

The Epic of Gilgamesh: Introduction

The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian

Translated with an introduction by ANDREW GEORGE



Introduction [Excerpts]

Ever since the first modern translations were published more than one hundred years ago, the Gilgamesh epic has been recognized as one of the great masterpieces of world literature. One of the early translations, by the German Assyriologist Arthur Ungnad, so inspired the poet Rainer Maria Rilke in 1916 that he became almost intoxicated with pleasure and wonder, and repeated the story to all he met. ‘Gilgamesh,’ he declared, ‘is stupendous!’ For him the epic was first and foremost ‘das Epos der Todesfurcht’, the epic about the fear of death. This universal theme does indeed unite the poem, for in examining the human longing for life eternal, it tells of one man’s heroic struggle against death—first for immortal renown through glorious deeds, then for eternal life itself; of his despair when confronted with inevitable failure, and of his eventual realization that the only immortality he may expect is the enduring name afforded by leaving behind some lasting achievement.

The fear of death may be one of the epic’s principal themes but the poem deals with so much more. As a story of one man’s ‘path to wisdom’, of how he is formed by his successes and failures, it offers many profound insights into the human condition, into life and death and the truths that touch us all. The subject that most held the attention of the royal courts of Babylonia and Assyria was perhaps another topic that underlies much of the poem: the debate on the proper duties of kingship, what a good king should do and should not do. The epic’s didactic side is also evident in the exposition of a man’s responsibilities to his family. The eternal conflict of nurture and nature—articulated as the benefits of civilization over savagery—is also examined, as too are the rewards of friendship, the nobility of heroic enterprise and the immortality of fame. Artfully woven into Gilgamesh’s own story are the traditional tale of the Deluge, the great flood by which early in human history the gods sought to

destroy mankind, and a long description of the gloomy realm of the dead. From all this Gilgamesh emerges as a kind of cultural hero. The wisdom he received at the ends of the earth from the survivor of the Deluge, Utnapishti, enabled him to restore the temples of the land and their rituals to their ideal state of antediluvian perfection. In the course of his heroic adventures it seems Gilgamesh was the first to dig oases in the desert, the first to fell cedars on Mount Lebanon, the first to discover the techniques of killing wild bulls, of sailing ocean-going craft and of diving for coral.

Amid the momentous themes, the epic is full of absorbing moments, often just minor, incidental details which serve every so often to catch the imagination or to lighten the mood. The text explains in passing why temples take in orphans, how there came to be two New Year's Days in the Babylonian calendar, how the Levantine Rift Valley was riven, how dwarfs came about, why nomads live in tents, why some prostitutes eke out a living on the cruel fringes of society and others enjoy a life of attentive luxury, how it is that doves and swallows cleave to human company but ravens do not, why snakes shed their skins, and so on.

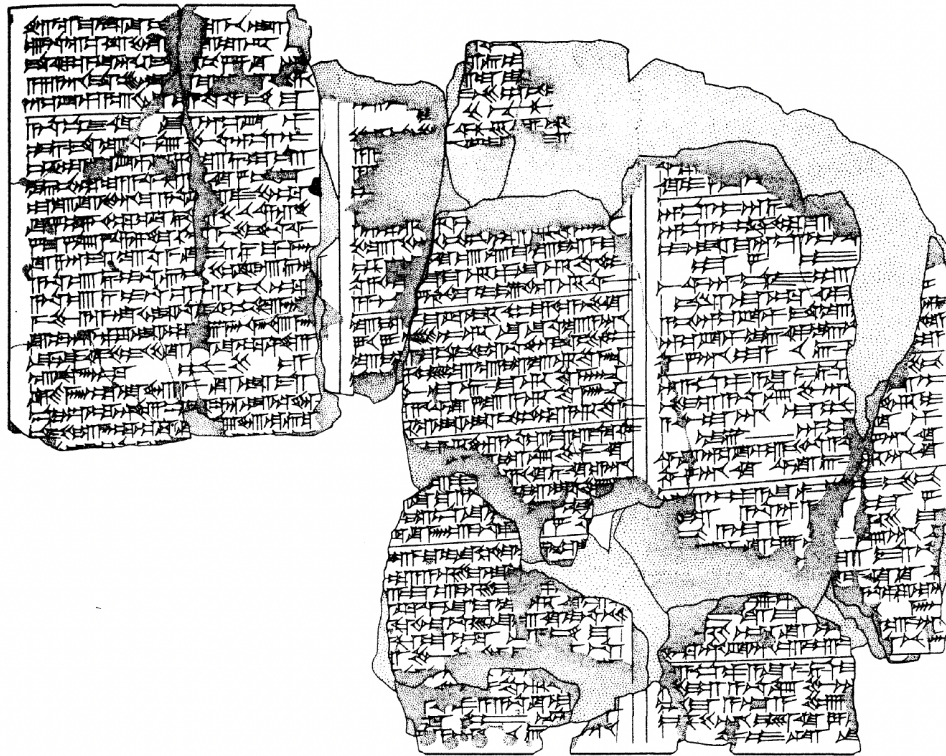
The spell of Gilgamesh has captured many since Rilke, so that over the years the story has been variously reworked into plays, novels and at least two operas. Translations have now appeared in at least sixteen languages and more appear year by year, so that the last decade has added ten to the dozens already published. Among the ten are two in English. Why so many, and why another? There are two replies that answer both these questions. First, a great masterpiece will always attract new renditions and will go on doing so while its worth is still recognized. This goes for Homer and Euripides, Virgil and Horace, Voltaire and Goethe—indeed any classic text, ancient or modern—as well as for Gilgamesh. But the difference with Gilgamesh, as also with the other works of ancient Mesopotamian literature, is that we keep finding more of it. Seventy years ago we possessed fewer than forty manuscripts from which to reconstruct the text and there were large gaps in the story. Now we have more than twice that number of manuscripts and fewer gaps. As the years pass the number of available sources will assuredly go on rising. Slowly our knowledge of the text will become better and better, so that one day the epic will again be complete, as it last was more than two thousand years ago. Sooner or later, as new manuscripts are discovered, this translation, like all others, will be superseded. For the moment, based as it is on first-hand study of very nearly all the available sources, unpublished as well as published, the present rendering offers the epic in its most complete form yet. However, gaps still remain and many preserved lines are still fragmentary; the epic is indeed riddled with holes. In many places the reader must set aside any comparison with the more complete masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature and accept those parts of text that are still incomplete and incoherent as skeletal remains that one day will live again.

The manuscripts of Gilgamesh are cuneiform tablets—smooth, cushion-shaped rectangles of clay inscribed on both sides with wedged-shaped cuneiform writing—and they come from the ancient cities of Mesopotamia, the Levant and Anatolia. Especially in the land that is now Iraq, there are few ancient sites that have not yielded clay tablets. Cuneiform writing was invented in the city-states of lower Mesopotamia in about 3000 BCE, when the administration of the great urban institutions, the palace and the temple, became too complex for the human memory to cope with. It developed, with painful slowness, from an accountant's aide-memoire into a system of writing which could express not just simple words and numbers, but all the creativity of the literate mind. And because clay does not easily perish when thrown away or when buried in the ruins of buildings, archaeologists provide us with enormous quantities of clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform characters. These documents range in date across three thousand years of history and in content from the merest chit to the most sophisticated works of science and literature.

Literary compositions that tell the story of Gilgamesh come down to us from several different periods and in several different languages. Some modern renderings disregard the enormous diversity of the material, so that

the reader forms a mistaken impression of the epic's contents and state of preservation. In the translations given in this book the texts are segregated according to time, place and language, allowing the reader to appreciate each body of material for itself.

[...]



1 A damaged masterpiece: the front side of one of the better preserved tablets of the Gilgamesh epic

The setting of the epic

The central setting of the epic is the ancient city-state of Uruk in the land of Sumer. Uruk, the greatest city of its day, was ruled by the tyrannical Gilgamesh, semi-divine by virtue of his mother, the goddess Ninsun, but none the less mortal. He was one of the great figures of legend. His enduring achievement was to rebuild the wall of Uruk on its antediluvian foundations, and his military prowess ended the hegemony of the northern city-state of Kish. He appears as a god in early lists of deities and in the later third millennium he benefited from a cult. Later tradition made it his function, as explained in one of the Sumerian poems, to govern the shades of the dead in the Netherworld. Because we have actual records from kings whom the ancients held to be his contemporaries, it is possible that, as perhaps there was once a real King Arthur, so there was once an actual King Gilgamesh. Certainly the native historical tradition held this to be the case, for Gilgamesh appears in the list of Sumerian kings as the fifth ruler of the First Dynasty of Uruk. He would thus have flourished about 2750 BCE, though some would place him a century or so earlier. His reign, which the list of kings holds to have lasted a mythical 126 years, falls in the shadowy period at the edge of Mesopotamian history, when, as in the Homeric epics, the gods took a personal interest in the affairs of men and often communicated with them directly.

Foremost among the gods was the supreme triad, which comprised the Sky God Anu, remote in his celestial palace, the more important Enlil, who presided over the affairs of gods and men from his temple on earth, and

the clever Ea, who lived in his freshwater ocean beneath the earth (the Ocean Below) and sent the Seven Sages to civilize mankind. Then there were the kindly Mother Goddess, Lady of the Gods, who first created men with Ea's help, the violent Adad, god of the storm, and the Moon God, Sin, the majestic son of Enlil. The Moon's children were Shamash, the Sun God, the patron of travellers and Gilgamesh's special protector, and the Babylonian Venus, the impetuous Ishtar, whose responsibilities were sexual love and war, and whose appetite for both was inexhaustible. Beneath Ea's watery domain, deep in the Netherworld, the gloomy realm of the dead, lived its queen, the bitter Ereshkigal. There she lay prostrate in perpetual mourning, attended by her minister, the gruesome Namtar, and the rest of her fell household.

Men lived in cities and cultivated the land. Where irrigation could not reach, the farmland gave way to rougher country in which shepherds grazed their flocks, ever on the look-out for wolves and lions. And further off still was the 'wild', the empty country prowled by hunters, outlaws and bandits, where legend had it there once roamed a strange wild man whom the gazelles brought up as their own. Enkidu was his name. Several months' journey across this wilderness, over many ranges of mountains, there was a sacred Forest of Cedar, where some said the gods dwelt. It was guarded for the gods by a fearsome ogre, the terrible Humbaba, cloaked for his protection in seven numinous auras, radiant and deadly. Somewhere at the edge of the world, patrolled by monstrous sentries who were half man and half scorpion, were the twin mountains of Mashu where the sun rose and set. Further still, at the other end of the Path of the Sun, was a fabulous Garden of Jewels, and nearby, in a tavern by the great Impassable Ocean that surrounded the earth, lived the mysterious goddess Shiduri, who dispensed wisdom from behind her veils. Across the ocean were the lethal Waters of Death, and beyond them, on a remote island where the rivers Euphrates and Tigris welled up again from the deep, far outside the ken of men and visited only by his ferryman Ur-shanabi, dwelt Uta-napishti the Distant, a primeval king who survived the great Deluge sent by Enlil early in human history and as a consequence was spared the doom of mortals. Many other powers populated the Babylonian cosmos—deities, demons and demigods of legend—but these are the principal characters of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic.

[...]

Dramatis personae

An acute accent marks the vowel of a stressed syllable. Where such a vowel falls in an open syllable it will often be long (e.g., Humbaaba). In some names the position of the stress is conjectural.

Gilgámesh, king of the city-state of Uruk

Nlnsun, a goddess, his mother

Enkídu, his friend and companion

Shámhat, a prostitute of Uruk

Shámash, the Sun God

Humbába, the guardian of the Forest of Cedar

Íshtar, the principal goddess of Uruk

Shidúri, a minor goddess of wisdom

Ur-shanábi, the ferryman of Uta-napishti

Úta-napíshti, survivor of the Flood

A Note on the Translation

The essential unit of poetry in Akkadian is the poetic line or verse, which usually forms a unit of sense complete in itself. There is therefore a pause at the end of each line. The verse is easily identified, for on cuneiform tablets the beginning and end of a verse coincide with the beginning and end of a line on the tablet (though not in Syria and elsewhere in the ancient West). In older poetry a single verse may occupy two or even three lines on the tablet. In the first millennium one verse usually occupies one line, though sometimes two verses are doubled up on to a single line of tablet. Extra-long lines occur occasionally; sometimes these have been arranged as two lines in the translation. (One or other of these points explains those occasions in the translation where the line-count in the margin seems to disagree with the numbers of lines of text.) In *Gilgamesh* the verse is the only poetic unit explicitly identifiable on the ancient manuscripts. However, more complex patterns can be detected. Usually two verses are complementary, parallel or otherwise paired by meaning or by the development of the narrative, and form a distich or couplet. A couplet is followed by a longer pause, more often than not one that in modern punctuation would be marked by a full stop (there was no punctuation in cuneiform writing). In some Babylonian poetry the division into couplets is rigorous. This is generally true of the earlier *Gilgamesh* poems, especially the old version of the epic represented by the Pennsylvania and Yale tablets. In the later, standard version the couplet system is not so strictly applied and one can often detect three-line combinations, or triplets. In the older texts, especially, one may also observe that two couplets usually hold together and that the poetry therefore progresses in a sequence of four-line stanzas, or quatrains.

In contrast with other renderings of the epic, some of which, it is true, do manage to observe the division into couplets, the present translation attempts to highlight the existence of longer poetic units. To this end the second line of a couplet is indented and the stanzas are separated in the conventional modern way, by introducing space between them. Where the stanzas are consistently of two couplets, the division into quatrains is confirmed by the regularity of the poetry. In the standard version of the epic, where the system of couplets was not so consistently applied, the division into stanzas is more arbitrary and the punctuation less secure. As a working hypothesis I have assumed that in the standard version stanzas will normally comprise four lines but may on occasion consist of two, three, five or even six lines. Other translators will have other ideas.

The plot summaries that in this translation introduce each Tablet of the standard version, the line-numbers, the editorial notes which link disconnected fragments of text, and other material in small type are, like the punctuation, modern additions.

Some explanation is needed of the conventions that mark damaged text:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| [<i>Gilgamesh</i>] | Square brackets enclose words that are restored in passages where the tablet is broken. Small breaks can often be restored with certainty from context and longer breaks can sometimes be filled securely from parallel passages. |
| <i>Gilgamesh</i> | Italics are used to indicate insecure decipherments and uncertain renderings of words in the extant text. |
| [<i>Gilgamesh</i>] | Within square brackets, italics signal restorations that are not certain or material that is simply conjectural, i.e. supplied by the translator to fill in the context. |
| ... | An ellipsis marks a small gap that occurs where writing is missing through damage or where the signs are present but cannot be deciphered. Each ellipsis represents up to one quarter of a verse. |

- Where a full line is missing or undeciphered the lacuna is marked by a sequence of four ellipses.
- * * * Where a lacuna of more than one line is not signalled by an editorial note it is marked by a succession of three asterisks.
- *Humbaba In old material that has been interpolated into the standard version of the epic some proper nouns are preceded by an asterisk. This is to signify that for consistency's sake the name in question (e.g. Huwawa) has been altered to its later form.

The Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablet I

Tablet I. The Coming of Enkidu

Prologue and paeon. King Gilgamesh tyrannizes the people of Uruk, who complain to the gods. To divert his superhuman energies the gods create his counterpart, the wild man Enkidu, who is brought up by the animals of the wild. Enkidu is spotted by a trapper, who lures him away from the herd with a prostitute. The prostitute shows him her arts and proposes to take him to Uruk, where Gilgamesh has been seeing him in dreams.

He who saw the Deep, the country's foundation,
[who] knew ... , was wise in all matters!
[Gilgamesh, who] saw the Deep, the country's foundation,
[who] knew ... , was wise in all matters!

[He] ... everywhere ... I 5
and [learnt] of everything the sum of wisdom.
He saw what was secret, discovered what was hidden,
he brought back a tale of before the Deluge.

He came a far road, was weary, found peace,
and set all his labours on a tablet of stone. 10
He built the rampart of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
of holy Eanna, the sacred storehouse.

See its wall like a strand of wool,
view its parapet that none could copy!
Take the stairway of a bygone era, 15
draw near to Eanna, seat of Ishtar the goddess,
that no later king could ever copy!

Climb Uruk's wall and walk back and forth!
Survey its foundations, examine the brickwork!
Were its bricks not fired in an oven? 20
Did the Seven Sages not lay its foundations?

[A square mile is] city, [a square mile] date-grove, a square mile is
clay-pit, half a square mile the temple of Ishtar:
[three square miles] and a half is Uruk's expanse.

[See] the tablet-box of cedar,
[release] its clasp of bronze! 25
[Lift] the lid of its secret,
[pick] up the tablet of lapis lazuli and read out
the travails of Gilgamesh, all that he went through.

Surpassing all other kings, heroic in stature,
brave scion of Uruk, wild bull on the rampage! 30
Going at the fore he was the vanguard,
going at the rear, one his comrades could trust!

A mighty bank, protecting his warriors,
 a violent flood-wave, smashing a stone wall!
 Wild bull of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh, the perfect in strength, 35
 suckling of the august Wild Cow, the goddess Ninsun!

Gilgamesh the tall, magnificent and terrible,
 who opened passes in the mountains,
 who dug wells on the slopes of the uplands,
 and crossed the ocean, the wide sea to the sunrise; 40

who scoured the world ever searching for life,
 and reached through sheer force Uta-napishti the Distant;
 who restored the cult-centres destroyed by the Deluge,
 and set in place for the people the rites of the cosmos.

Who is there can rival his kingly standing, 45
 and say like Gilgamesh, 'It is I am the king'?
 Gilgamesh was his name from the day he was born,
 two-thirds of him god and one third human.

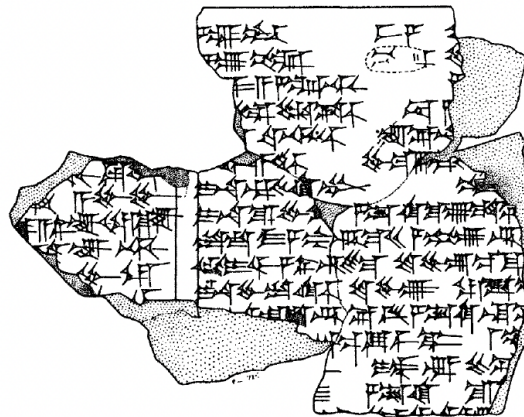
It was the Lady of the Gods drew the form of his figure,
 while his build was perfected by divine Nudimmud. 50

* * *

A triple cubit was his foot, half a rod his leg. 56
 Six cubits was his stride,
 ... cubits the *front part* of his ...

His cheeks were bearded like those of ... ,
 the hair of his head grew thickly [as barley.] 60
When he grew tall his beauty was consummate,
 by earthly standards he was most handsome.

In Uruk -the-Sheepfold he *walks* [*back and forth*,]
 like a wild bull lording it, head held aloft.
 He has no equal when his weapons are brandished, 65
 his companions are kept on their feet by his *contests*.



2 'Like a wild bull lording it, head held aloft'.

The young men of Uruk he harries without warrant,
 Gilgamesh lets no son go free to his father.
 By day and by night his tyranny grows harsher,
 Gilgamesh, *[the guide of the teeming people!]* 70

It is he who is shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 [but Gilgamesh] lets no [daughter go free to her] mother.
[The women voiced] their [troubles to the goddesses,]
[they brought their] complaint before [them:]

‘[Though powerful, pre-eminent,] expert [and mighty,]
 [Gilgamesh] lets [no] girl go free to [her bridegroom.]’ 75
 The warrior’s daughter, the young man’s bride,
 to their complaint the goddesses paid heed.

The gods of heaven, the lords of *initiative*,
[to the god Anu they spoke] ... : 80
 ‘A savage wild bull you have bred in Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 he has no equal when his weapons are brandished.

‘His companions are kept on their feet by his *contests*,
 [the young men of Uruk] he harries without warrant.
 Gilgamesh lets no son go free to his father, 85
 by day and by [night his tyranny grows] harsher.

‘Yet he is the shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 Gilgamesh, *[the guide of the] teeming [people.]*
 Though he is their shepherd and *their [protector,]*
 powerful, pre-eminent, expert [and mighty,] 90
 Gilgamesh lets no girl go free to her *bride[groom.]* ‘

The warrior’s daughter, the young man’s bride:
 to their complaint the god [Anu] paid heed. 93

The stanza which gives Anu’s reaction has been dropped in the late edition of the epic, but by good fortune it is preserved as a short extract from an older version of the text, which was written by a student scribe on an exercise tablet found in the city of Nippur:

‘[Let] them summon [Aruru,] the great one, MB Ni
 [she it was created them,] mankind so numerous:
 [let her create the *equal* of Gilgamesh,] one mighty in strength,
 [and let] him vie [with him,] so Uruk may be rested!’

The text of Tablet I resumes:

They summoned Aruru, the great one:
 ‘You, Aruru, created [mankind:] 95
 now fashion what Anu has thought of!

'Let him be a *match* for the *storm* of his heart,
 let them vie with each other, so Uruk may be rested!'

The goddess Aruru heard these words,
 what Anu had thought of she fashioned within her. 100

The goddess Aruru, she washed her hands,
 took a pinch of clay, threw it down in the wild.
 In the wild she created Enkidu, the hero,
 offspring of silence, knit strong by Ninurta.

All his body is matted with hair, 105
 he bears long tresses like those of a woman:
 the hair of his head grows thickly as barley,
 he knows not a people, nor even a country.

Coated in hair like the god of the animals,
 with the gazelles he grazes on grasses, I 110
joining the throng with the game at the water-hole,
 his heart *delighting* with the beasts in the water.

A hunter, a trapper-man,
 did come upon him by the water-hole.

One day, a second and then a third, 115
 he came upon him by the water-hole.
 When the hunter saw him, his expression froze,
 but he with his herds—he went back to his lair.

[The hunter was] troubled, subdued and silent,
 his mood [*was despondent,*] his features gloomy.

In his heart there was sorrow, 120
 his face resembled [one come from] afar.

The hunter opened [his mouth] to speak, saying [to his father:]
 'My father, there was a man came [*by the water-hole.*]
 Mightiest in the land, strength [he possesses,]
 [his strength] is as mighty [as a rock] from the sky. 125

'Over the hills he [*roams all day,*]
 [always] with the herd [*he grazes on grasses,*]
 [always] his tracks [*are found*] by the water-hole,
 [I am afraid and] I dare not approach him.

'[He fills in the] pits that I [myself] dig, 130
 [he pulls up] the snares that I lay.
 [He sets free from my grasp] all the beasts of the field,
 [he stops] me doing the work of the wild.'

[His father opened his mouth to] speak, saying to the hunter:
 '[My son, *in the city of*] Uruk [*go, seek out*] Gilgamesh! 135
 in his presence,
 his strength is as mighty [as a rock from the sky.]

'Take the road,] set your face [toward Uruk,
 [do not rely on] the strength of a man!
 [Go, my son, and] fetch [Shamhat the harlot,] 140
 [her allure is a match] for even the mighty!

'When the herd comes] down [to] the water-hole,
 [she should strip off] her [raiment to reveal] her charms.
 [He will] see her, and will approach her,
 his herd will spurn him, [though he grew up] amongst it.' 145

[Paying heed] to the advice of his father,
 the hunter went off, [set out on the journey.]
 He took the road, set [his face] toward Uruk,
 before Gilgamesh the king [he spoke these words:]

'There was a man [came by the water-hole,] 150
 mightiest in the land, strength [he possesses,]
 [his strength] is as mighty as a rock from the sky.

'Over the hills he roams all [day,]
 always with the herd [he grazes on grasses,]
 always his tracks [are found] by the water-[hole,] 155
 I am afraid and I dare not approach [him.]

'He fills in the pits that I [myself] dig,
 he pulls up the snares [that I lay.]
 He sets free from my grasp all the beasts of the field,
 he stops me doing the work of the wild.' 160

Said Gilgamesh to him, to the hunter:
 'Go, hunter, take with you Shamhat the harlot!

'When the herd comes down to the water-hole,
 she should strip off her raiment to reveal her charms.
 He will see her, and will approach her, 165
 his herd will spurn him, though he grew up amongst it.'

Off went the hunter, taking Shamhat the harlot,
 they set out on the road, they started the journey.
 On the third day they came to their destination,
 hunter and harlot sat down there to wait. 170

One day and a second they waited by the water-hole,
 then the herd came down to drink the water.
 The game arrived, their hearts *delighting in* water,
 and Enkidu also, born in the uplands.

With the gazelles he grazed on grasses, 175
 joining the throng with the game at the water-hole,
 his heart *delighting* with the beasts in the water:
 then Shamhat saw him, the child of nature,
 the savage man from the midst of the wild.

'This is he, Shamhat! Uncradle your bosom,
 bare your sex, let him take in your charms!
 Do not recoil, but take in his scent:
 he will see you, and will approach you. 180

'Spread your clothing so he may lie on you,
 do for the man the work of a woman!
 Let his passion caress and embrace you,
 his herd will spurn him, though he grew up amongst it.' 185

Shamhat unfastened the cloth of her loins,
 she bared her sex and he took in her charms.
 She did not recoil, she took in his scent:
 she spread her clothing and he lay upon her. 190

She did for the man the work of a woman,
 his passion caressed and embraced her.
 For six days and seven nights
 Enkidu was erect, as he coupled with Shamhat.

When with her delights he was fully sated,
 he turned his gaze to his herd. 195
 The gazelles saw Enkidu, they started to run,
 the beasts of the field shied away from his presence.

Enkidu had defiled his body so pure,
 his legs stood still, though his herd was in motion. 200
 Enkidu was weakened, could not run as before,
 but now he had *reason*, and wide understanding.

He came back and sat at the feet of the harlot,
 watching the harlot, observing her features.
 Then to the harlot's words he listened intently,
 [as Shamhat] talked to him, to Enkidu: 205

'You are handsome, Enkidu, you are just like a god!
 Why with the beasts do you wander the wild?
 Come, I will take you to Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 to the sacred temple, home of Anu and Ishtar, 210

'where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength,
 like a wild bull lording it over the menfolk.'
 So she spoke to him and her word found favour,
 he knew by instinct, he should seek a friend.

Said Enkidu to her, to the harlot: 215
 'Come, Shamhat, take me along
 to the sacred temple, holy home of Anu and Ishtar,
 where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength,
 like a wild bull lording it over the menfolk.

'I will challenge him, for [*my strength*] is mighty, 220
 I will vaunt myself in Uruk, saying "I am the mightiest!"
[*There*] I shall change the way things are ordered:
 [one] born in the wild is mighty, strength he possesses.'

Shamhat:

'Let [*the people*] see your face,
 that exists I know indeed. 225
Go, Enkidu, to Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 where young men are girt with waistbands!

'Every day [*in Uruk*] there is a festival,
 the drums there rap out the beat.
And there are harlots, most comely of figure, 230
 graced with charm and full of delights.

'Even the aged they rouse from their beds!
 o Enkidu, [as yet so] ignorant of life,
I will show you Gilgamesh, a man happy and carefree,
 look at him, regard his features! 235

'He is fair in manhood, dignified in bearing,
 graced with charm is his whole person.
He has a strength more mighty than yours,
 unsleeping he is by day and by night.

'O Enkidu, cast aside your sinful thoughts! 240
 Gilgamesh it is whom divine Shamash loves.
The gods Anu, Enlil and Ea have broadened his wisdom.

'Before you even came from the uplands,
 Gilgamesh in Uruk was seeing you in dreams:
Gilgamesh rose to relate a dream, saying to his mother: 245
 "O mother, this is the dream I had in the night—

 " "The stars of the heavens appeared above me,
 like a rock from the sky one fell down before me.
I lifted it up, but it weighed too much for me,
 I tried to roll it, but I could not dislodge it. 250

 " "The land of Uruk was standing around it,
 [the land was gathered] about it.
A crowd [*was milling about*] before it,
 [the menfolk were] thronging around it.

 " "[Like a babe-in]-arms they were kissing its feet, 255
 like a wife [I loved it,] caressed and embraced it.
[I lifted it up,] set it down at your feet,
 [and you, O mother, you] made it my equal."

'The mother of Gilgamesh] was clever and wise,
 well versed in everything, she said to her son—
 [Wild-Cow] Ninsun was clever and wise, 260
 well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:

' "The stars of heaven [appeared] above you,
 [like a] rock from the sky one fell down before you.
 You lifted it up, but it weighed too much for you,
 you tried to roll it, but you could not dislodge it.

' "You lifted it up, set it down at my feet, 265
 and I, Ninsun, I made it your equal.
 Like a wife you loved it, caressed and embraced it:
 a mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend's saviour.

' "Mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
 his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky. 270
 Like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him,
 he will be mighty, and often will save you."

'Having had a second dream,
 he rose and entered before the goddess, his mother.
 Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother, 275
 ~'Once more, O mother, have I had a dream -

' "[In a street] of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
 an axe was lying with a crowd gathered round.
 The land [of Uruk] was standing around it,
 [the country was] gathered about it. 280

' "A crowd *was milling about* before it,
 [the menfolk were] thronging around it.
 I lifted it up and set it down at your feet,
 like a wife [I loved] it, caressed and embraced it,
 [and you, O mother,] you made it my equal." 285

'The mother of Gilgamesh was clever and wise,
 well versed in everything, she said to her son—
 Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever and wise,
 well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:

' "My son, the axe you saw is a friend,
 like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him,
 and I, Ninsun, I shall make him your equal. 290
 A mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend's saviour,
 mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
 his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky."

'Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother,
 "May it befall me, O mother, by Counsellor Enlil's command! 295
 Let me acquire a friend to counsel me,
 a friend to counsel me I will acquire!"

‘[So did Gilgamesh] see his dreams.’

[After] Shamhat had told Enkidu the dreams of Gilgamesh,
the two of them together [began making] love.

The Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablet II

Tablet II. The Taming of Enkidu

The prostitute takes Enkidu to a shepherds' camp, where he is instructed in the ways of men and becomes the shepherds' watchman. A passing stranger tells him how in Uruk Gilgamesh exercises droit de seigneur at wedding ceremonies. Enkidu, shocked by this practice, enters Uruk and interrupts the proceedings. Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight until Enkidu accepts Gilgamesh's supremacy, whereupon the pair become firm friends. In search of fame and glory Gilgamesh proposes an expedition to the Forest of Cedar, ignoring Enkidu's warning of the dangers. They kit themselves out with weapons. Gilgamesh announces his plans to the assembly of Uruk. The elders try to dissuade him.

[Enkidu] was sitting before her, ...

II I

A lacuna follows the opening line of Tablet II, and when the text resumes the lines are still not fully recovered. The big Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet (P) supplies a better-preserved account, though one that partly overlaps with Tablet I:

While the two of them together were making love, P 46

he forgot the wild where he was born.

For seven days and seven nights

Enkidu was erect and coupled with) *Shamhat.

P 50

The harlot opened her mouth,

saying to Enkidu:

'As I look at you, Enkidu, you are like a god,

why with the beasts do you wander the wild?

P 55

'Come, I will lead you to Uruk-the-Town-Square,

to the sacred temple, the home of Anu!

Enkidu, arise, let me take you

to the temple Eanna, the home of Anu,

P 60

'where [men] are engaged in labours of skill,

you, too, like a man, will find a place for yourself.'

* * *

Her words he heard, her speech found favour:

P 66

the counsel of a woman struck home in his heart.

She stripped and clothed him in part of her garment,

P 70

the other part she put on herself.

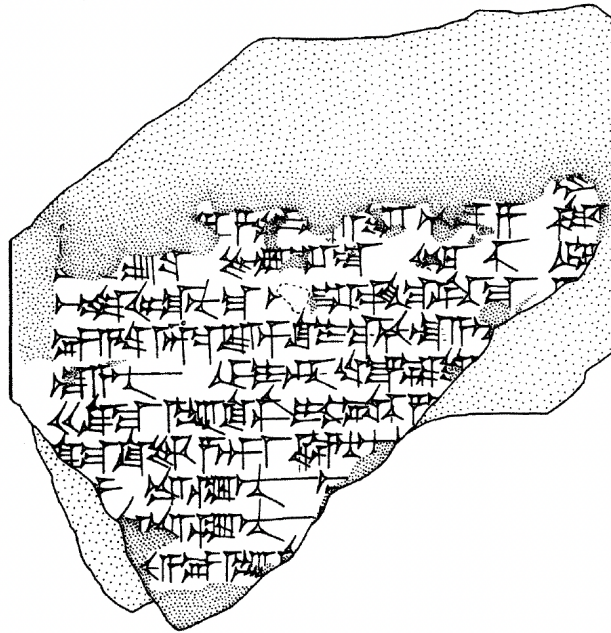
The text of Tablet II resumes:

By the hand she took him, like a god [she led him,
to the shepherds' camp, the site of the sheep-pen.
The band of shepherds was gathered around him,
talking about him among themselves:

II 36

'This fellow—how like in build he is to Gilgamesh,
tall in stature, proud as a battlement.
For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands,
his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.'

40



3 'For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands'.

Bread they set before him,
ale they set before him.
Enkidu ate not the bread, but looked askance.

45

Here Tablet 11 becomes fragmentary again, and the episode is best taken from the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet:

How to eat bread Enkidu knew not,
how to drink ale he had never been shown.

P 90

The harlot opened her mouth,
saying to Enkidu:

P 95

'Eat the bread, Enkidu, essential to life,
drink the ale, the lot of the land!'

Enkidu ate the bread until he was sated,
he drank the ale, a full seven goblets.
His mood became free, he started to sing,
his heart grew merry, his face lit up.

P 100

P 105

The barber groomed his body so hairy,
 anointed with oil he turned into a man.
 He put on a garment, became like a warrior, P 110
 he took up his weapon to do battle with lions.

The text of Tablet 11 resumes again:

[When at night the shepherds lay sleeping,
 [he struck] down wolves, he [chased off lions.] II 60
 Sleeping lay the senior shepherds,
 their shepherd boy Enkidu, a [man wide] awake.
 [A certain] fellow had [*been invited*] to a wedding,
 [to] Uruk-the-Sheepfold [*he was going*] for the [*banquet*.] 64

Here another lacuna intervenes in Tablet 11, which the Old Babylonian tablet again helps to fill:

Enkidu was having his pleasure with *Shamhat. P 135
 He lifted his eyes, caught sight of the man,
 and thus he spoke to the harlot:

*Shamhat, bring the man over: P 140
 why he came here, let me learn his reason.'
 The harlot hailed the man,
 went up to him, spoke to him:

'Where do you hurry to, fellow? P 145
 What is your journey so toilsome?'
 The fellow opened his mouth,
 saying to Enkidu:

'I was invited to a wedding banquet,
 it is the lot of the people to contract a marriage. P 150
 I shall load the ceremonial table
 with tempting foods for the wedding feast.

'For the king of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
 the veil will be parted for the one who picks first; P 155
 for Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
 the veil will be parted for the one who picks first.

'He will couple with the wife-to-be,
 he first of all, the bridegroom after. P 160
 By divine consent it is so ordained:
 when his navel-cord was cut, for him she was destined.'

At the fellow's words his face paled in anger. P 166

* * *

Off goes Enkidu, with *Shamhat following. P 175

He entered the city of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
 and a crowd gathered around.
 He came to a halt in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square, P 180
 all gathered about, the people discussed him:

'In build he is the image of Gilgamesh,
 but shorter in stature, and bigger of bone. P 185
 For [sure it's the one who] was born in the uplands,
 animals' milk is what he was suckled on.'

In Uruk they held regular festivals of sacrifice, P 190
 young men made merry, set up a *champion*:
 for the fellow whose features were fair,
 for Gilgamesh, like a god, was set up a rival. P 195

For the goddess of weddings the bed was laid out,
 Gilgamesh met with the maiden by night.
 Forward came (Enkidu), he stood in the street, P 200
 blocking the path of Gilgamesh.

The text of Tablet 11 becomes legible once more:

The land of Uruk was standing [around him,] II 103
 the land was gathered [about him.]
 A crowd was *milling about* before [him,] 105
 the menfolk were thronging [around him.]

Like a babe-in-arms they were [kissing his feet,]
 already the fellow
 For the goddess of weddings was ready the bed,
 for Gilgamesh, like a god, was set up a substitute. 110

Enkidu with his foot blocked the door of the wedding house,
 not allowing Gilgamesh to enter.
 They seized each other at the door of the wedding house,
 in the street they joined combat, in the Square of the Land.

The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder, 115
 [in the street Gilgamesh and Enkidu joined combat, in the Square of the Land.]
 [The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder.]

Another lacuna intervenes, again partly to be filled by the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet:

Gilgamesh knelt, one foot on the ground,
 his anger subsided, he broke off from the fight. P 230
 After he broke off from the fight,
 said Enkidu to him, to Gilgamesh:

‘As one unique your mother bore you, P 235
the wild cow of the fold, the goddess Ninsun!
High over warriors you are exalted,
to be king of the people Enlil made it your destiny!’ P 240

At this point the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet ends. Its sequel, the Yale tablet (Y), is less well preserved. In the first intelligible episode Enkidu is speaking to Gilgamesh:

‘Why do you desire to do this thing?
... anything ... do you want so much? Y 15
Let me ,
a feat that never was done in the land.’
They kissed each other and formed a friendship.

After another lacuna Tablet 11 resumes with an episode in which Gilgamesh introduces Enkidu to his mother:

‘The mightiest [in the land, strength he possesses.] 162
[His strength is as mighty as a] rock from the sky,
he is tall in [stature, *proud* as a battlement.],
The mother of Gilgamesh [opened her mouth to speak,] 165
sa ying to [her son—]
Wild-Cow Ninsun [opened her mouth to speak,]
[saying to Gilgamesh:]
‘My son, in his gate ,
bitterly you ’ 169

* * *

‘You hold , 172
... in his gate
‘Bitterly he ,
Enkidu possesses no [*kith or kin*.] 175
Shaggy hair hanging loose
he was born in the wild and [*has*] no [*brother*.]’
Standing there, Enkidu heard [what she said,]
and thinking it over, he sat [down *weeping*.]
His eyes brimmed with [tears,] 180
his arms fell limp, [his] strength [*ebbed away*.]
They took hold of each other and ,
they [*linked*] their hands like
Gilgamesh ,
to Enkidu he spoke a word, [saying:] 185

‘Why, my friend, [did your eyes] brim [with tears,
your arms fall limp, [your strength *ebb away*?]’
Said Enkidu to him, [to Gilgamesh:]
‘My friend, my heart is aggrieved ...
‘Through sobbing [my *legs* do] tremble, 190
terror has entered my heart.’

The Old Babylonian Yale tablet fills the gap in the standard version:

Gilgamesh opened his mouth,
saying to Enkidu: Y 90

* * *

‘..... ferocious *Humbaba,
... [let us] slay him, [so *his power*] is no more! Y 97

‘In the Forest of Cedar, [where *Humbaba] dwells,
let us frighten him in his lair!’ Y 100

Enkidu opened his mouth,
saying to Gilgamesh: Y 105

‘I knew him, my friend, in the uplands,
when I roamed here and there with the herd.

For sixty leagues the forest is a wilderness,
who is there would venture inside it?

‘*Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge,
his speech is fire, and his breath is death! Y 110

Why do you desire to do this thing?
An unwinnable battle is *Humbaba’s ambush!’ Y 115

Gilgamesh opened his mouth,
saying to Enkidu:

‘I will climb, my friend, [*the forest’s*] slopes.’ Y 119

The text of Tablet II resumes:

Enkidu [opened his] mouth [to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:] II 216

‘[My friend], how can we [go to the home of Humbaba?]

So to keep safe the cedars,

Enlil made it his lot to terrify men.

‘That is a journey [which must not be made,
[that is a man who must not be looked on.]

He who guards the [Forest of Cedar, his reach is wide,] 220

Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge.

'His speech is fire, his breath is death,
he hears the forest murmur at sixty leagues' distance.
Who is there would venture into his forest?
Adad ranks first, and Humbaba second. 225

'Who is there would oppose him among the Igigi?
So to keep safe the cedars,
Enlil made it his lot to terrify men;
if you penetrate his forest you are seized by the tremors.'
Gilgamesh opened his mouth to speak, 230
saying [to Enkidu:]

'Why, my friend, do you speak like a weakling?
With your spineless words you [make me] despondent.
'As for man, [his days] are numbered,
whatever he may do, it is but wind, 235
... exists not for me

'You were born and grew up [in the wild:]
even lions were afraid of you, [you experienced] all.
Grown men fled away [from your presence,]
your heart is tried and [tested in] combat. 240
'Come, my friend, [let us hie] to the forge!'

A short lacuna follows. It can be filled from the Old Babylonian Yale tablet:

'[Let] them cast [us hatchets] in our presence!' Y 162

They took each other by the hand and hied to the forge,
where the smiths were sitting in consultation.
Great hatchets they cast, Y 165
and axes weighing three talents apiece.

Great daggers they cast:
two talents apiece were the blades,
one half of a talent the crests of their handles,
half a talent apiece the daggers' gold mountings. Y 170
Gilgamesh and Enkidu bore ten talents each.

He bolted the sevenfold gates of Uruk,
he convened [the assembly,] the crowd gathered round .
... in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
Gilgamesh [*seated himself on*] his throne. Y 175

[In the street of Uruk]-the-Town-Square,
[the crowd was] sitting before him.
[Thus Gilgamesh] spoke
[to the elders of Uruk]-the-Town-Square:

‘[Hear me, O elders of Uruk-the-Town]-Square! Y 180
[I would tread the path to ferocious *Humbaba,]
I would see the god of whom men talk,
whose name the lands do constantly repeat.

‘I will conquer him in the Forest of Cedar:
let the land learn Uruk’s offshoot is mighty! Y 185
Let me start out, I will cut down the cedar,
I will establish for ever a name eternal!’

The text of Tablet II resumes:

[Then Gilgamesh spoke] II 258
[to the young men of Uruk-the-Sheepfold:]

‘Hear me, O young men [of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,] 260
O young men of Uruk, who understand [*combat*!]
Bold as I am I shall tread the distant path [to the home of Humbaba,]
I shall face a battle I know not.

‘[I shall ride] a road [I know not:]
give me your blessing as I go on my journey, 265
[so I may see again] your faces [in safety,]
and return [glad at heart] through Uruk’s gate!

‘On my return [I will celebrate] New Year [twice over,]
I will celebrate the festival twice in the year.
Let the festival take place, the merriment begin, 270
let the drums resound before [Wild-Cow] Ninsun!’

Enkidu [offered] counsel to the elders,
and the young men of Uruk, who understood *combat*:

‘Tell him not to go to the Forest of Cedar!
That is a journey which must not be made, 275
that is a man [who must not be] looked on.
He who guards the Forest of Cedar, his [*reach*] is wide.

‘This *Humbaba*, [his voice is the Deluge,]
[his speech is fire,] his breath is death!
[He hears] the forest murmur [at sixty leagues’ distance:] 280
[who is there would venture] into his forest?

‘[Adad ranks first, and Humbaba] second:
[who is there would oppose him] among the Igigi?
[So to keep safe the cedars,]
Enlil made it his lot to terrify men; 285
if you penetrate his forest you are seized by the tremors.’

The Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablet VI

Tablet VI. Ishtar and the Bull of Heaven

Back in Uruk Gilgamesh's beauty provokes the desire of the goddess Ishtar and she proposes to him. Gilgamesh scorns her, reminding her of the fates suffered by her many former conquests. Ishtar is enraged and rushes up to heaven. She persuades Anu, her father, to give her the fiery Bull of Heaven (the constellation Taurus) so that she can punish Gilgamesh with death. The Bull of Heaven causes havoc in Uruk, but Gilgamesh and Enkidu discover its weak spot and kill it. They insult Ishtar further and return to the palace in triumph to celebrate their victory.

He washed his matted hair, he cleaned his equipment,
he shook his hair down over his back.
Casting aside his dirty gear he clad himself in clean,
wrapped cloaks round him, tied with a sash.
Then did Gilgamesh put on his crown. VI 5

On the beauty of Gilgamesh Lady Ishtar looked with longing:
'Come, Gilgamesh, be you my bridegroom!
Grant me your fruits, O grant me!
Be you my husband and I your wife!

'Let me harness you a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold, 10
its wheels shall be gold and its horns shall be amber.
Driving lions in a team and mules of great size,
enter our house amid the sweet scent of cedar!

'As you enter our house
doorway and footstool shall kiss your feet! 15
Kings, courtiers and nobles shall kneel before you,
produce of mountain and lowland they shall bring you as tribute!

'Your goats shall bear triplets, your ewes shall bear twins,
your donkey when laden shall outpace any mule!
Your horse shall gallop at the chariot in glory, 20
no ox shall match yours at the yoke!'

[Gilgamesh] opened his mouth to speak,
[saying] to the Lady Ishtar:
'[And if indeed I] take you in marriage,
' body and clothing, 25
[whence would come] my food and my sustenance?
[Would you feed me] bread that is fit for a god,
[and pour me ale] that is fit for a king?' 28

* * *

'[*Who is there*] would take you in marriage? 32
 [You, a *frost* that congeals no] ice,
 a louvre-door [that] stays [not] breeze nor draught,
 a palace that massacres ... warriors, 35
 'an elephant which ... its *hoods*,
 bitumen that [*stains the hands*] of its bearer,
 a waterskin that [*cuts the hands*] of its bearer,
 limestone that [*weakens*] a wall of ashlar,
 'a battering ram that destroys [*the walls of*] the enemy, 40
 a shoe that bites the foot of its owner!
 What bridegroom of yours did endure for ever?
 What brave warrior of yours went up [*to the heavens?*]
 'Come, let me tell [you the tale] of your lovers:
 of his arm. 45
 Dumuzi, the lover of your youth,
 year upon year, to lamenting you doomed him.
 'You loved the speckled *allallu*-bird,
 but struck him down and broke his wing:
 now he stands in the woods crying "My wing!" 50
 You loved the lion, perfect in strength,
 but for him you dug seven pits and seven.
 'You loved the horse, so famed in battle,
 but you made his destiny whip, spur and lash.
 You made his destiny a seven-league gallop, 55
 you made his destiny to drink muddy water,
 and doomed Silili his mother to perpetual weeping.
 'You loved the shepherd, the grazier, the herdsman,
 who gave you piles of loaves baked in embers,
 and slaughtered kids for you day after day. 60
 'You struck him and turned him into a wolf,
 now his very own shepherd boys chase him away,
 and his dogs take bites at his haunches.
 'You loved Ishullanu, your father's gardener,
 who used to bring you dates in a basket, 65
 daily making your table gleam.
 You eyed him up and went to meet him:
 ' "O my Ishullanu, let us taste your vigour:
 Put out your 'hand' and stroke my quim!"
 But Ishullanu said to you: 70
 ' "Me! What do you want of me?
 Did my mother not bake? Have I not eaten,
 that now I should eat the bread of slander and insults?
 Should I let only rushes cover me in winter?"

'When you heard what [he'd] said, 75
 you struck him and turned him into a *dwarf*.
 You sat him down in the midst of his labours,
 he cannot go up ... , he cannot go down ...
 Must you love me also and [deal with me] likewise?'

The goddess Ishtar [heard] these words, 80
 she [went up] to heaven in a furious rage.
 [Weeping] she went to Anu, her father,
 before Antu, her mother, her tears did flow:
 'O father, again and again does Gilgamesh scorn me,
 telling a tale of foulest slander, 85
 slander about me and insults too.'

Anu opened his mouth to speak,
 saying to the Lady Ishtar:
 'Ah, but was it not you who provoked King Gilgamesh,
 so he told a tale of foulest slander, 90
 slander about you and insults too?'

Ishtar opened her mouth to speak,
 saying to her father, Anu:
 'Father, give me, please, the Bull of Heaven,
 so in his dwelling I may slay Gilgamesh! 95

'If you do not give me the Bull of Heaven,
 I shall *smash* [*the gates of the Netherworld, right down*] to its dwelling,
 to the world below I shall *grant* [*manumission,*]
 I shall bring up the dead to consume the living,
 I shall make the dead outnumber the living.' 100

Anu opened his mouth to speak,
 saying to the Lady Ishtar:
 'If you want from me the Bull of Heaven,
 let the widow of Uruk gather seven years' chaff,
 [and the farmer *of Uruk*] grow seven years' hay.' 105

[Ishtar opened her mouth] to speak,
 [saying to] her father, Anu:
 , already I stored,
 already I grew.

'The widow [of Uruk has] gathered [seven] years' chaff, 110
 the farmer [*of Uruk* has grown seven years'] hay.
 With the wrath of the Bull I shall [*have vengeance.*]
 Anu heard this speech of Ishtar,
 the Bull of Heaven's nose-rope he placed in her hands.

[Down came] Ishtar, leading it onward: 115
when it reached the land of Uruk,
it dried up the woods, the reed-beds and marshes,
down it went to the river, lowered the level by seven full cubits.

As the Bull of Heaven snorted a pit opened up,
one hundred men of Uruk fell down it. 120
The second time it snorted a pit opened up,
two hundred men of Uruk fell down it.

The third time it snorted a pit opened up,
and Enkidu fell in as far as his waist.
Enkidu sprang up and seized the Bull by the horns. 125
In his face the Bull spat slaver,
with the tuft of its tail ·

Enkidu opened his mouth [to speak,]
saying to Gilgamesh, [his friend:]
‘My friend, we vaunted ourselves [in our] city: 130
how shall we answer the thronging people?

‘My friend, I have tested the might of the Bull ... ,
so learning [its] strength, [*and knowing its*] *purpose*.
Let me [test] again the might of the Bull,
I [*shall get myself*] behind [the Bull of Heaven,]
I will seize [it by the tuft of the tail.]

‘I will set [my foot on *the back of*] its [*leg*,]
in [it.]
Then [you] like a [butcher, brave and] skilful,
between the yoke of the horns and the slaughter-spot thrust in your knife!’ 140

Enkidu rushed round to the rear of the Bull,
he seized it by the [tuft] of the tail.
[He set] his foot on [*the back of*] its [*leg*,]
[in] it.

Then Gilgamesh like a butcher, brave and skilful, 145
between the yoke of the horns and the slaughter-spot [he thrust in] his knife.

After they had slain the Bull of Heaven,
they bore its heart aloft and set it before Shamash.
Stepping back they fell prostrate in the presence of the Sun God,
then both of them together sat down. 150

Ishtar went up on the wall of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
hopping and stamping, she wailed in woe:
‘Alas! Gilgamesh, who mocked me, has killed the Bull of Heaven.’

Enkidu heard these words of Ishtar,
and tearing a haunch off the Bull he hurled it towards her. 155
‘Had I caught you too, I’d have treated you likewise,
I’d have draped your arms in its guts!’



7 'Between the yoke of the horns and the slaughter-spot he thrust
in his knife'.

Ishtar assembled the courtesans, prostitutes and harlots,
over the Bull of Heaven's haunch she began rites of mourning.
Gilgamesh summoned all the smiths and the craftsmen,
the size of the horns the craftsmen admired.

160

Thirty minas of lapis lazuli in a solid block,
two minas each their rims,
six kor of oil, the capacity of both.

He gave them to his god Lugalbanda, to hold oil for anointment,
he took them in to hang in his chamber.

165

They washed their hands in the river Euphrates,
took each other by the hand and in they came.
As they drove along the streets of Uruk,
the people were gathered to gaze [on them.]

170

Gilgamesh spoke a word to the serving girls of [his palace:]

'Who is the finest among men?

Who the most glorious of fellows?'

'Gilgamesh is the finest among men!

[Gilgamesh the most] glorious of fellows!'

175

* * *

Gilgamesh made merry in his palace.

At night the men lay asleep on their beds,
and Enkidu, as he slept was having a dream.
Enkidu rose to relate the dream,
saying to his friend:

180

[continued in Tablet VII]

Hesiod: *Theogony*

Theogony, or *Origins of the Gods*, is a poem by Hesiod (8th–7th century BC) describing the inception and genealogies of the Greek gods, composed c. 730–700 BCE. *Theogony* presents the descent of the gods, and, along with the works of Homer, is one of the key source documents for Greek mythology; it is the Genesis of Greek mythology. It gives the clearest presentation of the Greek pagan creation myth, starting with the creatrix goddesses Chaos and Earth, from whom descended all the gods and men; it mentions hundreds of individual gods, goddesses, demi-gods, elementals and heroes.¹

• • •

Proem

(ll. 1-25) From the Heliconian Muses let us begin to sing, who hold the great and holy mount of Helicon, and dance on soft feet about the deep-blue spring and the altar of the almighty son of Cronos, and, when they have washed their tender bodies in Permessus or in the Horse's Spring or Olmeius, make their fair, lovely dances upon highest Helicon and move with vigorous feet. Thence they arise and go abroad by night, veiled in thick mist, and utter their song with lovely voice, praising Zeus the aegis-holder and queenly Hera of Argos who walks on golden sandals and the daughter of Zeus the aegis-holder bright-eyed Athene, and Phoebus Apollo, and Artemis who delights in arrows, and Poseidon the earth-holder who shakes the earth, and reverend Themis and quick-glancing² Aphrodite, and Hebe with the crown of gold, and fair Dione, Leto, Iapetus, and Cronos the crafty counsellor, Eos and great Helius and bright Selene, Earth too, and great Oceanus, and dark Night, and the holy race of all the other deathless ones that are for ever. And one day they taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon, and this word first the goddesses said to me -- the Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis:

(ll. 26-28) 'Shepherds of the wilderness, wretched things of shame, mere bellies, we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things.'

(ll. 29-35) So said the ready-voiced daughters of great Zeus, and they plucked and gave me a rod, a shoot of sturdy laurel, a marvellous thing, and breathed into me a divine voice to celebrate things that shall be and things there were aforetime; and they bade me sing of

the race of the blessed gods that are eternally, but ever to sing of themselves both first and last. But why all this about oak or stone?³

(ll. 36-52) Come thou, let us begin with the Muses who gladden the great spirit of their father Zeus in Olympus with their songs, telling of things that are and that shall be and that were aforetime with consenting voice. Unwearying flows the sweet sound from their lips, and the house of their father Zeus the loud-thunderer is glad at the lily-like voice of the goddesses as it spread abroad, and the peaks of snowy Olympus resound, and the homes of the immortals. And they uttering their immortal voice, celebrate in song first of all the reverend race of the gods from the beginning, those whom Earth and wide Heaven begot, and the gods sprung of these, givers of good things. Then, next, the goddesses sing of Zeus, the father of gods and men, as they begin and end their strain, how much he is the most excellent among the gods and supreme in power. And again, they chant the race of men and strong giants, and gladden the heart of Zeus within Olympus, -- the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus the aegis-holder.

(ll. 53-74) Them in Pieria did Mnemosyne (Memory), who reigns over the hills of Eleuther, bear of union with the father, the son of Cronos, a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow. For nine nights did wise Zeus lie with her, entering her holy bed remote from the immortals. And when a year was passed and the seasons came round as the months waned, and many days were accomplished, she bare nine daughters, all of one mind, whose hearts are set upon song and their spirit free from care, a little way from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus. There are their bright dancing-places and beautiful homes, and beside them the Graces and Himerus (Desire) live in

¹ Source: Hesiod, Hugh G. Evelyn White, and James Loeb. 1914. *The Homeric hymns and Homerica*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. The notes and commentary are White's.

² The epithet probably indicates coquettishness.

³ A proverbial saying meaning, 'why enlarge on irrelevant topics?'

delight. And they, uttering through their lips a lovely voice, sing the laws of all and the goodly ways of the immortals, uttering their lovely voice. Then went they to Olympus, delighting in their sweet voice, with heavenly song, and the dark earth resounded about them as they chanted, and a lovely sound rose up beneath their feet as they went to their father. And he was reigning in heaven, himself holding the lightning and glowing thunderbolt, when he had overcome by might his father Cronos; and he distributed fairly to the immortals their portions and declared their privileges.

(Il. 75-103) These things, then, the Muses sang who dwell on Olympus, nine daughters begotten by great Zeus, Cleio and Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene and Terpsichore, and Erato and Polyhymnia and Urania and Calliope,⁴ who is the chiefest of them all, for she attends on worshipful princes: whomsoever of heaven-nourished princes the daughters of great Zeus honour, and behold him at his birth, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and from his lips flow gracious words. All the people look towards him while he settles causes with true judgements: and he, speaking surely, would soon make wise end even of a great quarrel; for therefore are there princes wise in heart, because when the people are being misguided in their assembly, they set right the matter again with ease, persuading them with gentle words. And when he passes through a gathering, they greet him as a god with gentle reverence, and he is conspicuous amongst the assembled: such is the holy gift of the Muses to men. For it is through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that there are singers and harpers upon the earth; but princes are of Zeus, and happy is he whom the Muses love: sweet flows speech from his mouth. For though a man have sorrow and grief in his newly-troubled soul and live in dread because his heart is distressed, yet, when a singer, the servant of the Muses, chants the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus, at once he forgets his heaviness and remembers not his sorrows at all; but the gifts of the goddesses soon turn him away from these.

(Il. 104-115) Hail, children of Zeus! Grant lovely song and celebrate the holy race of the deathless gods who are for ever, those that were born of Earth and starry Heaven and gloomy Night and them that briny Sea did

rear. Tell how at the first gods and earth came to be, and rivers, and the boundless sea with its raging swell, and the gleaming stars, and the wide heaven above, and the gods who were born of them, givers of good things, and how they divided their wealth, and how they shared their honours amongst them, and also how at the first they took many-folded Olympus. These things declare to me from the beginning, ye Muses who dwell in the house of Olympus, and tell me which of them first came to be.

The Origin of the Cosmos

(Il. 116-138) Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundations of all⁵ the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros (Love), fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them. \

The Offspring of the Primordial Gods

From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night; but of Night were born Aether⁶ and Day, whom she conceived and bare from union in love with Erebus. And Earth first bare starry Heaven, equal to herself, to cover her on every side, and to be an ever-sure abiding-place for the blessed gods. And she brought forth long Hills, graceful haunts of the goddess-Nymphs who dwell amongst the glens of the hills. She bare also the fruitless deep with his raging swell, Pontus, without sweet union of love. But afterwards she lay with Heaven and bare deep-swirling Oceanus, Coeus and Crius and Hyperion and Iapetus, Theia and Rhea, Themis and Mnemosyne and gold-crowned Phoebe and lovely Tethys. After them was born Cronos the wily, youngest and most terrible of her children, and he hated his lusty sire.

(Il. 139-146) And again, she bare the Cyclopes, overbearing in spirit, Brontes, and Steropes and stubborn-hearted Arges,⁷ who gave Zeus the thunder and made the thunderbolt: in all else they were like the gods, but one eye only was set in the midst of their fore-heads. And they were surnamed Cyclopes (Orb-eyed) because one orb'd eye was set in their

⁴ 'She of the noble voice': Calliope is queen of Epic poetry.

⁵ Earth, in the cosmology of Hesiod, is a disk surrounded by the river Oceanus and floating upon a waste of waters. It is called the foundation of all (the qualification 'the deathless ones...' etc. is an interpolation), because not only trees, men, and animals, but even the hills and seas (Il. 129, 131) are supported by it.

⁶ Aether is the bright, untainted upper atmosphere, as distinguished from Aer, the lower atmosphere of the earth.

⁷ Brontes is the Thunderer; Steropes, the Lightener; and Arges, the Vivid One.

foreheads. Strength and might and craft were in their works.

(Il. 147-163) And again, three other sons were born of Earth and Heaven, great and doughty beyond telling, Cottus and Briareos and Gyes, presumptuous children. From their shoulders sprang an hundred arms, not to be approached, and each had fifty heads upon his shoulders on their strong limbs, and irresistible was the stubborn strength that was in their great forms. For of all the children that were born of Earth and Heaven, these were the most terrible, and they were hated by their own father from the first.

And he used to hide them all away in a secret place of Earth so soon as each was born, and would not suffer them to come up into the light: and Heaven rejoiced in his evil doing. But vast Earth groaned within, being straitened, and she made the element of grey flint and shaped a great sickle, and told her plan to her dear sons. And she spoke, cheering them, while she was vexed in her dear heart:

(Il. 164-166) 'My children, gotten of a sinful father, if you will obey me, we should punish the vile outrage of your father; for he first thought of doing shameful things.'

(Il. 167-169) So she said; but fear seized them all, and none of them uttered a word. But great Cronos the wily took courage and answered his dear mother:

(Il. 170-172) 'Mother, I will undertake to do this deed, for I reverence not our father of evil name, for he first thought of doing shameful things.'

(Il. 173-175) So he said: and vast Earth rejoiced greatly in spirit, and set and hid him in an ambush, and put in his hands a jagged sickle, and revealed to him the whole plot.

(Il. 176-206) And Heaven came, bringing on night and longing for love, and he lay about Earth spreading himself full upon her.⁸

Then the son from his ambush stretched forth his left hand and in his right took the great long sickle with jagged teeth, and swiftly lopped off his own father's members and cast them away to fall behind him. And

not vainly did they fall from his hand; for all the bloody drops that gushed forth Earth received, and as the seasons moved round she bare the strong Erinyes and the great Giants with gleaming armour, holding long spears in their hands and the Nymphs whom they call Meliae⁹ all over the boundless earth. And so soon as he had cut off the members with flint and cast them from the land into the surging sea, they were swept away over the main a long time: and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden. First she drew near holy Cythera, and from there, afterwards, she came to sea-girt Cyprus, and came forth an awful and lovely goddess, and grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet. Her gods and men call Aphrodite, and the foam-born goddess and rich-crowned Cytherea, because she grew amid the foam, and Cytherea because she reached Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she was born in billowy Cyprus, and Philommedes¹⁰ because sprang from the members. And with her went Eros, and comely Desire followed her at her birth at the first and as she went into the assembly of the gods. This honour she has from the beginning, and this is the portion allotted to her amongst men and undying gods, -- the whisperings of maidens and smiles and deceits with sweet delight and love and graciousness.

(Il. 207-210) But these sons whom he begot himself great Heaven used to call Titans (Strainers) in reproach, for he said that they strained and did presumptuously a fearful deed, and that vengeance for it would come afterwards.

(Il. 211-225) And Night bare hateful Doom and black Fate and Death, and she bare Sleep and the tribe of Dreams. And again the goddess murky Night, though she lay with none, bare Blame and painful Woe, and the Hesperides who guard the rich, golden apples and the trees bearing fruit beyond glorious Ocean. Also she bare the Destinies and ruthless avenging Fates, Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos,¹¹ who give men at their birth both evil and good to have, and they pursue the transgressions of men and of gods: and these goddesses never cease from their dread anger until they punish the sinner with a sore penalty. Also deadly Night bare Nemesis (Indignation) to afflict

⁸ The myth accounts for the separation of Heaven and Earth. In Egyptian cosmology Nut (the Sky) is thrust and held apart from her brother Geb (the Earth) by their father Shu, who corresponds to the Greek Atlas.

⁹ Nymphs of the ash-trees, as Dryads are nymphs of the oak-trees. Cp. note on "Works and Days", l. 145.

¹⁰ 'Member-loving': the title is perhaps only a perversion of the regular *Philomeides* (laughter-loving).

¹¹ Clotho (the Spinner) is she who spins the thread of man's life; Lachesis (the Disposer of Lots) assigns to each man his destiny; Atropos (She who cannot be turned) is the 'Fury with the abhorred shears.'

mortal men, and after her, Deceit and Friendship and hateful Age and hard-hearted Strife.

(Il. 226-232) But abhorred Strife bare painful Toil and Forgetfulness and Famine and tearful Sorrows, Fightings also, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words, Disputes, Lawlessness and Ruin, all of one nature, and Oath who most troubles men upon earth when anyone wilfully swears a false oath.

The Descendants of Pontus

(Il. 233-239) And Sea begat Nereus, the eldest of his children, who is true and lies not: and men call him the Old Man because he is trusty and gentle and does not forget the laws of righteousness, but thinks just and kindly thoughts. And yet again he got great Thaumás and proud Phoreys, being mated with Earth, and fair-cheeked Ceto and Eurybia who has a heart of flint within her.

(Il. 240-264) And of Nereus and rich-haired Doris, daughter of Ocean the perfect river, were born children,¹² passing lovely amongst goddesses, Ploto, Eucrante, Sao, and Amphitrite, and Eudora, and Thetis, Galene and Glauce, Cymothoe, Speo, Thoe and lovely Halie, and Pasithea, and Erato, and rosy-armed Eunice, and gracious Melite, and Eulimene, and Agaue, Doto, Proto, Pherusa, and Dynamene, and Nisaea, and Actaea, and Protomedea, Doris, Panoepa, and comely Galatea, and lovely Hippothoe, and rosy-armed Hipponoe, and Cymodoce who with Cymatolege¹³ and Amphitrite easily calms the waves upon the misty sea and the blasts of raging winds, and Cymo, and Eione, and rich-crowned Alimede, and Glauconome, fond of laughter, and Pontoporea, Leagore, Euagore, and Laomedea, and Polynoe, and Autonoe, and Lysianassa, and Euarne, lovely of shape and without blemish of form, and Psamathe of charming figure and divine Menippe, Neso, Eupompe, Themisto, Pronoe, and Nemertes¹⁴ who has the nature of her deathless father. These fifty daughters sprang from blameless Nereus, skilled in excellent crafts.

(Il. 265-269) And Thaumás wedded Electra the daughter of deep-flowing Ocean, and she bare him swift Iris and the long-haired Harpies, Aello (Storm-swift) and Ocypetes (Swift-flier) who on their swift

wings keep pace with the blasts of the winds and the birds; for quick as time they dart along.

(Il. 270-294) And again, Ceto bare to Phoreys the fair-cheeked Graiae, sisters grey from their birth: and both deathless gods and men who walk on earth call them Graiae, Pemphredo well-clad, and saffron-robed Enyo, and the Gorgons who dwell beyond glorious Ocean in the frontier land towards Night where are the clear-voiced Hesperides, Sthenno, and Euryale, and Medusa who suffered a woeful fate: she was mortal, but the two were undying and grew not old. With her lay the Dark-haired One¹⁵ in a soft meadow amid spring flowers. And when Perseus cut off her head, there sprang forth great Chrysaor and the horse Pegasus who is so called because he was born near the springs (pegae) of Ocean; and that other, because he held a golden blade (aor) in his hands. Now Pegasus flew away and left the earth, the mother of flocks, and came to the deathless gods: and he dwells in the house of Zeus and brings to wise Zeus the thunder and lightning. But Chrysaor was joined in love to Callirrhoe, the daughter of glorious Ocean, and begot three-headed Geryones. Him mighty Heracles slew in sea-girt Erythea by his shambling oxen on that day when he drove the wide-browed oxen to holy Tiryns, and had crossed the ford of Ocean and killed Orthus and Eurytion the herdsman in the dim stead out beyond glorious Ocean.

(Il. 295-305) And in a hollow cave she bare another monster, irresistible, in no wise like either to mortal men or to the undying gods, even the goddess fierce Echidna who is half a nymph with glancing eyes and fair cheeks, and half again a huge snake, great and awful, with speckled skin, eating raw flesh beneath the secret parts of the holy earth. And there she has a cave deep down under a hollow rock far from the deathless gods and mortal men. There, then, did the gods appoint her a glorious house to dwell in: and she keeps guard in Arima beneath the earth, grim Echidna, a nymph who dies not nor grows old all her days.

(Il. 306-332) Men say that Typhaon the terrible, outrageous and lawless, was joined in love to her, the maid with glancing eyes. So she conceived and brought forth fierce offspring; first she bare Orthus the hound of Geryones, and then again she bare a second, a monster not to be overcome and that may

¹² Many of the names which follow express various qualities or aspects of the sea: thus Galene is 'Calm', Cymothoe is the 'Wave-swift', Pherusa and Dynamene are 'She who speeds (ships)' and 'She who has power'.

