

ILIAD 2

The gods slept soundly that night,
And the men, by their warhorses.

But Zeus lay awake in the dark,
Thinking of how to honor Achilles
And destroy Greeks by the shipload.
His thoughts parted like stormclouds,
And in the clear space between them
He saw what seemed to be the best plan:
To send to Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
A woolly menace, a Dream,
And to it he spoke these feathery words:

"Go, deadly Dream, along the Greek ships
Until you come to the hut of Agamemnon,
And deliver this message to him exactly:
Order him to arm his long-haired Greeks.
Now is his time to capture Troy.
The Olympian gods are no longer divided;
Hera has bent them all to her will
And targeted the Trojans for pain."

The Dream listened and went. Shadows flew
Around the Greek ships. It found Agamemnon
Wrapped in deep, starlit slumber.

The Dream stood above his head. It looked
Like Nestor, the old man that Agamemnon
Respected the most, looked just like Nestor,
And this dream that was a god addressed the king:

"Asleep, son of Atreus, horsebreaker,
Wise man? You can't sleep all night.
All those decisions to make, so many people
Depending on you. I'll be brief.

I am a messenger from Zeus, who is
Far away, but loves you and pities you.
He orders you to arm your long-haired Greeks.
Now is your time to capture Troy.
The Olympian gods are no longer divided;
Hera has bent them all to her will
And targeted Troy for sorrow from Zeus.
Think it over. Keep your wits about you,
And don't forget this when sleep slips away."

And the voice trailed off, leaving him there
Dreaming of things that were never to be.
He thought he would take Priam's city that day,
The fool. He didn't know what Zeus had in mind,
The pain and groans for both Trojans and Greeks
In the unendurable crush of battle.
He woke from sleep, the god's voice
Eddying around him. He sat upright,
Pulled on a silky shirt, threw on a cloak,
Laced a pair of sandals on his shining feet,
And hung from his shoulder a silver-worked sword.
And he held his imperishable, ancestral staff
As he walked through the ships of the bronze-kilted Greeks.

Dawn had just reached the peak of Olympus,
Speaking light to Zeus and the other immortals.

Agamemnon ordered the heralds
To call the Greeks to assembly.

The call went out, and the people gathered.
Agamemnon seated the elders first
By Nestor's ship and unfolded his plan:

60

"Listen, my friends. A dream from Zeus
Came to me last night in my sleep. It looked
Just like Nestor, same face, same build,
And it stood above my head and spoke:
'Asleep, son of Atreus, horsebreaker,
Wise man? You can't sleep all night.
All those decisions to make, so many people
Depending on you. I'll be brief.

70

I am a messenger from Zeus, who is
Far away, but loves you and pities you.
He orders you to arm your long-haired Greeks.
Now is your time to capture Troy.
The Olympian gods are no longer divided;
Hera has bent them all to her will
And targeted Troy for sorrow from Zeus.
Think it over.' The dream said all this
And off it flew, and I awoke from a sweet sleep.
We'd better move if we're going to get the men in armor.
But I'm going to test them first with a little speech,
The usual drill—order them to beat a retreat in their ships.
It's up to each one of you to persuade them to stay."

80

He had his say and sat down. Then up rose
Nestor, king of sandswept Pylos.
He was full of good will in the speech he made:

"Friends, Argive councillors and commanders:

If any other Greek told us this dream
We would call it a lie and turn our backs on him.
But this is a man with a claim to be
The best of the Greeks. We'd better move
If we're going to get them in armor."

And he headed out. The other commanders stood up,

90

Convinced he was right.

The troops were moving now,

*Swarming like insects over the beach, like bees
That hum from a hollow rock in an endless line
And fly in clusters over flowers in spring,
Grouping themselves in aerial throngs.*

100

The Greeks made like that as they swarmed
Out of the ships and the huts clutched beneath them,
Filing through the deep sand into assembly,
Swept along by Zeus' emissary,
Wildfire Rumor. They milled about
In the assembly ground, and the earth
Groaned as the unruly crowd eased itself down,
And nine bawling heralds tried to stop their shouting
And get them to listen to their Zeus-spawned kings.
They settled down finally and kept their seats
And stopped all the noise.

Up stood Lord Agamemnon,
Holding a staff.

110

Hephaestus had crafted this staff
And Hephaestus had given it to Cronion Zeus.
Zeus in turn gave it to quicksilver Hermes
And Hermes to Pelops, the charioteer.
Pelops handed it on to Atreus,
And when Atreus died he left it to Thyestes.
Thyestes left it for Agamemnon to bear
And rule over the islands and all of Argos.
Leaning on it now he addressed the Greeks:

"Danaan heroes and soldiers,
Zeus

120

Is a hard god, friends. He's kept me in the dark
After all his promises and nods my way
That I'd raze Ilion's walls before sailing home.
It was all a lie, and I see now that his orders
Are for me to return to Argos in disgrace,
And this after all the armies I've destroyed.

