The Odyssey of Homer

A New Verse Translation by

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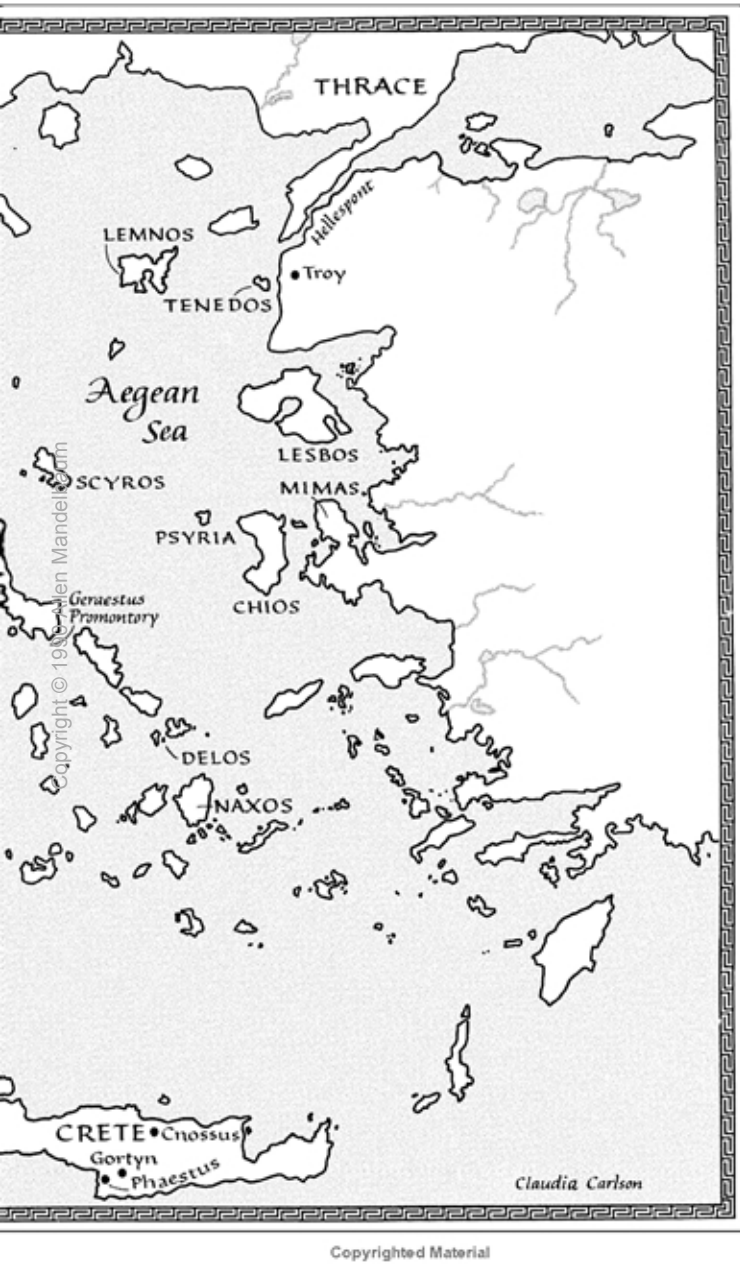

Muse, tell me of the man of many wiles,
the man who wandered many paths of exile
after he sacked Troy's sacred citadel.
He saw the cities—mapped the minds—of many;
and on the sea, his spirit suffered every
adversity—to keep his life intact;
to bring his comrades back. In that last task,
his will was firm and fast, and yet he failed:
he could not save his comrades. Fools, they foiled
themselves: they ate the oxen of the Sun,
the herd of Hélios Hypérion;
the lord of light requited their transgression—
he took away the day of their return.

Muse, tell us of these matters. Daughter of Zeus,
my starting point is any point you choose.

