

## Myths of the Greek and Roman Gods



# Myths of the Greek and Roman Gods

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TORONTO



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# Series Introduction

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The [Public Domain Core Collection](#) consists of over 50 titles of public domain works that have been created using Pressbooks and made available in online, epub, pdf and editable formats. Although the primary audience for this collection is students and faculty members in the post-secondary education sector in Ontario, the titles are freely available on the web to anyone who wants to read or adapt them for their own use.

Titles were chosen for this collection based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to post-secondary courses taught in Ontario
- Frequency of appearance on syllabi listed in the [Open Syllabus Project](#)
- Proposed usage in open assignments in courses at Ryerson and Brock universities during the Fall 2021 semester
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This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit: <https://vls.ecampusontario.ca/>.

# Acknowledgments

PUBLIC DOMAIN CORE COLLECTION TEAM

## Acknowledgements

The Public Domain Core Collection Project would not have been possible without the enthusiastic collaboration between staff, faculty members and students at Ryerson and Brock universities. We came together with a shared desire to make commonly used public domain texts more accessible to instructors and students in our institutions, Ontario and beyond. We also wanted to encourage instructors to use the texts as a basis for open pedagogy assignments with the aim of empowering students to become knowledge creators rather than just knowledge consumers.

## Core Project Team

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## Open Pedagogy Projects

We would like to give a special thanks to the faculty members and students who met our project with open minds and willing participation.

- Roberto Nickel, Assistant Professor and Graduate Program Director, Classics, Brock University

This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampusOntario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit: <https://vls.ecampusontario.ca>.

# Accessibility Statement

PUBLIC DOMAIN CORE COLLECTION TEAM

## Accessibility Features of the Web Version of this Resource

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- All content can be navigated using a keyboard,
- Links, headings, and tables use proper markup, and
- All images have text descriptions.

## Other Formats Available

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e.g., Windows 10, Google Chrome (Version 65.0.3325.181), NVDA screen reader

This statement was last updated on February 15, 2022.

# MYTHS OF THE GREEK AND ROMAN GODS



# L1 Hypothesis-Philemon & Baucis

[https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph8.php#anchor\\_Toc64106506](https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph8.php#anchor_Toc64106506)

# L2 Hypothesis-The Song of Ares and Aphrodite Homer

Odyssey, book 8, lines 340-461. Trans. Ian Johnston, 2019.

Johnston's complete translation of the Odyssey can be found here: <http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/homer/odysseytofc.html>

In book 8 of the Odyssey, Odysseus is a guest of the Phaeacians, a mythical people renowned for their knowledge of ships and the sea. In the extract below, a festival that involves athletic games, dancing, and song, the poet Demodocus ("the minstrel" of the opening line) entertains the assembled guests by reciting the myth of how Hephaestus caught his wife Aphrodite in their marriage bed with Ares. The myth is referred to as a "song" because in the ancient Greek world, poets performed myths to the musical accompaniment of a lyre.

The minstrel struck the opening chords to his sweet song— 340  
how war god Ares loved the fair-crowned Aphrodite,  
how in Hephaestus's own home they first had sex  
in secret, and how Ares gave her many gifts,  
while he disgraced the marriage bed of lord Hephaestus.  
But sun god Helios observed them making love  
and came at once to tell Hephaestus. When he heard  
the unwelcome news, the lame god went to his forge,  
turning over deep in his heart a devious scheme.  
He set up his enormous anvil on its block,  
and forged a net no one could ever break or loosen, 350  
so they would have to stay immobile where they were.  
When, in his rage, he had made that snare for Ares,  
he went into the room which housed his marriage bed,  
anchored the metal netting around the bed posts,  
and then hung loops of it from roof beams high above,  
as fine as spiders' webs, impossible to see,  
even for a blessed god—that's how skillfully  
he made that net. Once he had set the snare in place  
around the bed, he announced a trip to Lemnos, 360  
that well-built citadel, his favourite place by far  
of all the lands on earth. Ares of the Golden Reins,  
who maintained a constant lookout, saw Hephaestus,  
the celebrated master artisan, leave home,  
and went running over to Hephaestus's house,  
eager to have sex with fair-crowned Aphrodite.  
She had just left the presence of her father Zeus,  
mighty son of Cronos, and was sitting down.  
Ares charged inside the house, grabbed her by the hand,  
then spoke, saying these words to her:

“Come, my dear,  
let's go to bed and make love together. 370



Hephaestus is not home. No doubt he's gone  
to visit Lemnos and the Sintians,  
those men who speak like such barbarians.”

Ares spoke. To Aphrodite having sex with him  
seemed quite delightful. So the two raced off to bed  
and lay down together. But then the crafty net  
made by Hephaestus's great skill fell down around them,  
so they could not move their limbs or shift their bodies.  
After a while, they realized they could not get out.  
Then the famous crippled god came back to them—  
turning round before he reached the land of Lemnos.  
Helios had stayed on watch and gave him a report.  
With a grieving heart, Hephaestus went into his home,  
and stood inside the doorway, gripped by cruel rage.  
He made a dreadful cry, calling to all the gods:

380

“Father Zeus and you other sacred gods  
who live forever, come here, so you can see  
something disgusting and ridiculous—  
Aphrodite, Zeus's daughter, scorns me  
and lusts after Ares, the destroyer,  
because he's beautiful, with healthy limbs,  
while I was born deformed. I'm not to blame.  
My parents are! I wish they'd never had me!  
See how these two have gone to my own bed  
and are lying there, having sex together,  
while I look on in pain. But I don't think  
they wish to lie like this for very long,  
no matter how much they may be in love.  
They'll both soon lose the urge to stay in bed.  
But this binding snare will confine them here,  
until her father gives back all those presents,  
courting gifts I gave him for that shameless bitch—  
a lovely daughter but a sex-crazed wife.”

390

400

Hephaestus finished. Gods gathered at the bronze-floored house.  
Earthshaker Poseidon came, and lord Hermes, too,  
the god of luck, as well as archer god Apollo.  
But female goddesses were all far too ashamed  
and stayed at home. So the gods, givers of good things,  
stood in the doorway, looking at the artful work  
of ingenious Hephaestus. They began to chortle—  
and an irrepressible laughter then pealed out  
among the blessed gods. Glancing at his neighbour,  
one of them would say:

410

“Nasty deeds don't pay.  
The slow one overtakes the swift—just as

Hephaestus, slow as he is, has caught Ares, although of all the gods who hold Olympus he's the fastest one there is. Yes, he's lame, but he's a crafty one. So Ares now must pay a fine for his adultery."

That is how the gods then talked to one another. But lord Apollo, son of Zeus, questioned Hermes:

420

"Hermes, son of Zeus, you messenger and giver of good things, how would you like to lie in bed by golden Aphrodite, even though a strong net tied you down?"

The messenger god, killer of Argus, then said in his reply:

"Far-shooting lord Apollo, I wish there were three times as many nets, impossible to break, and all you gods were looking on, if I could like down there, alongside golden Aphrodite."

430

At Hermes's words, laughter arose from the immortal deities. But Poseidon did not laugh. He kept requesting Hephaestus, the celebrated master artisan, to set Ares free. When he talked to Hephaestus, his words had wings:

"Set Ares loose. I promise he will pay you everything, as you are asking, all he truly owes, in the presence of immortal gods."

The famous lame god then replied:

"Lord Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, do not ask me this. It's a risky thing to accept a pledge made for a nasty rogue. What if Ares escapes his chains, avoids the debt, and leaves—how then among all these immortal gods do I hold you in chains?"

440

Earthshaker Poseidon then answered him and said:

"Hephaestus, if indeed Ares does not discharge his debt and runs away, I'll pay you in person."

Then the celebrated crippled god replied:

450

“It would be inappropriate for me to refuse to take your word.”

After saying this,  
powerful Hephaestus then untied the netting.  
Both gods, one they had been released from their strong chains,  
jumped up immediately—Ares went off to Thrace,  
and laughter-loving Aphrodite left for Paphos,  
in Cyprus, for her sanctuary, her sacred altar.  
Once there, the Graces bathed and then anointed her  
with heavenly oil, the sort that gleams upon the gods,  
who live forever. Next, they took some gorgeous clothes  
and dressed her—the sight was marvellous to behold.

460

That was the song the celebrated minstrel sang.  
As he listened, Odysseus felt joy in his heart—  
long-oared Phaeacians, famous sailors, felt it, too.

# L2-The Hieros Gamos of Zeus and Hera

**Homer, *Iliad*, book 14, lines 185-419, translated by Ian Johnston, 2019.**

Prof. Johnston's complete translation of the *Iliad* can be found at:

[Homer's \*Iliad\*, trans. Ian Johnston](#)

*In this section of the Iliad, Zeus has forbidden the pro-Greek gods (among them Hera, Athena, and Poseidon) to intervene by helping the Greeks in the battle against the Trojans. Zeus is now watching the battle from the top of Mount Ida, just outside Troy. The gods are furious, and Poseidon, in disguise, is already helping the Greek, ignoring Zeus's order. Hera now decides to seduce Zeus and then have Hypnos (Sleep) make Zeus fall asleep so that Poseidon can continue help the Greeks for as long as possible.*

As this was happening, on a peak of Mount Olympus  
Hera of the golden throne was standing watching.

She recognized her brother-in-law at once,  
as he kept busy in the war where men win glory,  
for he was her brother and her husband's, too.

190

Hera's heart was pleased. She looked across at Zeus,  
sitting on the highest peak on top of Ida,  
with its many fountains. Hatred filled her heart.  
So ox-eyed queen Hera then began considering  
how she might deceive the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus.

In her heart the best course of action seemed to be  
to make herself look most attractive, go to Ida,  
then see if Zeus would want to lie down with her,  
embrace her, and make love. Then she could pour out  
on his eyelids and his crafty mind a deep warm sleep.

200

She went off to her bedroom, which Hephaestus,  
her dear son, had made for her, with close-fitting doors  
set against their posts, secured with a secret lock,  
which no other god could open. She went in there,  
then closed the shining doors. First, with ambrosia  
she washed from her lovely body all the stains,  
then rubbed her skin with fragrant oil, divinely sweet,  
made specially for her. If this perfume were merely stirred  
inside Zeus's bronze-floored house, its scent would then diffuse  
throughout heaven and earth. She used this perfume  
all over her fair body, then arranged her hair.

210

With her own hands she combed her shining locks in braids,  
a stunning style for an immortal goddess.

Then she wrapped around herself a heavenly robe,  
which Athena made for her from silky fabric,  
adorning it with gorgeous embroidery.

She pinned the robe around her breast with golden brooches.

On her waist she put a belt with a hundred tassels.  
Hera then fixed earrings in her pierced ear lobes,  
each with three gemstones, an enchanting glitter.  
Next the queen of goddesses placed on her head  
a fine new dazzling shawl, white as the sun.  
She then slipped lovely sandals over her sleek feet.

220

## Hera Vists Aphrodite

Once Hera had dressed her body in this finery,  
she left the room and summoned Aphrodite.  
Some distance from the other gods, she said to her:

“My dear child, will you agree to do  
what I ask of you, or will you refuse,  
because you’re angry with me in your heart,  
since I help the Greeks and you aid the Trojans?”

230

Zeus’s daughter Aphrodite answered her:

“Hera,  
honoured goddess, daughter of great Cronos,  
say what’s on your mind. My heart tells me  
I should do what you ask, if I can,  
if it’s something that can be carried out.”

Then queen Hera, with her devious mind, replied:

“Then give me Love and Sexual Desire,  
which you use to master all immortals,  
and mortal men as well. I’m going to visit  
the limits of this all-nourishing earth,  
to see Oceanus, from whom the gods arose,  
and mother Tethys, the two who reared me,  
taking good care of me inside their home,  
once they got me from Rhea, that time Zeus,  
who sees far and wide, forced Kronos  
underground, under the restless seas.  
I’m going to visit them. And I’ll resolve  
their endless quarrel. For a long time now,  
they’ve stayed apart from one another,  
not sharing love there in the marriage bed,  
since anger fills their hearts. If my words  
could reconcile the hearts in these two gods,  
bring them to bed again, once more in love,  
they’d think of me with loving reverence.”