I have no doubt that this is the high will
Of the god who has toppled so many cities
And will in the future, all glory to his power.

130

But it will be shame for generations to come,

That such a large and powerful army of Greeks
Has fought this futile war against a few puny men.

There is no end in sight, nor has there ever been.

Look, if the Greeks and the Trojans

Agreed to a truce, and both sides counted off—

All of the Trojans who live in the city

And all of the Greeks—and if we Greeks formed up

In platoons of ten, and each platoon picked a Trojan

To pour our wine, there would be many platoons

With no one to pour. That's how much our Greek forces

140

Outnumber the Trojans who live in the city.

It's their allies, reinforcements from other cities,

Who keep hitting me hard and won't let me capture

Ilion's serried fortress no matter how hard I try.

Nine years of great Zeus have passed.

Our ships' timbers are rotten and their tackle loose.

Our wives and little children are no doubt

Sitting at home waiting for us. And here we are,

The job that we came to do unfinished.

Now this is what I say, and I want us all to obey:

150

Let's clear out with our ships and head for home.

There's no more hope we will take Troy's tall town."

This speech roused the spirits of the rank and file,

The masses who had not been in on the council.

The army started to move on the shore.

Long waves form

On the Icarian Sea when winds East and South

Explode from the clouds of putriarch Zeus;

Or the West Wind rapes a field of deep wheat,

Rippling and tassling the ears as it blows.

160

So too these troop lines.

Then the shouting began,

And the mad rush to the ships, dust rising
In plumes from their feet as confused yells—
To fasten boathooks, clear out launchways
And drag the ships down to the shining sea—
Rose to the sky. They were going home.

They had already begun to remove the chocks

From under the hulls, and there might have been

An unordained homecoming then for the Greeks

If Hera had not had a word with Athena:

170

"This is awful. Child of Zeus, Mystic Daughter
Of the Aegis-Holder, are we going to allow
The Greeks to go home just like that, run away

To their own country over the sea's broad back?

They're just going to hand Priam and the Trojans

The glory, not to mention Helen of Argos,

For whose sake many a Greek has perished in Troy,

Far from his homeland. Go down there now

Along the ranks of the bronze-shirted Greeks,

180

And with your mild words restrain each man.

Don't let them haul their curved prows to the sea."

And Athena streaked down from Olympus' crags,
Her eyes like owls', grey in the blue air,

And came quickly to the ships in the beachhead camp.

She found Odysseus there, his mind like Zeus' own,

Standing in thought. He had not laid a hand

On his benched, black ship, and his heart was heavy.

The owl-eyed goddess stood close to him and said:

"Son of Laertes in the line of Zeus, wily Odysseus,

190

Are you Greeks going to run away just like that,

Home to your fatherland over the sea's broad back?

Are you just going to hand Priam and the Trojans

The glory, not to mention Helen of Argos,

For whose sake many a Greek has perished in Troy,

Far from his homeland? Now go down along

All the ships of the bronze-shirted Greeks,

And with your mild words restrain each man.
Don't let them haul their curved prow to the sea."

Odysseus knew that voice, and he set off at a run,
Throwing his cloak behind him—Eurybates
The herald, his man from Ithaca, gathered it up—
And he went up to Agamemnon and got from him
His ancestral staff, that splinter of eternity,
And with it went along the ships of the Greeks.
Whenever he encountered a chieftain or the like,
He tried to restrain him with gentle words:

"What's gotten into you? I don't mean to frighten you
As if you were a coward, but sit down here yourself
And make your men sit down. You don't really know
Agamemnon's mind. He's just testing us now,
But before long he's going to come down on us hard.
Didn't we all hear what he said in council?
If he gets angry the whole army had better watch out.
Kings are bred by Zeus and have tempers to match."

But if he caught any of the ordinary soldiers yelling,
He would belt him with the staff and bawl him out:

"You there, who do you think you are? Sit still
And listen to your betters. You're a weakling,
Unfit for combat, a nothing in battle and in council.
Do you think every Greek here can be a king?
It's no good having a carload of commanders. We need
One commander, one king, the one to whom Zeus,
Son of Cronus the crooked, has given the staff
And the right to make decisions for his people."

And so Odysseus mastered the army. The men all
Streamed back from their ships and huts and assembled
With a roar.