All other Greeks who had been spared the steep
descent to death had reached their homes—released
from war and waves. One man alone was left,
still longing for his home, his wife, his rest.
For the commanding nymph, the brightest goddess,
Calypso, held him in her hollow grottoes:
she wanted him as husband. Even when
the wheel of years drew near his destined time—
the time the gods designed for his return
to Ithaca—he still could not depend
upon fair fortune or unfailing friends.
While other gods took pity on him, one—
Poseidon—still pursued: he preyed upon
divine Odysseus until the end,
until the exile found his own dear land.

But now Poseidon was away—his hosts,
the Ethiopians, the most remote
of men (they live in two divided parts—
half, where the sun-god sets; half, where he starts).
Poseidon, visiting the east, received

the roasted thighs of bulls and sheep. The feast
delighted him. And there he sat. But all
his fellow gods were gathered in the halls
of Zeus upon Olympus; there the father
of men and gods spoke first. His mind upon
the versatile Aegísthus—whom the son
of Agamemnon, famed Oréstes, killed—
he shared this musing with the deathless ones:

"Men are so quick to blame the gods: they say
that we devise their misery. But they
themselves—in their depravity—design
grief greater than the griefs that fate assigns.
So did Aegísthus act when he transgressed
the boundaries that fate and reason set.
He took the lawful wife of Agamemnon;
and when the son of Átreus had come back,
Aegísthus murdered him—although he knew
how steep was that descent. For we'd sent Hermes,
our swiftest, our most keen-eyed emissary,
to warn against that murder and adultery:
'Oréstes will avenge his father when,
his manhood come, he claims his rightful land.'
Hermes had warned him as one warns a friend.
And yet Aegísthus' will could not be swayed.
Now, in one stroke, all that he owes is paid."

Athena, gray-eyed goddess, answered Zeus:
"Our father, Cronos' son, you, lord of lords,
Aegísthus died the death that he deserved.
May death like his strike all who ape his sins.
But brave Odysseus' fate does break my heart:
long since, in misery he suffers, far
from friends, upon an island in the deep—
a site just at the navel of the sea.
And there, upon that island rich in trees,
a goddess has her home: the fair-haired daughter
of Atlas the malevolent (who knows

the depths of every sea, for he controls
the giant column holding earth and sky
apart). Calypso, Atlas' daughter, keeps
the sad Odysseus there—although he weeps.
Her words are fond and fragrant, sweet and soft—
so she would honey him to cast far off
his Ithaca; but he would rather die
than live the life of one denied the sight
of smoke that rises from his homeland's hearths.
Are you, Olympus' lord, not moved by this?
Was not Odysseus your favorite
when, on the spacious plain of Troy, beside
the Argive ships, he sacrificed to you?
What turned your fondness into malice, Zeus?"

Zeus, shepherd of the clouds, replied: "My daughter,
how can the barrier of your teeth permit
such speech to cross your lips? Can I forget
godlike Odysseus, most astute of men,
whose offerings were so unstinting when
he sacrificed to the undying gods,
the masters of vast heaven? Rest assured.
Only Poseidon, lord whose chariot runs
beneath the earth, is furious—it was
Odysseus who deprived the grandest Cyclops,
the godlike Polyphémus, of his eye.
(Thöósa—nymph whose father, Phórcys, keeps
a close watch on the never-resting deep—
gave birth to that huge Cyclops after she
had lain in her deep sea-cave with Poseidon.)
And ever since his son was gouged, the god
who makes earth tremble, though he does not kill
Odysseus, will not let him end his exile.
But now we all must think of his return—
of how to bring him home again. Poseidon
will set aside his anger; certainly
he cannot have his way, for he is only
one god against us all, and we are many." □ □ □

Athena, gray-eyed goddess, answered him:
"Our father, Cronos' son, you, lord of lords,
if now the blessed gods indeed would end
the wanderings of Odysseus, let us send
the keen-eyed Hermes to Calypso's isle,
Ogýgia. Let him there at once declare
to her, the goddess with the lovely hair,
our undeniable decree: Steadfast
Odysseus is to find his homeward path.
But I shall make my way to Ithaca
at once, to give his son the strength to summon
the long-haired Ithacans; when they assemble
he can denounce—and scatter—all the suitors:
they are forever slaughtering his sheep,
his shambling oxen with their curving horns.
Then off to sandy Pylos and to Sparta
I'll send him to seek tidings of his father's
return; he may yet hear some hopeful word—
and men will then commend him for his search."