240

250

Laughter-loving Aphrodite answered Hera:

“It would not be appropriate for me  
to say no to your demand, since you sleep  
in the arms of Zeus, the greatest of the gods.”

Aphrodite spoke, then loosened from her breasts  
the finely decorated, embroidered garment  
in which all her magic charms were fixed—for love,  
erotic lust, flirtation, and seduction,  
which steals the wits even of clear-thinking men.  
Aphrodite put this in Hera’s hands, then said:

260

“Take this garment. Tie it round your breasts.  
Everything is interwoven in the cloth.  
I don’t think you’ll come back unsuccessful  
in getting what it is your heart desires.”

Aphrodite finished. Ox-eyed queen Hera smiled,  
and, as she did so, put the garment round her breasts.  
Then Aphrodite, Zeus’s daughter, went back home.

270

## Hera Visits Hypnos (Sleep)

Hera sped off, leaving the crest of Mount Olympus.  
She touched down on Pieria, lovely Emathia,  
rushed by the highest mountains of Thracian horsemen—  
her feet did not touch ground on those snow-covered peaks.  
From Athos she went across the heaving sea,  
coming to Lemnos, city of godlike Thoas.  
There she met Sleep, Death’s brother. Claspng his hand,  
she spoke to him:

“Sleep, king of all men and gods,  
if you’ve ever listened to what I say,  
obey me now. I’ll be grateful always.  
Lull Zeus’s radiant eyes to sleep for me,  
when I’m stretched out for sex beside him.  
I’ll give you as a gift a lovely throne,  
indestructible gold which my own son  
Hephaestus with his ambidextrous skills  
will make for you. Under it he’ll set a stool,  
so you can rest your feet when drinking wine.”

280

Sweet Sleep then said in reply:

“Honoured goddess Hera,  
daughter of mighty Kronos, I could with ease  
bring some other immortal one to sleep,  
even the streams of river Oceanus,  
the source of all of them. But I won’t come

290

near Zeus, lull him to sleep, unless he bids me,  
asks in person. Your request some time ago  
taught me my lesson, on that very day  
when Hercules, son of almighty Zeus,  
set sail from Troy, after he'd sacked  
the Trojans' city. That's when I seduced  
the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus, pouring  
my sweetness over him. You then carried  
evil in your heart for Hercules, driving  
blasts of hostile winds across the sea,  
taking him at last to well-settled Cos,  
far from all his friends. When Zeus woke up,  
he was incensed, throwing gods around his house,  
looking, above all, for me. He'd have tossed me  
from heaven into the sea, if Night,  
who subdues gods and men, had not saved me.  
I ran away to her, and Zeus held back,  
though still enraged, not wishing to offend  
swift Night. Now here you are again, asking me  
to do something I simply must not do." 300

Ox-eyed queen Hera then answered him:

“Sleep,  
why concern your heart about these matters?  
Do you think all-seeing Zeus feels for Trojans  
the same rage he felt then for Hercules,  
his own son? But come, I'll give you as your wife  
one of the younger Graces. You can marry  
Pasithea, whom you long for every day.” 310

Hera finished. Sleep was overjoyed and said:

“All right, then. Swear to me by waters  
of the inviolable river Styx, setting  
one hand on the all-nourishing earth,  
the other on the shimmering sea,  
so all may witness our agreement,  
even those gods underground with Kronos,  
that you will give me one of the Graces,  
Pasithea, whom I long for every day.”

Hera goes to Zeus on Mount Ida

White-armed goddess Hera agreed to Sleep's request.  
She made the oath, as he had asked, invoking  
all the gods under Tartarus, those called the Titans.  
Once she finished saying the oath, they both set off,  
wrapping themselves in mist. They left behind them  
the cities of Lemnos and Imbros, moving quickly,  
then came to Mount Ida with its many springs, 330

mother of wild creatures, and arrived at Lectum,  
where for the first time they left the sea. They walked  
on dry land, shaking treetops underneath their feet.  
Sleep then stopped, before Zeus's eyes could see him,  
climbed a high pine tree, at that time the tallest one  
growing on Ida. It stretched up through the lower air  
right into the sky. Concealed in that tree's branches,  
Sleep perched there, shaped like the clear-voiced mountain bird  
which gods call Chalcis, but people name Cymindis.

340

Hera moved quickly on to Ida's peak, high Gargarus.  
Cloud-gatherer Zeus caught sight of her. As he looked,  
his wise heart became suffused with sexual desire,  
as strong as when they'd first made love together,  
lying on a couch without their parents' knowledge.  
Zeus stood up in front of her, called her, and said:

350

“Hera, what are you looking for, coming  
down here from Olympus? Your chariot,  
your horses are not here. You should use them.”

Queen Hera with her crafty mind then answered Zeus:

“I'm going to visit the outer limits  
of this all-nourishing earth, to Oceanus,  
from whom gods came, and mother Tethys,  
who looked after me in their own home.  
They raised me well. I'll try to mediate  
their endless quarrel. For a long time now,  
they've stayed apart from one another,  
not sharing love there in the marriage bed,  
since anger fills their hearts. As for my horses,  
they're standing at the foot of Ida,  
with its many springs, to carry me  
across dry land and sea. I've come here now,  
down from Mount Olympus, to stop you  
from being angry with me afterwards,  
if I say nothing about going to visit  
deep-flowing Oceanus in his home.”

360

370

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered:

“Hera,  
you can go there later. But why don't we  
lie down and make joyful love together?  
I've never felt such sexual desire before  
for any goddess, for any mortal woman.  
It's flooding through me, overpowering the heart  
here in my chest—not even when I lusted for  
Ixion's wife, who bore me Peirithous,



a man as wise as gods, or Danaë, 380  
with her enchanting ankles, daughter  
of Acrisius, who gave birth to Perseus,  
most illustrious of men, nor the daughter  
of famous Phoenix, who bore me Minos  
and godlike Rhadamanthus, nor Alcmene,  
who gave birth to Hercules in Thebes,  
a mighty hearted son, nor Semele,  
who bore that joy to mortals Dionysus,  
nor fair-haired lady Demeter, nor Leto,  
that glorious girl, not even for yourself— 390  
I felt for none of these the love I feel  
for you right now—such sweet desire grips me.”

Queen Hera with her cunning mind then said in reply:

“Most fearsome son of Cronos, what are you saying?  
If you now want us to make love lying here,  
on Ida’s peaks, where anyone can see,  
what if one of the immortal gods observes us,  
as we sleep, then goes and tells the other gods?  
I could not get up from this bed and go  
into your home. That would be scandalous. 400  
But if that’s your wish, if your heart’s set on it,  
you have that bedroom your own son Hephaestus  
had built for you. It has close-fitting doors  
fixed into posts. Let’s go and lie down there,  
since you’re so keen for us to go to bed.”

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered her:

“Hera,  
don’t be afraid that any god or man  
will glimpse a thing. I’ll cover you up  
in a golden cloud. Even sun god Helios  
will not see the two of us, and his rays  
are the most perceptive spies of all.” 410

Zeus finished. Then Kronos’ son took his wife in his arms.  
Underneath them divine Earth made fresh flowers grow—  
dew-covered clover, crocuses, and hyacinths,  
lush and soft, to hold the lovers off the ground.  
They lay together there covered with a cloud,  
a lovely golden mist, from which fell glistening dew.  
Then Zeus slumbered peacefully on Mount Gargarus,  
overcome with love and sleep, his wife in his embrace.

# L3 Hypothesis-Hesiod's Theogony (1-152): the Muses & Creation

Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 1-152

translated by R. Nickel

## Proem = Introduction

Let us begin our song with the Helikonian Muses  
who inhabit the great and holy mountain of Helikon.  
They dance on soft feet around  
a violet spring and an altar to Kronos' powerful son.  
Once they've washed their soft skin in the spring called Permessus 5  
or the spring of the winged horse Pegasus or in the holy river Olmeius,  
on the topmost peaks of Mount Helikon, they devise beautiful dances  
that excite desire, their feet moving like water.  
Setting out from this place, veiling themselves in a dense mist,  
they move through the night, sending out a glorious song 10  
that celebrates Zeus, the aegis-bearer, and queenly Hera  
of Argos who goes about on golden sandals,  
and the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, owl-eyed Athena,  
Phoebus Apollo and arrow-pouring Artemis,  
Poseidon, earth-holder and earth shaker, 15  
exalted Themis and quick-glancing Aphrodite,  
golden-crowned Hebe and beautiful Dionê,  
Eos, the Dawn; great Helios, the Sun; and radiant Selenê, the Moon;  
Gaia, the Earth; mighty Ocean; and black Night; 20  
and the holy family of all the other gods who are forever.

## The Epiphany of the Muses

The Muses once taught Hesiod the noble art of song,  
as I was tending my sheep on the slopes of holy Mount Helikon.  
These are the very first words they spoke to me,  
the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus: 25  
"Country shepherds, disgusting dolts, nothing more than bellies!  
We know how to tell many lies that seem real  
and, whenever we want to, we know how to sing the truth."

So spoke the swift-speaking daughters of great Zeus,  
and they gave me a sceptre, breaking off a branch of lush, green laurel, 30  
exquisite to behold, and they breathed their divine voice into me  
so that I might sing of what is to come and what happened before,  
and they ordered me to celebrate the family of the carefree ones who are forever,  
and always to begin and end my song with them.

[But come now, why am I talking about myself so much? 35  
I might as well be talking about an oak-tree or a stone!]  
But come now, am I really able to sing like a prophet? 35  
Am I like the holy stone at Delphi or the talking oaks of Dodona? 35b

## Hesiod's Hymn to the Muses

But you, Hesiod, let us sing about the Muses, whose singing  
delights the great mind of father Zeus on Olympus.  
They tell of things that are, that will be, and that happened before,  
with voices in harmony. Their never-tiring song flows  
sweetly from their mouths. The palace of loud-thundering, father Zeus 40  
fills with laughter as the delicate voices of the goddesses  
spreads far and wide. The peaks of snowy Olympus echo,  
as do the homes the immortals. Sending forth a sound like ambrosia,  
first they celebrate with song the revered family of the gods,  
from the very beginning, those whom Gaia and wide Ouranos bore, 45  
and the gods, givers of good things, born from them.  
Next the goddesses sing of Zeus, father of gods and men,  
beginning and ending their song with him,  
how he is most powerful of the gods in strength, and greatest.  
Then, singing about the race of Humans and of the mighty Giants, 50  
the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus  
delight the mind of Zeus on Olympus.

## The Birth of the Muses

In Pieria, Mnemosyne, who protects the hills of Boeotian Eleutherae,  
joining in love with their father, bore them to Kronos' son  
to be a forgetting of evils and a respite from cares. 55  
For nine nights wise and clever Zeus united with her,  
far away from the immortals, coming into their holy marriage bed.  
When a year had gone by and the seasons turned around,  
as the months came to an end, and many days were completed,  
she bore nine like-minded daughters, whose hearts 60  
care only for song and never grow weary,

in Pieria, just below the topmost peak of snowy Olympus.  
There they have their gleaming dancing floors and beautiful homes.  
Beside them, the Graces and Desire reside  
in festivity. As they sing, a lovely sound issues from their lips, 65  
as they celebrate the customs and cherished practices  
of the immortals, with enchanting song.