*A wave from the restless, churning sea
Crashes on a beach, and the water seethes and thunders.*

They had all dropped to the sand and were sitting there,
Except for one man, Thersites, a blathering fool
And a rabble rouser. This man had a repertoire
Of choice insults he used at random to revile the nobles,
Saying anything he thought the soldiers would laugh at.
He was also the ugliest soldier at the siege of Troy,
Bowed, walked with a limp, his shoulders
Slumped over his caved-in chest, and up top
Scraggly fuzz sprouted on his pointy head.
Achilles especially hated him, as did Odysseus,
Because he was always provoking them. Now
He was screaming abuse at Agamemnon.
The Achaeans were angry with him and indignant,
But that didn't stop him from razzing the warlord:

"What's wrong, son of Atreus, something you need?
Your huts are filled with bronze, and with women
We Achaeans pick out and give to you first of all
Whenever we take some town. Are you short of gold?
Maybe some Trojan horse breeder will bring you some
Out of Ilion as ransom for his son
Whom I or some other Achaean has captured.
Maybe it's a young girl for you to make love to
And keep off somewhere for yourself. It's not right
For a leader to march our troops into trouble.
You Achaeans are a disgrace, Achaean women, not men!
Let's sail home in our ships and leave him here
To stew over his prizes so he'll have a chance to see
Whether he needs our help or not. Furthermore,
He dishonored Achilles, who's a much better man.
Achilles doesn't have an angry bone in his body,
Or this latest atrocity would be your last, son of Atreus!"

That was the abuse Agamemnon took
From the mouth of Thersites. Odysseus
Was on him in a flash, staring him down
With a scowl, and laid into him:

"Mind your tongue, Thersites. Better think twice

About being the only man here to quarrel with his betters.
I don't care how bell-toned an orator you are,
You're nothing but trash. There's no one lower

In all the army that followed Agamemnon to Troy.

270

You have no right even to mention kings in public,
Much less badmouth them so you can get to go home.

We have no idea how things are going to turn out,
What kind of homecoming we Achaeans will have.

Yet you have the nerve to revile Agamemnon,
Son of Atreus, the shepherd of his people,

Because the Danaan heroes are generous to him?

You think you can stand up in public and insult him?

Well, let me tell you something. I guarantee

That if I ever catch you running on at the mouth again

280

As you were just now, my name isn't Odysseus

And may I never again be called Telemachus' father

If I don't lay hold of you, strip your ass naked,

And run you out of the assembly and through the ships,

Crying at all the ugly licks I land on you."

And with that he whaled the staff down

On Thersites' back. The man crumpled in pain

And tears flooded his eyes. A huge bloody welt

Rose on his back under the gold stave's force,

290

And he sat there astounded, drooling with pain

And wiping away his tears. The troops, forgetting

Their disappointment, had a good laugh

At his expense, looking at each other and saying:

"Oh man! You can't count how many good things..."

Odysseus has done for the Greeks, a real leader

In council and in battle, but this tops them all,

The way he took that loudmouth out of commission.

I don't think he'll ever be man enough again

To rile the commanders with all his insults."

That's what they were saying in the ranks.

300

Then Odysseus, destroyer of cities, stood up
Holding the staff. Owl-eyed Athena transformed herself

Into a herald and silenced the troops
So that every last man in the Greek army
Would listen closely to what he had to say:

"Son of Atreus, the Greeks are out to make you,
My lord, the most despised man on earth,

And they have no intention of keeping the promise
They made to you when they set out from Argos—

Not to return until you pulled down Ilion's walls.

They are like little children or widow women,

The way they whine to each other about going home.

God knows it's hard enough to make a man give up

And go back. A man gets discouraged when he spends

Even one month away from his wife on his ship,

Battling winter winds and the surging sea.

For us, it's nine years we've been here now.

I can't blame our men for getting discouraged

As they wait beside their beaked ships. But still,

It would be a disgrace to go home empty-handed

After all this time. So bear up, friends,

And let's stay long enough to find out whether

Calchas has prophesied truly or not.

Everyone here—and I'm talking about all of us

Not carried off by the wings of death—remembers it.

It seems like just yesterday when the ships

Were mustered at Aulis with their cargo of sorrows

For Priam and the Trojans. We were gathered

Around a spring, offering sacrifice on sacred altars,

Perfect hecatombs, beneath a beautiful plane tree

From under which the shining water flowed.

330

Then we saw it: a serpent, its back blood-red,

Horrible—the Olympian himself

Must have brought it into the daylight.

It slithered out from the altar and up the plane tree.

A sparrow's fledglings were nested

On the topmost branch, eight little birds

Trembling under the leaves, or nine, counting

The mother who hatched them, and the serpent

Devoured them all as they cheeped pitifully.

The mother fluttered around, mourning her nestlings,

?

340

But he coiled and got her by the wing as she shrieked.
After he had eaten the sparrow and her young,
The very god who revealed him turned him to stone,
An unmistakable portent from Zeus, son of Cronus.
We stood there in awe of what had happened,
This prodigy that crept into our sacrifice.

Calchas was quick to pronounce its prophetic meaning:
'Why are you silent, all you long-haired Greeks?
This great portent is a message from Zeus,
Whose glory shall never die—a portent late in coming,
And late to be fulfilled. As this serpent devoured
The sparrow's children and the bird herself,
Eight hatchlings, nine, counting the mother,
So will we for as many years wage this war,
But in the tenth year we will capture the city.'
That was his prophecy, and it has all come true.
So let's have every Greek who ever strapped on armor
Stay put, until we capture Priam's great city!"

He finished. And the Greeks cheered, so loud
That the wooden hulls of the ships boomed
With their approval of godlike Odysseus' speech.