¹³ The 'Wave-receiver' and the 'Wave-stiller'.

¹⁴ 'The Unerring' or 'Truthful'; cp. l. 235.

¹⁵ i.e. Poseidon.

not be described, Cerberus who eats raw flesh, the brazen-voiced hound of Hades, fifty-headed, relentless and strong. And again she bore a third, the evil-minded Hydra of Lerna, whom the goddess, white-armed Hera nourished, being angry beyond measure with the mighty Heracles. And her Heracles, the son of Zeus, of the house of Amphitryon, together with warlike Iolaus, destroyed with the un pitying sword through the plans of Athene the spoil-driver. She was the mother of Chimaera who breathed raging fire, a creature fearful, great, swift-footed and strong, who had three heads, one of a grim-eyed lion; in her hinderpart, a dragon; and in her middle, a goat, breathing forth a fearful blast of blazing fire. Her did Pegasus and noble Bellerophon slay; but Echidna was subject in love to Orthus and brought forth the deadly Sphinx which destroyed the Cadmeans, and the Nemean lion, which Hera, the good wife of Zeus, brought up and made to haunt the hills of Nemea, a plague to men. There he preyed upon the tribes of her own people and had power over Tretus of Nemea and Apesas: yet the strength of stout Heracles overcame him.

(Il. 333-336) And Ceto was joined in love to Phorcys and bare her youngest, the awful snake who guards the apples all of gold in the secret places of the dark earth at its great bounds. This is the offspring of Ceto and Phoreys.

The Offspring of the Titans

(Il. 334-345) And Tethys bare to Ocean eddying rivers, Nilus, and Alpheus, and deep-swirling Eridanus, Strymon, and Meander, and the fair stream of Ister, and Phasis, and Rhesus, and the silver eddies of Achelous, Nessus, and Rhodius, Haliacmon, and Heptaporus, Granicus, and Aesepus, and holy Simois, and Peneus, and Hermus, and Caicus fair stream, and great Sangarius, Ladon, Parthenius, Euenus, Ardescus, and divine Scamander.

(Il. 346-370) Also she brought forth a holy company of daughters¹⁶ who with the lord Apollo and the Rivers have youths in their keeping -- to this charge Zeus appointed them -- Peitho, and Admete, and Ianthé, and Electra, and Doris, and Prymno, and Urania divine in form, Hippo, Clymene, Rhodéa, and Callirrhoe, Zeuxo and Clytie, and Idyia, and Pasithoe, Plexaura, and Galaxaura, and lovely Dione, Melobosis

and Thoe and handsome Polydora, Cerceis lovely of form, and soft eyed Pluto, Perseis, Ianeira, Acaste, Xanthe, Petraea the fair, Menestho, and Europa, Metis, and Eurynome, and Telesto saffron-clad, Chryseis and Asia and charming Calypso, Eudora, and Tyche, Amphirho, and Ocyrrhoe, and Styx who is the chiefest of them all. These are the eldest daughters that sprang from Ocean and Tethys; but there are many besides. For there are three thousand neat-ankled daughters of Ocean who are dispersed far and wide, and in every place alike serve the earth and the deep waters, children who are glorious among goddesses. And as many other rivers are there, babbling as they flow, sons of Ocean, whom queenly Tethys bare, but their names it is hard for a mortal man to tell, but people know those by which they severally dwell.

(Il. 371-374) And Theia was subject in love to Hyperion and bare great Helius (Sun) and clear Selene (Moon) and Eos (Dawn) who shines upon all that are on earth and upon the deathless Gods who live in the wide heaven.

(Il. 375-377) And Eurybia, bright goddess, was joined in love to Crius and bare great Astraeus, and Pallas, and Perses who also was eminent among all men in wisdom.

(Il. 378-382) And Eos bare to Astraeus the strong-hearted winds, brightening Zephyrus, and Boreas, headlong in his course, and Notus, -- a goddess mating in love with a god. And after these Erigenia¹⁷ bare the star Eosphorus (Dawn-bringer), and the gleaming stars with which heaven is crowned.

(Il. 383-403) And Styx the daughter of Ocean was joined to Pallas and bare Zelus (Emulation) and trim-ankled Nike (Victory) in the house. Also she brought forth Cratos (Strength) and Bia (Force), wonderful children. These have no house apart from Zeus, nor any dwelling nor path except that wherein God leads them, but they dwell always with Zeus the loud-thunderer. For so did Styx the deathless daughter of Ocean plan on that day when the Olympian Lightener called all the deathless gods to great Olympus, and said that whosoever of the gods would fight with him against the Titans, he would not cast him out from his rights, but each should have the office which he had before amongst the deathless gods. And he declared that he who was without office and rights as is just. So deathless Styx came first to Olympus with her

¹⁶ Goettling notes that some of these nymphs derive their names from lands over which they preside, as Europa, Asia, Doris, Ianeira ('Lady of the Ionians'), but that most are called after some quality which their streams possessed: thus Xanthe is the

'Brown' or 'Turbid', Amphirho is the 'Surrounding' river, Ianthé is 'She who delights', and Ocyrrhoe is the 'Swift-flowing'.

¹⁷ i.e. Eos, the 'Early-born'.

children through the wit of her dear father. And Zeus honoured her, and gave her very great gifts, for he appointed to be the great oath of the gods, and her children to live with him always. And as he promised, so he performed fully unto them all.

But he himself mightily reigns and rules.

(Il. 404-452) Again, Phoebe came to the desired embrace of Coeus.

Then the goddess through the love of the god conceived and brought forth dark-gowned Leto, always mild, kind to men and to the deathless gods, mild from the beginning, gentlest in all Olympus. Also she bare Asteria of happy name, whom Perses once led to his great house to be called his dear wife. And she conceived and bare Hecate whom Zeus the son of Cronos honoured above all. He gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and the unfruitful sea. She received honour also in starry heaven, and is honoured exceedingly by the deathless gods. For to this day, whenever any one of men on earth offers rich sacrifices and prays for favour according to custom, he calls upon Hecate. Great honour comes full easily to him whose prayers the goddess receives favourably, and she bestows wealth upon him; for the power surely is with her. For as many as were born of Earth and Ocean amongst all these she has her due portion. The son of Cronos did her no wrong nor took anything away of all that was her portion among the former Titan gods: but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea. Also, because she is an only child, the goddess receives not less honour, but much more still, for Zeus honours her. Whom she will she greatly aids and advances: she sits by worshipful kings in judgement, and in the assembly whom she will is distinguished among the people. And when men arm themselves for the battle that destroys men, then the goddess is at hand to give victory and grant glory readily to whom she will. Good is she also when men contend at the games, for there too the goddess is with them and profits them: and he who by might and strength gets the victory wins the rich prize easily with joy, and brings glory to his parents. And she is good to stand by horsemen, whom she will: and to those whose business is in the grey uncomfortable sea, and who pray to Hecate and the loud-crashing

Earth-Shaker, easily the glorious goddess gives great catch, and easily she takes it away as soon as seen, if so she will. She is good in the byre with Hermes to increase the stock. The droves of kine and wide herds of goats and flocks of fleecy sheep, if she will, she increases from a few, or makes many to be less. So, then, albeit her mother's only child,¹⁸ she is honoured amongst all the deathless gods. And the son of Cronos made her a nurse of the young who after that day saw with their eyes the light of all-seeing Dawn. So from the beginning she is a nurse of the young, and these are her honours.

(Il. 453-491) But Rhea was subject in love to Cronos and bare splendid children, Hestia,¹⁹ Demeter, and gold-shod Hera and strong Hades, pitiless in heart, who dwells under the earth, and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, and wise Zeus, father of gods and men, by whose thunder the wide earth is shaken. These great Cronos swallowed as each came forth from the womb to his mother's knees with this intent, that no other of the proud sons of Heaven should hold the kingly office amongst the deathless gods. For he learned from Earth and starry Heaven that he was destined to be overcome by his own son, strong though he was, through the contriving of great Zeus.²⁰ Therefore he kept no blind outlook, but watched and swallowed down his children: and unceasing grief seized Rhea. But when she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, then she besought her own dear parents, Earth and starry Heaven, to devise some plan with her that the birth of her dear child might be concealed, and that retribution might overtake great, crafty Cronos for his own father and also for the children whom he had swallowed down. And they readily heard and obeyed their dear daughter, and told her all that was destined to happen touching Cronos the king and his stout-hearted son. So they sent her to Lyctus, to the rich land of Crete, when she was ready to bear great Zeus, the youngest of her children. Him did vast Earth receive from Rhea in wide Crete to nourish and to bring up. Thither came Earth carrying him swiftly through the black night to Lyctus first, and took him in her arms and hid him in a remote cave beneath the secret places of the holy earth on thick-wooded Mount Aegaeum; but to the mightily ruling son of Heaven, the earlier king of the gods, she gave a great stone wrapped in swaddling

¹⁸ Van Lennep explains that Hecate, having no brothers to support her claim, might have been slighted.

¹⁹ The goddess of the hearth (the Roman "Vesta"), and so of the house. Cp. "Homeric Hymns" v.22 ff.; xxxix.1 ff.

²⁰ The variant reading 'of his father' (sc. Heaven) rests on inferior MS. authority and is probably an alteration due to the

difficulty stated by a Scholiast: 'How could Zeus, being not yet begotten, plot against his father?' The phrase is, however, part of the prophecy. The whole line may well be spurious, and is rejected by Heyne, Wolf, Gaisford and Guyet.

clothes. Then he took it in his hands and thrust it down into his belly: wretch! he knew not in his heart that in place of the stone his son was left behind, unconquered and untroubled, and that he was soon to overcome him by force and might and drive him from his honours, himself to reign over the deathless gods.

(Il. 492-506) After that, the strength and glorious limbs of the prince increased quickly, and as the years rolled on, great Cronos the wily was beguiled by the deep suggestions of Earth, and brought up again his offspring, vanquished by the arts and might of his own son, and he vomited up first the stone which he had swallowed last. And Zeus set it fast in the wide-pathed earth at goodly Pytho under the glens of Parnassus, to be a sign thenceforth and a marvel to mortal men.²¹ And he set free from their deadly bonds the brothers of his father, sons of Heaven whom his father in his foolishness had bound. And they remembered to be grateful to him for his kindness, and gave him thunder and the glowing thunderbolt and lightening: for before that, huge Earth had hidden these. In them he trusts and rules over mortals and immortals.

(Il. 507-543) Now Iapetus took to wife the neat-ankled mad Clymene, daughter of Ocean, and went up with her into one bed. And she bare him a stout-hearted son, Atlas: also she bare very glorious Menoetius and clever Prometheus, full of various wiles, and scatter-brained Epimetheus who from the first was a mischief to men who eat bread; for it was he who first took of Zeus the woman, the maiden whom he had formed. But Menoetius was outrageous, and far-seeing Zeus struck him with a lurid thunderbolt and sent him down to Erebus because of his mad presumption and exceeding pride. And Atlas through hard constraint upholds the wide heaven with unwearying head and arms, standing at the borders of the earth before the clear-voiced Hesperides; for this lot wise Zeus assigned to him. And ready-witted Prometheus he bound with inextricable bonds, cruel chains, and drove a shaft through his middle, and set on him a long-winged eagle, which used to eat his immortal liver; but by night the liver grew as much again everyway as the long-winged bird devoured in the whole day. That bird Heracles, the valiant son of shapely-ankled Alcmena, slew; and delivered the son of Iapetus from the cruel plague, and released him

from his affliction -- not without the will of Olympian Zeus who reigns on high, that the glory of Heracles the Theban-born might be yet greater than it was before over the plenteous earth. This, then, he regarded, and honoured his famous son; though he was angry, he ceased from the wrath which he had before because Prometheus matched himself in wit with the almighty son of Cronos. For when the gods and mortal men had a dispute at Mecone, even then Prometheus was forward to cut up a great ox and set portions before them, trying to befool the mind of Zeus. Before the rest he set flesh and inner parts thick with fat upon the hide, covering them with an ox paunch; but for Zeus he put the white bones dressed up with cunning art and covered with shining fat. Then the father of men and of gods said to him:

(Il. 543-544) 'Son of Iapetus, most glorious of all lords, good sir, how unfairly you have divided the portions!'

(Il. 545-547) So said Zeus whose wisdom is everlasting, rebuking him. But wily Prometheus answered him, smiling softly and not forgetting his cunning trick:

(Il. 548-558) 'Zeus, most glorious and greatest of the eternal gods, take which ever of these portions your heart within you bids.' So he said, thinking trickery. But Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, saw and failed not to perceive the trick, and in his heart he thought mischief against mortal men which also was to be fulfilled. With both hands he took up the white fat and was angry at heart, and wrath came to his spirit when he saw the white ox-bones craftily tricked out: and because of this the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars. But Zeus who drives the clouds was greatly vexed and said to him:

(Il. 559-560) 'Son of Iapetus, clever above all! So, sir, you have not yet forgotten your cunning arts!'

(Il. 561-584) So spake Zeus in anger, whose wisdom is everlasting; and from that time he was always mindful of the trick, and would not give the power of unwearying fire to the Melian race²² of mortal men who live on the earth. But the noble son of Iapetus outwitted him and stole the far-seen gleam of unwearying fire in a hollow fennel stalk. And Zeus

²¹ Pausanias (x. 24.6) saw near the tomb of Neoptolemus 'a stone of no great size', which the Delphians anointed every day with oil, and which he says was supposed to be the stone given to Cronos.

²² A Scholiast explains: 'Either because they (men) sprang from the Melian nymphs (cp. l. 187); or because, when they were born (?), they cast themselves under the ash-trees, that is, the trees.' The reference may be to the origin of men from ash-trees: cp. "Works and Days", l. 145 and note.

who thunders on high was stung in spirit, and his dear heart was angered when he saw amongst men the far-seen ray of fire. Forthwith he made an evil thing for men as the price of fire; for the very famous Limping God formed of earth the likeness of a shy maiden as the son of Cronos willed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her with silvery raiment, and down from her head she spread with her hands a brodered veil, a wonder to see; and she, Pallas Athene, put about her head lovely garlands, flowers of new-grown herbs. Also she put upon her head a crown of gold which the very famous Limping God made himself and worked with his own hands as a favour to Zeus his father. On it was much curious work, wonderful to see; for of the many creatures which the land and sea rear up, he put most upon it, wonderful things, like living beings with voices: and great beauty shone out from it.

(Il. 585-589) But when he had made the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing, he brought her out, delighting in the finery which the bright-eyed daughter of a mighty father had given her, to the place where the other gods and men were. And wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw that which was sheer guile, not to be withstood by men.

(Il. 590-612) For from her is the race of women and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmeets in hateful poverty, but only in wealth. And as in thatched hives bees feed the drones whose nature is to do mischief -- by day and throughout the day until the sun goes down the bees are busy and lay the white combs, while the drones stay at home in the covered skeps and reap the toil of others into their own bellies -- even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil. And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the good they had: whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows that women cause, and will not wed, reaches deadly old age without anyone to tend his years, and though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet, when he is dead, his kinsfolk divide his possessions amongst them. And as for the man who chooses the lot of marriage and takes a good wife suited to his mind, evil continually contends with good; for whoever happens to have mischievous children, lives always with unceasing grief in his spirit and heart within him; and this evil cannot be healed.

(Il. 613-616) So it is not possible to deceive or go beyond the will of Zeus; for not even the son of Iapetus, kindly Prometheus, escaped his heavy anger, but of necessity strong bands confined him, although he knew many a wile.

The Titanomachy

(Il. 617-643) But when first their father was vexed in his heart with Obriareus and Cottus and Gyes, he bound them in cruel bonds, because he was jealous of their exceeding manhood and comeliness and great size: and he made them live beneath the wide-pathed earth, where they were afflicted, being set to dwell under the ground, at the end of the earth, at its great borders, in bitter anguish for a long time and with great grief at heart. But the son of Cronos and the other deathless gods whom rich-haired Rhea bare from union with Cronos, brought them up again to the light at Earth's advising. For she herself recounted all things to the gods fully, how that with these they would gain victory and a glorious cause to vaunt themselves. For the Titan gods and as many as sprang from Cronos had long been fighting together in stubborn war with heart-grieving toil, the lordly Titans from high Othyrs, but the gods, givers of good, whom rich-haired Rhea bare in union with Cronos, from Olympus. So they, with bitter wrath, were fighting continually with one another at that time for ten full years, and the hard strife had no close or end for either side, and the issue of the war hung evenly balanced. But when he had provided those three with all things fitting, nectar and ambrosia which the gods themselves eat, and when their proud spirit revived within them all after they had fed on nectar and delicious ambrosia, then it was that the father of men and gods spoke amongst them:

(Il. 644-653) 'Hear me, bright children of Earth and Heaven, that I may say what my heart within me bids. A long while now have we, who are sprung from Cronos and the Titan gods, fought with each other every day to get victory and to prevail. But do you show your great might and unconquerable strength, and face the Titans in bitter strife; for remember our friendly kindness, and from what sufferings you are come back to the light from your cruel bondage under misty gloom through our counsels.'

(Il. 654-663) So he said. And blameless Cottus answered him again: 'Divine one, you speak that which we know well: nay, even of ourselves we know that your wisdom and understanding is exceeding, and that you became a defender of the deathless ones

from chill doom. And through your devising we are come back again from the murky gloom and from our merciless bonds, enjoying what we looked not for, O lord, son of Cronos. And so now with fixed purpose and deliberate counsel we will aid your power in dreadful strife and will fight against the Titans in hard battle.'

(Il. 664-686) So he said: and the gods, givers of good things, applauded when they heard his word, and their spirit longed for war even more than before, and they all, both male and female, stirred up hated battle that day, the Titan gods, and all that were born of Cronos together with those dread, mighty ones of overwhelming strength whom Zeus brought up to the light from Erebus beneath the earth. An hundred arms sprang from the shoulders of all alike, and each had fifty heads growing upon his shoulders upon stout limbs. These, then, stood against the Titans in grim strife, holding huge rocks in their strong hands. And on the other part the Titans eagerly strengthened their ranks, and both sides at one time showed the work of their hands and their might. The boundless sea rang terribly around, and the earth crashed loudly: wide Heaven was shaken and groaned, and high Olympus reeled from its foundation under the charge of the undying gods, and a heavy quaking reached dim Tartarus and the deep sound of their feet in the fearful onset and of their hard missiles. So, then, they launched their grievous shafts upon one another, and the cry of both armies as they shouted reached to starry heaven; and they met together with a great battle-cry.

(Il. 687-712) Then Zeus no longer held back his might; but straight his heart was filled with fury and he showed forth all his strength. From Heaven and from Olympus he came forthwith, hurling his lightning: the bold flew thick and fast from his strong hand together with thunder and lightning, whirling an awesome flame. The life-giving earth crashed around in burning, and the vast wood crackled loud with fire all about. All the land seethed, and Ocean's streams and the unfruitful sea. The hot vapour lapped round the earthborn Titans: flame unspeakable rose to the bright upper air: the flashing glare of the thunder-stone and lightning blinded their eyes for all that there were strong. Astounding heat seized Chaos: and to see with eyes and to hear the sound with ears it seemed even as if Earth and wide Heaven above came together; for such a mighty crash would have arisen if Earth were being hurled to ruin, and Heaven from on

high were hurling her down; so great a crash was there while the gods were meeting together in strife. Also the winds brought rumbling earthquake and duststorm, thunder and lightning and the lurid thunderbolt, which are the shafts of great Zeus, and carried the clangour and the warcry into the midst of the two hosts. An horrible uproar of terrible strife arose: mighty deeds were shown and the battle inclined. But until then, they kept at one another and fought continually in cruel war.

(Il. 713-735) And amongst the foremost Cottus and Briareos and Gyes insatiate for war raised fierce fighting: three hundred rocks, one upon another, they launched from their strong hands and overshadowed the Titans with their missiles, and buried them beneath the wide-pathed earth, and bound them in bitter chains when they had conquered them by their strength for all their great spirit, as far beneath the earth to Tartarus.

Tartarus

For a brazen anvil falling down from heaven nine nights and days would reach the earth upon the tenth: and again, a brazen anvil falling from earth nine nights and days would reach Tartarus upon the tenth. Round it runs a fence of bronze, and night spreads in triple line all about it like a neck-circlet, while above grow the roots of the earth and unfruitful sea. There by the counsel of Zeus who drives the clouds the Titan gods are hidden under misty gloom, in a dank place where are the ends of the huge earth. And they may not go out; for Poseidon fixed gates of bronze upon it, and a wall runs all round it on every side. There Gyes and Cottus and great-souled Obriareus live, trusty warders of Zeus who holds the aegis.

(Il. 736-744) And there, all in their order, are the sources and ends of gloomy earth and misty Tartarus and the unfruitful sea and starry heaven, loathsome and dank, which even the gods abhor.

It is a great gulf, and if once a man were within the gates, he would not reach the floor until a whole year had reached its end, but cruel blast upon blast would carry him this way and that. And this marvel is awful even to the deathless gods.

(Il. 744-757) There stands the awful home of murky Night wrapped in dark clouds. In front of it the son of Iapetus²³ stands immovably upholding the wide heaven upon his head and unwearying hands, where

²³ sc. Atlas, the Shu of Egyptian mythology: cp. note on line 177.

Night and Day draw near and greet one another as they pass the great threshold of bronze: and while the one is about to go down into the house, the other comes out at the door.

And the house never holds them both within; but always one is without the house passing over the earth, while the other stays at home and waits until the time for her journeying come; and the one holds all-seeing light for them on earth, but the other holds in her arms Sleep the brother of Death, even evil Night, wrapped in a vaporous cloud.

(Il. 758-766) And there the children of dark Night have their dwellings, Sleep and Death, awful gods. The glowing Sun never looks upon them with his beams, neither as he goes up into heaven, nor as he comes down from heaven. And the former of them roams peacefully over the earth and the sea's broad back and is kindly to men; but the other has a heart of iron, and his spirit within him is pitiless as bronze: whomsoever of men he has once seized he holds fast: and he is hateful even to the deathless gods.

(Il. 767-774) There, in front, stand the echoing halls of the god of the lower-world, strong Hades, and of awful Persephone. A fearful hound guards the house in front, pitiless, and he has a cruel trick. On those who go in he fawns with his tail and both his ears, but suffers them not to go out back again, but keeps watch and devours whomsoever he catches going out of the gates of strong Hades and awful Persephone.

(Il. 775-806) And there dwells the goddess loathed by the deathless gods, terrible Styx, eldest daughter of back-flowing Ocean.²⁴ She lives apart from the gods in her glorious house vaulted over with great rocks and propped up to heaven all round with silver pillars. Rarely does the daughter of Thaumás, swift-footed Iris, come to her with a message over the sea's wide back.

But when strife and quarrel arise among the deathless gods, and when any of them who live in the house of Olympus lies, then Zeus sends Iris to bring in a golden jug the great oath of the gods from far away, the famous cold water which trickles down from a high and beetling rock. Far under the wide-pathed earth a branch of Oceanus flows through the dark night out of the holy stream, and a tenth part of his water is allotted to her. With nine silver-swirling

streams he winds about the earth and the sea's wide back, and then falls into the main;²⁵ but the tenth flows out from a rock, a sore trouble to the gods. For whoever of the deathless gods that hold the peaks of snowy Olympus pours a libation of her water is forsworn, lies breathless until a full year is completed, and never comes near to taste ambrosia and nectar, but lies spiritless and voiceless on a strewn bed: and a heavy trance overshadows him. But when he has spent a long year in his sickness, another penance and an harder follows after the first. For nine years he is cut off from the eternal gods and never joins their councils of their feasts, nine full years. But in the tenth year he comes again to join the assemblies of the deathless gods who live in the house of Olympus. Such an oath, then, did the gods appoint the eternal and *primaeva* water of Styx to be: and it spouts through a rugged place.

(Il. 807-819) And there, all in their order, are the sources and ends of the dark earth and misty Tartarus and the unfruitful sea and starry heaven, loathsome and dank, which even the gods abhor.

And there are shining gates and an immovable threshold of bronze having unending roots and it is grown of itself.²⁶ And beyond, away from all the gods, live the Titans, beyond gloomy Chaos. But the glorious allies of loud-crashing Zeus have their dwelling upon Ocean's foundations, even Cottus and Gyes; but Briareos, being goodly, the deep-roaring Earth-Shaker made his son-in-law, giving him Cymopolea his daughter to wed.

Typhoeus

(Il. 820-868) But when Zeus had driven the Titans from heaven, huge Earth bare her youngest child Typhoeus of the love of Tartarus, by the aid of golden Aphrodite. Strength was with his hands in all that he did and the feet of the strong god were untiring. From his shoulders grew an hundred heads of a snake, a fearful dragon, with dark, flickering tongues, and from under the brows of his eyes in his marvellous heads flashed fire, and fire burned from his heads as he glared. And there were voices in all his dreadful heads which uttered every kind of sound unspeakable; for at one time they made sounds such that the gods understood, but at another, the noise of a bull bellowing aloud in proud ungovernable fury;

²⁴ Oceanus is here regarded as a continuous stream enclosing the earth and the seas, and so as flowing back upon himself.

²⁵ The conception of Oceanus is here different: he has nine streams which encircle the earth and the flow out into the 'main'

which appears to be the waste of waters on which, according to early Greek and Hebrew cosmology, the disk-like earth floated.

²⁶ i.e. the threshold is of 'native' metal, and not artificial.

and at another, the sound of a lion, relentless of heart; and at another, sounds like whelps, wonderful to hear; and again, at another, he would hiss, so that the high mountains re-echoed. And truly a thing past help would have happened on that day, and he would have come to reign over mortals and immortals, had not the father of men and gods been quick to perceive it. But he thundered hard and mightily: and the earth around resounded terribly and the wide heaven above, and the sea and Ocean's streams and the nether parts of the earth. Great Olympus reeled beneath the divine feet of the king as he arose and earth groaned thereat. And through the two of them heat took hold on the dark-blue sea, through the thunder and lightning, and through the fire from the monster, and the scorching winds and blazing thunderbolt. The whole earth seethed, and sky and sea: and the long waves raged along the beaches round and about, at the rush of the deathless gods: and there arose an endless shaking. Hades trembled where he rules over the dead below, and the Titans under Tartarus who live with Cronos, because of the unending clamour and the fearful strife. So when Zeus had raised up his might and seized his arms, thunder and lightning and lurid thunderbolt, he leaped from Olympus and struck him, and burned all the marvellous heads of the monster about him. But when Zeus had conquered him and lashed him with strokes, Typhoeus was hurled down, a maimed wreck, so that the huge earth groaned. And flame shot forth from the thunder-stricken lord in the dim rugged glens of the mount,²⁷ when he was smitten. A great part of huge earth was scorched by the terrible vapour and melted as tin melts when heated by men's art in channelled²⁸ crucibles; or as iron, which is hardest of all things, is softened by glowing fire in mountain glens and melts in the divine earth through the strength of Hephaestus.²⁹ Even so, then, the earth melted in the glow of the blazing fire. And in the bitterness of his anger Zeus cast him into wide Tartarus.

(Il. 869-880) And from Typhoeus come boisterous winds which blow damply, except Notus and Boreas and clear Zephyr. These are a god-sent kind, and a great blessing to men; but the others blow fitfully upon the seas. Some rush upon the misty sea and work great havoc among men with their evil, raging blasts; for varying with the season they blow, scattering ships and destroying sailors. And men who

meet these upon the sea have no help against the mischief. Others again over the boundless, flowering earth spoil the fair fields of men who dwell below, filling them with dust and cruel uproar.

The Offspring of the Olympians

(Il. 881-885) But when the blessed gods had finished their toil, and settled by force their struggle for honours with the Titans, they pressed far-seeing Olympian Zeus to reign and to rule over them, by Earth's prompting. So he divided their dignities amongst them.

(Il. 886-900) Now Zeus, king of the gods, made Metis his wife first, and she was wisest among gods and mortal men. But when she was about to bring forth the goddess bright-eyed Athene, Zeus craftily deceived her with cunning words and put her in his own belly, as Earth and starry Heaven advised. For they advised him so, to the end that no other should hold royal sway over the eternal gods in place of Zeus; for very wise children were destined to be born of her, first the maiden bright-eyed Tritogeneia, equal to her father in strength and in wise understanding; but afterwards she was to bear a son of overbearing spirit, king of gods and men. But Zeus put her into his own belly first, that the goddess might devise for him both good and evil.

(Il. 901-906) Next he married bright Themis who bare the Horae (Hours), and Eunomia (Order), Dike (Justice), and blooming Eirene (Peace), who mind the works of mortal men, and the Moerae (Fates) to whom wise Zeus gave the greatest honour, Clotho, and Lachesis, and Atropos who give mortal men evil and good to have.

(Il. 907-911) And Eurynome, the daughter of Ocean, beautiful in form, bare him three fair-cheeked Charites (Graces), Aglaea, and Euphrosyne, and lovely Thaleia, from whose eyes as they glanced flowed love that unnerves the limbs: and beautiful is their glance beneath their brows.

(Il. 912-914) Also he came to the bed of all-nourishing Demeter, and she bare white-armed Persephone whom Aidoneus carried off from her mother; but wise Zeus gave her to him.

²⁷ According to Homer Typhoeus was overwhelmed by Zeus amongst the Arimi in Cilicia. Pindar represents him as buried under Aetna, and Tzetzes reads Aetna in this passage.

²⁸ The epithet (which means literally 'well-bored') seems to refer to the spout of the crucible.

²⁹ The fire god. There is no reference to volcanic action: iron was smelted on Mount Ida; cp. "Epigrams of Homer", ix. 2-4.

(Il. 915-917) And again, he loved Mnemosyne with the beautiful hair: and of her the nine gold-crowned Muses were born who delight in feasts and the pleasures of song.

(Il. 918-920) And Leto was joined in love with Zeus who holds the aegis, and bare Apollo and Artemis delighting in arrows, children lovely above all the sons of Heaven.

(Il. 921-923) Lastly, he made Hera his blooming wife: and she was joined in love with the king of gods and men, and brought forth Hebe and Ares and Eileithyia.

(Il. 924-929) But Zeus himself gave birth from his own head to bright-eyed Tritogeneia,³⁰ the awful, the strife-stirring, the host-leader, the unwearying, the queen, who delights in tumults and wars and battles. But Hera without union with Zeus -- for she was very angry and quarrelled with her mate -- bare famous Hephaestus, who is skilled in crafts more than all the sons of Heaven.

(Il. 929a-929t)³¹ But Hera was very angry and quarrelled with her mate. And because of this strife she bare without union with Zeus who holds the aegis a glorious son, Hephaestus, who excelled all the sons of Heaven in crafts. But Zeus lay with the fair-cheeked daughter of Ocean and Tethys apart from Hera.... ((LACUNA))deceiving Metis (Thought) although she was full wise. But he seized her with his hands and put her in his belly, for fear that she might bring forth something stronger than his thunderbolt: therefore did Zeus, who sits on high and dwells in the aether, swallow her down suddenly. But she straightway conceived Pallas Athene: and the father of men and gods gave her birth by way of his head on the banks of the river Triton. And she remained hidden beneath the inward parts of Zeus, even Metis, Athena's mother, worker of righteousness, who was wiser than gods and mortal men. There the goddess (Athena) received that³² whereby she excelled in strength all the deathless ones who dwell in Olympus, she who made the host-scaring weapon of Athena. And with it (Zeus) gave her birth, arrayed in arms of war.

(Il. 930-933) And of Amphitrite and the loud-roaring Earth-Shaker was born great, wide-ruling Triton, and he owns the depths of the sea, living with his dear

mother and the lord his father in their golden house, an awful god.

(Il. 933-937) Also Cytherea bare to Ares the shield-piercer Panic and Fear, terrible gods who drive in disorder the close ranks of men in numbing war, with the help of Ares, sacker of towns: and Harmonia whom high-spirited Cadmus made his wife.

(Il. 938-939) And Maia, the daughter of Atlas, bare to Zeus glorious Hermes, the herald of the deathless gods, for she went up into his holy bed.

(Il. 940-942) And Semele, daughter of Cadmus was joined with him in love and bare him a splendid son, joyous Dionysus, -- a mortal woman an immortal son. And now they both are gods.

(Il. 943-944) And Alemena was joined in love with Zeus who drives the clouds and bare mighty Heracles.

(Il. 945-946) And Hephaestus, the famous Lamé One, made Aglaea, youngest of the Graces, his buxom wife.

(Il. 947-949) And golden-haired Dionysus made brown-haired Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, his buxom wife: and the son of Cronos made her deathless and unageing for him.

(Il. 950-955) And mighty Heracles, the valiant son of neat-ankled Alemena, when he had finished his grievous toils, made Hebe the child of great Zeus and gold-shod Hera his shy wife in snowy Olympus. Happy he! For he has finished his great works and lives amongst the dying gods, untroubled and unaging all his days.

(Il. 956-962) And Perseis, the daughter of Ocean, bare to unwearying Helios Circe and Aeetes the king. And Aeetes, the son of Helios who shows light to men, took to wife fair-cheeked Idyia, daughter of Ocean the perfect stream, by the will of the gods: and she was subject to him in love through golden Aphrodite and bare him neat-ankled Medea.

The Offspring of the Goddesses

(Il. 963-968) And now farewell, you dwellers on Olympus and you islands and continents and thou briny sea within. Now sing the company of

³⁰ i.e. Athena, who was born 'on the banks of the river Triton' (cp. l. 929l)

³¹ Restored by Peppmüller. The nineteen following lines from another recension of lines 889-900, 924-9 are quoted by Chrysippus (in Galen).

³² sc. the aegis. Line 929s is probably spurious, since it disagrees with l. 929q and contains a suspicious reference to Athens.

goddesses, sweet-voiced Muses of Olympus, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, -- even those deathless one who lay with mortal men and bare children like unto gods.

(ll. 969-974) Demeter, bright goddess, was joined in sweet love with the hero Iasion in a thrice-ploughed fallow in the rich land of Crete, and bare Plutus, a kindly god who goes everywhere over land and the sea's wide back, and him who finds him and into whose hands he comes he makes rich, bestowing great wealth upon him.

(ll. 975-978) And Harmonia, the daughter of golden Aphrodite, bare to Cadmus Ino and Semele and fair-cheeked Agave and Autonoe whom long haired Aristaeus wedded, and Polydorus also in rich-crowned Thebe.

(ll. 979-983) And the daughter of Ocean, Callirrhoe was joined in the love of rich Aphrodite with stout hearted Chrysaor and bare a son who was the strongest of all men, Geryones, whom mighty Heracles killed in sea-girt Erythea for the sake of his shambling oxen.

(ll. 984-991) And Eos bare to Tithonus brazen-crested Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, and the Lord Emathion. And to Cephalus she bare a splendid son, strong Phaethon, a man like the gods, whom, when he was a young boy in the tender flower of glorious youth with childish thoughts, laughter-loving Aphrodite seized and caught up and made a keeper of her shrine by night, a divine spirit.

(ll. 993-1002) And the son of Aeson by the will of the gods led away from Aeetes the daughter of Aeetes the heaven-nurtured king, when he had finished the many grievous labours which the great king, over bearing Pelias, that outrageous and presumptuous

doer of violence, put upon him. But when the son of Aeson had finished them, he came to Iolcus after long toil bringing the coy-eyed girl with him on his swift ship, and made her his buxom wife. And she was subject to Iason, shepherd of the people, and bare a son Medeus whom Cheiron the son of Philyra brought up in the mountains. And the will of great Zeus was fulfilled.

(ll. 1003-1007) But of the daughters of Nereus, the Old man of the Sea, Psamathe the fair goddess, was loved by Aeacus through golden Aphrodite and bare Phocus. And the silver-shod goddess Thetis was subject to Peleus and brought forth lion-hearted Achilles, the destroyer of men.

(ll. 1008-1010) And Cytherea with the beautiful crown was joined in sweet love with the hero Anchises and bare Aeneas on the peaks of Ida with its many wooded glens.

(ll. 1011-1016) And Circe the daughter of Helius, Hyperion's son, loved steadfast Odysseus and bare Agrius and Latinus who was faultless and strong: also she brought forth Telegonus by the will of golden Aphrodite. And they ruled over the famous Tyrenians, very far off in a recess of the holy islands.

(ll. 1017-1018) And the bright goddess Calypso was joined to Odysseus in sweet love, and bare him Nausithous and Nausinous.

(ll. 1019-1020) These are the immortal goddesses who lay with mortal men and bare them children like unto gods.

(ll. 1021-1022) But now, sweet-voiced Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis, sing of the company of women.

3.1. Homer / Agamemnon's Insult

Agamemnon has taken the daughter of Chryses, a priest of Apollo, hostage and refused to accept a ransom, causing the priest to pray to Apollo for vengeance.

Hom. *Il.* 1. Source: Homer. *The Iliad*. Trans. A. T. Murray. London: Heinemann, 1924.)

The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus's son Achilles, the accursed wrath which brought countless sorrows upon the Achaeans, and sent down to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made the men themselves to be the spoil for dogs and birds of every kind; and thus the will of Zeus was brought to fulfillment. Of this sing from the time when first there parted in strife Atreus's son, lord of men,¹ and noble Achilles....

[The priest's prayer of vengeance for Agamemnon taking his daughter causes Apollo to rain down pestilence among the Greeks.]

For nine days the missiles of the god ranged through the army, but on the tenth Achilles called the army to the place of assembly, for the goddess, white-armed Hera, had put it in his heart; for she pitied the Danaans² because she saw them dying. So, when they were assembled and met together, among them rose and spoke Achilles, swift of foot:

"Son of Atreus, now I think we shall be driven back and return home, our plans thwarted—if we should escape death, that is—if indeed war and pestilence alike are to subdue the Achaeans. But come, let us ask some seer or priest, or some reader of dreams—for a dream too is from Zeus—who might tell us why Phoebus Apollo has conceived such anger, whether it is because of a vow that he blames us, or a hecatomb;³ in the hope that perhaps he may accept the savor of lambs and unblemished goats, and be minded to ward off destruction from us."

When he had thus spoken he sat down, and among them rose up Calchas, son of Thestor, far the best of diviners, who had knowledge of all things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before, and who had guided the ships of the Achaeans to Ilios by the gift of prophecy that Phoebus Apollo had granted him. He with good intent addressed their assembly and spoke among them:

"Achilles, dear to Zeus, you ask me to declare the wrath of Apollo, who smites from afar.... It is not because of a vow that he blames us, nor a hecatomb, but because of the priest whom Agamemnon dishonored, and did not release his daughter nor accept the ransom. For this reason the god who strikes from afar has given woes, and will continue to give them, nor will he drive off from the Danaans loathsome destruction until we give back to her father the bright-eyed maiden, unbought, unransomed, and take a holy hecatomb to Chryse; then perhaps we might appease his wrath and persuade him."

When he had thus spoken, he sat down, and among them rose the warrior, son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, deeply vexed; and with rage was his black heart wholly filled, and his

eyes were like blazing fire. To Calchas first of all he spoke, and his look threatened trouble:

"Prophet of evil, never yet have you given me a favorable prophecy; always it is dear to your heart to prophesy evil, and no word of good have you ever yet spoken or brought to fulfillment. And among the Danaans in assembly you utter your prophecies, and declare that it is for this reason that the god who strikes from afar is bringing woes on them, because I would not accept the glorious ransom for the girl, the daughter of Chryses, since I would far rather keep her at home. For in fact I prefer her to Clytemnestra, my wedded wife, since she is in no way inferior to her, either in form or in stature, or in mind, or in handiwork. But even so I am minded to give her back if that is better; I would rather have the army safe than perishing. But for me make ready a prize at once, so that I may not be the only one of the Argives without a prize, since that is not right; for you all see this, that my prize goes from me elsewhere."

Then in answer to him spoke noble Achilles, swift of foot:

"Most glorious son of Atreus, most covetous of all men, how shall the great-hearted Achaeans give you a prize? We know nothing of any wealth laid up in common store, but whatever we took by pillage from the cities has been distributed, and it is not right to take this back from the men. Do you give her up at the god's command, and we Achaeans will recompense you threefold and fourfold, if ever Zeus grants us to sack the well-walled city of Troy."

Then in answer to him lord Agamemnon spoke:

"Do not in this way, valiant though you are, godlike Achilles, try to deceive me by your cleverness, for you will not outstrip me nor persuade me. Do you really intend, so long as you yourself keep your prize, that I sit here like this lacking one, since you ask me to give her back? Let the great-hearted Achaeans give me a prize, suiting it to my heart so that the recompense is equal! But if they do not give it, then I will come myself and take your prize, or that of Aias, or that of Odysseus I will seize and carry off. Angry will he be, to whomever I come. But of these things we will take thought later on; now let us launch a black ship into the bright sea, and man it with a due number of rowers, and place on board a hecatomb, and embark on it the fair-cheeked daughter of Chryses herself. And let one that is a counselor take command, Aias, or Idomeneus, or noble Odysseus, or you, son of Peleus, of all men most daunting, that you may offer sacrifice and appease him who works from afar."

Then with an angry glance Achilles swift of foot spoke to him:

"What, you clothed in shamelessness, you crafty of mind, how can any Achaean eagerly obey your words either to go on a journey or to do battle? I did not come here to fight because of the spearmen of Troy, since they are in no way at fault toward me. Never did they drive off my cattle or my horses, nor ever in deep-soiled Phthia, nourisher of men, did they lay waste the grain, for many things lie between us—shadowy mountains and sounding sea. But you, shameless one, we followed here in order to please you, seeking to win recompense for Menelaus and for

¹ Agamemnon, the overlord of the Greek armies.

² Another word for the Greeks collectively.

³ A sacrifice of 100 cattle; was Apollo demanding one?

you, dog-face, from the Trojans. This you do not regard or take thought of; and you even threaten that you will yourself take from me the prize for which I toiled much, and the sons of the Achaeans gave it to me. Never do I have a prize like yours, when the Achaeans sack a well-peopled city of the Trojans; my hands bear the brunt of tumultuous battle, but when the distribution comes, your prize is far greater, while I go to my ships with some small thing, yet my own, when I have grown weary with fighting. Now I will go to Phthia, since it is far better to return home with my beaked ships, nor do I intend, while without honor here, to pile up goods and wealth for you.”

Then answered him Agamemnon, the lord of men: “Flee then, if your heart is set on it; I am not begging you to stay for my sake. With me are others that will do me honor, and above all Zeus, the lord of counsel. Most hateful to me are you of the kings, nurtured by Zeus, for always is strife dear to you, and wars and battles. If you are most powerful, a god, I think, gave you this. Go home with your ships and your men, and lord it over your Myrmidons;¹ for you I care not, nor am I concerned about your anger. And this will be my threat to you: since Phoebus Apollo takes from me the daughter of Chryses, her with a ship of mine and men of mine I will send back, but I will myself come to your hut and take the fair-cheeked Briseis, that prize of yours, so that you may well know how much mightier I am than you, and another too may shrink from declaring himself my equal and likening himself to me to my face.”

So he spoke, and grief came upon the son of Peleus, and within his shaggy breast his heart was divided in counsel, whether he should draw his sharp sword from his side and break up the assembly, and kill the son of Atreus, or whether he should check his wrath and curb his spirit. While he pondered this in his mind and heart, and was drawing his great sword from its sheath, Athene came from heaven, sent by the goddess, white-armed Hera, for in her heart she loved them both alike

and cared for them. She stood behind him, and caught the son of Peleus by his tawny hair, allowing herself to be seen by him alone, and of the rest no one saw her....

“I have come from heaven to put a stop to your anger, if you will listen, and the goddess, white-armed Hera, sent me, for in her heart she loves you both alike, and cares for you. Come now, cease from strife, and let not your hand draw your sword. With words indeed taunt him with what will happen; for thus I will speak, and surely this thing will come to pass: one day three times as many glorious gifts will be yours on account of this insult. Restrain yourself, therefore, and obey us.”...

[Athena departs, and Achilles taunts Agamemnon:]

“You heavy with wine, with the face of a dog but the heart of a deer, never have you dared to arm yourself for battle with your troops, or to go into an ambush with the chief men of the Achaeans. That seems to you to be death. It is surely far better to take back the gifts of whoever through the wide camp of the Achaeans speaks in opposition to you. People-devouring king, since you rule over nobodies! Otherwise, son of Atreus, you would now be committing your final outrage.

“But I will speak frankly to you, and will swear a mighty oath on it: by this staff here—that will never again put out leaves or shoots since it first left its stump in the mountains, nor will it again grow green, for the bronze has stripped it of leaves and bark, and now the sons of the Achaeans that give judgment bear it in their hands, those who guard the laws that come from Zeus; and this shall be for you a mighty oath—surely some day longing for Achilles will come on the sons of the Achaeans one and all, and on that day you will in no way be able to help them for all your grief, when many will be laid low at the hands of man-slaying Hector. But you will gnaw your heart within you in wrath that you did not at all honor the best of the Achaeans.”

¹ Achilles's own people, whose warriors he led to Troy.

Homer: Nausicaa and the Stranger

(from *The Odyssey*)

The Dark Age bards who sang of the heroic Bronze Age past could not imagine what Bronze Age life was like. Thus a royal household was depicted with a middle-class flavor and a rather rustic and naive quality of speech and activity; a king was conceived of as a rough and unregal person, capable of doing his own farm labor or making his own household furniture.¹

By and by morning came and woke Nausicaa, who began wondering about her dream; she therefore went to the other end of the house to tell her father and mother all about it, and found them in their own room. Her mother was sitting by the fireside spinning her purple yarn with her maids around her, and she happened to catch her father just as he was going to attend a meeting of the town council, which the Phaeacian aldermen had convened. She stopped him and said:

“Papa dear, could you manage to let me have a good big waggon? want to take all our dirty clothes to the river and wash them. You are the chief man here, so it is only right that you should have a clean shirt when you attend meetings of the council. Moreover, you have five sons at home, two of them married, while the other three are good-looking bachelors; you know they always like to have clean linen when they go to a dance, and I have been thinking about all this.”

She did not say a word about her own wedding, for she did not like to but her father knew and said, “You shall have the mules, my love, and whatever else you have a mind for. Be off with you, and the men shall get you a good strong waggon with a body to it that will hold all your clothes.”

On this he gave his orders to the servants, who got the waggon out, harnessed the mules, and put them to, while the girl brought the cloth, down from the linen room and placed them on the waggon. Her mother prepared her a basket of provisions with all sorts of good things, and goat skin full of wine; the girl now got into the waggon, and her mother, gave her also a golden cruse of oil, that she and her women might anoint themselves. Then she took the whip and reins and lashed the mules on whereon they set off, and their hoofs clattered on the road. They pulled without flagging, and carried not only Nausicaa and her wash of clothe but the maids also who were with her.

When they reached the water side they went to the washing-cisterns, through which there ran at all times enough pure water to wash any quantity of linen, no matter how dirty. Here they unharnessed the mules and turned them out to feed on the sweet juicy herbage that grew by the water side. They took the clothes out of the waggon, put them in the water, and vied with one another in treading them in the pits to get the dirt out. After they had washed them and got them quite clean, they laid them out by the sea side, where the waves had raised a high beach of shingle, and set about washing themselves and anointing themselves with olive oil. Then they got their dinner by the side of the stream, and waited for the sun to finish drying the clothes. When they had done dinner they threw off the veils that covered their heads and began to play at ball, while Nausicaa sang for them. As the huntress Diana goes forth upon the mountains of Taygetus or Erymanthus to hunt wild boars or deer, and the wood-nymphs, daughters of Aegis-bearing Zeus, take their sport along with her (then is Leto proud at seeing her daughter stand a full head taller than the others, and eclipse the loveliest amid a whole bevy of beauties), even so did the girl outshine her handmaids.

When it was time for them to start home, and they were folding the clothes and putting them into the waggon, Athena began to consider how Odysseus should wake up and see the handsome girl who was to conduct him to the city of the Phaeacians. The girl, therefore, threw a ball at one of the maids, which missed her and fell into deep water. On this they all shouted, and the noise they made woke Odysseus, who sat up in his bed of leaves and began to wonder what it might all be.

“Alas,” said he to himself, “what kind of people have I come amongst? Are they cruel, savage, and uncivilized, or hospitable and humane? I seem to hear the voices of young women, and they sound like those

¹ Hom. *Od.* 6.48–6.315. Source: Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Samuel Butler. London: Fiffield, 1900.

of the nymphs that haunt mountain tops, or springs of rivers and meadows of green grass. At any rate I am among a race of men and women. Let me try if I cannot manage to get a look at them.”

As he said this he crept from under his bush, and broke off a bough covered with thick leaves to hide his nakedness. He looked like some lion of the wilderness that stalks about exulting in his strength and defying both wind and rain; his eyes glare as he prowls in quest of oxen, sheep, or deer, for he is famished, and will dare break even into a well-fenced homestead, trying to get at the sheep—even such did Odysseus seem to the young women, as he drew near to them all naked as he was, for he was in great want. On seeing one so unkempt and so begrimed with salt water, the others scampered off along the spits that jutted out into the sea, but the daughter of Alcinous stood firm, for Athena put courage into her heart at took away all fear from her. She stood right in front of Odysseus, and doubted whether he should go up to her, throw himself at her feet, and embrace her knees as a suppliant, or stay where he was and entreat her give him some clothes and show him the way to the town. In the end I deemed it best to entreat her from a distance in case the girl should take offence at his coming near enough to clasp her knees, so he addressed her in honeyed and persuasive language.

“O queen,” he said, “I implore your aid—but tell me, are you a goddess or are you a mortal woman? If you are a goddess and dwell in heaven, can only conjecture that you are Zeus’s daughter Diana, for your face at figure resemble none but hers; if on the other hand you are a mortal at live on earth, thrice happy are your father and mother—thrice happy, to are your brothers and sisters; how proud and delighted they must feel when they see so fair a scion as yourself going out to a dance; most happy, however, of all will he be whose wedding gifts have been the richest, and who takes you to his own home. I never yet saw anyone so beautiful, neither man nor woman, and am lost in admiration as I behold you. I can on compare you to a young palm tree which I saw when I was at Delos growing near the altar of Apollo—for I was there, too, with much people aft me, when I was on that journey which has been the source of all my troubles. Never yet did such a young plant shoot out of the ground as that was, and I admired and wondered at it exactly as I now admire and wonder at yourself. I dare not clasp your knees, but I am in great distress; yesterday made the twentieth day that I had been tossing about upon the sea. The winds and waves have taken me all the way from the Ogygian island, and now fate has flung me upon this coast that I may

endure still further suffering; for I do not think that I have yet come to the end of it, bi rather that heaven has still much evil in store for me.

“And now, O queen, have pity upon me, for you are the first person have met, and I know no one else in this country. Show me the way to your town, and let me have anything that you may have brought hither to wrap your clothes in. May heaven grant you in all things your heart desire—husband, house, and a happy, peaceful home; for there is nothing better in this world than that man and wife should be of one mind in house. It discomfits their enemies, makes the hearts of their friends glad, and they themselves know more about it than anyone.”

To this Nausicaa answered, “Stranger, you appear to be a sensible, well disposed person. There is no accounting for luck; Zeus gives prosperity to rich and poor just as he chooses, so you must take what he has seen fit to send you, and make the best of it. Now, however, that you have come to this our country, you shall not want for clothes nor for anything else that a foreigner in distress may reasonably look for. I will show you the way to the town, and will tell you the name of our people; we are called Phaeacians, and I am daughter to Alcinous, in whom the whole power of the state is vested.”

Then she called her maids and said, “Stay where you are, you girls. Can you not see a man without running away from him? Do you take him for a robber or a murderer? Neither he nor anyone else can come here to do us Phaeacians any harm, for we are dear to the gods, and live apart on a land’s end that juts into the sounding sea, and have nothing to do with any other people. This is only some poor man who has lost his way, and we must be kind to him, for strangers and foreigners in distress are under Zeus’s protection, and will take what they can get and be thankful; so, girls, give the poor fellow something to eat and drink, and wash him in the stream at some place that is sheltered from the wind.”

On this the maids left off running away and began calling one another back. They made Odysseus sit down in the shelter as Nausicaa had told them, and brought him a shirt and cloak. They also brought him the little golden cruse of oil, and told him to go and wash in the stream. But Odysseus said, “Young women, please to stand a little on one side that I may wash the brine from my shoulders and anoint myself with oil, for it is long enough since my skin has had a drop of oil upon it. I cannot wash as long as you all

keep standing there. I am ashamed to strip before a number of good-looking young women.”

Then they stood on one side and went to tell the girl, while Odysseus washed himself in the stream and scrubbed the brine from his back and from his broad shoulders. When he had thoroughly washed himself, and had got the brine out of his hair, he anointed himself with oil, and put on the clothes which the girl had given him; Athena then made him look taller and stronger than before, she also made the hair grow thick on the top of his head, and flow down in curls like hyacinth blossoms; she glorified him about the head and shoulders as a skilful workman who has studied art of all kinds under Vulcan and Athena enriches a piece of silver plate by gilding it—and his work is full of beauty. Then he went and sat down a little way off upon the beach, looking quite young and handsome, and the girl gazed on him with admiration; then she said to her maids:

“Hush, my dears, for I want to say something. I believe the gods who live in heaven have sent this man to the Phaeacians. When I first saw him I thought him plain, but now his appearance is like that of the gods who dwell in heaven. I should like my future husband to be just such another as he is, if he would only stay here and not want to go away. However, give him something to eat and drink.”

They did as they were told, and set food before Odysseus, who ate and drank ravenously, for it was long since he had had food of any kind. Meanwhile, Nausicaa bethought her of another matter. She got the linen fold and placed in the waggon, she then yoked the mules, and, as she took her seat, she called Odysseus:

“Stranger,” said she, “rise and let us be going back to the town; I will introduce you at the house of my excellent father, where I can tell you that you will meet all the best people among the Phaeacians. But be sure and do as I bid you, for you seem to be a sensible person. As long as we are going past the fields and farm lands, follow briskly behind the waggon along with the maids and I will lead the way myself. Presently, however we shall come to the town, where you will find a high wall running; round it, and a good harbour on either side with a narrow entrance in the city, and the ships will be drawn up by the road side, for everyone has a place where his own ship can lie. You will see the market place with temple of Poseidon in the middle of it, and paved with large stones bedded in the earth. Here people deal in ship’s gear of all kinds,

such as cables and sails, and here, too, are the places where oars are made, for the Phaeacia are not a nation of archers; they know nothing about bows and arrows, but are a seafaring folk, and pride themselves on their masts, oars, and ships with which they travel far over the sea.

“I am afraid of the gossip and scandal that may be set on foot against me later on; for the people here are very ill-natured, and some low fellow, he met us, might say, ‘Who is this fine-looking stranger that is going about with Nausicaa? Where did she find him? I suppose she is going to mar him. Perhaps he is a vagabond sailor whom she has taken from some foreign vessel, for we have no neighbours; or some god has at last can down from heaven in answer to her prayers, and she is going to live with him all the rest of her life. It would be a good thing if she would take herself off and find a husband somewhere else, for she will not look at or of the many excellent young Phaeacians who are in love with her.’ This is the kind of disparaging remark that would be made about me, and could not complain, for I should myself be scandalized at seeing any other girl do the like, and go about with men in spite of everybody, while her father and mother were still alive, and without having been married in the face of all the world.

“If, therefore, you want my father to give you an escort and to help you home, do as I bid you; you will see a beautiful grove of poplars by the road side dedicated to Athena; it has a well in it and a meadow all round it. Here my father has a field of rich garden ground, about as far from the town as a man’s voice will carry. Sit down there and wait for a while till the rest of us can get into the town and reach my father’s house. Then, when you think we must have done this, come into the town and ask the way to the house of my father Alcinous. You will have no difficulty in finding it; any child will point it out to you, for no one else in the whole town has anything like such a fine house as he has. When you have got past the gates and through the outer court, go right across the inner court till you come to my mother. You will find her sitting by the fire and spinning her purple wool by firelight. It is a fine sight to see her as she leans back against one of the bearing-posts with her maids all ranged behind her. Close to her seat stands that of my father, on which he sits and toposes like an immortal god. Never mind him, but go up to my mother, and lay your hands upon her knees if you would get home quickly. If you can gain her over, you may hope to see your own country again, no matter how distant it may be.”

Homer: The Artifice of Penelope

(from *The Odyssey*)

The Odyssey, Book 2 — While Odysseus, the chieftan of Ithaca, is away, suitors start besetting his wife Penelope. Eventually their son Telemachus convenes the men of Ithaca.¹

Telemachus took this speech as of good omen and rose at once, for he was bursting with what he had to say. He stood in the middle of the assembly and the good herald Pisenor brought him his staff. Then, turning to Aegyptius, “Sir,” said he, “it is I, as you will shortly learn, who have convened you, for it is I who am the most aggrieved. I have not got wind of any host approaching about which I would warn you, nor is there any matter of public moment on which I would speak. My grievance is purely personal, and turns on two great misfortunes which have fallen upon my house.

“The first of these is the loss of my excellent father, who was chief among all you here present, and was like a father to every one of you; the second is much more serious, and ere long will be the utter ruin of my estate. The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Icarius, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, but day by day they keep hanging about my father’s house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness; we have now no Odysseus to ward off harm from our doors, and I cannot hold my own against them. I shall never all my days be as good a man as he was, still I would indeed defend myself if I had power to do so, for I cannot stand such treatment any longer; my house is being disgraced and ruined.

“Have respect, therefore, to your own consciences and to public opinion. Fear, too, the wrath of heaven, lest the gods should be displeased and turn upon you. I pray you by Zeus and Themis, who is the beginning and the end of councils, [do not] hold back, my friends, and leave me singlehanded- unless it be that my brave father Odysseus did some wrong to the Achaeans which you would now avenge on me, by aiding and abetting these suitors. Moreover, if I am to

be eaten out of house and home at all, I had rather you did the eating yourselves, for I could then take action against you to some purpose, and serve you with notices from house to house till I got paid in full, whereas now I have no remedy.”

With this Telemachus dashed his staff to the ground and burst into tears. Every one was very sorry for him, but they all sat still and no one ventured to make him an angry answer, save only Antinous, who spoke thus:

“Telemachus, insolent braggart that you are, how dare you try to throw the blame upon us suitors? It is your mother’s fault not ours, for she is a very artful woman. This three years past, and close on four, she has been driving us out of our minds, by encouraging each one of us, and sending him messages without meaning one word of what she says. And then there was that other trick she played us. She set up a great tambour frame in her room, and began to work on an enormous piece of fine needlework. ‘Sweet hearts,’ said she, ‘Odysseus is indeed dead, still do not press me to marry again immediately, wait- for I would not have skill in needlework perish unrecorded- till I have completed a pall for the hero Laertes, to be in readiness against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the place will talk if he is laid out without a pall.’

“This was what she said, and we assented; whereon we could see her working on her great web all day long, but at night she would unpick the stitches again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years and we never found her out, but as time wore on and she was now in her fourth year, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her work, so she had to finish it whether she would or no. The suitors, therefore, make you this answer, that both you and the Achaeans may understand- ‘Send your mother away, and bid her marry the man of her own and of her

¹ Source: Homer. *The Odyssey*, translated by Samuel Butler. London: A. C. Fifield, 1900.

father's choice'; for I do not know what will happen if she goes on plaguing us much longer with the airs she gives herself on the score of the accomplishments Athena has taught her, and because she is so clever. We never yet heard of such a woman; we know all about Tyro, Alcmena, Mycene, and the famous women of old, but they were nothing to your mother, any one of them. It was not fair of her to treat us in that way, and as long as she continues in the mind with which heaven has now endowed her, so long shall we go on eating up your estate; and I do not see why she should change, for she gets all the honour and glory, and it is you who pay for it, not she. Understand, then, that we will not go back to our lands, neither here nor elsewhere, till she has made her choice and married some one or other of us."

Telemachus answered, "Antinous, how can I drive the mother who bore me from my father's house? My

father is abroad and we do not know whether he is alive or dead. It will be hard on me if I have to pay Icarius the large sum which I must give him if I insist on sending his daughter back to him. Not only will he deal rigorously with me, but heaven will also punish me; for my mother when she leaves the house will call on the Erinyes to avenge her; besides, it would not be a creditable thing to do, and I will have nothing to say to it.

"If you choose to take offence at this, leave the house and feast elsewhere at one another's houses at your own cost turn and turn about. If, on the other hand, you elect to persist in spunging upon one man, heaven help me, but Zeus shall reckon with you in full, and when you fall in my father's house there shall be no man to avenge you."

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The Odyssey, Book 18 — Penelope continues to put off the suitors by whatever means, unaware that Odysseus has returned to Ithaca in disguise, seeing a way to reclaim his house.

Then Athena put it into the mind of Penelope to show herself to the suitors, that she might make them still more enamoured of her, and win still further honour from her son and husband. So she feigned a mocking laugh and said, "Eurynome, I have changed my and have a fancy to show myself to the suitors although I detest them. I should like also to give my son a hint that he had better not have anything more to do with them. They speak fairly enough but they mean mischief."

"My dear child," answered Eurynome, "all that you have said is true, go and tell your son about it, but first wash yourself and anoint your face. Do not go about with your cheeks all covered with tears; it is not right that you should grieve so incessantly; for Telemachus, whom you always prayed that you might live to see with a beard, is already grown up."

"I know, Eurynome," replied Penelope, "that you mean well, but do not try and persuade me to wash and to anoint myself, for heaven robbed me of all my beauty on the day my husband sailed; nevertheless, tell Autonoe and Hippodamia that I want them. They must be with me when I am in the cloister; I am not going among the men alone; it would not be proper for me to do so."

On this the old woman went out of the room to bid the maids go to their mistress. In the meantime Athena bethought her of another matter, and sent Penelope off into a sweet slumber; so she lay down on her couch and her limbs became heavy with sleep. Then the goddess shed grace and beauty over her that all the Achaeans might admire her. She washed her face with the ambrosial loveliness that Venus wears when she goes dancing with the Graces; she made her taller and of a more commanding figure, while as for her complexion it was whiter than sawn ivory. When Athena had done all this she went away, whereon the maids came in from the women's room and woke Penelope with the sound of their talking.

"What an exquisitely delicious sleep I have been having," said she, as she passed her hands over her face, "in spite of all my misery. I wish Diana would let me die so sweetly now at this very moment, that I might no longer waste in despair for the loss of my dear husband, who possessed every kind of good quality and was the most distinguished man among the Achaeans."

With these words she came down from her upper room, not alone but attended by two of her maidens, and when she reached the suitors she stood by one of

the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the cloister, holding a veil before her face, and with a staid maid servant on either side of her. As they beheld her the suitors were so overpowered and became so desperately enamoured of her, that each one prayed he might win her for his own bed fellow.

“Telemachus,” said she, addressing her son, “I fear you are no longer so discreet and well conducted as you used to be. When you were younger you had a greater sense of propriety; now, however, that you are grown up, though a stranger to look at you would take you for the son of a well-to-do father as far as size and good looks go, your conduct is by no means what it should be. What is all this disturbance that has been going on, and how came you to allow a stranger to be so disgracefully ill-treated? What would have happened if he had suffered serious injury while a suppliant in our house? Surely this would have been very discreditable to you.”

“I am not surprised, my dear mother, at your displeasure,” replied Telemachus, “I understand all about it and know when things are not as they should be, which I could not do when I was younger; I cannot, however, behave with perfect propriety at all times. First one and then another of these wicked people here keeps driving me out of my mind, and I have no one to stand by me. After all, however, this fight between Irus and the stranger did not turn out as the suitors meant it to do, for the stranger got the best of it. I wish Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo would break the neck of every one of these wooers of yours, some inside the house and some out; and I wish they might all be as limp as Irus is over yonder in the gate of the outer court. See how he nods his head like a drunken man; he has had such a thrashing that he cannot stand on his feet nor get back to his home, wherever that may be, for has no strength left in him.”

Thus did they converse. Eurymachus then came up and said, “Queen Penelope, daughter of Icarius, if all the Achaeans in Iasian Argos could see you at this moment, you would have still more suitors in your house by tomorrow morning, for you are the most admirable woman in the whole world both as regards personal beauty and strength of understanding.”

To this Penelope replied, “Eurymachus, heaven robbed me of all my beauty whether of face or figure when the Argives set sail for Troy and my dear husband with them. If he were to return and look after my affairs, I should both be more respected and

show a better presence to the world. As it is, I am oppressed with care, and with the afflictions which heaven has seen fit to heap upon me. My husband foresaw it all, and when he was leaving home he took my right wrist in his hand- ‘Wife,’ he said, ‘we shall not all of us come safe home from Troy, for the Trojans fight well both with bow and spear. They are excellent also at fighting from chariots, and nothing decides the issue of a fight sooner than this. I know not, therefore, whether heaven will send me back to you, or whether I may not fall over there at Troy. In the meantime do you look after things here. Take care of my father and mother as at present, and even more so during my absence, but when you see our son growing a beard, then marry whom you will, and leave this your present home. This is what he said and now it is all coming true. A night will come when I shall have to yield myself to a marriage which I detest, for Zeus has taken from me all hope of happiness. This further grief, moreover, cuts me to the very heart. You suitors are not wooing me after the custom of my country. When men are courting a woman who they think will be a good wife to them and who is of noble birth, and when they are each trying to win her for himself, they usually bring oxen and sheep to feast the friends of the lady, and they make her magnificent presents, instead of eating up other people’s property without paying for it.”

This was what she said, and Odysseus was glad when he heard her trying to get presents out of the suitors, and flattering them with fair words which he knew she did not mean.

Then Antinous said, “Queen Penelope, daughter of Icarius, take as many presents as you please from any one who will give them to you; it is not well to refuse a present; but we will not go about our business nor stir from where we are, till you have married the best man among us whoever he may be.”

The others applauded what Antinous had said, and each one sent his servant to bring his present. Antinous’s man returned with a large and lovely dress most exquisitely embroidered. It had twelve beautifully made brooch pins of pure gold with which to fasten it. Eurymachus immediately brought her a magnificent chain of gold and amber beads that gleamed like sunlight. Eurymachus’s two men returned with some earrings fashioned into three brilliant pendants which glistened most beautifully; while king Pisander son of Polyctor gave her a necklace of the rarest workmanship, and every one else brought her a beautiful present of some kind.

Then the queen went back to her room upstairs, and her maids brought the presents after her. Meanwhile the suitors took to singing and dancing, and stayed till evening came. They danced and sang till it grew dark; they then brought in three braziers to give light, and piled them up with chopped firewood very and dry, and they lit torches from them, which the maids held up turn and turn about. Then Odysseus said:

“Maids, servants of Odysseus who has so long been absent, go to the queen inside the house; sit with her and amuse her, or spin, and pick wool. I will hold the light for all these people. They may stay till morning, but shall not beat me, for I can stand a great deal.”

The maids looked at one another and laughed, while pretty Melantho began to gibe at him contemptuously. She was daughter to Dolius, but had been brought up by Penelope, who used to give her toys to play with, and looked after her when she was a child; but in spite of all this she showed no consideration for the sorrows of her mistress, and used to misconduct herself with Eurymachus, with whom she was in love.

“Poor wretch,” said she, “are you gone clean out of your mind? Go and sleep in some smithy, or place of public gossips, instead of chattering here. Are you not ashamed of opening your mouth before your betters—so many of them too? Has the wine been getting into your head, or do you always babble in this way? You seem to have lost your wits because you beat the tramp Irus; take care that a better man than he does not come and cudgel you about the head till he packs you bleeding out of the house.”

“Vixen,” replied Odysseus, scowling at her, “I will go and tell Telemachus what you have been saying, and he will have you torn limb from limb.”