That said, Athena fastened on fine sandals:
these—golden, everlasting—carried her
with swift winds over seas and endless lands.
The goddess took her bronze-tipped battle lance,
heavy and huge and solid; with this shaft,
she—daughter of so great a force—can smash
the ranks of warriors who've earned her wrath.
One leap—and from Olympus' peaks she reached
the land of Ithaca. She stood before
Odysseus' door, the threshold of his court.
She gripped the bronze-tipped shaft, and taking on
the likeness of a stranger, she became
lord Méntës, chieftain of the Táphians.
She found the braggart suitors at the gate.
Delighting in their dicing, they reclined
on hides of oxen they themselves had skinned—
with pages and attendants serving them,
some mixing wine and water in wide bowls,

while others washed the tables down with sponges
and readied them for food, and others still
stacked meat in heaps on platters—high and full.

The very first to notice Méntës' presence
was young Telémachus. He—sad, morose—
sat with the suitors. In his reverie,
he saw his sturdy father—would that he,
returning suddenly, might banish these
intruders from his palace and restore
the rights and rule that had been his before.
Such was the sadness of Telémachus,
alone among the suitors, till he saw
Athena; he rushed toward the outer door,
ashamed that none had gone to greet the stranger.
He drew near, clasped her right hand, even as
his left relieved her of the heavy lance.
And when he spoke, his words were like winged shafts:
"My greetings, stranger. Welcome to our feast.
Eat first—and then do tell us what you seek."

He led the way; Athena followed him.
Once they were in the high-roofed hall, he placed
her lance against a column at whose base
a polished rack, with slots for spears, was set;
within that rack there stood still other shafts,
the many spears that brave Odysseus left.
He led the stranger to a tall chair, wrought
with care; across its frame he spread rich cloth.
There he invited her to sit and rest
her feet upon a stool; and he himself
sat nearby, on another well-carved chair,
set far off from the suitors, lest his guest,
in all that brouhaha, might look askance
at feasting with such overbearing men—
and, too, because he wanted so to gather
what news he could about his distant father.
That they might wash their hands, a servant poured

fresh water from a lovely golden jug
into a silver basin; at their side
she placed a polished table. The old housewife
was generous: she drew on lavish stores;
to each of them she offered much and more.
The carver offered meats of every sort,
and for their wine he set out golden cups;
and these—again, again—a page filled up.

But then the suitors swaggered in; they sat,
in order, on low seats and high-backed chairs.
The pages poured fresh water for their hands,
and servants brought them baskets heaped with bread.
The suitors' hands reached out. The feast was theirs.

When they had had their fill of food and drink,
the feasters felt the need for chant and dance—
at banquets, these are pleasing ornaments.
A steward now consigned a handsome harp
into the hands of Phémius, who was forced,
from time to time, to entertain those lords.
He struck the strings, and music graced his words.

Then, as Telémachus turned toward his guest,
lest he be overheard, he held his head
close to the gray-eyed goddess—and he said:

"Dear guest, will you be vexed at what I say?
This harping and this chant delight these men,
for all these goods come easily to them:
they feed—but never need to recompense.
They feast at the expense of one whose white
bones, surely, either rot beneath the rain,
unburied and abandoned on the land,
or else are preyed upon by churning waves.
Yet, were Odysseus to return, were they
to see him here again, they would not pray
for gold or richer clothes—just faster feet.