Then Nestor, the Gerenian rider, addressed them:

"Bah, you're carrying on like silly boys
Who have no business at all fighting a war.
What will become of our compacts and oaths?
Into the fire with our resolutions and plans,
The pure wine we poured out, the handclaps
We trusted in! We are wrangling with words now
And will not find thereby the ways or means
To stay the course for long.

Son of Atreus,
Assert yourself, and resume your command
Of the Greek forces in all their grueling battles.
To hell with those one or two Achaeans
With private plans—which will come to nothing—
To return to Argos before we know for sure
Whether Zeus' promise was a lie or not.

I say that the Aegis-Holder nodded his assent
On that day when the Argives came in their ships
With their cargo of carnage and death for the Trojans.
Lightning on the right, favorable signs revealed.
No man here should be in a hurry to go home
Until he has spent the night with some Trojan's wife
As revenge for Helen's struggles and groans.
But if anyone is so almighty eager
To go back home, let him touch his black ship—
So he can seal his fate before the whole army.
But now, my lord, be prudent and take the advice,
Hardly negligible, that I am about to give.
Divide the men by tribes and clans, Agamemnon,
So that clans and tribes can support each other.
If you do this and the army complies,
You will know which of your captains is a coward
And which is brave, and so too with the soldiers,
For they will fight as units. You will know too
Whether it is heaven's will that you not take the city
Or that your men are cowards and witless in war."

He spoke, and Lord Agamemnon answered:

"Once again, Nestor, the best speech of all.
Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, give me
Ten such counsellors, and Priam's city
Would lay her head in our lap, taken and ravaged.
But Zeus, son of Cronus, has given me grief,
Embroiding me in pointless quarrels.
Yes, Achilles and I argued over a girl,
And it was I who grew angry first.
If we two could agree, there would not be
The slightest postponement of evil for Troy.
But go eat now, so we can get this battle together.
Sharpen your spears and dress your shields,
Lay out fodder for your horses,
And inspect your chariots. We're going to war.
We're going to fight all day and hate every minute
Without any breaks until it's too dark to see.
It's going to be chests sweating under shield straps,

Hands sore from gripping spears, horses sweaty
From pulling us around in our polished cars.
And if I catch anyone even thinking about
Staying out of the fight back here with the ships,
The dogs and birds will have him by nightfall."

420

The cheer that followed this speech came on like a wave

*That pounds a high cliff, a wave swollen by wind
Against a jutting crag that is constantly worried
By wind-driven waves from every direction.*

The men stood up and scattered to their ships,
Made fires in their huts and took their meal.
And each made sacrifice to his favorite god,
Praying to escape from battle alive.

430

The warlord Agamemnon sacrificed a fat bull,
Five years old, to Cronus' almighty son,
And he summoned the elders, the best of the Achaeans,
Nestor first of all, and the warlord Idomeneus,
Then the two Ajaxes, and Tydeus' son, Diomedes,
And as the sixth, Odysseus, Zeus' match in wisdom.
Menelaus, the rallier, came on his own,
Knowing what his brother was up against.
They stood 'round the ox and took up the barley grains,
And the warlord Agamemnon led them in prayer:

440

"Zeus, most glorious, most great,
Dark Cloud that art in heaven,
May the sun not set nor darkness gather
Until I have cast Priam's roof beam
Smoldering to the ground, and burned
His doorways with consuming fire.
And may I tear Hector's heart out with bronze,
And may many of his comrades
Fall headlong around him,
Face down in the dust."

450

But Zeus would not grant his prayer,
Not yet. He accepted Agamemnon's sacrifice

But blew upon his woes and increased them.

After the prayers and the strewing of barley
They cut the ox's throat and flayed it,
Jointed the thighbones and wrapped them
In a layer of fat with cuts of meat on top.
These they roasted over split kindling wood.
When the thigh pieces were charred and they had
Tasted the tripe, they cut the rest into strips,
Skewered it on spits, and roasted it carefully.
When they were done and the feast was ready,
Feast they did, and no one lacked an equal share.
When they had eaten and drunk to their heart's content,
Nestor the Gerenian horseman spoke:

460

"Son of Atreus, my lord Agamemnon,
Let us remain gathered here no longer
Nor delay the work that the gods have given us.
Have the heralds of the bronze-armored Greeks
Make proclamation all through the ships
And muster the army. We will patrol camp
In a group, to waken Ares more quickly."

470

He spoke, and the warlord Agamemnon
Ordered the heralds to muster the troops
In battle formation. They gave their skirling cry,
And all the commanders around Atreus' son
Hurried to have their men fall in.
And in their midst Athena, eyes like slate,
Carried the aegis, priceless and out of all time,
Pure gold tassels flying in the wind, each
Woven strand worth a hundred oxen.
And the goddess herself, glowing like moonlight,
Rushed over the sand, sweeping them on
And stiffening their hearts, so that for each of them
To die in battle was sweeter than going home.