After their birth, they went to Olympus, exulting in their beautiful sound,  
their song like ambrosia. All around, the black earth resounded 70  
with their singing. A lovely rhythmic pulse arose beneath their feet  
as they moved toward their father. He rules in the sky;  
possessing thunder and blazing lightning,  
he defeated his father Kronos by strength. Justly he issues  
complex commands for the immortals and oversees their honours.  
About all this, they sing, the Muses who have their homes on Olympus, 75  
nine daughters born from great Zeus:

**Cleio** who glorifies, **Euterpê** who delights,  
Festive **Thalia** and ever-singing **Melpomenê**, 77b  
**Terpsichorê** who dances with lovely **Erato**,  
**Polyhymnia**, filled with song, heavenly **Ourania**, 78b  
and **Calliopê**, with her beautiful voice, best of them all,  
for she is the companion of revered kings. 80

## The Muses' *timai*

Whomever of divinely favoured kings  
Zeus's daughters honour and look to when he's born,  
upon his tongue they pour sweet dew,  
and from his lips flows honey. His people  
all look to him as he establishes decrees 85  
with straight judgments. With sure and steady speech,  
quickly and skillfully he resolves even a great conflict.  
Kings are sensible for this reason: when the people are wronged,  
in the public square they determine a just compensation  
easily, persuading all with gentle words. 90  
When he comes into the assembly, they exalt him like a god  
with gracious reverence, and among those assembled he is preeminent.  
Such is the Muses' holy gift to men and women.

For from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo  
men all over the earth are singers and lyre-players. 95  
But kings are from Zeus. He whom the Muses  
love prospers. A sweet voice flows from his lips.  
For if a person feels sorrow in his fresh-grieving heart  
and his soul dries up in grief, and a poet –  
a companion of the Muses – sings of the glorious deeds 100

of men and women of long ago and the carefree gods who dwell on Olympus,  
straightaway he forgets his cares and remembers  
none of his sorrows. Swiftly the goddesses' gift turns them aside.

## Invocation of the Muses

Greetings, children of Zeus, grant me a lovely song,  
and celebrate the holy family of the immortals who are forever, 105  
those who were born from Gaia and starry Ouranos, the Sky,  
and from dark Night, and those whom the salty Sea reared.  
Say how first Gods and Earth were born,  
and Rivers and the immense Sea, surging with enormous waves,  
and shining Stars and the vast Sky above them. 110  
The Gods, givers of good things, who were born from all these –  
how did they distribute wealth and divide up honours,  
how first did they take possession of Olympus, with its many valleys?  
Tell me all these things, Muses who make your home on Olympus,  
from the beginning. Tell me which of them was born first. 115

## The Primal Beings

Before all others, **Chaos**, vast and empty, was born. Then came  
**Gaia**, wide-breasted Earth, unmoving foundation for all  
the immortals who dwell on the peaks of snowy Olympus.  
Next, misty **Tartarus**, the Underworld, in a hollow of wide-wayed Earth,  
and **Eros**. Among all the immortal gods, he is most beautiful; 120  
limb-loosener. For all gods and all men and women,  
he crushes balanced thought and sensible plans in their breasts.  
  
From Chaos, Darkness and black Night were born.  
From Night, Brightness and Day arose.  
Night conceived and bore them, uniting in love with Darkness. 125  
  
Gaia first gave birth to a being equal to herself,  
starry Ouranos, to enclose her all around,  
so that she might always be an unmoving foundation for the carefree gods.  
She then gave birth to high Mountains, lovely habitats for goddesses,  
Nymphs who dwell on wooded mountains. 130  
She bore Pontos, the desolate Sea, surging with high waves,  
without the delightful act of love.

## The Children of Gaia & Ouranos: Titans, Cyclopes, & Hundred Handers

Next, uniting with Ouranos,  
she bore the Titans: Ocean, with his strong currents,  
Koios, Kreios, Hyperion, and Iapetus,  
Theia, Rhea, Themis, and Mnemosyne who remembers, 135  
Gold-crowned Phoebê and lovely Tethys.  
After these, she bore her youngest, crooked-counseling Kronos,  
most terrifying of her children, and he despised his potent father.  
Then she gave birth to the Cyclopes, who possess a violent heart:  
thundering Brontes, blazing Steropes, and strong-hearted Argês. 140  
They gave thunder to Zeus and crafted lightning for him.  
In all other ways they resembled the gods,  
except that a single eye was fixed in their foreheads.  
They were called Cyclopes because one cylindrical eye  
was fixed in the middle of their foreheads. 145  
Strength and violence and ingenious craft was in their works.  
Three other children were born from the union of Gaia and Ouranos –  
massive, violent children who should not be named:  
Kottos, Briareus, and Gyges – magnificent, arrogant children.  
From their shoulders, one hundred arms shot out, 150  
indescribable. From each one's shoulders  
fifty heads grew on powerful bodies.  
Added to their massive form, they possessed unapproachable, powerful strength.

# L3-Archilochus & the Muses (the Mnesiepes Inscription)

## The Mnesiepes Inscription: Archilochus and the Muses

translated by R. Nickel

Concerning the matters we wish to inscribe [on this stone], the following account has been handed down to us from men of old, and we ourselves worked on them:

For they say that when Archilochus was still young, he was sent by his father, Telesicles, into the field, in the neighbourhood called “The Meadows,” in order to fetch a cow for sale. Archilochus got up very early, when it was still night and the moon was shining, and brought the cow to the city.

When he was in the place called “The Cliffs,” he thought he saw a group of women. Presuming that they were returning from the fields to the city, he taunted and teased them. They welcomed him with child-like glee and laughter, and asked him if he was bringing the cow in order to sell it. When he replied “yes,” they said that they would give him a fair price. Once they’d said this, both they and the cow disappeared, and before his feet he saw a lyre. He was dumbstruck. After some time, he came to his senses and understood that the women who had appeared and given him the lyre were the Muses. Picking up the lyre, he proceeded into the city and revealed to his father what had happened.

When Telesicles heard the story and saw the lyre, he was amazed. First he conducted a search for the cow all over the island, but was unable to find her. Next he was chosen by the citizens to go as a delegate, along with Lycambes, to Delphi in order to consult the oracle [of Apollo] on behalf of the city. He left on this voyage very eagerly, because he wanted to learn what had happened to them [i.e., to him and his son Archilochus].

When they arrived and entered the oracular shrine, the god [Apollo] gave the following oracle to Telesicles:

Your son will be immortal and famous in song, Telesicles,  
that son who first addresses you when you leap from your  
ship onto your beloved fatherland.

They arrived back at Paros during a festival in honour of Artemis, and the first of all his children to approach and greet their father was Archilochus. When they went home, Telesicles asked if the items required [for the festival] were at hand, since it was late in the day ...

[At this point, the stone on which these words are inscribed is too badly damaged to be restored. Another stone on which the inscription continues, while damaged, contains some details about how the hero cult of Archilochus came to be established.]

# L4 Hypothesis-Hesiod's Theogony (the Succession Myth)

## Hesiod, *Theogony* (lines 132-232, 453-506, 617-735, 811-961)

(translated by R. Nickel)

Translator's Note:

The following extracts are taken from Hesiod's *Theogony* to provide a continuous reading of the Succession Myth. Note that the title headings are my own, and not Hesiod's.

At times, Hesiod uses the terms "Gaia," "Ouranos," "Tartarus," "Ocean," and "Sea" to refer to ancient gods who came into being at the beginning of the universe. At other times, he uses these terms to refer simply to geography: the earth, the sky, the underworld, and the ocean and the sea. In my translation, I alternate between using Gaia, Ouranos, Tartarus etc. as the proper names of gods involved in the story and as geographical features of our world. When the names are being used primarily to indicate geography, I replace "Gaia" in the Greek with "Earth", Ouranos with "Sky" and so on. I use capital letters (the Sea, Ocean, the Sky etc.) as a way of indicating that, to an ancient Greek, the earth is always simultaneously a geographical place and a goddess, that the ocean is at one and the same time a huge expanse of water and the eldest of the Titan gods, and the sky above us also and always the god who is Gaia's eldest son, first husband and first ruler of the universe.

## The Children of Gaia & Ouranos: Titans, Cyclopes, & Hundred Handers

Next, uniting with Ouranos,

Gaia bore the Titans: Ocean, with his strong currents,  
Koios, Kreios, Hyperion, and Iapetus,  
Theia, Rhea, Themis, and Mnemosyne who remembers, 135  
Gold-crowned Phoebê and lovely Tethys.  
After these, she bore her youngest, crooked-counseling Kronos,  
most terrifying of her children, and he despised his potent father.  
Then she gave birth to the Cyclopes, who possess a violent heart:  
thundering Brontes, blazing Steropes, and strong-hearted Argês. 140  
They gave thunder to Zeus and crafted lightning for him.  
In all other ways they resembled the gods,  
except that a single eye was fixed in their foreheads.  
They were called Cyclopes because one cylindrical eye  
was fixed in the middle of their foreheads. 145  
Strength and violence and ingenious craft was in their works.  
Three other children were born from the union of Gaia and Ouranos –  
massive, violent children who should not be named:  
Kottos, Briareus, and Gyges – magnificent, arrogant children.



From their shoulders, one hundred arms shot out, 150  
indescribable. From each one's shoulders  
fifty heads grew on powerful bodies.  
Added to their massive form, they possessed unapproachable, powerful strength.

## The Succession Myth: Part 1

All those who were born from Gaia and Ouranos 155  
were awe-inspiring children, and their own father hated them  
from the beginning. When first any of them was born,  
he would hide them all away, not allowing them to come up to the light,  
in a hole of Gaia. Ouranos took delight  
in his evil deed. But she, vast Gaia, groaned becoming more  
crowded within, and she pondered a deceitful, evil craft. 160  
Right away, creating the class of metal known as grey adamant,  
she fashioned a giant sickle and showed it to her children.  
She spoke words of courage, though she grieved in her heart:

“Children of me and an arrogant father, if only you are willing 165  
to obey, we could take vengeance for the evil outrage  
of your father, for he first plotted despicable actions.”

So she spoke, and fear seized them all. No one  
spoke a word. But then, almost at once, great crooked-counseling Kronos  
bravely addressed these words to his revered mother:

“Mother, I would undertake and accomplish this action, 170  
for I feel no respect for the one wrongly called father,  
our father. For he first plotted despicable actions.”

So he spoke and vast Gaia rejoiced greatly in her heart.  
She set him down, hidden in ambush, put in his hands  
a sickle with jagged teeth, and revealed the whole cunning plot. 175

Then he came, great Ouranos bringing Night with him, and all around Gaia,  
in his desire for love-making, he stretched out and grew longer,  
all of him. But his son, from his place of ambush, reached out  
with his left hand; with his right, he grasped the vast sickle,  
with its long jagged teeth, and eagerly sheared away 180  
the genitals of his own father. He hurled them away to be carried  
behind him. Not without result did they fly from his hand.  
The drops of blood that fell down,  
Gaia received them all, and in the course of the revolving year,  
she bore the powerful Furies and the massive Giants, 185  
gleaming in their armour and holding long spears in their hands,  
and the nymphs they call the Ash-Tree Nymphs, all along the limitless earth.

## The Birth of Aphrodite

When first he cut off the genitals with adamant,  
he threw them away from dry land into the surging sea,  
and so they floated on the sea's surface for a long time; all around, white foam  
arose from the immortal flesh, and in the foam  
a maiden grew. First she drew near the holy island of Cythera;  
from there she came to sea-girt Cyprus.  
A revered and beautiful god emerged. Everywhere  
grass grew beneath her slender feet. Aphrodite,  
foam-born goddess, well-garlanded Cythereia —  
so gods and men alike call her, because she was formed  
in foam, but also Cythereia, since she came past Cythera,  
and Cyprogeneia, Cyprus-born, since she was born on wave-washed Cyprus.  
And Philommeidês, laughter-loving, because she appeared from the genitals.  
Eros accompanied her, and lovely Desire followed,  
when first she was born and as she entered the company of the gods.

From the beginning she has held this honour and received  
this fated portion among women and men and immortal gods:  
maidens' whispers, smiles, and deceptions,  
sweet delight and delightful love-making.

But great Ouranos, their father, now called his children Titans, Overreachers,  
quarrelling with the children he himself begot.  
He kept saying that they had recklessly overreached and committed  
a monstrous deed, for which in time to come there would be vengeance.