But he has died by now, died wretchedly;
and nothing can console us now, not even
if some man on this earth should say my father
will yet return. The day of his homecoming
is lost: it is a day we'll never see.
But tell me one thing—tell me honestly:
Who are you? Of what father were you born?
Where is your city, where your family?
On what ship did you sail? Why did that crew
bring you to Ithaca? And who were they?
For surely you did not come here on foot!
And also tell me truthfully—is this
the first time you have come to Ithaca,
or have you been my father's guest before?
For many other foreigners have come
to visit us—like you, my father knew
the ways of many men and many lands."

Athena, gray-eyed goddess, answered him:
"My words to you are true: I'm Méntës, son
of wise Anchíalus; the Táphians,
tenacious oarsmen, are the men I rule.
Now I have landed here with ship and crew;
we cross the winedark sea toward Témesë—
all this in search of copper. What we stow
is gleaming iron, which we're set to barter.
Outside the city, moored in Rhēithron's harbor,
close to the fields, beneath Mount Néion's forest,
my ship is waiting. Years ago, your father
and mine were guests and friends. (Just ask the brave
Laértës—though they say he shuns the city;
it seems that now he much prefers to grieve
far off, alone, except for one old servant.
She, when his body aches from the hard climb
he makes, from slope to slope, to tend his vines,
still carries food and drink right to his side.)

□ □ □

"Now I have come—for I had heard indeed
that he, your father, had returned. Surely
it is the gods who now obstruct his journey.
For bright Odysseus has not died upon
this earth: he is alive somewhere, delayed
upon an island set among vast waves,
held by harsh savages, against his will.
I am no augur or interpreter
of flights of birds, but now I shall foretell—
even as the immortals prompt my soul—
events my mind can see: Your father will
not be kept back from his dear land much longer,
though they may bind him fast in iron chains;
he is a man of many wiles, who can
contrive the way to reach his home again.
But you—do tell me now with honesty:
Are you, so tall, indeed Odysseus' son?
Your head and handsome eyes resemble his
extraordinarily; we two had met
quite often in the days before he left
for Troy, where others, too—the Argives' best—
sailed in their hollow ships. But since then I
have not seen him, and he has not seen me."

Telémachus' reply was keen and wise:
"Dear friend, I cannot be more frank than this.
My mother says I am his son, but none
can know for sure the seed from which he's sprung.
In any case, would I had been the son
of one so blessed that he grew old among
his own belongings. I, instead, am born—
or so they say—of one who surely was
the most forsaken man, the most forlorn.
Now you have had and heard my full response."

Athena, gray-eyed goddess, answered him:
"Despite misfortune now, your family
can count on future fame: Penelope

is mother of a son who is most worthy.
But tell me truthfully: What sort of feast
is this? A banquet? Or a wedding party?
This surely is no meal where each has brought
his share. Why did this crowd seek out your house?
These guzzlers seem to me no better than
a pack of swaggerers—too rude, too coarse.
Seeing their shameful doings, any man
of sense would feel both anger and contempt."

Telémachus' response was wise, precise:
"Dear guest, to all you ask, I now reply.
I tell you that as long as he, my father,
was in his native land, this house was rich
and great. But then the gods willed otherwise—
they made my father vanish: they devised
oblivion for him—much deeper than
oblivion known by any other man.
And though he's dead, my grief would be less deep
if he had fallen in the land of Troy,
among his fellow warriors, or else—
once he had wound up all the threads of war—
had died at home, among his very own.
Then all of the Achæans would have built
a tomb for him; and, too, he would have won
much glory for his son in days to come.
Instead, the spirit-winds—the stormy Harpies—
snatched him away ingloriously: he
was banished into black obscurity.
And I am left with grief and misery.
I sigh not only over him: the gods
have given me still more calamities.
All lords with power in these isles—who rule
Dulíchium and Samos and Zacýnthus,
the wooded isle, and those who now presume
to rule in rocky Ithaca—continue
to woo my mother and consume my goods.
She'll not reject the hateful wedding or

accept it. Meanwhile all their gluttony
lays waste my house; they soon will ruin me."