480

*A fire raging through endless forests
In a mountain range can be seen far away
As a distant glow.*

Likewise the glare

From the advancing army's unimaginable bronze,
An eerie light that reached the stratosphere.

490

*Migratory birds—cranes, geese, or long-necked swans—
Are gathering in a meadow in Asia
Where the river Caystrus branches out in streams.
For a while they fly in random patterns
For the pure joy of using their wings,
But then with a single cry they start to land,
One line of birds settling in front of another
Until the whole meadow is a carpet of sound.*

Likewise from the ships and huts, tribe after tribe
Poured out onto the Scamander's floodplain,
And the ground groaned and reverberated
Under their feet and the hooves of their horses.
And they stood in the flowering meadow there,
Countless as leaves, or as flowers in their season.

500

*Innumerable throngs of buzzing flies
Will swarm all over a herdsman's yard
In springtime, when milk wets the pails—*

Likewise the throngs of long-haired Greeks
Who stood on the plain facing the Trojans,
Intent on hammering them to pieces.

510

*And as goats easily separate out
Wide flocks of goats mingled in pasture,*

So the commanders drew up their troops
To enter battle, and Lord Agamemnon
Moved among them like Zeus himself,
The look in his eyes, the carriage of his head,
With a torso like Ares', or like Poseidon's.

*Picture a bull that stands out from the herd
Head and horns above the milling cattle—*

Zeus on that day made the son of Atreus
A man who stood out from the crowd of heroes.

Tell me now, Muses,
Who live on Olympus—for you are
Goddesses, and are present,
And know all things, while we
Hear only reports and know nothing—
Who were the Greek captains and lords?
The rank and file I could never name,
Not even if I had ten tongues, ten mouths,
A voice that never broke, and a bronze heart,
Unless the Olympian Muses, daughters
Of Zeus, called to my mind
All those who came under Ilion's walls.

530

Now I will call the roll of the ships.

The Boeotians were led by PENELEUS and LEITUS,
With Arcesilaus, Protenor, and Clonius.

Their towns were Hyria,
rocky Aulis,

Scolus,
ridged Eteoneus,
Thespeia,
and Schoenus,

540

Broad Mycalessus,
Harna,
Graea,

Erythrae,
Eleon,
Eileision,

Hyle,
Peteon,

550

Ocalea,
Medeon,
Copae,
Eutresus,

Dovecoted Thisbe,

Coroneia,

grassy Haliartus,

Plataea,

Glisas,

Lower Thebes,

Onchestus,

560

Posideon, with its grove,

and Arne, its vineyards,

Mideia,

sacred Nisa,

and on the coast, Anthedon.

Fifty ships, and aboard each ship,

One hundred and twenty young men of Boeotia.

The Minyans from Aspledon and Orchomenos

Were led by ASCALAPUS and IALMENUS,

Sons of Ares, born to Astyoche, then a virgin,

In the palace of Actor, son of Azeus,

When she had the god in her upstairs room.

570

Their thirty vessels were drawn up in rows.

The Phocians were led by SCHEDIUS and ERISTROPHUS,

Sons of Iphitos, grandsons of Naubolus.

Their towns were Cyparissus

and rocky Pytho,

Sacred Crisa,

Daulis,

Panopeus,

Anemoria,

Hyampolis,

on the river Cephissus,

And Lilaia,

by the springs of Cephissus.

Forty black ships formed their contingent,

580

And their leaders marshalled their ranks

Left of the Boeotians as they readied for war.

The Locrians were led by swift AJAX,

Son of Oileus, not as great as Telamonian Ajax,

Not nearly, a small man who wore a linen corselet

But with a spear the best soldier in Greece.

590

They lived in Cynus

and Ophus and Calliarus,

In Bessa and Scarphe

and lovely Augeiae,

In Tarphe and Thronion

by the streams of Boagrius.

Ajax led forty black ships, manned by Locrians

Who dwell over against sacred Euboea.

600

The Abantes, who hold Euboea and Chalcis,

Eretria and the vineyards of Histiaea,

Seaside Cerinthus and the steep stronghold of Dios,

And those in Carystus and also in Styra,

Were led by ELEPHENOR, a scion of Ares

And son of Chalcodon. He was chief of the Abantes,

A spirited people, swift and hot-tempered,

Their hair long in the back, spearmen eager

With outstretched spears to rend enemy corselers.

610

Forty black ships followed Elephenor.

Those who held Athens—the well-founded citadel

And the land of Erechtheus, whom Athena fostered

After the grain field bore him, and made him live

In her own rich precinct, where Athenian youths

Still propitiate him yearly with rams and bulls—

These were led by MENESTHEUS, Peteos' son.

This man had no equal anywhere on earth

At marshalling chariots and infantry,

Rivalled only by Nestor, who was his elder.

620

Fifty black ships followed Menestheus.

AJAX led from Salamis twelve ships
And stationed them by the Athenian contingent.