With these words he scared the women, and they went off into the body of the house. They trembled all over, for they thought he would do as he said. But Odysseus took his stand near the burning braziers, holding up torches and looking at the people—brooding the while on things that should surely come to pass.

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The Odyssey, Book 23 — Odysseus and Penelope are finally reunited.

Meanwhile Eurynome and the nurse took torches and made the bed ready with soft coverlets; as soon as they had laid them, the nurse went back into the house to go to her rest, leaving the bed chamber woman Eurynome to show Odysseus and Penelope to bed by torch light. When she had conducted them to their room she went back, and they then came joyfully to the rites of their own old bed. Telemachus, Philoetius, and the swineherd now left off dancing, and made the women leave off also. They then laid themselves down to sleep in the cloisters.

When Odysseus and Penelope had had their fill of love they fell talking with one another. She told him how much she had had to bear in seeing the house filled with a crowd of wicked suitors who had killed so many sheep and oxen on her account, and had drunk so many casks of wine. Odysseus in his turn told her what he had suffered, and how much trouble he had himself given to other people. He told her everything, and she was so delighted to listen that she never went to sleep till he had ended his whole story.

He began with his victory over the Cicons, and how he thence reached the fertile land of the Lotus-eaters. He told her all about the Cyclops and how he had punished him for having so ruthlessly eaten his brave comrades; how he then went on to Aeolus, who received him hospitably and furthered him on his way, but even so he was not to reach home, for to his great grief a hurricane carried him out to sea again; how he went on to the Laestrygonian city Telepylos, where the people destroyed all his ships with their crews, save himself and his own ship only. Then he told of cunning Circe and her craft, and how he sailed to the chill house of Hades, to consult the ghost of the Theban prophet Teiresias, and how he saw his old comrades in arms, and his mother who bore him and brought him up when he was a child; how he then heard the wondrous singing of the Sirens, and went on to the wandering rocks and terrible Charybdis and to Scylla, whom no man had ever yet passed in safety; how his men then ate the cattle of the sun-god, and how Zeus therefore struck the ship with his thunderbolts, so that all his men perished together,

himself alone being left alive; how at last he reached the Ogygian island and the nymph Calypso, who kept him there in a cave, and fed him, and wanted him to marry her, in which case she intended making him immortal so that he should never grow old, but she could not persuade him to let her do so; and how after much suffering he had found his way to the Phaeacians, who had treated him as though he had been a god, and sent him back in a ship to his own country after having given him gold, bronze, and raiment in great abundance. This was the last thing about which he told her, for here a deep sleep took hold upon him and eased the burden of his sorrows.

Then Athena bethought her of another matter. When she deemed that Odysseus had had both of his wife and of repose, she bade gold-enthroned Dawn rise out of Oceanus that she might shed light upon mankind. On this, Odysseus rose from his comfortable bed and said to Penelope, "Wife, we have both of us had our full share of troubles, you, here, in lamenting my absence, and I in being prevented from getting home though I was longing all the time to do

so. Now, however, that we have at last come together, take care of the property that is in the house. As for the sheep and goats which the wicked suitors have eaten, I will take many myself by force from other people, and will compel the Achaeans to make good the rest till they shall have filled all my yards. I am now going to the wooded lands out in the country to see my father who has so long been grieved on my account, and to yourself I will give these instructions, though you have little need of them. At sunrise it will at once get abroad that I have been killing the suitors; go upstairs, therefore, and stay there with your women. See nobody and ask no questions."

As he spoke he girded on his armour. Then he roused Telemachus, Philoetius, and Eumaeus, and told them all to put on their armour also. This they did, and armed themselves. When they had done so, they opened the gates and sallied forth, Odysseus leading the way. It was now daylight, but Athena nevertheless concealed them in darkness and led them quickly out of the town.

Hesiod: *Works and Days*

In *Works and Days* Hesiod divided time into five ages: the Golden age, ruled by Cronos, when people lived extremely long lives ‘without sorrow of heart’; the Silver age, ruled by Zeus; the Bronze age, an epoch of war; the Heroic age, the time of the Trojan war; and lastly the Iron age, the corrupt present. This is similar to Hindu and Buddhist concepts of the Kali Yuga. The idea of a Golden Age has likewise had a profound impact on western thought. *Works and Days* also discusses pagan ethics, extols hard work, and lists lucky and unlucky days of the month for various activities.¹

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Proem

(ll. 1-10) Muses of Pieria who give glory through song, come hither, tell of Zeus your father and chant his praise. Through him mortal men are famed or unfamed, sung or unsung alike, as great Zeus wills. For easily he makes strong, and easily he brings the strong man low; easily he humbles the proud and raises the obscure, and easily he straightens the crooked and blasts the proud—Zeus who thunders aloft and has his dwelling most high.

Attend thou with eye and ear, and make judgements straight with righteousness. And I, Perses, would tell of true things.

The Two Strifes

(ll. 11-24) So, after all, there was not one kind of Strife alone, but all over the earth there are two. As for the one, a man would praise her when he came to understand her; but the other is blameworthy: and they are wholly different in nature. For one fosters evil war and battle, being cruel: her no man loves; but perforce, through the will of the deathless gods, men pay harsh Strife her honour due. But the other is the elder daughter of dark Night, and the son of Cronos who sits above and dwells in the aether, set her in the roots of the earth: and she is far kinder to men. She stirs up even the shiftless to toil; for a man grows eager to work when he considers his neighbour, a rich man who hastens to plough and plant and put his house in good order; and neighbour vies with his neighbour as he hurries after wealth. This Strife is wholesome for men. And potter is angry with potter, and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is jealous of beggar, and minstrel of minstrel.

(ll. 25-41) Perses, lay up these things in your heart, and do not let that Strife who delights in mischief hold your heart back from work, while you peep and peer and listen to the wrangles of the court-house. Little concern has he with quarrels and courts who has not a year’s victuals laid up betimes, even that which the earth bears, Demeter’s grain. When you have got plenty of that, you can raise disputes and strive to get another’s goods. But you shall have no second chance to deal so again: nay, let us settle our dispute here with true judgement which is of Zeus and is perfect. For we had already divided our inheritance, but you seized the greater share and carried it off, greatly swelling the glory of our bribe-swallowing lords who love to judge such a cause as this. Fools! They know not how much more the half is than the whole, nor what great advantage there is in mallow and asphodel.²

The Myth of Prometheus and Pandora

(ll. 42-53) For the gods keep hidden from men the means of life. Else you would easily do work enough in a day to supply you for a full year even without working; soon would you put away your rudder over the smoke, and the fields worked by ox and sturdy mule would run to waste. But Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it, because Prometheus the crafty deceived him; therefore he planned sorrow and mischief against men. He hid fire; but that the noble son of Iapetus stole again for men from Zeus the counsellor in a hollow fennel-stalk, so that Zeus who delights in thunder did not see it. But afterwards Zeus who gathers the clouds said to him in anger:

(ll. 54-59) ‘Son of Iapetus, surpassing all in cunning, you are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire—a great plague to you yourself and to men that

¹ Hesiod. *The Homeric Hymns and Homeric Hymns*, translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1914.

² That is, the poor man’s fare, like ‘bread and cheese’.

shall be. But I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction.'

(ll. 60-68) So said the father of men and gods, and laughed aloud. And he bade famous Hephaestus make haste and mix earth with water and to put in it the voice and strength of human kind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face; and Athene to teach her needlework and the weaving of the varied web; and golden Aphrodite to shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs. And he charged Hermes the guide, the Slayer of Argus, to put in her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature.

(ll. 69-82) So he ordered. And they obeyed the lord Zeus the son of Cronos. Forthwith the famous Lame God moulded clay in the likeness of a modest maid, as the son of Cronos purposed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her, and the divine Graces and queenly Persuasion put necklaces of gold upon her, and the rich-haired Hours crowned her head with spring flowers. And Pallas Athene bedecked her form with all manners of finery. Also the Guide, the Slayer of Argus, contrived within her lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature at the will of loud thundering Zeus, and the Herald of the gods put speech in her. And he called this woman Pandora,³ because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread.

(ll. 83-89) But when he had finished the sheer, hopeless snare, the Father sent glorious Argus-Slayer, the swift messenger of the gods, to take it to Epimetheus as a gift. And Epimetheus did not think on what Prometheus had said to him, bidding him never take a gift of Olympian Zeus, but to send it back for fear it might prove to be something harmful to men. But he took the gift, and afterwards, when the evil thing was already his, he understood.

(ll. 90-105) For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sickness which bring the Fates upon men; for in misery men grow old quickly. But the woman took off the great lid of the jar⁴ with her hands and scattered all these and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men. Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding

Zeus who gathers the clouds. But the rest, countless plagues, wander amongst men; for earth is full of evils and the sea is full. Of themselves diseases come upon men continually by day and by night, bringing mischief to mortals silently; for wise Zeus took away speech from them. So is there no way to escape the will of Zeus.

The Myth of the Races

(ll. 106-108) Or if you will, I will sum you up another tale well and skilfully—and do you lay it up in your heart—how the gods and mortal men sprang from one source.

(ll. 109-120) First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods.

(ll. 121-139) But after earth had covered this generation—they are called pure spirits dwelling on the earth, and are kindly, delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men; for they roam everywhere over the earth, clothed in mist and keep watch on judgements and cruel deeds, givers of wealth; for this royal right also they received;—then they who dwell on Olympus made a second generation which was of silver and less noble by far. It was like the golden race neither in body nor in spirit. A child was brought up at his good mother's side an hundred years, an utter simpleton, playing childishly in his own home. But when they were full grown and were come to the full measure of their prime, they lived only a little time in sorrow because of their foolishness, for they could not keep from sinning and from wronging one another, nor would they serve the immortals, nor sacrifice on the holy altars of the blessed ones as it is right for men to do wherever they dwell. Then Zeus the son of Cronos was angry and put them away, because they would not give honour to the blessed gods who live on Olympus.

³ The All-endowed.

⁴ The jar or casket contained the gifts of the gods mentioned in l.82.

(ll. 140-155) But when earth had covered this generation also—they are called blessed spirits of the underworld by men, and, though they are of second order, yet honour attends them also—Zeus the Father made a third generation of mortal men, a brazen race, sprung from ash-trees;⁵ and it was in no way equal to the silver age, but was terrible and strong. They loved the lamentable works of Ares and deeds of violence; they ate no bread, but were hard of heart like adamant, fearful men. Great was their strength and unconquerable the arms which grew from their shoulders on their strong limbs. Their armour was of bronze, and their houses of bronze, and of bronze were their implements: there was no black iron. These were destroyed by their own hands and passed to the dank house of chill Hades, and left no name: terrible though they were, black Death seized them, and they left the bright light of the sun.

(ll. 156-169b) But when earth had covered this generation also, Zeus the son of Cronos made yet another, the fourth, upon the fruitful earth, which was nobler and more righteous, a god-like race of hero-men who are called demi-gods, the race before our own, throughout the boundless earth. Grim war and dread battle destroyed a part of them, some in the land of Cadmus at seven-gated Thebe when they fought for the flocks of Oedipus, and some, when it had brought them in ships over the great sea gulf to Troy for rich-haired Helen's sake: there death's end enshrouded a part of them. But to the others father Zeus the son of Cronos gave a living and an abode apart from men, and made them dwell at the ends of earth. And they live untouched by sorrow in the islands of the blessed along the shore of deep swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far from the deathless gods, and Cronos rules over them;⁶ for the father of men and gods released him from his bonds. And these last equally have honour and glory.

(ll. 169c-169d) And again far-seeing Zeus made yet another generation, the fifth, of men who are upon the bounteous earth.

(ll. 170-201) Thereafter, would that I were not among the men of the fifth generation, but either had died before or been born afterwards. For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils. And Zeus will destroy this race of mortal men also when they come to have grey hair on the temples at their birth.⁷ The father will not agree with his children, nor the children with their father, nor guest with his host, nor comrade with comrade; nor will brother be dear to brother as aforetime. Men will dishonour their parents as they grow quickly old, and will carp at them, chiding them with bitter words, hard-hearted they, not knowing the fear of the gods. They will not repay their aged parents the cost their nurture, for might shall be their right: and one man will sack another's city. There will be no favour for the man who keeps his oath or for the just or for the good; but rather men will praise the evil-doer and his violent dealing. Strength will be right and reverence will cease to be; and the wicked will hurt the worthy man, speaking false words against him, and will swear an oath upon them. Envy, foul-mouthed, delighting in evil, with scowling face, will go along with wretched men one and all. And then Aidos and Nemesis,⁸ with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil.

Justice and Work

(ll. 202-211) And now I will tell a fable for princes who themselves understand. Thus said the hawk to the nightingale with speckled neck, while he carried her high up among the clouds, gripped fast in his talons, and she, pierced by his crooked talons, cried pitifully. To her he spoke disdainfully: 'Miserable thing, why do you cry out? One far stronger than you now holds you fast, and you must go wherever I take you, songstress as you are. And if I please I will make my meal of you, or let you go. He is a fool who tries to withstand the stronger, for he does not get the

⁵ Eustathius refers to Hesiod as stating that men sprung 'from oaks and stones and ashtrees'. Proclus believed that the Nymphs called Meliae ("Theogony", 187) are intended. Goettling would render: 'A race terrible because of their (ashen) spears.'

⁶ Preserved only by Proclus, from whom some inferior MSS. have copied the verse. The four following lines occur only in Geneva Papyri No. 94. For the restoration of ll. 169b-c see "Class. Quart." vii. 219-220. (NOTE: Mr. Evelyn-White means

that the version quoted by Proclus stops at this point, then picks up at l. 170.—DBK).

⁷ i.e. the race will so degenerate that at the last even a new-born child will show the marks of old age.

⁸ Aidos, as a quality, is that feeling of reverence or shame which restrains men from wrong; Nemesis is the feeling of righteous indignation aroused especially by the sight of the wicked in undeserved prosperity (cf. "Psalms", lxxii. 1-19).

mastery and suffers pain besides his shame.' So said the swiftly flying hawk, the long-winged bird.

(Il. 212-224) But you, Perses, listen to right and do not foster violence; for violence is bad for a poor man. Even the prosperous cannot easily bear its burden, but is weighed down under it when he has fallen into delusion. The better path is to go by on the other side towards justice; for Justice beats Outrage when she comes at length to the end of the race. But only when he has suffered does the fool learn this. For Oath keeps pace with wrong judgements. There is a noise when Justice is being dragged in the way where those who devour bribes and give sentence with crooked judgements, take her. And she, wrapped in mist, follows to the city and haunts of the people, weeping, and bringing mischief to men, even to such as have driven her forth in that they did not deal straightly with her.

(Il. 225-237) But they who give straight judgements to strangers and to the men of the land, and go not aside from what is just, their city flourishes, and the people prosper in it: Peace, the nurse of children, is abroad in their land, and all-seeing Zeus never decrees cruel war against them. Neither famine nor disaster ever haunt men who do true justice; but light-heartedly they tend the fields which are all their care. The earth bears them victual in plenty, and on the mountains the oak bears acorns upon the top and bees in the midst. Their woolly sheep are laden with fleeces; their women bear children like their parents. They flourish continually with good things, and do not travel on ships, for the grain-giving earth bears them fruit.

(Il. 238-247) But for those who practise violence and cruel deeds far-seeing Zeus, the son of Cronos, ordains a punishment. Often even a whole city suffers for a bad man who sins and devises presumptuous deeds, and the son of Cronos lays great trouble upon the people, famine and plague together, so that the men perish away, and their women do not bear children, and their houses become few, through the contriving of Olympian Zeus. And again, at another time, the son of Cronos either destroys their wide army, or their walls, or else makes an end of their ships on the sea.

(Il. 248-264) You princes, mark well this punishment you also; for the deathless gods are near among men and mark all those who oppress their fellows with crooked judgements, and reckon not the anger of the gods. For upon the bounteous earth Zeus has thrice

ten thousand spirits, watchers of mortal men, and these keep watch on judgements and deeds of wrong as they roam, clothed in mist, all over the earth. And there is virgin Justice, the daughter of Zeus, who is honoured and revered among the gods who dwell on Olympus, and whenever anyone hurts her with lying slander, she sits beside her father, Zeus the son of Cronos, and tells him of men's wicked heart, until the people pay for the mad folly of their princes who, evilly minded, pervert judgement and give sentence crookedly. Keep watch against this, you princes, and make straight your judgements, you who devour bribes; put crooked judgements altogether from your thoughts.

(Il. 265-266) He does mischief to himself who does mischief to another, and evil planned harms the plotter most.

(Il. 267-273) The eye of Zeus, seeing all and understanding all, beholds these things too, if so he will, and fails not to mark what sort of justice is this that the city keeps within it. Now, therefore, may neither I myself be righteous among men, nor my son—for then it is a bad thing to be righteous—if indeed the unrighteous shall have the greater right. But I think that all-wise Zeus will not yet bring that to pass.

(Il. 274-285) But you, Perses, lay up these things within you heart and listen now to right, ceasing altogether to think of violence. For the son of Cronos has ordained this law for men, that fishes and beasts and winged fowls should devour one another, for right is not in them; but to mankind he gave right which proves far the best. For whoever knows the right and is ready to speak it, far-seeing Zeus gives him prosperity; but whoever deliberately lies in his witness and forswears himself, and so hurts Justice and sins beyond repair, that man's generation is left obscure thereafter. But the generation of the man who swears truly is better thenceforward.

(Il. 286-292) To you, foolish Perses, I will speak good sense. Badness can be got easily and in shoals: the road to her is smooth, and she lives very near us. But between us and Goodness the gods have placed the sweat of our brows: long and steep is the path that leads to her, and it is rough at the first; but when a man has reached the top, then is she easy to reach, though before that she was hard.

(Il. 293-319) That man is altogether best who considers all things himself and marks what will be better afterwards and at the end; and he, again, is

good who listens to a good adviser; but whoever neither thinks for himself nor keeps in mind what another tells him, he is an unprofitable man. But do you at any rate, always remembering my charge, work, high-born Perses, that Hunger may hate you, and venerable Demeter richly crowned may love you and fill your barn with food; for Hunger is altogether a meet comrade for the sluggard. Both gods and men are angry with a man who lives idle, for in nature he is like the stingless drones who waste the labour of the bees, eating without working; but let it be your care to order your work properly, that in the right season your barns may be full of victual. Through work men grow rich in flocks and substance, and working they are much better loved by the immortals.⁹ Work is no disgrace: it is idleness which is a disgrace. But if you work, the idle will soon envy you as you grow rich, for fame and renown attend on wealth. And whatever be your lot, work is best for you, if you turn your misguided mind away from other men's property to your work and attend to your livelihood as I bid you. An evil shame is the needy man's companion, shame which both greatly harms and prospers men: shame is with poverty, but confidence with wealth.

(Il. 320-341) Wealth should not be seized: god-given wealth is much better; for it a man take great wealth violently and perforce, or if he steal it through his tongue, as often happens when gain deceives men's sense and dishonour tramples down honour, the gods soon blot him out and make that man's house low, and wealth attends him only for a little time. Alike with him who does wrong to a suppliant or a guest, or who goes up to his brother's bed and commits unnatural sin in lying with his wife, or who infatuatedly offends against fatherless children, or who abuses his old father at the cheerless threshold of old age and attacks him with harsh words, truly Zeus himself is angry, and at the last lays on him a heavy requittal for his evil doing. But do you turn your foolish heart altogether away from these things, and, as far as you are able, sacrifice to the deathless gods purely and cleanly, and burn rich meats also, and at other times propitiate them with libations and incense, both when you go to bed and when the holy light has come back, that they may be gracious to you in heart and spirit, and so you may buy another's holding and not another yours.

⁹ The alternative version is: 'and, working, you will be much better loved both by gods and men; for they greatly dislike the idle.'

Social and Religious Advice

(Il. 342-351) Call your friend to a feast; but leave your enemy alone; and especially call him who lives near you: for if any mischief happen in the place, neighbours come ungirt, but kinsmen stay to gird themselves.¹⁰ A bad neighbour is as great a plague as a good one is a great blessing; he who enjoys a good neighbour has a precious possession. Not even an ox would die but for a bad neighbour. Take fair measure from your neighbour and pay him back fairly with the same measure, or better, if you can; so that if you are in need afterwards, you may find him sure.

(Il. 352-369) Do not get base gain: base gain is as bad as ruin. Be friends with the friendly, and visit him who visits you. Give to one who gives, but do not give to one who does not give. A man gives to the free-handed, but no one gives to the close-fisted. Give is a good girl, but Take is bad and she brings death. For the man who gives willingly, even though he gives a great thing, rejoices in his gift and is glad in heart; but whoever gives way to shamelessness and takes something himself, even though it be a small thing, it freezes his heart. He who adds to what he has, will keep off bright-eyed hunger; for it you add only a little to a little and do this often, soon that little will become great. What a man has by him at home does not trouble him: it is better to have your stuff at home, for whatever is abroad may mean loss. It is a good thing to draw on what you have; but it grieves your heart to need something and not to have it, and I bid you mark this. Take your fill when the cask is first opened and when it is nearly spent, but midways be sparing: it is poor saving when you come to the lees.

(Il. 370-372) Let the wage promised to a friend be fixed; even with your brother smile—and get a witness; for trust and mistrust, alike ruin men.

(Il. 373-375) Do not let a flaunting woman coax and cozen and deceive you: she is after your barn. The man who trusts womankind trust deceivers.

(Il. 376-380) There should be an only son, to feed his father's house, for so wealth will increase in the home; but if you leave a second son you should die old. Yet Zeus can easily give great wealth to a greater number. More hands mean more work and more increase.

¹⁰ i.e. neighbours come at once and without making preparations, but kinsmen by marriage (who live at a distance) have to prepare, and so are long in coming.

Farming Advice

(Il. 381-382) If your heart within you desires wealth, do these things and work with work upon work.

(Il. 383-404) When the Pleiades, daughters of Atlas, are rising,¹¹ begin your harvest, and your ploughing when they are going to set.¹² Forty nights and days they are hidden and appear again as the year moves round, when first you sharpen your sickle. This is the law of the plains, and of those who live near the sea, and who inhabit rich country, the glens and dingles far from the tossing sea—strip to sow and strip to plough and strip to reap, if you wish to get in all Demeter's fruits in due season, and that each kind may grow in its season. Else, afterwards, you may chance to be in want, and go begging to other men's houses, but without avail; as you have already come to me. But I will give you no more nor give you further measure. Foolish Perses! Work the work which the gods ordained for men, lest in bitter anguish of spirit you with your wife and children seek your livelihood amongst your neighbours, and they do not heed you. Two or three times, may be, you will succeed, but if you trouble them further, it will not avail you, and all your talk will be in vain, and your word-play unprofitable. Nay, I bid you find a way to pay your debts and avoid hunger.

(Il. 405-413) First of all, get a house, and a woman and an ox for the plough—a slave woman and not a wife, to follow the oxen as well—and make everything ready at home, so that you may not have to ask of another, and he refuses you, and so, because you are in lack, the season pass by and your work come to nothing. Do not put your work off till to-morrow and the day after; for a sluggish worker does not fill his barn, nor one who puts off his work: industry makes work go well, but a man who putts off work is always at hand-grips with ruin.

(Il. 414-447) When the piercing power and sultry heat of the sun abate, and almighty Zeus sends the autumn rains,¹³ and men's flesh comes to feel far easier—for then the star Sirius passes over the heads of men, who are born to misery, only a little while by day and takes greater share of night—then, when it showers its leaves to the ground and stops sprouting, the wood you cut with your axe is least liable to worm.

Then remember to hew your timber: it is the season for that work. Cut a mortar¹⁴ three feet wide and a pestle three cubits long, and an axle of seven feet, for it will do very well so; but if you make it eight feet long, you can cut a beetle¹⁵ from it as well. Cut a fellow three spans across for a waggon of ten palms' width. Hew also many bent timbers, and bring home a plough-tree when you have found it, and look out on the mountain or in the field for one of holm-oak; for this is the strongest for oxen to plough with when one of Athena's handmen has fixed in the share-beam and fastened it to the pole with dowels. Get two ploughs ready work on them at home, one all of a piece, and the other jointed. It is far better to do this, for if you should break one of them, you can put the oxen to the other. Poles of laurel or elm are most free from worms, and a share-beam of oak and a plough-tree of holm-oak. Get two oxen, bulls of nine years; for their strength is unspent and they are in the prime of their age: they are best for work. They will not fight in the furrow and break the plough and then leave the work undone. Let a brisk fellow of forty years follow them, with a loaf of four quarters and eight slices¹⁶ for his dinner, one who will attend to his work and drive a straight furrow and is past the age for gaping after his fellows, but will keep his mind on his work. No younger man will be better than he at scattering the seed and avoiding double-sowing; for a man less staid gets disturbed, hankering after his fellows.

(Il. 448-457) Mark, when you hear the voice of the crane¹⁷ who cries year by year from the clouds above, for she give the signal for ploughing and shows the season of rainy winter; but she vexes the heart of the man who has no oxen. Then is the time to feed up your horned oxen in the byre; for it is easy to say: 'Give me a yoke of oxen and a waggon,' and it is easy to refuse: 'I have work for my oxen.' The man who is rich in fancy thinks his waggon as good as built already—the fool! He does not know that there are a hundred timbers to a waggon. Take care to lay these up beforehand at home.

(Il. 458-464) So soon as the time for ploughing is proclaimed to men, then make haste, you and your slaves alike, in wet and in dry, to plough in the season for ploughing, and bestir yourself early in the morning so that your fields may be full. Plough in the

¹¹ Early in May.

¹² In November.

¹³ In October.

¹⁴ For pounding corn.

¹⁵ A mallet for breaking clods after ploughing.

¹⁶ The loaf is a flattish cake with two intersecting lines scored on its upper surface which divide it into four equal parts. Eight slices: The meaning is obscure. A scholiast renders 'giving eight mouthfuls'; but the elder Philostratus uses the word in contrast to 'leavened'.

¹⁷ About the middle of November.

spring; but fallow broken up in the summer will not belie your hopes. Sow fallow land when the soil is still getting light: fallow land is a defender from harm and a soother of children.

(Il. 465-478) Pray to Zeus of the Earth and to pure Demeter to make Demeter's holy grain sound and heavy, when first you begin ploughing, when you hold in your hand the end of the plough-tail and bring down your stick on the backs of the oxen as they draw on the pole-bar by the yoke-straps. Let a slave follow a little behind with a mattock and make trouble for the birds by hiding the seed; for good management is the best for mortal men as bad management is the worst. In this way your corn-ears will bow to the ground with fullness if the Olympian himself gives a good result at the last, and you will sweep the cobwebs from your bins and you will be glad, I ween, as you take of your garnered substance. And so you will have plenty till you come to grey springtime,¹⁸ and will not look wistfully to others, but another shall be in need of your help.

(Il. 479-492) But if you plough the good ground at the solstice¹⁹, you will reap sitting, grasping a thin crop in your hand, binding the sheaves awry, dust-covered, not glad at all; so you will bring all home in a basket and not many will admire you. Yet the will of Zeus who holds the aegis is different at different times; and it is hard for mortal men to tell it; for if you should plough late, you may find this remedy—when the cuckoo first calls²⁰ in the leaves of the oak and makes men glad all over the boundless earth, if Zeus should send rain on the third day and not cease until it rises neither above an ox's hoof nor falls short of it, then the late-plougher will vie with the early. Keep all this well in mind, and fail not to mark grey spring as it comes and the season of rain.

(Il 493-501) Pass by the smithy and its crowded lounge in winter time when the cold keeps men from field work—for then an industrious man can greatly prosper his house—lest bitter winter catch you helpless and poor and you chafe a swollen foot with a shrunk hand. The idle man who waits on empty hope, lacking a livelihood, lays to heart mischief-making; it is not an wholesome hope that accompanies a need man who lolls at ease while he has no sure livelihood.

(Il. 502-503) While it is yet midsummer command your slaves: 'It will not always be summer, build barns.'

(Il. 504-535) Avoid the month Lenaeon,²¹ wretched days, all of them fit to skin an ox, and the frosts which are cruel when Boreas blows over the earth. He blows across horse-breeding Thrace upon the wide sea and stirs it up, while earth and the forest howl. On many a high-leaved oak and thick pine he falls and brings them to the bounteous earth in mountain glens: then all the immense wood roars and the beasts shudder and put their tails between their legs, even those whose hide is covered with fur; for with his bitter blast he blows even through them although they are shaggy-breasted. He goes even through an ox's hide; it does not stop him. Also he blows through the goat's fine hair. But through the fleeces of sheep, because their wool is abundant, the keen wind Boreas pierces not at all; but it makes the old man curved as a wheel. And it does not blow through the tender maiden who stays indoors with her dear mother, unlearned as yet in the works of golden Aphrodite, and who washes her soft body and anoints herself with oil and lies down in an inner room within the house, on a winter's day when the Boneless One²² gnaws his foot in his fireless house and wretched home; for the sun shows him no pastures to make for, but goes to and fro over the land and city of dusky men,²³ and shines more sluggishly upon the whole race of the Hellenes. Then the horned and unhorned denizens of the wood, with teeth chattering pitifully, flee through the copses and glades, and all, as they seek shelter, have this one care, to gain thick coverts or some hollow rock. Then, like the Three-legged One²⁴ whose back is broken and whose head looks down upon the ground, like him, I say, they wander to escape the white snow.

(Il. 536-563) Then put on, as I bid you, a soft coat and a tunic to the feet to shield your body—and you should weave thick woof on thin warp. In this clothe yourself so that your hair may keep still and not bristle and stand upon end all over your body.

Lace on your feet close-fitting boots of the hide of a slaughtered ox, thickly lined with felt inside. And when the season of frost comes on, stitch together skins of firstling kids with ox-sinew, to put over your back and to keep off the rain. On your head above

¹⁸ Spring is so described because the buds have not yet cast their iron-grey husks.

¹⁹ In December.

²⁰ In March.

²¹ The latter part of January and earlier part of February.

²² i.e. the octopus or cuttle.

²³ i.e. the darker-skinned people of Africa, the Egyptians or Aethiopians.

²⁴ i.e. an old man walking with a staff (the 'third leg'—as in the riddle of the Sphinx).

wear a shaped cap of felt to keep your ears from getting wet, for the dawn is chill when Boreas has once made his onslaught, and at dawn a fruitful mist is spread over the earth from starry heaven upon the fields of blessed men: it is drawn from the ever flowing rivers and is raised high above the earth by windstorm, and sometimes it turns to rain towards evening, and sometimes to wind when Thracian Boreas huddles the thick clouds. Finish your work and return home ahead of him, and do not let the dark cloud from heaven wrap round you and make your body clammy and soak your clothes. Avoid it; for this is the hardest month, wintry, hard for sheep and hard for men. In this season let your oxen have half their usual food, but let your man have more; for the helpful nights are long. Observe all this until the year is ended and you have nights and days of equal length, and Earth, the mother of all, bears again her various fruit.

(Il. 564-570) When Zeus has finished sixty wintry days after the solstice, then the star Arcturus²⁵ leaves the holy stream of Ocean and first rises brilliant at dusk. After him the shrilly wailing daughter of Pandion, the swallow, appears to men when spring is just beginning. Before she comes, prune the vines, for it is best so.

(Il. 571-581) But when the House-carrier²⁶ climbs up the plants from the earth to escape the Pleiades, then it is no longer the season for digging vineyards, but to whet your sickles and rouse up your slaves. Avoid shady seats and sleeping until dawn in the harvest season, when the sun scorches the body. Then be busy, and bring home your fruits, getting up early to make your livelihood sure. For dawn takes away a third part of your work, dawn advances a man on his journey and advances him in his work—dawn which appears and sets many men on their road, and puts yokes on many oxen.

(Il. 582-596) But when the artichoke flowers,²⁷ and the chirping grass-hopper sits in a tree and pours down his shrill song continually from under his wings in the season of wearisome heat, then goats are plump and wine sweetest; women are most wanton, but men are feeblest, because Sirius parches head and knees and the skin is dry through heat. But at that time let me have a shady rock and wine of

Biblis, a clot of curds and milk of drained goats with the flesh of an heifer fed in the woods, that has never calved, and of firstling kids; then also let me drink bright wine, sitting in the shade, when my heart is satisfied with food, and so, turning my head to face the fresh Zephyr, from the everflowing spring which pours down unfouled thrice pour an offering of water, but make a fourth libation of wine.

(Il. 597-608) Set your slaves to winnow Demeter's holy grain, when strong Orion first appears,²⁸ on a smooth threshing-floor in an airy place. Then measure it and store it in jars. And so soon as you have safely stored all your stuff indoors, I bid you put your bondman out of doors and look out for a servant-girl with no children;—for a servant with a child to nurse is troublesome. And look after the dog with jagged teeth; do not grudge him his food, or some time the Day-sleeper²⁹ may take your stuff. Bring in fodder and litter so as to have enough for your oxen and mules. After that, let your men rest their poor knees and unyoke your pair of oxen.

(Il. 609-617) But when Orion and Sirius are come into mid-heaven, and rosy-fingered Dawn sees Arcturus,³⁰ then cut off all the grape-clusters, Perses, and bring them home. Show them to the sun ten days and ten nights: then cover them over for five, and on the sixth day draw off into vessels the gifts of joyful Dionysus. But when the Pleiades and Hyades and strong Orion begin to set,³¹ then remember to plough in season: and so the completed year will fitly pass beneath the earth.³²

Sailing Advice

(Il. 618-640) But if desire for uncomfortable sea-faring seize you; when the Pleiades plunge into the misty sea³³ to escape Orion's rude strength, then truly gales of all kinds rage. Then keep ships no longer on the sparkling sea, but bethink you to till the land as I bid you. Haul up your ship upon the land and pack it closely with stones all round to keep off the power of the winds which blow damply, and draw out the bilge-plug so that the rain of heaven may not rot it. Put away all the tackle and fittings in your house, and stow the wings of the sea-going ship neatly, and hang up the well-shaped rudder over the smoke. You yourself wait until the season for sailing is come, and

²⁵ February to March.

²⁶ i.e. the snail. The season is the middle of May.

²⁷ In June.

²⁸ July.

²⁹ i.e. a robber.

³⁰ September.

³¹ The end of October.

³² That is, the succession of stars which make up the full year.

³³ The end of October or beginning of November.

then haul your swift ship down to the sea and stow a convenient cargo in it, so that you may bring home profit, even as your father and mine, foolish Perses, used to sail on shipboard because he lacked sufficient livelihood. And one day he came to this very place crossing over a great stretch of sea; he left Aeolian Cyme and fled, not from riches and substance, but from wretched poverty which Zeus lays upon men, and he settled near Helicon in a miserable hamlet, Ascra, which is bad in winter, sultry in summer, and good at no time.

(ll. 641-645) But you, Perses, remember all works in their season but sailing especially. Admire a small ship, but put your freight in a large one; for the greater the lading, the greater will be your piled gain, if only the winds will keep back their harmful gales.

(ll. 646-662) If ever you turn your misguided heart to trading and with to escape from debt and joyless hunger, I will show you the measures of the loud-roaring sea, though I have no skill in sea-faring nor in ships; for never yet have I sailed by ship over the wide sea, but only to Euboea from Aulis where the Achaeans once stayed through much storm when they had gathered a great host from divine Hellas for Troy, the land of fair women. Then I crossed over to Chalcis, to the games of wise Amphidamas where the sons of the great-hearted hero proclaimed and appointed prizes. And there I boast that I gained the victory with a song and carried off an handled tripod which I dedicated to the Muses of Helicon, in the place where they first set me in the way of clear song. Such is all my experience of many-pegged ships; nevertheless I will tell you the will of Zeus who holds the aegis; for the Muses have taught me to sing in marvellous song.

(ll. 663-677) Fifty days after the solstice,³⁴ when the season of wearisome heat is come to an end, is the right time for me to go sailing. Then you will not wreck your ship, nor will the sea destroy the sailors, unless Poseidon the Earth-Shaker be set upon it, or Zeus, the king of the deathless gods, wish to slay them; for the issues of good and evil alike are with them. At that time the winds are steady, and the sea is harmless. Then trust in the winds without care, and haul your swift ship down to the sea and put all the freight no board; but make all haste you can to return home again and do not wait till the time of the new wine and autumn rain and oncoming storms with the

fierce gales of Notus who accompanies the heavy autumn rain of Zeus and stirs up the sea and makes the deep dangerous.

(ll. 678-694) Another time for men to go sailing is in spring when a man first sees leaves on the topmost shoot of a fig-tree as large as the foot-print that a cow makes; then the sea is passable, and this is the spring sailing time. For my part I do not praise it, for my heart does not like it. Such a sailing is snatched, and you will hardly avoid mischief. Yet in their ignorance men do even this, for wealth means life to poor mortals; but it is fearful to die among the waves. But I bid you consider all these things in your heart as I say. Do not put all your goods in hallow ships; leave the greater part behind, and put the lesser part on board; for it is a bad business to meet with disaster among the waves of the sea, as it is bad if you put too great a load on your waggon and break the axle, and your goods are spoiled. Observe due measure: and proportion is best in all things.

Further Social and Religious Advice

(ll. 695-705) Bring home a wife to your house when you are of the right age, while you are not far short of thirty years nor much above; this is the right age for marriage. Let your wife have been grown up four years, and marry her in the fifth. Marry a maiden, so that you can teach her careful ways, and especially marry one who lives near you, but look well about you and see that your marriage will not be a joke to your neighbours. For a man wins nothing better than a good wife, and, again, nothing worse than a bad one, a greedy soul who roasts her man without fire, strong though he may be, and brings him to a raw³⁵ old age.

(ll. 706-714) Be careful to avoid the anger of the deathless gods. Do not make a friend equal to a brother; but if you do, do not wrong him first, and do not lie to please the tongue. But if he wrongs you first, offending either in word or in deed, remember to repay him double; but if he ask you to be his friend again and be ready to give you satisfaction, welcome him. He is a worthless man who makes now one and now another his friend; but as for you, do not let your face put your heart to shame.³⁶

³⁴ July-August.

³⁵ i.e. untimely, premature. Juvenal similarly speaks of 'cruda senectus' (caused by gluttony).

³⁶ The thought is parallel to that of 'O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath.'

(Il. 715-716) Do not get a name either as lavish or as churlish; as a friend of rogues or as a slanderer of good men.

(Il. 717-721) Never dare to taunt a man with deadly poverty which eats out the heart; it is sent by the deathless gods. The best treasure a man can have is a sparing tongue, and the greatest pleasure, one that moves orderly; for if you speak evil, you yourself will soon be worse spoken of.

(Il. 722-723) Do not be boorish at a common feast where there are many guests; the pleasure is greatest and the expense is least.³⁷

(Il. 724-726) Never pour a libation of sparkling wine to Zeus after dawn with unwashed hands, nor to others of the deathless gods; else they do not hear your prayers but spit them back.

(Il. 727-732) Do not stand upright facing the sun when you make water, but remember to do this when he has set towards his rising. And do not make water as you go, whether on the road or off the road, and do not uncover yourself: the nights belong to the blessed gods. A scrupulous man who has a wise heart sits down or goes to the wall of an enclosed court.

(Il. 733-736) Do not expose yourself befouled by the fireside in your house, but avoid this. Do not beget children when you are come back from ill-omened burial, but after a festival of the gods.

(Il. 737-741) Never cross the sweet-flowing water of ever-rolling rivers afoot until you have prayed, gazing into the soft flood, and washed your hands in the clear, lovely water. Whoever crosses a river with hands unwashed of wickedness, the gods are angry with him and bring trouble upon him afterwards.

(Il. 742-743) At a cheerful festival of the gods do not cut the withered from the quick upon that which has five branches with bright steel.³⁸

(Il. 744-745) Never put the ladle upon the mixing-bowl at a wine party, for malignant ill-luck is attached to that.

(Il. 746-747) When you are building a house, do not leave it rough-hewn, or a cawing crow may settle on it and croak.

(Il. 748-749) Take nothing to eat or to wash with from uncharmed pots, for in them there is mischief.

(Il. 750-759) Do not let a boy of twelve years sit on things which may not be moved,³⁹ for that is bad, and makes a man unmanly; nor yet a child of twelve months, for that has the same effect. A man should not clean his body with water in which a woman has washed, for there is bitter mischief in that also for a time. When you come upon a burning sacrifice, do not make a mock of mysteries, for Heaven is angry at this also. Never make water in the mouths of rivers which flow to the sea, nor yet in springs; but be careful to avoid this. And do not ease yourself in them: it is not well to do this.

(Il. 760-763) So do: and avoid the talk of men. For Talk is mischievous, light, and easily raised, but hard to bear and difficult to be rid of. Talk never wholly dies away when many people voice her: even Talk is in some ways divine.

The Days

(Il. 765-767) Mark the days which come from Zeus, duly telling your slaves of them, and that the thirtieth day of the month is best for one to look over the work and to deal out supplies.

(Il. 769-768)⁴⁰ For these are days which come from Zeus the all-wise, when men discern aright.

(Il. 770-779) To begin with, the first, the fourth, and the seventh—on which Leto bare Apollo with the blade of gold—each is a holy day. The eighth and the ninth, two days at least of the waxing month,⁴¹ are specially good for the works of man. Also the eleventh and twelfth are both excellent, alike for shearing sheep and for reaping the kindly fruits; but the twelfth is much better than the eleventh, for on it the airy-swinging spider spins its web in full day, and then the Wise One,⁴² gathers her pile. On that day

³⁷ The 'common feast' is one to which all present subscribe. Theognis (line 495) says that one of the chief pleasures of a banquet is the general conversation. Hence the present passage means that such a feast naturally costs little, while the many present will make pleasurable conversation.

³⁸ i.e. 'do not cut your fingernails'.

³⁹ i.e. things which it would be sacrilege to disturb, such as tombs.

⁴⁰ H.G. Evelyn-White prefers to switch Il. 768 and 769, reading l. 769 first then l. 768.—DBK

⁴¹ The month is divided into three periods, the waxing, the mid-month, and the waning, which answer to the phases of the moon.

⁴² i.e. the ant.

woman should set up her loom and get forward with her work.

(Il. 780-781) Avoid the thirteenth of the waxing month for beginning to sow: yet it is the best day for setting plants.

(Il. 782-789) The sixth of the mid-month is very unfavourable for plants, but is good for the birth of males, though unfavourable for a girl either to be born at all or to be married. Nor is the first sixth a fit day for a girl to be born, but a kindly for gelding kids and sheep and for fencing in a sheep-cote. It is favourable for the birth of a boy, but such will be fond of sharp speech, lies, and cunning words, and stealthy converse.

(Il. 790-791) On the eighth of the month geld the boar and loud-bellowing bull, but hard-working mules on the twelfth.

(Il. 792-799) On the great twentieth, in full day, a wise man should be born. Such an one is very sound-witted. The tenth is favourable for a male to be born; but, for a girl, the fourth day of the mid-month. On that day tame sheep and shambling, horned oxen, and the sharp-fanged dog and hardy mules to the touch of the hand. But take care to avoid troubles which eat out the heart on the fourth of the beginning and ending of the month; it is a day very fraught with fate.

(Il. 800-801) On the fourth of the month bring home your bride, but choose the omens which are best for this business.

(Il. 802-804) Avoid fifth days: they are unkindly and terrible. On a fifth day, they say, the Erinyes assisted at the birth of Horcus (Oath) whom Eris (Strife) bore to trouble the forsworn.

(Il. 805-809) Look about you very carefully and throw out Demeter's holy grain upon the well-rolled⁴³ threshing floor on the seventh of the mid-month. Let the woodman cut beams for house building and plenty of ships' timbers, such as are suitable for ships. On the fourth day begin to build narrow ships.

(Il. 810-813) The ninth of the mid-month improves towards evening; but the first ninth of all is quite harmless for men. It is a good day on which to beget or to be born both for a male and a female: it is never an wholly evil day.

(Il. 814-818) Again, few know that the twenty-seventh of the month is best for opening a wine-jar, and putting yokes on the necks of oxen and mules and swift-footed horses, and for hauling a swift ship of many thwarts down to the sparkling sea; few call it by its right name.

(Il. 819-821) On the fourth day open a jar. The fourth of the mid-month is a day holy above all. And again, few men know that the fourth day after the twentieth is best while it is morning: towards evening it is less good.

(Il. 822-828) These days are a great blessing to men on earth; but the rest are changeable, luckless, and bring nothing. Everyone praises a different day but few know their nature. Sometimes a day is a stepmother, sometimes a mother. That man is happy and lucky in them who knows all these things and does his work without offending the deathless gods, who discerns the omens of birds and avoids transgressions.

⁴³ Such seems to be the meaning here, though the epithet is otherwise rendered 'well-rounded'. Corn was threshed by

means of a sleigh with two runners having three or four rollers between them, like the modern Egyptian "nurag".

5.2. Plutarch / Sayings of Spartan Women

Plutarch, who wrote a series of biographies and essays ca. 100 CE, covered a number of subjects related to cultural expectations in the book *Moralia*. In one section he collected sayings attributed to the matrons of Sparta—mostly anecdotes of anonymous Spartan mothers happy that their sons had died a brave death in battle, or furious that they had not.

Source: Plutarch, and Frank Cole Babbitt. 1931. *Moralia*, vol. 3. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

ARGILEONIS

Argileonis, the mother of Brasidas, when her son had met his death, and some of the citizens of Amphipolis arrived at Sparta and came to her, asked if her son had met his death honourably and in a manner worthy of Sparta. And when they proceeded to tell of his greatness, and declared that he was the best of all the Spartans in such enterprises, she said, “Sirs, my son was a gude and honourable mon, but Sparta has mony a mon better than him.”

GORG¹

1 Gorgo, daughter of king Cleomenes, when Aristagoras of Miletus was urging her father to enter upon the war against the Persian king in behalf of the Ionians, promising a vast sum of money, and, in answer to Cleomenes’ objections, making the amount larger and larger, said, “Father, the miserable foreigner will be your ruin if you don’t get him out of the house pretty soon!”

2 Once when her father told her to give some grain to a man by way of remuneration, and added, “It is because he showed me how to make the wine taste good,” she said, “Then, father, there will be more wine drunk, and the drinkers will become more intemperate and depraved.”

3 When she had watched Aristagoras having his shoes put on and laced by one of the servants, she said, “Father, the foreigner hasn’t any hands!”

4 When a foreigner made advances in a mild and leisurely way, she pushed him aside, saying, “Get away from here, you who cannot play a woman’s part either!”

5 Being asked by a woman from Attica, “Why is it that you Spartan women are the only women that lord it over your men,” she said, “Because we are the only women that are mothers of men.”

6 As she was encouraging her husband Leonidas, when he was about to set out for Thermopylae, to show himself worthy of Sparta, she asked what she should do; and he said, “Marry a good man, and bear good children.”

GYRTIAS

1 Gyrtias, when on a time Acrotatus, her grandson, in a fight with other boys received many blows, and was brought

home for dead, and the family and friends were all wailing, said, “Will you not stop your noise? He has shown from what blood he was sprung.” And she said that people who were good for anything should not scream, but should try to find some remedy.

2 When a messenger came from Crete bringing the news of the death of Acrotatus, she said, “When he had come to the enemy, was he not bound either to be slain by them or to slay them? It is more pleasing to hear that he died in a manner worthy of myself, his country, and his ancestors than if he had lived for all time a coward.”

DAMATRIA

DamatRIA heard that her son had been a coward and unworthy of her, and when he arrived, she made away with him. This is the epigram referring to her:

Sinner against our laws, Damatrius, slain by his mother,
Was of the Spartan youth; she was of Sparta too.

OTHER SPARTAN WOMEN TO FAME UNKNOWN

1 Another Spartan woman made away with her son, who had deserted his post, on the ground that he was unworthy of his country, saying, “Not mine the scion.” This is the epigram referring to her:

Off to your fate through the darkness, vile scion, who
makes such a hatred,
So the Eurotas flow not e’en for the timorous deer.
Worthless whelp that you are, vile remnant, be off
now to Hades;
Off! for never I bore Sparta’s unworthy son.

2 Another, hearing that her son had fallen on the field of battle, said:

“Let the poor cowards be mourned, but, with never a tear
do I bury
You, my son, who are mine, yea, and are Sparta’s as
well.”

3 Another, hearing that her son had been saved and had run away from the enemy, wrote to him, “Ill report is spread about ye; either clear yersel’ of this or stop yer living.”

4 Another, when her sons had run away from battle and come to her, said, “Where have you come now in your cowardly flight, vile varlets? Do you intend to slink in here whence you came forth?” And with these words she pulled up her garment and showed them.

5 One woman, observing her son coming towards her, inquired, “How fares our country?” And when he said, “All have perished,” she took up a tile and, hurling it at him, killed him, saying, “And so they sent you to bear the bad news to us!”

6 As a man was narrating to his mother the noble death of his brother, she said, “Isn’t it a shame, then, to have missed his company on such a journey?”

7 One woman sent forth her sons, five in number, to war, and, standing in the outskirts of the city, she awaited anxiously

¹ Gorgo later became the wife of Leonidas.

the outcome of the battle. And when someone arrived and, in answer to her inquiry, reported that all her sons had met death, she said, "I did not inquire about that, you vile varlet, but how fares our country?" And when he declared that it was victorious, "Then," she said, "I accept gladly also the death of my sons."

8 Another was burying her son, when a commonplace old woman came up to her and said, "Ah the bad luck of it, you poor woman." "No, by Heaven," said she, "but good luck; for I bore him that he might die for Sparta, and this is the very thing that has come to pass for me."

9 When a woman from Ionia showed vast pride in a bit of her own weaving, which was very valuable, a Spartan woman pointed to her four sons, who were most well-behaved, and said, "Such should be the employments of the good and honourable woman, and it is over these that she should be elated and boastful."

10 Another, hearing about her son that he was conducting himself badly in a foreign land, wrote to him, "Ill report is spread about ye; pit this from ye or else stop yer living."

11 Of somewhat similar character is this: Chian exiles came to Sparta, and accused Paedaretus of many misdeeds; Ewhereupon his mother Teleutia sent for them and, after listening to their complaints, feeling that her son was in the wrong, sent him this letter: "Mither to Paedaretus. Aither dae better, or stay where ye are, and gie up hope o' gaen back safe to Sparta."

12 Another, when her son was being tried for some offence, said to him, "My child, either rid yourself of the charges, or rid yourself of life."

13 Another, as she accompanied a lame son on his way to the field of battle, said, "At every step, my child, remember your valour."

14 Another, when her son came back to her from field of battle wounded in the foot, and in great pain, said, "If you remember your valour, my child, you will feel no pain, and be quite cheerful."

15 A Spartan, wounded in battle and unable to walk, was crawling on all fours. He was mortified at being so ridiculous; but his mother said to him, "How much better to be joyful over your bravery than to be mortified at silly laughter."

16 Another, as she handed her son his shield, exhorted him, saying, "[Return] either with this or upon this."¹

17 Another, as her son was going forth to war, said, as she gave the shield into his hands, "This shield your father kept always safe for you; do you, therefore, keep it safe, or cease to live."

18 Another, in answer to her son who said that the sword which he carried was short, said, "Add a step to it."

19 Another, hearing that her son had been slain fighting bravely in the line of battle, said, "Yes, he was mine." But learning in regard to her other son that he had played the coward and saved his life, she said, "No, he was not mine."

20 Another, hearing that her son had been killed in battle on the spot where he had been placed, said, "Lay him away, and let his brother take his place."

21 Another, engaged in conducting a solemn public procession, heard that her son was victorious on the field of battle, but that he was dying from the many wounds he had received. She did not remove the garland from her head, but with a proud air said to the women near her, "How much more noble, my friends, to be victorious on the field of battle and meet death, than to win at the Olympic games and live!"

22 As a man was relating to his sister the noble death of her son, she said, "As glad as I am for him, I am sorry for you that you were left behind when you might have gone in such brave company."

23 A man sent to a Spartan woman to ask if she were inclined to look with favour upon seduction; she replied, "When I was a child I learned to obey my father, and made that my practice. Then when I became a married woman, my husband took that place. So if the man's proposal is honourable, let him lay the matter before my husband first."

24 A poor girl, being asked what dowry she brought to the man who married her, said, "The family virtue."

25 A Spartan woman, being asked if she had made advances to her husband, said, "No, but my husband has made them to me."

26 A girl had secret relations with a man, and, after bringing on an abortion, she bore up so bravely, not uttering a single sound, that her delivery took place without the knowledge of her father and others who were near. For the confronting of her indecorum with decorum gained the victory over the poignant distress of her pains.

27 A Spartan woman who was being sold as a slave, when asked what she knew how to do, said, "To be faithful."

28 Another, taken captive, and asked a similar question, said, "To manage a house well."

29 Another, asked by a man if she would be good if he bought her, said, "Yes, and if you do not buy me."

30 Another who was being sold as a slave, when the crier inquired of her what she knew how to do, said, "To be free." And when the purchaser ordered her to do something not fitting for a free woman, she said, "You will be sorry that your meanness has cost you such a possession," and committed suicide."

¹ Ancient writers were not agreed whether the second half meant to fall upon the shield (dead or wounded) or to be brought home dead upon it. The first part refers to the practice of cowards (from other cities) who cast away their

shields when fleeing battle so as not to be slowed down by the shield's weight.

4.2. Sappho / Selected Poems

Sappho was born ca. 630–612 BCE. Her wealth allowed her leisure to study the arts on the isle of Lesbos, which was a cultural center in 7th century Hellas. She wrote her poems to be performed with the accompaniment of a lyre, innovating the music and meter.

Source: Sappho. *Sappho*. Trans. Mary Barnard. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1958.

I have not had one word from her

I have not had one word from her
Frankly I wish I were dead
 When she left, she wept
a great deal; she said to me, “This parting must be
 endured, Sappho. I go unwillingly.”
I said, “Go, and be happy
 but remember (you know
 well) whom you leave shackled by love
“If you forget me, think
 of our gifts to Aphrodite
 and all the loveliness that we shared
“all the violet tiaras,
 braided rosebuds, dill and
 crocus twined around your young neck
“myrrh poured on your head
 and on soft mats girls with
 all that they most wished for beside them
“while no voices chanted
 choruses without ours,
 no woodlot bloomed in spring without song...”

To Andromeda

That country girl has witched your wishes,
 all dressed up in her country clothes
 and she hasn't got the sense
 to hitch her rags above her ankles.

On the throne of many hues

On the throne of many hues, Immortal Aphrodite,
 child of Zeus, weaving wiles—I beg you
 not to subdue my spirit, Queen,
 with pain or sorrow
but come—if ever before
 having heard my voice from far away
 you listened, and leaving your father's
 golden home you came
in your chariot yoked with swift, lovely
 sparrows bringing you over the dark earth
 thick-feathered wings swirling down
 from the sky through mid-air
arriving quickly—you, Blessed One,
 with a smile on your unaging face
 asking again what have I suffered
 and why am I calling again
and in my wild heart what did I most wish
 to happen to me: “Again whom must I persuade

back into the harness of your love?
Sappho, who wrongs you?
For if she flees, soon she'll pursue,
 she doesn't accept gifts, but she'll give,
 if not now loving, soon she'll love
 even against her will.”
Come to me now again, release me from
 this pain, everything my spirit longs
 to have fulfilled, fulfill, and you
 be my ally

Please

Come back to me, Gongyla, here tonight,
 You, my rose, with your Lydian lyre.
 There hovers forever around you delight:
 A beauty desired.
Even your garment plunders my eyes.
 I am enchanted: I who once
 Complained to the Cyprus-born goddess,
 Whom I now beseech
Never to let this lose me grace
 But rather bring you back to me:
 Amongst all mortal women the one
 I most wish to see.

Some an army of horsemen

Some an army of horsemen, some an army on foot
 and some say a fleet of ships is the loveliest sight
 on this dark earth; but I say it is what-
 ever you desire:
and it is possible to make this perfectly clear
 to all; for the woman who far surpassed all others
 in her beauty, Helen, left her husband—
 the best of all men—
behind and sailed far away to Troy; she did not spare
 a single thought for her child nor for her dear parents
 but [the goddess of love] led her astray
 [to desire...]
[...which]
 reminds me now of Anactoria
 although far away,

To me it seems

To me it seems
that man has the fortune of the gods,
whoever sits beside you, and close,
who listens to you sweetly speaking
and laughing temptingly;
my heart flutters in my breast,
whenever I look quickly, for a moment—
I say nothing, my tongue broken,
a delicate fire runs under my skin,
my eyes see nothing, my ears roar,
cold sweat rushes down me,
trembling seizes me,
I am greener than grass,
to myself I seem
needing but little to die. But all must be endured, since...

To Atthis

Though in Sardis now,
she thinks of us constantly
and of the life we shared.
She saw you as a goddess
and above all your dancing gave her deep joy.
Now she shines among Lydian women like
the rose-fingered moon
rising after sundown, erasing all
stars around her, and pouring light equally
across the salt sea
and over densely flowered fields
lucent under dew. Her light spreads
on roses and tender thyme
and the blooming honey-lotus.
Often while she wanders she remembers you, gentle Atthis,
and desire eats away at her heart
for us to come.

Aeschylus: from *Eumenides*

The third part of Aeschylus's only surviving trilogy, the much-celebrated *Oresteia*, *Eumenides* (a Greek euphemism for the avenging Furies) was written in 458 BCE. After the slaying of his father's murderer, his mother Clytemnestra, at the command of Apollo, Orestes is embittered and on the verge of madness, but he never doubts that he has done the right thing.

The priestess's speech begins the play, and highlights the conflict between the old gods (represented in the play by the Furies) and new (Apollo) and, by extension, evolving ideas of justice and morality among humans. The location in Apollo's temple at the Oracle of Delphi.¹

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THE PRIESTESS OF PYTHIAN APOLLO

[1] First, in this prayer of mine, I give the place of highest honor among the gods to the first prophet, Earth; and after her to Themis, for she was the second to take this oracular seat of her mother, as legend tells. And in the third allotment, with Themis' consent and not by force, another Titan, child of Earth, Phoebe, took her seat here. She gave it as a birthday gift to Phoebus, who has his name from Phoebe. Leaving the lake² and ridge of Delos, he landed on Pallas' ship-frequented shores, and came to this region and the dwelling places on Parnassus. The children of Hephaistos,³ road-builders taming the wildness of the untamed land, escorted him with mighty reverence. And at his arrival, the people and Delphus, helmsman and lord of this land, made a great celebration for him. Zeus inspired his heart with prophetic skill and established him as the fourth prophet on this throne; but Loxias is the spokesman of Zeus, his father.

[20] These are the gods I place in the beginning of my prayer. And Pallas who stands before the temple⁴ is honored in my words; and I worship the Nymphs where the Corycian⁵ rock is hollow, the delight of birds and haunt of gods. Bromius has held the region—I do not forget him—ever since he, as a god, led the Bacchantes in war, and contrived for Pentheus death as of a hunted hare. I call on the streams of Pleistus and the strength of Poseidon, and highest Zeus, the Fulfiller; and then I take my seat as prophetess upon my throne. And may they allow me

now to have the best fortune, far better than on my previous entrances. And if there are any from among the Hellenes here, let them enter, in turn, by lot, as is the custom. For I prophesy as the god leads.

[She enters the temple and after a brief interval returns terror-stricken.]

[34] Horrors to tell, horrors for my eyes to see, have sent me back from the house of Loxias, so that I have no strength and I cannot walk upright. I am running on hands and knees, with no quickness in my limbs; for an old woman, overcome with fright, is nothing, or rather she is like a child.

[39] I was on my way to the inner shrine, decked with wreaths; I saw on the center-stone⁶ a man defiled in the eyes of the gods, occupying the seat of suppliants. His hands were dripping blood; he held a sword just drawn and an olive-branch, from the top of the tree, decorously crowned with a large tuft of wool, a shining fleece; for as to this I can speak clearly.

[46] Before this man an extraordinary band of women slept, seated on thrones. No! Not women, but rather Gorgons I call them; and yet I cannot compare them to forms of Gorgons either. Once before I saw some creatures in a painting,⁷ carrying off the feast of Phineus; but these are wingless in appearance, black, altogether disgusting; they snore with repulsive breaths, they drip from their eyes hateful drops; their attire is not fit to bring either before the statues of the gods or into the homes of men. I have never seen the

¹ Translation by Herbert Weir Smyth. Harvard University Press. 1926.

² A circular lake in the island of Apollo's birth.

³ The Athenians, because Erichthonius, who was identified with Erechtheus, was the son of Hephaestus, who first fashioned axes.

⁴ The shrine of Pallas "before the temple," close to Delphi on the main road leading to the sanctuary of Apollo.

⁵ The Corycian cave, sacred to the Nymphs and Pan, has been identified with a grotto on the great plateau above Delphi.

⁶ omphalos "navel" was the name given by the Delphians to a white stone (in Aeschylus' time placed in the inmost sanctuary of Apollo), which they regarded as marking the exact center of the earth. Near the great altar of Apollo the French excavators of Delphi discovered a navel-stone. omphalos sometimes used of Delphi itself.

⁷ The Harpies.

tribe that produced this company, nor the land that boasts of rearing this brood with impunity and does not grieve for its labor afterwards.

[60] Let what is to come now be the concern of the master of this house, powerful Loxias himself. He is a prophet of healing, a reader of portents, and for others a purifier of homes.

[Exit.]

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Goaded by Clytemnestra's ghost, the Furies chase Orestes to Athens. He takes refuge in the temple of Athena, clinging to her statue.

[Enter Athena, wearing the aegis.]

ATHENA

[397] From afar I heard the call of a summons, from the Scamander, while I was taking possession of the land, which the leaders and chiefs of the Achaeans assigned to me, a great portion of the spoil their spears had won, to be wholly mine forever, a choice gift to Theseus' sons.⁸ From there I have come, urging on my tireless foot, without wings rustling the folds of my aegis, [yoking this chariot to colts in their prime.]⁹ As I see this strange company of visitors to my land, I am not afraid, but it is a wonder to my eyes. Who in the world are you? I address you all in common—this stranger sitting at my image, and you, who are like no race of creatures ever born, neither seen by gods among goddesses nor resembling mortal forms. But it is far from just to speak ill of one's neighbor who is blameless, and Right stands aloof.

CHORUS

[415] Daughter of Zeus, you will hear it all in brief. We are the eternal children of Night. We are called Curses in our homes beneath the earth.

ATHENA

[418] I now know your family and the names by which you are called.

CHORUS

[419] You will soon learn my office.

ATHENA

[420] I shall understand, if someone would tell the story clearly.

CHORUS

[421] We drive murderers from their homes.

ATHENA

[422] And where is the end of flight for the killer?

CHORUS

[423] Where joy is absent and unknown.¹⁰

ATHENA

[424] And would you drive this man with your shrieks to such flight?

CHORUS

[425] Yes, for he thought it right to be his mother's murderer.

ATHENA

[426] Through other compulsions, or in fear of someone's wrath?

CHORUS

[427] Where is there a spur so keen as to compel the murder of a mother?

ATHENA

[428] Two parties are present; only half the case is heard.

CHORUS

[429] But he will not receive an oath nor does he want to give one.

ATHENA

[430] You want to be called just rather than to act justly.

CHORUS

[431] How so? Teach me. For you are not poor in subtleties.

ATHENA

[432] I say that oaths must not win victory for injustice.

CHORUS

[433] Well then, question him, and make a straight judgment.

⁸ Athena confirms as ancient her possession of the district of Sigeum, which had been won from the Mityleneans by the Athenians early in the sixth century.

⁹ Line 405 "yoking this chariot to colts in their prime" contradicts the statement in the preceding verse, and may

have been interpolated for a later representation of the play when Athena appeared on a chariot (Paley, Wilam.).

¹⁰ Literally "where joy (or the word joy) is nowhere in use."

ATHENA

[434] Then would you turn over the decision of the charge to me?

CHORUS

[435] How not?—since we honor you because you are worthy and of worthy parentage.

ATHENA

[436] What do you want to say to this, stranger, in turn? After you name your country and family and fortunes, then defend yourself against this charge; if indeed, relying on the justice of your case, you sit clinging to my image near my hearth, as a sacred suppliant, like Ixion.¹¹ To all this give me a plain answer.

ORESTES

[443] Lady Athena, first of all I will take away a great anxiety from your last words. I am not a suppliant in need of purification, nor did I sit at your image with pollution on my hands. I will give you strong proof of this. It is the law for one who is defiled by shedding blood to be barred from speech until he is sprinkled with the blood of a new-born victim by a man who can purify from murder. Long before at other houses I have been thus purified both by victims and by flowing streams.

[453] And so I declare that this concern is out of the way. As to my family, you will soon learn. I am an Argive; my father—you rightly inquire about him—was Agamemnon, the commander of the naval forces; along with him, you made Troy, the city of Ilion, to be no city. He did not die nobly, after he came home; but my black-hearted mother killed him after she covered him in a crafty snare that still remains to witness his murder in the bath. And when I came back home, having been an exile in the time before, I killed the woman who gave birth to me, I will not deny it, as the penalty in return for the murder of my dearly-loved father. Together with me Loxias is responsible for this deed, because he threatened me with pains, a goad for my heart, if I should fail to do this deed to those who were responsible. You judge whether I acted justly or not; whatever happens to me at your hands, I will be content.

ATHENA

[470] The matter is too great, if any mortal thinks to pass judgment on it; no, it is not lawful even for me to

decide on cases of murder that is followed by the quick anger of the Furies, especially since you, by rites fully performed, have come a pure and harmless suppliant to my house; and so I respect you, since you do not bring harm to my city. Yet these women have an office that does not permit them to be dismissed lightly; and if they fail to win their cause, the venom from their resentment will fall upon the ground, an intolerable, perpetual plague afterwards in the land.

[480] So stands the case: either course—to let them stay, to drive them out—brings disaster and perplexity to me. But since this matter has fallen here, I will select judges of homicide bound by oath, and I will establish this tribunal for all time. Summon your witnesses and proofs, sworn evidence to support your case; and I will return when I have chosen the best of my citizens, for them to decide this matter truly, after they take an oath that they will pronounce no judgment contrary to justice.

[*Exit.*]

CHORUS

[490] Here is the overturning of new laws, if the wrongful cause of this matricide is to triumph. Now his deed will accustom all men to recklessness; [many sorrowful wounds, given in truth by children, wait for parents in the future time.

[499] For the wrath of us, the Furies who keep watch on mortals, will not come stealthily upon such deeds—I will let loose death in every form. And as he anticipates his neighbor's evils, one man will ask of another when hardship is to end or to decrease; and the poor wretch offers the vain consolation of uncertain remedies.

[508] Do not let anyone who is struck by misfortune make an appeal and cry aloud this word, "Justice!" "Thrones of the Furies!" Perhaps some father, or mother, in new sorrow, may cry out these words piteously, now that the house of Justice is falling.

[517] There is a time when fear is good and ought to remain seated as a guardian of the heart. It is profitable to learn wisdom under strain. But who, if he did not train his heart in fear, either city or mortal, would still revere justice in the same way?

[526] Do not approve of a lawless life or one subject to a tyrant. The god grants power to moderation in

¹¹ Ixion, king of the Lapiths, murdered the father of his bride, and was given purification by Zeus after having been denied by the other gods. Cp. 718.

every form, but he oversees other matters in different ways. I have a timely word of advice: arrogance is truly the child of impiety, but from health of soul comes happiness, dear to all, much prayed for.

[538] And as for the whole matter, I say to you: respect the altar of Justice and do not, looking to profit, dishonor it by spurning with godless foot; for punishment will come upon you. The appointed fulfilment remains. Therefore, let a man rightly put first in honor the reverence owed to his parents, and have regard for attentions paid to guests welcomed in his house.

