's Art: Essays in Honor of Betty Radice.* Harmondsworth, England, 1987.
Romm, J. S. *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction.* Princeton, NJ, 1992.
Russo, J., M. Fernández-Galiano, and A. Heubeck, eds. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey.* Vol. 3: *Books.* Oxford, 1992. For vols. 1 and 2, see Heubeck et al., above.
Scott, W. C. *The Artistry of the Homeric Simile.* Hanover, NH, 2009.
Seferis, G. *Collected Poems, 1924–1955.* Ed. and trans., with introd. by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Supplemented edition. Princeton, NJ, 1969.
Stanford, W. B. *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero.* Oxford, 1954.
———, ed. *The Odyssey of Homer.* 2 vols. 2nd ed. London, 1958. Reprint with additions and corrections, 1971.
Steiner, G., ed. *Homer in English.* Harmondsworth, England, 1996.
Thornton, A. *People and Themes in Homer's Odyssey.* London, 1970.
*Vermeule, E. *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry.* Berkeley, CA, 1979.
Vivante, P. *The Epithets in Homer: A Study in Poetic Values.* New Haven, CT, 1982.
*†West, M. L. *Greek Epic Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC.* Cambridge, MA, 2003.
———. "Towards a Chronology of Early Greek Epic." In *Relative Chronology of Greek Epic Poetry,* ed. Ø. Andersen and D. Haug. Cambridge, 2011.
†———. *The Epic Cycle: A Commentary on the Lost Troy Epics.* Oxford, 2013.
*———. *The Making of the Odyssey.* Oxford, 2014.
*Whitman, C. H. *Homer and the Heroic Tradition.* Cambridge, MA, 1958.
Wolf, F. A. *Prolegomena to Homer.* 1795. Translated with introduction and notes by A. Grafton, G. W. Most, and J. E. G. Zetzel. Princeton, NJ, 1985.
*Woodhouse, W. J. *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey.* Oxford, 1930; repr., 1969.
Yamagata, N. *Homeric Morality.* Leiden, 1994.

Index

NOTE

Some major entries consist of two sections: the first of events in order of occurrence, the second an alphabetically ordered selection of topics.

LOCATOR FORMATS AND SEQUENCE

Map: lowercase small roman numerals, e.g., xii*map*

Introduction: italic typeface

Translation: plain typeface in book/line format, e.g., 1.111

Synopsis: italic typeface

Glossary: bold typeface