## The Children of Night

Night bore hateful Doom and black Destiny  
and Death. She bore sleep, and the tribe of Dreams.  
Next gloomy Night gave birth to Blame and painful Suffering,  
though she lay with no one,  
and the Hesperides who tend beautiful golden apples  
and fruit-bearing trees beyond the boundaries of famous Ocean.  
She also bore the Fates and ruthless Dooms —  
Klotho who spins, Lachesis who apportions, and Atropos who cuts the thread.  
The Fates provide both good and evil to mortals at the time of their birth,  
and pursue the transgressions of men and gods alike;  
these goddesses never let go of their fearsome anger  
until they exact an ugly vengeance from anyone who sins.  
Deadly Night also bore Nemesis — Retribution — a curse  
for mortal men and women. Then she bore Deception and Affection,  
destructive Old Age and strong-hearted Strife.

## The Children of Strife

Hateful Strife bore painful Toil,  
Forgetfulness, Famine and tearful Pains;  
Quarrels, Lies, Words, and Disputes;  
Bad Government and Ruin who know one another well; 230  
and Oath, who most of all brings misery  
to mortal men and women whenever they swear a false oath.

*(For the next 220 lines, Hesiod continues with long catalogue lists of the birth of hundreds of divine beings, including nymphs in the sea, monsters, and rivers. The narrative of the Succession Myth continues at line 453 below.)*

## The Succession Myth: Part 2 (Kronos)

Rhea gave birth to shining children, overpowered by Kronos:  
Hestia, Demeter, and Hera of the golden sandals;  
strong Hades, who makes his home beneath the earth, 455  
his heart without pity; loud-sounding Poseidon;  
and cunning Zeus, father of gods and men,  
whose thunder makes the wide earth tremble.

Great Kronos swallowed them all, as each one  
emerged from their mother's womb to her knees, 460  
intending that none of Ouranos' grandchildren  
ever possess the honour of kingship among the immortals.  
For he learned from Gaia and starry Ouranos  
that he was fated to be overpowered by his own son,  
in spite of his strength, through the plans of great Zeus. 465  
And so his vigilance was not careless, but watching closely  
he swallowed down his children, and unceasing grief took hold of Rhea.

But when she was about to give birth to Zeus,  
father of gods and men, she implored  
her beloved parents, Gaia and starry Ouranos 470  
to devise a cunning plan so that she could bear her beloved child  
unnoticed and the Furies of her father could exact vengeance  
for the children great, crooked-counselling Kronos swallowed.  
They listened eagerly to their beloved daughter, and obeyed.

They revealed to her all that was fated to happen 475  
concerning Kronos, the king, and his strong-hearted son.  
They sent her to Lyktos, in the rich community of Crete,  
when the time came for her to give birth to her youngest,  
great Zeus. Immense Gaia received the child from her  
to raise and keep safe in broad Crete. 480

Carrying him through the swift dark night, she came first

to Lyktos. Taking the child in her arms, she hid him away  
in a deep cave, beneath the hiding places of holy earth,  
on the forest-covered mountain of Aegaion.

Wrapping a large stone in a baby's blanket, Rhea offered it 485  
to Ouranos' wide-ruling son, king of the earlier gods.

Taking it in his hands, he put it down inside his belly,  
the vile fool. He did not think in his mind that,  
in place of the stone, his son remained for the future  
untroubled, undefeated, soon to overpower him, 490  
deprive him of his honour, and rule among the immortals.

Swiftly the strength and shining limbs  
of our king grew, and in the course of a year,  
tricked by Gaia's cunning advice,  
great, crooked-counselling Kronos disgorged his children, 495  
defeated by the skill and strength of his son.

First he vomited out the stone which he'd swallowed last.  
Zeus set it down in the wide-wayed earth,  
in holy Delphi, in the vales of Mount Parnassus,  
to serve as a sign hereafter, a wonder for mortal men and women. 500

## Zeus releases the Cyclopes

He then released his uncles from cruel bondage,  
[thundering Brontes, blazing Steropes, and strong-hearted Argês,]  
sons of Ouranos, their father, who had foolishly imprisoned them.  
They repaid the favour of Zeus's kindness  
and gave him thunder and the fiery thunderbolt  
and lightning which earlier vast Gaia had concealed. 505  
Trusting in these he rules over mortals and immortals.

*[Hesiod now interrupts the Succession Myth with a lengthy digression on the god Prometheus and how he stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans. We will skip over this for now, since Prometheus will be the focus of Lessons 5 and 6.]*

*Hesiod returns to the Succession Myth, picking up where he'd left off. After Zeus releases his uncles the Cyclopes, he releases his other triplet uncles, the Hundred Handers. Both sets of uncles will be Zeus's faithful allies in the war against the Titans that is about to begin.]*

## Zeus releases the Hundred Handers

When their father, Ouranos, first became angry in his soul with the Hundred Handers –  
Briareus, Kottos, and Gyges – he bound them with powerful chains,  
envying their extreme manliness, form, and size.

He settled them beneath the wide-wayed earth. 620  
There, enduring pain as they dwell beneath the Earth,  
they sit, at the farthest limits of vast Gaia,  
grieving deeply and experiencing much sorrow in their hearts.

## The Titanomachy

But the son of Kronos and the other immortal gods,  
those whom fair-haired Rhea bore through intercourse with Kronos, 625  
brought the Hundred Handers up into the light again, following the advice of Gaia.  
For Gaia told them everything in detail:  
that, with the aid of these ones, they would win victory and glorious renown.  
For much too long the Titans and all the gods fathered by Kronos had been fighting,  
against one another in powerful battles, achieving only painful toil. 630

The famous Titans were fighting from the top of Mount Othrys,  
and the gods who are givers of good things from the top of Mount Olympus,  
those gods whom fair-haired Rhea bore, going to bed with Kronos.  
Enduring painful battles against one another,  
they fought without end for ten years. 635  
There was no release from harsh strife, no end  
for either side. The war's outcome hung in the balance.  
But then Zeus gave the Hundred Handers what they lacked –  
nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods.  
Immense strength then grew in their chests, 640

Then Zeus, father of gods and men, spoke to them:

“Hear me, glorious children of Gaia and Ouranos,  
that I might speak what the spirit in my breast compels me to say.  
For too long now against one another 645  
We have been fighting every day for victory and power,  
the immortal Titans and those of us fathered by Kronos.  
Reveal your great strength and invincible arms  
to the Titans, as you oppose them in painful battle.  
Remember my kind friendship, and all that you suffered 650  
beneath the misty darkness before you came up to the light  
from painful bondage through my wise planning.”

So spoke Zeus, and straightaway blameless Kottos answered him:

“You are a strange one! You reveal what is not unknown.  
We ourselves know that your mind and your judgment are superior, 655  
and you were born to be the immortals' champion against deadly cold harm.  
By your goodwill, from misty Darkness and our harsh chains  
we have come up once again, lordly son of Kronos,  
gaining that which we thought beyond hope.

And so now, with stubborn purpose and a willing spirit, 660  
we shall defend your power in the dreadful din of battle,  
as we fight against the Titans in strong encounters.”

So spoke Kottos, the Hundred Hander, and the gods, givers of good things,  
praised him when they heard his words. Their spirits longed for war  
more than ever before. They roused up unenviable battle, 665  
all of them, males and females both, on that day,  
the Titans and all those whom Kronos sired,  
and those ones Zeus brought up from Darkness beneath Earth to the light,  
terrifying and powerful beings possessing infinite strength.  
One hundred arms jut out from their shoulders, 670  
for each one of them, and each has fifty heads  
growing up from their shoulders on powerful necks.

Then they took their places against the Titans in the grievous conflict,  
holding giant rocks in their massive hands. 675  
The Titans, from the other side, strengthened their ranks  
eagerly. Both sides revealed the violent work of their hands.  
All around, infinite Pontos, the Sea, resounded dreadfully.  
Gaia, the Earth, roared loudly and the wide Ouranos, the Sky, groaned  
as he was shaken. From its very foundations, tall Olympus quaked 680  
beneath the force of the immortals. The heavy pounding of their feet,  
the shrill noise of unspeakable retreat  
and powerful weapons came all the way to misty Tartarus.  
So they hurled painful missiles at one another,  
and the cries of both sides reached up to starry Ouranos, 685  
as they came toward each other with great war cries.

No longer did Zeus hold back his strength. But straightaway  
his heart filled with rage, and he revealed all his force.  
From Sky and from Olympus at once  
he advanced in a hail of lightning. The lightning bolts 690  
flew from his powerful hands in a dense rain  
of blazing thunder, a thick, flaming tornado.  
All around, life-bearing Gaia screamed,  
as she burned. Limitless forests howled loudly in the fire.  
All the Earth, the streams of Ocean, and the barren Sea 695  
boiled. Hot blasts engulfed the Earth-born Titans,  
as never-ending flames reached the shining upper air.  
Strong though they were, the blazing flare  
of lightning and thunder blinded their eyes.  
The unspeakable heat bore down even on Chaos. 700  
It seemed to those who had eyes for seeing and ears for hearing  
as though Earth and broad Sky were coming together.  
So loud was the thud of Gaia being fallen upon and  
and of Ouranos as he fell on her from above.  
So great was the sound of the gods as they came together in strife. 705

The winds caused shaking and clouds of dust,  
 producing flashing thunder and blazing lightning,  
 missiles of great Zeus, and they brought clamour and shouting  
 into the midst of both sides. An infinite roar of deadly strife  
 arose, and the power of their actions was revealed. 710  
 The battle turned against the Titans. Before this they charged at one another  
 and fought without end through powerful encounters.  
 Now in the front ranks, Kottos, Briareus,  
 and Gyges, hungry for battle, roused up bitter war.  
 From their powerful hand they sent three hundred rocks 715  
 flying, their missiles casting shadows over the Titans.  
 They sent the Titans down beneath the wide-wayed Earth  
 and bound them fast in painful chains,  
 vanquishing them, powerful though they were, with their hands.

## The Fate of the Titans & the timē of the Hundred Handers

As far beneath Earth as Sky is above Earth 720  
 just so far beneath Earth is misty Tartarus.

Falling for nine days and nine nights from Sky,  
 a bronze anvil would reach Earth on the tenth day.  
 Equally from Earth to misty Tartarus,  
 falling again for nine days and nine nights from Earth, 725  
 a bronze anvil would arrive in Tartarus on the tenth day.

A fence of bronze runs around it. All around Tartarus,  
 three rows of Night pour down, encircling his neck. Above him,  
 the roots of Earth and the barren Sea grow down.  
 There the Titan gods, in misty darkness,  
 are hidden away through the plans of cloud-gathering Zeus 730  
 in a moldy place, at the furthest boundaries of vast Gaia.  
 For the Titans, there is no exit. Poseidon made the doors  
 of bronze, and a wall runs along on both sides.

There Kottos, Briareus, and great-hearted Gyges  
 reside, jailers trusted by aegis-bearing Zeus. 735

*[Hesiod now provides an extended description of the geography and most famous inhabitants of Tartarus, including Hades, Persephone, Cerberus, the river Styx and many others. This long digression, which we will skip over, answers a fundamental question for the ancient Greeks: what will the afterlife be like? What awaits all of us in the underworld? Because he has become the instrument of the Muses, Hesiod, like all Muse-inspired poets, has access to this knowledge. But can we trust these capricious goddesses? After all, they may know how to tell the truth, but they also know how to tell lies indistinguishable from the truth. We really have no choice but to trust them, since we have no other way of finding out what awaits us in Tartarus.]*

*After the digression on Tartarus, Hesiod resumes the main narrative of the Succession Myth, briefly returning to Zeus's*

*uncles and allies, the Hundred Handers and then moving onto Zeus's last obstacle before he can become ruler of the universe: the monster Typhoeus.]*

There exist Tartarus' shining gates and bronze threshold, 811  
unmovable, fixed in place by far-reaching, ever-growing  
roots. Beyond and far-removed from all the other gods  
dwell the Titans, beyond even gloomy Chaos.

The famous allies of loud-thundering Zeus 815  
make their homes there by the foundations of Ocean –

Kottos and Gyges. Briareus too: the loud-roaring  
Earthshaker, Poseidon, made him his son-in-law,  
and gave him his own daughter, Cympoleia, to marry.

## The Typhonomachy

But, once Zeus had driven the Titans from the Sky, 820  
vast Gaia gave birth to her youngest son, Typhoeus,  
by intercourse with Tartarus through gold-adorned Aphrodite.