Pallas Athena, now incensed, replied:
"The absent one, Odysseus, is indeed
the man whom you, unhappy son, could use:
he'd break the back of this marauding band.
Would he—returned—were now to take his stand
upon the threshold with his helmet, shield,
and pair of spears—the mighty man that I
first saw on his way back from Éphyrë,
the land of Ílus, son of Mérmerus;
along his homeward way, he stayed with us—
I saw him drinking, feasting, in our house.
(He'd sailed in his fast ship to visit Ílus,
to seek a fatal venom he could smear
on his bronze arrow-tips; but in his fear
of the undying gods' displeasure, Ílus
refused to give Odysseus that dread drug.
My father gave it to him, for he loved
your father so extraordinarily.)
For if Odysseus were to show himself
among this pack of suitors with the same
strength he showed then, they all would meet quick death
and bitter wooing. But of things like these—
whether or not your father, on returning,
will take revenge within his palace—we
know nothing; such things lie upon the knees
of gods. But for yourself, you must consider
the way in which to rid your house of suitors.
Now hear my words and think on them with care.
Tomorrow ask the lords of Ithaca
to gather here; then speak to all, and let
the gods be witnesses. Command the suitors
to scatter, each on his own way; and order
your mother, should she be inclined to wed,
to go back to her mighty father's house.
Let him prepare his daughter's wedding and

the gifts—appropriately rich—she merits.
As for yourself, the path I urge is this,
if you would listen: Find the fittest ship
and, with a crew of twenty oarsmen, seek
some word of your long-absent father—for
a mortal may have heard about him, or
your ears may chance to hear the voice that Zeus
so often uses when he brings men news.
Sail first to Pylos: question noble Nestor.
Then visit Sparta's king, blond Meneláus:
of all Achæans clad in bronze, he was
the last to reach his home. If you should hear
word that your father is still alive and steers
a homeward path, then—though you are much tried—
you surely can hold out for one more year.
But if you learn that he has died, return
to your dear land and raise a mound for him;
complete a just, unstinting funeral,
then marry off your mother to some man:
you will have done all that you should—and can.
But then weigh carefully in mind and soul
how best to kill the suitors in your halls—
by way of open combat or of guile.
Forget the pastimes of a child: you are
a boy no longer. Or have you not heard
what fame Oréstes gained when he avenged
the murder of his father? Everyone
knows how he killed that master of deceptions,
Aegísthus, slayer of great Agamemnon.
You, too, my friend—I see you tall, robust—
must never flinch or falter if you want
to win the praise of men in time to come.
But now I must return to my swift ship;
this long delay may make my comrades fret.
Consider carefully—heed what I've said."

□ □ □

Telémachus' reply was keen and wise:
"My guest, your words come from a friendly mind—
words like a father's to a son—and I
shall not forget them. But why not extend
your stay? Although your voyage presses, bathe—
refresh your spirit; then, fine gift in hand,
you can with satisfaction sail away.
That gift will be a precious, handsome thing,
a keepsake such as dear friends give to friends."

Athena, gray-eyed goddess, answered him:
"Do not delay me now. I truly wish
to leave; whatever gift your heart would give—
you'll choose a handsome one, I'm sure—can be
consigned when I stop here again, on my
return, that I may bear it home. And it
will earn for you a gift of equal merit."

When that was said, gray-eyed Athena left,
quick as a bird. Within his heart she'd set
resolve and strength and memories more intense—
more bent upon his father—than before.
And he was pensive, marveling, aware
that he had had some god as visitor.