Those who held Argos and walled Tiryns
And Hermione and Asine, on the deep gulf,
Troezen and Eionae and vine-clad Epidaurus,
And the Achaean youths in Aegina and Mases—
All these were led by DIOMEDES and STHENELUS,
Son of Capaneus, with EURYALUS as a third.
But the commander in chief was Diomedes,

630

And eighty black ships followed him.

Those who held Mycenae's citadel,

And wealthy Corinth,
and those in Cleonae
And in Orneiae
and lovely Araethyrea,

And in Sicyon,
where Adrastus first was king,
And those in Hyperesia
and steep Gonoessa,

640

And in Pellene,
and around Aegium,
Throughout all Aegialus
and around wide Helice—

All these were commanded,
a hundred ships,

By Lord AGAMEMNON,
son of Atreus.

His contingent was far the largest and best,
And among them he put on his gleaming bronze,
Glorying, preeminent among all,

650

And the army he led was largest of all.

Those who lived
in Lacedaemon's gulches,
In Pharis and Sparta,
in dove-haunted Messe,
And those in Bryseiae

and lovely Augeriae,
And Amyclae and Helus,
a citadel by the sea,

660

And those in Laas
and the environs of Oetylus—
These were led
by Agamemnon's brother,

MENELAUS,
whose voice carried in battle,
In sixty ships
marshalled separately.

And he moved among them with confidence,
Urging them into war. He wanted most of all
Requit for Helen's struggles and groans.

670

Those who lived in Pylos and lovely Arene,
In Thyron, ford of Alpheius, and Aipy,
In Cyparisseis and Amphigeneia,
In Pteleos and Helus and Dorium, where
The Muses met Thamyras and stopped his song
As he journeyed from Eurytus' house in Oechalia
Boasting he would win even if the Muses,
Daughters of Zeus, were to sing against him,
And in anger they maimed him, took away
His melody and silenced his lyre—

680

All these Gerenian NESTOR led, and had
Ninety hollow ships drawn up in rows.

Those who held Arcadia in Cyllene's shadow
Beside Aepyrtus' tomb, where men fight hand to hand,
And those in Pheneos and Orchomenos,

In Rhipe and Stratia and windy Enispe,
Those who held Tegea and Mantinea,
Those who held Stymphalus and lived in Parthasia—

All these ACAPENOR led, Ancaeus' son,
Fifty ships, and each ship had on board
Many Arcadians who knew how to fight.
Agamemnon himself had given them ships
To cross over the sea's grey wine,
For the Arcadians knew nothing of sailing the sea.

Those from Buprasium
and shining Elis,
And the land that Hymene
and Myrsinus enclose
On the coast,
and between Olen rock and Alesium—

All those had four leaders, each with ten ships
With many Epeians aboard. The captains were
AMPHIMACHUS and THALPIUS, both of Actor's line,
One Cteatus' son, the other of Eurytus;
Third was mighty Diores, son of Amarynceus;
Fourth was godlike POLYXEINUS, Augeias' son.

Those from Dulichium
and the holy islands,
The Echinaes,
that lie in the sea offshore from Elis,

Had MEGES as leader, peer of Ares,
Whom Phyleus dear to Zeus had begotten,
The horseman Phyleus who once upon a time
Had moved to Dulichium angry with his father.

Forty black ships followed Meges to Troy.
Odysseus led the proud Cephalenians
Who held Ithaca
and forested Neriton,

And those in Crocyleia
and rugged Aigilips,
In Zacynthus and Samos,
and all those who lived
Along the mainland coast
opposite these islands.

Odysseus led them, peer of Zeus in counsel,
And twelve vermillion prows followed him to Troy.

The Aetolians were led by Adraemon's son,
THOAS. They lived in Pleuron, Olenos, Pylene,
In seaside Chalcis and rocky Calydon.
For great-hearted Oeneus' sons were gone,
And he himself was dead, and blond Meleager,
Who once was told to rule all Aetolia.

Forty black ships followed Thoas to Troy.

The Cretans were led by IDOMENEUS.

Their cities were Cnossus

and walled Gortys,
Lycus and Miletus

and lime-white Lycastus,
Phaestus and Rhytium,

And all who dwelled in Crete's hundred towns,
well-peopled cities,

Idomeneus, famed for his spear, was captain,
As was MERRONES, who could kill like Ares.

Eighty black ships sailed with them to Troy.

Heracles' son TLEPOLEMUS, a good man, and big,
Led nine ships from Rhodes. The Rhodians
Were divided into three contingents:
Lindos, Ialysus, and lime-white Camerius.
They were led by the warrior Tlepollemus,
Born to great Heracles by Astyocheia,

Whom he had taken out of Ephyre
 And away from the river Selleis, after
 Pillaging the cities of many a hero.
 But when Tlepolemus came of age in the palace,
 He killed his father's dear uncle, Licymnius,
 A scion of Ares, then getting on in years.
 He quickly built a fleet, gathered a following,
 And took flight on the sea, threatened by the other
 Sons and grandsons of mighty Heracles.
 He came to Rhodes in his painful wanderings,
 And his people settled in three regions by tribes.
 They were loved by Zeus, who rules gods and men,
 And the son of Cronus showered them with wealth.