[550] Whoever is just willingly and without compulsion will not lack happiness; he will never be utterly destroyed. But I say that the man who boldly transgresses, amassing a great heap unjustly—by force, in time, he will strike his sail, when trouble seizes him as the yardarm is splintered.

[559] He calls on those who hear nothing and he struggles in the midst of the whirling waters. The god laughs at the hot-headed man, seeing him, who boasted that this would never happen, exhausted by distress without remedy and unable to surmount the cresting wave. He wrecks the happiness of his earlier life on the reef of Justice, and he perishes unwept, unseen.

[Enter, in procession, Athena, a herald, the jury of the Areopagus, a crowd of citizens. Orestes removes to the place appointed for the accused. Apollo appears after Athena's first speech.]

ATHENA

[566] Herald, give the signal and restrain the crowd; and let the piercing Tyrrhenian¹² trumpet, filled with human breath, send forth its shrill blare to the people! For while this council-hall is filling, it is good to be silent, and for my ordinances to be learned, by the whole city for everlasting time, and by these appellants, so that their case may be decided well.

[Enter Apollo.]

CHORUS

[574] Lord Apollo, be master of what is yours. Say what part you have in this matter.

APOLLO

[576] I have come both to bear witness—for this man was a lawful suppliant and a guest of my sanctuary,

and I am his purifier from bloodshed—and to be his advocate myself. I am responsible for the murder of his mother. *[To Athena.]* Bring in the case, and, in accordance with your wisdom, decide it.

ATHENA

[582] *[To the Furies.]* It is for you to speak—I am only bringing in the case; for the prosecutor at the beginning, speaking first, shall rightly inform us of the matter.

CHORUS

[585] We are many, but we will speak briefly. *[To Orestes.]* Answer our questions, one by one. Say first if you killed your mother.

ORESTES

[588] I killed her. There is no denial of this.

CHORUS

[589] Of the three falls that win the wrestling match, this one is already ours.

ORESTES

[590] You make this boast over a man who is not down yet.

CHORUS

[591] You must, however, say how you killed her.

ORESTES

[592] I will say it: with drawn sword in hand, I stabbed her in the throat.

CHORUS

[593] By whom were you persuaded and on whose advice?

ORESTES

[594] By the oracles of this god here; he is my witness.

CHORUS

[595] The prophet directed you to kill your mother?

ORESTES

[596] Yes, and to this very hour, I do not blame my fortune.

CHORUS

[597] But if the jury's vote catches hold of you, you'll soon speak differently.

¹² The Etruscans were regarded as the inventors of the trumpet.

ORESTES

[598] I have good confidence. My father will send protection from his grave.

CHORUS

[599] Put your confidence in the dead now, after you have killed your mother!

ORESTES

[600] I do, for she was twice afflicted with pollution.

CHORUS

[601] How so? Teach the judges this.

ORESTES

[602] By murdering her husband, she killed my father.

CHORUS

[603] And so, although you are alive, she is free of pollution by her death.¹³

ORESTES

[604] But why did you not drive her into exile, while she lived?

CHORUS

[605] She was not related by blood to the man she killed.

ORESTES

[606] Then am I my mother's kin by blood?

CHORUS

[607] How else could she have nurtured you, murderer, beneath her belt? Do you reject the nearest kinship, that of a mother?

ORESTES

[609] Apollo, give your testimony now. Explain, on my behalf, whether I was justified in killing her. For I do not deny that I did it, as it is done. But decide whether this bloodshed was, to your mind, just or not, so that I may inform the court.

APOLLO

[614] I will speak justly before you, Athena's great tribunal,—since I am a prophet, I cannot lie. I have never yet, on my oracular throne, said anything about a man or woman or city that Zeus, the father of the Olympians, did not command me to say. Learn how

strong this plea of justice is; and I tell you to obey the will of my father; for an oath is not more powerful than Zeus.¹⁴

CHORUS

[622] Zeus, as you say, gave you this oracular command, to tell Orestes here to avenge his father's murder but to take no account at all of the honor due his mother?

APOLLO

[625] Yes, for it is not the same thing—the murder of a noble man, honored by a god-given scepter, and his murder indeed by a woman, not by rushing arrows sped from afar, as if by an Amazon, but as you will hear, Pallas, and those who are sitting to decide by vote in this matter.

[631] She received him from the expedition, where he had for the most part won success beyond expectation,¹⁵ in the judgment of those favorable to him; then, as he was stepping from the bath, on its very edge, she threw a cloak like a tent over it, fettered her husband in an embroidered robe, and cut him down.

[636] This was his death, as I have told it to you—the death of a man wholly majestic, commander of the fleet. As for that woman, I have described her in such a way as to whet the indignation of the people who have been appointed to decide this case.

CHORUS

[640] Zeus gives greater honor to a father's death, according to what you say; yet he himself bound his aged father, Cronus. How does this not contradict what you say? I call on you as witnesses turning to the judges to hear these things.

APOLLO

[644] Oh, monsters utterly loathed and detested by the gods! Zeus could undo fetters, there is a remedy for that, and many means of release. But when the dust has drawn up the blood of a man, once he is dead, there is no return to life. For this, my father has made no magic spells, although he arranges all other things, turning them up and down; nor does his exercise of force cost him a breath.

¹³ She is freed from blood-guiltiness because her blood has been shed.

¹⁴ The oath taken by the judges (489) may pronounce Orestes guilty as to the fact; but as his deed was done at the command of Zeus, whose representative is his son, Zeus therefore assumes all moral responsibility.

¹⁵ Literally "trafficked better" — "better" either "than his foes, the Trojans"; or "beyond expectation" (since he was guilty of the death of his daughter); or possibly, without any implicit comparative force, simply "well."

CHORUS

[652] See how you advocate acquittal for this man! After he has poured out his mother's blood on the ground, shall he then live in his father's house in Argos? Which of the public altars shall he use? What purification rite of the brotherhoods¹⁶ will receive him?

APOLLO

[657] I will explain this, too, and see how correctly I will speak. The mother of what is called her child is not the parent, but the nurse of the newly-sown embryo.¹⁷ The one who mounts is the parent, whereas she, as a stranger for a stranger, preserves the young plant, if the god does not harm it. And I will show you proof of what I say: a father might exist without a mother. A witness is here at hand, the child of Olympian Zeus, who was not nursed in the darkness of a womb, and she is such a child as no goddess could give birth to.

[667] For my part, Pallas, as in all other matters, as I know how, I will make your city and people great; and I have sent this man as a suppliant to your sanctuary so that he may be faithful for all time, and that you, goddess, might win him and those to come after him as a new ally and so that these pledges of faith might remain always, for the later generations of these people to cherish.

ATHENA

[674] Am I to assume that enough has been said, and shall I now command these jurors to cast an honest vote according to their judgment?

CHORUS

[676] For our part, every bolt is already shot. But I am waiting to hear how the trial will be decided.

ATHENA

[678] Why not? As for you, [*To Apollo and Orestes.*] how shall I arrange matters so that I will not be blamed by you?

APOLLO

[679] You have heard what you have heard; and as

you cast your ballots, keep the oath sacred in your hearts, friends.

ATHENA

[681] Hear now my ordinance, people of Attica, as you judge the first trial for bloodshed. In the future, even as now, this court of judges will always exist for the people of Aegeus. And this Hill of Ares,¹⁸ the seat and camp of the Amazons, when they came with an army in resentment against Theseus, and in those days built up this new citadel with lofty towers to rival his, and sacrificed to Ares, from which this rock takes its name, the Hill of Ares: on this hill, the reverence of the citizens, and fear, its kinsman, will hold them back from doing wrong by day and night alike, so long as they themselves do not pollute the laws with evil streams; if you stain clear water with filth, you will never find a drink.

[696] Neither anarchy nor tyranny—this I counsel my citizens to support and respect, and not to drive fear wholly out of the city. For who among mortals, if he fears nothing, is righteous? Stand in just awe of such majesty, and you will have a defense for your land and salvation of your city, such as no man has, either among the Scythians or in Pelops' realm. I establish this tribunal, untouched by greed, worthy of reverence, quick to anger, awake on behalf of those who sleep, a guardian of the land.

[707] I have prolonged this advice to my citizens for the future; but now you must rise and take a ballot, and decide the case under the sacred obligation of your oath. My word has been spoken.

[The judges rise from their seats and cast their ballots one by one during the following altercation.]

CHORUS

[711] And I counsel you not to dishonor us in any way, since our company can be a burden to your land.

APOLLO

[713] And I, for my part, command you to stand in fear

¹⁶ Kinsfolk, actual or fictitious, were united in phratrīai, with common worship, offerings, and festivals.

¹⁷ This notion appears in Egypt (Diodorus Siculus 1. 80, whose source was Hecataeus, an older contemporary of Aeschylus) and in various Greek authors later than Aeschylus, e.g. Eur. Or. 552; Frag. 1064, the Pythagoreans cited by Stobaeus (Hense ii. 72). The passage in the play has been invoked as evidence that the Athenians of the fifth century B.C. were upholding, some the ancient mode of tracing descent from the mother (the argument of the Erinyes); others, the patrilinear theory advocated by Apollo.

¹⁸ The Amazons, as "daughters of Ares," invaded Attica to take vengeance on Theseus either, as one story reports, because he had carried off Antiope, their queen; or because he did not enclose the hill within the confines of his newly-founded city, which included the Acropolis. Aeschylus apparently rejects the legend whereby the Hill of Ares had its name from the fact that Ares was here tried for the murder of Halirrothius, a son of Poseidon, and acquitted by a tie vote of the gods, his judges.

of the oracles, both mine and Zeus', and not cause them to be unfulfilled.

CHORUS

[715] Although it is not your office, you have respect for deeds of bloodshed. You will prophesy, dispensing prophecies that are no longer pure.

APOLLO

[716] Then was my father mistaken in any way in his purposes when Ixion, who first shed blood, was a suppliant?

CHORUS

[719] You do argue! But if I fail to win the case, I will once more inflict my company on this land as a burden.

APOLLO

[721] But you have no honor, among both the younger and the older gods. I will win.

CHORUS

[723] You did such things also in the house of Pheres, when you persuaded the Fates to make mortals free from death.¹⁹

APOLLO

[725] Is it not right, then, to do good for a worshipper, especially when he is in need?

CHORUS

[727] It was you who destroyed the old dispensations when you beguiled the ancient goddesses with wine.

APOLLO

[729] Soon, when you have lost the case, you will spit out your venom—no great burden to your enemies.
[*The balloting is now ended.*]

CHORUS

[731] Since you, a youth, would ride me down, an old woman, I am waiting to hear the verdict in the case, since I have not decided whether to be angry at the city.

ATHENA

[734] It is my duty to give the final judgment and I shall cast my vote for Orestes. For there was no mother who gave me birth; and in all things, except

for marriage, whole-heartedly I am for the male and entirely on the father's side. Therefore, I will not award greater honor to the death of a woman who killed her husband, the master of the house. Orestes wins, even if the vote comes out equal. Cast the ballots out of the urns, as quickly as possible, you jurors who have been assigned this task.

[*The ballots are turned out and separated.*]

ORESTES

[744] O Phoebus Apollo! How will the trial be decided?

CHORUS

[745] O Night, our dark Mother, do you see this?

ORESTES

[746] Now I will meet my end by hanging, or I will live.

CHORUS

[747] Yes, and we will be ruined, or maintain our honors further.

APOLLO

[748] Correctly count the ballots cast forth, friends, and be in awe of doing wrong in the division of the votes. Error of judgment is the source of much distress, and the cast of a single ballot has set upright a house.

[*The ballots are shown to Athena.*]

ATHENA

[752] This man is acquitted on the charge of murder, for the numbers of the casts are equal.

[*Apollo disappears.*]

ORESTES

[753] Pallas, savior of my house! I was deprived of a fatherland, and it is you who have given me a home there again. The Hellenes will say, "The man is an Argive once again, and lives in his father's heritage, by the grace of Pallas and of Loxias and of that third god, the one who accomplishes everything, the savior" —the one who, having respect for my father's death, saves me, seeing those advocates of my mother.

¹⁹ In atonement for having shed blood (according to one legend, that of the dragon at Delphi, according to another, that of the Cyclopes), Apollo was compelled by Zeus to serve as a thrall in the house of Admetus, son of Pheres. An ancient story, adopted by Aeschylus, reported that, when the time came for Admetus to die, Apollo, in gratitude for the kindness shown him by the prince, plied the Fates with wine

(l. 728) and thus secured their consent that Admetus should be released from death on condition that some one should voluntarily choose to die in his stead. Euripides, in his *Alcestis*, tells how, when both the father and the mother of Admetus refused to give up to him the remnant of their days, his wife Alcestis died for him.

[762] I will return to my home now, after I swear an oath to this land and to your people²⁰ for the future and for all time to come, that no captain of my land will ever come here and bring a well-equipped spear against them. For I myself, then in my grave, will accomplish it by failure without remedy, making their marches spiritless and their journeys ill-omened, so that those who violate my present oath will repent their enterprise. But while the straight course is preserved, and they hold in everlasting honor this city of Pallas with their allied spears, I will be the more well-disposed to them.

[775] And so farewell—you and the people who guard your city. May your struggle with your enemies let

none escape, bringing you safety and victory with the spear!

[Exit.]

• • •

After persuading the Erinyes to accept the verdict, Athena leads a procession accompanying them to a new home, where they are now called “Semnai” (Venerable Ones) and are to be honored by the Athenians to ensure the city’s prosperity. Athena also declares that henceforth tied juries will result in the defendant being acquitted, as mercy should always take precedence over harshness.

²⁰ The passage points to the league between Athens and Argos, formed after Cimon was ostracized (461 B.C.) and the treaty with Sparta denounced.

Herodotos, from *The Histories*

Herodotos wrote his comprehensive history in the fifth century BCE; though it's our main source for the Persian Wars with the Greeks (490-478 BCE), Herodotos's larger purpose was to seek to understand human nature and the elements of civilization by comparing and contrasting anecdotes concerning various events and cultures. Excerpted below are tales concerning the matriarchal Amazons; the admiral-queen Artemesia; Gorgo, daughter and wife of Spartan kings; Candaules and his exhibition of his wife; and the brooch-murdering wives of Athens.¹

• • •

The Amazons

4.110 The history of the Sauromatae is as I will now show. When the Greeks warred with the Amazons (whom the Scythians call Oiorpata, a name signifying in our tongue “killers of men,” for in Scythian a man is *oior*, and to kill is *pata*) after their victory on the Thermodon they sailed away carrying in three ships as many Amazons as they had been able to take alive; and out at sea the Amazons set upon the crews and threw them overboard. But they knew nothing of ships, nor how to use rudder or sail or oar; and the men being thrown overboard they were borne at the mercy of waves and winds, till they came to the Cliffs by the Maeetian lake; this place is in the country of the free Scythians. There the Amazons landed, and set forth on their journey to the inhabited country. But at the beginning of their journey they found a place where horses were reared; and carrying these horses away they raided the Scythian lands on horseback.

4.111 The Scythians could not understand the matter; for they knew not the women's speech nor their dress nor their nation, but wondered whence they had come, and supposed them to be men all of the same age; and they met the Amazons in battle. The end of the fight was, that the Scythians got possession of the dead, and so came to know that their foes were women. Wherefore taking counsel they resolved by no means to slay them as heretofore, but to send to them their youngest men, of a number answering (as they guessed) to the

number of the women. They bade these youths encamp near to the Amazons and to imitate all that they did; if the women pursued them, then not to fight, but to flee; and when the pursuit ceased, to come and encamp near them. This was the plan of the Scythians, for they desired that children should be born of the women. The young men, being sent, did as they were charged.

4.112 When the Amazons perceived that the youths meant them no harm, they let them be; but every day the two camps drew nearer to each other. Now the young men, like the Amazons, had nothing but their arms and their horses, and lived as did the women, by hunting and plunder.

4.113 At midday the Amazons would scatter and go singly or in pairs away from each other, roaming thus apart for greater comfort. The Scythians marked this and did likewise; and as the women wandered alone, a young man laid hold of one of them, and the woman made no resistance but suffered him to do his will; and since they understood not each other's speech and she could not speak to him, she signed with the hand that he should come on the next day to the same place bringing another youth with him (showing by signs that there should be two), and she would bring another woman with her. The youth went away and told his comrades; and the next day he came himself with another to the place, where he found the Amazon and another with her awaiting him. When the rest of the young men learnt of this, they had intercourse with the rest of the Amazons.

¹ Source: Herodotus, and A. D. Godley. 1920. *Herodotus*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

4.114 Presently they joined their camps and dwelt together, each man having for his wife the woman with whom he had had intercourse at first. Now the men could not learn the women's language, but the women mastered the speech of the men; and when they understood each other, the men said to the Amazons, "We have parents and possessions; now therefore let us no longer live as we do, but return to the multitude of our people and consort with them; and we will still have you, and no others, for our wives." To this the women replied, "Nay, we could not dwell with your women; for we and they have not the same customs. We shoot with the bow and throw the javelin and ride, but the crafts of women we have never learned; and your women do none of the things whereof we speak, but abide in their waggons working at women's crafts, and never go abroad a-hunting or for aught else. We and they therefore could never agree. Nay, if you desire to keep us for wives and to have the name of just men, go to your parents and let them give you the allotted share of their possessions, and after that let us go and dwell by ourselves. The young men agreed and did this.

4.115 So when they had been given the allotted share of possessions which fell to them, and returned to the Amazons, the women said to them: "We are in fear and dread, to think how we should dwell in this country; seeing that not only have we bereaved you of your parents, but we have done much hurt to your land. Nay, since you think right to have us for wives, let us all together, we and you, remove out of this country and dwell across the river Tanais."

4.116 To this too the youths consented; and crossing the Tanais they went a three days' journey from the river eastwards, and a three days' journey from the Maeetan lake northwards; and when they came to the region in which they now dwell, they made their abode there. Ever since then the women of the Sauromatae have followed their ancient usage; they ride a-hunting with their men or without them; they go to war, and wear the same dress as the men.

4.117 The language of the Sauromatae is Scythian, but not spoken in its ancient purity, seeing that the Amazons never rightly learnt it. In regard to marriage, it is the custom that no virgin weds till she has slain a man of the enemy; and some of them grow old and die unmarried, because they cannot fulfil the law.

Artemisia of Halicarnassus

7.99 I name none of the rest of the captains [of the Persian fleet], having no need so to do, save only Artemisia, who moves me to marvel greatly that a woman should have gone with the armament against Hellas; for her husband being dead, she herself had his sovereignty and a young son withal, and followed the host under no stress of necessity, but of mere high-hearted valour. Artemisia was her name; she was daughter to Lygdamis, on her father's side of Halicarnassian lineage, and a Cretan on her mother's. She was the leader of the men of Halicarnassus and Cos and Nisyrus and Calydnos, furnishing five ships. Her ships were reputed the best in the whole fleet after the ships of Sidon; and of all his allies she gave the king the best counsels. The cities, whereof I said she was the leader, are all of Dorian stock, as I can show, the Halicarnassians being of Troezen, and the rest of Epidaurus. Here ends what I have said of the fleet.

...

8.68 Mardonius went about questioning them, from the Sidonian onwards; and all the rest gave their united voice for offering battle at sea; but Artemisia said: "Tell the king, I pray you, Mardonius, that I who say this have not been the hindmost in courage or in feats of arms in the fights near Euboea. Nay, master, but it is right that I should declare my opinion, even that which I deem best for your cause. And this I say to you — Spare your ships, and offer no battle at sea; for their men are as much stronger by sea than yours, as men are stronger than women. And why must you at all costs imperil yourself by fighting battles on the sea? have you not possession of Athens, for the sake of which you set out on this march, and of the rest of Hellas? no man

stands in your path; they that resisted you have come off in such plight as beseemed them. I will show you now what I think will be the course of your enemies' doings. If you make no haste to fight at sea, but keep your ships here and abide near the land, or even go forward into the Peloponnese, then, my master, you will easily gain that end wherefor you have come. For the Greeks are not able to hold out against you for a long time, but you will scatter them, and they will flee each to his city; they have no food in this island, as I am informed, nor, if you lead your army into the Peloponnese, is it likely that those of them who have come from thence will abide unmoved; they will have no mind to fight sea-battles for Athens. But if you make haste to fight at once on sea, I fear lest your fleet take some hurt and thereby harm your army likewise. Moreover, O king, call this to mind — good men's slaves are wont to be evil and bad men's slaves good; and you, who are the best of all men, have evil slaves, that pass for your allies, men of Egypt and Cyprus and Cilicia and Pamphylia, in whom is no usefulness."

8.69 When Artemisia spoke thus to Mardonius, all that were her friends were sorry for her words, thinking that the king would do her some hurt for counselling him against a sea-fight; but they that had ill-will and jealousy against her for the honour in which she was held above all the allies were glad at her answer, thinking it would be her undoing. But when the opinions were reported to Xerxes he was greatly pleased by the opinion of Artemisia; he had ever deemed her a woman of worth and now held her in much higher esteem. Nevertheless he bade the counsel of the more part to be followed; for he thought that off Euboea his men had been slack fighters by reason of his absence, and now he purposed to watch the battle himself. ...

8.87 Now as touching some of the others I cannot with exactness say how they fought severally, foreigners or Greeks; but what befel Artemisia made her to be esteemed by the king even more than before. The king's side being now in dire confusion, Artemisia's ship was at this time being pursued by a ship of Attica; and she could not

escape, for other friendly ships were in her way, and it chanced that she was the nearest to the enemy; wherefore she resolved that she would do that which afterwards tended to her advantage, and as she fled pursued by the Athenian she charged a friendly ship that bore men of Calyndus and the king himself of that place, Damasithymus. It may be that she had had some quarrel with him while they were still at the Hellespont, but if her deed was done of set purpose, or if the Calyndian met her by crossing her path at haphazard, I cannot say. But having charged and sunk the ship, she had the good luck to work for herself a double advantage. For when the Attic captain saw her charge a ship of foreigners, he supposed that Artemisia's ship was Greek or a deserter from the foreigners fighting for the Greeks, and he turned aside to deal with others.

8.88 By this happy chance it came about that she escaped and avoided destruction; and moreover the upshot was that the very harm which she had done won her great favour in Xerxes' eyes. For the king (it is said) saw her charge the ship as he viewed the battle, and one of the bystanders said, "Sire, see you Artemisia, how well she fights, and how she has sunk an enemy ship?" Xerxes then asking if it were truly Artemisia that had done the deed, they affirmed it, knowing well the ensign of his ship; and they supposed that the ship she had sunk was an enemy; for the luckiest chance of all which had (as I have said) befallen her was, that not one from the Calyndian ship was saved alive to be her accuser. Hearing what they told him, Xerxes is reported to have said, "My men have become women, and my women men"; such, they say, were his words.

Gorgo of Sparta

5.48 Such, then, was the manner of Dorieus' death. Had he endured Cleomenes' rule and stayed at Sparta, he would have been king of Lacedaemon; for Cleomenes reigned no long time, and died leaving no son but one only daughter, whose name was Gorgo.

5.49 I return to my story. It was in the reign of Cleomenes that Aristagoras the despot of Miletus

came to Sparta; and when he had audience of the king (so the Lacedaemonians say) he brought with him a bronze tablet on which the map of all the earth was engraved, and all the sea and all the rivers. ...

5.50 Thus far they advanced at that hearing. But when on the day appointed for the answer they came to the place whereon they had agreed, Cleomenes asked Aristagoras how many days' journey it was from the Ionian sea to the king. Till now, Aristagoras had been cunning and fooled the Spartan right well; but here he made a false step; for if he desired to bring the Spartans away into Asia he should never have told the truth; but he did tell it, and said that it was a three months' journey inland. At that, Cleomenes cut short all the rest that Aristagoras began to tell him about the journey, and bade his Milesian guest depart from Sparta before sunset; for never (he said) would the Lacedaemonians listen to the plan, if Aristagoras desired to lead them a three month's journey from the sea.

5.51 Having thus spoken Cleomenes went to his house; but Aristagoras took a suppliant's garb and followed him thither, and entering in he used a suppliant's right to beseech Cleomenes to hear him, but first send the child away; for Cleomenes' daughter, whose name was Gorgo, was standing by him; she was his only child, and was about eight or nine years of age. Cleomenes bade him say what he would and not let the child's presence hinder him. Then Aristagoras began to promise Cleomenes from ten talents upwards, if he would grant his request. Cleomenes refusing, Aristagoras offered him ever more and yet more, till when he promised fifty talents the child cried out, "Father, the stranger will corrupt you, unless you leave him and go away." Cleomenes was pleased with the child's counsel and went into another room; and Aristagoras departed clean out of Sparta, and could find no occasion for telling further of the journey inland to the king's place.

...

7.239 I return now to that place in my history where it lately left off. The Lacedaemonians were the first to be informed that the king was equipping himself to attack Hellas; with this knowledge it was that they sent to the oracle at Delphi, where they received the answer whereof I spoke a little while ago; and the way of their being so informed was strange. Demaratus son of Ariston, being an exile among the Medes, was, as I suppose (reason being also my ally), no friend to the Lacedaemonians, and I leave it to be imagined whether what he did was done out of goodwill or spiteful triumph. Xerxes being resolved to march against Hellas, Demaratus, who was then at Susa and had knowledge of this, desired to send word of it to the Lacedaemonians. But he feared to be detected, and had no other way of acquainting them than this trick: — taking a double tablet, he scraped away the wax from it, and then wrote the king's intent on the wood; which done, he melted the wax back again over the writing, so that the bearer of the tablet thus left blank might not be troubled by the way-wardens. When the tablet came to Lacedaemon, the Lacedaemonians could not guess its meaning, till at last (as I have been told) Gorgo, Cleomenes' daughter and Leonidas' wife, discovered the trick of herself and advised them to scrape the wax away, when they would find writing on the wood. So doing, they found and read the message, and presently sent it to the rest of the Greeks. This is the story, as it is told.

Candaules of Sardis

1.6 Croesus was by birth a Lydian, son of Alyattes, and monarch of all the nations west of the river Halys, which flows from the south between Syria and Paphlagonia, and issues northward into the sea called Euxinus. This Croesus was as far as we know the first foreigner who subdued Greeks and took tribute of them, and won the friendship of others, — the former being the Ionians, the Aeolians, and the Dorians of Asia, and the latter the Lacedaemonians. Before the reign of Croesus all Greeks were free: for the Cimmerian host which

invaded Ionia before his time did not subdue the cities but rather raided and robbed them.

1.7 Now the sovereign power, which belonged to the descendants of Heracles, fell to the family of Croesus — the Mermnadae as they were called — in the following way. Candaules, whom the Greeks call Myrsilus, was the ruler of Sardis; he was descended from Alcaeus, son of Heracles; Agron, son of Ninus, son of Belus, son of Alcaeus, was the first Heraclid king of Sardis, and Candaules, son of Myrsus, was the last. The kings of this country before Agron were descendants of Lydus, son of Atys, from whom all this Lydian district took its name; before that it was called the land of the Meii. From these the Heraclidae, descendants of Heracles and a female slave of Iardanus, received the sovereignty and held it in charge, by reason of an oracle; and they ruled for two and twenty generations, or 505 years, son succeeding father, down to Candaules, son of Myrsus.

1.8 This Candaules, then, fell in love with his own wife, so much that he supposed her to be by far the fairest woman in the world; and being persuaded of this, he raved of her beauty to Gyges, son of Dascylus, who was his favourite among his bodyguard; for it was to Gyges that he entrusted all his weightiest secrets. Then after a little while Candaules, being doomed to ill-fortune, spoke thus to Gyges: "I think, Gyges, that you do not believe what I tell you of the beauty of my wife; men trust their ears less than their eyes; do you, then, so contrive that you may see her naked." Gyges exclaimed loudly at this. "Master," said he, "what a pestilent command is this that you lay upon me! that I should see her who is my mistress naked! with the stripping off of her tunic a woman is stripped of the honour due to her. Men have long ago made wise rules for our learning; one of these is, that we, and none other, should see what is our own. As for me, I fully believe that your queen is the fairest of all women; ask not lawless acts of me, I entreat you."

1.9 Thus speaking Gyges sought to turn the king's purpose, for he feared lest some ill to himself

should come of it: but this was Candaules' answer: Take courage, Gyges: fear not that I say this to put you to the proof, nor that my wife will do you any harm. I will so contrive the whole business that she shall never know that you have seen her. I will bring you into the chamber where she and I lie and set you behind the open door; and after I have entered, my wife too will come to her bed. There is a chair set near the entrance of the room: on this she will lay each part of her raiment as she takes it off, and you will be able to gaze upon her at your leisure. Then, when she goes from the chair to the bed, turning her back upon you, do you look to it that she does not see you going out through the doorway."

1.10 As Gyges could not escape, he consented. Candaules, when he judged it to be bed time, brought Gyges into the chamber, his wife presently followed, and when she had come in and was laying aside her garments Gyges beheld her; and when she turned her back upon him, going to her bed, he slipped privily from the room. The woman saw him as he passed out, and perceived what her husband had done. But shamed though she was she never cried out nor let it be seen that she had perceived aught, for she had it in mind to punish Candaules; seeing that among the Lydians and most of the foreign peoples it is held great shame that even a man should be seen naked.

1.11 For the nonce she made no sign and held her peace. But as soon as it was day, she assured herself of those of her household whom she perceived to be most faithful to her, and called Gyges: who, supposing that she knew nothing of what had been done, came at call; for he had always been wont to attend the queen whenever she bade him. So when he came, the lady thus addressed him: "Now, Gyges, you have two roads before you; choose which you will follow. You must either kill Candaules and take me for your own and the throne of Lydia, or yourself be killed now without more ado; that will prevent you from obeying all Candaules' commands in the future and seeing what you should not see. One of you must die: either he, the contriver of this plot, or you, who have outraged all

usage by looking on me unclad." At this Gyges stood awhile astonished: presently he entreated her not to compel him to such a choice; but when he could not move her, and saw that dire necessity was in very truth upon him either to kill his master or himself be killed by others, he chose his own life. Then he asked the queen to tell him, since she forced him against his will to slay his master, how they were to attack the king: and she replied, "You shall come at him from the same place whence he made you see me naked; attack him in his sleep."

1.12 So when they had made ready this plot, and night had fallen, Gyges followed the lady into the chamber (for he could not get free or by any means escape, but either he or Candaules must die), and she gave him a dagger and hid him behind the same door; and presently he stole out and slew Candaules as he slept, and thus made himself master of the king's wife and sovereignty. He is mentioned in the iambic verses of Archilochus of Paros who lived about the same time.

1.13 So he took possession of the sovereign power, and was confirmed therein by the Delphic oracle. For when the Lydians were much angered by the fate of Candaules, and took up arms, the faction of Gyges and the rest of the people came to an agreement that if the oracle should ordain him to be king of the Lydians, then he should reign: but if not, then he should render back the kingship to the Heraclidae. The oracle did so ordain: and Gyges thus became king. Howbeit the Pythian priestess declared that Heraclidae should have vengeance on Gyges' posterity in the fifth generation: an utterance of which the Lydians and their kings took no account, till it was fulfilled.

The brooches of Athens

5.87 This, then, is the story told by the Argives and Aeginetans, and the Athenians too acknowledge that it was only one man of them who came safe back to Attica [from the disastrous raid at Aegina];

but the Argives say that it was they, and the Athenians say that it was divine power, that destroyed the Attic army when this one man was saved alive; albeit even this one (say the Athenians) was not saved alive but perished as here related. It would seem that he made his way to Athens and told of the mishap; and when this was known (it is said) to the wives of the men who had gone to attack Aegina, they were very wroth that he alone should be safe out of all, and they gathered round him and stabbed him with the brooch-pins of their garments, each asking him "where her man was."

5.88 Thus was this man done to death; and this deed of their women seemed to the Athenians to be yet more dreadful than their misfortune. They could find, it is said, no other way to punish the women; but they changed their dress to the Ionian fashion; for till then the Athenian women had worn Dorian dress, very like to the Corinthian; it was changed, therefore, to the linen tunic, that so they might have no brooch-pins to use. But if the truth be told, this dress is not in its origin Ionian, but Carian; for in Hellas itself all the women's dress in ancient times was the same as that which we now call Dorian. As for the Argives and Aeginetans, this was the reason of their even making a law for each of their nations that their brooch pins should be made half as long again as the measure then customary, and that brooch-pins in especial should be dedicated by their women in the temple of those goddesses; and that neither ought else Attic should be brought to the temple, nor earthenware, but that it be the law to drink there from vessels of the country.

5.89 So then the women of Argolis and Aegina ever since that day wore brooch-pins longer than before, by reason of the feud with the Athenians, and so they did even to my time; and the enmity of the Athenians against the Aeginetans began as I have told. And now at the Thebans' call the Aeginetans came readily to the aid of the Boeotians, remembering the business of the images.

Euripides: from *The Bacchae*

The Bacchae tells the story of the introduction of the worship of the god Dionysus from Asia into Greece. But as Dionysus arrives in the Greek city of Thebes, he finds that the populace, led by its king, Pentheus, refuses to acknowledge his divinity.

Dionysus sets out to punish the unfaithful, and “stings the female population of Thebes with daemonic frenzy, sending them to the mountains outside of the city where they celebrate his rites at last.”¹

[Scene: The Greek city of Thebes, outside the royal palace. Dionysus, appearing as young man, is alone, with the palace behind him, its main doors facing the audience. He speaks directly to the audience]

DIONYSUS

I've arrived here in the land of Thebes,
I, Dionysus, son of Zeus, born to him
from Semele, Cadmus' daughter, delivered
by a fiery midwife—Zeus's lightning flash.²
Yes, I've changed my form from god to human,
appearing here at these streams of Dirce,
the waters of Ismarus. I see my mother's tomb—
for she was wiped out by that lightning bolt.
It's there, by the palace, with that rubble,
the remnants of her house, still smoldering
from Zeus's living fire—Hera's undying outrage
against my mother. But I praise Cadmus. [10]
He's made his daughter's shrine a sacred place.
I have myself completely covered it
with leafy shoots of grape-bearing vines.

I've left the fabulously wealthy East,
lands of Lydians and Phrygians,
Persia's sun-drenched plains, walled towns in Bactria.
I've moved across the bleak lands of the Medes,
through rich Arabia, all Asian lands,
along the salt-sea coast, through those towns
with their beautifully constructed towers,
full of barbarians and Greeks all intermingled.
Now I've come to Thebes, city of Greeks, [20]
only after I've set those eastern lands
dancing in the mysteries I established,
making known to men my own divinity.
Thebes is the first city of the Greeks
where I've roused people to shout out my cries,
with this deerskin draped around my body,

this ivy spear, a thyrsus, in my hand.³
For my mother's sisters have acted badly,
something they, of all people, should avoid.
They boasted aloud that I, Dionysus,
was no child of Zeus, claiming Semele,
once she was pregnant by some mortal man,
attributed her bad luck in bed to Zeus, [30]
a story made up (they said) to trick Cadmus.
Those sisters state that is why Zeus killed her,
because she lied about the man she'd slept with.
So I've driven those women from their homes
in a frenzy—they now live in the mountains,
out of their minds. I've made them put on costumes,
outfits appropriate for my mysteries.
All Theban offspring—or, at least, all women—
I've driven in a crazed fit from their homes.
Now they sit out there among the rocks,
underneath green pine trees, no roof overhead,
Cadmus' daughters in their company as well.
For this city has to learn, though against its will,
that it has yet to be initiated
into my Dionysian rites. Here I plead [40]
the cause of my own mother, Semele,
appearing as a god to mortal men,
the one she bore to Zeus. Now Cadmus,
the old king, has just transferred his power,
his royal authority, to Pentheus,
his daughter's son, who, in my case at least,
fights against the gods, prohibiting me
all sacrificial offerings. When he prays,
he chooses to ignore me. For this neglect
I'll demonstrate to him, to all in Thebes,
that I was born a god. Once these things here
have been made right, I'll move on somewhere else,
to some other land, revealing who I am.
But if Thebans in this city, in their anger, [50]
try to make those Bacchic women leave,

¹ Source: Translation by Ian Johnston, 2003. <https://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/euripides/bacchae.html>

² Semele, Cadmus's daughter and Dionysus's mother, had an affair with Zeus. Hera, Zeus's wife, tricked Zeus into destroying Semele with a lightning bolt. Zeus took the infant Dionysus from his mother's womb as she was dying and sewed him into his thigh, where Dionysus continued to grow until he was delivered as a new-born infant.

³ A thyrsus (pl. thyrsos) is a hollow plant stalk, usually decorated with ivy, and carried as a symbol of Dionysus in the dancing celebrations (where it can acquire magical powers).

to drive them from the mountains forcibly,
 then I, commander of these Maenads,
 will fight them.⁴ That's why I've transformed myself,
 assumed a mortal shape, altered my looks,
 so I resemble any human being.

*[Enter the Chorus of Bacchae, dressed in ritual deerskin,
 carrying small drums like tambourines.]*

But you there, you women who've left Tmolus,
 backbone of Lydia, my band of worshippers,
 whom I've led here from barbarian lands,
 my comrades on the road and when we rest,
 take up your drums, those instruments of yours
 from Phrygian cities, first invented
 by mother Rhea and myself. Move round here,
 beat those drums by Pentheus's palace, [60]
 let Cadmus' city see you, while I go,
 in person, to the clefts of Mount Cithaeron,
 to my Bacchae, to join in their dancing.⁵

[Exit Dionysus.]

• • •

*In this passage, a messenger describes to
 Pentheus the sights he has seen on Mount
 Cithaeron, where the Theban women—now
 Bacchantes, Dionysus' female adherents—have fed.
 Among them are Pentheus' mother Agave, and her
 sisters Autonoe and Ino.*

MESSENGER

The grazing cattle
 were just moving into upland pastures,
 at the hour the sun sends out its beams
 to warm the earth. Right then I saw them—
 three groups of dancing women. One of them [680]
 Autonoe led. Your mother, Agave,
 led the second group, and Ino led the third.

They were all asleep, bodies quite relaxed,
 some leaning back on leafy boughs of pine,
 others cradling heads on oak-leaf pillows,
 resting on the ground—in all modesty.
 They weren't as you described—all drunk on wine
 or on the music of their flutes, hunting
 for Aphrodite in the woods alone.

Once she heard my horned cattle lowing,
 your mother stood up amid those Bacchae,
 then called them to stir their limbs from sleep.
 They rubbed refreshing sleep out of their eyes, [690]

and stood up straight there—a marvelous sight,
 to see such an orderly arrangement,
 women young and old and still unmarried girls.
 First, they let their hair loose down their shoulders,
 tied up the fawn skins (some had untied the knots
 to loosen up the chords). Then around those skins
 they looped some snakes, who licked the women's cheeks.
 Some held young gazelles or wild wolf cubs
 and fed them on their own white milk, the ones [700]
 who'd left behind at home a new-born child,
 whose breasts were still swollen full of milk.
 They draped themselves with garlands from oak trees,
 ivy and flowering yew. Then one of them,
 taking a thyrsus, struck a rock with it,
 and water gushed out, fresh as dew. Another,
 using her thyrsus, scraped the ground. At once,
 the god sent fountains of wine up from the spot.
 All those who craved white milk to drink
 just scratched the earth with their fingertips—
 it came out in streams. From their ivy wands [710]
 thick sweet honey dripped. Oh, if you'd been there,
 if you'd seen this, you'd come with reverence
 to that god whom you criticize so much.

Well, we cattle herders and shepherds met
 to discuss and argue with each other
 about the astonishing things we'd seen.
 And then a man who'd been in town a bit
 and had a way with words said to us all,
 "You men who live in the holy regions
 of these mountains, how'd you like to hunt down
 Pentheus' mother, Agave—take her [720]
 away from these Bacchic celebrations,
 do the king a favour?" To all of us
 he seemed to make good sense. So we set up
 an ambush, hiding in the bushes,
 lying down there. At the appointed time,
 the women started their Bacchic ritual,
 brandishing the thyrsus and calling out
 to the god they cry to, Bromius, Zeus's son.
 The entire mountain and its wild animals
 were, like them, in one Bacchic ecstasy.
 As these women moved, they made all things dance.
 Agave, by chance, was dancing close to me.
 Leaving the ambush where I'd been concealed,
 I jumped out, hoping to grab hold of her. [730]
 But she screamed out, "O my quick hounds,
 men are hunting us. Come, follow me.
 Come on, armed with that thyrsus in your hand."

⁴ The Maenads, who make up the Chorus of the play, are the female followers of Dionysus, who have followed him from Phrygia in Asia Minor to Thebes.

⁵ Rhea is Zeus's mother. The drums are tambourines. Tmolus is a mountain in Asia Minor. Mount Cithaeron is a sacred mountain near Thebes.

We ran off, and so escaped being torn apart.
 But then those Bacchic women, all unarmed,
 went at the heifers browsing on the turf,
 using their bare hands. You should have seen one
 ripping a fat, young, lowing calf apart—
 others tearing cows in pieces with their hands.
 You could have seen ribs and cloven hooves [740]
 tossed everywhere—some hung up in branches
 dripping blood and gore. And bulls, proud beasts till then,
 with angry horns, collapsed there on the ground,
 dragged down by the hands of a thousand girls.
 Hides covering their bodies were stripped off
 faster than you could wink your royal eye.

Then, like birds carried up by their own speed,
 they rushed along the lower level ground,
 beside Asopus' streams, that fertile land
 which yields its crops to Thebes. Like fighting troops, [750]

they raided Hysiae and Erythrae,
 below rocky Cithaeron, destroying
 everything, snatching children from their homes.
 Whatever they carried their shoulders,
 even bronze or iron, never tumbled off
 onto the dark earth, though nothing was tied down.
 They carried fire in their hair, but those flames
 never singed them. Some of the villagers,
 enraged at being plundered by the Bacchae,
 seized weapons. The sight of what happened next, [760]
 my lord, was dreadful. For their pointed spears
 did not draw blood. But when those women
 threw the thyrsos in their hands, they wounded them
 and drove them back in flight. The women did this
 to men, but not without some god's assistance.

Then they went back to where they'd started from,
 those fountains which the god had made for them.
 They washed off the blood. Snakes licked their cheeks,
 cleansing their skin of every drop. My lord,
 you must welcome this god into our city, [770]
 whoever he is. He's a mighty god
 in many other ways. The people say,
 so I've heard, he gives to mortal human beings
 that vine which puts an end to human grief.
 Without wine, there's no more Aphrodite—
 or any other pleasure left for men.

CHORUS LEADER

I'm afraid to talk freely before the king,
 but nonetheless I'll speak—this Dionysus
 is not inferior to any god.

PENTHEUS

This Dionysian arrogance, like fire,

keeps flaring up close by—a great insult
 to all the Greeks. We must not hesitate.

[*To one of his armed attendants*]

Go to the Electra Gates. Call out the troops, [780]
 the heavy infantry, all fast cavalry.
 Tell them to muster, along with all those
 who carry shields—all the archers, too,
 the men who pull the bowstring back by hand.
 We'll march out against these Bacchae.
 In this whole business we will lose control,
 if we have to put up with what we've suffered
 from these women.

DIONYSUS

You've heard what I had to say,
 Pentheus, but still you're not convinced.
 Though I'm suffering badly at your hands,
 I say you shouldn't go to war against a god.
 You should stay calm. Bromius will not let you [790]
 move his Bacchae from their mountains.

PENTHEUS

Don't preach to me! You've got out of prison—
 enjoy that fact. Or shall I punish you some more?

DIONYSUS

I'd sooner make an offering to that god
 than in some angry fit kick at his whip—
 a mortal going to battle with a god.

PENTHEUS

I'll sacrifice all right—with a slaughter
 of those women, just as they deserve—
 in the forests on Cithaeron.

DIONYSUS

You'll all run.
 What a disgrace! To turn your bronze shields round,
 fleeing the thyrsos of those Bacchic women!

PENTHEUS

[*turning to one of his armed attendants, as if to go*]
 It's useless trying to argue with this stranger— [800]
 whatever he does or suffers, he won't shut up.

DIONYSUS [*calling Pentheus back*]

My lord! There's still a chance to end this calmly.

PENTHEUS

By doing what? Should I become a slave
 to my own slaves?

DIONYSUS

I'll bring the women here—
 without the use of any weapons.

PENTHEUS

I don't think so.

You're setting me up for your tricks again.

DIONYSUS

What sort of trick, if I want to save you
in my own way?

PENTHEUS

You've made some arrangement,
you and your god, so you can always dance
your Bacchanalian orgies.

DIONYSUS

Yes, that's true.

I have made some arrangement with the god.

PENTHEUS [*to one of his armed servants*]

You there, bring me my weapons.

[*To Dionysus*] And you—

No more talk! Keep quiet!

DIONYSUS

Just a minute!

[810]

[*Moving up to Pentheus*]

How would you like to gaze upon those women
sitting together in the mountains?

PENTHEUS

I'd like that.

Yes, for that I'd pay in gold—and pay a lot.

DIONYSUS

Why is that? Why do you desire it so much?

PENTHEUS

I'd be sorry to see the women drunk.

DIONYSUS

Would you derive pleasure from looking on,
viewing something you find painful?

PENTHEUS

Yes, I would—

if I were sitting in the trees in silence.

DIONYSUS

But even if you go there secretly,
they'll track you down.

PENTHEUS

You're right.

I'll go there openly.

DIONYSUS

So you're prepared,
are you, to make the trip? Shall I lead you there?

PENTHEUS

Let's go, and with all speed. I've got time.

[820]

DIONYSUS

In that case, you must clothe your body
in a dress—one made of eastern linen.

PENTHEUS

What! I'm not going up there as a man?
I've got to change myself into a woman?

DIONYSUS

If they see you as a man, they'll kill you.

PENTHEUS

Right again. You always have the answer.

DIONYSUS

Dionysus taught me all these things.

PENTHEUS

How can I best follow your suggestion?

DIONYSUS

I'll go inside your house and dress you up.

PENTHEUS

What? Dress up in a female outfit?
I can't do that—I'd be ashamed to.

DIONYSUS

You're still keen to see the Maenads, aren't you?

PENTHEUS

What sort of clothing do you recommend?
How should I cover up my body?

[830]

DIONYSUS

I'll fix up a long hair piece for your head.

PENTHEUS

All right.
What's the next piece of my outfit?

DIONYSUS

A dress down to your feet—then a headband,
to fit just here, around your forehead.

PENTHEUS

What else? What other things will you provide?

DIONYSUS

A thyrsus to hold and a dappled fawn skin.

PENTHEUS

No. I can't dress up in women's clothes!

DIONYSUS

But if you go fighting with these Bacchae,
you'll cause bloodshed.

PENTHEUS

Yes, that's true.

So first, we must go up and spy on them.

DIONYSUS

Hunt down evil by committing evil—
that sounds like a wise way to proceed.

PENTHEUS

But how will I make it through the city
without the Thebans noticing me?

[840]

DIONYSUS

We go by deserted streets. I'll take you.

PENTHEUS

Well, anything is easier to accept
than being made a fool by Bacchic women.
Let's go in the house. I'll think about what's best.

DIONYSUS

As you wish. Whatever you do, I'm ready.

PENTHEUS

I think I'll go in now. It's a choice
of going with weapons or taking your advice.

[Exit Pentheus into the palace. Dionysus turns to face the chorus.]

DIONYSUS

My women! that man's now entangled in our net.
He'll go to those Bacchae, and there he'll die.
That will be his punishment. Dionysus,
you're not far away. Now it's up to you.
Punish him. First, make sure he goes insane
with some crazed fantasy. If his mind is strong,
he'll not agree to put on women's clothes.
But he'll do it, if you make him mad.
I want him made the laughing stock of Thebes,
while I lead him through the city, mincing
as he moves along in women's clothing,
after he made himself so terrifying
with all those earlier threats. Now I'll be off,
to fit Pentheus into the costume
he'll wear when he goes down to Hades,
once he's butchered by his mother's hands.
He'll come to acknowledge Dionysus,
son of Zeus, born in full divinity,
most fearful and yet most kind to men.

[850]

[860]

• • •

Pentheus goes to Mount Cithaeron to see what the women are doing, but Dionysus traps Pentheus in a tree and calls on the Maenads to punish the one who denounced and ridiculed them. In their unreasoning frenzy they tear Pentheus apart, limb from limb, led by Pentheus's mother, Agave, daughter of Cadmus.

[Enter Agave, cradling the head of Pentheus.]

AGAVE

Asian Bacchae . . .

CHORUS

Why do you appeal to me?

AGAVE [displaying the head]

From the mountains I've brought home
this ivy tendril freshly cut.
We've had a blessed hunt.

[1170]

CHORUS

I see it.

As your fellow dancer, I'll accept it.

AGAVE

I caught this young lion without a trap,
as you can see.

CHORUS

What desert was he in?

AGAVE

Cithaeron.

CHORUS

On Cithaeron?

AGAVE

Cithaeron killed him.

CHORUS

Who struck him down?

AGAVE

The honour of the first blow goes to me.
In the dancing I'm called blessed Agave.

[1180]

CHORUS

Who else?

AGAVE

Well, from Cadmus . . .

CHORUS

From Cadmus

what?

AGAVE

His other children laid hands on the beast,
but after me—only after I did first.
We've had good hunting. So come, share our feast.

CHORUS

What? You want me to eat that with you?
O you unhappy woman.

AGAVE

This is a young bull. Look at this cheek
It's just growing downy under the crop
of his soft hair.

CHORUS

His hair makes him resemble
some wild beast.

AGAVE

Bacchus is a clever huntsman—[1190]
he wisely set his maenads on this beast.

CHORUS

Yes, our master is indeed a hunter.

AGAVE

Have you any praise for me?

CHORUS

I praise you.

AGAVE

Soon all Cadmus' people. . .

CHORUS

. . . and Pentheus, your son . . .

AGAVE

. . . will celebrate his mother, who caught the beast,
just like a lion.

CHORUS

It's a strange trophy.

AGAVE

And strangely captured, too.

CHORUS

You're proud of what you've done?

AGAVE

Yes, I'm delighted. Great things I've done—
great things on this hunt, clear for all to see.

CHORUS

Well then, you most unfortunate woman, [1200]
show off your hunting prize, your sign of victory,
to all the citizens.

AGAVE [*addressing everyone*]

All of you here,
all you living in the land of Thebes,
in this city with its splendid walls,
come see this wild beast we hunted down—
daughters of Cadmus—not with thonged spears,
Thessalian javelins, or by using nets,
but with our own white hands, our finger tips.
After this, why should huntsmen boast aloud,
when no one needs the implements they use?
We caught this beast by hand, tore it apart— [1210]
with our own hands. But where's my father?
He should come here. And where's Pentheus?
Where is my son? He should take a ladder,
set it against the house, fix this lion's head
way up there, high on the palace front.
I've captured it and brought it home with me.

[*Enter Cadmus and attendants, carrying parts of
Pentheus's body.*]

CADMUS

Follow me, all those of you who carry
some part of wretched Pentheus. You slaves,
come here, right by the house.

[*They place the bits of Pentheus' body together in a chest
front of the palace.*]

I'm worn out.

So many searches—but I picked up the body.
I came across it in the rocky clefts
on Mount Cithaeron, ripped to pieces, [1220]
no parts lying together in one place.
It was in the woods—difficult to search.
Someone told me what my daughter'd done,
those horrific acts, once I'd come back,
returning here with old Tiresias,
inside the city walls, back from the Bacchae.
So I climbed the mountains once again.
Now I bring home this child the maenads killed.
I saw Autonoe, who once bore
Actaeon to Aristaeus—and Ino,
she was with her there, in the forest,
both still possessed, quite mad, poor creatures.
Someone said Agave was coming here, [1230]
still doing her Bacchic dance. He spoke the truth,
for I see her there—what a wretched sight!

AGAVE

Father, now you can be truly proud.
Among all living men you've produced
by far the finest daughters. I'm talking
of all of us, but mostly of myself.
I've left behind my shuttle and my loom,

and risen to great things, catching wild beasts
with my bare hands. Now I've captured him,
I'm holding in my arms the finest trophy,
as you can see, bringing it back home to you,
so it may hang here.

[Offering him Pentheus' head]

Take this, father [1240]
let your hands welcome it. Be proud of it,
of what I've caught. Summon all your friends—
have a banquet, for you are blessed indeed,
blessed your daughters have achieved these things.

CADMUS
This grief's beyond measure, beyond endurance.
With these hands of yours you've murdered him.
You strike down this sacrificial victim,
this offering to the gods, then invite me,
and all of Thebes, to share a banquet.
Alas—first for your sorrow, then my own.
Lord god Bromius, born into this family,
has destroyed us, acting out his justice, [1250]
but too much so.

AGAVE
Why such scowling eyes?
How sorrowful and solemn old men become.
As for my son, I hope he's a fine hunter,
who copies his mother's hunting style,
when he rides out with young men of Thebes
chasing after creatures in the wild.
The only thing he seems capable of doing
is fighting with the gods. It's up to you,
father, to reprimand him for it.
Who'll call him here into my sight,
so he can see my good luck for himself?

CADMUS
Alas! Alas! What dreadful pain you'll feel
when you recognize what you've just done. [1260]
If you stay forever in your present state,
you'll be unfortunate, but you won't feel
as if you're suffering unhappiness.

AGAVE
But what in all this is wrong or painful?

CADMUS
First, raise your eyes. Look up into the sky.

AGAVE
All right. But why tell me to look up there?

CADMUS
Does the sky still seem the same to you,
or has it changed?

AGAVE
It seems, well, brighter . . .
more translucent than it was before.

CADMUS
And your inner spirit—is it still shaking?

AGAVE
I don't understand what it is you're asking.
But my mind is starting to clear somehow.
It's changing . . . it's not what it was before. [1270]

CADMUS
Can you hear me? Can you answer clearly?

AGAVE
Yes. But, father, what we discussed before,
I've quite forgotten.

CADMUS
Then tell me this—
to whose house did you come when you got married?

AGAVE
You gave me to Echion, who, men say,
was one of those who grew from seeds you cast.

CADMUS
In that house you bore your husband a child.
What was his name?

AGAVE
His name was Pentheus.
I conceived him with his father.

CADMUS
Well then,
this head your hands are holding—whose is it?

AGAVE
It's a lion's. That's what the hunters said.

CADMUS
Inspect it carefully. You can do that
without much effort.

AGAVE *[inspecting the head]*
What is this?
What am I looking at? What am I holding? [1280]

CADMUS
Look at it. You'll understand more clearly.

AGAVE

What I see fills me with horrific pain . . .
such agony . . .

CADMUS

Does it still seem to you
to be a lion's head?

AGAVE

No. It's appalling—
this head I'm holding belongs to Pentheus.

CADMUS

Yes, that's right. I was lamenting his fate
before you recognized him.

AGAVE

Who killed him?
How did he come into my hands?

CADMUS

Harsh truth—
how you come to light at the wrong moment.

AGAVE

Tell me. My heart is pounding in me
to hear what you're about to say.

CADMUS

You killed him—
you and your sisters.

AGAVE

Where was he killed?
At home? In what sort of place? [1290]

CADMUS

He was killed
where dogs once made a common meal of Actaeon.

AGAVE

Why did this poor man go to Cithaeron?

CADMUS

He went there to ridicule the god
and you for celebrating Dionysus.

AGAVE

But how did we happen to be up there?

CADMUS

You were all insane—the entire city
was in a Bacchic madness.

AGAVE

Now I see.
Dionysus has destroyed us all.

CADMUS

He took offense at being insulted.
You did not consider him a god.

AGAVE

Father, where's the body of my dearest son?

CADMUS

I had trouble tracking down the body.
I brought back what I found.

AGAVE

Are all his limbs laid out
just as they should be? And Pentheus, [1300]
what part did he play in my madness?

CADMUS

Like you, he was irreverent to the god.
That's why the god linked you and him together
in the same disaster—thus destroying
the house and me, for I've no children left,
now I see this offspring of your womb,
you unhappy woman, cruelly butchered
in the most shameful way. He was the one
who brought new vision to our family.

[Addressing the remains of Pentheus]

My child, you upheld the honour of our house,
my daughter's son. You were feared in Thebes. [1310]

No one who saw you ever would insult me,
though I was old, for you would then inflict
fit punishment. Now the mighty Cadmus,
the man who sowed and later harvested
the most splendid crop—the Theban people—
will be an exile, banished from his home,
a dishonoured man. Dearest of men,
even though, my child, you're alive no more,
I count you among those closest to me.

You won't be touching my cheek any more,
holding me in your arms, and calling me
“grandfather,” as you ask me, “Old man,
who's injuring or dishonouring you? [1320]

Who upsets your heart with any pain?
Tell me, father, so I can punish him—
anyone who treats you in an unjust way.”
Now you're in this horrifying state,
I'm in misery, your mother's pitiful,
and all your relatives are in despair.
If there's a man who disrespects the gods,
let him think about how this man perished—
then he should develop faith in them.

CHORUS LEADER

I'm sorry for you Cadmus—you're in pain.
But your grandson deserved his punishment.

AGAVE

Father, you see how all has changed for me.⁶
[From being your royal and honoured daughter,
the mother of a king, I'm now transformed—
an abomination, something to fill
all people's hearts with horror, with disgust—
the mother who slaughtered her only son,
who tore him apart, ripping out the heart
from the child who filled her own heart with joy—
all to honour this god Dionysus.
But, father, give me your permission now
to lay out here the body of my son,
prepare his corpse for proper burial.

CADMUS

That's no easy task to undertake.
His body, all the parts I could collect,
lies here, in this chest, not a pretty sight.
My own eyes can hardly bear to see him.
But if you think you can endure the work,
then, my child, begin the appropriate rites.

AGAVE

*[removing Pentheus's limbs and placing them on the ground
in front of her]*

Alas, for my poor son, my only child,
destroyed by his mother's Bacchic madness.
How could these hands of mine, which loved him so,
have torn these limbs apart, ripped out his flesh.
Here's an arm which has held me all these years,
growing stronger as he grew into a man,
his feet . . . O how he used to run to me,
seeking assurance of his mother's love.
His face was handsome, on the verge of manhood.
See the soft down still resting on these lips,
which have kissed me thousands of times or more.
All this, and all the rest, set here before us.
O Zeus and all you Olympian gods . . .

[She cannot complete the ritual and collapses in grief]

It makes no sense—it's unendurable.
How could the god have wished such things on me?

CHORUS LEADER *[helping Agave get up]*

Lady, you must bear what cannot be borne.
Your suffering is intense, but the god is just.

You insulted him in Thebes, showed no respect—
you've brought the punishment upon yourself.

CHORUS

What is wisdom? What is finer
than the rights men get from gods—
to hold their powerful hands
over the heads of their enemies?
Ah yes, what's good is always loved.
So all praise Dionysus,
praise the dancing god,
god of our revelry,
god whose justice is divine,
whose justice now reveals itself.

[Enter Dionysus.]

DIONYSUS

Yes, I am Dionysus, son of Zeus.
You see me now before you as a god.
You Thebans learned about my powers too late.
Dishonouring me, you earn the penalty.
You refused my rites. Now you must leave—
abandon your city for barbarian lands.
Agave, too, that polluted creature,
must go into perpetual banishment.
And Cadmus, you too must endure your lot.⁷
Your form will change, so you become a serpent. [1330]
Your wife, Harmonia, Ares' daughter,
whom you, though mortal, took in marriage,
will be transformed, changing to a snake.
As Zeus's oracle declares, you and she
will drive a chariot drawn by heifers.
You'll rule barbarians. With your armies,
too large to count, you'll raze many cities.
Once they despoil Apollo's oracle,
they'll have a painful journey back again.
But Ares will guard you and Harmonia.
In lands of the blessed he'll transform your lives.
That's what I proclaim—I, Dionysus, [1340]
born from no mortal father, but from Zeus.
If you had understood how to behave
as you should have when you were unwilling,
you'd now be fortunate, with Zeus's child
among your allies.

. . .

*Agave and Cadmus take leave of each other, both
cursed by the horrific events.*

⁶ At this point, there is a major gap in the manuscript. The text here is reconstructed from what we know about the content of the missing portion.

⁷ The Greek text resumes here at the end of the gap in the manuscript.

AGAVE

How I grieve for you, my father.

CADMUS

And I grieve for you, my child,
as I weep for your sisters.

AGAVE

Lord Dionysus has inflicted
such brutal terror on your house.

DIONYSUS:

Yes. For at your hands I suffered, too—
and dreadfully. For here in Thebes
my name received no recognition.

AGAVE

Farewell, father.

CADMUS

My most unhappy daughter,
may you fare well. That will be hard for you. [1380]

AGAVE

Lead on, friends, so I may take my sisters,
those pitiful women, into exile with me.
May I go somewhere where cursed Cithaeron
will never see me, nor my eyes glimpse
that dreadful mountain, a place far away
from any sacred thyrsus. Let others
make Bacchic celebrations their concern.

[Exit Agave.]

CHORUS

The gods appear in many forms,
carrying with them unwelcome things.
What people thought would happen never did.
What they did not expect, the gods made happen.
That's what this story has revealed.

*[Exeunt Chorus and Cadmus, leaving on stage the remains
of Pentheus's body.]*

14.2. Theocritus / Women at the Adonis Festival

Theocritus was a Greek bucolic poet who flourished in Syracuse, Cos, and Alexandria in the 3rd century BCE. His surviving work, mixed in with that of other, similar poets whose works were once attributed to him, can mostly be found within an old compendium of 30 poems about country life known as the “Idylls of Theocritus.”

The scene of this mime is Alexandria, and the chief characters are two fellow-countrywomen of the author. Gorgo, paying a morning call, finds Praxinoa, with her two-year-old child, superintending the spinning of her maids, and asks her to come with her to the Festival of Adonis at the palace of Ptolemy II. Praxinoa makes some demur, but at last washes and dresses and sallies forth with her visitor and their two maids. After sundry encounters in the crowded streets, they enter the palace, and soon after, the prima donna begins the Drie—which is really a wedding-song containing a forecast of a dirge—with an address to the bride Aphrodite and a reference to the deification of the queen of Ptolemy I. The song describes the scene—the offerings displayed about the marriage-bed, the two canopies of greenery above it, the bedstead with its representation of the Rape of Ganymede, the coverlets which enwrap the effigies of Adonis and Aphrodite, the image of the holy bridegroom himself—and ends with an anticipation of the choral dirge to be sung on the morrow at the funeral of Adonis.

Theoc. *Idyll* 15. Source: Mitchell Carroll, *Greek Women*, (Philadelphia: Rittenhouse Press, 1908), pp. 369-375.

GORGO (*with her maid Etychis at the door, as the maid Eunoia opens it*)

Praxinoa at home?

PRAXINOA (*running forward*)

Dear Gorgo! at last! she is at home. I quite thought you'd forgotten me. (*to the maid*) Here, Eunoia, a chair of the lady, and a cushion on it.

GORGO (*refusing the cushion*)

No, thank you, really.

PRAXINOA

Do sit down.

GORGO (*sitting*)

O what a silly I was to come! What with the crush and the horses, Praxinoa, I've scarcely got here alive. It's all big boots and people in uniform. And the street was never-ending, and you can't think how far your house is along it.¹

PRAXINOA

That's my lunatic; came and took one at the end of the world, and more an animal's den, too, than a place of a human being to live in, just to prevent you and me being neighbours, out of sheer spite, the jealous old wretch! He's always the same.

GORGO

My dear, pray don't call your good Dinon such names before Baby. See how he's staring at you. (*to the child*) It's all right, Zopyrion, my pet. It's not dad-dad she's talking about.

PRAXINOA

Upon my word, the child understands.

GORGO

Nice dad-dad.

PRAXINOA

And yet that dad-dad of his the other day—the other day, now I tell him ‘Daddy, get mother some soap and rouge from the shop,’ and, would you believe it? back he came with a packet of salt, the great six feet of folly!

GORGO

Mine's just the same. Diocleidas is a perfect spendthrift. Yesterday he gave seven shillings a piece for mere bits of dog's hair, mere pluckings of old handbags, five of them, all filth, all work to be done over again. But come, my dear, get your cloak and gown. I want you to come with me (grandly) to call on our high and mighty Prince Ptolemy to see the Adonis. I hear the Queen's getting up something quite splendid this year.

PRAXINOA (*hesitating*)

Fine folks, fine ways.

GORGO

Yes; but sightseers make good gossips, you know, if you've been and other people haven't. It's time we were on the move.

PRAXINOA (*still hesitating*)

It's always holiday with people who've nothing to do. (*suddenly making up her mind*) Here, Eunoia, you scratch-face, take up the spinning and put it away with the rest. Cats always will lie soft. Come, bestir yourself. Quick, some water! (*to Gorgo*) Water's wanted first, and she brings the soap. (*to Eunoia*) Never mind; give it me. (*Eunoia pours out the powdered soap*) Not all that, you wicked waste!² Pour out the water. (*Eunoia washes her mistress's hands and face*) Oh, you wretch! What do you mean by wetting my bodice like that? That's enough. (*to Gorgo*) I've got myself washed somehow, thank goodness. (*to Eunoia*) Now where's the key of the big cupboard? Bring it here. (*Takes out a Dorian pinner—a gown fastened with pins or brooches to the shoulders and reaching to the ground, with an overfold coming to the waist—and puts it on with Eunoia's aid over the inner garment with short sleeves which she wears indoors*)

GORGO (*referring to the style of the overfold*)

Praxinoa, that full gathering suits you really well. Do tell me what you gave for the material.

PRAXINOA

Don't speak of it, Gorgo; it was more than eight golden sovereigns, and I can tell you I put my very soul into making it up.

¹ “You can't think how far,” etc. : or perhaps ‘You always live too far away.’

² “Wicked waste” : the Greek is “pirate-vessel.”

GORG0

Well, all I can say is, it's *most* successful.

PRAXINOA

I'm inclined to agree with you.¹ (*to Eunoa*) Come, put on my cloak and hat for me, and mind you do it properly. (*Eunoa puts her cloak about her head and shoulders and pins the straw sun-hat to it*). (*taking up the child*) No; I'm not going to take you, Baby. Horse-bogey bites little boys. (*the child cries*) You may cry as much as you like; I'm not going to have you lamed for life. (*to Gorgo, giving the child to the nurse*) Come along. Take Baby and amuse him, Phyrigia, and call the dog indoors and lock he front-door.

(*in the street*) GORG0

Heavens, what a crowd! How we're to get through this awful crush and how long it's going to take us, I can't imagine. Talk of an antheap!

PRAXINOA

I must say, you've done us many a good turn, my good Ptolemy, since your father went to heaven. We have no villains sneaking up to murder us in the streets nowadays in the good old Egyptian style. They don't play those awful games now—the thorough-paced rogues, every one of them the same, all queer!

Gorgo dearest! what *shall* we do? The Royal Horse! Don't run me down, my good man. That bay's rearing. Look, what temper! Stand back, Eunoa, you reckless girl! He'll be the death of that man. Thank goodness I left Baby at home!

GORG0

It's all right, Praxinoa, We've got well behind them, you see. They're all where they ought to be, now.

PRAXINOA (*recovering*)

And fortunately I can say the same of my poor wits.² Ever since I was a girl, two things have frightened me more than anything else, a horrid chilly snake and a horse. Let's go on. Here's ever such a crowd pouring after us.

GORG0 (*to an Old Woman*)

Have you come from the palace, mother?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, my dears.

GORG0

Then we can get there all right, can we?

OLD WOMAN

Trying took Troy, my pretty; don't they say where there's a will there's a way?

GORG0

That old lady gave us some oracles,³ didn't she?

PRAXINOA (*mock-sententiously*)

My dear, women knew everything. They know all about Zeus marrying Hera.

GORG0

Do look, Praxinoa; what a crowd there is at the door! It's marvellous!