At once he went among the suitors—he,
a mortal like a god. The flawless bard
was chanting still; the suitors sat in silent
astonishment. He sang of the Achaéans:
their sad return from Troy, the penalty
Athena made them pay. Penelope,
within her rooms above, hung on his words;
she grasped the wondrous sense of every verse.
The pensive daughter of Icárius
descended the steep stairs, escorted by
two of her maids: she did not come alone.
And when that lovely woman reached the hall,
beside a pillar that sustained the roof,

she stopped—a glowing shawl before her face,
and, to each side, there stood a faithful maid.
In tears, Penelope implored the singer:

"You, Phémius, know many other deeds
of men and gods—exploits that bring delight
to mortals, acts that singers celebrate.
Then, seated here among these suitors sing
of such things—while they drink their wine in silence.
But stop this dismal chant, for it consumes
the heart within my breast, since I have been
struck by a loss that cannot be forgotten.
Indeed, such was the man for whom I grieve
with endless memory, a man whose glory
is known through Hellas, Argos—all of Greece."

This was Telémachus' astute reply:
"My mother, why not let the faithful singer
delight us as his heart impels? The singer
is not to blame; this grief was brought by Zeus,
he who assigns to those who feed on bread
the good or evil he alone decrees.
Do not fault Phémius if he would sing
the Dánaans' sorry doom: men hold most dear
whatever song is newest to their ears.
Allow your heart and soul to listen, for
Odysseus was not the only one
to lose in Troy the day of his return:
there many other warriors met their death.
But go now to your room; tend to your tasks,
the distaff and the loom; your women can
complete the work that they began. Leave speech
to men: to all those here and—most—to me;
within this house, I have authority."

Amazed, while going to her room, she laid
to heart her son's wise words. Then, with her maids,
she reached the upper floor, and wept and wept

for her dear husband, her Odysseus,
until Athena, gray-eyed goddess, shed
sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

But the suitors
began to clamor in the shadowed hall:
each hoped that he might lie in bed with her.
For them Telémachus had these sharp words:

"How arrogant you are—beyond all measure—
you who would win my mother. Feast with pleasure
for now, but let there be no brouhaha:
to hear the song of one whose voice is like
the gods'—that is most fine. There will be time
tomorrow to assemble, one and all;
within that council I shall frankly call
on every one of you to quit my halls.
Just hold your future revels someplace else;
consume your own fine goods; let each for each
prepare, in turn—in his own house—a feast.
Or if you think it easier—or better—
to eat your unpaid way through one man's wealth,
feast here indeed. But I shall then implore
the gods, who live forever, asking Zeus
to grant me my requital: all of you
would then die unavenged within these halls."

The angry suitors bit their lips, amazed
to hear Telémachus speak words so brave.
Antínoüs, Eupēithes' son, replied:

"Telémachus, the gods indeed may teach
brash blustering to you and braggart speech.
But let us hope that they'll not intervene,
that Cronos' son will not make you the king
of seagirt Ithaca, whatever claim
your birth might bring."

□ □ □

To this, Telémachus'
reply was keen and wise: "Antínoüs,
though what I say may well incite your wrath,
I would be king were Zeus to grant me that.
I want that honor: do you really think
that kingship is a sorry destiny?
To be a king does not mean misery:
a ruler's house grows rich at once; his name
gains glory everywhere. In any case,
our seagirt Ithaca has many lords—
other Achæan chiefs both young and old;
and since the firm Odysseus now is dead,
one of these princes may succeed him. Yet
I still shall rule in my own hall and keep
the servants that Odysseus won for me."

Eurýmachus, the son of Pólybus,
replied: "This matter rests on the gods' knees—
which lord of the Achæans will be king
in seagirt Ithaca. But do be sure,
your house has you as lord, your goods are yours.
As long as there are men in Ithaca,
no one—whoever he may be—can come
and seize your wealth by force, against your will.
But, dear friend, tell me now about the stranger:
Where does he come from? Did he say what country
he can call home? Where is his family?
Where are his native fields? Did he bring word
about Odysseus' coming home? Or was
he traveling on his own affairs? He left
so quickly, suddenly; he did not wait
to meet us—but his aspect was not base."