His hands were strong, able to accomplish his works,  
and the feet of this powerful god never grew weary. From his shoulders  
a hundred snake heads grew, flicking 825

dark tongues of a terrifying serpent. Fire shot out  
from his eyes under the brows on his monstrous heads.

From all the heads, fire blazed wherever he looked.

In all the terrifying heads were voices  
sending out unspeakable sounds. At one time, 830

they made sounds understood by the gods; at another time,

came the voice of a proud, invincible bull, bellowing its strength;

then the voice of a lion with shameless spirit,

and at another time, like that of puppies, a wonder to hear. 835

Sometimes he hissed, and the high mountains echoed back the sound.

On that day a deed beyond all help would have been accomplished,  
and he would have ruled over mortals and immortals,  
if the father of gods and men had not thought quickly.

He thundered hard and powerful. All around, Earth  
resounded horribly, so too broad Sky above, 840

the Sea, streams of Ocean, and regions underneath Earth.

Tall Olympus shook under the immortal feet  
of the king as he set out, and Earth groaned.

Searing heat from both of them oppressed the violet-coloured Sea,  
from thunder and lightning, and from the monster's fire, 845

from scorching winds and flaming thunderbolts.

All the Earth boiled, and Sky and Sea too.

Around and over shores and sea cliffs giant waves raged



beneath the immortals' onslaught, and an immense earthquake began.  
Hades, lord of the dead below, trembled; 850  
so did the Titans, allies of Kronos, in the lowest parts of Tartarus,  
from the endless noise of dreadful battle-strife.

When Zeus unleashed his mighty wrath and seized his weapons —  
thunder, lightning, and blazing thunderbolts —  
he leaped from Olympus and struck. He engulfed 855  
all the appalling heads of the terrifying monster in fire.

And once he overpowered him, flogging him with blows,  
Typhoeus crashed down, his limbs broken, and vast Gaia groaned.  
Flames shot up from the thunderstruck lord,  
in the dark, rugged valleys of the mountain 860

where he was struck. Most of vast Gaia was on fire  
from the unspeakable heat, and she melted like tin  
made molten in open cauldrons through the arts  
of craftsmen, or as iron, which is strongest of all,

mastered by blazing fire in mountain valleys, 865  
melts in the shining Earth through Hephaestus' skill.  
Just so, Gaia was melting from the blaze of flaming fire.  
Zeus, overwhelmed with rage, hurled him into broad Tartarus.

From Typhoeus comes the wrath of wet-blowing winds,  
except for Notos the South, Boreas the North, and Zephyr the West Wind — 870  
these come from the gods, a great blessing for mortals.

The other winds blow without purpose on the Sea,  
a great torment for mortals; they rage with evil blasts.  
They start howling when you least expect them, scattering ships,  
and the sailors drown. No remedy exists for their evil, 875

not for the men who encounter them at Sea.  
So too across the infinite blooming Earth,  
they destroy the lovely fields of Earth-dwelling women and men,  
and fill Gaia with dust and grievous turmoil.

## Zeus becomes king

But when the carefree gods had accomplished their labour,  
and decided the issue of honours with the Titans, by force,  
then they urged far-seeing Olympian Zeus,  
by the shrewd advice of Gaia, to be king and ruler  
of the immortals. And he skillfully divided honours among them. 885

# The Wives of Zeus

## 1. Metis

Zeus, now king of the gods, chose as his first wife **Metis**,  
because, among gods and mortal men and women, she knows most.

But when she was about to give birth to the goddess  
owl-eyed Athena, he deceived her mind with a trick.

Using wily words, he placed her down into his belly,  
by the shrewd advice of Gaia and starry Ouranos.

890

For they advised him, so that no one else of the eternal gods,  
other than Zeus, should ever hold the honour of kingship.

From Metis, wise children were destined be born,  
first a daughter, owl-eyed Tritogeneian Athena,  
endowed with courage and prudent counsel, equal to her father.

895

But then, after that, she was fated to bear a son,  
a king of gods and men, born with overwhelming strength.

Before that happened, Zeus placed her down into his belly,  
so the goddess might advise him on good and evil.

900

## 2. Themis

Second, Zeus brought home bright, just **Themis**, who bore the Seasons —  
Good Governance, Justice, and flowering Peace —  
who oversee the works of mortal men and women.

And she bore the Fates, whom shrewd Zeus gave an immense honour —  
Clotho the Spinner, Lachesis the Allotter and Atropos the Unbending:  
for mortal women and men, they assign possession of good and evil.

905

## 3. Eurynome

Third, **Eurynome**, the daughter of Ocean, a goddess of enticing beauty,  
bore to Zeus the fair-cheeked Graces —  
glittering Aglaia, joyful Euphrosyne, and lovely festive Thalia.

From their eyes, as they look our way, desire radiates  
and loosens our limbs. Under their eyelids, beauty inhabits their glances.

910

## 4. Demeter

Then Zeus went to the bed of bountiful **Demeter**.  
She bore white-armed Persephone, whom Aidoneus  
seized from her mother, and shrewd Zeus gave his permission.

## 5. Mnemosyne (Memory)

Then Zeus fell in love with lovely-haired **Mnemosyne**.  
She bore the Muses who wear gold ribbons in their hair,  
nine daughters whose delight is festivals and the joy of song.

915

## 6. Leto

Leto too joined in love with aegis-bearing Zeus,  
and bore Apollo and arrow-pouring Artemis,  
captivating children surpassing all of Sky's descendants.

920

## 7. Hera

Last of all, Zeus made Hera his lush and fertile wife.  
She gave birth to youthful Hebê, Ares, and Eileithyia,  
joining in love with the king of gods and men.

Zeus himself gave birth from his head to owl-eyed Athena,  
fearsome rouser of battles, leader of armies, never wearying 925  
queen who rejoices at the clash of arms, wars, and battles.  
But Hera raged in strife with her husband, and joining  
in intercourse with no one, gave birth to renowned Hephaestus,  
who surpassed all the descendants of Ouranos in skill of his hands.

More and more children  
From Amphitrite and the resounding Earth-Shaker, 930  
huge powerful Triton was born, who in the Sea's depths  
with his beloved mother and lordly father  
lives in a golden palace, an awesome god. And to Ares,  
the piercer of shields, Aphrodite of Cythera bore Fear and Terror —  
awful gods who cause panic in crowded battalions of men, 935  
in ice-cold war with city-destroying Ares —  
and Harmony, whom bold Cadmus made his wife.

Maia, daughter of Atlas, bore famous Hermes, the immortals' messenger,  
to Zeus, after she came into his marriage bed.

Cadmus' daughter, Semele, joining in love with Zeus. 940  
bore a shining son, joyful Dionysus —  
a mortal mother and an immortal son. Both are gods now.

Alkmene bore mighty Herakles,  
joining in love with cloud-gathering Zeus.

Famous broken-footed Hephaestus made Aglaia, 945  
youngest of the Graces his blooming wife.

Golden-haired Dionysus took blonde Ariadne,  
daughter of Minos as his blooming wife.  
Zeus, son of Kronos made her ageless and immortal.

The heroic son of fair-ankled Alcmene, 950  
mighty Herakles, once he finished his grievous Labours,  
made the daughter of great Zeus and Hera who walks in golden sandals  
his revered wife, on snow-covered Olympus,  
Happy and blessed, who finished his great work and lives  
among the immortals, free from pain and old age forever. 955

To Helios, the Sun who never grows weary, the famous daughter of Ocean,  
Perseis, bore Circe and king Aietes.  
Aietes, son of Helios who shines on mortals,  
married fair-cheeked Idyia, a daughter of Ocean,  
the perfect river. She bore fair-ankled Medea 960  
mastered in lovely intercourse through gold-adorned Aphrodite.

*[The Theogony continues for another 50 or so lines, as Hesiod turns to the children born to goddesses who had sex with mortal men: Demeter, Eos (the Dawn goddess), Thetis, Aphrodite, Circe and so on. In this way, Hesiod ends his poem in a*

*glorious celebration of procreation, as all the gods take their cue from Zeus, joining in love with each other and with mortal men and women to produce more and more gods and heroes.]*

# L5 Hypothesis-Prometheus & Pandora (Hesiod's Theogony and Works & Days)

## Lesson 5 Primary Readings: Prometheus and Pandora

### Notes:

- Hesiod recounts the myth of Prometheus' theft of fire and the creation of the first woman, Pandora, twice: first in the Theogony and then again in the Works and Days. The two versions each contain unique information and have different emphases. It is important to read each version carefully to compare them and to build a fuller version of the myth by taking both accounts into consideration.
- The Theogony version emphasizes the events that happen at Mekone concerning the shared meal and the origins of the sacrificial ritual.
- The Works and Days version has a fuller description of the creation of Pandora by all the gods, with an explanation of her name related to this. She is called "Pan-dora" (All-Gifts) because all the gods gave her gifts, according to Hesiod. This version also includes Pandora's famous jar in which Hope is contained.

### Hesiod, *Theogony* (lines 507-616)

(translated by S. Ahmed and A. Rappold)

Iapetos brought home the daughter of Ocean – enticing, beautiful-ankled Clymene and carried her straight into their shared bed. She bore him these children:

Atlas, strong-hearted  
Menoitios, obsessed with fame 510  
Prometheus, with pre-planning, clever  
in hindsight, ignorant: Epimetheus.

Epimetheus:

first brought suffering to working men  
when he accepted the gift: Zeus's woman moulded 515  
in the form of a young virgin.

arrogant Menoitios:

blasted into Darkness by far-seeing Zeus,  
– with a flash of lightning and the lingering smell of sulphur –  
destroyed by his reckless, out-of-control aggression. 520

Atlas:

stands before the clear-voiced Hesperides, at the ends of the earth.

he labours under the heaviest of obligations: the wide heavens  
press down on his head and hands, without rest  
such was the duty allotted to him by cunningly intelligent Zeus. 525

Subtle-planning Prometheus:

shackled by Zeus with punishments unbreakable  
and excruciating: Zeus drove a spike right through his chest  
and sent a long-winged eagle to torture him.  
Again and again the eagle gorged on his immortal liver: 530  
every day, the long-winged bird feasted, but  
each night, the liver grew back, exactly as before.

That bird was killed by the son of enticing, beautiful-ankled Alkmene:  
Herakles. He cured this plague, this living death,  
and freed the son of Iapetos from his maddening pain. 535

This was not opposed by the will of the one who rules on high: Olympian Zeus.  
After all, Zeus had always planned that the glory of Theban-born Heracles  
would spread far and wide across the earth.

So Zeus multiplied the honour of his legendary son  
by setting aside his old anger, though bile still filled his heart because, 540  
though he was Kronos' heir, and held clear superiority,  
Prometheus had, so many times, tried to outwit him.

As had happened, once upon a time:

The gods and mortals could not decide on a fair division of sacrificial honours  
at Mekone.

Prometheus eagerly cut a large bull into two portions 545  
and offered this as a compromise, seeking to outwit Zeus.

To Zeus he offered one portion: the best meat and the entrails rich with fat  
but all hidden inside a sack of skin and stomach.

To men he offered another: the white bones of the bull but cleverly arranged 550  
and all hidden under a covering of delicious, shining-white fat.

The father of gods and men said to him:

“Well, son of Iapetus, you never miss a chance to show off your status to the other kings,  
but you might be a bit ripe in the head — this solution is needlessly partisan.”

As he spoke, there was a sneer on the face of Zeus, who knows immovable plans. 555

Crooked-minded Prometheus responded,  
though he couldn't help smiling softly, keeping in mind his greater deception:  
“Zeus, most glorious, most magnificent among the gods who are forever:  
choose whichever portion best suits you.”

He spoke, planning deception. . Zeus who knows imperishable plans 560  
knew already — how could he have failed to recognize the deception?  
His mind had already foreseen how suffering would first  
come to mortal men and how this choice would bring it about.  
So, with both hands, he chose the second portion, wrapped in white fat.

Anger chased out every other thought and bile choked his heart, 565  
when, out in the open, he saw the white bones of the bull and their clever arrangement.  
By that decision, even now, men and women across the earth honour the immortals,  
by offering them the smoke of white bones from blazing altars.