PRAXINOA

Give me your arm, Gorgo; and you take hold of Eutychis' arm, Eunoa; and you take care, Eutychis, not to get separated. We'll all go in together. Mind you keep hold of me, Eunoa. Oh dear, oh dear, Gorgo! my summer cloak's torn right in two.⁴ (*to a stranger*) For Heaven's sake, as you wish to be saved, mind my cloak, sir.

FIRST STRANGER

I really can't help what happens; but I'll do my best.

PRAXINOA

The crowd's simply enormous; they're pushing like a drove of pigs.

FIRST STRANGER

Don't be alarmed, madam; we're all right.

PRAXINOA

You deserve to be all right to the end of your days, my dear sir, for the care you've been taking of us (*to Gorgo*) What a kind considerate man! Poor Eunoa's getting squeezed. (*to Eunoa*) Push, you coward, can't you? (*they pass in*)

That's all right. All inside, as the bridegroom said when he shut the door.

GORG0 (*referring, as they move forward towards the dais, to the draperies which hang between the pillars*)

Praxinoa, do come here. Before you do anything else I insist upon your looking at the embroideries. How delicate they are! and in such good taste! They're really hardly human, are they?

PRAXINOA

Huswife Athena! the weavers that made that material and the embroiderers who did that close detailed work are simply marvels. How realistically the things all stand and move about in it! they're living! It *is* wonderful what people can do. And then the Holy Boy; how perfectly beautiful he looks lying on his silver couch, with the down of manhood just showing on his cheeks,—(*religioso*) the thrice-beloved Adonis, beloved even down below!

SECOND STRANGER

Oh dear, oh dear, ladies! do stop that eternal cooing. (*to the bystanders*) They'll weary me to death with their ah-ah-ah-ing.

PRAXINOA

My word! where *does* that person come from? What business is it of yours if we do coo? Buy your slaves before you order them about, pray. You're giving your orders to Syracusans. If you *must* know, we're Corinthians by extraction, like Bellerophon himself. What *we* talk's Peloponnesian. I suppose Dorians may speak Doric, mayn't they? Persephone! let's have

¹ lit. 'you may say so.'

² "I can say the same": the Greek has a pun on 'assembling' troops and 'collecting' one's wits.

³ "Gave us some oracles": i.e. her sententious remarks were about as useful as oracles generally are.

⁴ "Summer cloak": the festival was probably held upon the longest day.

no more masters than the one we've got. I shall do just as I like.
Pray don't waste your breath.¹

GORG0

Be quiet, Praxinoa. She's just going to being the song, that Argive person's daughter, you know, the "accomplished vocalist" that was chosen to sing the dirge *last* year.² You may be sure *she'll* give us something good. Look, she's making her bow.

THE DIRGE

Lover of Golgi and Idaly and Eryx' steepy hold,
O Lady Aphrodite with the face that beams like gold,
Twelve months are sped and soft-footéd Heav'n's pretty
 laggards, see,
Bring o'er the never-tarrying stream Adonis back to thee.
The Seasons, the Seasons, full slow they go and come,
But some sweet thing for all they bring, and so they are
 welcome home.
O Cypris, Dion's daughter, of thee annealed,³ 'tis said,
Our Queen that was born of woman is e'en immortal made;
And now, sweet Lady of many names, of many shrines Ladye,
They guerdon's giv'n; for the Queen's daughtér, as Helen fair
 to see,
Thy lad doth dight with all delight upon this holyday;
For there's not a fruit the orchard bears but is here for his
 hand to take,
And cresses trim all kept for him in many a silver tray,
And Syrian balm in vials of gold; and O, there's every cake
That ever woman kneaded of bolted meal so fair
With blossoms blent of every scent or oil or honey rare –
Here's all outlaid in semblance made of every bird and beast.
Two testers green they have plight ye, with dainty dill well
 dressed,
Whereon, like puny nightingales that flit from bough to bough
Trying their waxing wings to spread, the Love-babes hovering
 go.
How fair the ebony and the gold, the ivory white how fair,
And eagles twain to Zeus on high bringing his cup-bearer!
Aye, and he coverlets spread for ye are softer spread than sleep

Forsooth Miletus town may say, or the master of Samian
 sheep,⁴

"The bridal bed of Adonis spread of my own making is;
Cypris hath this for her wrapping, Adonis that for his."
Of eighteen years or nineteen is turned the rose-limbed
 groom;

His pretty lip is smooth to sip, for it bears but flaxen bloom.
And now she's in her husband's arms, and so we'll say good-
 night;

But to-morrow we'll come wi' the dew, the dew, and take
 hands and bear him away
Where plashing wave the shore doth lave, and there with locks
 undight

And blossoms bare all shining fair will raise this shrilling lay; –
"O sweet Adonis, none but thee of the children of Gods and
 men

"Twixt overworld and underworld doth pass and pass agen;
That cannot Agamemnon, nor the Lord o' the Woeful Spleen,⁵
Nor the first of the twice-ten children⁶ that came of the Trojan
 queen,

Nor Patroclus brave, nor Pyrrhus bold that home from the war
 did win,

Nor none o' the kith o' the old Lapith nor of them of
 Deucalion's kin –

E'en Pelops line lacks fate so fine, and Pelasgian Argos' pride.
Adonis sweet, Adonis dear, be gracious for another year;
Thou'rt welcome to thine own alway, and welcome we'll both
 cry to-day and next Adonis-tide."

GORG0

O Praxinoa! what clever things we women are! I do envy her
knowing all that, and still more having such a lovely voice. But
I must be getting back. It's Diocleidas' dinner-time, and that
man's all pepper;⁷ I wouldn't advise anyone to come near him
even, when he's kept waiting for his food. Goodbye, Adonis
darling; and I only trust you may find us all thriving when you
come next year.

¹ "Don't waste your breath" : the Greek has 'don't scrape the top of an empty measure.'

² "Last year" : the day of the festival was apparently regarded as the first day of Adonis' six months' stay upon the earth, the other six being spent in Hades.

³ "Annealed" : 'anointed.'

⁴ "Miletus, Samian sheep" : Milesian and Samian wool were famous.

⁵ "The Lord o' the Woeful Spleen" : Ajax.

⁶ "The first of the twice-ten children" : Hector.

⁷ "All pepper" : in the Greek 'all vinegar,' which suggests something going bad.

Sophocles: from *Antigone*

Though it was the first of the Oedipus, or Theban, trilogy to be composed, *Antigone* deals with the fortunes of Oedipus's children: sisters Antigone and Ismene and twin brothers Eteocles and Polyneices.

The brothers had shared rule of Thebes, but Polyneices quarreled with his brother and eventually betrayed his city, siding with Argos against Thebes; the brothers killed each other in battle. Creon, who then became king, lost the first of his two sons in the fight, and begrudged Polyneices, decreeing that he be neither buried nor mourned.

Antigone's story was told by others, including Aeschylus; but unlike Aeschylus's heroine, who is supported by friends and even half of the chorus, Sophocles's Antigone stands alone, with a dreadful death explicitly before her in consequence of her defiance, a heightening of the tragic situation characteristic of Sophocles.¹

[In Thebes, directly in front of the royal palace, which stands in the background, its main doors facing the audience. Enter Antigone leading Ismene away from the palace.]

ANTIGONE

Now, dear Ismene, my own blood sister,
do you have any sense of all the troubles
Zeus keeps bringing on the two of us,
as long as we're alive? All that misery
which stems from Oedipus? There's no suffering,
no shame, no ruin—not one dishonour—
which I have not seen in all the troubles
you and I go through. What's this they're saying now,
something our general has had proclaimed
throughout the city? Do you know of it?
Have you heard? Or have you just missed the news?
Dishonours which better fit our enemies
are now being piled up on the ones we love. [10]

ISMENE

I've had no word at all, Antigone,
nothing good or bad about our family,
not since we two lost both our brothers,
killed on the same day by a double blow.
And since the Argive army, just last night,
has gone away, I don't know any more
if I've been lucky or face total ruin.

ANTIGONE

I know that. That's why I brought you here,
outside the gates, so only you can hear.

ISMENE

What is it? The way you look makes it seem [20]
you're thinking of some dark and gloomy news.

ANTIGONE

Look—what's Creon doing with our two brothers?
He's honouring one with a full funeral
and treating the other one disgracefully!
Eteocles, they say, has had his burial
according to our customary rites,
to win him honour with the dead below.
But as for Polyneices, who perished
so miserably, an order has gone out
throughout the city—that's what people say.

He's to have no funeral or lament,
but to be left unburied and unwept,
a sweet treasure for the birds to look at,
for them to feed on to their heart's content. [30]
That's what people say the noble Creon
has announced to you and me—I mean to me—
and now he's coming to proclaim the fact,
to state it clearly to those who have not heard.

For Creon this matter's really serious.
Anyone who acts against the order
will be stoned to death before the city.
Now you know, and you'll quickly demonstrate
whether you are nobly born, or else
a girl unworthy of her splendid ancestors.

ISMENE

O my poor sister, if that's what's happening,
what can I say that would be any help
to ease the situation or resolve it? [40]

ANTIGONE

Think whether you will work with me in this
and act together.

¹ Source: Translation by Ian Johnston, 2005. <https://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/sophocles/antigonehtml.html>

ISMENE

In what kind of work?
What do you mean?

ANTIGONE

Will you help these hands
take up Polyneices' corpse and bury it?

ISMENE

What? You're going to bury Polyneices,
when that's been made a crime for all in Thebes?

ANTIGONE

Yes. I'll do my duty to my brother—
and yours as well, if you're not prepared to.
I won't be caught betraying him.

ISMENE

You're too rash.
Has Creon not expressly banned that act?

ANTIGONE

Yes. But he's no right to keep me from what's mine.

ISMENE

O dear. Think, Antigone. Consider
how our father died, hated and disgraced, [50]
when those mistakes which his own search revealed
forced him to turn his hand against himself
and stab out both his eyes. Then that woman,
his mother and his wife—her double role—
destroyed her own life in a twisted noose.
Then there's our own two brothers, both butchered
in a single day—that ill-fated pair
with their own hands slaughtered one another
and brought about their common doom.
Now, the two of us are left here quite alone.

Think how we'll die far worse than all the rest,
if we defy the law and move against [60]
the king's decree, against his royal power.
We must remember that by birth we're women,
and, as such, we shouldn't fight with men.
Since those who rule are much more powerful,
we must obey in this and in events
which bring us even harsher agonies.

So I'll ask those underground for pardon—
since I'm being compelled, I will obey
those in control. That's what I'm forced to do.
It makes no sense to try to do too much.

ANTIGONE

I wouldn't urge you to. No. Not even
if you were keen to act. Doing this with you
would bring me no joy. So be what you want. [70]

I'll still bury him. It would be fine to die
while doing that. I'll lie there with him,
with a man I love, pure and innocent,
for all my crime. My honours for the dead
must last much longer than for those up here.
I'll lie down there forever. As for you,
well, if you wish, you can show contempt
for those laws the gods all hold in honour.

ISMENE

I'm not disrespecting them. But I can't act
against the state. That's not in my nature.

ANTIGONE

Let that be your excuse. I'm going now [80]
to make a burial mound for my dear brother.

ISMENE

O poor Antigone, I'm so afraid for you.

ANTIGONE

Don't fear for me. Set your own fate in order.

ISMENE

Make sure you don't reveal to anyone
what you intend. Keep it closely hidden.
I'll do the same.

ANTIGONE

No, no. Announce the fact—
if you don't let everybody know,
I'll despise your silence even more.

ISMENE

Your heart is hot to do cold deeds.

ANTIGONE

But I know
I'll please the ones I'm duty bound to please.

ISMENE

Yes, if you can. But you're after something [90]
which you're incapable of carrying out.

ANTIGONE

Well, when my strength is gone, then I'll give up.

ISMENE

A vain attempt should not be made at all.

ANTIGONE

I'll hate you if you're going to talk that way.
And you'll rightly earn the loathing of the dead.
So leave me and my foolishness alone—
we'll get through this fearful thing. I won't suffer
anything as bad as a disgraceful death.

ISMENE

All right then, go, if that's what you think right.
But remember this—even though your mission
makes no sense, your friends do truly love you.

*[Exit Antigone away from the palace. Ismene watches her
go and then turns slowly into the palace.]*

• • •

*Antigone proceeds with her plan and is
apprehended after having buried Polyneices.*

*[Enter the Guard, bringing Antigone with him. She is not
resisting.]*

CHORUS LEADER

What this? I fear some omen from the gods.
I can't deny what I see here so clearly—
that young girl there—it's Antigone.
O you poor girl, daughter of Oedipus,
child of a such a father, so unfortunate,
what's going on? Surely they've not brought you here
because you've disobeyed the royal laws,
because they've caught you acting foolishly? [380]

GUARD

This here's the one who carried out the act.
We caught her as she was burying the corpse.
Where's Creon?

[The palace doors open. Enter Creon with attendants.]

CHORUS LEADER

He's coming from the house—
and just in time.

CREON

Why have I come "just in time"?
What's happening? What is it?

GUARD

My lord,
human beings should never take an oath
there's something they'll not do—for later thoughts
contradict what they first meant. I'd have sworn [390]
I'd not soon venture here again. Back then,
the threats you made brought me a lot of grief.
But there's no joy as great as what we pray for
against all hope. And so I have come back,
breaking that oath I swore. I bring this girl,
captured while she was honouring the grave.
This time we did not draw lots. No. This time
I was the lucky man, not someone else.
And now, my lord, take her for questioning.

Convict her. Do as you wish. As for me,
by rights I'm free and clear of all this trouble. [400]

CREON

This girl here—how did you catch her? And where?

GUARD

She was burying that man. Now you know
all there is to know.

CREON

Do you understand
just what you're saying? Are your words the truth?

GUARD

We saw this girl giving that dead man's corpse
full burial rites—an act you'd made illegal.
Is what I say simple and clear enough?

CREON

How did you see her, catch her in the act?

GUARD

It happened this way. When we got there,
after hearing those awful threats from you,
we swept off all the dust covering the corpse,
so the damp body was completely bare. [410]
Then we sat down on rising ground upwind,
to escape the body's putrid rotting stench.
We traded insults just to stay awake,
in case someone was careless on the job.
That's how we spent the time right up 'til noon,
when the sun's bright circle in the sky
had moved half way and it was burning hot.

Then suddenly a swirling windstorm came,
whipping clouds of dust up from the ground,
filling the plain—some heaven-sent trouble.
In that level place the dirt storm damaged
all the forest growth, and the air around [420]
was filled with dust for miles. We shut our mouths
and just endured this scourge sent from the gods.
A long time passed. The storm came to an end.
That's when we saw the girl. She was shrieking—
a distressing painful cry, just like a bird
who's seen an empty nest, its fledglings gone.

That's how she was when she saw the naked corpse.
She screamed out a lament, and then she swore,
calling evil curses down upon the ones
who'd done this. Then right away her hands
threw on the thirsty dust. She lifted up
a finely made bronze jug and then three times [430]
poured out her tributes to the dead.
When we saw that, we rushed up right away
and grabbed her. She was not afraid at all.

We charged her with her previous offence
as well as this one. She just kept standing there,
denying nothing. That made me happy—
though it was painful, too. For it's a joy
escaping troubles which affect oneself,
but painful to bring evil on one's friends.
But all that is of less concern to me
than my own safety. [440]

CREON

You there—you with your face
bent down towards the ground, what do you say?
Do you deny you did this or admit it?

ANTIGONE

I admit I did it. I won't deny that.

CREON [*to the Guard*]

You're dismissed—go where you want. You're free—
no serious charges made against you.

[*Exit the Guard. Creon turns to interrogate Antigone.*]

Tell me briefly—not in some lengthy speech—
were you aware there was a proclamation
forbidding what you did?

ANTIGONE

I'd heard of it.
How could I not? It was public knowledge.

CREON

And yet you dared to break those very laws?

ANTIGONE

Yes. Zeus did not announce those laws to me. [450]
And Justice living with the gods below
sent no such laws for men. I did not think
anything which you proclaimed strong enough
to let a mortal override the gods
and their unwritten and unchanging laws.
They're not just for today or yesterday,
but exist forever, and no one knows
where they first appeared. So I did not mean
to let a fear of any human will
lead to my punishment among the gods.

I know all too well I'm going to die— [460]
how could I not?—it makes no difference
what you decree. And if I have to die
before my time, well, I count that a gain.
When someone has to live the way I do,
surrounded by so many evil things,

how can she fail to find a benefit
in death? And so for me meeting this fate
won't bring any pain. But if I'd allowed
my own mother's dead son to just lie there,
an unburied corpse, then I'd feel distress.
What's going on here does not hurt me at all.
If you think what I'm doing now is stupid,
perhaps I'm being charged with foolishness [470]
by someone who's a fool.

CHORUS LEADER

It's clear enough
the spirit in this girl is passionate—
her father was the same. She has no sense
of compromise in times of trouble.

CREON [*to the Chorus Leader*]

But you should know the most obdurate wills
are those most prone to break. The strongest iron
tempered in the fire to make it really hard—
that's the kind you see most often shatter.
I'm well aware the most tempestuous horses
are tamed by one small bit. Pride has no place
in anyone who is his neighbour's slave.
This girl here was already very insolent [480]
in contravening laws we had proclaimed.
Here she again displays her proud contempt—
having done the act, she now boasts of it.
She laughs at what she's done. Well, in this case,
if she gets her way and goes unpunished,
then she's the man here, not me. No. She may be
my sister's child, closer to me by blood
than anyone belonging to my house
who worships Zeus Herkeios in my home,
but she'll not escape my harshest punishment—
her sister, too, whom I accuse as well.²
She had an equal part in all their plans [490]
to do this burial. Go summon her here.
I saw her just now inside the palace,
her mind out of control, some kind of fit.

[*Exit attendants into the palace to fetch Ismene.*]

When people hatch their mischief in the dark
their minds often convict them in advance,
betraying their treachery. How I despise
a person caught committing evil acts
who then desires to glorify the crime.

ANTIGONE

Take me and kill me—what more do you want?

²Zeus Herkeios refers to Zeus of the Courtyard, a patron god of worship within the home.

CREON

Me? Nothing. With that I have everything.

ANTIGONE

Then why delay? There's nothing in your words
that I enjoy—may that always be the case! [500]
And what I say displeases you as much.
But where could I gain greater glory
than setting my own brother in his grave?
All those here would confirm this pleases them
if their lips weren't sealed by fear—being king,
which offers all sorts of various benefits,
means you can talk and act just as you wish.

CREON

In all of Thebes, you're the only one
who looks at things that way.

ANTIGONE

They share my views,
but they keep their mouths shut just for you.

CREON

These views of yours—so different from the rest—
don't they bring you any sense of shame? [510]

ANTIGONE

No—there's nothing shameful in honouring
my mother's children.

CREON

You had a brother
killed fighting for the other side.

ANTIGONE

Yes—from the same mother and father, too.

CREON

Why then give tributes which insult his name?

ANTIGONE

But his dead corpse won't back up what you say.

CREON

Yes, he will, if you give equal honours
to a wicked man.

ANTIGONE

But the one who died
was not some slave—it was his own brother.

CREON

Who was destroying this land—the other one
went to his death defending it.

ANTIGONE

That may be,
but Hades still desires equal rites for both.³

CREON

A good man does not wish what we give him [520]
to be the same an evil man receives.

ANTIGONE

Who knows? In the world below perhaps
such actions are no crime.

CREON

An enemy
can never be a friend, not even in death.

ANTIGONE

But my nature is to love. I cannot hate.

CREON

Then go down to the dead. If you must love,
love them. No woman's going to govern me—
no, no—not while I'm still alive.

[Enter two attendants from the house bringing Ismene to Creon.]

CHORUS LEADER

Ismene's coming. There—right by the door.
She's crying. How she must love her sister!
From her forehead a cloud casts its shadow
down across her darkly flushing face—
and drops its rain onto her lovely cheeks. [530]

CREON

You there—you snake lurking in my house,
sucking out my life's blood so secretly.
I'd no idea I was nurturing two pests,
who aimed to rise against my throne. Come here.
Tell me this—do you admit you played your part
in this burial, or will you swear an oath
you had no knowledge of it?

ISMENE

I did it—
I admit it, and she will back me up.
So I bear the guilt as well.

ANTIGONE

No, no—
justice will not allow you to say that.
You didn't want to. I did not work with you.

³Hades, a brother of Zeus, is god of the underworld, lord of the dead.

ISMENE
But now you're in trouble, I'm not ashamed [540]
of suffering, too, as your companion.

ANTIGONE
Hades and the dead can say who did it—
I don't love a friend whose love is only words.

ISMENE
You're my sister. Don't dishonour me.
Let me respect the dead and die with you.

ANTIGONE
Don't try to share my death or make a claim
to actions which you did not do. I'll die—
and that will be enough.

ISMENE
But if you're gone,
what is there in life for me to love?

ANTIGONE
Ask Creon. He's the one you care about.

ISMENE
Why hurt me like this? It doesn't help you. [550]

ANTIGONE
If I am mocking you, it pains me, too.

ISMENE
Even now is there some way I can help?

ANTIGONE
Save yourself. I won't envy your escape.

ISMENE
I feel so wretched leaving you to die.

ANTIGONE
But you chose life—it was my choice to die.

ISMENE
But not before I'd said those words just now.

ANTIGONE
Some people may approve of how you think—
others will believe my judgment's good.

ISMENE
But the mistake's the same for both of us.

ANTIGONE
Be brave. You're alive. But my spirit died
some time ago so I might help the dead [560]

CREON
I'd say one of these girls has just revealed

how mad she is—the other's been that way
since she was born.

ISMENE
My lord, whatever good sense
people have by birth no longer stays with them
once their lives go wrong—it abandons them.

CREON
In your case, that's true, once you made your choice
to act in evil ways with wicked people.

ISMENE
How could I live alone, without her here?

CREON
Don't speak of her being here. Her life is over.

ISMENE
You're going to kill your own son's bride?

CREON
Why not? There are other fields for him to plough.

ISMENE
No one will make him a more loving wife
than she will.

CREON
I have no desire my son
should have an evil wife.

ANTIGONE
Dearest Haemon,
how your father wrongs you.

CREON
I've had enough of this—
you and your marriage.

ISMENE
You really want that?
You're going to take her from him?

CREON
No, not me.
Hades is the one who'll stop the marriage.

CHORUS LEADER
So she must die—that seems decided on.

CREON
Yes—for you and me the matter's closed.

[*Creon turns to address his attendants.*]

No more delay. You slaves, take them inside.
From this point on they must act like women

and have no liberty to wander off.
Even bold men run when they see Hades [580]
coming close to them to snatch their lives.

*[The attendants take Antigone and Ismene into the palace,
leaving Creon and the Chorus on stage.]*

• • •
*Haemon, son of Creon and Euridice and
Antigone's fiancé, hears what has happened.*

[The palace doors open.]

CHORUS LEADER

Here comes Haemon,
your only living son. Is he grieving
the fate of Antigone, his bride,
bitter that his marriage hopes are gone? [630]

CREON

We'll soon find out—more accurately
than any prophet here could indicate.

[Enter Haemon from the palace.]

My son, have you heard the sentence that's been passed
upon your bride? And have you now come here
angry at your father? Or are you loyal to me,
on my side no matter what I do?

HAEMON

Father, I'm yours. For me your judgments
and the ways you act on them are good—
I shall follow them. I'll not consider
any marriage a greater benefit
than your fine leadership.

CREON

Indeed, my son,
that's how your heart should always be resolved,
to stand behind your father's judgment [640]
on every issue. That's what men pray for—
obedient children growing up at home
who will pay back their father's enemies,
evil to them for evil done to him,
while honouring his friends as much as he does.

A man who fathers useless children—
what can one say of him except he's bred
troubles for himself, and much to laugh at
for those who fight against him? So, my son,
don't ever throw good sense aside for pleasure,

for some woman's sake. You understand
how such embraces can turn freezing cold [650]
when an evil woman shares your life at home.
What greater wound is there than a false friend?
So spit this girl out—she's your enemy.
Let her marry someone else in Hades.

Since I caught her clearly disobeying,
the only culprit in the entire city,
I won't perjure myself before the state.
No—I'll kill her. And so let her appeal
to Zeus, the god of blood relationships.
If I foster any lack of full respect
in my own family, I surely do the same
with those who are not linked to me by blood. [660]
The man who acts well with his household
will be found a just man in the city.⁴
I'd trust such a man to govern wisely
or to be content with someone ruling him.

And in the thick of battle at his post [670]
he'll stand firm beside his fellow soldier,
a loyal, brave man. But anyone who's proud
and violates our laws or thinks he'll tell
our leaders what to do, a man like that
wins no praise from me. No. We must obey
whatever man the city puts in charge,
no matter what the issue—great or small,
just or unjust. For there's no greater evil
than a lack of leadership. That destroys
whole cities, turns households into ruins,
and in war makes soldiers break and run away.
When men succeed, what keeps their lives secure
in almost every case is their obedience.
That's why they must support those in control
and never let some woman beat us down.

If we must fall from power, let that come
at some man's hand—at least, we won't be called
inferior to any woman. [680]

CHORUS LEADER

Unless we're being deceived by our old age,
what you've just said seems reasonable to us.

HAEMON

Father, the gods instill good sense in men—
the greatest of all the things which we possess.
I could not find your words somehow not right—
I hope that's something I never learn to do.
But other words might be good, as well.

⁴Following common editorial practice, the lines of the Greek
have been rearranged here, so that 663-7 come after 671, hence
the apparently odd numbering of the lines.

Because of who you are, you can't perceive
all the things men say or do—or their complaints.
Your gaze makes citizens afraid—they can't [690]
say anything you would not like to hear.

But in the darkness I can hear them talk—
the city is upset about the girl.
They say of all women here she least deserves
the worst of deaths for her most glorious act.
When in the slaughter her own brother died,
she did not just leave him there unburied,
to be ripped apart by carrion dogs or birds.
Surely she deserves some golden honour?
That's the dark secret rumour people speak. [700]
For me, father, nothing is more valuable
than your well being. For any children,
what could be a greater honour to them
than their father's thriving reputation?
A father feels the same about his sons.

So don't let your mind dwell on just one thought,
that what you say is right and nothing else.
A man who thinks that only he is wise,
that he can speak and think like no one else,
when such men are exposed, then all can see
their emptiness inside. For any man, [710]
even if he's wise, there's nothing shameful
in learning many things, staying flexible.
You notice how in winter floods the trees
which bend before the storm preserve their twigs.

The ones who stand against it are destroyed,
root and branch. In the same way, those sailors
who keep their sails stretched tight, never easing off,
make their ship capsize—and from that point on
sail with their rowing benches all submerged.

So end your anger. Permit yourself to change.
For if I, as a younger man, may state
my views, I'd say it would be for the best [720]
if men by nature understood all things—
if not, and that is usually the case,
when men speak well, it good to learn from them.

CHORUS LEADER
My lord, if what he's said is relevant,
it seems appropriate to learn from him,
and you too, Haemon, listen to the king.
The things which you both said were excellent.

CREON
And men my age—are we then going to school
to learn what's wise from men as young as him?

HAEMON
There's nothing wrong in that. And if I'm young,
don't think about my age—look at what I do.

CREON
And what you do—does that include this, [730]
honouring those who act against our laws?

HAEMON
I would not encourage anyone
to show respect to evil men.

CREON
And her—
is she not suffering from the same disease?

HAEMON
The people here in Thebes all say the same—
they deny she is.

CREON
So the city now
will instruct me how I am to govern?

HAEMON
Now you're talking like someone far too young.
Don't you see that?

CREON
Am I to rule this land
at someone else's whim or by myself?

HAEMON
A city which belongs to just one man
is no true city.

CREON
According to our laws,
does not the ruler own the city?

HAEMON
By yourself you'd make an excellent king
but in a desert.

CREON
It seems as if this boy [740]
is fighting on the woman's side.

HAEMON
That's true—
if you're the woman. I'm concerned for you.

CREON
You're the worst there is—you set your judgment up
against your father.

HAEMON

No, not when I see
you making a mistake and being unjust.

CREON

Is it a mistake to honour my own rule?

HAEMON

You're not honouring that by trampling on
the gods' prerogatives.

CREON

You foul creature—
you're worse than any woman.

HAEMON

You'll not catch me
giving way to some disgrace.

CREON

But your words
all speak on her behalf.

HAEMON

And yours and mine—
and for the gods below.

CREON

You woman's slave—
don't try to win me over.

HAEMON

What do you want—
to speak and never hear someone reply?⁵

CREON

You'll never marry her while she's alive. [750]

HAEMON

Then she'll die—and in her death kill someone else.

CREON

Are you so insolent you threaten me?

HAEMON

Where's the threat in challenging a bad decree?

CREON

You'll regret parading what you think like this—
you—a person with an empty brain!

HAEMON

If you were not my father, I might say
you were not thinking straight.

CREON

Would you, indeed?

Well, then, by Olympus, I'll have you know
you'll be sorry for demeaning me
with all these insults.

[*Creon turns to his attendants.*]

Go bring her out—

[760]

that hateful creature, so she can die right here,
with him present, before her bridegroom's eyes.

HAEMON

No. Don't ever hope for that. She'll not die
with me just standing there. And as for you—
your eyes will never see my face again.
So let your rage charge on among your friends
who want to stand by you in this.

[*Exit Haemon, running back into the palace.*]

CHORUS LEADER

My lord, Haemon left in such a hurry.
He's angry—in a young man at his age
the mind turns bitter when he's feeling hurt.

CREON

Let him dream up or carry out great deeds
beyond the power of man, he'll not save these girls—
their fate is sealed.

CHORUS LEADER

Are you going to kill them both? [770]

CREON

No—not the one whose hands are clean. You're right.

CHORUS LEADER

How do you plan to kill Antigone?

CREON

I'll take her on a path no people use,
and hide her in a cavern in the rocks,
while still alive. I'll set out provisions,
as much as piety requires, to make sure
the city is not totally corrupted.⁶
Then she can speak her prayers to Hades,
the only god she worships, for success
avoiding death—or else, at least, she'll learn,

⁵Following the suggestion of Andrew Brown and others, I have moved lines 756-7 in the Greek text so that they come right after line 750.

⁶The killing of a family member could bring on divine punishment in the form of a pollution involving the entire city (as in the case of Oedipus). Creon is, one assumes, taking refuge in the notion that he will not be executing Antigone directly.

although too late, how it's a waste of time
to work to honour those whom Hades holds. [780]

• • •

Antigone is led to her execution, reproached by the chorus (representing the rich men of Thebes). Antigone catigates them for their lack of respect for the gods. Creon intercedes.

CREON

Don't you know that no one faced with death
would ever stop the singing and the groans,
if that would help? Take her and shut her up,
as I have ordered, in her tomb's embrace.

And get it done as quickly as you can.
Then leave her there alone, all by herself—
she can sort out whether she wants suicide
or remains alive, buried in a place like that.
As far as she's concerned, we bear no guilt.
But she's lost her place living here with us.⁷ [890]

ANTIGONE

O my tomb and bridal chamber—
my eternal hollow dwelling place,
where I go to join my people. Most of them
have perished—Persephone has welcomed them
among the dead.⁸ I'm the last one, dying here
the most evil death by far, as I move down
before the time allotted for my life is done.
But I go nourishing the vital hope
my father will be pleased to see me come,
and you, too, my mother, will welcome me,
as well as you, my own dear brother.

When you died, with my own hands I washed you. [900]
I arranged your corpse and at the grave mound
poured out libations. But now, Polyneices,
this is my reward for covering your corpse.⁹
However, for wise people I was right
to honour you. I'd never have done it
for children of my own, not as their mother,
nor for a dead husband lying in decay—
no, not in defiance of the citizens.

What law do I appeal to, claiming this?
If my husband died, there'd be another one,

⁷Creon's logic seems to suggest that because he is not executing Antigone directly and is leaving her a choice between committing suicide and slowly starving to death in the cave, he has no moral responsibility for what happens.

⁸Persephone is the wife of Hades and thus goddess of the underworld.

⁹In these lines Antigone seems to be talking about both her brothers, first claiming she washed and dressed the body of Eteocles and then covered Polyneices. However, the pronoun

and if I were to lose a child of mine
I'd have another with some other man. [910]
But since my father and my mother, too,
are hidden away in Hades' house,
I'll never have another living brother.
That was the law I used to honour you.

But Creon thought that I was in the wrong
and acting recklessly for you, my brother.
Now he seizes me by force and leads me here—
no wedding and no bridal song, no share
in married life or nurturing children.
Instead I go in sorrow to my grave,
without my friends, to die while still alive. [920]
What holy justice have I violated?
In my wretchedness, why should I still look
up to the gods? Which one can I invoke
to bring me help, when for my reverence
they charge me with impiety? Well then,
if this is something fine among the gods,
I'll come to recognize that I've done wrong.

But if these people here are being unjust
may they endure no greater punishment
than the injustices they're doing to me.

CHORUS LEADER

The same storm blasts continue to attack
the mind in this young girl. [930]

CREON

Then those escorting her
will be sorry they're so slow.

ANTIGONE

Alas, then,
those words mean death is very near at hand.

CREON

I won't encourage you or cheer you up,
by saying the sentence won't be carried out.

ANTIGONE

O city of my fathers
in this land of Thebes—
and my ancestral gods,

references in the Greek are confusing. Lines 904 to 920 in the Greek text have prompted a great deal of critical debate, since they seem incompatible with Antigone's earlier motivation and do not make much sense in context (in addition most of them appear closely derived from Herodotus 3.119). Hence, some editors insist that the lines (or most of them) be removed. Brown provides a useful short summary of the arguments and some editorial options (199-200).

I am being led away.
No more delaying for me.

Look on me, you lords of Thebes, [940]
the last survivor of your royal house,
see what I have to undergo,
the kind of men who do this to me,
for paying reverence to true piety.

[*Antigone is led away under escort.*]

. . .

*Warned of dire consequences for himself and
Thebes by the seer Tiresias for his unholy
treatment of Polyneices's body, Creon is prevailed
upon by the chorus to free Antigone and entomb
her brother.*

[*Enter a Messenger.*]

MESSENGER
All you here who live beside the home
of Amphion and Cadmus—in human life
there's no set place which I would praise or blame.¹⁰
The lucky and unlucky rise or fall
by chance day after day—and how these things
are fixed for men no one can prophesy. [1160]
For Creon, in my view, was once a man
we all looked up to. For he saved the state,
this land of Cadmus, from its enemies.

He took control and reigned as its sole king—
and prospered with the birth of noble children.
Now all is gone. For when a man has lost
what gives him pleasure, I don't include him
among the living—he's a breathing corpse.
Pile up a massive fortune in your home,
if that's what you want—live like a king.
If there's no pleasure in it, I'd not give
to any man a vapour's shadow for it, [1170]
not compared to human joy.

CHORUS LEADER
Have you come with news of some fresh trouble
in our house of kings?

MESSENGER
They are dead—
and those alive bear the responsibility
for those who've died.

CHORUS LEADER
Who did the killing?
Who's lying dead? Tell us.

MESSENGER
Haemon has been killed.
No stranger shed his blood.

CHORUS LEADER
At his father's hand?
Or did he kill himself?

MESSENGER
By his own hand—
angry at his father for the murder.

CHORUS LEADER
TEIRESIAS, how your words have proven true!

MESSENGER
That's how things stand. Consider what comes next.

CHORUS LEADER
I see Creon's wife, poor Eurydice— [1180]
she's coming from the house—either by chance,
or else she's heard there's news about her son.

[*Enter Eurydice from the palace with some attendants.*]

EURYDICE
Citizens of Thebes, I heard you talking,
as I was walking out, going off to pray,
to ask for help from goddess Pallas.
While I was unfastening the gate,
I heard someone speaking of bad news
about my family. I was terrified.
I collapsed, fainting back into the arms
of my attendants. So tell the news again— [1190]
I'll listen. I'm no stranger to misfortune.

MESSENGER
Dear lady, I'll speak of what I saw,
omitting not one detail of the truth.
Why should I ease your mind with a report
which turns out later to be incorrect?
The truth is always best. I went to the plain,
accompanying your husband as his guide.
Polyneices' corpse, still unlamented,
was lying there, the greatest distance off,
torn apart by dogs. We prayed to Pluto
and to Hecate, goddess of the road,
for their good will and to restrain their rage. [1200]

¹⁰Amphion was legendary king of Thebes, husband of Niobe.

We gave the corpse a ritual wash, and burned
what was left of it on fresh-cut branches.

We piled up a high tomb of his native earth.
Then we moved to the young girl's rocky cave,
the hollow cavern of that bride of death.
From far away one man heard a voice
coming from the chamber where we'd put her
without a funeral—a piercing cry.
He went to tell our master Creon,
who, as he approached the place, heard the sound,
an unintelligible scream of sorrow.

He groaned and then spoke out these bitter words, [1210]
"Has misery made me a prophet now?
And am I travelling along a road
that takes me to the worst of all disasters?
I've just heard the voice of my own son.
You servants, go ahead—get up there fast.
Remove the stones piled in the entrance way,
then stand beside the tomb and look in there
to see if that was Haemon's voice I heard,
or if the gods have been deceiving me."
Following what our desperate master asked,
we looked. In the furthest corner of the tomb [1220]
we saw Antigone hanging by the neck,
held up in a noose—fine woven linen.

Haemon had his arms around her waist—
he was embracing her and crying out
in sorrow for the loss of his own bride,
now among the dead, his father's work,
and for his horrifying marriage bed.

Creon saw him, let out a fearful groan,
then went inside and called out anxiously,
"You unhappy boy, what have you done?
What are you thinking? Have you lost your mind?
Come out, my child—I'm begging you—please come." [1230]

But the boy just stared at him with savage eyes,
spat in his face and, without saying a word,
drew his two-edged sword. Creon moved away,
so the boy's blow failed to strike his father.
Angry at himself, the ill-fated lad
right then and there leaned into his own sword,
driving half the blade between his ribs.
While still conscious he embraced the girl
in his weak arms, and, as he breathed his last,
he coughed up streams of blood on her fair cheek.
Now he lies there, corpse on corpse, his marriage [1240]
has been fulfilled in chambers of the dead.
The unfortunate boy has shown all men

how, of all the evils which afflict mankind,
the most disastrous one is thoughtlessness.

[Eurydice turns and slowly returns into the palace.]

CHORUS LEADER

What do you make of that? The queen's gone back.
She left without a word, good or bad.

MESSENGER

I'm surprised myself. It's about her son—
she heard that terrible report. I hope
she's gone because she doesn't think it right
to mourn for him in public. In the home,
surrounded by her servants, she'll arrange
a period of mourning for the house.
She's discreet and has experience—
she won't make mistakes. [1250]

CHORUS LEADER

I'm not sure of that.
to me her staying silent was extreme—
it seems to point to something ominous,
just like a vain excess of grief.

MESSENGER

I'll go in.
We'll find out if she's hiding something secret,
deep within her passionate heart. You're right—
excessive silence can be dangerous.

*[The Messenger goes up the stairs into the palace. Enter
Creon from the side, with attendants. Creon is holding the
body of Haemon.]*

CHORUS LEADER

Here comes the king in person—carrying
in his arms, if it's right to speak of this,
a clear reminder that this evil comes
not from some stranger, but his own mistakes. [1260]

CREON

Aaiai—mistakes made by a foolish mind,
cruel mistakes that bring on death.
You see us here, all in one family—
the killer and the killed.
O the profanity of what I planned!
Alas, my son, you died so young—
a death before your time.
Aaiai . . . aaiai . . . you're dead . . . gone—
not your own foolishness but mine.

CHORUS LEADER

Alas, it seems you've learned to see what's right—
but far too late. [1270]

CREON

Aaiiii . . . I've learned it in my pain.
Some god clutching a great weight struck my head,
then hurled me onto pathways in the wilderness,
throwing down and casting underfoot
what brought me joy.

Sad . . . so sad . . .
the wretched agony of human life.

[*The Messenger reappears from the palace.*]

MESSENGER

My lord, you come like one who stores up evil,
what you hold in your arms and what you'll see
before too long inside the house. [1280]

CREON

What's that?
Is there something still more evil than all this?

MESSENGER

Your wife is dead—blood mother of that corpse—
killed with a sword—her wounds are new, poor lady.

CREON

Aaiiii . . . a gathering place for death . . .
no sacrifice can bring this to an end.
Why are you destroying me? You there—
you bringer of this dreadful news, this agony,
what are you saying now? Aaiii . . .
You kill a man then kill him once again.
What are you saying, boy? What news?
A slaughter heaped on slaughter— [1290]
my wife, alas . . . she's dead?

MESSENGER

[*opening the palace doors, revealing the body of Eurydice*]
Look here. No longer is she hidden in the house.

CREON

Alas, how miserable I feel—to look upon
this second horror. What remains for me,
what's Fate still got in store? I've just held
my own son in my arms, and now I see
right here in front of me another corpse.
Alas for this suffering mother. [1300]
Alas, my son . . .

MESSENGER

Stabbed with a sharp sword at the altar,
she let her darkening eyesight fail,
once she had cried out in sorrow

for the glorious fate of Megareos,
who died some time ago, and then again
for Haemon, and then, with her last breath,
she called out evil things against you,
the killer of your sons.¹¹

CREON

Aaiii . . . My fear now makes me tremble.
Why won't someone now strike out at me,
pierce my heart with a two-edged sword?
How miserable I am . . . aaiii . . . [1310]
how full of misery and pain . . .

MESSENGER

By this woman who lies dead you stand charged
with the deaths of both your sons.

CREON

What about her?
How did she die so violently?

MESSENGER

She killed herself,
with her own hands she stabbed her belly,
once she heard her son's unhappy fate.

CREON

Alas for me . . . the guilt for all of this is mine—
it can never be removed from me or passed
to any other mortal man. I, and I alone . . .
I murdered you . . . I speak the truth.
Servants—hurry and lead me off, [1320]
get me away from here, for now
what I am in life is nothing.

CHORUS LEADER

What you advise is good—if good can come
with all these evils. When we face such things
the less we say the better.

CREON

Let that day come, O let it come,
the fairest of all destinies for me,
the one which brings on my last day. [1330]
O let it come, so that I never see
another dawn.

CHORUS LEADER

That's something for the times ahead.
Now we need to deal with what confronts us here.
What's yet to come is the concern of those
whose task it is to deal with it.

¹¹Megareos was Haemon's brother, who, we are to understand on the basis of this reference, died nobly some time before the play begins. It is not clear how Creon might have been responsible

for his death. In another version of the story, Creon has a son Menoeceus, who kills himself in order to save the city.

CREON

In that prayer
I spoke of everything I long for.

CHORUS

Pray for nothing.
There's no release for mortal human beings,
not from events which destiny has set.

CREON

Then take this foolish man away from here.
I killed you, my son, without intending to, [1340]
and you, as well, my wife. How useless I am now.

I don't know where to look or find support.
Everything I touch goes wrong, and on my head
fate climbs up with its overwhelming load.

*[The Attendants help Creon move up the stairs into the
palace, taking Haemon's body with them.]*

CHORUS

The most important part of true success
is wisdom—not to act impiously
towards the gods, for boasts of arrogant men [1350]
bring on great blows of punishment—
so in old age men can discover wisdom.

Euripides: from *Medea*

Medea, daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis, married the hero Jason and returned with him to Corinth to bear two children—only to have Jason leave Medea when Creon, king of Corinth, offers him his daughter, Glauce. Her allure and exotic origin caused her to be suspected of being a sorceress, representing the mysterious old ways of pre-Greek civilizations encountered by the newly arrived Greeks of the Bronze Age.¹

[Enter Medea with the Nurse.]

MEDEA

Women of Corinth, I have come out here,
outside the house, so you won't think ill of me.
Many men, I know, become too arrogant,
both in the public eye and in their homes.
Others get a reputation for indifference,
because they stay at ease within the house.
There's no justice in the eyes of mortal men.
Before they know someone's deep character, [220]
they hate the sight of her, though she's not hurt them.
A guest of the city must comply, of course,
act as the city wants. I don't commend
a stubborn man, not even a citizen,
who thanks to his stupidity annoys
his fellow townsmen. But in my case,
this unexpected blow that's hit me,
has destroyed my heart. My life is over,
dear friends. I've lost all joy. I want to die.
The person who was everything to me,
my own husband, has turned out to be
the worst of men. This I know is true.
Of all things with life and understanding, [230]
we women are the most unfortunate.

First, we need a husband, someone we get
for an excessive price. He then becomes
the ruler of our bodies. And this misfortune
adds still more troubles to the grief we have.
Then comes the crucial struggle: this husband
we have selected, is he good or bad?
For a divorce loses women all respect,
yet we can't refuse to take a husband.
Then, when she goes into her husband's home,
with its new rules and different customs,
she needs a prophet's skill to sort out the man
whose bed she shares. She can't learn that at home. [240]
Once we've worked hard at this, and with success,
our husband accepts the marriage yoke
and lives in peace—an enviable life.
But if the marriage doesn't work, then death

is much to be preferred. When the man tires
of the company he keeps at home, he leaves,
seeking relief for his distress elsewhere,
outside the home. He gets his satisfaction
with some male friend or someone his own age.

We women have to look at just one man.
Men tell us we live safe and secure at home,
while they must go to battle with their spears.
How stupid they are! I'd rather stand there
three times in battle holding up my shield [250]
than give birth once. But your story and mine
are not the same. For you have a city,
you have your father's house, enjoy your life
with friends for company. But I'm alone.
I have no city, and I'm being abused
by my own husband. I was carried off,
a trophy from a barbarian land.
I have no mother, brother, or relation
to shelter with in this extremity.
And so I want to ask something from you.
If I find some way to punish Jason [260]
for these injustices—his bride, as well,
and her father—say nothing. In other things
a woman may be timid—in watching battles
or seeing steel, but when she's hurt in love,
her marriage violated, there's no heart
more desperate for blood than hers.

CHORUS LEADER

I'll do what you request. For you are right
to pay back your husband. And, Medea,
I'm not surprised you grieve at these events.

[Enter Creon, with armed attendants.]

I see Creon, king of Corinth, coming.
He'll be bringing news, announcing
some new decision that's been made. [270]

CREON

You there, Medea, scowling in anger
against your husband. I'm ordering you

¹ Source: Translation by Ian Johnston, 2008. <https://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/euripides/medeahtml.html>

out of Corinth. You must go into exile,
and take those two children of yours with you.
Go quickly. I'm here to make quite sure
that this decree is put into effect.
I'm not going back into the palace
until I've cast you out beyond our borders.

MEDEA

O now my sufferings will kill me. It's over.
My enemies have set full sail against me,
and there's no way I can avert disaster.
But, Creon, let me ask you something—
since I'm the one abused, why banish me?
What have I done?

[280]

CREON

I am afraid of you.
I won't conceal the truth. There's a good chance
you might well instigate some fatal harm
against my daughter. Many things lead me
to this conclusion: you're a clever woman,
very experienced in evil ways;
you're grieving the loss of your husband's bed;
and from reports I hear you're making threats
to take revenge on Jason, on his bride,
and on her father. Before that happens,
I'm taking some precautions. Woman,
it's better that you hate me than for me
to grow soft now and regret it later.

[290]

MEDEA

Alas, this is not the first time, Creon,
my reputation has badly damaged me.
It's happened often. No man with any sense
should ever educate his children
to know anything beyond what's normal.
Quite apart from charges of idleness
which other people bring against them,
they stir up in their fellow citizens
a hostile envy. If you offer fools
some brand new wisdom, they'll consider you
quite useless, not someone wise. And if,
within the city, people think of you
as greater than those men who seem quite wise,
you'll appear a nuisance. So it is with me.

[300]

I'm a knowledgeable woman. I make
some people envious. Others say I'm shy.
Some the opposite. Some say I'm hostile.
I'm not that clever, but still you fear me.
Have I hurt you at all, made you suffer?
Don't fear me, Creon. It's not in me
to commit crimes against the men in charge.
Besides, in what way have you injured me?

You have married your daughter to a man,
one your heart selected. My husband's
the one I hate. In my view, you've acted
in this business with good sense. So now,
I'll not begrudge you your prosperity.
Have your marriage, and good luck to you.
But let me remain here, in this country.
Although I've suffered an injustice,
I'll obey the rulers and stay silent.

[310]

CREON

What you say sounds comforting enough,
but I'm still afraid that heart of yours
is planning something evil. At this point,
I trust you even less than previously.
Passionate people, women as well as men,
are easier to protect oneself against,
than someone clever who keeps silent.
No. You must leave Corinth—and right away.
No more speeches. I have made up my mind.
It's not possible for you to stay here,
not with us, given your hostility to me.

[320]

MEDEA [*kneeling in front of Creon*]

No, don't send me away. I'm begging you,
at your knee, in your daughter's name.

CREON

Your words are useless. You won't persuade me.

MEDEA

You'll send me into exile without hearing
my supplication?

CREON

Indeed I will.
I don't love you more than my own family.

MEDEA

O my homeland! How I'm thinking of you now.

CREON

Except for my own children, my country
is what I cherish most by far.

MEDEA

Alas,
love's a miserable thing for mortal men.

[330]

CREON

I think events determine if that's true.

MEDEA

O Zeus, don't overlook who bears the blame
for all this evil.

CREON

It's time to leave,
you foolish woman. Time to rid myself
of all this trouble.

MEDEA

We have trouble enough—
There's no need for any more.

CREON

Come on—
or my servants will force you into exile.

MEDEA

No, don't do that. I beg you, Creon . . .

[Medea seizes Creon's hand.]

CREON

Woman, it seems you're trying to provoke me.

MEDEA

All right then. I will go into exile.
I wasn't begging to escape from that.

CREON

Then why squeeze my hand so hard and not let go?

MEDEA

Let me remain here one day to prepare, [340]
to get ready for my exile and provide
something for my children, since their father,
as one more insult, does nothing for them.
Have pity on them. You're a parent, too.
You should treat them kindly—that's what's right.
If I go into exile, I don't care,
but I weep for them in their misfortune.

CREON

For a tyrant my will is by nature tender,
and by feeling pity I've been hurt before,
more than once. And now, woman, I see
I'm making a mistake, for you can have [350]
your extra day. But let me warn you—
if the sun catches you tomorrow
within the borders of this country,
you or your children, you'll be put to death.
Don't assume I'm not telling you the truth.
So, if you must remain, stay one more day.
In that time you can't do the harm I fear.

[Exit Creon with his attendants.]

CHORUS LEADER

Alas for you, unfortunate woman—
how wretched your distress. Where will you turn?
Where will you find someone to take you in?
What country, what home will you ever find
to save you from misfortune? [360]

MEDEA

Things have worked out badly in every way.
Who can deny the fact? But nonetheless,
you should not assume that's how things will stay.
The newly wedded pair still face some struggles,
and the man who made this marriage happen
might have serious problems yet. Do you think
I'd prostrate myself before a man like that,
if there was no advantage to be gained?
If I did not have some plan in mind, [370]
I'd not have talked to him or grabbed his hand.
But the man's become completely foolish—
when he had the power to prevent me
from planning anything, by sending me
out of his land, he let me stay one day,
a day when I'll turn three of my enemies
to corpses—father, daughter, and my husband.

Now, I can slaughter them in many ways.
I'm not sure which one to try out first.
Perhaps I should set the bridal suite on fire
or sneak into the house in silence, [380]
right up to their marriage bed, and plunge
some sharpened steel right through their guts.
There's just one problem. If I get caught
entering their house meaning to destroy it,
I'll be killed, and my enemies will laugh.
No. The best method is the most direct,
the one at which I have a special skill—
I'll murder them with poison. Yes, that's it.
But once they're dead, what city will receive me?
Who will give me safe shelter as a guest,
and offer me physical protection?
There's no one. Still, I'll wait a little while.
If someone shows up who can shield me, [390]
I'll set my scheme in motion and kill them
without saying a word. But if events
force me to act openly, I'll use a sword.
Even though it will bring about my death,
I'll push my daring to the very limit
and slaughter them. By Hecate, goddess
I worship more than all the others,²
the one I choose to help me in this work,
who lives with me deep inside my home,

² Hecate, among her many functions, is connected with magic arts.

these people won't bring pain into my heart
and laugh about it. This wedding of theirs,
I'll make it hateful for them, a disaster—
Creon's marriage ties, my exile from here, [400]
he'll find those bitter. So come, Medea,
call on all those things you know so well,
as you plan this and set it up. Let the work,
this deadly business, start. It's a test of wills.

You know what you now have to deal with.
You must not let Jason's marriage make you
a laughing stock among Corinthians,
compatriots of Sisyphus, for you
trace your family from a noble father
and from Helios, the sun.³ So get to work.
Besides, we possess a woman's nature—
powerless to perform fine noble deeds,
but very skilled in every form of evil.

. . .

JASON

Woman, it seems I'll need to give good reasons,
and, like a skilled helmsman on a ship,
haul in my sails and run before that storm
blowing from your raving tongue. In my view,
you overestimate your favours to me.

I consider goddess Aphrodite
the only one of gods or mortal men
who saved my expedition. As for you,
well, you've a subtle mind. But if I told
how Eros with his unerring arrows [530]
forced you to save me, I could injure you.
So I won't press the matter very far.

However you helped me, you did it well.
But by saving me you got in return
more than you gave, as I will demonstrate.
First of all, you now live among the Greeks,
not in a country of barbarians.

You're familiar with justice and the laws,
rather than brute force. Besides, all the Greeks
know you're clever, so you have earned yourself
a fine reputation. If you still lived [540]
out there at the boundary of the world,
no one would talk about you. And great fame
I'd sooner have than houses filled with gold
or the power to sing sweet melodies,
sweeter than all the songs of Orpheus.

That's my response to you about my labours.
Remember you started this war of words.

As for your complaints about this marriage,
I'll show you that in this I'm being wise
and moderate and very friendly to you
and to my children. You must have patience. [550]
When I came here from the land of Iolcus,
I brought with me many troubles, hard ones,
things impossible for me to deal with.
What greater good fortune could I have found
than marrying the daughter of the king,
me—an exile? On the point that irks you,
it's not the case I hate our marriage bed,
overcome with lust for some new bride,
nor am I keen to rival other men
in the number of my many children.
We have enough. I'm not complaining.
The most important thing for us to do
is to live well and not in poverty,
knowing that everyone avoids a friend [560]
once he's a pauper. As for my children,
I want to raise them in the proper way,
one worthy of my house, to have brothers
for the children born from you, and make them
all the same. Thus, with a united family
I might prosper. Do you need more children?

In my case, there's some benefit to have
new children to help those already born.
Was this a bad scheme? You'd agree with me,
if you weren't so upset about the sex.
But you women are so idiotic—
you think if everything is fine in bed, [570]
you have all you need, but if the sex is bad,
then all the very best and finest things
you make your enemies. What mortals need
is some other way to get our children.
We ought to have no female sex, and then
men would be rid of all their troubles.

CHORUS LEADER

Jason, your reasons here seem logical,
but it strikes me, if I may presume,
you're in the wrong abandoning your wife.

MEDEA

I'm very different from many others,
in all sorts of ways—in my opinion,
the unjust man who speaks so plausibly [580]
brings on himself the harshest punishment.
Since he's sure his tongue can hide injustice,
he dares anything. But he's not that clever.
So you should not parade before me now

³ Sisyphus in Greek mythology was the founder and first king of Corinth, a man famous for his punishment in Hades, as described in Homer's *Odyssey*, where he is condemned to an

eternity of rolling a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll down again.

that leaving me for this royal alliance
 is a fine idea—he's acted properly
 and made the right decisions. Then I'll ask [780]
 if my children can remain. My purpose
 is not to leave them in a hostile land
 surrounded by insulting enemies,
 but a trick to kill the daughter of the king.
 I'll send the children to her with gifts.
 They'll carry presents for the bride, as if
 requesting to be spared their banishment—
 a finely woven robe and a tiara
 of twisted gold. If she accepts those presents
 and puts them on, she'll die—and painfully.
 And so will anyone touching the girl.
 I've smeared strong poisons on those gifts.

So much for that. I'll say no more about her. [790]
 But the next thing I'll do fills me with pain—
 I'm going to kill my children. There's no one
 can save them now. And when I've done this,
 wiped out Jason's house completely, I'll leave,
 evading the punishment I'd receive
 for murdering my darling children,
 a sacrilegious crime. You see, my friends,
 I won't accept my enemies' contempt.
 So be it. What good does life hold for me now?
 I have no father, no home, no refuge.
 I was wrong to leave my father's house, [800]
 won over by the words of that Greek man,
 who now, with the gods' help, will pay the price.
 He'll never see his children alive again,
 the ones I bore him, nor have more children
 with his new bride, for she's been marked to die
 an agonizing death, poisoned by my drugs.
 Let no one think that I'm a trivial woman,
 a feeble one who sits there passively.
 No, I'm a different sort—dangerous
 to enemies, but well disposed to friends.
 Lives like mine achieve the greatest glory. [810]

CHORUS LEADER
 Since you've shared your plans with me, I urge you
 not to do this. I want to help you,
 holding to the standards of human law.

MEDEA
 In this matter there's no choice. I forgive
 what you just said, because, unlike me,
 you don't have to bear this suffering.

CHORUS LEADER
 But, lady, can you stand to kill your children?

MEDEA
 Yes. It will be a mortal blow to Jason.

CHORUS LEADER
 But as a woman it will devastate you.

MEDEA
 That's beside the point. Until that time
 it's useless to continue talking.

[Medea goes to door of the house and calls inside.]

You in there . . .

[Enter Nurse from the house.]

. . . go and fetch Jason here. [820]
 When I need to trust someone, I choose you.
 Tell him nothing of what I mean to do,
 if you like your mistress and are a woman.

[Exit Medea into the house and the Nurse off stage.]

.

[Enter Medea from the house and, from the side, Jason with the Nurse.]

JASON
 I've come, as you requested. You hate me,
 but I'm here, and I'm prepared to listen.
 Woman, what it is you now want from me?

MEDEA
 Jason, I ask you to forgive me
 for what I said before. My anger [870]
 you should be able to put up with,
 since we two have shared many acts of love.
 I've been debating with myself. I realize
 I've been in the wrong. I tell myself,

"I'm a fool. Why am I in such a rage,
 resenting those who offer good advice?
 Why fight against the rulers of this land
 or against my husband, whose actions serve
 my own best interests with this royal marriage,
 producing brothers for my children?
 Why can't I stop being angry? What's wrong with me,
 when gods are being so kind? Don't I have children?
 [880]

Don't I know we're going into exile,
 where friends are hard to find?"

With thoughts like these,
 I recognized how foolish I had been,
 how senseless it was to be so annoyed.
 So now I agree with you. It strikes me
 you've been acting prudently, by forging
 this marriage link on our behalf. I was mad.
 I should have worked with you in this design,

helped you with your plans, stood there beside you
in this marriage, rejoiced along with you
for this union with your bride. But women are,
well, I won't say bad—we are what we are.
You should not copy the bad things we do, [890]
repaying foolishness with foolishness.
So I give in. I admit that I was wrong.
But now I see things in a better light.

[Medea goes to the door of the house and calls inside.]

Children, come out here—leave the house.

[Enter the children with the Tutor.]

Come on out. Welcome your father here—
talk to him with me. You and your mother
will end the bad blood in this family.
We've patched things up, and no one's angry now.
Take his right hand. O it's harsh to think [900]
of what the future hides.

[Medea hugs her children.]

O my children,
will you keep holding your dear arms out like
this
through all the many years you have to live?
O dear, I'm just too tearful, too afraid!
My delicate eyes keep filling up with tears,
now I've stopped this quarrel with your father.

CHORUS LEADER

My eyes, too, begin to weep pale tears.
May this bad luck proceed no further.

JASON

Lady, I approve of what you're saying now.
Not that I blame you for what went on before.
For it's quite natural in the female sex
to get angry when their husbands set up
secret schemes for another secret marriage. [910]
But your heart has changed now for the better.
Although it took a while, you understand
the wiser course of action. In doing so,
you're acting like a woman of good sense.
Now, as for you, my children, your father
has not been neglectful. With the gods' help,
I've made secure provision for you both.
At some future date, you'll be leaders here,
in Corinth, alongside your new brothers.
But first you must grow up. As for the rest,
your father and the god who smiles on him
will take care of that. I pray I see you [920]
mature into fine young men, victorious
over all my enemies.

[Medea starts to weep.]

Medea,

why turn away? Why weep and fill your eyes
with these pale tears? What I have said,
does that not make you happy?

MEDEA

It's nothing.

I was thinking of the children.

JASON

Cheer up.

I will see that they are well looked after.

MEDEA

I will cheer up. I trust what you have said.
But it's a woman's nature to shed tears.

JASON

But why be so tearful with the boys?

MEDEA

I gave birth to them. When you made that prayer [930]
about them growing up, I felt pity,
wondering how things would turn out for them.
But let's discuss the reasons for your visit.
I've mentioned some. Now I'll let you know the rest.
Since the rulers here are keen to banish me,
I recognize the best thing I can do
is try not to stand in their way or yours,
by staying here. This royal house thinks me
their enemy. So I've made up my mind
to leave this country and go into exile.
But you should beg Creon to spare our boys,
not banish them, so they can grow up here, [940]
under your direction.

JASON

Well, I don't know
if I can convince him. But I should try.

MEDEA

You could tell your wife to ask her father
not to send the children into exile.

JASON

A good idea. I think I can persuade her.

MEDEA

You will, if she's a woman like the rest.
And I'll give you some help. I'll send her gifts,
by far the finest human gifts I know,
a finely woven gown, a diadem
of twisted gold. The boys will take them.
One of my servants will fetch them here— [950]

[Medea gestures to a servant.]

You—bring me those presents right away.

[Servant goes into the house.]

She's got more than one reason to be happy,
that wife of yours. She's blessed in countless ways.
In you she's found a very worthy man
to share her bed—and now she gets these gifts,
which my grandfather Helios once gave
to his descendants.

*[The servant returns with the gifts. Medea takes them and
hands them over to her children.]*

Come, children,
take up these wedding gifts and carry them
as offerings to the happy royal bride.
What she's getting will be worthy of her.

JASON

What are you doing, you foolish woman,
disposing of these things of yours? Do you think
the royal house lacks clothes or gold? Keep them. [960]
Don't give them away. If my wife values me,
she'll set more store on what I want to do
than on rich possessions. I'm sure of that.

MEDEA

Don't say that. Even the gods, they claim,
are won by gifts. And among mortal men,
gold works more wonders than a thousand words.
Her fortune's on the rise. Gods favour her.
She's young, with royal power to command.
But to spare my children banishment,
I'd trade more than gold. I'd give my life.
Now, children, when you get inside the palace,
you must beg this new wife of your father's, [970]
my mistress, not to send you into exile.
When you present these gifts, you must make sure
she takes them from you herself, in her own hands.
Now go and be quick about it. Good luck!
Bring your mother back news of your success,
the happy news she so desires to hear.

[Exit Jason and the children, with the Nurse and Tutor.]

• • •

[Enter the Tutor with the children.]

TUTOR

My lady, your children won't be exiled.

The royal bride was happy to accept,
with own hands, the gifts you sent her.
Now the boys have made their peace with her.

[Medea starts to weep.]

What's wrong? Why do you stand there in distress?
Things have worked out well. Why turn away again?
Are you not happy with my splendid news?

MEDEA

Alas . . .

TUTOR

An odd response to the report I bring.

MEDEA

All I can say is that I feel so sad . . .

TUTOR

Have I mistakenly said something bad?
Am I wrong to think my news is good? [1010]

MEDEA

You've reported what you had to tell me.
I'm not blaming you.

TUTOR

Then why avert your eyes?
Why are you crying?

MEDEA

Old man, I have my reasons.
The gods and I, with my worst intentions,
have made this situation what it is.

TUTOR

Be happy. Your children will one day
bring you back home again.

MEDEA

But before that,
I shall bring others to their homes—alas,
how much misery I feel.⁵

TUTOR

You're not the only mother whose children
have been separated from her. We mortals
must bear our bad times patiently.

MEDEA

I'll do so.
But now go in the house. And carry on.
Give the children their usual routine. [1020]

⁵ The grim word-play is untranslatable: κατὰ γῶ means both
'bring home (from exile)' and 'bring down.'

[Tutor exits into the house. The children remain with Medea.]

O children, my children, you still have
a city and a home, where you can live,⁶
once you have left me to my suffering.
You can live on here without your mother.
But I must go to another country,
an exile, before I've had my joy in you,
before I've seen you happy, or helped
to decorate your marriage beds, your brides,
your bridal chambers, or lifted high
your wedding torches.⁷ How miserable
my self-will has made me. I raised you—
and all for nothing. The work I did for you,
the cruel hardships, pains of childbirth— [1030]
all for nothing. Once, in my foolishness,
I had many hopes in you—it's true—
that you'd look after me in my old age,
that you'd prepare my corpse with your own hands,
in the proper way, as all people wish.

But now my tender dreams have been destroyed.
For I will live my life without you two,
in sorrow, and those loving eyes of yours
will never see your mother any more.
Your life is changing. O my children, [1040]
why are you looking at me in that way?
Why smile at me—that last smile of yours?
Alas, what shall I do? You women here,
my heart gives way when I see those eyes,
my children's smiling eyes. I cannot do it.
Good bye to those earlier plans of mine.
I'll take my children from this country.
Why harm them as a way to hurt their father
and have to suffer twice his pain myself?
No, I won't do that. And so farewell
to what I planned before. But what's going on?
What's wrong with me? Do I really want
my enemies escaping punishment, [1050]
while I become someone they ridicule?
I will go through with this. What a coward
I am to let my heart even admit
such sentimental reasons. Children,
you must go in the house.

[The children move toward the house but remain at the door, looking at Medea.]

Anyone forbidden
to attend my sacrifice, let such a man
concern himself about these children.

My hand will never lack the strength for this.
And yet . . . My heart, do not do this murder.
You're made of stone, but leave the boys alone.
Spare my children. If they remain alive,
with me in Athens, they'll make you happy.
No! By those avengers in lower Hell,
I'll never deliver up my children, [1060]
hand them over to their enemies,
to be humiliated. They must die—
that's unavoidable, no matter what.
Since that must happen, then their mother,
the one who gave them life, will kill them.
At all events it's settled. There's no way out.
On her head the royal bride already wears
the poisoned crown. That dress is killing her.
But I am treading an agonizing path
and send my children on one even worse.
What I want to do now is say farewell.

[Medea moves to the children near the door, kneels down and hugs them.]

Give me your right hands, children. Come on. [1070]
Let your mother kiss them. Oh, these hands—
how I love them—and how I love these mouths,
faces—the bearing of such noble boys.
I wish you happiness—but somewhere else.
Where you live now your father takes away.
O this soft embrace! Their skin's so tender.
My boys' breathing smells so sweet to me.
But you must go inside. Go. I can't stand
to look at you any more like this.
The evil done to me has won the day.
I understand too well the dreadful act
I'm going to commit, but my judgment
cannot check my anger, and that incites
the greatest evils human beings do. [1080]

[Medea shepherds the children into the house, leaving the Chorus alone on stage.]

. . .

[Enter the Messenger, coming from the royal palace.]

MESSENGER

Medea, you must escape—leave this place.
You've done an awful deed, broken every law.
Take ship and go by sea—or go overland
by chariot. But you must go from here.

⁶ To the children this means Corinth, to Medea it means the nether world. Such veiled discourse is characteristic of this speech, with the exception of the bracketed section below.

⁷ A special bath for the bride and the groom preceded the wedding.

MEDEA

What's happened that I have to run away?

MESSENGER

The king's daughter has just been destroyed,
her father, too—Creon. You poisoned them.