Telémachus' reply was careful, weighed:
"Eurýmachus, that day is lost—the day
on which my father would return. And thus,
no news that men may bring can win my trust:
I pay no heed to any prophecy,

to any seer my mother may have called
into this hall. That stranger is a friend
whom I inherited. He comes from Taphos:
Méntës, the son of wise Anchíalus—
so he announced himself. And he commands
those men who love to row, the Táphians."

Though he said this, his heart knew he had met
the deathless goddess: she had been his guest.

The suitors, charmed by dance, entranced by song,
rejoicing, waited for the night to come.
And then dark evening fell as they caroused,
and each—to sleep—went back to his own house.
Telémachus walked toward the fair courtyard:
there stood the high-walled room, set well apart,
where he would spend the night. But as he walked,
not sleep but hope and worry filled his thoughts.
Beside him, blazing torches in her hands
to light his way, went careful Euryclēia,
daughter of Ops, who was Peisénor's son.
(Long years ago, when she had just been touched
by loveliness, Laértës purchased her:
he paid as much as twenty oxen cost.
And even as he honored his dear wife,
so had he honored her. But he had never
brought her to bed with him: he took much care
never to wound his wife or stir her anger.)
And it was she who led him to his door,
who bore bright torches as they crossed the court,
for none among the handmaids loved him more—
she was the one who'd nursed Telémachus.

Once he'd unlatched the door of his fine room,
he sat down on the bed, shed his soft tunic,
and handed it to the astute old woman.
She smoothed and folded it, then hung it on
a peg beside the bedstead. When she left,

she shut the door, drew to the silver knob,
then pulled the drop-strap fast. Telémachus—
night long, and covered by a wool-fleece wrap—
thought on the trip his goddess-guest had mapped.

BOOK II

Dawn.

•

A public appeal in vain:
Telémachus before the elders of Ithaca;
his complaint against the suitors.

The omen of the eagles:
an augur's prediction of Odysseus' return
and his vengeance on the suitors.

•

Telémachus and Athena, as Mentor, by the shore:
the goddess' plan for Telémachus' departure.

Their secret preparations;
a swift ship and a sturdy crew.

An evening sailing—
off to Pylos.

Firstlight: when Dawn's rose fingers touched the sky,
the dear son of Odysseus—quick to rise
and dress—soon set within his shoulder strap
his sharp blade; to his feet—anointed, sleek—
he tied fine sandals. As he crossed the threshold,
he seemed a god. At once he told his heralds—
with voices clarion-clear—to call a council.
The long-haired Ithacans were soon assembled.
Then he, his lance of bronze held fast, advanced—
but not alone: behind, two brisk hounds paced.
On him Athena shed a deathless grace,
and all the people marveled as he came
to the assembly ground. He took his place:
his father's seat. The elders all gave way.

The first to speak was lord Aegýptius,
one bent with age, astute in all life's ways.
The spearman Ántiphus was his dear son,
the good Odysseus' close companion, one
who'd sailed in hollow ships to Ílion,
where many fine foals graze. But in the cave
of brutal Cyclops, when that savage ate
the Ithacans, his final meal was made
of Ántiphus. Three other sons were born
of lord Aegýptius; and although one,
Eurýnomus, had joined the suitors' band,
the last two farmed their aged father's lands.
And yet Aegýptius did not forget
his absent son: his grief was long and deep.
Now, even as he wept, he urged the chiefs:

"Do listen, Ithacans, to what I say.
This is our first assembly since the day
when hollow ships bore bright Odysseus
away. But who is he who summons us?
Who needed so to see us gather here—
a younger man or one well on in years?
Did he hear word of an approaching force

and want to share that first alert with us?
Or did he need to rally this assembly
for other public matters he'll discuss?
In any case, he seems to me courageous,
blessed by the gods: may Zeus be generous—
and let this man fulfill what his heart wills."