760

NIREUS led three trim ships from Syme.

Nireus was the son of Aglaia and Charops,
 King of Syme, and was the handsomest man
 Of all the Danaans who came to Troy.
 After the flawless son of Peleus.
 But he was weak, and few men followed him.

770

Those who held
 Nisyrtus and Carpathus,
 Casus and Cos,
 Eurypylius' city,
 And the Calydnian islands,

Were led by PHEIDIPPUS and ANTIPHUS,
 The two sons of Thessalus, Hercules' son.

Their thirty vessels were drawn up in rows.

Those who inhabited

Pelagian Argos

780

And lived in Alos,

Alope, and Trachis,

And held Phthia and Hellas,
 land of fair women,

And were known as MYRMIDONS,
 Hellenes,
 Achaeans—

ACHILLES commanded their fifty ships.

But none of them now thought of gruesome war,
 Since there was no one to lead them into the ranks.
 The great sprinter lay idle in their beachhead camp,
 Nursing his wrath because of the girl,
 Fair-haired Briseis, whom he had taken,
 After great effort, out of Lyrnessus
 When he sacked that town and levelled Thebes' walls
 And cut down Mynes and Epistrophus,
 King Evenos' sons, great warriors both.
 Heartsick for her, and angry, Achilles lay idle,
 But he would rise again soon.

790

Those in Phylace
 and flowering Pyrasus,
 Demeter's sanctuary,
 and those in Iton,
 Mother of flocks,
 in Antron, by the sea,
 And in the grasslands
 of Pteleos—

800

All these were led by PROTESILAUS,
 While he still lived. The black earth now held him.
 His wife, cheeks torn, was left in Phylace,
 His house half-built. A Dardanian killed him
 As he leapt from his ship, the first Greek ashore.
 His men were not leaderless—though they missed
 Their leader—for PODARCES marshalled them,
 Son of Ipichlus Phylacides, rich in flocks, and
 Protesilaus' brother. But Protesilaus was older
 And a better man, a hero, and though his men
 Did not lack a leader, they yearned for him.

810

Forty black ships followed Protesilaus to Troy.

Those in Pherae beside Lake Boebeis,

820

And in Boebe,

Glaphyrae,

and well-built Iolkos,

Were in eleven ships led by EUMELUS,
Admetus' son by a glorious woman,
Alcestis, loveliest of Pelias' daughters.

Those in Methone and Thaumacia,

In Meliboea and rugged Olizon,

Came in seven ships led by PHILOCTETES,

The great archer, and aboard each ship

Were fifty oarsmen skilled with the bow.

But Philoctetes now lay in pain on an island,

Sacred Lemnos, where the Achaeans stranded him,

Afflicted with a wound from a deadly snake.

He lay there in anguish, but the Greeks at Troy

Would soon remember Lord Philoctetes.

Nor were these men leaderless. MEDON

Marshalled them, Oileus' bastard son,

Whom Rhene bore to the pillager Oileus.

830

Those in Tricca and craggy Ithome,

And those in Oechalia, Eurytus' city,

Were led by the two sons of Asclepius,

PODALIRIUS and MACHAON, good healers both,

840

With thirty vessels drawn up in rows.

Those who held Ormenios and the spring Hyperaia,

And Asterion and Titanos' white peaks,

Were led by EURYPIUS, Euaemon's great son.

Forty black ships sailed with him to Troy.

Those who held Argissa,

and lived in Gyrtone,

850

In Orthe,

Elone,

and white-bricked Oloöson,

Were led by POIXROETES, staunch in battle,

Son of Peirithous, whom deathless Zeus begot.

Gloried Hippodameia conceived Polypoetes that day

When Peirithous punished the shaggy centaurs,

Drove them from Pelion and to the Aethices.

Leonteus shared the command, Caeneus' grandson.

Forty black ships sailed with them to Troy.

860

GOUNEUS led twenty-two ships from Cyphus,

And with him came the Enines and Paraebi,

Who had settled around wintry Dodona

And in the fields around the stream Titareus,

A tributary of the Peneius. Its lovely water

Does not mingle with Peneius' silver eddies

But glides on its surface like olive oil,

A branch of Styx, the dread water of oaths.

The Magnetes, who lived around Peneius

And forested Pelion, were led by swift PROTHOUS,

870

Son of Tentnedon, in forty black ships.

These were the leaders of the Danaans.

But tell me now, Muse, who were the best

Of men and of horses in the Atreides' army?

The best horses were the mares of Eumelus,

Swift as birds, of the same age, with matching coats,

And their backs were as even as a levelling line.

Apollo Silverbow had bred them in Perea,

A team of mares who bore Panic in battle.