MEDEA

What really splendid news you bring.
From now on, I'll consider you a friend,
one of my benefactors.

MESSENGER

What's that?

Are you in your right mind, lady, or insane?
To commit this crime against the royal house, [1130]
and then be happy when you hear the news,
without being terribly afraid?

MEDEA

I have some remarks to offer in reply.
But, my friend, don't be in such a hurry.
Tell me of their deaths. If you report
they died in pain, you'll double my rejoicing.

MESSENGER

When your two children came with their father
and entered the bride's home, we servants,
who had shared in your misfortune, were glad,
for a rumour spread at once from ear to ear
that you and your husband's previous quarrel [1140]
was now over. Someone kissed the boys' hands,
someone else their golden hair. In my joy,
I went with the children right inside,
into the women's quarters. Our mistress,
whom we now look up to instead of you,
before she caught sight of your two children,
wanted to fix her eyes on Jason only.
But then she veiled her eyes and turned away
her white cheek, disgusted that they'd come.
Your husband tried to change the young bride's mood, [1150]
to soften her anger, saying these words,

"Don't be so hard-hearted with your family.
Check your anger, and turn your face this way,
look at us again, and count as friends of yours
those your husband thinks are friends of his.
Now, receive these gifts, and then, for my sake,
beg your father not to exile these two boys."

Once she saw the gifts, she did not hold out,
but agreed in everything with Jason.
And before your children and their father
had gone any distance from the palace,
she took the richly embroidered gown
and put it on, then arranged the golden crown, [1160]
fixing it in her hair at a bright mirror,
smiling at her body's lifeless image there.
Then she stood up from her seat and strolled
across the room, moving delicately
on her pale feet, delighted at the gifts,
with a great many glances to inspect
the straightness of the dress against her legs.
But then it happened—a horrific sight.

She changed colour, staggered back and sideways,
trembling, then fell into her chair again,
almost collapsing on the floor. An old woman, [1170]
one of her servants, thinking it was a fit
inspired by Pan or by some other god,
shouted in festive joy, until she saw
the white spit foaming in her mouth, her eyes
bulging from their sockets, and her pale skin
quite drained of blood. The servant screamed again—
this time, to make up for her former shout,
she cried out in distress. Another slave
ran off at once towards her father's palace,
and another to the girl's new husband
to tell him the grim fate his bride had met. [1180]
The whole house rang with people's footsteps,
as they hurried back and forth. By the time
it would take a fast runner to complete
two hundred yards and reach the finish line,⁸
her eyes opened—the poor girl woke up,
breaking her silent fit with a dreadful scream.

She was suffering a double agony—
around her head the golden diadem
shot out amazing molten streams of fire
burning everything, and the fine woven robe,
your children's gift, consumed the poor girl's flesh.
She jumped up from the chair and ran away, [1190]
all of her on fire, tossing her head, her hair,
this way and that, trying to shake off
her golden crown—but it was fixed in place,
and when she shook her hair, the fire blazed
twice as high. Then she fell down on the ground,
overcome by the disaster. No one
could recognize her, except her father.
Her eyes had lost their clear expression,
her face had changed. And there was blood

⁸ I.e., about twenty seconds elapsed. The reference is to the Olympic stade-race, whose winner gave his name to the Olympiad.

across her head, dripping down, mixed with fire.
 The flesh was peeling from her bones, chewed off
 by the poison's secret jaws, just like resin [1200]
 oozing from a pine tree. An appalling sight!
 Everyone was too afraid to touch the corpse—
 what we'd seen had warned us. But her father,
 poor wretch, didn't know what she's been through.
 He came unexpectedly into the house
 and stumbled on the corpse. He cried aloud,
 embraced his daughter and kissed her, saying,

"My poor child, what god has been so cruel
 to destroy you in this way? Who's taken you
 away from me, an old man near my death?
 O my child, I wish I could die with you." [1210]

He ended his lamenting cries. But then,
 when he tried to raise his old body up,
 he was entangled in that woven dress,
 like ivy wrapped around a laurel branch.
 He struggled dreadfully, trying to get up
 onto his knees, but she held him down.
 If he used force, he tore his ancient flesh
 clear from his bones. The poor man at last gave up.
 His breathing stopped—he could not stand the pain
 a moment longer. So the two of them lie dead—
 the daughter, her old father, side by side. [1220]
 It's horrible, something to make one weep.
 Concerning you there's nothing I will say.
 For you'll know well enough the punishment
 that's coming to you. As for human life,
 it seems to me, and not for the first time,
 nothing but shadows. And I might say,
 without feeling any fear, those mortals
 who seem wise, who prepare their words with care,
 are guilty of the greatest foolishness.
 Among human beings no one is happy.
 Wealth may flow in to produce a man
 more lucky than another, but no man, [1230]
 is ever happy, no one.

[Exit Messenger.]

CHORUS LEADER

This is the day, it seems,
 the god tightens troubles around Jason,
 and justly so. O poor Creon's daughter,
 how we pity your misfortune. You're gone,
 down into Hades' home—the price you pay
 for marrying Jason.

MEDEA

I've made up my mind, my friends.
 I'll do it—kill my children now, without delay,
 and flee this land. I must not hesitate.

That would hand them over to someone else
 to be slaughtered by a hand less loving.
 No matter what, the children have to die.
 Since that's the case, then I, who gave them life, [1240]
 will kill them. Arm yourself for this, my heart.
 Why do I put off doing this dreadful act,
 since it must be done? Come, pick up the sword,
 wretched hand of mine. Pick up the sword,
 move to where your life of misery begins.
 Don't play the coward. Don't remember now
 how much you love them, how you gave them life.
 For this short day forget they are your children—
 and mourn them later. Although you kill them,
 still you loved them. As a woman, I'm so sad. [1250]

[Exit Medea into the house.]

• • •

JASON

You accursed woman, most abominable
 to the gods and me and all mankind.
 You dared to take the sword to your own boys,
 you—the one who bore them—and to leave me
 destroyed and childless. Having done this,
 after committing this atrocious crime,
 can you still look upon the earth and sun?
 May you be destroyed! Now I understand—
 I must have lost my mind to bring you here,
 from that savage country, to a Greek home. [1330]
 You were truly evil then—you betrayed
 your father and the land that raised you.
 But the avenging fury meant for you
 the gods have sent to me. You slaughtered
 your brother in your home, then came aboard
 our fine ship, the Argo. That's how you began.
 When you married me and bore my children,
 in your lust for sex and our marriage bed,
 you killed them. No woman from Greece would dare
 to do this, but I chose you as my wife [1340]
 above them all, and that has proved to be
 a hateful marriage—it has destroyed me.
 You're not a woman. You're a she-lion.
 Your nature is more bestial than Scylla,
 the Tuscan monster. But my insults,
 multiplied a thousand fold, don't hurt you.
 Your heart's too hard for that. So be off,
 you shameful murderer of your children.
 Let me lament my fate. I'll get no delight
 from my new bride, nor will I ever speak
 to my own living children, the two boys
 I bred and raised. They're lost to me. [1350]

MEDEA

I would reply to your words at length,
if father Zeus did not already know
what I did for you and what you did to me.
You weren't going to shame my marriage bed
and have a pleasant life ridiculing me,
nor was that royal bride or Creon,
who gave her to you, going to banish me,
throw me from here with impunity.
So if you want, call me a lioness
or Scylla, who lives on Tuscan shores.
For I've made contact with your heart at last. [1360]

JASON

You have your own share of pain and sorrow.

MEDEA

That's true. But there is relief in knowing
you cannot laugh at me.

JASON

O my children,
you had such an evil mother!

MEDEA

O my children,
victims of your father's evil actions!

JASON

At least it was not my hand that killed them.

MEDEA

No. It was an insult—your new marriage.

JASON

Was it right to murder them for that?

MEDEA

Do you think an insult to a woman
is something insignificant?

JASON

Yes, I do,
to a woman with good sense. But to you
it is completely evil.

MEDEA

Well, your sons are gone.
That should cause you pain. [1370]

JASON

I think their spirits live
to take out their revenge on you.

MEDEA

The gods are aware who began this fight.

JASON

Yes, they well know your detested heart.

MEDEA

Keep up your hate. How I loathe your voice.

JASON

And I hate yours. It won't be difficult
for the two of us to part.

MEDEA

Tell me how.
What shall I do? For that's what I want, too.

JASON

Let me bury these dead boys and mourn them.

MEDEA

Never. My own hands will bury them.
I'll take them to Hera's sacred lands
in Acraia,⁹ so no enemy of mine
will commit sacrilege against them
by tearing up their graves. And in this place, [1380]
this land of Sisyphus, I'll initiate
a solemn celebration, with mystic rites,
future atonement for this profane murder.¹⁰
I'll now go to the land of Erechtheus,
to live with Aegeus, son of Pandion.
As for you, you'll have a miserable death,
as is fitting for a coward. Now you've seen
the bitter ending of your marriage to me,
your head will be smashed in, when you are hit
by a moldy relic of your ship the Argo.

JASON

May the avenging Fury of our children
destroy you—may you find blood justice.¹¹ [1390]

MEDEA

What god or spirit listens to you,
a man who doesn't keep his promises,
a man who deceives and lies to strangers?

JASON

You polluted wretch! Child killer!

⁹ Hera as worshiped on the Acrocorinth.

¹⁰ In historical times, there appears to have been such a festival, in which young boys and girls of noble family spent a year in the temple precinct.

¹¹ Both the Erinys (Fury) and Diké (Justice) are agents of Zeus.

MEDEA

Go home.

Bury that wife of yours.

JASON

I'll go.

I've lost both my sons.

MEDEA

Your grief's not yet begun.

Wait until you're old.

JASON

O such loving children!

MEDEA

Their mother loved them. You did not.

JASON

And yet you killed them?

MEDEA

Yes, to injure you.

JASON

Alas, how I long to see my dear boys' faces,
to hold them in my arms.

[1400]

MEDEA

So now, at this point,
you'll talk to them, you'll give them an embrace.
Before this, you shoved them from you.

JASON

By the gods,
I beg you, let me feel their tender skin.

MEDEA

No. Your words are wasted.

JASON

O Zeus,

do you hear how I'm being driven off,
what I must endure from this child killer,
this she lion, this abomination?
But I'll use the strength I have for grieving
and praying to the gods to bear witness
how you have killed my children and refuse
to let me hold their bodies or bury them.
How I wish I'd never been a father
and had to see you kill my children.

[1410]

*[Medea's chariot takes her and the children up and away
from the scene. Exit Jason.]*

CHORUS

Zeus on Olympus,
dispenses many things.
Gods often contradict
our fondest expectations.
What we anticipate
does not come to pass.
What we don't expect
some god finds a way
to make it happen.
So with this story.

[Exit Chorus.]

Unknown / Birth of Hatshepsut

Source: Translated from Emma Brunner-Traut, *AltÄgyptische Märchen*, 5th ed. (Dusseldorf und Ksln, 1979), pp. 76-87.

*The **bold faced type** represents a narrative interpretation of the reliefs in Hatshepsut's temple.*

• • •

Amun summoned the Great Ennead in heaven to him and proclaimed to them his decision to procreate for the land of Egypt a new king, and he promised to the gods all good through it. As successor, Hatshepsut was chosen the unique woman; the royal office for her was claimed.

“She builds your chapels,” said Amun to the Ennead. “She consecrates your temples . . . she makes you rich offerings . . . the dew of heaven shall fall in her time . . . and the Nile shall be high in her time. Surround her with your protection, with life, happiness unto eternity.”

The Ennead answered, “We have come herewith. We surround her with our protection, with life and happiness . . . **“Amun charged Thoth, the god of wisdom and messenger, to seek Queen Iahmes, the wife of the reigning king, whom he selected as the future mother of the successor, and Thoth answered him as follows:** “This young woman is a princess. She is called Iahmes. She is more beautiful than all the women in the whole land. She is the wife of the king, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Tuthmosis I, and his majesty is still a youth. Go therefore to her . . .” **Then Thoth led Amun to Queen Iahmes.**

There came the ruling god, Amun, Lord of the throne of the Two Lands, after he had assumed the form of the majesty of her husband, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Tuthmosis I. He found her as she rested in the innermost (area) of her palace. Then she awoke because of the scent of the god, and she smiled at his majesty. At the same time, he went there to her and was full of desire for her. He gave her his heart and allowed her to recognize him in his divine form, after which he approached her. She rejoiced to show her beauty, and his love went over into her body. The palace was flooded with the fragrance of the god. All his scent was the fragrance from Punt.

The royal wife and king’s mother Iahmes spoke to the majesty of the splendid god Amun, to the lord of the throne of the Two Lands, “My lord, how great is your glory. How splendid it is to see your face. You have enclosed my majesty with your glance. Your fragrance is in all my parts.” [Thus she spoke,] after the majesty of this god had done with her all which he wished.

Then Amun, the lord of the throne of the Two Lands spoke to her, “Hatshepsut is thus the name of this your daughter whom I have laid in your body, according to the speech of your mouth. She will exercise the splendid kingship in the whole land. My glory will belong to her, my authority will belong to her, and my crown will belong to her. She will rule the Two Lands (Egypt) . . . I will surround her every day with my protection in common with the god of the respective day.”

After Amun attended the queen, determined the name of the child, and promised her the lordship over Egypt, he spoke with the creator god Khnum who would form the child on the potter’s wheel from mud. Thereby he commissioned him to create for the child a ka. And Khnum answered him :

“I form this your daughter prepared for life, prosperity, and health, for food, nourishment, for respect, popularity, and all good. I distinguish her form from the gods in her great dignity of king of Upper and Lower Egypt.”

Then according to the divine instruction, Khnum created the royal child Hatshepsut and her ka on the potter’s wheel, and the goddess of birth, the frog-headed Heket, proffered life to her. Khnum spoke in addition, “I form you with this divine body . . . I have come to you to form you completely as all gods (Kings), give to you all life and prosperity, give to you enduring and joy . . . and give to you all health, deliver to you all flat lands and all mountain lands as well as all subjects, give to you every food and nourishment and cause that you appear on the throne of

Horus like (the sun god) Re (himself). I cause that you stand as the head of all the living when you appear as king of Upper and Lower Egypt. Thus as your father Amun-Re who loves you has commanded it.”

Khnum’s divine companion Heket concluded with speeches of blessing and gave the child with her word, life, enduring, and happiness in all eternity.

The divine messenger Thoth, dispatched by Amun, proclaimed to the royal mother Iahmes the office and title which heaven had conferred on her. He called her “the daughter of Geb, heir of Osiris, princess of Egypt, and mother of the king of Egypt. Amun the lord of the throne of the Two Lands is content with your great dignity of Princess who is great of favor, cheerfulness, charm, loveliness, and popularity,” and his message to the great royal wife Iahmes concluded with the wish that she live, endure, be happy and everlastingly joyful in heart.

Khnum, the creator god, and his divine companion Heket conducted the pregnant queen to the birth and the birth place and there pronounced their blessings. Khnum spoke to her, “I surround your daughter with my protection. You are great, but the one who opens your womb will be greater than all kings till now . . . “ Thus spoke Khnum, the potter . . . and Heket, the deliverer.

The queen who accordingly immediately became pregnant and now suffers the birth pains was delivered in the presence of the god Amun and goddess of the birth place Mesekhnet with the assistance of many spirits and divine nurses.

After a long speech by Amun, Mesekhnet executed her blessing on the child.

Unknown / Epitaph of Kheredankh Daughter of Shepmin

Source: Hildesheim PM 6352 [TM 89804], 2nd/1st century BCE. K. Jansen-Winkeln and M. Panov, trans. The middle section of the translation is taken from M. Panov, “Women in the Inscriptions of the Late Period”, no 7.3; the start and end is adapted from the commentary by K. Jansen-Winkeln, “Die Hildesheimer Stele der Chereduanch”. There is also a ‘provisional’ English translation by R.K. Ritner, which he provided for a Christie’s catalogue.

This 2nd/1st century BCE inscription describes the carefree life of a young woman ‘who loved to drink’, without any suggestion of criticising her.

• • •

The grown-up girl, of patient (?) character and familiar ways, eloquent *but* restrained, capable and intelligent, popular *and* (?) in the mouth of everyone, of careful tongue and with friendly words, Osiris Kheredankh, justified, daughter of the ‘judge’, the prophet of Amun, the primeval of the two lands, the prophet of Min, the lord of Achmim, the Osiris Shepmin, justified, born of the Lady of the House Senimouthis, who is well, says this:

O all writers, all scholars, ḥn-z3w, who are allowed to enter the libraries, residents of the house of life who read the scriptures, team of the Ibis who are searching the books of life (?), servants of Thot, practitioners of the rituals, all dignitaries, lords, patricians and subjects, [5] all wab-priests, stolistai, prophets and fathers of my nome, ḥzk-priests of the nome of Abydos, administrators of *Osiris* Khenti-amenti and expert *readers* of lower rank, all those living on earth, who come from Upper and Lower Egypt and will pass through this desert, who will enter the necropolis of the nome of Abydos and will pass Ḥ3pt-nb.s, all you who will see this stele next to my grave: come *near* so that you can read this writing that is on it, in which I say what happened to me, without listening to someone else saying *it*.

I was a beautiful lady in my city, and I was so beautiful of face that *people* rejoiced at seeing me! *I was* trusted by each person who saw me, both male and female. It is me who pronounced good *speeches* and said desirable *words*. Evil never left my lips and never [10] occupied my body. I was a nurse who reared little babies, *and* nourished *them* all with my sustenance.

I was happily conceived and *came* in a pleasant birth; I was raised in joy. My father praised my grace more than that of any child of his, when he gave me to his eldest son. His *son’s* heart was filled with love for me. He did not let me separate from him in the ‘beer house’, day or night. He forgot everything bad in his heart at the sight of me, every day.

I was sitting and relaxing every day with my associates, we drank and banqueted, our hearts were delighted with the northern wind blowing on us. I made festivals and *arranged* appearing both of the gods and goddesses of my region. I was mistress of beverages, who loved a merry day, pleasures proceeded in front of her every day, [15] anointed with myrrh, adorned with lotus. *Flower* garlands always hung round our necks, various plants were brought for us. We smelled herbs perfuming sweet, their scent was like *the aroma of those carried from* Punt. Singers made music for us, beautiful girls, with *their* heads down, sang, danced and played, making us happy every day, without cease.

It was I who gave goods to the poor. I gave bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked. Citizens prayed for my health in return for benefactions I performed for them. I was a grown-up lady with a short lifespan. The crocodile seized me and I died when I was young (?).

O *all* who you are living on earth, people [20] who will come to die *also*: Give me water as a libation—I was one who loved to drink. Your Lord, the King of the Gods {*Osiris*} Wennefer, justified, the ruler of the nome of Abydos, will live for you according to how you speak of a royal sacrifice and *how* your arms bend with incense, libations and a sacrifice of a thousand-fold of all things for a young girl’s ka; *because* I was one who *only* spent a few years conforming to my heart. *My* years on earth: 20 years, 9 months and 13 days.

The Book of Esther

*Esther was, according to this sacred Hebrew text, the Jewish queen to the Persian king Ahasuerus, who is sometimes identified as Xerxes (reigned 486–465 BCE). This story, the background to the Jewish feast of Purim, is not corroborated by other historical evidence.*¹

Chapter 1

¹ And it comes to pass, in the days of Ahasuerus—he [is] Ahasuerus who is reigning from Hodu even to Cush, one hundred twenty-seven provinces—² in those days, at the sitting of King Ahasuerus on the throne of his kingdom, that [is] in Shushan the palace,³ in the third year of his reign, he has made a banquet to all his heads and his servants; of the force of Persia and Media, the chiefs and heads of the provinces [are] before him,⁴ in his showing the wealth of the glory of his kingdom, and the glory of the beauty of his greatness, many days—one hundred eighty days.⁵ And at the fullness of these days the king has made a banquet to all the people who are found in Shushan the palace, from great even to small, [for] seven days, in the court of the garden of the house of the king—⁶ white linen, white cotton, and blue, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on rings of silver, and pillars of marble, couches of gold, and of silver, on a pavement of smaragdus, and white marble, and mother-of-pearl, and black marble—⁷ and the giving of drink in vessels of gold, and the vessels [are] various vessels, and the royal wine [is] abundant, as a memorial of the king.⁸ And the drinking [is] according to law, none is pressing, for so the king has appointed for every chief one of his house, to do according to the pleasure of man and man.⁹ Also Vashti the queen has made a banquet for women, in the royal house that King Ahasuerus has.

¹⁰ On the seventh day, as the heart of the king is glad with wine, he has commanded to Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who are ministering in the presence of King Ahasuerus,¹¹ to bring in Vashti the queen before the king, with a royal crown, to show the peoples and the heads her beauty, for she [is] of good appearance,¹² and the queen Vashti refuses to come in at the word of the king that [is] by the hand of the eunuchs, and the king is very angry, and his fury has burned in him.¹³ And the king says to wise men, knowing the times—for so [is] the word of the king before all knowing law and judgment,¹⁴ and he who is near to him [is] Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, Memucan, seven heads of Persia and Media seeing the face of the king, who are sitting first in the kingdom—¹⁵ “According to law, what should [I] do with Queen Vashti, because that she has not done the saying of King Ahasuerus by the hand of the eunuchs?”¹⁶ And Memucan says before the king and the heads, “Queen Vashti has not done perversely against the king by himself, but against all the heads, and against all the peoples that [are] in all provinces of King Ahasuerus;¹⁷ for the word of the queen goes forth to all the women, to render their husbands contemptible in their eyes, in their saying, King Ahasuerus commanded to bring in Vashti the queen before him, and she did not come;¹⁸ indeed, this day princesses of Persia and Media, who have heard the word of the queen, say [so] to all heads of the king, even according to the sufficiency of contempt and wrath.¹⁹ If to the king [it be] good, there goes forth a royal word from before him, and it is written with the laws of Persia and Media, and does not pass away, that Vashti does not come in before King Ahasuerus, and the king gives her royalty to her companion who [is] better than she;²⁰ and the sentence of the king that he makes has been heard in all his kingdom—for it [is] great—and all the wives give honor to their husbands, from great even to small.”²¹ And the

¹ Source: The Holy Bible: Literal Standard Version (LSV). 2020. Covenant Press.

thing is good in the eyes of the king, and of the princes, and the king does according to the word of Memucan,²² and sends letters to all provinces of the king, to province and province according to its writing, and to people and people according to its tongue, for every man being head in his own house—and speaking according to the language of his people.

Chapter 2

¹ After these things, at the ceasing of the fury of King Ahasuerus, he has remembered Vashti, and that which she did, and that which has been decreed concerning her;² and servants of the king, his ministers, say, “Let them seek for the king young women, virgins, of good appearance,³ and the king appoints inspectors in all provinces of his kingdom, and they gather every young woman—virgin, of good appearance—to Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, to the hand of Hegai eunuch of the king, keeper of the women, and to give their purifications,⁴ and the young woman who is good in the eyes of the king reigns instead of Vashti”; and the thing is good in the eyes of the king, and he does so.⁵ A man, a Jew, there has been in Shushan the palace, and his name [is] Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite—⁶ who had been removed from Jerusalem with the expulsion that was removed with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed—⁷ and he is supporting Hadassah—she [is] Esther—daughter of his uncle, for she has neither father nor mother, and the young woman [is] of beautiful form, and of good appearance, and at the death of her father and her mother Mordecai has taken her to himself for a daughter.

⁸ And it comes to pass, in the word of the king, even his law, being heard, and in many young women being gathered to Shushan the palace, to the hand of Hegai, that Esther is taken to the house of the king, to the hand of Hegai, keeper of the women,⁹ and the young woman is good in his eyes, and she receives kindness before him, and he hurries her purifications and her portions—to give to her, and the seven young women who are provided—to give to her, from the house of the king, and he changes her and her young women to a good [place in] the house of the women.¹⁰ Esther has not declared her people, and her family, for Mordecai has laid a charge on her that she does not declare [it];¹¹ and during every day Mordecai is walking up and down before the court of the house of the women to know the welfare of Esther, and what is done with her.¹² And in the drawing near of the turn of each young woman to come in to King Ahasuerus, at the end of there being to her—according to the law of the women—twelve months, for so they fulfill the days of their purifications; six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes, and with the purifications of women,¹³ and with this the young woman has come in to the king, all that she says is given to her to go in with her out of the house of the women to the house of the king;¹⁴ in the evening she has gone in, and in the morning she has turned back to the second house of the women, to the hand of Shaashgaz eunuch of the king, keeper of the concubines; she does not come in anymore to the king except the king has delighted in her, and she has been called by name.¹⁵ And in the drawing near of the turn of Esther—daughter of Abihail, uncle of Mordecai, whom he had taken to himself for a daughter—to come in to the king, she has not sought a thing except that which Hegai eunuch of the king, keeper of the women, says, and Esther is receiving grace in the eyes of all seeing her.

¹⁶ And Esther is taken to King Ahasuerus, to his royal house, in the tenth month—it [is] the month of Tebeth—in the seventh year of his reign,¹⁷ and the king loves Esther above all the women, and she receives grace and kindness before him above all the virgins, and he sets a royal crown on her head, and causes her to reign instead of Vashti,¹⁸ and the king makes a great banquet to all his heads and his servants—the banquet of Esther—and has made a release to the provinces, and gives gifts as a memorial of the king.¹⁹ And in the virgins being gathered a second time, then Mordecai is sitting in the gate of the king;²⁰ Esther is not declaring her family and her people, as Mordecai has laid a charge on her, and the saying of Mordecai Esther is doing as when she was

truly with him. ²¹ In those days, when Mordecai is sitting in the gate of the king, has Bigthan been angry, and Teresh (two of the eunuchs of the king, the keepers of the threshold), and they seek to put forth a hand on King Ahasuerus, ²² and the thing is known to Mordecai, and he declares [it] to Esther the queen, and Esther speaks to the king in the name of Mordecai, ²³ and the thing is sought out, and found, and both of them are hanged on a tree, and it is written in the scroll of the Chronicles before the king.

Chapter 3

¹ After these things has King Ahasuerus exalted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and lifts him up, and sets his throne above all the heads who [are] with him, ² and all servants of the king, who [are] in the gate of the king, are bowing and doing homage to Haman, for so the king has commanded for him; and Mordecai does not bow nor pay respect. ³ And the servants of the king, who [are] in the gate of the king, say to Mordecai, “Why [are] you transgressing the command of the king?” ⁴ And it comes to pass, in their speaking to him, day by day, and he has not listened to them, that they declare [it] to Haman, to see whether the words of Mordecai stand, for he has declared to them that he [is] a Jew. ⁵ And Haman sees that Mordecai is not bowing and doing homage to him, and Haman is full of fury, ⁶ and it is contemptible in his eyes to put forth a hand on Mordecai by himself, for they have declared to him the people of Mordecai, and Haman seeks to destroy all the Jews who [are] in all the kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai. ⁷ In the first month—it [is] the month of Nisan—in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, has one caused to fall Pur (that [is] the lot) before Haman, from day to day, and from month to month, [to] the twelfth, it [is] the month of Adar.

⁸ And Haman says to King Ahasuerus, “There is one people scattered and separated among the peoples, in all provinces of your kingdom, and their laws [are] diverse from all people, and the laws of the king they are not doing, and for the king it is not profitable to permit them; ⁹ if to the king [it be] good, let it be written to destroy them, and ten thousand talents of silver I weigh into the hands of those doing the work, to bring [it] into the treasuries of the king.” ¹⁰ And the king turns aside his signet from off his hand, and gives it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, adversary of the Jews; ¹¹ and the king says to Haman, “The silver is given to you, and the people, to do with it as [it is] good in your eyes.” ¹² And scribes of the king are called, on the first month, on the thirteenth day of it, and it is written according to all that Haman has commanded, to lieutenants of the king, and to the governors who [are] over province and province, and to the heads of people and people, province and province, according to its writing, and people and people according to its tongue, in the name of King Ahasuerus it has been written and sealed with the signet of the king, ¹³ and letters to be sent by the hand of the runners to all provinces of the king, to cut off, to slay, and to destroy all the Jews, from young even to old, infant and women, on one day, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month—it [is] the month of Adar—and to seize their spoil, ¹⁴ a copy of the writing to be made law in each and every province is revealed to all the peoples, to be ready for this day. ¹⁵ The runners have gone forth, hurried by the word of the king, and the law has been given in Shushan the palace, and the king and Haman have sat down to drink, and the city Shushan is perplexed.

Chapter 4

¹ And Mordecai has known all that has been done, and Mordecai tears his garments, and puts on sackcloth and ashes, and goes forth into the midst of the city and cries—a cry loud and bitter, ² and he comes to the front of the gate of the king, but none is to come to the gate of the king with a sackcloth-garment. ³ And in each and every province, the place where the word of the king, even his law, is coming, the Jews have a great mourning, and fasting, and weeping, and lamenting: sackcloth and ashes are spread for many. ⁴ And young women of Esther come in and her eunuchs, and declare [it] to her, and the queen is exceedingly pained, and sends garments to

clothe Mordecai, and to turn aside his sackcloth from off him, and he has not received [them].⁵ And Esther calls to Hatach, of the eunuchs of the king, whom he has stationed before her, and gives him a charge for Mordecai, to know what this [is], and why this [is].⁶ And Hatach goes out to Mordecai, to a broad place of the city, that [is] before the gate of the king,⁷ and Mordecai declares to him all that has met him, and the explanation of the money that Haman said to weigh to the treasuries of the king for the Jews, to destroy them,⁸ and the copy of the writing of the law that had been given in Shushan to destroy them he has given to him, to show Esther, and to declare [it] to her, and to lay a charge on her to go in to the king, to make supplication to him, and to seek from before him, for her people.

⁹ And Hatach comes in and declares to Esther the words of Mordecai,¹⁰ and Esther speaks to Hatach, and charges him for Mordecai:¹¹ “All servants of the king, and people of the provinces of the king, know that any man and woman who comes to the king, into the inner court, who is not called—one law of his [is] to put [them] to death, apart from him to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, then he has lived; and I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”¹² And they declare to Mordecai the words of Esther,¹³ and Mordecai commands to send back to Esther: “Do not think in your soul to be delivered [in] the house of the king, more than all the Jews,¹⁴ but if you keep entirely silent at this time, respite and deliverance remains to the Jews from another place, and you and the house of your fathers are destroyed; and who knows whether for a time like this you have come to the kingdom?”¹⁵ And Esther commands to send back to Mordecai:¹⁶ “Go, gather all the Jews who are found in Shushan, and fast for me, and do not eat nor drink three days, by night and by day; also I and my young women fast likewise, and so I go in to the king, that [is] not according to law, and when I have perished—I have perished.”¹⁷ And Mordecai passes on, and does according to all that Esther has charged on him.

Chapter 5

¹ And it comes to pass on the third day, that Esther puts on royalty, and stands in the inner-court of the house of the king in front of the house of the king, and the king is sitting on his royal throne, in the royal-house, opposite the opening of the house,² and it comes to pass, at the king's seeing Esther the queen standing in the court, she has received grace in his eyes, and the king holds out to Esther the golden scepter that [is] in his hand, and Esther draws near, and touches the top of the scepter.³ And the king says to her, “What do you [want], Esther, O queen? And what [is] your request? To the half of the kingdom—and it is given to you.”⁴ And Esther says, “If to the king [it be] good, the king comes in, and Haman, today, to the banquet that I have made for him”;⁵ and the king says, “Hurry Haman—to do the word of Esther”; and the king comes in, and Haman, to the banquet that Esther has made.⁶ And the king says to Esther, during the banquet of wine, “What [is] your petition? And it is given to you; and what [is] your request? To the half of the kingdom—and it is done.”⁷ And Esther answers and says, “My petition and my request [is]:⁸ if I have found grace in the eyes of the king, and if to the king [it be] good, to give my petition, and to perform my request, the king comes, and Haman, to the banquet that I make for them, and tomorrow I do according to the word of the king.”

⁹ And Haman goes forth on that day rejoicing and glad in heart, and at Haman's seeing Mordecai in the gate of the king, and he has not risen nor moved for him, then is Haman full of fury against Mordecai.¹⁰ And Haman forces himself, and comes into his house, and sends, and brings in his friends, and his wife Zeresh,¹¹ and Haman recounts to them the glory of his wealth, and the abundance of his sons, and all that with which the king made him great, and with which he lifted him up above the heads and servants of the king.¹² And Haman says, “Indeed, Esther the queen brought none in with the king, to the feast that she made, except myself, and also for tomorrow I am called to her, with the king,¹³ and all this is not profitable to me, during all the time that I am

seeing Mordecai the Jew sitting in the gate of the king.”¹⁴ And his wife Zeresh says to him, and all his friends, “Let them prepare a tree, in height fifty cubits, and in the morning speak to the king, and they hang Mordecai on it, and go in with the king to the banquet rejoicing”; and the thing is good before Haman, and he prepares the tree.

Chapter 6

¹ On that night the sleep of the king has fled away, and he commands to bring in the scroll of memorials of the chronicles, and they are read before the king,² and it is found written that Mordecai had declared concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs of the king, of the keepers of the threshold, who sought to put forth a hand on King Ahasuerus.³ And the king says, “What honor and greatness has been done to Mordecai for this?” And the servants of the king, his ministers, say, “Nothing has been done with him.”⁴ And the king says, “Who [is] in the court?” And Haman has come into the outer court of the house of the king, to say to the king to hang Mordecai on the tree that he had prepared for him.⁵ And the servants of the king say to him, “Behold, Haman is standing in the court”; and the king says, “Let him come in.”

⁶ And Haman comes in, and the king says to him, “What should [I] do with the man in whose honor the king has delighted?” And Haman says in his heart, “To whom does the king delight to do honor more than myself?”⁷ And Haman says to the king, “The man in whose honor the king has delighted,⁸ let them bring in royal clothing that the king has put on himself, and a horse on which the king has ridden, and that the royal crown be put on his head,⁹ and to give the clothing and the horse into the hand of a man of the heads of the king, the chiefs, and they have clothed the man in whose honor the king has delighted, and caused him to ride on the horse in a broad place of the city, and called before him: Thus it is done to the man in whose honor the king has delighted.”¹⁰ And the king says to Haman, “Hurry, take the clothing and the horse, as you have spoken, and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting in the gate of the king; there does not fall a thing of all that you have spoken.”¹¹ And Haman takes the clothing, and the horse, and clothed Mordecai, and causes him to ride in a broad place of the city, and calls before him, “Thus it is done to the man in whose glory the king has delighted.”

¹² And Mordecai turns back to the gate of the king, and Haman has been hurried to his house mourning, and with covered head,¹³ and Haman recounts to his wife Zeresh, and to all his friends, all that has met him, and his wise men and his wife Zeresh say to him, “If Mordecai [is] of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you are not able for him, but certainly fall before him.”¹⁴ They are yet speaking with him, and eunuchs of the king have come, and hurry to bring in Haman to the banquet that Esther has made.

Chapter 7

¹ And the king comes in, and Haman, to drink with Esther the queen,² and the king says to Esther also on the second day, during the banquet of wine, “What [is] your petition, Esther, O queen? And it is given to you; and what [is] your request? To the half of the kingdom—and it is done.”³ And Esther the queen answers and says, “If I have found grace in your eyes, O king, and if to the king [it be] good, let my life be given to me at my petition, and my people at my request;⁴ for we have been sold, I and my people, to cut off, to slay, and to destroy; and if for menservants and for maidservants we had been sold I had kept silent—but the adversity is not equal to the loss of the king.”⁵ And King Ahasuerus says, indeed, he says to Esther the queen, “Who [is] he—this one? And where [is] this one whose heart has filled him to do so?”⁶ And Esther says, “The man—adversary and enemy—[is] this wicked Haman”; and Haman has been afraid at the presence of the king and of the queen.⁷ And the king has risen, in his fury, from the banquet of wine, to the garden of the house, and Haman has remained to seek for his life from Esther the queen, for he has seen that evil has been determined against him by the king.⁸ And the

king has turned back out of the garden of the house to the house of the banquet of wine, and Haman is falling on the couch on which Esther [is], and the king says, “Also to subdue the queen with me in the house?” The word has gone out from the mouth of the king, and the face of Haman they have covered.⁹ And Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, says before the king, “Also behold, the tree that Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, is standing in the house of Haman, in height fifty cubits”; and the king says, “Hang him on it.”¹⁰ And they hang Haman on the tree that he had prepared for Mordecai, and the fury of the king has lain down.

Chapter 8

¹ On that day has King Ahasuerus given to Esther the queen the house of Haman, adversary of the Jews, and Mordecai has come in before the king, for Esther has declared what he [is] to her,² and the king turns aside his signet, that he has caused to pass away from Haman, and gives it to Mordecai, and Esther sets Mordecai over the house of Haman.³ And Esther adds, and speaks before the king, and falls before his feet, and weeps, and makes supplication to him, to cause the evil of Haman the Agagite to pass away, and his scheme that he had devised against the Jews;⁴ and the king holds out to Esther the golden scepter, and Esther rises, and stands before the king,⁵ and says, “If to the king [it be] good, and if I have found grace before him, and the thing has been right before the king, and I [am] good in his eyes, let it be written to bring back the letters—a scheme of Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite—that he wrote to destroy the Jews who [are] in all provinces of the king,⁶ for how do I endure when I have looked on the evil that finds my people? And how do I endure when I have looked on the destruction of my family?”

⁷ And King Ahasuerus says to Esther the queen, and to Mordecai the Jew, “Behold, the house of Haman I have given to Esther, and him they have hanged on the tree, because that he put forth his hand on the Jews,⁸ and you, write for the Jews, as [it is] good in your eyes, in the name of the king, and seal with the signet of the king—for the writing that is written in the name of the king, and sealed with the signet of the king, there is none to turn back.”⁹ And the scribes of the king are called, at that time, in the third month—it [is] the month of Sivan—in the twenty-third [day] of it, and it is written, according to all that Mordecai has commanded, to the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the governors, and the heads of the provinces, that [are] from Hodu even to Cush, one hundred twenty-seven provinces—province and province according to its writing, and people and people according to its tongue, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their tongue.¹⁰ And he writes in the name of King Ahasuerus, and seals with the signet of the king, and sends letters by the hand of the runners with horses, riders of the dromedary, the mules, the young mares,¹¹ that the king has given to the Jews who [are] in each and every city, to be assembled, and to stand for their life, to cut off, to slay, and to destroy the whole force of the people and province who are distressing them, infants and women, and their spoil to seize.

¹² In one day, in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month—it [is] the month of Adar—¹³ a copy of the writing to be made law in each and every province is revealed to all the peoples, and for the Jews being ready at this day to be avenged of their enemies.¹⁴ The runners, riding on the dromedary, [and] the mules, have gone out, hurried and pressed by the word of the king, and the law has been given in Shushan the palace.¹⁵ And Mordecai went out from before the king, in royal clothing of blue and white, and a great crown of gold, and a garment of fine linen and purple, and the city of Shushan has rejoiced and been glad;¹⁶ to the Jews has been light, and gladness, and joy, and honor,¹⁷ and in each and every province, and in each and every city, the place where the word of the king, even his law, is coming, gladness and joy [are] to the Jews, a banquet, and a good day; and many of the peoples of the land are becoming Jews, for a fear of the Jews has fallen on them.

Chapter 9

¹ And in the twelfth month—it [is] the month of Adar—on the thirteenth day of it, in which the word of the king, even his law, has come to be done, in the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to rule over them, and it is turned that the Jews rule over those hating them—² the Jews have been assembled in their cities, in all provinces of King Ahasuerus, to put forth a hand on those seeking their evil, and no man has stood in their presence, for their fear has fallen on all the peoples.³ And all heads of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the governors, and those doing the work that the king has, are lifting up the Jews, for a fear of Mordecai has fallen on them;⁴ for great [is] Mordecai in the house of the king, and his fame is going into all the provinces, for the man Mordecai is going on and becoming great.

⁵ And the Jews strike among all their enemies—a striking of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction—and do with those hating them according to their pleasure,⁶ and in Shushan the palace the Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men;⁷ and Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,⁸ and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,⁹ and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,¹⁰ ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, adversary of the Jews, they have slain, and on the prey they have not put forth their hand.¹¹ On that day has come the number of the slain in Shushan the palace before the king,¹² and the king says to Esther the queen, “In Shushan the palace the Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men, and the ten sons of Haman; in the rest of the provinces of the king what have they done? And what [is] your petition? And it is given to you; and what your request again? And it is done.”

¹³ And Esther says, “If [it is] good to the king, let it also be given tomorrow, to the Jews who [are] in Shushan, to do according to the law of today; and the ten sons of Haman they hang on the tree.”¹⁴ And the king commands [for it] to be done so; and a law is given in Shushan, and they have hanged the ten sons of Haman.¹⁵ And the Jews who [are] in Shushan are also assembled on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they slay three hundred men in Shushan, and they have not put forth their hand on the prey.¹⁶ And the rest of the Jews, who [are] in the provinces of the king, have been assembled, even to stand for their life, and to rest from their enemies, and to slay seventy-five thousand among those hating them, and they have not put forth their hand on the prey;¹⁷ on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, even to rest on the fourteenth of it, and to make it a day of banquet and of joy.¹⁸ And the Jews who [are] in Shushan have been assembled, on the thirteenth day of it, and on the fourteenth of it, even to rest on the fifteenth of it, and to make it a day of banquet and of joy.¹⁹ Therefore the Jews of the open places, who are dwelling in cities of the open places, are making the fourteenth day of the month of Adar—joy and banquet, and a good day, and of sending portions to one another.²⁰ And Mordecai writes these things, and sends letters to all the Jews who [are] in all provinces of King Ahasuerus, who are near and who are far off,²¹ to establish on them, to be keeping the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and the fifteenth day of it, in every year and year,²² as days on which the Jews have rested from their enemies, and the month that has been turned to them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning to a good day, to make them days of banquet and of joy, and of sending portions to one another, and gifts to the needy.

²³ And the Jews have received that which they had begun to do, and that which Mordecai has written to them,²⁴ because Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, adversary of all the Jews, had devised concerning the Jews to destroy them, and had caused to fall Pur—that [is] the lot—to crush them and to destroy them;²⁵ and in her coming in before the king, he commanded with the letter, “Let his evil scheme that he devised against the Jews return on his own head,” and they have hanged him and his sons on the tree,²⁶ therefore they have called these days Purim—by the name of the lot—therefore, because of all the words of this letter, and what they have seen concerning this, and what has come to them,²⁷ the Jews have established and received on them, and on their seed, and on all those joined to them, and it does not pass away, to be keeping these two days according to

their writing, and according to their season, in every year and year; ²⁸ and these days are remembered and kept in every generation and generation, family and family, province and province, and city and city, and these days of Purim do not pass away from the midst of the Jews, and their memorial is not ended from their seed. ²⁹ And Esther the queen, daughter of Abihail, writes, and Mordecai the Jew, with all might, to establish this second letter of Purim, ³⁰ and he sends letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus—words of peace and truth— ³¹ to establish these days of Purim, in their seasons, as Mordecai the Jew has established on them, and Esther the queen, and as they had established on themselves, and on their seed—matters of the fastings, and of their cry. ³² And a saying of Esther has established these matters of Purim, and it is written in the Scroll.

Chapter 10

¹ And King Ahasuerus sets a tribute on the land and the islands of the sea; ² and all the work of his strength, and his might, and the explanation of the greatness of Mordecai with which the king made him great, are they not written on the scroll of the Chronicles of Media and Persia? ³ For Mordecai the Jew [is] second to King Ahasuerus, and a great man of the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brothers, seeking good for his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

The Book of Ruth

The book is named for its central character, a Moabite woman who married the son of a Judean couple living in Moab. After the death of her husband, Ruth moved to Judah with her mother-in-law, Naomi, instead of remaining with her own people. The book dates to the 6th to 4th centuries BCE.¹

Chapter 1

¹ And it comes to pass, in [the] days [when] the ones judging judge, that there is a famine in the land, and there goes a man from Beth-Lehem-Judah to sojourn in the fields of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ² And the name of the man [is] Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephraimites from Beth-Lehem-Judah; and they come into the fields of Moab, and are there. ³ And Elimelech husband of Naomi dies, and she is left, she and her two sons; ⁴ and they take to them wives, Moabitesses: the name of the first [is] Orpah, and the name of the second Ruth; and they dwell there about ten years. ⁵ And they die also, both of them—Mahlon and Chilion—and the woman is left of her two children and of her husband.

⁶ And she rises, she and her daughters-in-law, and turns back from the fields of Moab, for she has heard in the fields of Moab that God has looked after His people—to give to them bread. ⁷ And she goes out from the place where she has been, and her two daughters-in-law with her, and they go in the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ And Naomi says to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return, each to the house of her mother; YHWH does with you kindness as you have done with the dead, and with me; ⁹ YHWH grants to you, and you find rest each in the house of her husband”; and she kisses them, and they lift up their voice and weep. ¹⁰ And they say to her, “Surely with you we go back to your people.” ¹¹ And Naomi says, “Turn back, my daughters; why do you go with me? Are there yet to me sons in my bowels that they have been to you for husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters, go, for I am too aged to be to a husband; though I had said, There is for me hope, also, I have been tonight to a husband, and also I have borne sons: ¹³ do you wait for them until they grow up? Do you shut yourselves up for them, not to be to a husband? No, my daughters, for more bitter to me than to you, for the hand of YHWH has gone out against me.” ¹⁴ And they lift up their voice, and weep again, and Orpah kisses her mother-in-law, and Ruth has cleaved to her.

¹⁵ And she says, “Behold, your sister-in-law has turned back to her people, and to her god, turn back after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ And Ruth says, “Do not urge me to leave you—to turn back from after you; for to where you go I go, and where you lodge I lodge; your people [is] my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I die, and there I am buried; thus does YHWH to me, and thus He adds—for death itself parts between me and you.” ¹⁸ And she sees that she is strengthening herself to go with her, and she ceases to speak to her;

¹⁹ and the two of them go until their coming to Beth-Lehem; and it comes to pass at their coming to Beth-Lehem, that all the city is moved at them, and they say, “Is this Naomi?” ²⁰ And she says to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly to me, ²¹ I went out full, and YHWH has brought me back empty, why do you call me Naomi, and YHWH has testified against me, and the Almighty has done evil to me?” ²² And Naomi turns back, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who has turned back from the fields of Moab, and they have come to Beth-Lehem at the commencement of barley-harvest.

¹ Source: The Holy Bible: Literal Standard Version (LSV). 2020. Covenant Press.

Chapter 2

¹ And Naomi has an acquaintance of her husband's, a man mighty in wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name [is] Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabitess says to Naomi, "Please let me go into the field, and I gather among the ears of grain after him in whose eyes I find grace"; and she says to her, "Go, my daughter." ³ And she goes and comes and gathers in a field after the reapers, and her chance happens—the portion of the field is Boaz's who [is] of the family of Elimelech. ⁴ And behold, Boaz has come from Beth-Lehem, and says to the reapers, "YHWH [is] with you"; and they say to him, "YHWH blesses you." ⁵ And Boaz says to his young man who is set over the reapers, "Whose [is] this young person?" ⁶ And the young man who is set over the reapers answers and says, "A young woman—Moabitess—she [is], who came back with Naomi from the fields of Moab," ⁷ and she says, Please let me glean and I have gathered among the sheaves after the reapers; and she comes and remains since the morning and until now; she sat in the house a little [while]."

⁸ And Boaz says to Ruth, "Have you not heard, my daughter? Do not go to glean in another field, and also, do not pass over from here, and thus you cleave to my young women: ⁹ your eyes [are] on the field which they reap, and you have gone after them; have I not charged the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty then you have gone to the vessels, and have drunk from that which the young men draw." ¹⁰ And she falls on her face, and bows herself to the earth, and says to him, "Why have I found grace in your eyes, to discern me, and I a stranger?" ¹¹ And Boaz answers and says to her, "It has been thoroughly declared to me all that you have done with your mother-in-law, after the death of your husband, and you leave your father, and your mother, and the land of your birth, and come to a people which you have not known before. ¹² YHWH repays your work, and your reward is complete from YHWH, God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." ¹³ And she says, "Let me find grace in your eyes, my lord, because you have comforted me, and because you have spoken to the heart of your maidservant, and I am not as one of your maidservants."

¹⁴ And Boaz says to her, "At meal-time come near here, and you have eaten of the bread, and dipped your morsel in the vinegar." And she sits at the side of the reapers, and he reaches to her roasted grain, and she eats, and is satisfied, and leaves. ¹⁵ And she rises to glean, and Boaz charges his young men, saying, "Even between the sheaves she gleans, and you do not cause her to blush; ¹⁶ and also you surely cast to her of the handfuls—and have left, and she has gleaned, and you do not push against her."

¹⁷ And she gleans in the field until the evening, and beats out that which she has gleaned, and it is about an ephah of barley; ¹⁸ and she takes [it] up, and goes into the city, and her mother-in-law sees that which she has gleaned, and she brings out and gives to her that which she left from her satiety. ¹⁹ And her mother-in-law says to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where have you worked? May he who is discerning you be blessed." And she declares to her mother-in-law with whom she has worked, and says, "The name of the man with whom I have worked today [is] Boaz." ²⁰ And Naomi says to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed [is] he of YHWH who has not forsaken His kindness with the living and with the dead"; and Naomi says to her, "The man is a relation of ours; he [is] of our redeemers." ²¹ And Ruth the Moabitess says, "Also he surely said to me, Near the young people whom I have you cleave until they have completed the whole of the harvest which I have." ²² And Naomi says to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "Good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and they do not come against you in another field." ²³ And she cleaves to the young women of Boaz to glean, until the completion of the barley-harvest, and of the wheat-harvest, and she dwells with her mother-in-law.

Chapter 3

¹ And her mother-in-law Naomi says to her, “My daughter, do I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² And now, is not Boaz of our acquaintance, with whose young women you have been? Behold, he is winnowing the threshing-floor of barley tonight, ³ and you have bathed, and anointed yourself, and put your garments on you, and gone down to the threshing-floor; do not let yourself be known to the man until he completes to eat and to drink; ⁴ and it comes to pass, when he lies down, that you have known the place where he lies down, and have gone in, and uncovered his feet, and lain down—and he declares to you that which you do.” ⁵ And she says to her, “All that you say—I do.”

⁶ And she goes down [to] the threshing-floor, and does according to all that her mother-in-law commanded her ⁷ And Boaz eats and drinks, and his heart is glad; and he goes in to lie down at the end of the heap; and she comes in gently, and uncovers his feet, and lies down. ⁸ And it comes to pass, at the middle of the night, that the man trembles, and turns himself, and behold, a woman is lying at his feet. ⁹ And he says, “Who [are] you?” And she says, “I [am] Ruth your handmaid, and you have spread your skirt over your handmaid, for you [are] a redeemer.” ¹⁰ And he says, “Blessed [are] you of YHWH, my daughter; you have dealt more kindly at the latter end than at the beginning—not to go after the young men, either poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear, all that you say I do to you, for all the gate of my people knows that you [are] a virtuous woman. ¹² And now, surely, true, that I [am] a redeemer, but also there is a redeemer nearer than I. ¹³ Lodge tonight, and it has been in the morning, if he redeems you, well: he redeems; and if he does not delight to redeem you, then I have redeemed you—I; YHWH lives! Lie down until the morning.”

¹⁴ And she lies down at his feet until the morning, and rises before one discerns another; and he says, “Let it not be known that the woman has come into the floor.” ¹⁵ And he says, “Give the covering which [is] on you, and keep hold on it”; and she keeps hold on it, and he measures six [measures] of barley, and lays [it] on her; and he goes into the city. ¹⁶ And she comes to her mother-in-law, and she says, “Who [are] you, my daughter?” And she declares to her all that the man has done to her. ¹⁷ And she says, “These six [measures] of barley he has given to me, for he said, You do not go in empty to your mother-in-law.” ¹⁸ And she says, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter falls, for the man does not rest except he has completed the matter today.”

Chapter 4

¹ And Boaz has gone up to the gate, and sits there, and behold, the redeemer is passing by of whom Boaz had spoken, and he says, “Turn aside, sit down here, such a one, such a one”; and he turns aside and sits down. ² And he takes ten men from [the] elderly of the city, and says, “Sit down here”; and they sit down. ³ And he says to the redeemer, “A portion of the field which [is] to our brother, to Elimelech, has Naomi sold, who has come back from the fields of Moab; ⁴ and I said, I uncover your ear, saying, Buy before the inhabitants and before [the] elderly of my people; if you redeem—redeem, and if none redeems—declare [it] to me and I know, for there is none except you to redeem, and I after you.” And he says, “I redeem [it].” ⁵ And Boaz says, “In the day of your buying the field from the hand of Naomi, then from Ruth the Moabitess, wife of the dead, you have bought [it], to raise up the name of the dead over his inheritance.” ⁶ And the redeemer says, “I am not able to redeem [it] for myself, lest I destroy my inheritance; redeem for yourself—you—my right of redemption, for I am not able to redeem.”

⁷ And this [is] formerly in Israel for redemption and for exchanging, to establish anything: a man has drawn off his sandal, and given [it] to his neighbor, and this [is] the Testimony in Israel. ⁸ And the redeemer says to Boaz, “Buy [it] for yourself,” and draws off his sandal. ⁹ And Boaz says to the elderly, and [to] all the people, “You [are]

witnesses today that I have bought all that [belonged] to Elimelech, and all that [belonged] to Chilion and Mahlon, from the hand of Naomi; ¹⁰ and also Ruth the Moabitess, wife of Mahlon, I have bought to myself for a wife, to raise up the name of the dead over his inheritance; and the name of the dead is not cut off from among his brothers, and from the gate of his place; witnesses you [are] today.” ¹¹ And all the people who [are] in the gate say—also the elderly, “Witnesses! YHWH makes the woman who is coming to your house as Rachel and as Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and you do virtuously in Ephrathah, and proclaim the name in Beth-Lehem; ¹² and let your house be as the house of Perez (whom Tamar bore to Judah), of the seed which YHWH gives to you of this young woman.”

¹³ And Boaz takes Ruth, and she becomes his wife, and he goes in to her, and YHWH gives conception to her, and she bears a son. ¹⁴ And the women say to Naomi, “Blessed [is] YHWH who has not let a redeemer cease to you today, and his name is proclaimed in Israel, ¹⁵ and he has been to you for a restorer of life, and for a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who has loved you—who is better to you than seven sons—has borne him.” ¹⁶ And Naomi takes the boy, and lays him in her bosom, and is to him for a nurse; ¹⁷ and the neighboring women give a name to him, saying, “There has been a son born to Naomi,” and they call his name Obed; he [is] father of Jesse, father of David.

¹⁸ And these are generations of Perez: Perez begot Hezron, ¹⁹ and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminidab, ²⁰ and Amminidab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon, ²¹ and Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed, ²² and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

The Capture of the Sabine Women

Source: Livy 1.9–1.33. Translated by William Masfen Roberts. In *The History of Rome*. London: J.M. Dent, 1912.

According to legend, Rome, founded as it was by adventurers and immigrants, had an acute shortage of women. The story of Romulus's plan—to take their neighbors' maidens—was repeated in the later Republic most of all because it was justified in retrospect by the maidens' defense of their new home.

The Roman State had now become so strong that it was a match for any of its neighbors in war, but its greatness threatened to last for only one generation, since through the absence of women there was no hope of offspring, and there was no right of intermarriage with their neighbors. Acting on the advice of the senate, Romulus sent envoys amongst the surrounding nations to ask for alliance and the right of intermarriage on behalf of his new community....

As to the origin of Rome, it was well known that whilst it had received divine assistance, courage and self-reliance were not wanting. There should, therefore, be no reluctance for men to mingle their blood with their fellow-men. Nowhere did the envoys meet with a favorable reception....

The Roman youth could ill brook such insults, and matters began to look like an appeal to force. To secure a favorable place and time for such an attempt, Romulus, disguising his resentment, made elaborate preparations for the celebration of games in honor of "Equestrian Neptune," which he called "the Consualia."...

There was a great gathering; people were eager to see the new City, all their nearest neighbors ... and the whole Sabine population came, with their wives and families. They were invited to accept hospitality at the different houses, and after examining the situation of the City, its walls and the large number of dwelling-houses it included, they were astonished at the rapidity with which the Roman State had grown.

When the hour for the games had come, and their eyes and minds were alike riveted on the spectacle before them, the preconcerted signal was given and the Roman youth dashed in all directions to carry off the maidens who were present. The larger part were carried off indiscriminately....

Alarm and consternation broke up the games, and the parents of the maidens fled, distracted with grief, uttering bitter reproaches on the violators of the laws of hospitality and appealing to the god to whose solemn games they had come, only to be the victims of impious perfidy.

The abducted maidens were quite as despondent and indignant. Romulus, however, went round in person, and pointed out to them that it was all owing to the pride of their parents in denying right of intermarriage to their neighbors. They would live in honorable wedlock, and share all their property and civil rights, and—dearest of all to human nature—would be the mothers of freemen.

[War breaks out between the Sabines and the Romans.] Then it was that the Sabine women, whose wrongs had led to the war, throwing off all womanish fears in their distress, went boldly into the midst of the flying missiles with disheveled hair and rent garments. Running across the space between the two armies they tried to stop any further fighting and calm the excited passions by appealing to their fathers in the one army and their husbands in the other not to bring upon themselves a curse by staining their hands with the blood of a father-in-law or a son-in-law, nor upon their posterity the taint of parricide. "If," they cried, "you are weary of these ties of kindred, these marriage-bonds, then turn your anger upon us; it is we who are the cause of the war, it is we who have wounded and slain our husbands and fathers. Better for us to perish rather than live without one or the other of you, as widows or as orphans."

The Rape of Lucretia

Source: Livy 1.57–59. Translated from the original in Jean Bayet, ed., *Tite-Live: Histoire Romaine*, Tome I, livre I. Paris: Société d'Édition "les belles-lettres," 1954, pp. 92-95.

In this excerpt, Livy repeats a legend that was extremely important to Romans during the Republic. The sons of the King of Rome, L. Tarquinius Superbus, are at Ardea, a city which the army is attempting to conquer, when they hear of the virtue of the Roman matron Lucretia. The virtues this story puts forth for Roman society through the example of Lucretia helps explain why this story would have mattered to later Romans.

One day when the young men were drinking at the house of Sex. Tarquinius, after a supper where they had dined with the son of Egerius, Tarquinius Conlatinus, they fell to talking about their wives, and each man fell to praising his wife to excess. Finally Tarquinius Conlatinus declared that there was no need to argue; they might all be sure that no one was more worthy than his Lucretia. "Young and vigorous as we are, why don't we go get out horses and go and see for ourselves what our wives are doing? And we will base our judgment on whatever we see them doing when their husbands arrive unannounced." Encouraged by the wine, "Yes, let's go!" they all cried, and they went on horseback to the city. Darkness was beginning to fall when they arrived and they went to the house of Conlatinus. There, they found Lucretia behaving quite differently from the daughters-in-law of the King, whom they had found with their friends before a grand feast, preparing to have a night of fun. Lucretia, even though it was night, was still working on her spinning, with her servants, in the middle of her house. They were all impressed by Lucretia's chaste honor. When her husband and the Tarquins arrived, she received them, and her husband, the winner, was obliged to invite the king's sons in. It was then that Sex. Tarquinius was seized by the desire to violate Lucretia's chastity, seduced both by her beauty and by her exemplary virtue. Finally, after a night of youthful games, they returned to the camp.

Several days passed. Sex. Tarquinius returned to the house of Conlatinus, with one of his companions. He was well received and given the hospitality of the house, and maddened with love, he waited until he was sure everyone else was asleep. Then he took up his sword and went to Lucretia's bedroom, and placing his sword against her left breast, he said, "Quiet, Lucretia; I am Sextus Tarquinius, and I have a sword in my hand. If you speak, you will die." Awakening from sleep, the poor woman realized that she was without help and very close to death. Sex. Tarquinius declared his love for her, begging and

threatening her alternately, and attacked her soul in every way. Finally, before her steadfastness, which was not affected by the fear of death even after his intimidation, he added another menace. "When I have killed you, I will put next to you the body of a nude servant, and everyone will say that you were killed during a dishonorable act of adultery." With this menace, Sex. Tarquinius triumphed over her virtue, and when he had raped her he left, having taken away her honor.

Lucretia, overcome with sorrow and shame, sent messengers both to her husband at Ardea and her father at Rome, asking them each to come "at once, with a good friend, because a very terrible thing had happened." S. Lucretius, her father, came with P. Valerius, the son of Volesus, and Conlatinus came with L. Junius Brutus; they had just returned to Rome when they met Lucretia's messenger. They found Lucretia in her chamber, overpowered by grief. When she saw them she began to cry. "How are you?" her husband asked. "Very bad," she replied, "how can anything go well for a woman who has lost her honor? There are the marks of another man in your bed, Conlatinus. My body is greatly soiled, though my heart is still pure, as my death will prove. But give me your right hand in faith that you will not allow the guilty to escape. It was Sex. Tarquinius who returned our hospitality with enmity last night. With his sword in his hand, he came to take his pleasure for my unhappiness, but it will also be his sorrow if you are real men."

They promised her that they would pursue him, and they tried to appease her sorrow, saying that it was the soul that did wrong, and not the body, and because she had had no bad intention, she did no wrong. "It is your responsibility to see that he gets what he deserves," she said, "I will absolve myself of blame, and I will not free myself from punishment. No woman shall use Lucretia as her example in dishonor." Then she took up a knife which she had hidden beneath her robe, and plunged it into her heart, collapsing from her wound; she died there amid the cries of her husband and father.

Brutus, leaving them in their grief, took the knife from Lucretia's wound, and holding it all covered with blood up in the aid, cried, "By this blood, which was so pure before the crime of the prince, I swear before you, O gods, to chase the King L. Tarquinius Superbus, with his criminal wife and all their offspring, by fire, iron, and all the methods I have at my disposal, and never to tolerate Kings in Rome evermore, whether of that family or any other."

FRAGMENTS

The Twelve Tables

Source: From: Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., The Library of Original Sources (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1901), Vol. III: The Roman World, pp. 9-11. Scanned by: J. S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton. Prof. Arkenberg has modernized the text.

Cicero, De Oratore, I.44: "Though all the world exclaim against me, I will say what I think: that single little book of the Twelve Tables, if anyone look to the fountains and sources of laws, seems to me, assuredly, to surpass the libraries of all the philosophers, both in weight of authority, and in plenitude of utility."

What we have of the Tables is fragments only—quotations preserved in other, later sources. The division into tables and the numbering shown below is modern and arbitrary.

Table I.

1. If anyone summons a man before the magistrate, he must go. If the man summoned does not go, let the one summoning him call the bystanders to witness and then take him by force.
2. If he shirks or runs away, let the summoner lay hands on him.
3. If illness or old age is the hindrance, let the summoner provide a team. He need not provide a covered carriage with a pallet unless he chooses.
4. Let the protector of a landholder be a landholder; for one of the proletariat, let anyone that cares, be protector.
- 6-9. When the litigants settle their case by compromise, let the magistrate announce it. If they do not compromise, let them state each his own side of the case, in the comitium of the forum before noon. Afterwards let them talk it out together, while both are present. After noon, in case either party has failed to appear, let the magistrate pronounce judgment in favor of the one who is present. If both are present the trial may last until sunset but no later.

Table II.

2. He whose witness has failed to appear may summon him by loud calls before his house every third day.

Table III.

1. One who has confessed a debt, or against whom judgment has been pronounced, shall have thirty days to pay it in. After that forcible seizure of his person is allowed. The creditor shall bring him before the magistrate. Unless he pays the amount of the judgment or some one in the presence of the magistrate interferes in his behalf as protector the creditor so shall take him home and fasten him in stocks or fetters. He shall fasten him with not less than fifteen pounds of weight or, if he choose,

with more. If the prisoner choose, he may furnish his own food. If he does not, the creditor must give him a pound of meal daily; if he choose he may give him more.

2. On the third market day let them divide his body among them. If they cut more or less than each one's share it shall be no crime.

3. Against a foreigner the right in property shall be valid forever.

Table IV.

1. A dreadfully deformed child shall be quickly killed.
2. If a father sell his son three times, the son shall be free from his father.
3. As a man has provided in his will in regard to his money and the care of his property, so let it be binding. If he has no heir and dies intestate, let the nearest agnate have the inheritance. If there is no agnate, let the members of his gens have the inheritance.
4. If one is mad but has no guardian, the power over him and his money shall belong to his agnates and the members of his gens.
5. A child born after ten months since the father's death will not be admitted into a legal inheritance.

Table V.

1. Females should remain in guardianship even when they have attained their majority.

Table VI.

1. When one makes a bond and a conveyance of property, as he has made formal declaration so let it be binding.
3. A beam that is built into a house or a vineyard trellis one may not take from its place.
5. *Usucapio* of movable things requires one year's possession for its completion; but *usucapio* of an estate and buildings two years.¹
6. Any woman who does not wish to be subjected in this manner to the hand of her husband should be absent three nights in succession every year, and so interrupt the *usucapio* of each year.²

¹ *Usucapio* is the acquisition of ownership by continuous possession and use (*usus*).

² Because marriage was seen as a form of "conveyance," women could become bound to a man via a common-law marriage that corresponds to *usucapio*, acquisition by continuous possession.

Table VII.

1. Let them keep the road in order. If they have not paved it, a man may drive his team where he likes.
9. Should a tree on a neighbor's farm be bend crooked by the wind and lean over your farm, you may take legal action for removal of that tree.
10. A man might gather up fruit that was falling down onto another man's farm.

Table VIII.

2. If one has maimed a limb and does not compromise with the injured person, let there be retaliation. If one has broken a bone of a freeman with his hand or with a cudgel, let him pay a penalty of three hundred coins. If he has broken the bone of a slave, let him have one hundred and fifty coins. If one is guilty of insult, the penalty shall be twenty-five coins.
3. If one is slain while committing theft by night, he is rightly slain.
4. If a patron shall have devised any deceit against his client, let him be accursed.
5. If one shall permit himself to be summoned as a witness, or has been a weigher, if he does not give his testimony, let him be noted as dishonest and incapable of acting again as witness.
10. Any person who destroys by burning any building or heap of corn deposited alongside a house shall be bound, scourged, and put to death by burning at the stake provided that he has committed the said misdeed with malice aforethought; but if he shall have committed it by accident, that is, by negligence, it is ordained that he repair the damage or, if he be too poor to be competent for such punishment, he shall receive a lighter punishment.
12. If the theft has been done by night, if the owner kills the thief, the thief shall be held to be lawfully killed.
13. It is unlawful for a thief to be killed by day....unless he defends himself with a weapon; even though he has come with a weapon, unless he shall use the weapon and fight back, you

shall not kill him. And even if he resists, first call out so that someone may hear and come up.

23. A person who had been found guilty of giving false witness shall be hurled down from the Tarpeian Rock.
26. No person shall hold meetings by night in the city.

Table IX.

4. The penalty shall be capital for a judge or arbiter legally appointed who has been found guilty of receiving a bribe for giving a decision.
5. Treason: he who shall have roused up a public enemy or handed over a citizen to a public enemy must suffer capital punishment.
6. Putting to death of any man, whosoever he might be unconvicted is forbidden.

Table X.

1. None is to bury or burn a corpse in the city.
3. The women shall not tear their faces nor wail on account of the funeral.
5. If one obtains a crown himself, or if his chattel does so because of his honor and valor, if it is placed on his head, or the head of his parents, it shall be no crime.

Table XI.

1. Marriages should not take place between plebeians and patricians.

Table XII.

2. If a slave shall have committed theft or done damage with his master's knowledge, the action for damages is in the slave's name.
5. Whatever the people had last ordained should be held as binding by law.