Cloud-gathering Zeus spoke, his expression strained:  
“Son of Iapetus, you never miss a chance to show off your intellect. 570  
But you’re a bit ripe in the head; you just can’t stop playing tricks.”

His anger simmered as he said this, Zeus who knows imperishable plans.  
From that point onwards, his mind was occupied, plotting a response to the deception

First, he withheld the power of weariless fire from the people of the ash-spear:  
mortal men, 575  
who inhabit the earth  
but the helpful son of Iapetos outwitted him  
by stealing back weariless fire. Though its blaze was clear from far away,  
he hid it in a hollow fennel stalk. This provocation gnawed at the deepest core  
of high-thundering Zeus. And his heart again filled with bile  
when, out in the open, he saw the clear blaze of fire – now in the hands of men. 580

As a trade for the fire, Zeus devised wicked suffering for mankind.  
The renowned, broken-footed smith moulded Earth into  
the shape of a virginal girl, cheeks blushing modestly, according to the plans of Kronos’ son.  
The owl-eyed goddess Athena was in charge of her clothing and adornment:

for her body, a dress of silver-white, nearly transparent 585  
over the face: a veil woven by Athena’s own hands – its appearance, miraculous.  
throughout her hair: a crown of wild-flowers, newly blossomed,  
provoking desire-. All was arranged by Pallas Athena.

Onto her head: a golden diadem made by the renowned, broken-footed-god.  
He shaped and perfected it with his own hands, to please his father Zeus: 590  
Across it, he overlaid intricate scenes – their appearance, miraculous–

of monsters of earth and sea, many and massive,  
but all contained within the diadem. He depicted them with such allure,  
so miraculous, that you’d swear the animals were alive.

The woman was Zeus’ trick: a beautiful evil in return for something good. 595

Next, he revealed her to the gathered assembly of gods and men.  
Her appearance was a testament to the skill of the owl-eyed daughter of a mighty father.  
All the immortal gods and mortal men gazed upon her— her appearance, miraculous –  
as they beheld this inescapable trap, irresistible to men.

The species of female women originated with her and 600  
she was the start of that whole destructive race,  
this terrible plague for mankind. They squat within the homes of mortal men,  
unbearable in Poverty, barely tolerable in Plenty:

Just like:  
bees, within their domed hives, 605  
work to feed the drones – where they go, hard work follows.

*Every moment of the day, from dawn to dusk  
the bees exhaust themselves, laying out white honeycomb  
while the drones lounge inside the domed hives,  
the work of one goes straight into the belly of the other.* 610

It's just the same for mortal men: women are the bearers of suffering,  
created by high-thundering Zeus.

Wherever women go, hard work follows.

Zeus gave one more evil in return for the good:

[Option 1:]

Let's say someone manages to avoid marriage, women, and all those anxieties –  
disaster then comes in old age: since he chose not to marry, 615  
who takes care of him at life's end? And even if his needs are met  
in life – well then, after death

there are no children to carry on his legacy. His hard work profits  
only distant relatives. 620

[Option 2:]

Let's say someone chooses the fate of marriage:

Either he manages to find a wife he can trust, their hearts perfectly matched  
but still lives in fear that this comfort will one day give way to suffering.

Or he marries an abusive type, a troublemaker –

that is a source of chest-clutching anxiety for the rest of his life. 625

Headache and heartache too. Trust me, this suffering is incurable.

The moral: you can't deceive or outwit the mind of Zeus.

Not even the son of Iapetus, Prometheus, the helpful-trickster

could get out from under his anger. Instead, he was crushed by a heavy sentence  
and despite his slippery mind, was shackled in chains. 630

## Hesiod, Works and Days (lines 1-106)

(translated by S. Ahmed, R. Nickel, and A. Rappold)

Muses from Pieria, you who bestow fame through song  
come and tell of Zeus, celebrating your father in song.

Through him, mortal men are famous and not famous,  
spoken of and not spoken of, by the will of great Zeus.

With ease he makes a man strong; with ease he crushes the mighty. 5

With ease he degrades a distinguished man and exalts the obscure.

With ease he straightens one who is bent over and shrivels the arrogant.

High-thundering Zeus, who dwells in lofty palaces.

Hear, see, and listen; with justice keep our laws straight,

you for your part; I for mine would tell Perses the way things are. 10

There's not only one kind of Strife. On Earth



there are two. The one, when you see her, you would praise;  
 the other deserves blame. They possess diverse natures.  
 The one promotes war — that evil — and division, 15  
 the cruel one. No mortals love her, but by Necessity,  
 through the plans of the immortals, they honour this Strife, this burden.  
 The other one, dark Night bore her first.  
 The high-throned son of Kronos who dwells in the Sky,  
 set her down in the roots of Earth, and for men she is far better.  
 Even a deadbeat, even him, she's able to rouse to work. 20  
 A person in need of work sees another man,  
 a rich man eager to plow and to sow  
 and build a good house. One neighbour competes with another  
 as he rushes toward riches. This Strife is good for mortals.  
 Potter vies with potter, carpenter with carpenter. 25  
 Beggar is jealous of beggar, poet of poet.

Perses, set these words in your heart.  
 Don't allow Strife, who rejoices in evil, keep you from work,  
 as you watch for quarrels and eavesdrop in the marketplace. 30  
 The season for marketplace quarrels is short  
 for the man who hasn't yet stored up this year's crop,  
 harvested in season, the crop that Gaia brings, the grain of Demeter.  
 Once you have enough of this, you can promote quarrels and division  
 over others' possessions. You'll get no second chance  
 to do this work.

So come, let's settle our dispute 35  
 with straight judgments, which come from Zeus and are best.  
 We'd already divided the farm. But you kept on taking  
 and carried off almost everything, always flattering the kings,  
 bribe-eaters; they specialize in making these kinds of judgments.

They're fools: when asked to divide in half, they give the whole thing, 40  
 and soft — unfamiliar with the value of a hard day's work.  
 For most men, the gods hide the way to make a living —  
 the easy way, at least. Otherwise, you'd work only a single day,  
 harvest food for the year and spend the rest relaxing.

Soon you'd hang up your plow-handles to dry, 45  
 finished with the work of oxen and much-enduring mules.

Any hope for this carefree life was concealed by an angry Zeus —  
 his heart, filled with bile at crooked-minded Prometheus' deception —  
 his mind, focused on a scheme: how to bring painful suffering to mankind.

First, Zeus hid fire. But the helpful son of Iapetos, 50  
 stealing from wise-minded Zeus, gave it back to mankind  
 by hiding it in a fennel stalk, deceiving Zeus who delights in thunder.

In anger, cloud-gathering Zeus addressed him:

“Son of Iapetus, you never miss a chance to show off your intellect.  
 You’re pleased with yourself, because you stole fire and outwitted me. 55  
 This will prove disastrous for you. For mankind too.  
 In exchange for fire, I’ll devise a truly wicked trade: a gift all  
 will choose to accept with open arms, willingly embracing their own suffering.”  
 As he said this, he couldn’t stop laughing: the father of men and of gods.

Next, Zeus issued these commands: 60

to Hephaistos, famous for his creations:  
 “make a mixture of earth and water and pour into it a human voice  
 and the same spirit as well. Mould its face to resemble a goddess  
 and shape its body like that of a young virgin, innocently exciting desire.”

to Athena: 65  
 “teach her to craft and weave careful art upon the loom”

to gold-adorned Aphrodite:  
 “anoint her with allure, body-devouring longing and painful need.”

to Hermes, Watchdog Slayer and Guide, he commanded: 70  
 “install a bitch’s mind and a criminal’s heart.”

They all obeyed the commands of Kronos’ son, king Zeus.  
 The renowned, broken-footed god swiftly moulded from Earth  
 the shape of a virginal girl, cheeks blushing modestly, according to the plans of Kronos’ son.  
 divine, owl-eyed Athena was in charge of clothing and adornment:  
 the divine Graces and queenly Persuasion set onto 75  
 the inviting skin of her neck golden bands. For her hair,  
 a crown of spring blossoms from the beautifully-coiffed Seasons.

All was arranged invitingly across her naked skin by Pallas Athena.  
 But in her breast, Hermes the Guide, Watchdog Slayer, installed  
 a tricky, lying tongue and a criminal’s heart. 80  
 All was done according to the plans of loud-thundering Zeus.

Last of all, the gods’ messenger placed a voice in her and announced her name:  
 Pandora: because because all the Olympian gods gave her gifts,  
 though she would be a plague for labouring men.

Finally, when he’d completed his inescapable trap, irresistible to men, 85  
 father Zeus sent out Hermes, the Watchdog Slayer, to Epimetheus.  
 The swift messenger of the gods brought the gift. But Epimetheus  
 only considered in hindsight Prometheus’ forewarning:  
 “Never accept gifts from Olympian Zeus. Send everything back,  
 Don’t bring it into your house, or I fear mortals will suffer for it.” 90

Only after Epimetheus accepted the gift, after he held suffering in his arms, did he understand.

Before:  
 all men, across the earth, used to prosper

free from suffering, hard work  
and painful disease: for men, these are death-bringers  
because those who weather these evils become old before their time. 95

Then:

The woman removed the heavy lid of the jar with her own hands, and  
driven by her own thoughts, unleashed sorrows for men, death-bringers.  
Hope alone remained in its unbreakable home,  
caught underneath the lip of the jar. Its escape  
was only a short flight away, but, just in time, she slammed the lid down. 100  
All according to the plan of aegis-bearing, cloud-gathering Zeus.

Now:

Ten thousand or more sorrows roam free among all mankind.  
Suffering is inescapable on land and sea.  
Worse, diseases stalk human beings day and night,  
spreading everywhere, out of control; for men, they bring wails of grief, 105  
silently since their divine voice was removed by cunningly wise Zeus.

The moral: in the end, there is no way to evade the mind of Zeus.

# L6 Hypothesis-Prometheus & Io (Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound)

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In the following text, the numbers without brackets refer to the English text, and those in square brackets refer to the Greek text. Indented partial lines in the English text are included with the line above in the reckoning. Stage directions and endnotes have been provided by the translator.

## BACKGROUND NOTE

Aeschylus (c.525 BC to c.456 BC) was one of the three great Greek tragic dramatists whose works have survived. Of his many plays, seven still remain. Aeschylus may have fought against the Persians at Marathon (490 BC), and he did so again at Salamis (480 BC). According to tradition, he died from being hit with a tortoise dropped by an eagle. After his death, the Athenians, as a mark of respect, permitted his works to be restaged in their annual competitions.

Prometheus Bound was apparently the first play in a trilogy (the other two plays, now lost except for some fragments, were Prometheus Unbound and Prometheus the Fire-Bringer). Although a number of modern scholars have questioned whether Aeschylus was truly the author of the play, it has always been included among his works.

In Greek mythology, Prometheus was a Titan, a descendant of the original gods, Gaia and Ouranos (Earth and Heaven). The Titans were defeated in a battle with Zeus, who fought against his own father, Cronos, imprisoned him deep in the earth, and became the new ruling power in heaven. Although he was a Titan, Prometheus assisted Zeus in this conflict, but later offended him by stealing fire from heaven and giving it to human beings, for whom he had a special affection. Aeschylus's play begins after Zeus has assumed control of heaven and learned about the theft.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

POWER: divine agent of Zeus.

FORCE: divine agent of Zeus.

HEPHAESTUS: divine son of Zeus, the artisan god.

PROMETHEUS: a Titan.

CHORUS: daughters of Oceanus.

OCEANUS: a god of the sea.

IO: daughter of Inachus.

HERMES: divine son of Zeus.