The best warrior was Telamonian Ajax—

880

While Achilles was in his rage. For Achilles
was second to no one, as were the horses

That bore Peleus' flawless son. But now he lay idle

Among his beaked, seagoing hulls, furious

With Agamemnon, the shepherd of the people,

The son of Atreus. Achilles' men

Amused themselves on the shore, throwing

The discus and javelin and shooting their bows.

The horses stood beside their chariots

Champing lotus and marsh parsley.

890

The chariots lay covered in their owners' huts.

The men missed their leader. They tramped

Through the camp and had no part in fighting.

The army marched, and it was as though the land
Were swept with fire. Earth groaned beneath them,

*As beneath Zeus when in his wrath he thunders
And lashes the country of the Arimi with lightning
Where men say Typhoeus lies in the ground.*

So the earth groaned under their feet
As they pressed on quickly over the plain.

900

Zeus notified the Trojans of all this
By sending Iris streaking down to Ilion.
She found the citizens assembled in one body,
Young and old alike, near Priam's gate, talking.
Iris positioned herself nearby

And made her voice sound like Polites'—

A son of Priam who, trusting his speed,

Often sat as lookout on top of the barrow

Of old Aesytes, watching for any movement

Of Greek troops from their ships.

Using his voice, the goddess said to Priam:

910

"Sir, you are as fond of endless speeches now

As you were in peacetime. But this is war.

I have been in a battle or two, but never

Have I seen an army like this,

Covering the plain like leaves, or like sand,

As it advances to attack the city.

Hector, you're in charge of this operation.

But because there are so many allies here

With different languages from points abroad,

Each captain should give the word to his own men

And lead them out marshalled by cities."

920

Hector knew this was a goddess's speech

And dismissed the assembly. They rushed to arms.

All the gates were opened, and the troops

Poured through them, on foot and in war cars.

In front of the city there is a steep hill

Out in the plain, level terrain all around it.

Men call this hill Bateia. Immortals call it

The barrow of Myrtilus the Dancer.

930

It was here that the Trojans and their allies

Drew up their troops in companies.

The Trojans were led by great HECTOR,

Son of Priam, in his shining helmet.

His contingent was far the largest and the best,

Arrayed for battle, resolute with their spears.

The Dardanian troops were led by AENEAS,
Whom bright Aphrodite bore to Anchises,
A goddess lying with a mortal man

In the foothills of Ida. Sharing the command

Were Antenor's two sons, Archelochus

And Acamas, skilled in all forms of combat.

940

The Troes, who lived in wealthy Zeleia

At Ida's foot, and drank the Aesepus' dark water,

Were led by the glorious son of Lycaon,

PANDARUS, whose bow was a gift from Apollo.

Those who held Adrasteia and the deme Apaesus,
 And Pityeia and the steep Mount Tereia,
 Were led by Adrastus and Amphinus,
 With linen corselets, sons of Merops and Percote.
 This man knew divination, and forbade his sons
 To go to war, but they would not listen,
 For Death's black birds were calling them on.

950

Those who lived around Percote and Practios,
 Who held Sestus and Abydus and bright Arisbe,
 Were led by Asius Hyttacides, a bom leader,
 Asius, whom his great chestnut horses
 Had drawn from Arisbe and the river Selleis.

960

The Pelasgian tribes, ferocious spearmen
 From fertile Larisa, were led by Hippotonus
 With his brother Pylaeus. They were sons
 Of Pelasgian Lethus, grandsons of Teutamus.

Acamas and Peirous led all the Thracians
 Beyond the strong current of the Hellespont.

Euphemus captained the Ciconian spearmen,
 Son of Thoezenus and grandson of Ceas.

Pyraechmes led the distant Paeonians,
 With curved bows, from Amydon and the river
 Axios, whose water flows fairest over the earth.

970

Pylaemenes, shaggy heart, led the Parthlagonians
 From the land of the Enei, where the mules run wild.
 Their cities were Cytoros and Sesamos,
 And they lived around the river Parthenios
 In Crottona, Aegialos, and high Erythini.

Opus and Ergastoronus led the Halizones
 From distant Alube, ancient source of silver.

The Mysians were led by Chromis
 And Ennomus, who foretold the future

From the flight of birds, but could not ward off
 The black birds of death. They would be slain in the river
 By the terrible sword of swift Achilles,
 Aeacus' grandson, when he killed many there.

980

Phorcys and Ascanus led the Phrygians
 From distant Ascania, battle-hungry troops.

The Maeonians were led by Mesthles and Antiphus,
 Talaemon's sons, whose mother was the nymph
 Of Lake Gygaia, under Mount Imolus.

990

Nastes led the Carians, who spoke a foreign tongue.
 Their strongholds were Miletus, and Mount Phthires,
 The streams of Maeander, and Mycale's steep crests.
 Amphinachus shared the command with Nastes,
 Who came to the war wearing gold like a girl,
 The fool, but it could not save him from death.
 Achilles killed him in his rush through the river
 Without a second thought, and bore off the gold.

Sarpedon and Glaucus captained the Lycians
 Who came from the faraway, swirling Xanthus.