Ovid: Selections from *Metamorphoses*

Women feature strongly in Ovid's compilation of mythological stories, Metamorphoses—often bearing the burden of decisions made by men, and thereby becoming the origin of important elements of the later Greek and Roman world. Below are excerpts relating the stories of Daphne, a nymph pursued by Apollo; Hecuba, queen of the destroyed Troy; unhappy lovers Pyramus and Thisbe; and Galatea, the sea-nymph beloved of Acis and coveted by Polyphemus, the Cyclops. The work is Roman, from the first century BCE.¹

Daphne's Refusal

I:438-472 Phoebus kills the Python and sees Daphne

Indeed, though she would not have desired to, she then gave birth to you, great Python, covering so great an area of the mountain slopes, a snake not known before, a terror to the new race of men. The archer god, with lethal shafts that he had only used before on fleeing red deer and roe deer, with a thousand arrows, almost emptying his quiver, destroyed the creature, the venom running out from its black wounds. Then he founded the sacred Pythian games, celebrated by contests, named from the serpent he had conquered. There the young winners in boxing, in foot and chariot racing, were honoured with oak wreaths. There was no laurel as yet, so Phoebus crowned his temples, his handsome curling hair, with leaves of any tree.

Phoebus's first love was Daphne, daughter of Peneus, and not through chance but because of Cupid's fierce anger. Recently the Delian god, exulting at his victory over the serpent, had seen him bending his tightly strung bow and said 'Impudent boy, what are you doing with a man's weapons? That one is suited to my shoulders, since I can hit wild beasts of a certainty, and wound my enemies, and not long ago destroyed with countless arrows the swollen Python that covered many acres with its plague-ridden belly. You should be intent on stirring the concealed fires of love with your burning brand, not laying claim to my glories!' Venus's son replied 'You may hit every other thing Phoebus, but my bow will strike you: to the degree that all living creatures are less than gods, by that degree is your glory less than mine.' He spoke, and striking the air fiercely with beating wings, he landed on the shady peak of Parnassus, and took two arrows with opposite effects from his full quiver: one kindles love, the other dispels it. The one that kindles is golden with a sharp glistening point, the one that dispels is blunt with lead beneath its shaft. With the second he transfixed Peneus's daughter, but with the first he wounded Apollo piercing him to the marrow of his bones.

I: 473-503 Phoebus pursues Daphne

Now the one loved, and the other fled from love's name, taking delight in the depths of the woods, and the skins of the wild beasts she caught, emulating virgin Phoebe, a careless ribbon holding back her hair. Many courted her, but she, averse to being wooed, free from men and unable to endure them, roamed the pathless woods, careless of Hymen or Amor, or whatever marriage might be. Her father often said 'Girl you owe me a son-in-law', and again often 'Daughter, you owe me grandsons.' But, hating the wedding torch as if it smacked of crime she would blush red with shame all over her beautiful face, and clinging to her father's neck with coaxing arms, she would say 'Dearest father, let me be a virgin for ever! Diana's father granted it to her.' He yields to that plea, but your beauty itself, Daphne, prevents your wish, and your loveliness opposes your prayer.

¹ Source: Ovid, and A.S. Kline. 2014. *Ovid: The Metamorphoses – A Complete English Translation and Mythological Index*. CreateSpace. <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Ovhome.php>.

Phoebus loves her at first sight, and desires to wed her, and hopes for what he desires, but his own oracular powers fail him. As the light stubble of an empty cornfield blazes; as sparks fire a hedge when a traveller, by mischance, lets them get too close, or forgets them in the morning; so the god was altered by the flames, and all his heart burned, feeding his useless desire with hope. He sees her disordered hair hanging about her neck and sighs 'What if it were properly dressed?' He gazes at her eyes sparkling with the brightness of starlight. He gazes on her lips, where mere gazing does not satisfy. He praises her wrists and hands and fingers, and her arms bare to the shoulder: whatever is hidden, he imagines more beautiful. But she flees swifter than the lightest breath of air, and resists his words calling her back again.

I:504-524 Phoebus begs Daphne to yield to him

'Wait nymph, daughter of Peneus, I beg you! I who am chasing you am not your enemy. Nymph, Wait! This is the way a sheep runs from the wolf, a deer from the mountain lion, and a dove with fluttering wings flies from the eagle: everything flies from its foes, but it is love that is driving me to follow you! Pity me! I am afraid you might fall headlong or thorns undeservedly scar your legs and I be a cause of grief to you! These are rough places you run through. Slow down, I ask you, check your flight, and I too will slow. At least enquire whom it is you have charmed. I am no mountain man, no shepherd, no rough guardian of the herds and flocks. Rash girl, you do not know, you cannot realise, who you run from, and so you run. Delphi's lands are mine, Claros and Tenedos, and Patara acknowledges me king. Jupiter is my father. Through me what was, what is, and what will be, are revealed. Through me strings sound in harmony, to song. My aim is certain, but an arrow truer than mine, has wounded my free heart! The whole world calls me the bringer of aid; medicine is my invention; my power is in herbs. But love cannot be healed by any herb, nor can the arts that cure others cure their lord!'

I:525-567 Daphne becomes the laurel bough

He would have said more as timid Peneüs ran, still lovely to see, leaving him with his words unfinished. The winds bared her body, the opposing breezes in her way fluttered her clothes, and the light airs threw her streaming hair behind her, her beauty enhanced by flight. But the young god could no longer waste time on further blandishments, urged on by Amor, he ran on at full speed. Like a hound of Gaul starting a hare in an empty field, that heads for its prey, she for safety: he, seeming about to clutch her, thinks now, or now, he has her fast, grazing her heels with his outstretched jaws, while she uncertain whether she is already caught, escaping his bite, spurts from the muzzle touching her. So the virgin and the god: he driven by desire, she by fear. He ran faster, Amor giving him wings, and allowed her no rest, hung on her fleeing shoulders, breathed on the hair flying round her neck. Her strength was gone, she grew pale, overcome by the effort of her rapid flight, and seeing Peneus's waters near cried out 'Help me father! If your streams have divine powers change me, destroy this beauty that pleases too well!' Her prayer was scarcely done when a heavy numbness seized her limbs, thin bark closed over her breast, her hair turned into leaves, her arms into branches, her feet so swift a moment ago stuck fast in slow-growing roots, her face was lost in the canopy. Only her shining beauty was left.

Even like this Phoebus loved her and, placing his hand against the trunk, he felt her heart still quivering under the new bark. He clasped the branches as if they were parts of human arms, and kissed the wood. But even the wood shrank from his kisses, and the god said 'Since you cannot be my bride, you must be my tree! Laurel, with you my hair will be wreathed, with you my lyre, with you my quiver. You will go with the Roman generals when joyful voices acclaim their triumph, and the Capitol witnesses their long processions. You will stand outside Augustus's doorposts, a faithful guardian, and keep watch over the crown of oak between them. And just as my head with its un-cropped hair is always young, so you also will wear the beauty of undying leaves.' Paeon had done: the laurel bowed her newly made branches, and seemed to shake her leafy crown like a head giving consent.

The Lament of Hecuba, Priam's Queen

XIII:481-575 Hecuba's lament and transformation

The Trojan women lift her body, counting over the lamented children of Priam, and recounting how much blood one house has surrendered. They weep for you, girl, and for you, Hecuba, who were lately called the royal wife, the royal parent, the image of bright Asia, now in evil circumstances, even for a prisoner, whom victorious Ulysses would not have wanted, except for the fact that you had given birth to Hector a partner for his mother that Hector would scarcely have imagined!

Embracing the body of Polyxena, now empty of that brave spirit, she sheds the tears for her that she has shed so often for her husband, sons and country. She pours her tears over her daughter's wound, covers her lips with kisses, and beats at her own bruised breast.

Then, tearing at her white hair caked with blood, and plucking at her breast, she said this amongst other things: 'Child – since, what else is left me? – your mother's last grief, Child, you lie there, and I see your wound, that is my wound. Look, you also have your wound, so that I might lose none of my children without bloodshed. Because you were a woman, I thought you safe from the sword: yet, a woman, you have died by the sword: and that same Achilles who has ruined Troy and made me childless, who has destroyed so many of your brothers, has killed you in the same way.

Yet when he fell to the arrow of Paris, and Phoebus, I said: "Now surely, Achilles is no longer to be feared." Yet even then I still needed to fear him. His very ashes in the tomb are hostile to our race: even in the grave we feel his enmity: I gave birth for the Aeacidae! Mighty Ilium is in the dust, and, in a grievous outcome, our ruined State is ended. But still, it ended: in me, only, Pergama remains. My grief still takes its course. A moment ago I was endowed with the greatest things, so many sons and daughters, sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law, and my husband. Now, exiled, destitute, torn from the tombs of my loved ones, I am dragged off as a prize, to serve Penelope. She will point me out to the women of Ithaca, as I spin the wool she gives me, and say: "This is the famous mother of Hector, this is Priam's queen." Now you, Polyxena, after so many have been lost, you, who were the only one left to comfort your mother's grief, have been sacrificed on an enemy tomb! I have borne offerings for the enemy dead!

Why do I remain, unyielding? Why do I linger here? Why do you preserve me, wrinkled old age? Why prolong an old woman's life, cruel gods, unless it is for me to view more funerals? Who would have thought Priam could be happy when Pergama has fallen? Yet he is happy, in death! He did not see you killed, daughter, but left his kingdom and his life together. Do I imagine you will be endowed with funereal splendour, and your body laid to rest in the ancestral tomb? That is not our house's fate! Your mother's tears will be your funeral gift, and the wastes of foreign sand. I have lost everything: now an only child is left, once the youngest son of my family, his mother's dearest, a reason to endure life for a brief space of time, Polydorus, sent to these shores, to the Ismarian king. But why do I delay, meanwhile, the cleansing of your cruel wound with water, your face spattered with drops of blood?

She spoke, and went to the shore, with the stumbling steps of an old woman, tearing at her white hair. 'Give me an urn, women of Troy!' said the unhappy mother, wanting to draw water from the sea. There, she saw Polydorus's body, thrown on the beach, covered with open wounds made by Thracian spears. The Trojan women cried out, but she was dumb with grief. The grief itself obliterated both her powers of speech and the tears welling inside, and she stood unmoving like solid rock, at one moment with her gaze fixed on the ground, the next lifting her face grimly towards the sky. Now she looked at her dead son's face, now at his wounds, mostly at his wounds,

awakening a growing anger in herself. Then it blazed out, and she, as if she were still a queen, determined on vengeance, her whole mind filled with thoughts of punishment.

Hecuba, her grief mixed with anger, forgetting her age, but not forgetting her rage, like a lioness maddened by the theft of her unweaned cub, that, though she cannot see her enemy, follows the traces she finds of his footsteps, found her way to the author of the dreadful crime, Polymestor. She made out that she wanted to show him a secret hoard of gold, to be given to her son. The Thracian believed her, and with his usual desire for gain, came with her secretly. Then with smooth and cunning words, he said: 'Do not delay, Hecuba: give me your gift to your son! It will all be for him, both what you give and what was given before, I swear by the gods.'

She gazed at him, grimly, as he spoke and swore his lying oath, until, her seething anger boiling over, she called on her train of captive women to attack the man, and drove her nails into his deceitful eyes, and (made strong by anger) tore the eyeballs from their sockets, and dipped her hand, and drank, stained with his sinful blood, not from his eyes (nothing of them remained) but from the holes that were his eyes.

The Thracians, enraged by the murder of their king, attacked the Trojan woman, hurling stones and missiles, but she chased the stones they threw, snapping at them with a harsh growling, and, readying her jaws for words, barked when she tried to speak. The place is still there, and takes its name, Cynossema, the Monument of the Bitch, from this, and she still howls mournfully amongst the Sithonian fields, remembering endlessly her ancient suffering.

Her fate moved the Trojans and her enemies the Greeks, and it moved all the gods as well, yes, all, so that even Juno, Jove's sister-wife, said that Hecuba did not merit such misfortune.

Pyramus and Thisbe

IV:55-92 Arsippe tells the story of Pyramus and Thisbe

'Pyramus and Thisbe, he the loveliest youth, and she the most sought after girl, the East held, lived in neighbouring houses, in the towering city of Babylon, that Semiramis is said to have enclosed with walls of brick. Their nearness and their first childhood steps made them acquainted and in time love appeared. They would have agreed to swear the marriage oath as well, but their parents prevented it. They were both on fire, with hearts equally captivated, something no parent can prevent. They had no one to confide all this to: nods and signs were their speech, and the more they kept the fire hidden, the more it burned.

There was a fissure, a thin split, in the shared wall between their houses, which traced back to when it was built. No one had discovered the flaw in all those years – but what can love not detect? – You lovers saw it first, and made it a path for your voices. Your endearments passed that way, in safety, in the gentlest of murmurs. Often, when they were in place, Thisbe here, and Pyramus there, and they had each caught the sound of the other's breath, they said "Unfriendly wall, why do you hinder lovers? How hard would it be for you to let our whole bodies meet, or if that is too much perhaps, to open to the kisses we give each other? Not that we are not grateful. We confess that we owe it to you that words are allowed to pass to loving ears." So they talked, hopelessly, sitting opposite, saying, as night fell, "Farewell", each touching the wall with kisses that could not reach the other side.

One morning when Aurora had quenched the fires of night, and the sun's rays had thawed the frosty grass, they came to their usual places. Then they decided, first with a little murmur of their great sorrows, to try, in the silence of night, to deceive the guards, and vanish outside. Once out of the house they would leave the city as well, and they agreed, in case they went astray crossing the open country, to meet by the grave of Ninus, and hide in the shelter of a tree. There was a tall mulberry tree there, dense with white berries, bordering a cool fountain. They

were satisfied with their plan, and the light, slow to lose its strength, was drowned in the waters, and out of the same waters the night emerged.'

IV:93-127 The death of Pyramus

'Carefully opening the door, Thisbe, slipped out, deceiving her people, and came to the tomb, her face veiled, and seated herself under the tree they had agreed on. Love made her brave. But a lioness fresh from the kill, her jaws foaming, smeared with the blood of cattle, came to slake her thirst at the nearby spring. In the moonlight, Babylonian Thisbe sees her some way off, and flees in fear to a dark cave, and as she flees, she leaves behind her fallen veil. When the fierce lioness has drunk deeply, returning towards the trees, she chances to find the flimsy fabric, without its owner, and rips it in her bloodstained jaws. Leaving the city a little later, Pyramus sees the creature's tracks in the thick dust, and his face is drained of colour. When he also discovers the veil stained with blood, he cries, "Two lovers will be lost in one night. She was the more deserving of a long life. I am the guilty spirit. I have killed you, poor girl, who told you to come by night to this place filled with danger, and did not reach it first. O, all you lions, that live amongst these rocks, tear my body to pieces, and devour my sinful flesh in your fierce jaws! Though it is cowardly to ask for death"

He picks up Thisbe's veil, and carries it with him to the shadow of the tree they had chosen. Kissing the token, and wetting it with tears, he cries, "Now, be soaked in my blood too." Having spoken he drove the sword he had been wearing into his groin, and, dying, pulled it, warm, from the wound. As he lay back again on the ground, the blood spurted out, like a pipe fracturing at a weak spot in the lead, and sending long bursts of water hissing through the split, cutting through the air, beat by beat. Sprinkled with blood, the tree's fruit turned a deep blackish-red, and the roots, soaked through, also imbued the same overhanging mulberries with the dark purplish colour.'

IV:128-166 The death of Thisbe

'Now Thisbe returns, not yet free of fear, lest she disappoint her lover, and she calls for him with her eyes and in her mind, eager to tell him about the great danger she has escaped. Though she recognises the place and the shape of the familiar tree, the colour of the berries puzzles her. She waits there: perhaps this is it. Hesitating, she sees quivering limbs writhing on the bloodstained earth, and starts back, terrified, like the sea, that trembles when the slightest breeze touches its surface, her face showing whiter than boxwood. But when, staying a moment longer, she recognises her lover, she cries out loud with grief, striking at her innocent arms, and tearing at her hair. Cradling the beloved body, she bathes his wounds with tears, mingling their drops with blood. Planting kisses on his cold face, she cries out 'Pyramus, what misfortune has robbed me of you? Pyramus, answer me! Your dearest Thisbe calls to you: obey me, lift your fallen head!' At Thisbe's name, Pyramus raised his eyes, darkening with death, and having looked at her, buried them again in darkness.'

'When she recognised her veil and saw the ivory scabbard without its sword, she said, "Unhappy boy, your own hand, and your love, have destroyed you! I too have a firm enough hand for once, and I, too, love. It will give me strength in my misfortune. I will follow you to destruction, and they will say I was a most pitiful friend and companion to you. He, who could only be removed from me by death, death cannot remove. Nevertheless I ask this for both of us, in uttering these words, O our poor parents, mine and his, do not deny us the right to be laid in one tomb, we whom certain love, and the strangest hour have joined. And you, the tree, that now covers the one poor body with your branches, and soon will cover two, retain the emblems of our death, and always carry your fruit darkened in mourning, a remembrance of the blood of us both."

Saying this, and placing the point under her heart, she fell forward onto the blade, still warm with his blood. Then her prayer moved the gods, and stirred her parents' feelings, for the colour of the berry is blackish-red, when fully ripened, and what was left from the funeral pyres rests in a single urn.'

Galatea the Sea Nymph

XIII:705-737 Aeneas's journey to Sicily

From there, remembering that they, the Teucrians, came originally from the blood of Teucer, they made for his Crete. But, unable to endure Jove's plague, they left Crete with its hundred cities, hoping to reach the harbours of Ausonian Italy. Tempests raged, and tossed the heroes on stormy seas, and taking refuge in the treacherous harbour of the Strophades, they were terrified by the harpy, Aëlo.

Now they were carried past Dulichium's anchorage; past Same, and the houses of Neritos; and Ithaca, cunning Ulysses's kingdom. They saw Ambracia, famous now for its Apollo of Actium, once contended over by quarreling gods; and saw the image of the judge who was turned to stone; Dodona's land with its oracular oaks; and Chaonia's bay, where the sons of Munichus, the Molossian king, escaped the impious flames on new-found wings.

Next they headed for the country of the Phaeacians, set with rich orchards, and touched at Buthrotus in Epirus, a miniature Troy, ruled by Helenus, the Trojan seer. From there, certain of their future, all of which Helenus, Priam's son predicted, with reliable warnings, they entered Sicilian waters. Three tongues of this land run down into the sea. Of these Pachynos faces the rainy south, Lilybaeon fronts the soft western breeze, and Peloros looks to the northern Bears that never touch the waves. Here the Teucrians came, and rowing, with a favourable tide, their fleet reached the sandy beach of Zancle, as night fell.

Scylla attacks from the right-hand coast, restless Charybdis from the left. The latter sucks down and spits out ships she has caught: the former has a girdle of savage dogs round her dark belly. She has a girl's face, and if the tales of poets are not all false, she was once a girl also. Many suitors wooed her, whom she rejected, and she would go and tell the ocean nymphs, being well loved by the ocean nymphs, of the thwarted desires of young men.

XIII:738-788 Acis and Galatea

Once while Galatea let Scylla comb her hair, she addressed these words to her, sighing often: 'At least, O virgin Scylla, you are not wooed by a relentless breed of men: and you can reject them without fear, as you do. But I, whose father is Nereus, and whose mother is sea-green Doris, I, though protected by a crowd of sisters, was not allowed to flee the love of Polyphemos, the Cyclops, except through sorrow', and tears stopped the sound of her voice. When the girl had wiped away the tears with her white fingers, and the goddess was comforted, she said: 'Tell me, O dearest one: do not hide the cause of your sadness (I can be so trusted).' The Nereid answered Crateis's daughter in these words: 'Acis was the son of Faunus and the nymph Symaethis, a great delight to his father and mother, but more so even to me, since he and I alone were united. He was handsome, and having marked his sixteenth birthday, a faint down covered his tender cheeks. I sought him, the Cyclops sought me, endlessly. If you asked, I could not say which was stronger in me, hatred of Cyclops or love of Acis, both of them were equally strong.

Oh! Gentle Venus, how powerful your rule is over us! How that ruthless creature, terrifying even to the woods themselves, whom no stranger has ever seen with impunity, who scorns mighty Olympus and its gods, how he feels what love is, and, on fire, captured by powerful desire, forgets his flocks and caves. Now Polyphemos, you care for your appearance, and are anxious to please, now you comb your bristling hair with a rake, and are pleased to cut your shaggy beard with a reaping hook, and to gaze at your savage face in the water and compose its

expression. Your love of killing, your fierceness, and your huge thirst for blood, end, and the ships come and go in safety.

Meanwhile, Telemus the augur, Telemus, the son of Eurymus, whom no flight of birds could deceive, came to Sicilian Mount Aetna, addressed grim Polyphemus, and said: "Ulysses will take from you, that single eye in the middle of your forehead." He laughed, and answered: "O most foolish of seers, you are wrong, another, a girl, has already taken it." So he scorned the true warning, given in vain, and weighed the coast down, walking with giant tread, or returned weary to his dark cave.

A wedge-shaped hillside, ending in a long spur, projects into the sea (the waves of the ocean wash round it on both sides). The fierce Cyclops climbed to it, and sat at its apex, and his woolly flocks, shepherd-less, followed. Then laying at his feet the pine trunk he used as a staff, fit to carry a ship's rigging, he lifted his panpipes made of a hundred reeds. The whole mountain felt the pastoral notes, and the waves felt them too. Hidden by a rock, I was lying in my Acis's arms, and my ears caught these words, and, having heard them, I remembered:'

XIII:789-869 The song of Polyphemus

'Galatea, whiter than the snowy privet petals,
taller than slim alder, more flowery than the meadows,
friskier than a tender kid, more radiant than crystal,
smoother than the shells, polished, by the endless tides;
more welcome than the summer shade, or the sun in winter,
showier than the tall plane-tree, fleetier than the hind;
more than ice sparkling, sweeter than grapes ripening,
softer than the swan's-down, or the milk when curdled,
lovelier, if you did not flee, than a watered garden.
Galatea, likewise, wilder than an untamed heifer,
harder than an ancient oak, trickier than the sea;
tougher than the willow-twigs, or the white vine branches,
firmer than these cliffs, more turbulent than a river,
vainer than the vaunted peacock, fiercer than the fire;
more truculent than a pregnant bear, pricklier than thistles,
deafer than the waters, crueller than a trodden snake;
oh, what I wish I could alter in you, most of all, is this:
that you are swifter than the deer, driven by loud barking,
swifter even than the winds, and the passing breeze.

But if you knew me well, you would regret your flight, and you would condemn your own efforts yourself, and hold to me: half of the mountain is mine, and the deep caves in the natural rock, where winter is not felt nor the midsummer sun. There are apples that weigh down the branches, golden and purple grapes on the trailing vines. Those, and these, I keep for you. You will pick ripe strawberries born in the woodland shadows, in autumn cherries and plums, not just the juicy blue-purple, but also the large yellow ones, the colour of fresh bees'-wax. There will be no lack of fruit from the wild strawberry trees, nor from the tall chestnuts: every tree will be there to serve you.

This whole flock is mine, and many are wandering the valleys as well, many hidden by the woods, many penned in the caves. If you asked me I could not tell you how many there are: a poor man counts his flocks. You can see, you need not merely believe me, how they can hardly move their legs with their full udders. There are newborn lambs

in the wain sheepfolds, and kids too, of the same age, in other pens, and I always have snow-white milk: some of it kept for drinking, and some with rennet added to curdle it.

You will not have vulgar gifts or easily found pleasures, such as leverets, or does, or kids, or paired doves, or a nest from the treetops. I came upon twin cubs of a shaggy bear that you can play with: so alike you can hardly separate them. I came upon them and I said: "I shall keep these for my mistress."

Now Galatea, only lift your shining head from the dark blue sea: come, do not scorn my gifts. Lately, I examined myself, it's true, and looked at my reflection in the clear water, and, seeing my self, it pleased me. Look how large I am: Jupiter, in the sky, since you are accustomed to saying some Jove or other rules there, has no bigger a body. Luxuriant hair hangs over my face, and shades my shoulders like a grove. And do not consider it ugly for my whole body to be bristling with thick prickly hair. A tree is ugly without its leaves: a horse is ugly unless a golden mane covers its neck: feathers hide the birds: their wool becomes the sheep: a beard and shaggy hair befits a man's body. I only have one eye in the middle of my forehead, but it is as big as a large shield. Well? Does great Sol not see all this from the sky? Yet Sol's orb is unique.

Added to that my father, Neptune, rules over your waters: I give you him as a father-in-law. Only have pity, and listen to my humble prayers! I, who scorn Jove and his heaven and his piercing lightning bolt, submit to you alone: I fear you, Nereid your anger is fiercer than lightning. And I could bear this contempt of yours more patiently, if you fled from everyone. But why, rejecting Cyclops, love Acis, and prefer Acis's embrace to mine? Though he is pleased with himself, and, what I dislike, pleases you too, Galatea, let me just have a chance at him. Then he will know I am as strong as I am big! I'll tear out his entrails while he lives, rend his limbs and scatter them over the fields, and over your ocean, (so he can join you!) For I am on fire, and, wounded, I burn with a fiercer flame, and I seem to bear Aetna with all his violent powers sunk in my breast, yet you, Galatea, are unmoved.'

XIII:870-897 Acis is turned into a river-god

'With such useless complaints he rose (for I saw it all) and as a bull that cannot stay still, furious when the cow is taken from it, he wanders through the woods and glades. Not anticipating such a thing, without my knowing, he saw me, and saw Acis. "I see you," he cried, "and I'll make this the last celebration of your love." His voice was as loud as an angry Cyclops's voice must be: Aetna shook with the noise. And I, terrified, plunged into the nearby waters. My hero, son of Symaethis, had turned his back, and ran, crying: "Help me, I beg you, Galatea! Forefathers, help me, admit me to your kingdom or I die!"

Cyclops followed him and hurled a rock wrenched from the mountain, and though only the farthest corner of the stone reached him, it still completely buried Acis. Then I, doing the only thing that fate allowed me, caused Acis to assume his ancestral powers. From the rock, crimson blood seeped out, and in a little while its redness began to fade, became the colour of a river at first swollen by rain, gradually clearing. Then the rock, that Polyphemus had hurled, cracked open, and a tall green reed sprang from the fissure, and the mouth of a chamber in the rock echoed with leaping waters, and (a marvel) suddenly a youth stood, waist-deep in the water, his fresh horns wreathed with rushes. It was Acis, except that he was larger, and his face dark blue: yet it was still Acis, changed to a river-god, and his waters still retain his former name.

Cato Opposes Extravagance

Source: Livy XXXIV. 1-3. Translated by Cyrus Edmonds. In Kevin Guinagh and Alfred P. Dorjahn (eds.). *Latin Literature in Translation*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1942.

In 215 BCE, Hannibal was ravaging Italy. The Oppian Law was passed to restrain women from extravagance in dress. When Carthage was defeated, the law was repealed despite the vigorous efforts of M. Porcius Cato, or Cato the Elder, consul 195 and one of the most formidable men in Roman history.

Amid the serious concerns of important wars, either scarcely brought to a close or impending, an incident intervened, trivial indeed to be mentioned, but which, through the zeal of the parties concerned, issued in a violent contest. M. Fundanius and L. Valerius, plebeian tribunes, proposed to the people the repealing of the Oppian law. This law, which had been introduced by C. Oppius, plebeian tribune, in the consulate of Q. Fabius and Ti. Sempronius, during the heat of the Punic war, enacted that “no woman should possess more than half an ounce of gold, or wear a garment of various colors, or ride in a carriage drawn by horses, in a city, or any town, or any place nearer thereto than one mile; except on occasion of some public religious solemnity.”

M. and P. Junius Brutus, plebeian tribunes, supported the Oppian law, and declared, that they would never suffer it be repealed; while many of the nobility stood forth to argue for and against the motion proposed. The Capitol was filled with crowds, who favored or opposed the law; nor could the matrons be kept at home, either by advice or shame, nor even by the commands of their husbands; but beset every street and pass in the city, beseeching the men as they went down to the forum, that in the present flourishing state of the commonwealth, when the private fortune of all was daily increasing, they would suffer the women to have their former ornaments of dress restored. This throng of women increased daily, for they arrived even from the country towns and villages; and they had at length the boldness to come up to the consuls, praetors, and magistrates, to urge their request. One of the consuls, however, they found especially inexorable—M. Porcius Cato, who, in support of the law proposed to be repealed, spoke to this effect:

“If, Romans, every individual among us had made it a rule to maintain the prerogative and authority of a husband with respect to his own wife, we should have less trouble with the whole sex. But now, our privileges, overpowered at home by female contumacy, are, even here in the forum, spurned and trodden under foot; and because we are unable to withstand each separately, we now dread their collective body. I was accustomed to think it a fabulous and fictitious tale, that, in a certain island, the whole race of males was utterly extirpated by a conspiracy of the women. But the utmost danger may be apprehended equally from either sex, if you suffer cabals, assemblies, and secret consultations to be held: scarcely,

indeed, can I determine, in my own mind, whether the act itself, or the precedent that it affords, is of more pernicious tendency. The latter of these more particularly concerns us consuls, and the other magistrates’ the former, yourselves, my fellow-citizens. For, whether the measure proposed to your consideration be profitable to the state or not, is to be determined by you, who are about to go to the vote. As to the outrageous behavior of these women, whether it be merely an act of their own, or owing to your instigations, M. Fundanius and L. Valerius, it unquestionably implies culpable conduct in magistrates. I know not whether it reflects greater disgrace on you, tribunes, or on the consuls: on you certainly, if you have, on the present occasion, brought these women hither for the purpose of raising tribunician seditions; on us, if we suffer laws to be imposed on us by a secession of women, as was done formerly by that of the common people. It was not without painful emotions of shame, that I, just now, made my way into the forum through the midst of a band of women. Had I not been restrained by respect for the modesty and dignity of some individuals among them, rather than of the whole number, and been unwilling that they should be seen rebuked by a consul, I should have said to them, ‘What sort of practice is this, of running out into public, besetting the streets, and addressing other women’s husbands? Could not each have made the same request to her husband at home? Are your blandishments more seducing in public than in private; and with other women’s husbands, than with your own? Although if the modesty of matrons confined them within the limits of their own rights, it did not’ become you, even at home, to concern yourselves about what laws might be passed or repealed here.’ Our ancestors thought it not proper that women should perform any, even private business, without a director; but that they should be ever under the control of parents, brothers, or husbands. We, it seems, suffer them, now, to interfere in the management of state affairs, and to introduce themselves into the forum, into general assemblies, and into assemblies of election. For, what are they doing, at this moment, in your streets and lanes? What, but arguing, some in support of the motion of the plebeian tribunes~ others, for the repeal of the law? Will you give the reins to their intractable nature, and their uncontrolled passions, and then expect that themselves should set bounds to their licentiousness, when you have failed to do so? This is the smallest of the injunctions laid on them by usage or the laws, as which women bear with impatience: they long for liberty; or rather, to speak the truth, for unbounded freedom in every particular. For what will they not attempt, if they now come off victorious?

“Recollect all the institutions respecting the sex, by which our forefathers restrained their undue freedom, and by which they subjected them to their husbands; and yet, even with the help of all these restrictions, you can scarcely keep them within

bounds. If, then, you suffer them to throw these off one by one, to tear them all asunder, and, at last, to be set on an equal footing with yourselves, can you imagine that they will be any longer tolerable by you? The moment they have arrived at an equality with you, they will have become your superiors. But, forsooth, they only object to any new law being made against them' they mean to deprecate, not justice, but severity. Nay, their wish is, that a law which you have admitted, established by your suffrages, and confirmed by the practice and experience of so many years to be beneficial, should now be repealed; that is, that, by abolishing one law, you should weaken all the rest. No law perfectly suits the convenience of every member of the community: the only consideration is, whether, upon the whole, it be profitable to the greater part. If, because a law proves obnoxious to a private individual, that circumstance should destroy and sweep it away, to what purpose is it for the community to enact general laws, which those, with reference to whom they were passed, could presently repeal? I should like, however, to hear what this important affair is which has induced the matrons thus to run out into public in this excited manner, scarcely restraining from pushing into the forum and the assembly of the people. Is it to solicit that their parents, their husbands, children, and brothers may be ransomed from captivity under Hannibal? By no means: and far be ever from the commonwealth so unfortunate a situation. Yet, even when such was the case, you refused this to their prayers. But it is not duty, nor solicitude for their friends; it is religion that has collected them together. They are about to receive the Idaean Mother, coming out of Phrygia from Pessinus! What motive, that even common decency will allow to be mentioned, is pretended for this female insurrection? Why, say they, that we may shine in gold and purple; that, both on festal and common days, we may ride through the city in our chariots, triumphing over vanquished and abrogated law, after having captured and wrested from you your suffrages; and that there may be no bounds to our expenses and our luxury.

"Often have you heard me complain of the profuse expenses of the women—often of those of the men; and that not only of men in private stations, but of the magistrates: and that the state was endangered by two opposite vices, luxury and avarice; those pests, which have been the ruin of all great empires. These I dread the more, as the circumstances of the commonwealth grow daily more prosperous and happy; as the empire increases; as we have now passed over into Greece and Asia, places abounding with every kind of temptation that can inflame the passions, and as we have begun to handle even royal treasures: so much the more do I fear that these matters will bring us into captivity, rather than we them. Believe me, those statues from Syracuse were brought into this city with hostile effect. I already hear too many commending and admiring the decorations of Athens and Corinth, and ridiculing the earthen images of our Roman gods that stand on the fronts of their temples. For my part I prefer these gods,—propitious as they are, and I hope will continue to be, if we allow them to remain in their own mansions. In the memory of our fathers, Pyrrhus, by his ambassador Cineas, made trial of the dispositions, not only of our men, but of our women also, by

offers of presents: at that time the Oppian law, for restraining female luxury, had not been made; and yet not one woman accepted a present. What, think you, was the reason? That for which our ancestors made no provision by law on this subject: there was no luxury existing which needed to be restrained. As diseases must necessarily be known before their remedies, so passions come into being before the laws which prescribe limits to them. What called forth the Licinian law, restricting estates to five hundred acres, but the unbounded desire for enlarging estates? What the Cincian law, concerning gifts and presents, but that the plebeians had become vassals and tributaries to the senate? It is not therefore in any degree surprising, that no want of the Oppian law, or of any other, to limit the expenses of the women, was felt at that time, when they refused to receive gold and purple that was thrown in their way, and offered to their acceptance. If Cineas were now to go round the city with his presents he would find numbers of women standing in the public streets to receive them. There are some passions, the causes or motives of which I can no way account for. For that that should not be lawful for you which is permitted to another, may perhaps naturally excite some degree of shame or indignation; yet, when the dress of all is alike, why should anyone of you fear, lest she should not be an object of observation? Of all kinds of shame, the worst, surely, is the being ashamed of frugality or of poverty; but the law relieves you with regard to both; since that which you have not it is unlawful for you to possess. This equalization, says the rich matron, is the very thing that I cannot endure. Why do not I make a figure, distinguished with gold and purple? Why is the poverty of others concealed under this cover of a law, so that it should be thought that, if the law permitted, they would have such things as they are not now able to procure?

"Romans, do you wish to excite among your wives an emulation of this sort, that the rich should wish to have what no other can have; and that the poor, lest they should be despised as such, should extend their expenses beyond their means? Be assured, that when a woman once begins to be ashamed of what she ought not to be ashamed of, she will not be ashamed of what she ought. She who can, will purchase out of her own purse; she who cannot, will ask her husband. Unhappy is the husband, both he who complies with the request, and he who does not; for what he will not give himself, he will see given by another. Now, they openly solicit favors from other women's husbands; and, what is more, solicit a law and votes. From some they obtain them; although, with regard to yourself, your property, or your children, they would be inexorable. So soon as the law shall cease to limit the expenses of your wife, you yourself will never be able to do so. Do not suppose that the matter will hereafter be in the same state in which it was before the law was made on the subject. It is safer that a wicked man should even never be accused, than that he should be acquitted; and luxury, if it had never been meddled with, would be more tolerable than it will be, now, like a wild beast, irritated by having been chained, and then let loose. My opinion is, that the Oppian law ought, on no account, to be repealed. Whatever determination you may come to, I pray all the gods to prosper it."

Pliny the Younger: Selected Letters

Pliny the Younger served as an official of the Roman government under Trajan. He was also a prolific letter-writer, and as many of them survive he's an important and candid source for both public and private appraisals of the aristocratic Roman life of the first century CE.

4.19: To Calpurnia Hispulla

As you are an exemplary instance of tender regard to your family in general, and to your late excellent brother in particular, whose warm attachment you returned with an equal fondness: and have not only shewn the affection of an aunt, but supplied that of a lost father, to his daughter; you will hear, I am persuaded, with infinite pleasure, that she behaves worthy of her father, her grandfather, and yourself. She is incomparably discerning, incomparably thrifty; while her love for her husband betokens a chaste nature. Her affection to me has given her a turn to books; and my compositions, which she takes a pleasure in reading, and even getting by heart, are continually in her hands. How full of solicitude is she when I am entering upon any cause! How kindly does she rejoice with me when it is over! When I am pleading, she stations messengers to inform her from time to time how I am heard, what applauses I receive, and what success attends the cause. When at any time I recite my works, she sits close at hand, concealed behind a curtain, and greedily overhears my praises. She sings my verses and sets them to her lyre, with no other master but Love, the best instructor.

From these circumstances I draw my most assured hopes, that the harmony between us will increase with our days, and be as lasting as our lives. For it is not my youth or my person, which time gradually impairs; it is my glory of which she is enamoured. But what else could be expected from one who was trained by your hands, and formed by your instructions; who was surrounded under your roof with all that is pious and moral, and had learned to love me from your account of my character? For while you honoured my mother as if she were your own, so you formed and encouraged me from infancy, presaging that I should become all that my wife now thinks I am. Accept therefore of our mutual thanks, that you have given us to each other, and, as it were, chosen the one for the other. Farewell.

10.81: To Geminius

Numidia Quadratilla is dead, having almost reached her eightieth year. She enjoyed, up to her last illness, uninterrupted good health, and was unusually stout and robust for one of her sex. She has left a very prudent will, having disposed of two-thirds of her estate to her grandson, and the rest to her granddaughter.

The young lady I know very slightly, but the grandson is one of my most intimate friends. He is a remarkable young man, and his merit entitles him to the affection of a relation, even where his blood does not. Notwithstanding his remarkable personal beauty, he escaped every malicious imputation both whilst a boy and when a youth: he was a husband at four-and-twenty, and would have been a father if Providence had not disappointed his hopes.

He lived in the family with his grandmother, who was exceedingly devoted to the pleasures of the town, yet observed great severity of conduct himself, while always perfectly deferential and submissive to her. She retained a set of pantomimes, and was an encourager of this class of people to a degree inconsistent with one of her sex and rank. But Quadratus never appeared at these entertainments, whether she exhibited them in the theatre or in her own house; not indeed did she require him to be present. I once heard her say, when she was recommending to me the supervision of her grandson's studies, that it was her custom, in order to pass away some of those unemployed hours with which female life abounds, to amuse herself with playing at chess, or seeing the mimicry of her pantomimes; but that, whenever she engaged in either of those amusements, she constantly sent away her grandson to his studies: she appeared to me to act thus as much out of reverence for the youth as from affection.

I was a good deal surprised, as I am sure you will be too, at what he told me the last time the Pontifical games were exhibited.¹

As we were coming out of the theatre together, where we had been entertained with a show of these pantomimes, "Do you know," said he, "to-day is the first time I ever saw my grandmother's freedman dance?" Such was the grandson's speech! while a set of men of a far different stamp, in order to do honour to Quadratilla (I am ashamed to call it honour), were running up and down the theatre, pretending to be struck with the utmost admiration and rapture at the performances of those pantomimes, and then imitating in musical chant the mien and manner of their lady patroness. But now all the reward they have got, in return for their theatrical performances, is just a few trivial legacies, which they have the mortification to receive from an heir who was never so much as present at these shows.

I send you this account, knowing you do not dislike hearing town news, and because, too, when any occurrence has given me pleasure, I love to renew it again by relating it. And indeed this instance of affection in Quadratilla, and the honour done therein to that excellent youth, her grandson, has afforded me a very sensible satisfaction; as I extremely rejoice that the house which once belonged to Cassius,² the founder and chief of the Cassian school, is come into the possession of one no less considerable than its former master. For my friend will fill it and become it as he ought, and its ancient dignity, lustre, and glory will again revive under Quadratus, who, I am persuaded, will prove as eminent an orator as Cassius was a lawyer. Farewell.

7.54: To Marcellinus

I write this to you in the deepest sorrow: the youngest daughter of my friend Fundanus is dead! I have never seen a more cheerful and more lovable girl, or one who better deserved to have enjoyed a long, I had almost said an immortal, life! She was scarcely fourteen, and yet there was in her a wisdom far beyond her years, a matronly gravity united with girlish sweetness and virgin bashfulness.

With what an endearing fondness did she hang on her father's neck! How affectionately and modestly she used to greet us, his friends! With what a tender and

deferential regard she used to treat her nurses, tutors, teachers, each in their respective offices! What an eager, industrious, intelligent reader she was! She took few amusements, and those with caution. How self-controlled, how patient, how brave she was under her last illness! She complied with all the directions of her physicians; she spoke cheerful, comforting words to her sister and her father; and when all her bodily strength was exhausted, the vigour of her mind sustained her. That indeed continued even to her last moments, unbroken by the pain of a long illness, or the terrors of approaching death; and it is a reflection which makes us miss her, and grieve that she has gone from us, the more. Oh, melancholy, untimely loss, too truly!

She was engaged to an excellent young man; the wedding-day was fixed, and we were all invited. How our joy has been turned into sorrow! I cannot express in words the inward pain I felt when I heard Fundanus himself (as grief is ever finding out fresh circumstances to aggravate its affliction) ordering the money he had intended laying out upon clothes, pearls, and jewels for her marriage, to be employed in frankincense, ointments, and perfumes for her funeral. He is a man of great learning and good sense, who has applied himself from his earliest youth to the deeper studies and the fine arts, but all the maxims of fortitude which he has received from books, or advanced himself, he now absolutely rejects, and every other virtue of his heart gives place to all a parent's tenderness. You will excuse, you will even approve, his grief, when you consider what he has lost. He has lost a daughter who resembled him in his manners, as well as his person, and exactly copied out all her father.

So, if you should think proper to write to him upon the subject of so reasonable a grief, let me remind you not to use the rougher arguments of consolation, and such as seem to carry a sort of reproof with them, but those of kind and sympathizing humanity. Time will render him more open to the dictates of reason: for as a fresh wound shrinks back from the hand of the surgeon, but by degrees submits to, and even seeks of its own accord, the means of its cure, so a mind under the first impression of a misfortune shuns and rejects all consolations, but at length desires and is lulled by their gentle application. Farewell.

¹ The priests, as well as other magistrates, exhibited public games to the people when they entered upon their office.

² A famous lawyer who flourished in the reign of the emperor Claudius: those who followed his opinions were said to be Cassians, or of the school of Cassius.

5.34: To Nepos

I have constantly observed that amongst the deeds and sayings of illustrious persons of either sex, some have made more noise in the world, whilst others have been really greater, although less talked about; and I am confirmed in this opinion by a conversation I had yesterday with Fannia. This lady is a granddaughter to that celebrated Arria who animated her husband to meet death, by her own glorious example. She informed me of several particulars relating to Arria, no less heroic than this applauded action of hers, though taken less notice of, and I think you will be as surprised to read the account of them as I was to hear it.

Her husband, Caecinna Paetus, and her son, were both attacked at the same time with a fatal illness, as was supposed; of which the son died, a youth of remarkable beauty, and as modest as he was comely, endeared indeed to his parents no less by his many graces than from the fact of his being their son. His mother prepared his funeral and conducted the usual ceremonies so privately that Paetus did not know of his death. Whenever she came into his room, she pretended her son was alive and actually better: and as often as he enquired after his health, would answer, "He has had a good rest, and eaten his food with quite an appetite." Then when she found the tears she had so long kept back, gushing forth in spite of herself, she would leave the room, and having given vent to her grief, return with dry eyes and a serene countenance, as though she had dismissed every feeling of bereavement at the door of her husband's chamber.

I must confess it was a brave action³ in her to draw the steel, plunge it into her breast, pluck out the dagger, and present it to her husband with that ever memorable, I had almost said that divine, expression, "Paetus, it is not painful." But when she spoke and acted thus, she had the prospect of glory and immortality before her; how far greater, without the support of any such animating motives, to hide her tears, to conceal her grief, and cheerfully to act the mother, when a mother no more!

Scribonianus had taken up arms in Illyria against Claudius, where he lost his life, and Paetus, who was of his party, was brought a prisoner to Rome. When

they were going to put him on board ship, Arria besought the soldiers that she might be permitted to attend him: "For surely," she urged, "you will allow a man of consular rank some servants to dress him, attend to him at meals, and put his shoes on for him; but if you will take me, I alone will perform all these offices." Her request was refused; upon which she hired a fishing-boat, and in that small vessel followed the ship.

On her return to Rome, meeting the wife of Scribonianus in the emperor's palace, at the time when this woman voluntarily gave evidence against the conspirators—"What," she exclaimed, "shall I hear you even speak to me, you, on whose bosom your husband, Scribonianus, was murdered, and yet you survive him?"—an expression which plainly shews that the noble manner in which she put an end to her life was no unpremeditated effect of sudden passion.

Moreover, when Thræsea, her son-in-law, was endeavouring to dissuade her from her purpose of destroying herself, and, amongst other arguments which he used, said to her, "Would you then advise your daughter to die with me if my life were to be taken from me?" "Most certainly I would," she replied, "if she had lived as long, and in as much harmony with you, as I have with my Paetus." This answer greatly increased the alarm of her family, and made them watch her for the future more narrowly; which when she perceived, "It is of no use," she said, "you may oblige me to effect my death in a more painful way, but it is impossible you should prevent it."

Saying this, she sprang from her chair, and running her head with the utmost violence against the wall, fell down, to all appearance, dead; but being brought to herself again, "I told you," she said, "if you would not suffer me to take an easy path to death, I should find a way to it, however hard." Now, is there not, my friend, something much greater in all this than in the so-much-talked-of "Paetus, it is not painful," to which these led the way? And yet this last is the favourite topic of fame, while all the former are passed over in silence. Whence I cannot but infer, what I observed at the beginning of my letter, that some actions are more celebrated, whilst others are really greater.

³ The following is the story, as related by several of the ancient historians: Paetus, having joined Scribonianus, who was in arms, in Illyria, against Claudius, was taken after the death of Scribonianus, and condemned to death. Arria, having, in vain, solicited his life, persuaded him to destroy himself, rather than

suffer the ignominy of falling by the executioner's hands; and, in order to encourage him to an act, to which, it seems, he was not particularly inclined, she set him the example in the manner Pliny relates.

6.43: To Cornelius Minicianus

Have you heard—I suppose, not yet, for the news has but just arrived that Valerius Licinianus has become a professor in Sicily? This unfortunate person, who lately enjoyed the dignity of praetor, and was esteemed the most eloquent of our advocates, is now fallen from a senator to an exile, from an orator to a teacher of rhetoric. Accordingly in his inaugural speech he uttered, sorrowfully and solemnly, the following words: “O Fortune, how capriciously dost thou sport with mankind! Thou makest rhetoricians of senators, and senators of rhetoricians!” A sarcasm so poignant and full of gall that one might almost imagine he fixed upon this profession merely for the sake of an opportunity of applying it. And having made his first appearance in school, clad in the Greek cloak (for exiles have no right to wear the toga), after arranging himself and looking down upon his attire, “I am, however,” he said, “going to declaim in Latin.” You will think, perhaps, this situation, wretched and deplorable as it is, is what he well deserves for having stained the honourable profession of an orator with the crime of incest.

It is true, indeed, he pleaded guilty to the charge; but whether from a consciousness of his guilt, or from an apprehension of worse consequences if he denied it, is not clear; for Domitian generally raged most furiously where his evidence failed him most hopelessly. That emperor had determined that Cornelia, chief of the Vestal Virgins,⁴ should be buried alive, from an extravagant notion that exemplary severities of this kind conferred lustre upon his reign.

Accordingly, by virtue of his office as supreme pontiff, or, rather, in the exercise of a tyrant’s cruelty, a despot’s lawlessness, he convened the sacred college, not in the pontifical court where they usually assemble, but at his villa near Alba; and there, with a guilt no less heinous than that which he professed to be punishing, he condemned her, when she was not present to defend herself, on the charge of incest, while he himself had been guilty, not only of

debauching his own brother’s daughter, but was also accessory to her death: for that lady, being a widow, in order to conceal her shame, endeavoured to procure an abortion, and by that means lost her life.

However, the priests were directed to see the sentence immediately executed upon Cornelia. As they were leading her to the place of execution, she called upon Vesta, and the rest of the gods, to attest her innocence; and, amongst other exclamations, frequently cried out, “Is it possible that Caesar can think me polluted, under the influence of whose sacred functions he has conquered and triumphed?”⁵ Whether she said this in flattery or derision; whether it proceeded from a consciousness of her innocence, or contempt of the emperor, is uncertain; but she continued exclaiming in this manner, til she came to the place of execution, to which she was led, whether innocent or guilty I cannot say, at all events with every appearance and demonstration of innocence. As she was being lowered down into the subterranean vault, her robe happening to catch upon something in the descent, she turned round and disengaged it, when, the executioner offering his assistance, she drew herself back with horror, refusing to be so much as touched by him, as though it were a defilement to her pure and unspotted chastity: still preserving the appearance of sanctity up to the last moment; and, among all the other instances of her modesty, “She took great care to fall with decency.”⁶

Celer likewise, a Roman knight, who was accused of an intrigue with her, while they were scourging him with rods⁷ in the Forum, persisted in exclaiming, “What have I done?—I have done nothing.”

These declarations of innocence had exasperated Domitian exceedingly, as imputing to him acts of cruelty and injustice; accordingly Licinianus, being seized by the emperor’s orders for having concealed a freedwoman of Cornelia’s in one of his estates, was advised, by those who took him in charge, to confess the fact, if he hoped to obtain a remission of his punishment, and he complied with their advice.

⁴ “Their office was to attend upon the rites of Vesta, the chief part of which was the preservation of the holy fire. If this fire happened to go out, it was considered impiety to light it at any common flame, but they made use of the pure and unpolluted rays of the sun for that purpose. There were various other duties besides connected with their office. The chief rules prescribed them were, to vow the strictest chastity for the space of thirty years. After this term was completed, they had liberty to leave the order. If they broke their vow of virginity; they were buried alive in a place allotted to that peculiar use.” Kennet’s *Antiq.* Their reputation for sanctity was so high that Livy mentions the

fact of two of those virgins having violated their vows, as a prodigy that threatened destruction to the Roman state. Lib. xxii., c. 57. And Suetonius informs us that Augustus had so high an opinion of this religious order that he consigned the care of his will to the Vestal Virgins. Suet. in Vit. Aug. c. 101.

⁵ It was usual with Domitian to triumph, not only without a victory, but even after a defeat.

⁶ Euripides’ *Hecuba*.

⁷ The punishment inflicted upon the violators of Vestal chastity was to be scourged to death.

Herennius Senecio spoke for him in his absence, in some such words as Homer's "Patroclus lies in death."

"Instead of an advocate," said he, "I must turn informer: Licinianus has fled." This news was so agreeable to Domitian that he could not help betraying his satisfaction: "Then," he exclaimed, "has Licinianus acquitted us of injustice"; adding that he would not press too hard upon him in his disgrace. He accordingly allowed him to carry off such of his effects as he could secure before they were seized for the public use, and in other respects softened the sentence of banishment by way of reward for his voluntary confession. Licinianus was afterwards, through the clemency of the emperor Nerva, permitted to settle in Sicily, where he now professes rhetoric, and avenges himself upon Fortune in his declamations.

You see how obedient I am to your commands, in sending you a circumstantial detail of foreign as well as domestic news. I imagined indeed, as you were absent when this transaction occurred, that you had only heard just in a general way that Licinianus was banished for incest, as Fame usually makes her report in general terms, without going into particulars. I think I deserve in return a full account of all that is going on in your town and neighbourhood, where something worth telling about is usually happening; however, write what you please, provided you send me as long a letter as my own. I give you notice, I shall count not only the pages, but even the very lines and syllables. Farewell.

Plutarch: Advice to Bride and Groom (from *Moralia*)

Nobody will attempt to deny that the status of women has changed materially since Plutarch's time; but, apart from this, she will find in Plutarch's short essay many suggestions regarding whole-souled co-operation and cheerful intellectual companionship with her husband, which *mutatis mutandis* hold as good to-day as they did when they were written, nearly two thousand years ago. Nor is the husband neglected; he can find much sound advice regarding his attitude towards his wife and the respect and consideration that is always due to her.

Plutarch was no mere theorist in these matters. He himself was happily married, and anyone who doubts this should read his letter to his wife (*Moralia*, 608a).

From Plutarch to Pollianus and Eurydice, health and prosperity.

Following close upon the time-honoured rites which the priestess of Demeter¹ applied to you when you were retiring together to the bridal chamber, a discourse which equally touches both of you and swells the nuptial song will, I think, have a useful effect which will also accord with convention.

In music they used to call one of the conventional themes for the flute the "Horse Rampant,"² a strain which, as it seems, aroused an ardent desire in horses and imparted it to them at the time of mating. Of the many admirable themes contained in philosophy, that which deals with marriage deserves no less serious attention than any other, for by means of it philosophy weaves a spell over those who are entering together into a lifelong partnership, and renders them gentle and amiable toward each other. I have therefore drawn up a compendium of what you, who have been brought up in the atmosphere of philosophy, have often heard, putting it in the form of brief comparisons that it may be more easily remembered, and I am sending it as a gift for you both to possess in common; and at the same time I pray that the Muses may lend their presence and co-operation to Aphrodite, and may feel that it is no more fitting for them to provide a lyre or lute well attuned than it is to provide that the harmony which concerns marriage and the household shall be well attuned through reason, concord, and philosophy. Indeed, the ancients gave Hermes a place at the side of Aphrodite,³ in the conviction that pleasure in marriage stands especially in need of reason; and

they also assigned a place there to Persuasion and the Graces, so that married people should succeed in attaining their mutual desires by persuasion and not by fighting and quarrelling.

[1] Solon directed that the bride should nibble a quince before getting into bed, intimating, presumably, that the delight from lips and speech should be harmonious and pleasant at the outset.⁴

[2] In Boeotia, after veiling the bride, they put on her head a chaplet of asparagus; for this plant yields the finest flavoured fruit from the roughest thorns, and so the bride will provide for him who does not run away or feel annoyed at her first display of peevishness and unpleasantness a docile and sweet life together. Those who do not patiently put up with the early girlish disagreements are on a par with those who on account of the sourness of green grapes abandon the ripe clusters to others. Again, many of the newly married women because of their first experiences get annoyed at their husbands, and find themselves in like predicament with those who patiently submit to the bees' stings, but abandon the honeycomb.

[3] In the beginning, especially, married people ought to be on their guard against disagreements and clashes, for they see that such household vessels as are made of sections joined together are at the outset easily pulled apart by any fortuitous cause, but after a time, when their joints have become set, they can hardly be separated by fire and steel.

[4] Just as fire catches readily in chaff, fibre, and hares' fur, but goes out rather quickly, unless it gets

¹ Cf. O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, p1176. A few references are given regarding marriage rites and customs which are here touched upon, but anyone interested in these matters will consult some book like Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (5th ed. 1922).

² Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 704F.

³ Hermes as the patron of arts and sciences, including speaking and writing; cf., for example, the familiar instance in Acts XIV.12.

⁴ Plutarch mentions this again in *Moralia*, 279F, and in his *Life of Solon*, chap. XX (p. 89C)

hold of some other thing that can retain it and feed it, so the keen love between newly married people that blazes up fiercely as the result of physical attractiveness must not be regarded as enduring or constant, unless, by being centred about character and by gaining a hold upon the rational faculties, it attains a state of vitality.

[5] Fishing with poison is a quick way to catch fish and an easy method of taking them, but it makes the fish inedible and bad. In the same way women who artfully employ love-potions and magic spells upon their husbands, and gain the mastery over them through pleasure, find themselves consorts of dull-witted, degenerate fools. The men bewitched by Circe were of no service to her, nor did she make the least use of them after they had been changed into swine and asses, while for Odysseus, who had sense and showed discretion in her company, she had an exceeding great love.

[6] Women who prefer to have power over fools rather than to hearken to sensible men, are like persons who prefer to guide the blind on the road rather than to follow persons possessed of knowledge and sight.

[7] Women will not believe that Pasiphaë, the consort of a king, fell in love with a bull, in spite of the fact that they see some of their sex who feel bored by uncompromising and virtuous men, and take more pleasure in consorting with those who, like dogs and he-goats, are a combination of licentiousness and sensuality.

[8] Men who through weakness or effeminacy are unable to vault upon their horses teach the horses to kneel of themselves and crouch down. In like manner, some who have won wives of noble birth or wealth, instead of making themselves better, try to humble their wives, with the idea that they shall have more authority over their wives if these are reduced to a state of humility. But, as one pays heed to the size of his horse in using the rein, so in using the rein on his wife he ought to pay heed to her position.

[9] Whenever the moon is at a distance from the sun we see her conspicuous and brilliant, but she disappears and hides herself when she comes near him. Contrariwise a virtuous woman ought to be most

visible in her husband's company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away.

[10] Herodotus was not right in saying that a woman lays aside her modesty along with her undergarment.⁵ On the contrary, a virtuous woman puts on modesty in its stead, and husband and wife bring into their mutual relations the greatest modesty as a token of the greatest love.

[11] Whenever two notes are sounded in accord the tune is carried by the bass; and in like manner every activity in a virtuous household is carried on by both parties in agreement, but discloses the husband's leadership and preferences.

[12] The Sun won a victory over the North Wind⁶ or the wind tried by force to rob a man of his cloak, and blew briskly against him, but the man only drew his garment closer, and held it more tightly together. But when the heat of the sun succeeded the wind, the man began to get warm, and later very hot, and ended by stripping off his shirt as well as his cloak. This is the way most women act. When their husbands try forcibly to remove their luxury and extravagance they keep up a continual fight and are very cross; but if they are convinced with the help of reason, they peaceably put aside these things and practise moderation.

[13] Cato expelled from the Senate a man who kissed his own wife in the presence of his daughter.⁷ This perhaps was a little severe. But if it is a disgrace (as it is) for man and wife to caress and kiss and embrace in the presence of others, is it not more of a disgrace to air their recriminations and disagreements before others, and, granting that his intimacies and pleasures with his wife should be carried on in secret, to indulge in admonition, fault-finding, and plain speaking in the open and without reserve?

[14] Just as a mirror, although embellished with gold and precious stones, is good for nothing unless it shows a true likeness, so there is no advantage in a rich wife unless she makes her life true to her husband's and her character in accord with his. If the mirror gives back a gloomy image of a glad man, or a cheerful and grinning image of a troubled and gloomy man, it is a failure and worthless. So too a wife is worthless and lacking in sense of fitness who puts on a gloomy face when her husband is bent on being sportive and gay, and again, when he is serious,

⁵ Herodotus, I.8. Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 37C, and Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition).

⁶ Nos. 306 and 307 of the *Fables* which pass under the name of Aesop. Cf. also Athenaeus, 604F.

⁷ The story is told with more humorous details by Plutarch in his *Life of Cato Major*, chap. XVII (p. 346C).

is sportive and mirthful. The one smacks of disagreeableness, the other of indifference. Just as lines and surfaces, in mathematical parlance, have no motion of their own but only in conjunction with the bodies to which they belong,⁸ so the wife ought to have no feeling of her own, but she should join with her husband in seriousness and sportiveness and in soberness and laughter.

[15] Men who do not like to see their wives eat in their company are thus teaching them to stuff themselves when alone. So those who are not cheerful in the company of their wives, nor join with them in sportiveness and laughter, are thus teaching them to seek their own pleasures apart from their husbands.

[16] The lawful wives of the Persian kings sit beside them at dinner, and eat with them. But when the kings wish to be merry and get drunk, they send their wives away, and send for their music-girls and concubines.⁹ In so far they are right in what they do, because they do not concede any share in their licentiousness and debauchery to their wedded wives. If therefore a man in private life, who is incontinent and dissolute in regard to his pleasures, commit some peccadillo with a paramour or a maidservant, his wedded wife ought not to be indignant or angry, but she should reason that it is respect for her which leads him to share his debauchery, licentiousness, and wantonness with another woman.

[17] Kings fond of the arts make many persons incline to be artists, those fond of letters make many want to be scholars, and those fond of sport make many take up athletics. In like manner a man fond of his personal appearance makes a wife all paint and powder; one fond of pleasure makes her meretricious and licentious, while a husband who loves what is good and honourable makes a wife discreet and well-behaved.

[18] A young Spartan woman, in answer to an inquiry as to whether she had already made advances to her husband, said, "No, but he has made them to me."¹⁰ This behaviour, I take it, is characteristic of the true mistress of the household, on the one hand not to avoid or to feel annoyed at such actions on the part of her husband if he begins them, and on the other not to take the initiative herself; for the one course is meretricious and froward, the other disdainful and unamiable.

[19] A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour.

[20] Plato asserts that the state is prosperous and happy in which the people hear "mine" and "not mine" most rarely uttered, the reason being that the citizens, so far as in them lies, treat all things of real importance as common property.¹¹ Much more should such expressions be eliminated from the married state; save that, as physicians tell us that blows on the left side of the body record the sensation on the right side, so, in the same way, it is a lovely thing for the wife to sympathize with her husband's concerns and the husband with the wife's, so that, as ropes, by being intertwined, get strength from each other, thus, by the due contribution of goodwill in corresponding measure by each member, the copartnership may be preserved through the joint action of both. For Nature unites us through the commingling of our bodies, in order that, by taking and blending together a portion derived from each member of a pair, the offspring which she produces may be common to both, so that neither can define or distinguish his own or the other's part therein. Such a copartnership in property as well is especially befitting married people, who should pour all their resources into a common fund, and combine them, and each should not regard one part as his own and another part as the other's, but all as his own and nothing as the other's. As we call a mixture "wine," although the larger of the component parts is water, so the property and the estate ought to be said to belong to the husband even though the wife contribute the larger share.

[21] Helen was fond of wealth and Paris of pleasure; Odysseus was sensible and Penelope virtuous. Therefore the marriage of the latter pair was happy and enviable, while that of the former created an "Iliad of woes" for Greeks and barbarians.

[22] The Roman, on being admonished by his friends because he had put away a virtuous, wealthy, and lovely wife, reached out his shoe and said, "Yes, this is beautiful to look at, and new, but nobody knows

⁸ Cf. *Moralia*, 63B.

⁹ Cf. *Moralia*, 613A.

¹⁰ Cf. *Moralia*, 242B.

¹¹ *Republic*, p. 462C. Cf. also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 484B and 767D.

where it pinches me.”¹² A wife, then, ought not to rely on her dowry or birth or beauty, but on things in which she gains the greatest hold on her husband, namely conversation, character, and comradeship, which she must render not perverse or vexatious day by day, but accommodating, inoffensive, and agreeable. For, as physicians have more fear of fevers that originate from obscure causes and gradual accretion than of those which may be accounted for by manifest and weighty reasons, so it is the petty, continual, daily clashes between man and wife, unnoticed by the great majority, that disrupt and mar married life.

[23] King Philip was enamoured of a Thessalian woman who was accused of using magic charms upon him. Olympias accordingly made haste to get the woman into her power. But when the latter had come into the queen’s presence and was seen to be beautiful in appearance, and her conversation with the queen was not lacking in good-breeding or cleverness, Olympias exclaimed, “Away with these slanders! You have your magic charms in yourself.”¹³ And so a wedded and lawful wife becomes an irresistible thing if she makes everything, dowry, birth, magic charms, and even the magic girdle itself,¹⁴ to be inherent in herself, and by character and virtue succeeds in winning her husband’s love.

[24] On another occasion, when a young man of the court had married a beautiful woman of bad reputation,¹⁵ Olympias said, “That fellow has no brains; else he would not have married on sight.” Marriages ought not to be made by trusting the eyes only, or the fingers either, as is the case with some who take a wife after counting up how much she brings with her, but without deciding what kind of a helpmate she will be.

[25] Socrates used to urge the ill-favoured among the mirror-gazing youth to make good their defect by virtue, and the handsome not to disgrace their face and figure by vice.¹⁶ So too it is an admirable thing for the mistress of the household, whenever she holds her mirror in her hands, to talk with herself — for the ill-favoured woman to say to herself, “What if I am not

virtuous?” and the beautiful one, “What if I am virtuous as well?” For if the ill-favoured woman is loved for her character, that is something of which she can be very proud, far more than if she were loved for her beauty.

[26] The Sicilian despot sent clothing and jewellery of the costly kind to the daughters of Lysander;¹⁷ but Lysander would not accept them, saying, “These adornments will disgrace my daughters far more than they will adorn them.” But Sophocles, before Lysander, had said this:¹⁸

Adornment! No, you wretch! Naught that adorns
‘Twould seem to be — your crazy mind’s desire.

For, as Crates used to say, “adornment is that which adorns,” and that adorns or decorates a woman which makes her more decorous. It is not gold or precious stones or scarlet that makes her such, but whatever invests her with that something which betokens dignity, good behaviour, and modesty.

[27] Those who offer sacrifice to Hera, the Protectress of Wedlock,¹⁹ do not consecrate the bitter gall with the other parts of the offering, but remove it and cast it beside the altar — an intimation on the part of him who established this custom that bitterness and anger ought never to find a place in married life. For the acerbity of the mistress, like that of wine, ought to be salutary and pleasant, not bitter like that of aloes, nor suggestive of a dose of medicine.

[28] Plato advised Xenocrates, who was somewhat churlish in character but otherwise a good and honourable man, to sacrifice to the Graces.²⁰ It is my opinion that the virtuous woman has especial need of graces in her relations with her husband, in order that, as Metrodorus used to put it,²¹ “she may live pleasantly with him and not be cross all the time because she is virtuous.” The thrifty woman must not neglect cleanliness, nor the loving wife cheerfulness; for asperity makes a wife’s correct behaviour disagreeable, just as untidiness has a similar effect upon plain living.

¹² Cf. Plutarch’s *Life of Aemilius Paulus*, chap. V (p. 257B), and Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, I chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne’s edition).

¹³ Much the same story is told of the wife of Hystaspes by Satyrus in his *Life of Euripides* (Oxyrhynchus Papyri, IX p157).

¹⁴ Homer, *Il.* XIV.214.

¹⁵ Pantica of Cyprus, according to Phylarchus, as quoted by Athenaeus, 609C.

¹⁶ Attributed to Bias by Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, III.79 ζ, and by Demetrius Phalereus, *Sayings of the Seven Wise Men*. Other authors (e.g. Diogenes Laertius, II.33) assign it to Socrates.

¹⁷ Dionysius according to Plutarch, *Moralia*, 190E, 229A, and *Life of Lysander*, chap. II (p. 439D). The same story is told of Archidamus in *Moralia* 218E.

¹⁸ From an unknown play; cf. Nauck, *Trag. Graec.* Frag. p310, Sophocles, No. 762.

¹⁹ Cf. O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, p1134; also Plutarch, *Frag. 2 of De Daedalis Plataeensis* (in Bernardakis’s edition, vol. VII p44).

²⁰ The same advice in *Moralia* 769D, in Plutarch’s *Life of C. Marius*, chap. II (p. 407A), and a slightly different inference in *Moralia*, 753C.