*[In a remote mountainous region of Scythia. HEPHAESTUS enters with POWER and FORCE dragging PROMETHEUS with them in chains.]*

POWER

We have just reached the land of Scythia,  
at the most distant limits of the world,  
remote and inaccessible. Hephaestus,  
now it is your duty to carry out  
those orders you received from Father Zeus—

to nail this troublemaker firmly down  
against these high, steep cliffs, shackling him  
in adamantine chains that will not break.  
For he in secret stole your pride and joy  
and handed it to men—the sacred fire  
which fosters all the arts. For such a crime, 10  
he must pay retribution to the gods,  
so he will learn to bear the rule of Zeus  
and end that love he has for humankind. [10]

HEPHAESTUS

Power and Force, where you two are concerned,  
what Zeus commanded us has now been done.  
There are no further obstacles to face.  
I am not bold enough to use sheer force  
against a kindred god and nail him down  
here on this freezing rock. But nonetheless, 20  
I must steel myself to finish off our work,  
for it is dangerous to disregard  
the words of Father Zeus.

[HEPHAESTUS addresses PROMETHEUS.]

High-minded son  
of our wise counsellor, goddess Themis,  
against my will and yours, I must bind you [20]  
with chains of brass which no one can remove  
on this cliff face, far from all mortal men,  
where you will never hear a human voice  
or glimpse a human shape and sun's hot rays  
will scorch and age your youthful flesh. For you, 30  
the sparkling stars high in the sky at night  
will hide those rays and offer some relief.  
Then, in the morning, once again the sun  
will melt the frost. This never-ending burden  
of your present agony will wear you down,  
for the one who is to rescue you someday  
is not yet even born. This is your reward  
for acting as a friend to human beings.  
Though you are a god, you were not deterred  
by any fear of angering the gods. 40  
You gave men honours they did not deserve, [30]  
possessions they were not entitled to.  
Because of that, you will remain on guard,  
here on this joyless rock, standing upright  
with your legs straight, and you will never sleep.  
You will often scream in pain and sorrow,  
for Zeus's heart is pitilessly harsh,

and everyone whose ruling power is new  
is cruel and ruthless.

POWER

Come on. Why wait  
and mope around like this so uselessly?  
Why do you not despise this deity  
who is so hateful to the other gods?  
He gave your special gift to mortal men.

50

HEPHAESTUS

We are comrades—we share strong common bonds.

POWER

That may be true, but can you disobey  
your father's words? Do you not fear him more?

[40]

HEPHAESTUS

Ah yes! You always lack a sense of pity  
and are so full of cruel self-confidence.

POWER

There is no point in wailing a lament  
for this one here. You should stop wasting time  
on things that bring no benefits to you.

60

HEPHAESTUS

How much I hate the special work I do!

POWER

Why hate it? It's clear enough your artistry  
had nothing at all to do with causing  
what we are facing here.

HEPHAESTUS

That may be true,  
but still I wish my lot as artisan  
had gone to someone else.

POWER

Well, every task  
is burdensome, except to rule the gods.  
No one is truly free except for Zeus.

[50]

HEPHAESTUS

I know. This work is proof enough of that.  
I cannot deny it.

POWER

Then hurry up  
and get these chains around him, just in case  
Zeus sees you stalling.

HEPHAESTUS

All right. These shackles here  
are ready. Take a look.

*[Hephaestus starts chaining Prometheus's arm to the cliff.]*

POWER

Bind his hands.  
Use some heavy hammer blows and rivet him  
against the rock.

HEPHAESTUS

There! This part is finished.  
It looks all right.

POWER

Strike harder. Make sure  
he is securely fixed, with nothing slack.  
He is an expert at devising ways  
to wriggle out of hopeless situations.

80

HEPHAESTUS

Well, this arm, at least, is firmly nailed here.  
No one will get this out.

[60]

POWER

Now drive a spike  
in here as well—make sure it won't come loose.  
No matter how intelligent he is,  
he has to learn he is nothing but a fool  
compared to Zeus.

HEPHAESTUS

No one could justly fault  
this work I do, except for him.

POWER

Now smash

the blunt tip of this adamantine wedge  
straight through his chest—use all your force.

HEPHAESTUS

Alas!

O Prometheus, this suffering of yours—  
how it makes me weep!

90

POWER

Why are you so slow  
and sighing over Zeus's enemy?  
Be careful, or soon you may be groaning  
for yourself.

HEPHAESTUS

This sight is difficult to watch,  
as you can see.

POWER

I see this criminal  
is getting just what he deserves. Come on,  
wrap these chains around his ribs.

[70]

HEPHAESTUS

Look, I know  
I have to carry out this work, so stop  
ordering me about so much.

POWER

Hold on—  
I'll give you orders as often as I please  
and keep on badgering you. Move down,  
and use your strength to fix his legs in place.

100

HEPHAESTUS

Our work is done. That did not take too long.

POWER

Hit the fetters really hard—those ones there,  
around his feet. The one who's watching us,  
inspecting what we do, can turn vicious.

HEPHAESTUS

The words you speak well match the way you look.

POWER



Well, your soft heart can sympathize with him,  
but do not criticize my stubborn will  
and my harsh temper. [80]

HEPHAESTUS

We should be going. 110  
His limbs are all securely fixed in place.

[Exit Hephaestus.]

POWER [to Prometheus]

Now you can flaunt your arrogance up here,  
by stealing honours given to the gods  
and offering them to creatures of a day.  
Are mortal beings strong enough to ease  
the burden of your pain? The gods were wrong  
to give that name 'Prometheus' to you,  
'someone who thinks ahead,' for now you need  
a real Prometheus to help you out  
and find a way to free you from these chains. 120

[Exit Power and Force.]

PROMETHEUS

O you heavenly skies and swift-winged winds,  
you river springs, you countless smiling waves  
on ocean seas, and Earth, you mother of all, [90]  
and you as well, the all-seeing circle  
of the celestial sun—I summon you  
to see what I, a god, am suffering  
at the hands of gods. Look here and witness  
how I am being worn down with torments  
which I will undergo for countless years.  
This is the kind of shameful punishment 130  
the new ruler of the gods imposed on me.

Alas! Alas! I groan under the pain  
of present torments and those yet to come.  
Who will deliver me from such harsh pain? [100]

From what part of the sky will he appear?  
And yet, why talk like this? For I possess  
a detailed knowledge of what lies in store  
before it happens—none of my tortures  
will come as a surprise. I must endure,  
as best I can, the fate I have been given, 140  
for I know well that no one can prevail  
against the strength of harsh Necessity.  
And yet it is not possible for me  
to speak or not to speak about my fate.

I have been compelled to bear the yoke  
of punishment because I gave a gift  
to mortal beings—I searched out and stole  
the source of fire concealed in fennel stalks,  
and that taught men the use of all the arts  
and gave them ways to make amazing things. [110]  
Now chained and nailed beneath the open sky,  
I am paying the price for what I did. 150  
But wait! What noise and what invisible scent  
is drifting over me? Is it divine  
or human or both of these? Has someone  
travelled to the very edges of the world  
to watch my suffering. What do they want?

*[Prometheus shouts out to whoever is watching him.]*

Here I am, an ill-fated god! You see  
an enemy of Zeus shackled in chains, [120]  
hated by all those gods who spend their time 160  
in Zeus's court! They think my love for men  
is too excessive!

What is that sound I hear?  
The whirling noise of birds nearby—the air  
is rustling with their lightly beating wings!  
Whatever comes too close alarms me.

*[Enter the Chorus of nymphs, daughters of Oceanus, in a winged chariot, which hovers beside Prometheus.]*

CHORUS

You need not fear us. We are your friends.  
The rapid beating of these eager wings  
has borne our company to this sheer cliff. [130]  
We worked to get our father to agree, 170  
and he did so, although that was not easy.  
The swiftly moving breezes bore us on,  
for the echoing clang of hammer blows  
pierced right into the corners of our cave  
and beat away my bashful modesty.  
And so, without tying any sandals on,  
I rushed here in this chariot with wings.

PROMETHEUS

Aaaiii! Alas! O you daughters  
born from fertile Tethys, children  
of your father Oceanus, whose current  
circles the entire world and never rests, 180 [140]  
look at me! See how I am chained here,

nailed on this cliff above a deep ravine,  
where I maintain my dreary watch.

CHORUS

I see that, Prometheus, and a cloud  
of tears and terror moves across my eyes  
to observe your body being worn away  
in these outrageous adamantine chains.  
New gods now rule on Mount Olympus,  
and, like a tyrant, Zeus is governing  
with new-fangled laws, overpowering  
those gods who were so strong before.

[150]

190

PROMETHEUS

If only he had thrown me underground,  
down there in Hades, which receives the dead,  
in Tartarus, through which no one can pass,  
and cruelly bound me there in fetters  
no one could break, so that none of the gods  
or anyone else could gloat at my distress.  
But now the blowing winds toy with me here,  
and the pain I feel delights my enemies.

CHORUS

What god is so hard-hearted he would find  
this scene enjoyable? Who would not feel  
compassion for these sufferings of yours,  
apart from Zeus, who, in his angry mood,  
has set his rigid mind inflexibly  
on conquering the race of Ouranos.  
And he will never stop until his heart  
is fully satisfied or someone else  
overthrows his power by trickery,  
hard as that may be, and rules instead.

200 [160]

PROMETHEUS

Yes, and even though I am being tortured,  
bound in these strong chains, the day is coming  
when that ruler of those sacred beings  
will truly need me to reveal to him  
a new intrigue by which he will be stripped  
of all his honours and his sceptre, too.  
He will not charm that secret out of me  
with sweet honeyed phrases of persuasion,  
nor, for all his savage threats, will I ever  
cringe down in front of him and let him know  
the answer—no!—not until he frees me

210

[170]

220

from these cruel shackles and is willing  
to pay me compensation for his crime!

CHORUS

With that audacious confidence of yours, [180]  
you do not cower before these bitter pains,  
but you allow your tongue to speak too freely.

A piercing fear knifes through my heart,  
my dread about your fate, how you must  
steer your ship to find safe haven  
and see an end to all your troubles.

For the son of Cronos has a heart 230  
that is inflexible—his character  
will not be moved by prayer.

PROMETHEUS

Yes, I know.

Zeus is a harsh god and holds the reins [190]  
of justice in his hands. But nonetheless,  
I can see the day approaching when his mind

will soften, once that secret I described  
has led to his collapse. Then he will abate  
his stubborn rage and enter eagerly  
into a bond of friendship with me.

By then I will be eager for that, too. 240

CHORUS

Tell us the whole story of what happened.  
How did Zeus have you seized and on what charge?  
Why does he so shamefully abuse you  
in this painful way? Give us the details,  
unless you would be harmed by telling us.

PROMETHEUS

I find these matters truly unbearable  
to talk about, but remaining silent  
pains me, too. The events that led to this [200]  
are all so miserably unfortunate.

When the powers in heaven got angry, 250  
they started quarrelling amongst themselves.

Some wanted to hurl Cronos from his throne,  
so Zeus could rule instead, but then others  
wanted the reverse—to ensure that Zeus  
would never rule the gods. I tried my best  
to give them good advice, but I could not  
convince the Titans, offspring of the Earth  
and Heaven, who, despising trickery,

insisted stubbornly they would prevail [210]  
 without much effort, by using force. 260  
 Both mother Themis and the goddess Earth  
 (who has a single form but many names)  
 had often uttered prophecies to me  
 about how Fate would make events unfold,  
 how those who would seize power and control  
 would need, not brutal might and violence,  
 but sly deception. I went through all this,  
 but they were not concerned—they thought  
 everything I said a waste of time.  
 So then, when I considered what to do, 270  
 the wisest course of action seemed to be  
 to join my mother and take Zeus's side. [220]  
 I did so eagerly, and he was keen  
 to have me with him. Thanks to my advice,  
 the gloomy pit of Tartarus now hides  
 old Cronos and his allies. I helped Zeus,  
 that tyrant of the gods—now he repays me  
 with this foul torment. It is a sickness  
 which somehow comes with every tyranny  
 to place no trust in friends.