His words were done. Odysseus' dear son
delighted in the presage he had heard.
He sat no longer but prepared to speak.
He stood among the Ithacans. Peisénor,
the herald, wise in counsel, set the scepter
into his hands. And then Telémachus
spoke words meant—chiefly—for Aegýptius:

"Old man, as you yourself are soon to hear,
the one who called this council is at hand.
I am the man who wanted us to meet,
the man who—more than any here—must grieve.
I have no news of an invading fleet,
no urgent warning I must now repeat
to every Ithacan—nor would I speak
of other public things. All that I plead
is my own sorry case: A double curse
has fallen on my house. For I have lost
a most courageous father, he who once
ruled you who gather here—a man most gentle.
And still another evil threatens me:
The ruin of my house will be complete;
all that we own will be consumed. The suitors—
dear sons of those who are the noblest here—
against her will, besiege my mother now.
They are afraid to seek her father's house—
though it's Icárius who should endow
his daughter with a dowry, then bestow
her hand upon that man he favors most.
Instead, they crowd into our house. They slaughter
oxen and rams and fat goats; there they guzzle

our glowing wine: their stupid rite, their revel.
They waste our wealth away: there's no defense—
no man who, as Odysseus could, might end
this pestilence. I am too weak to check
their insolence; yes—even if I tried,
I lack warcraft, the power that defies.
Had I the force, I certainly would fight:
their acts are unendurable—my house
has gone to ruin—a disastrous course.
You, too, should scorn their ways and feel the force
of shame for what your neighbors here have wrought:
beware—the gods, grown angry for these acts
of malice, may assault you in their wrath.
I call upon Olympian Zeus and Themis,
she who disperses and convenes men's meetings:
my friends, let each of you go his own way;
leave me to my despair. Or can it be
that brave Odysseus' hate brought injury
to the Achæans with their sturdy greaves,
and you, revenging that, would harass me,
inciting those who court Penelope?
If that is so, it would indeed be better
were you—and not the suitors—to consume
my herds and treasures: then I could at least
receive fair recompense. We would persist,
would press our claim throughout the town, insist
on payment for our goods, until their worth
was given back in full. But now you cast
despair into my heart—a sorrow past
all care and cure."

These were his bitter words.
Throwing his scepter to the ground, he wept;
and pity overcame the people. All
the rest were motionless; and no one dared
to answer him with harsh words—none, except
Antínoüs, who, in replying, said:

□ □ □

"Telémachus, with roaring words, unchecked,
your anger blames, defames us. But be sure,
if anyone's to blame, it's not the suitors,
but that supreme deceiver—your dear mother.
Three years have passed—the fourth will soon be gone:
she still continues to connive, to thwart
the hearts of the Achǽans. She would sport:
she offers every suitor hope and promise—
meanwhile her mind is bent on something else.
Her heart devised this guile: Within her room
Penelope set up a spacious loom.
The web was wide, the threads were fine, and she
assured us all—unhesitatingly:
'Young men, since bright Odysseus now is dead,
be patient; though you're keen to marry me,
wait till the cloth is done, lest any thread
unravel. This is lord Laértës' shroud—
the robe he'll wear when dark death strikes him down.
I weave it now, lest some Achǽan women
condemn me for neglect, for having let
a man who'd won such wealth lie at his death
without a shroud.' These were her words—and we,
with manly hearts, agreed. So she would weave
that mighty web by day—but then, by night,
by torchlight, she undid what she had done.
She hoodwinked all of us for three long years;
but when, as spring returned, the fourth was here,
one of her women servants—well aware
of how your mother had connived—told all.
We caught Penelope as she unraveled
that lovely web. So she—against her will—
completed it. This is our just retort
to you—that you may know it in your heart
and the Achǽans all may know it, too:
Send off your mother now, and order her
to wed the suitor chosen by her father—
and pleasing to herself. And should she vex
the sons of the Achǽans any longer,