²¹ Cf. *Moralia*, 753C.

[29] The woman who is afraid to laugh and jest a bit with her husband, lest possibly she appear bold and wanton, is no different from one who will not use oil on her head lest she be thought to use perfume, or from one who will not even wash her face lest she be thought to use rouge. But we observe both poets and public speakers, such as try to avoid vulgarity, narrowness, and affectation in their diction, employing all artistry to move and stir the hearer by means of their subject matter, their handling of it, and their portrayal of characters. So too the mistress of the household, just because she avoids and deprecates everything extravagant, meretricious and ostentatious (and she does well to do so), ought all the more, in the graces of her character and daily life, to employ all artistry upon her husband, habituating him to what is honourable and at the same time pleasant. However, if a woman is naturally uncompromising, arbitrary, and unpleasant, the husband must be considered, and do as Phocion did when Antipater prescribed for him a dishonourable and unbecoming course of action. Phocion said, "You cannot use me as a friend and flatterer both,"²² and so the husband must reason about his virtuous and uncompromising wife, "I cannot have the society of the same woman both as wife and as paramour."

[30] The women of Egypt, by inherited custom, were not allowed to wear shoes,²³ so that they should stay at home all day; and most women, if you take from them gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple, and pearls, stay indoors.

[31] Theano, in putting her cloak about her, exposed her arm.²⁴ Somebody exclaimed, "A lovely arm." "But not for the public," said she. Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself; for in her talk can be seen her feelings, character, and disposition.

[32] Pheidias made the Aphrodite of the Eleans with one foot on a tortoise,²⁵ to typify for womankind keeping at home and keeping silence. For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or

through her husband, and she should not feel aggrieved if, like the flute-player, she makes a more impressive sound through a tongue not her own.

[33] Rich men and princes by conferring honours on philosophers adorn both themselves and the philosophers; but, on the other hand, philosophers by paying court to the rich do not enhance the repute of the rich but lower their own. So is it with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman, not as the owner has control over a piece of property, but, as the soul colonists the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill. As, therefore, it is possible to exercise care over the body without being a slave to its pleasures and desires, so it is possible to govern a wife, and at the same time to delight and gratify her.

[34] Philosophers say of bodies that some are composed of separate elements, as a fleet or an army, others of elements joined together, as a house or a ship, and still others form together an intimate union,²⁶ as is the case with every living creature. In about the same way, the marriage of a couple in love with each other is an intimate union; that of those who marry for dowry or children is of persons joined together; and that of those who merely sleep in the same bed is of separate persons who may be regarded as cohabiting, but not really living together.²⁷ As the mixing of liquids, according to what men of science say, extends throughout their entire content, so also in the case of married people there ought to be a mutual amalgamation of their bodies, property, friends, and relations. In fact, the purpose of the Roman law-giver²⁸ who prohibited the giving and receiving of presents between man and wife was, not to prevent their sharing in anything, but that they should feel that they shared all things in common.

[35] In Leptis, a city of Africa, it is an inherited custom²⁹ for the bride, on the day after her marriage, to send to the mother of the bridegroom and ask for a pot. The latter does not give it, and also declares that she has none, her purpose being that the bride may

²² Cf. *Moralia*, 64C, 188F, 533D; Plutarch's *Life of Phocion*, chap. XXX (p. 755B); *Life of Agis*, chap. II (p. 795E).

²³ This is quite contrary to the classical Greek tradition (Herodotus, II.35; Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 339), which errs just as badly in the other direction.

²⁴ Wife of Pythagoras the philosopher. The story is told a little more fully by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV p. 522C.

²⁵ Pausanias, VI.25.1; cf. also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 381E. Roscher, *Lexikon d. gr. u. rom. Mythologie*, I p412, mentions two ancient bronzes, one Greek and one Etruscan, in which Aphrodite is represented with one foot on a tortoise.

²⁶ Undoubtedly the Stoic philosophers are meant; *Moralia*, 426A.

²⁷ The meaning of this passage is made quite clear by No. 4 of the *fragmenta incerta* of the *Moralia*, in vol. VII of Bernardakis's edition, p151, and Musonius, pp67-68 of O. Hense's edition = Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, LXIX.23.

²⁸ Cf. *Moralia*, 265E.

²⁹ Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, I chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition), amplifies this by a reference to Terence, *Heccyra*, II.1.4: "All mothers-in-law hate their daughters-in-law."

from the outset realize the stepmother's attitude in her mother-in-law, and, in the event of some harsher incident later on, may not feel indignant or resentful. A wife ought to take cognizance of this hostility, and try to cure the cause of it, which is the mother's jealousy of the bride as the object of her son's affection. The one way at once cure this trouble is to create an affection for herself personally on the part of her husband, and at the same time not to divert or lessen his affection for his mother.

[36] Mothers appear to have a greater love for their sons because of a feeling that their sons are able to help them, and fathers for their daughters because of a feeling that the daughters have need of their help. Perhaps, also, because of the honour accorded by man and wife to each other, the one wishes openly to show that he feels greater esteem and affection for the attributes which are more characteristic of the other. And herein there may perhaps be a divergence, but, on the other hand, it is a nice thing if the wife, in the deference she shows, is observed to incline rather toward her husband's parents than her own, and, if she is distressed over anything, to refer it to them without the knowledge of her own parents. For seeming confidence begets confidence, and love, love.

[37] The generals issued orders to the Greeks in Cyrus's army,³⁰ that if the enemy advanced shouting they should receive them with silence, but, on the other hand, if the enemy kept silent, they should charge against them with a shout. Women who have sense keep quiet while their husbands in their fits of anger vociferate, but when their husbands are silent they talk to them and mollify them by words of comfort.

[38] Euripides is right in censuring those who employ the lyre as an accompaniment to wine.³¹ For music ought rather to be invoked on occasions of anger and grief rather than to be made an added attraction for those who are engaged in their pleasures. So you two must regard those persons in error who for the sake of pleasure occupy the same bed, but when they get into some angry disagreement repose apart; they ought, instead, at that time especially to invoke Aphrodite, who is the best physician for such

disorders. Such no doubt is the teaching of the poet when he represents Hera as saying,

I will settle their uncomposed quarrels,
Sending them back to their bed to a union of
loving enjoyment.³²

[39] At all times and in all places a wife ought to try to avoid any clash with her husband, and a husband with his wife, but they ought to be especially on their guard against doing this in the privacy of their bedchamber. The woman in travail and pain kept saying to those who were trying to make her go to bed, "How can the bed cure this ailment which I contracted in bed?" But the disagreements, recriminations, and angry passions which the bed generates are not easily settled in another place and at another time.

[40] Hermione seems to speak the truth when she says, "Bad women's visits brought about my fall."³³

This, however, does not come about so simply, but only when marital disagreements and jealousies open not only a wife's doors but also her hearing to such women. So, at such a time especially, a woman who has sense ought to stop her ears, and be on her guard against whispered insinuations, so that fire may not be added to fire,³⁴ and she ought to have ready in mind the saying of Philip.³⁵ or it is told that when he was being incited by his friends against the Greeks on the ground that they were being well treated, but were speaking ill of him, he said, "What would happen, then, if we were to treat them ill?" So when these back-biters say, "Your husband treats grievously his loving and virtuous wife." "Yes, what would happen, then, if I were to begin to hate him and wrong him?"

[41] A man whose slave had run away, on catching sight of the fugitive some time later, ran after him; but when the slave got ahead of him by taking refuge in a treadmill, the master said, "Where else could I have wished to find you rather than here?"³⁶ So then let the woman who, on account of jealousy, is entering a writ of divorce, and is in a high dudgeon, say to herself, "Where else would my rival like better to see me, what would she rather have me do, than feel aggrieved with my husband and quarrel with him and abandon my very home and chamber?"

³⁰ Possibly a confused reminiscence of Xenophon, *Anabasis*, I.7.4, and I.8.11.

³¹ *Medea*, 190. Cf. also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 710E.

³² Adapted from Homer, *Il.* XIV.205, 209.

³³ Euripides, *Andromache*, 930: cf. also Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, I chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition).

³⁴ Cf. the note on 123F supra.

³⁵ Cf. *Moralia*, 179A and 457F. A similar remark of Pausanias is quoted in *Moralia*, 230D.

³⁶ A remark of the same tenor is attributed to Phocion by Plutarch, *Moralia*, 188A, and *Life of Phocion*, chap. X (p. 746E).

[42] The Athenians observe three sacred ploughings: the first at Scirum in commemoration of the most ancient of sowings; the second in Raria, and the third near the base of the Acropolis, the so-called Buzygius (the ox-yoking).³⁷ But most sacred of all such sowings is the marital sowing and ploughing for the procreation of children. It is a beautiful epithet which Sophocles applied to Aphrodite when he called her "bountiful-bearing Cytherea."³⁸ Therefore man and wife ought especially to indulge in this with circumspection, keeping themselves pure from all unholy and unlawful intercourse with others, and not sowing seed from which they are unwilling to have any offspring,³⁹ and from which if any issue does result, they are ashamed of it, and try to conceal it.

[43] When the orator Gorgias read to the Greeks at Olympia a speech about concord,⁴⁰ Melanthius said, "This fellow is giving us advice about concord, and yet in his own household he has not prevailed upon himself, his wife, and maidservant, three persons only, to live in concord." For there was, apparently, some love on Gorgias's part and jealousy on the wife's part towards the girl. A man therefore ought to have his household well harmonized who is going to harmonize State, Forum, and friends. For it is much more likely that the sins of women rather than sins against women will go unnoticed by most people.

[44] They say that the cat is excited to frenzy by the odour of perfumes. Now if it happened that women were similarly made furious and frantic by perfumes, it would be a dreadful thing for their husbands not to abstain from perfume, but for the sake of their own brief pleasure to permit their wives to suffer in this way. Now inasmuch as women are affected in this way, not by their husband's using perfume, but by their having connexion with other women, it is unfair to pain and disturb them so much for the sake of a trivial pleasure, and not to follow with wives the practice observed in approaching bees (because these insects are thought to be irritable and bellicose towards men who have been with women)⁴¹ — to be pure and clean from all connexion with others when they approach their wives.

[45] Those who have to go near elephants do not put on bright clothes, nor do those who go near bulls put on red;⁴² for the animals are made especially furious by these colours; and tigers, they say, when surrounded by the noise of beaten drums go completely mad and tear themselves to pieces.⁴³ Since, then, this is also the case with men, that some cannot well endure the sight of scarlet and purple clothes, while others are annoyed by cymbals and drums,⁴⁴ what terrible hardship is it for women to refrain from such things, and not disquiet or irritate their husbands, but live with them in constant gentleness?

[46] A woman once said to Philip, who was trying to force her to come to him against her will, "Let me go. All women are the same when the lights are out." This is well said as an answer to adulterous and licentious men, but the wedded wife ought especially when the light is out not to be the same as ordinary women, but, when her body is invisible, her virtue, her exclusive devotion to her husband, her constancy, and her affection, ought to be most in evidence.

[47] Plato used to advise the elderly men more especially to have the sense of shame before the young, so that the young may be respectful toward them;⁴⁵ for where the old men are without sense of shame, he felt, no respect or deference is engendered for the young. The husband ought to bear this in mind, and show no greater respect for anybody than for his wife, seeing that their chamber is bound to be for her a school of orderly behaviour or of wantonness. The man who enjoys the very pleasures from which he tries to dissuade his wife is in no wise different from him who bids her fight to the death against the enemies to whom he has himself surrendered.

[48] In regard to love of finery, I beg, Eurydice, that you will read and try to remember what was written to Aristylla by Timoxena;⁴⁶ and as for you, Pollianus, you must not think that your wife will refrain from immoderate display and extravagance if she sees that you do not despise these things in others, but, on the contrary, find delight in gilded drinking-cups, pictured walls, trappings for mules, and showy

³⁷ Scirum was near Athens on the road to Eleusis; the Rarian plain was near Eleusis; the most convenient references regarding these sacred ploughings are Roscher, *Lexikon der griech. und rom. Mythologie*, s.v. Buzyges, and Harrison and Verrall, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, pp166-8.

³⁸ Nauck, *Trag. Graec. Frag.* p310, Sophocles, No. 763.

³⁹ Cf. Plato, *Laws*, p. 839A.

⁴⁰ Cf. Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, III pp248-9 (Gorgias, B 7-8a).

⁴¹ A wide-spread ancient superstition; the classical references may be found in Magerstedt, *Die Bienenzucht des Altertums*, *Sondershausen*, 1851.

⁴² Cf. *Moralia*, 330B.

⁴³ Cf. *Moralia*, 167C.

⁴⁴ An indication that the wife was interested in some foreign religion like the worship of Cybele.

⁴⁵ *Laws*, p. 729C. Also cited or referred to by Plutarch, *Moralia*, 14B, 71B, and 272C.

⁴⁶ Plutarch's wife presumably; who Aristylla was we do not know.

neckbands for horses. For it is impossible to expel extravagance from the wife's part of the house when it has free range amid the men's rooms.

Besides, Pollianus, you already possess sufficient maturity to study philosophy, and I beg that you will beautify your character with the aid of discourses which are attended by logical demonstration and mature deliberation, seeking the company and instruction of teachers who will help you. And for your wife you must collect from every source what is useful, as do the bees, and carrying it within your own self impart it to her, and then discuss it with her, and make the best of these doctrines her favourite and familiar themes. For to her

Thou art a father and precious-loved mother,
Yea, and a brother as well.⁴⁷

No less ennobling is it for a man among other things hear his wife say, "My dear husband,

Nay, but thou art to me⁴⁸

guide, philosopher, and teacher in all that is most lovely and divine." Studies of this sort, in the first place, divert women from all untoward conduct; for a woman studying geometry will be ashamed to be a dancer, and she will not swallow any beliefs in magic charms while she is under the charm of Plato's or Xenophon's words. And if anybody professes power to pull down the moon from the sky, she will laugh at the ignorance and stupidity of women who believe these things, inasmuch as she herself is not unschooled in astronomy, and has read in the books about Aglaonice,⁴⁹ the daughter of Hegetor of Thessaly, and how she, through being thoroughly acquainted with the periods of the full moon when it is subject to eclipse, and, knowing beforehand the time when the moon was due to be overtaken by the earth's shadow, imposed upon the women, and made them all believe that she was drawing down the moon.

It is said that no woman ever produced a child without the co-operation of a man, yet there are misshapen, fleshlike, uterine growths originating in some infection, which develop of themselves and acquire firmness and solidity, and are commonly called "moles."⁵⁰ Great care must be taken that this sort of thing does not take place in women's minds. For if they do not receive the seed of good doctrines and share with their husbands in intellectual advancement, they, left to themselves, conceive many untoward ideas and low designs and emotions.

And as for you, Eurydice, I beg that you will try to be conversant with the sayings of the wise and good, and always have at your tongue's end those sentiments which you used to cull in your girlhood's days when you were with us, so that you may give joy to your husband, and may be admired by other women, adorned, as you will be, without price, with rare and precious jewels. For you cannot acquire and put upon you this rich woman's pearls or that foreign woman's silks without buying them at a high price, but the ornaments of Theano; Cleobulina; Gorgo, the wife of Leonidas; Timocleia, the sister of Theagenes; Claudia of old; Cornelia, daughter of Scipio;⁵¹ and of all other women who have been admired and renowned, you may wear about you without price, and, adorning yourself with these, you may live a life of distinction and happiness.

If Sappho thought that her beautiful compositions in verse justified her in writing to a certain rich woman,⁵²

Dead in the tomb shalt thou lie,
Nor shall there be thought of thee there,
For in the roses of Pierian fields?
Thou hast no share,

why shall it not be even more allowable for you to entertain high and splendid thoughts of yourself, if you have a share not only in the roses but also in the fruits which the Muses bring and graciously bestow upon those who admire education and philosophy?

⁴⁷ Adapted from Homer, *Il.* VI.429.

⁴⁸ Adapted from Homer, *Il.* VI.429.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Moralia*, 416F. The belief that Thessalian women had the power to draw down the moon was wide-spread in antiquity. It may suffice here to refer to Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 749, and for Aglaonice to Plutarch, *Moralia* 417A.

⁵⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, IV.7.

⁵¹ Theano: Wife of Pythagoras; cf. 142C, supra. Cleobulina: Also called Eumetis, daughter of Cleobulus; cf. 148C-E, 150E, and

154A-C, infra. Gorgo: Daughter of Cleomenes, king of Sparta; cf. Herodotus, VII.239. Timocleia: Plutarch tells of Timocleia's intrepid behaviour after the battle of Chaeroneia in *Moralia*, 259C, and *Life of Alexander*, chap. XII (p. 671A). Claudia: Claudia vindicated her virtue when the goddess Cybele was brought to Rome; Livy, XXIX.14. Cornelia: Better known as the mother of the Gracchi, who said of her sons, "These are my jewels."⁵² Bergk, Poet. Lyr. Gr. III p111, Sappho, No. 68; J. M. Edmonds, *Lyra Graeca*, in the L. C. L. I p69.

Roman Accounts of Cleopatra

The last of the pharaohs, Cleopatra VII, of the Ptolemaic dynasty founded by Alexander's general Ptolemy, is known primarily through her involvement in and accounts of her dealings with Rome, first with Julius Caesar and then with his surviving lieutenant, Mark Antony. Plutarch's accounts date from ca. 100 CE, a century and a half after the events.¹

Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*

[48.5] As for the war in Egypt, some say that it was not necessary, but due to Caesar's passion for Cleopatra, and that it was inglorious and full of peril for him. But others blame the king's party for it,² and especially the eunuch Potheinus, who had most influence at court, and had recently killed Pompey; he had also driven Cleopatra from the country, and was now secretly plotting against Caesar. [6] On this account they say that from this time on Caesar passed whole nights at drinking parties in order to protect himself. But in his open acts also Potheinus was unbearable, since he said and did many things that were invidious and insulting to Caesar. [7] For instance, when the soldiers had the oldest and worst grain measured out to them, he bade them put up with it and be content, since they were eating what belonged to others; and at the state suppers he used wooden and earthen dishes, on the ground that Caesar had taken all the gold and silver ware in payment of a debt. [8] For the father of the present king owed Caesar seventeen million five hundred thousand drachmas,³ of which Caesar had formerly remitted a part to his children, but now demanded payment of ten millions for the support of his army. [9] When, however, Potheinus bade him go away now and attend to his great affairs, assuring him that later he would get his money with thanks, Caesar replied that he had no need whatever of Egyptians as advisers, and secretly sent for Cleopatra from the country.

[49.1] So Cleopatra, taking only Apollodorus the Sicilian from among her friends, embarked in a little skiff and landed at the palace when it was already getting dark; [2] and as it was impossible to escape notice otherwise, she stretched herself at full length inside a bed-sack, while Apollodorus tied the bed-sack up with a cord and carried it indoors to Caesar. [3] It was by this device of Cleopatra's, it is said, that Caesar was first captivated, for she showed herself to be a bold coquette, and succumbing to the charm of further intercourse with her, he reconciled her to her brother on the basis of a joint share with him in the royal power. ... [10] Then [after killing the eunuch and defeating Ptolemy XIII], leaving Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt (a little later she had a son by him whom the Alexandrians called Caesarion), he set out for Syria.

Plutarch, *Life of Antony*

[25.1] Such, then, was the nature of Antony, where now as a crowning evil his love for Cleopatra supervened, roused and drove to frenzy many of the passions that were still hidden and quiescent in him, and dissipated and destroyed whatever good and saving qualities still offered resistance. And he was taken captive in this manner. As he was getting ready for the Parthian war, he sent to Cleopatra, ordering her to meet him in Cilicia in order to make answer to the charges made against her of raising and giving to Cassius much money for the war. [2] But Dellius, Antony's messenger, when he saw how Cleopatra looked, and noticed her subtlety

¹ Source: Plutarch, and Bernadotte Perrin. 1923. *Parallel Lives*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

² The king being Ptolemy XIII, Cleopatra's brother and co-heir of Ptolemy XII.

³ During Caesar's consulship ([59] B.C.) Ptolemy XII Auletes was declared a friend and ally of the Romans. To secure this honour he both gave and promised money to the state.

and cleverness in conversation, at once perceived that Antony would not so much as think of doing such a woman any harm, but that she would have the greatest influence with him. He therefore resorted to flattery and tried to induce the Egyptian to go to Cilicia “decked out in fine array” (as Homer would say), and not to be afraid of Antony, who was the most agreeable and humane of commanders. [3] She was persuaded by Dellius, and judging by the proofs which she had had before this of the effect of her beauty upon Caius Caesar and Gnaeus the son of Pompey, she had hopes that she would more easily bring Antony to her feet. For Caesar and Pompey had known her when she was still a girl and inexperienced in affairs, but she was going to visit Antony at the very time when women have the most brilliant beauty and are at the acme of intellectual power. [4] Therefore she provided herself with many gifts, much money, and such ornaments as high position and prosperous kingdom made it natural for her to take; but she went putting her greatest confidence in herself, and in the charms and sorceries of her own person.

[26.1] Though she received many letters of summons both from Antony himself and from his friends, she so despised and laughed the man to scorn as to sail up the river Cydnus in a barge with gilded poop, its sails spread purple, its rowers urging it on with silver oars to the sound of the flute blended with pipes and lutes. [2] She herself reclined beneath a canopy spangled with gold, adorned like Venus in a painting, while boys like Loves in paintings stood on either side and fanned her. Likewise also the fairest of her serving-maidens, attired like Nereïds and Graces, were stationed, some at the rudder-sweeps, and others at the reefing-ropes. Wondrous odours from countless incense-offerings diffused themselves along the river-banks. [3] Of the inhabitants, some accompanied her on either bank of the river from its very mouth, while others went down from the city to behold the sight. The throng in the market-place gradually streamed away, until at last Antony himself, seated on his tribunal, was left alone. And

a rumour spread on every hand that Venus was come to revel with Bacchus for the good of Asia.

Antony sent, therefore, and invited her to supper; but she thought it meet that he should rather come to her. [4] At once, then, wishing to display his complacency and friendly feelings, Antony obeyed and went. He found there a preparation that beggared description, but was most amazed at the multitude of lights. For, as we are told, so many of these were let down and displayed on all sides at once, and they were arranged and ordered with so many inclinations and adjustments to each other in the form of rectangles and circles, that few sights were so beautiful or so worthy to be seen as this.

[27.1] On the following day Antony feasted her in his turn, and was ambitious to surpass her splendour and elegance, but in both regards he was left behind, and vanquished in these very points, and was first to rail at the meagreness and rusticity of his own arrangements. Cleopatra observed in the jests of Antony much of the soldier and the common man, and adopted this manner also towards him, without restraint now, and boldly. [2] For her beauty, as we are told, was in itself not altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her; but converse with her had an irresistible charm, and her presence, combined with the persuasiveness of her discourse and the character which was somehow diffused about her behaviour towards others, had something stimulating about it. [3] There was sweetness also in the tones of her voice; and her tongue, like an instrument of many strings, she could readily turn to whatever language she pleased, so that in her interviews with Barbarians she very seldom had need of an interpreter, but made her replies to most of them herself and unassisted, whether they were Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes or Parthians. [4] Nay, it is said that she knew the speech of many other peoples also, although the kings of Egypt before her had not even made an effort to learn the native language, and some actually gave up their Macedonian dialect.

[28.1] Accordingly, she made such booty of Antony that, while Fulvia his wife was carrying on war at Rome with Caesar in defence of her husband's interests, and while a Parthian army was hovering about Mesopotamia (over this country the generals of the king had appointed Labienus Parthian commander-in-chief, and were about to invade Syria), he suffered her to hurry him off to Alexandria. There, indulging in the sports and diversions of a young man of leisure, he squandered and spent upon pleasures that which Antiphon calls the most costly outlay, namely, time. ...

[29.1] But Cleopatra, distributing her flattery, not into the four forms of which Plato speaks, but into many, and ever contributing some fresh delight and charm to Antony's hours of seriousness or mirth, kept him in constant tutelage, and released him neither night nor day. She played at dice with him, drank with him, hunted with him, and watched him as he exercised himself in arms; and when by night he would station himself at the doors or windows of the common folk and scoff at those within, she would go with him on his round of mad follies, wearing the garb of a serving maiden. [2] For Antony also would try to array himself like a servant. Therefore he always reaped a harvest of abuse, and often of blows, before coming back home; though most people suspected who he was. However, the Alexandrians took delight in their graceful and cultivated way; they liked him, and said that he used the tragic mask with the Romans, but the comic mask with them.

[3] Now, to recount the greater part of his boyish pranks would be great nonsense. One instance will suffice. He was fishing once, and had bad luck, and was vexed at it because Cleopatra was there to see. He therefore ordered his fishermen to dive down and secretly fasten to his hook some fish that had been previously caught, and pulled up two or three

of them. But the Egyptian saw through the trick, and pretending to admire her lover's skill, told her friends about it, and invited them to be spectators of it the following day. [4] So great numbers of them got into the fishing boats, and when Antony had let down his line, she ordered one of her own attendants to get the start of him by swimming onto his hook and fastening on it a salted Pontic herring. Antony thought he had caught something, and pulled it up, whereupon there was great laughter, as was natural, and Cleopatra said: "Imperator, hand over thy fishing-rod to the fishermen of Pharos and Canopus; thy sport is the hunting of cities, realms, and continents."

[31.1] These arrangements [dividing the empire with Octavian]⁴ were thought to be fair, but they needed a stronger security, and this security Fortune offered. Octavia was a sister of [Octavian] Caesar, older than he, though not by the same mother; for she was the child of Ancharia, but he, by a later marriage, of Atia. Caesar was exceedingly fond of his sister, who was, as the saying is, a wonder of a woman.⁵ [2] Her husband, Caius Marcellus, had died a short time before, and she was a widow. Antony, too, now that Fulvia was gone, was held to be a widower, although he did not deny his relations with Cleopatra; he would not admit, however, that she was his wife, and in this matter his reason was still battling with his love for the Egyptian. Everybody tried to bring about this marriage. For they hoped that Octavia, who, besides her great beauty, had intelligence and dignity, when united to Antony and beloved by him, as such a woman naturally must be, would restore harmony and be their complete salvation. [3] Accordingly, when both men were agreed, they went up to Rome and celebrated Octavia's marriage, although the law did not permit a woman to marry before her husband had been dead ten months. In this case,

⁴ Julius Caesar's heir was a young man named C. Octavius. When Julius Caesar adopted him, he took his adoptive father's name and became C. Julius Caesar Octavianus, or "Octavian" for short in English, though in ancient writings he was often referred to as Young Caesar or just Caesar when there was no chance of

ambiguity (as here). This Caesar Octavian is the same man who later became the emperor Augustus.

⁵ Octavian's sister, Octavia, was widely admired for her virtue and strength of character, not least because she properly raised not only her own children by Antony, even after she was spurned for Cleopatra, but also those by his previous wife Fulvia.

however, the senate passed a decree remitting the restriction in time.

...

[36.1] But the dire evil which had been slumbering for a long time, namely, his passion for Cleopatra, which men thought had been charmed away and lulled to rest by better considerations, blazed up again with renewed power as he drew near to Syria. And finally, like the stubborn and unmanageable beast of the soul, of which Plato speaks, he spurned away all saving and noble counsels and sent Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra to Syria. [2] And when she was come, he made her a present of no slight or insignificant addition to her dominions, namely, Phoenicia, Coele Syria, Cyprus, and a large part of Cilicia; and still further, the balsam-producing part of Judaea, and all that part of Arabia Nabataea which slopes toward the outer sea. These gifts particularly annoyed the Romans. And yet he made presents to many private persons of tetrarchies and realms of great peoples, and he deprived many monarchs of their kingdoms, as, for instance, Antigonus the Jew, whom he brought forth and beheaded, though no other king before him had been so punished. [3] But the shamefulness of the honours conferred upon Cleopatra gave most offence. And he heightened the scandal by acknowledging his two children by her, and called one Alexander and the other Cleopatra, with the surname for the first of Sun, and for the other of Moon. However, since he was an adept at putting a good face upon shameful deeds, he used to say that the greatness of the Roman empire was made manifest, not by what the Romans received, but by what they bestowed; and that noble families were extended by the successive begettings of many kings. [4] In this way, at any rate, he said, his own progenitor was begotten by Heracles, who did not confine his succession to a single womb, nor stand in awe of laws like Solon's for the regulation of conception, but gave free course to nature, and left behind him the beginnings and foundations of many families. ...

[37.4] And yet we are told that all this preparation and power, which terrified even the Indians beyond Bactria and made all Asia quiver, was made of no avail to Antony by reason of Cleopatra. For so eager was he to spend the winter with her that he began the war before the proper time, and managed everything confusedly. He was not master of his own faculties, but, as if he were under the influence of certain drugs or of magic rites, was ever looking eagerly towards her, and thinking more of his speedy return than of conquering the enemy.

...

[53.1] But at Rome Octavia was desirous of sailing to Antony, and Caesar gave her permission to do so, as the majority say, not as a favour to her, but in order that, in case she were neglected and treated with scorn, he might have plausible ground for war. When Octavia arrived at Athens, she received letters from Antony in which he bade her remain there and told her of his expedition. [2] Octavia, although she saw through the pretext and was distressed, nevertheless wrote Antony asking whither he would have the things sent which she was bringing to him. For she was bringing a great quantity of clothing for his soldiers, many beasts of burden, and money and gifts for the officers and friends about him; and besides this, two thousand picked soldiers equipped as praetorian cohorts with splendid armour. These things were announced to Antony by a certain Niger, a friend of his who had been sent from Octavia, and he added such praises of her as was fitting and deserved.

[3] But Cleopatra perceived that Octavia was coming into a contest at close quarters with her, and feared lest, if she added to the dignity of her character and the power of Caesar her pleasurable society and her assiduous attentions to Antony, she would become invincible and get complete control over her husband. She therefore pretended to be passionately in love with Antony herself, and reduced her body by slender diet; she put on a look of rapture when Antony drew near, and one of faintness and melancholy when he went away. [4] She would contrive to be often seen in tears, and

then would quickly wipe the tears away and try to hide them, as if she would not have Antony notice them. And she practised these arts while Antony was intending to go up from Syria to join the Medes. Her flatterers, too, were industrious in her behalf, and used to revile Antony as hard-hearted and unfeeling, and as the destroyer of a mistress who was devoted to him and him alone. [5] For Octavia, they said, had married him as a matter of public policy and for the sake of her brother, and enjoyed the name of wedded wife; but Cleopatra, who was queen of so many people, was called Antony's beloved, and she did not shun this name nor disdain it, as long as she could see him and live with him; but if she were driven away from him she would not survive it. [6] At last, then, they so melted and enervated the man that he became fearful lest Cleopatra should throw away her life, and went back to Alexandria, putting off the Medes until the summer season, although Parthia was said to be suffering from internal dissensions. However, he went up and brought the king once more into friendly relations, and after betrothing to one of his sons by Cleopatra one of the king's daughters who was still small, he returned, his thoughts being now directed towards the civil war.

[54.1] As for Octavia, she was thought to have been treated with scorn, and when she came back from Athens Caesar ordered her to dwell in her own house. But she refused to leave the house of her husband, nay, she even entreated Caesar himself, unless on other grounds he had determined to make war upon Antony, to ignore Antony's treatment of her, since it was an infamous thing even to have it said that the two greatest imperators in the world plunged the Romans into civil war, the one out of passion for, and the other out of resentment in behalf of, a woman. [2] These were her words, and she confirmed them by her deeds. For she dwelt in her husband's house, just as if he were at home, and she cared for his children, not only those whom she herself, but also those whom Fulvia had borne him, in a noble and magnificent manner; she also received such friends of Antony as

were sent to Rome in quest of office or on business, and helped them to obtain from Caesar what they wanted. Without meaning it, however, she was damaging Antony by this conduct of hers; for he was hated for wronging such a woman. [3] He was hated, too, for the distribution which he made to his children in Alexandria; it was seen to be theatrical and arrogant, and to evince hatred of Rome. For after filling the gymnasium with a throng and placing on a tribunal of silver two thrones of gold, one for himself and the other for Cleopatra, and other lower thrones for his sons, [4] in the first place he declared Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele Syria, and she was to share her throne with Caesarion. Caesarion was believed to be a son of the former Caesar, by whom Cleopatra was left pregnant. In the second place, he proclaimed his own sons by Cleopatra Kings of Kings, and to Alexander he allotted Armenia, Media and Parthia (when he should have subdued it), to Ptolemy Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia. [5] At the same time he also produced his sons, Alexander arrayed in Median garb, which included a tiara and upright head-dress, Ptolemy in boots, short cloak, and broad-brimmed hat surmounted by a diadem. For the latter was the dress of the kings who followed Alexander, the former that of Medes and Armenians. [6] And when the boys had embraced their parents, one was given a bodyguard of Armenians, the other of Macedonians. Cleopatra, indeed, both then and at other times when she appeared in public, assumed a robe sacred to Isis, and was addressed as the New Isis.

[55.1] By reporting these things to the senate and by frequent denunciations before the people Caesar tried to inflame the multitude against Antony. Antony, too, kept sending counter-accusations against Caesar. The chief accusations which he made were, in the first place, that after taking Sicily away from Pompey, Caesar had not assigned a part of the island to him; in the second place, that after borrowing ships from him for the war he had kept them for himself; thirdly, that after ejecting his colleague Lepidus from office and degrading him,

he was keeping for himself the army, the territory, and the revenues which had been assigned to Lepidus; [2] finally that he had distributed almost all Italy in allotments, to his own soldiers, and had left nothing for the soldiers of Antony. To these charges Caesar replied by saying that he had deposed Lepidus from office because he was abusing it, and as for what he had acquired in war, he would share it with Antony whenever Antony, on his part, should share Armenia with him; and Antony's soldiers had no claim upon Italy, since they had Media and Persia, which countries they had added to the Roman dominion by their noble struggles under their imperator.

[56.1] Antony heard of this while he was tarrying in Armenia; and at once he ordered Canidius to take sixteen legions and go down to the sea. But he himself took Cleopatra with him and came to Ephesus. It was there that his naval force was coming together from all quarters, eight hundred ships of war with merchant vessels, of which Cleopatra furnished two hundred, besides twenty thousand talents, and supplies for the whole army during the war. [2] But Antony, listening to the advice of Domitius and sundry others, ordered Cleopatra to sail to Egypt and there await the result of the war. Cleopatra, however, fearing that Octavia would again succeed in putting a stop to the war, persuaded Canidius by large bribes to plead her cause with Antony, and to say that it was neither just to drive away from the war a woman whose contributions to it were so large, [3] nor was it for the interest of Antony to dispirit the Egyptians, who formed a large part of his naval force; and besides, it was not easy to see how Cleopatra was inferior in intelligence to anyone of the princes who took part in the expedition, she who for a long time had governed so large a kingdom by herself, and by long association with Antony had learned to manage large affairs. These arguments (since it was destined that everything should come into Caesar's hands) prevailed; and with united forces they sailed to Samos and there made merry. [4] For just as all the kings, dynasts, tetrarchs, nations, and cities

between Syria, the Maeotic Lake, Armenia, and Illyria had been ordered to send or bring their equipment for the war, so all the dramatic artists were compelled to put in an appearance at Samos; and while almost all the world around was filled with groans and lamentations, a single island for many days resounded with flutes and stringed instruments; theatres there were filled, and choral bands were competing with one another. [5] Every city also sent an ox for the general sacrifice, and kings vied with one another in their mutual entertainments and gifts. And so men everywhere began to ask: "How will the conquerors celebrate their victories if their preparations for the war are marked by festivals so costly?"

[57.1] When these festivities were over, Antony gave the dramatic artists Priene as a place for them to dwell, and sailed himself to Athens, where sports and theatres again engaged him. Cleopatra, too, jealous of Octavia's honours in the city (for Octavia was especially beloved by the Athenians), tried by many splendid gifts to win the favour of the people. [2] So the people voted honours to her, and sent a deputation to her house carrying the vote, of whom Antony was one, for was he not a citizen of Athens? And standing in her presence he delivered a speech in behalf of the city. To Rome, however, he sent men who had orders to eject Octavia from his house. [3] And we are told that she left it taking all his children with her except his eldest son by Fulvia, who was with his father; she was in tears of distress that she herself also would be regarded as one of the causes of the war. But the Romans felt pity for Antony, not for her, and especially those who had seen Cleopatra and knew that neither in youthfulness nor beauty was she superior to Octavia.

[58.1] When Caesar heard of the rapidity and extent of Antony's preparations, he was much disturbed, lest he should be forced to settle the issue of the war during that summer. For he was lacking in many things, and people were vexed by the exactions of taxes. The citizens were generally compelled to pay one fourth of their income, and the freedmen one

eighth of their property, and both classes cried out against Caesar, and disturbances arising from these causes prevailed throughout all Italy. [2] Wherefore, among the greatest mistakes of Antony men reckon his postponement of the war. For it gave Caesar time to make preparations and put an end to the disturbances among the people. For while money was being exacted from them, they were angry, but when it had been exacted and they had paid it, they were calm. Moreover, Titius and Plancus, friends of Antony and men of consular rank, being abused by Cleopatra (for they had been most opposed to her accompanying the expedition) ran away to Caesar, and they gave him information about Antony's will, the contents of which they knew. [3] This will was on deposit with the Vestal Virgins, and when Caesar asked for it, they would not give it to him; but if he wanted to take it, they told him to come and do so. So he went and took it; and to begin with, he read its contents through by himself; and marked certain reprehensible passages; then he assembled the senate and read it aloud to them, although most of them were displeased to hear him do so. [4] For they thought it a strange and grievous matter that a man should be called to account while alive for what he wished to have done after his death. Caesar laid most stress on the clause in the will relating to Antony's burial. For it directed that Antony's body, even if he should die in Rome, should be borne in state through the forum and then sent away to Cleopatra in Egypt. [5] Again, Calvisius, who was a companion of Caesar, brought forward against Antony the following charges also regarding his behaviour towards Cleopatra: he had bestowed upon her the libraries from Pergamum, in which there were two hundred thousand volumes; at a banquet where there were many guests he had stood up and rubbed her feet, in compliance with some agreement and compact which they had made; he had consented to have the Ephesians in his presence salute Cleopatra as mistress; [6] many times, while he was seated on his tribunal and dispensing justice to tetrarchs and kings, he would receive love-billets from her in tablets of onyx or crystal, and read them; and once when Furnius was

speaking, a man of great worth and the ablest orator in Rome, Cleopatra was carried through the forum on a litter, and Antony, when he saw her, sprang up from his tribunal and forsook the trial, and hanging on to Cleopatra's litter escorted her on her way.

[59.1] However, most of the charges thus brought by Calvisius were thought to be falsehoods; but the friends of Antony went about in Rome beseeching the people in his behalf, and they sent one of their number, Geminius, with entreaties that Antony would not suffer himself to be voted out of his office and proclaimed an enemy of Rome. [2] But Geminius, after his voyage to Greece, was an object of suspicion to Cleopatra, who thought that he was acting in the interests of Octavia; he was always put upon with jokes at supper and insulted with places of no honour at table, but he endured all this and waited for an opportunity to confer with Antony. Once, however, at a supper, being bidden to tell the reasons for his coming, he replied that the rest of his communication required a sober head, but one thing he knew, whether he was drunk or sober, and that was all would be well if Cleopatra was sent off to Egypt. [3] At this, Antony was wroth, and Cleopatra said: "Thou has done well, Geminius, to confess the truth without being put to the torture." Geminius, accordingly, after a few days, ran away to Rome. And Cleopatra's flatterers drove away many of the other friends of Antony also who could not endure their drunken tricks and scurrilities. [4] Among these were Marcus Silanus and Dellius the historian. And Dellius says that he was also afraid of a plot against him by Cleopatra, of which Glaucus the physician had told him. For he had offended Cleopatra at supper by saying that while sour wine was served to them, Sarmentus, at Rome, was drinking Falernian. Now, Sarmentus was one of the youthful favourites of Caesar, such as the Romans call "deliciae."

[60.1] When Caesar had made sufficient preparations, a vote was passed to wage war against Cleopatra, and to take away from Antony the authority which he had surrendered to a woman.

And Caesar said in addition that Antony had been drugged and was not even master of himself, and that the Romans were carrying on war with Mardion the eunuch, and Potheinus, and Iras, and the tire-woman of Cleopatra, and Charmion, by whom the principal affairs of the government were managed.

[2] The following signs are said to have been given before the war. Pisaurum, a city colonized by Antony situated near the Adriatic, was swallowed by chasms in the earth. From one of the marble statues of Antony near Alba sweat oozed for many days, and though it was wiped away it did not cease. In Patrae, while Antony was staying there, the Heracleium was destroyed by lightning; and at Athens the Dionysus in the Battle of the Giants was dislodged by the winds and carried down into the theatre. [3] Now, Antony associated himself with Heracles in lineage, and with Dionysus in the mode of life which he adopted, as I have said, and he was called the New Dionysus.⁶ The same tempest fell upon the colossal figures of Eumenes and Attalus at Athens, on which the name of Antony had been inscribed, and prostrated them, and them alone out of many. Moreover the admiral's ship of Cleopatra was called Antonius, and a dire sign was given with regard to it. Some swallows, namely, made their nest under its stern; but other swallows attacked these, drove them out and destroyed their nestlings.

[61.1] When the forces came together for the war, Antony had no fewer than five hundred fighting ships, among which were many vessels of eight and ten banks of oars, arrayed in pompous and festal fashion; he also had one hundred thousand infantry soldiers and twelve thousand horsemen. Of subject kings who fought with him, there were Bocchus the king of Libya, Tarcondemus the king of Upper Cilicia, Archelaüs of Cappadocia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, and Sadalas of Thrace. [2] These were with him, while from Pontus Polemon sent an army, and Malchus from Arabia, and Herod the Jew, besides Amyntas

the king of Lycaonia and Galatia; the king of the Medes also sent an auxiliary force. Caesar had two hundred and fifty ships of war, eighty thousand infantry, and about as many horsemen as his enemies. [3] Antony's authority extended over the country from the Euphrates and Armenia to the Ionian sea and Illyria; Caesar's over the country reaching from Illyria to the Western Ocean and from the ocean back to the Tuscan and Sicilian seas. Of Libya, the part extending opposite to Italy, Gaul, and Iberia as far as the pillars of Hercules, belonged to Caesar; the part extending from Cyrene as far as Armenia, to Antony.

[62.1] But to such an extent, now, was Antony an appendage of the woman that although he was far superior on land, he wished the decision to rest with his navy, to please Cleopatra, and that too when he saw that for lack of crews his trierarchs were haling together out of long-suffering Greece wayfarers, mule-drivers, harvesters, and ephebi,^[50] and that even then their ships were not fully manned, but most of them were deficient and sailed wretchedly. [2] Caesar's fleet, on the other hand, was perfectly equipped, and consisted of ships which had not been built for a display of height or mass, but were easily steered, swift, and fully manned. This fleet Caesar kept assembled at Tarentum and Brundisium, and he sent to Antony a demand to waste no time, but to come with his forces; Caesar himself would furnish his armament with unobstructed roadsteads and harbours, and would withdraw with his land forces a day's journey for a horseman from the sea-shore, until Antony should have safely landed and fixed his camp. [3] This boastful language Antony matched by challenging Caesar to single combat, although he was an older man than Caesar; and if Caesar declined this, Antony demanded that they should fight out the issue at Pharsalus, as Caesar and Pompey had once done. But while Antony was lying at anchor off Actium, where now Nicopolis stands, Caesar got the start of him by crossing the Ionian

⁶ As Cleopatra was called the New Isis ([54.6]).

sea and occupying a place in Epirus^o called Toruné (that is, ladle); and when Antony and his friends were disturbed by this, since their infantry forces were belated, Cleopatra, jesting, said: "What is there dreadful in Caesar's sitting at a ladle?"

[63.1] But Antony, when the enemy sailed against him at daybreak, was afraid lest they should capture his ships while they had no fighting crews, and therefore armed the rowers and drew them up on the decks so as to make a show; then he grouped his ships at the mouth of the gulf near Actium, their ranks of oars on either side lifted and poised as for the stroke, and their prows towards the enemy, as if they were fully manned and prepared to fight. [2] Caesar, thus outwitted and deceived, withdrew. Antony was also thought to have shown great skill in enclosing the potable water within certain barriers and thus depriving the enemy of it, since the places round about afforded little, and that of bad quality. He also behaved with magnanimity towards Domitius, contrary to the judgment of Cleopatra. For when Domitius, who was already in a fever, got into a small boat and went over to Caesar, Antony, though deeply chagrined, nevertheless, sent off to him all his baggage, together with his friends and servants. [3] And Domitius, as if repenting when his faithlessness and treachery became known, straightway died.

There were also defections among the kings, and Amyntas and Deiotarus went over to Caesar. Besides, since his navy was unlucky in everything and always too late to be of assistance, Antony was again compelled to turn his attention to his land forces. Canidius also, the commander of the land forces, changed his mind in presence of the danger, and advised Antony to send Cleopatra away, to withdraw into Thrace or Macedonia, and there to decide the issue by a land battle. [4] For Dicomus the king of the Getae promised to come to their aid with a large force; and it would be no disgrace, Canidius urged, for them to give up the sea to Caesar, who had practised himself there in the Sicilian war; but it would be a strange thing for Antony, who was most experienced in land

conflicts, not to avail himself of the strength and equipment of his numerous legionary soldiers, but to distribute his forces among ships and so fritter them away.

[5] However, Cleopatra prevailed with her opinion that the war should be decided by the ships, although she was already contemplating flight, and was disposing her own forces, not where they would be helpful in winning the victory, but where they could most easily get away if the cause was lost. Moreover, there were two long walls extending down to the naval station from the camp, and between these Antony was wont to pass without suspecting any danger. [6] But a slave told Caesar that it was possible to seize Antony as he went down between the walls, and Caesar sent men to lie in ambush for him. These men came near accomplishing their purpose, but seized only the man who was advancing in front of Antony, since they sprang up too soon; Antony himself escaped with difficulty by running.

...

[66.1] Though the struggle was beginning to be at close range, the ships did not ram or crush one another at all, since Antony's, owing to their weight, had no impetus, which chiefly gives effect to the blows of the beaks, while Caesar's not only avoided dashing front to front against rough and hard bronze armour, but did not even venture to ram the enemy's ships in the side. [2] For their beaks would easily have been broken off by impact against vessels constructed of huge square timbers fastened together with iron. The struggle was therefore like a land battle; or, to speak more truly, like the storming of a walled town. For three or four of Caesar's vessels were engaged at the same time about one of Antony's, and the crews fought with wicker shields and spears and punting-poles and fiery missiles; the soldiers of Antony also shot with catapults from wooden towers.

[3] And now, as Agrippa was extending the left wing with a view to encircling the enemy, Publicola was forced to advance against him, and so was separated

from the centre. The centre falling into confusion and engaging with Arruntius, although the sea-fight was still undecided and equally favourable to both sides, suddenly the sixty ships of Cleopatra were seen hoisting their sails for flight and making off through the midst of the combatants; for they had been posted in the rear of the large vessels, and threw them into confusion as they plunged through. [4] The enemy looked on with amazement, seeing that they took advantage of the wind and made for Peloponnesus. Here, indeed, Antony made it clear to all the world that he was swayed neither by the sentiments of a commander nor of a brave man, nor even by his own, but, as someone in pleasantry said that the soul of the lover dwells in another's body, he was dragged along by the woman as if he had become incorporate with her and must go where she did. [5] For no sooner did he see her ship sailing off than he forgot everything else, betrayed and ran away from those who were fighting and dying in his cause, got into a five-oared galley, where Alexas the Syrian and Scellius were his only companions, and hastened after the woman who had already ruined him and would make his ruin still more complete.

[67.1] Cleopatra recognized him and raised a signal on her ship; so Antony came up and was taken on board, but he neither saw nor was seen by her. Instead, he went forward alone to the prow and sat down by himself in silence, holding his head in both hands. [2] At this point, Liburnian ships were seen pursuing them from Caesar's fleet; but Antony ordered the ship's prow turned to face them, and so kept them off, except the ship of Eurycles the Laconian, who attacked vigorously, and brandished a spear on the deck as though he would cast it at Antony. And when Antony, standing at the prow, asked, "Who is this that pursues Antony?" the answer was, "I am Eurycles the son of Lachares, whom the fortune of Caesar enables to avenge the death of his father." [3] Now, Lachares had been beheaded by Antony because he was involved in a charge of robbery. However, Eurycles did not hit Antony's ship, but smote the other admiral's ship

(for there were two of them) with his bronze beak and whirled her round, and one of the other ships also, which contained costly equipment for household use. [4] When Eurycles was gone, Antony threw himself down again in the same posture and did not stir. He spent three days by himself at the prow, either because he was angry with Cleopatra, or ashamed to see her, and then put in at Taenarum. Here the women in Cleopatra's company at first brought them into a parley, and then persuaded them to eat and sleep together.

[5] Presently not a few of their heavy transport ships and some of their friends began to gather about them after the defeat, bringing word that the fleet was destroyed, but that, in their opinion, the land forces still held together. So Antony sent messengers to Canidius, ordering him to retire with his army as fast as he could through Macedonia into Asia; [6] he himself, however, since he purposed to cross from Taenarum to Libya, selected one of the transport ships which carried much coined money and very valuable royal utensils in silver and gold, and made a present of it to his friends, bidding them divide up the treasure and look out for their own safety. They refused his gift and were in tears, but he comforted them and besought them with great kindness and affection, and finally sent them away, [7] after writing to Theophilus, his steward in Corinth, that he should keep the men in safe hiding until they could make their peace with Caesar. This Theophilus was the father of Hipparchus, who had the greatest influence with Antony, was the first of Antony's freedmen to go over to Caesar, and afterwards lived in Corinth.

[68.1] This, then, was the situation of Antony. But at Actium his fleet held out for a long time against Caesar, and only after it had been most severely damaged by the high sea which rose against it did it reluctantly, and at the tenth hour, give up the struggle. There were not more than five thousand dead, but three hundred ships were captured, as Caesar himself has written. [2] Only a few were aware that Antony had fled, and to those who heard of it the story was at first an incredible one, that he

had gone off and left nineteen legions of undefeated men-at-arms and twelve thousand horsemen, as if he had not many times experienced both kinds of fortune and were not exercised by the reverses of countless wars and fightings. [3] His soldiers, too, had a great longing for him, and expected that he would presently make his appearance from some quarter or other; and they displayed so much fidelity and bravery that even after his flight had become evident they held together for seven days, paying no heed to the messages which Caesar sent them. But at last, after Canidius their general had run away by night and forsaken the camp, being now destitute of all things and betrayed by their commanders, they went over to the conqueror.

...

[73.1] Caesar would not listen to the proposals for Antony, but he sent back word to Cleopatra that she would receive all reasonable treatment if she either put Antony to death or cast him out. He also sent with the messengers one of his own freedmen, Thyrsus, a man of no mean parts, and one who would persuasively convey messages from a young general to a woman who was haughty and astonishingly proud in the matter of beauty. [2] This man had longer interviews with Cleopatra than the rest, and was conspicuously honoured by her, so that he roused suspicion in Antony, who seized him and gave him a flogging, and then sent him back to Caesar with a written message stating that Thyrsus, by his insolent and haughty airs, had irritated him, at a time when misfortunes made him easily irritated. "But if thou dost not like the thing," he said, "thou has my freedman Hipparchus;^[58] hang him up and give him a flogging, and we shall be quits." [3] After this, Cleopatra tried to dissipate his causes of complaint and his suspicions by paying extravagant court to him; her own birthday she kept modestly and in a manner becoming to her circumstances, but she celebrated his with an excess of all kinds of splendour and costliness, so that many of those who were bidden to the supper came poor and went away rich. Meanwhile Caesar was being called home by Agrippa, who frequently

wrote him from Rome that matters there greatly needed his presence.

[74.1] Accordingly, the war was suspended for the time being; but when the winter was over, Caesar again marched against his enemy through Syria, and his generals through Libya. When Pelusium was taken there was a rumour that Seleucus had given it up, and not without the consent of Cleopatra; but Cleopatra allowed Antony to put to death the wife and children of Seleucus, and she herself, now that she had a tomb and monument built surpassingly lofty and beautiful, which she had erected near the temple of Isis, [2] collected there the most valuable of the royal treasures, gold, silver, emeralds, pearls, ebony, ivory, and cinnamon; and besides all this she put there great quantities of torch-wood and tow, so that Caesar was anxious about the reason, and fearing lest the woman might become desperate and burn up and destroy this wealth, kept sending on to her vague hopes of kindly treatment from him, at the same time that he advanced with his army against the city. [3] But when Caesar had taken up position near the hippodrome, Antony sallied forth against him and fought brilliantly and routed his cavalry, and pursued them as far as their camp. Then, exalted by his victory, he went into the palace, kissed Cleopatra, all armed as he was, and presented to her the one of his soldiers who had fought most spiritedly. Cleopatra gave the man as a reward of valour a golden breastplate and a helmet. The man took them, of course, — and in the night deserted to Caesar.

[75.1] And now Antony once more sent Caesar a challenge to single combat. But Caesar answered that Antony had many ways of dying. Then Antony, conscious that there was no better death for him than that by battle, determined to attack by land and sea at once. And at supper, we are told, he bade the slaves pour out for him and feast him more generously; [2] for it was uncertain, he said, whether they would be doing this on the morrow, or whether they would be serving other masters, while he himself would be lying dead, a mummy

and a nothing. Then, seeing that his friends were weeping at these words, he declared that he would not lead them out to battle, since from it he sought an honourable death for himself rather than safety and victory.

[3] During this night, it is said, about the middle of it, while the city was quiet and depressed through fear and expectation of what was coming, suddenly certain harmonious sounds from all sorts of instruments were heard, and the shouting of a throng, accompanied by cries of Bacchic revelry and satyric leavings, as if a troop of revellers, making a great tumult, were going forth from the city; [4] and their course seemed to lie about through the middle of the city toward the outer gate which faced the enemy, at which point the tumult became loudest and then dashed out. Those who sought the meaning of the sign were of the opinion that the god to whom Antony always most likened and attached himself was now deserting him.

[76.1] At daybreak, Antony in person posted his infantry on the hills in front of the city, and watched his ships as they put out and attacked those of the enemy; and as he expected to see something great accomplished by them, he remained quiet. But the crews of his ships, as soon as they were near, saluted Caesar's crews with their oars, and on their returning the salute changed sides, and so all the ships, now united into one fleet, sailed up towards the city prows on. [2] No sooner had Antony seen this than he was deserted by his cavalry, which went over to the enemy, and after being defeated with his infantry he retired into the city, crying out that he had been betrayed by Cleopatra to those with whom he waged war for her sake. But she, fearing his anger and his madness, fled for refuge into her tomb and let fall the drop-doors, which were made strong with bolts and bars; then she sent messengers to tell Antony that she was dead. [3] Antony believed that message, and saying to himself, "Why doest thou longer delay, Antony? Fortune has taken away thy sole remaining excuse for clinging to life," he went into his chamber. Here, as he unfastened his breastplate and

laid it aside, he said: "O Cleopatra, I am not grieved to be bereft of thee, for I shall straightway join thee; but I am grieved that such an imperator as I am has been found to be inferior to a woman in courage."

[4] Now, Antony had a trusty slave named Eros. Him Antony had long before engaged, in case of need, to kill him, and now demanded the fulfilment of his promise. So Eros drew his sword and held it up as though he would smite his master, but then turned his face away and slew himself. And as he fell at his master's feet Antony said: "Well done, Eros! though thou wast not able to do it thyself, thou teachest me what I must do"; and running himself through the belly he dropped upon the couch. [5] But the wound did not bring a speedy death. Therefore, as the blood ceased flowing after he had lain down, he came to himself and besought the bystanders to give him the finishing stroke. But they fled from the chamber, and he lay writhing and crying out, until Diomedes the secretary came from Cleopatra with orders to bring him to her in the tomb.

[77.1] Having learned, then, that Cleopatra was alive, Antony eagerly ordered his servants to raise him up, and he was carried in their arms to the doors of her tomb. Cleopatra, however, would not open the doors, but showed herself at a window, from which she let down ropes and cords. To these Antony was fastened, and she drew him up herself, with the aid of the two women whom alone she had admitted with her into the tomb. [2] Never, as those who were present tell us, was there a more piteous sight. Smearred with blood and struggling with death he was drawn up, stretching out his hands to her even as he dangled in the air. For the task was not an easy one for the women, and scarcely could Cleopatra, with clinging hands and strained face, pull up the rope, while those below called out encouragement to her and shared her agony. [3] And when she had thus got him in and laid him down, she rent her garments over him, beat and tore her breasts with her hands, wiped off some of his blood upon her face, and called him master, husband, and imperator; indeed, she almost forgot

her own ills in her pity for his. But Antony stopped her lamentations and asked for a drink of wine, either because he was thirsty, or in the hope of a speedier release. [4] When he had drunk, he advised her to consult her own safety, if she could do it without disgrace, and among all the companions of Caesar to put most confidence in Proculeius, and not to lament him for his last reverses, but to count him happy for the good things that had been his, since he had become most illustrious of men, had won greatest power, and now had been not ignobly conquered, a Roman by a Roman.

[78.1] Scarcely was he dead, when Proculeius came from Caesar. For after Antony had smitten himself and while he was being carried to Cleopatra, Dercetaeus, one of his body-guard, seized Antony's sword, concealed it, and stole away with it; and running to Caesar, he was the first to tell him of Antony's death, and showed him the sword all smeared with blood. [2] When Caesar heard these tidings, he retired within his tent and wept for a man who had been his relation by marriage, his colleague in office and command, and his partner in many undertakings and struggles. Then he took the letters which had passed between them, called in his friends, and read the letters aloud, showing how reasonably and justly he had written, and how rude and overbearing Antony had always been in his replies. [3] After this, he sent Proculeius, bidding him, if possible, above all things to get Cleopatra into his power alive; for he was fearful about the treasures in her funeral pyre, and he thought it would add greatly to the glory of his triumph if she were led in the procession. Into the hands of Proculeius, however, Cleopatra would not put herself; [4] but she conferred with him after he had come close to the tomb and stationed himself outside at a door which was on a level with the ground. The door was strongly fastened with bolts and bars, but allowed a passage for the voice. So they conversed, Cleopatra asking that her children might have the kingdom, and Proculeius bidding her be of good cheer and trust Caesar in everything.

[79.1] After Proculeius had surveyed the place, he brought back word to Caesar, and Gallus was sent to have another interview with the queen; and coming up to the door he purposely prolonged the conversation. Meanwhile Proculeius applied a ladder and went in through the window by which the women had taken Antony inside. Then he went down at once to the very door at which Cleopatra was standing and listening to Gallus, and he had two servants with him. [2] One of the women imprisoned with Cleopatra cried out, "Wretched Cleopatra, thou art taken alive," whereupon the queen turned about, saw Proculeius, and tried to stab herself; for she had at her girdle a dagger such as robbers wear. But Proculeius ran swiftly to her, threw both his arms about her, and said: "O Cleopatra, thou art wronging both thyself and Caesar, by trying to rob him of an opportunity to show great kindness, and by fixing upon the gentlest of commanders the stigma of faithlessness and implacability." [3] At the same time he took away her weapon, and shook out her clothing, to see whether she was concealing any poison. And there was also sent from Caesar one of his freedmen, Epaphroditus, with injunctions to keep the queen alive by the strictest vigilance, but otherwise to make any concession that would promote her ease and pleasure.

[80.1] And now Caesar himself drove into the city, and he was conversing with Areius the philosopher, to whom he had given his right hand, in order that Areius might at once be conspicuous among the citizens, and be admired because of the marked honour shown him by Caesar. After he had entered the gymnasium and ascended a tribunal there made for him, the people were beside themselves with fear and prostrated themselves before him, but he bade them rise up, and said that he acquitted the people of all blame, first, because of Alexander, their founder; second, because he admired the great size and beauty of the city; and third, to gratify his companion, Areius. [2] This honour Caesar bestowed upon Areius, and pardoned many other persons also at his request. Among these was

Philostratus, a man more competent to speak extempore than any sophist that ever lived, but he improperly represented himself as belonging to the school of the Academy. Therefore Caesar, abominating his ways, would not listen to his entreaties. [3] So Philostratus, having a long white beard and wearing a dark robe, would follow behind Areius, ever declaiming this verse:—

“A wise man will a wise man save, if
wise he be.”

When Caesar heard of this, he pardoned him, wishing rather to free Areius from odium than Philostratus from fear.

[81.1] As for the children of Antony, Antyllus, his son by Fulvia, was betrayed by Theodorus his tutor and put to death; and after the soldiers had cut off his head, his tutor took away the exceeding precious stone which the boy wore about his neck and sewed it into his own girdle; and though he denied the deed, he was convicted of it and crucified. [2] Cleopatra’s children, together with their attendants, were kept under guard and had generous treatment. But Caesarion, who was said to be Cleopatra’s son by Julius Caesar, was sent by his mother, with much treasure, into India, by way of Ethiopia. There Rhodon, another tutor like Theodorus, persuaded him to go back, on the ground that Caesar invited him to take the kingdom. But while Caesar was deliberating on the matter, we are told that Areius said:—

“Not a good thing were a Caesar too many.”

[82.1] As for Caesarion, then, he was afterwards put to death by Caesar, — after the death of Cleopatra; but as for Antony, though many generals and kings asked for his body that they might give it burial, Caesar would not take it away from Cleopatra, and it was buried by her hands in sumptuous and royal fashion, such things being granted her for the purpose as she desired. But in consequence of so much grief as well as pain (for her breasts were wounded and inflamed by the blows she gave them) a fever assailed her, and she welcomed it as an

excuse for abstaining from food and so releasing herself from life without hindrance. [2] Moreover, there was a physician in her company of intimates, Olympus, to whom she told the truth, and she had his counsel and assistance in compassing her death, as Olympus himself testifies in a history of these events which he published. But Caesar was suspicious, and plied her with threats and fears regarding her children, by which she was laid low, as by engines of war, and surrendered her body for such care and nourishment as was desired.

[83.1] After a few days Caesar himself came to talk with her and give her comfort. She was lying on a mean pallet-bed, clad only in her tunic, but sprang up as he entered and threw herself at his feet; her hair and face were in terrible disarray, her voice trembled, and her eyes were sunken. There were also visible many marks of the cruel blows upon her bosom; in a word, her body seemed to be no better off than her spirit. [2] Nevertheless, the charm for which she was famous and the boldness of her beauty were not altogether extinguished, but, although she was in such a sorry plight, they shone forth from within and made themselves manifest in the play of her features. After Caesar had bidden her to lie down and had seated himself near her, she began a sort of justification of her course, ascribing it to necessity and fear of Antony; but as Caesar opposed and refuted her on every point, she quickly changed her tone and sought to move his pity by prayers, as one who above all things clung to life. [3] And finally she gave him a list which she had of all her treasures; and when Seleucus, one of her stewards, showed conclusively that she was stealing away and hiding some of them, she sprang up, seized him by the hair, and showered blows upon his face. [4] And when Caesar, with a smile, stopped her, she said: “But is it not a monstrous thing, O Caesar, that when thou hast deigned to come to me and speak to me though I am in this wretched plight, my slaves denounce me for reserving some women’s adornments, — not for myself, indeed, unhappy woman that I am, — but that I may make trifling gifts to Octavia and thy Livia, and through

their intercession find thee merciful and more gentle?" [5] Caesar was pleased with this speech, being altogether of the opinion that she desired to live. He told her, therefore, that he left these matters for her to manage, and that in all other ways he would give her more splendid treatment than she could possibly expect. Then he went off, supposing that he had deceived her, but he rather deceived by her.

[84.1] Now, there was a young man of rank among Caesar's companions, named Cornelius Dolabella. This man was not without a certain tenderness for Cleopatra; and so now, in response to her request, he secretly sent word to her that Caesar himself was preparing to march with his land forces through Syria, and had resolved to send off her and her children within three days. [2] After Cleopatra had heard this, in the first place, she begged Caesar that she might be permitted to pour libations for Antony; and when the request was granted, she had herself carried to the tomb, and embracing the urn which held his ashes, in company with the women usually about her, she said: "Dear Antony, I buried thee but lately with hands still free; now, however, I pour libations for thee as a captive, and so carefully guarded that I cannot either with blows or tears disfigure this body of mine, which is a slave's body, and closely watched that it may grace the triumph over thee. [3] Do not expect other honours or libations; these are the last from Cleopatra the captive. For though in life nothing could part us from each other, in death we are likely to change places; thou, the Roman, lying buried here, while I, the hapless woman, lie in Italy, and get only so much of thy country as my portion. [4] But if indeed there is any might or power in the gods of that country (for the gods of this country have betrayed us), do not abandon thine own wife while she lives, nor permit a triumph to be celebrated over myself in my person, but hide and bury me here with thyself, since out of all my innumerable ills not one is so great and dreadful as this short time that I have lived apart from thee."

[85.1] After such lamentations, she wreathed and kissed the urn, and then ordered a bath to be prepared for herself. After her bath, she reclined at table and was making a sumptuous meal. And there came a man from the country carrying a basket; and when the guards asked him what he was bringing there, he opened the basket, took away the leaves, and showed them that the dish inside was full of figs. [2] The guards were amazed at the great size and beauty of the figs, whereupon the man smiled and asked them to take some; so they felt no mistrust and bade him take them in. After her meal, however, Cleopatra took a tablet which was already written upon and sealed, and sent it to Caesar, and then, sending away all the rest of the company except her two faithful women, she closed the doors.

[3] But Caesar opened the tablet, and when he found there lamentations and supplications of one who begged that he would bury her with Antony, he quickly knew what had happened. At first he was minded to go himself and give aid; then he ordered messengers to go with all speed and investigate. But the mischief had been swift. For though his messengers came on the run and found the guards as yet aware of nothing, when they opened the doors they found Cleopatra lying dead upon a golden couch, arrayed in royal state. [4] And of her two women, the one called Iras was dying at her feet, while Charmion, already tottering and heavy-handed, was trying to arrange the diadem which encircled the queen's brow. Then somebody said in anger: "A fine deed, this, Charmion!" "It is indeed most fine," she said, "and befitting the descendant of so many kings." Not a word more did she speak, but fell there by the side of the couch.

[86.1] It is said that the asp was brought with those figs and leaves and lay hidden beneath them, for thus Cleopatra had given orders, that the reptile might fasten itself upon her body without her being aware of it. But when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said: "There it is, you see," and baring her arm she held it out for the bite. [2] But others say that the asp was kept carefully shut up in

a water jar, and that while Cleopatra was stirring it up and irritating it with a golden distaff it sprang and fastened itself upon her arm. But the truth of the matter no one knows; for it was also said that she carried about poison in a hollow comb and kept the comb hidden in her hair; and yet neither spot nor other sign of poison broke out upon her body. [3] Moreover, not even was the reptile seen within the chamber, though people said they saw some traces of it near the sea, where the chamber looked out upon it with its windows. And some also say that Cleopatra's arm was seen to have two slight and indistinct punctures; and this Caesar also seems to have believed. For in his triumph an image of Cleopatra herself with the asp clinging to her was carried in the procession. These, then, are the various accounts of what happened.

[4] But Caesar, although vexed at the death of the woman, admired her lofty spirit; and he gave orders that her body should be buried with that of Antony in splendid and regal fashion. Her women also received honourable interment by his orders. When Cleopatra died she was forty years of age save one, and had shared her power with Antony more than fourteen. [5] Antony was fifty-six years of age, according to some, according to others, fifty-three. Now, the statues of Antony were torn down, but those of Cleopatra were left standing, because Archibius, one of her friends, gave Caesar two thousand talents, in order that they might not suffer the same fate as Antony's.