But you asked 280  
 why Zeus is torturing me like this.  
 I will explain. As soon as he was seated [230]  
 on his father's throne, he quickly set about  
 assigning gods their various honours  
 and organizing how he meant to rule.  
 But for those sad wretched human beings,  
 he showed no concern at all. He wanted  
 to wipe out the entire race and grow  
 a new one in its place. None of the gods  
 objected to his plan except for me. 290  
 I was the only one who had the courage.  
 So I saved those creatures from destruction  
 and a trip to Hades. And that is why  
 I have been shackled here and have to bear  
 such agonizing pain, so pitiful to see. [240]  
 I set compassion for the human race  
 above the way I felt about myself,  
 so now I am unworthy of compassion.  
 This is how he seeks to discipline me,  
 without a shred of mercy—the spectacle 300  
 disgraces Zeus's name.

CHORUS

But anyone

who shows no pity for your agonies,  
Prometheus, has a heart of iron  
and is made out of rock. As for myself,  
I had no wish to see them, and now I have,  
my heart is full of grief.

PROMETHEUS

Yes, to my friends  
I make a most distressing sight.

CHORUS

Was there more?  
Or were you guilty of just one offence?

PROMETHEUS

I stopped men thinking of their future deaths.

[250]

CHORUS

What cure for this disease did you discover?

310

PROMETHEUS

Inside their hearts I put blind hope.

CHORUS

With that  
you gave great benefits to humankind.

PROMETHEUS

And in addition to hope, I gave them fire.

CHORUS

You did that for those creatures of a day?  
Do they have fire now?

PROMETHEUS

They do. And with it  
they will soon master many arts.

CHORUS

So Zeus  
charged you with this . . .

PROMETHEUS [*interrupting*]

. . . and he torments me  
and gives me no relief from suffering!

CHORUS

And has no time been set when your ordeal  
comes to an end?

PROMETHEUS

No. None at all,  
except when it seems suitable to Zeus.

320  
[260]

CHORUS

How will he ever think it suitable?  
What hope is there in that? Do you not see  
where you went wrong? But I do not enjoy  
discussing those mistakes you made, and you  
must find it painful. Let us leave that point,  
so in this anguish you find some release.

PROMETHEUS

It is easy for someone whose foot remains  
unsnared by suffering to give advice  
and criticize another in distress.

I was well aware of all these matters,  
and those mistakes I made quite willingly—  
I freely chose to do the things I did.

I will not deny that. By offering help  
to mortal beings I brought on myself  
this suffering. But still, I did not think

I would receive this kind of punishment,  
wasting away on these high rocky cliffs,  
fixed on this remote and desolate crag.

But do not mourn the troubles I now face.

Step down from your chariot and listen  
to those misfortunes I must still confront,  
so you will learn the details of my story  
from start to finish. Accept my offer.

Agree to hear me out, and share with me  
the pain I feel right now. For misery,  
shifting around from place to place, settles  
on different people at different times.

CHORUS [*leaving the chariot*]

Your request does not fall on deaf ears,  
Prometheus. My lightly stepping foot  
has moved down from the swift-winged chariot  
and sacred air, the pathway of the birds,  
to walk along this rugged rock towards you.

330  
[270]  
340  
350 [280]

I want to hear your tale, a full account  
of all your suffering.

*[Enter OCEANUS on a flying monster.]*

OCEANUS

I have now reached  
the end of my long journey, travelling  
to visit you, Prometheus, on the wings  
of this swift beast, and using my own mind  
instead of any reins to guide it here.  
You know I feel great sympathy for you  
and for your suffering. It seems to me  
our ties of kinship make me feel that way.  
But even if there were no family bonds,  
no one wins more respect from me than you.  
You will soon realize I speak the truth  
and do not simply prattle empty words.  
So come, show me how I can be of help,  
for you will never say you have a friend  
more loyal to you than Oceanus.

360 [290]

PROMETHEUS

What is this? What am I looking at?  
Have you, too, travelled here to gaze upon  
my agonies? How were you brave enough  
to leave that flowing stream which shares your name  
and those rock arches of the cave you made,  
to journey to this land, the womb of iron?  
Or have you come to see how I am doing,  
to sympathize with me in my distress?  
Behold this spectacle—a friend of Zeus,  
who helped him win his way to sovereignty!  
See how his torments weigh me down!

370 [300]

OCEANUS

I see that,  
Prometheus, and although you do possess  
a subtle mind, I would like to offer you  
some good advice. You have to understand  
your character and adopt new habits.  
For even gods have a new ruler now.  
If you keep hurling out offensive words,  
with such insulting and abusive language,  
Zeus may well hear you, even though his throne  
is far away, high in the heavenly sky,  
and then this present heap of anguished pain

380

[310]

390



will seem mere childish play. Instead of that,  
you poor suffering creature, set aside  
this angry mood of yours and seek relief  
from all this misery. These words of mine  
may seem to you perhaps too old and trite,  
but this is what you get, Prometheus, [320]  
for having such a proud and boastful tongue.  
You show no modesty in what you say  
and will not bow down before misfortune,  
for you prefer to add more punishments 400  
to those you have already. You should hear me  
as your teacher and stop this kicking out  
against the whip. You know our present king,  
who rules all by himself and has no one  
he must answer to, is harsh. I will go  
and, if I can, attempt to ease your pain.  
You must stay quiet—do not keep shouting  
such intemperate things. Do you not know, [330]  
with all that shrewd intelligence of yours,  
your thoughtless tongue can get you punished? 410

PROMETHEUS

I am happy things turned out so well for you.  
You had the courage to support my cause,  
but you escaped all blame. Now let me be,  
and do not make my suffering your concern.  
Whatever you may say will be in vain—  
persuading Zeus is not an easy task.  
You should take care this journey you have made  
does not get you in trouble.

OCEANUS

Your nature  
makes you far better at giving good advice  
to neighbours rather than yourself. I judge 420  
by looking at the facts, not by listening  
to what others say. You should not deter [340]  
a person who is eager to help out.  
For I am sure—yes, I am confident—  
there is one gift which Zeus will offer me,  
and he will free you from this suffering.

PROMETHEUS

You have my thanks—and I will not forget.  
There is in you no lack of willingness  
to offer aid. But spare yourself the trouble,  
which will be useless and no help to me, 430

if, in fact, you want to make the effort.  
Just keep quiet, and do not interfere.

I may be miserable, but my distress  
does not make me desire to see such pain  
imposed on everyone—no, not at all.

What my brother Atlas has to suffer  
hurts my heart. In some region to the west  
he has to stand, bearing on his shoulders  
the pillar of earth and heaven, a load  
even his arms find difficult to carry.

[350]

And I feel pity when I contemplate  
the creature living in Cilician caves,  
that fearful monster with a hundred heads,  
born from the earth, impetuous Typhon,  
curbed by Zeus's force. He held out against  
the might of all the gods. His hideous jaws  
produced a terrifying hiss, and his eyes  
flashed a ferocious stare, as if his strength  
could utterly destroy the rule of Zeus.

440

But Zeus's thunderbolt, which never sleeps,  
that swooping, fire-breathing lightning stroke,  
came down and drove the arrogant boasting  
right out of him. Struck to his very heart,  
he was reduced to ash, and all his might  
was blasted away by rolls of thunder.

450 [360]

Now his helpless and immobile body  
lies close beside a narrow ocean strait,  
pinned down beneath the roots of Aetna,  
while on that mountain, at the very top,  
Hephaestus sits and forges red-hot iron.

460

But one day that mountain peak will blow out  
rivers of fire, whose savage jaws devour  
the level fruitful fields of Sicily.

[370]

Though Typhon may have been burned down to ash  
by Zeus's lightning bolt, his seething rage  
will then erupt and shoot out molten arrows,  
belching horrifying streams of liquid fire.

But you are not without experience  
and have no need of me to teach you this.

So save yourself the way you think is best,  
and I will bear whatever I must face,  
until the rage in Zeus's heart subsides.

470

OCEANUS

Surely you realize, Prometheus,  
that in the case of a disordered mood  
words act as healers.

[380]

PROMETHEUS

Yes, but only if  
one uses them at the appropriate time  
to soften up the heart and does not try  
to calm its swollen rage too forcefully.

OCEANUS

What dangers do you see if someone blends  
his courage and his eagerness to act?  
Tell me that.

480

PROMETHEUS

Simple stupidity  
and wasted effort.

OCEANUS

Well, let me fall ill  
from this disease, for someone truly wise  
profits most when he is thought a fool.

PROMETHEUS

But they will think that I made the mistake.

OCEANUS

Those words of yours are clearly telling me  
to go back home.

PROMETHEUS

Yes, in case concern for me  
gets you in serious trouble.

[390]

OCEANUS

You mean with Zeus,  
now seated on his new all-powerful throne?

PROMETHEUS

Take care, in case one day that heart of his  
vents its rage on you.

490

OCEANUS

What you are suffering,  
Prometheus, will teach me that.

PROMETHEUS

Then go.  
Be on your way. Keep to your present plans.

OCEANUS

These words of yours are telling me to leave,  
and I am eager to depart. The wings  
on this four-footed beast will brush the air  
and make our pathway smooth. He will rejoice  
to rest his limbs back in his stall at home.

[Exit OCEANUS.]

CHORUS

I groan for your accursed fate,  
Prometheus, and floods of tears  
are streaming from my weeping eyes  
and moisture wets my tender cheeks.  
For Zeus, who rules by his own laws,  
has set your wretched destiny and shows  
towards the gods of earlier days  
an overweening sense of power.

500 [400]

Now every region cries in one lament.  
They mourn the lost magnificence,  
so honoured long ago, the glorious fame  
you and your brothers once possessed.  
And all those mortal beings who live  
in sacred Asia sense your pain,  
those agonies all men find pitiful . . .

510 [410]

. . . including those young girls who dwell  
in Colchis and have no fear of war,  
and Scythian hordes who occupy  
the furthest regions of the world  
along the shores of lake Maeotis . . .

. . . and in Arabian lands the warlike tribes  
from those high rocky fortress towns  
in regions near the Caucasus,  
a horde of warriors who scream  
to heft their lethal sharpened spears.

[420]  
520

Only once before have I beheld  
another Titan god in such distress  
bound up in adamantine chains—  
great Atlas, whose enormous strength  
was unsurpassed and who now groans  
to bear the vault of heaven on his back.

[430]

The sea waves, as they fall, cry out,

530

the ocean depths lament, while down below  
the deep black pits of Hades growl,  
and limpid flowing rivers moan,  
to see the dreadful pain you undergo.

PROMETHEUS

You must not think it is my stubbornness  
that keeps me quiet, or a sense of pride,  
for bitter thoughts keep gnawing at my heart  
to see how foully I am being abused.

And yet who else but I assigned clear rights  
and privileges to these new deities?

[440]

But I make no complaint about such things,  
for if I spoke, I would be telling you  
what you already know. So listen now  
to all the miseries of mortal men—  
how they were simple fools in earlier days,  
until I gave them sense and intellect.

540

I will not speak of them to criticize,  
but in a spirit of goodwill to show  
I did them many favours.

First of all,

they noticed things, but did not really see  
and listened, too, but did not really hear.

550

They spent their lives confusing everything,  
like random shapes in dreams. They knew nothing  
of brick-built houses turned towards the sun  
or making things with wood. Instead, they dug  
their dwelling places underneath the earth,  
like airy ants in cracks of sunless caves.

[450]

They had no signs on which they could rely  
to show when winter came or flowery spring  
or fruitful summer. Everything they did  
betrayed their total lack of understanding,  
until I taught them all about the stars  
and pointed out the way they rise and set,  
which is not something easy to discern.

560

Then I invented arithmetic for them,  
the most ingenious acquired skill,  
and joining letters to write down words,  
so they could store all things in Memory,  
the working mother of the Muses' arts.

[460]

I was the first to set wild animals  
beneath the yoke, and I made them submit  
to collars and to packs, so mortal men  
would find relief from bearing heavy loads.

570

I took horses trained to obey the reins  
and harnessed them to chariots, a sign  
of luxurious wealth and opulence.  
And I was the one who designed their ships,  
those mariners' vessels which sail on wings  
across the open sea.

Yes, those are the things  
which I produced for mortal men, and yet,  
as I now suffer here, I cannot find  
a way to free myself from this distress.

580 [470]

#### CHORUS

You have had to bear appalling pain.  
You lost your wits and now are at a loss.  
Like some bad doctor who has fallen ill,  
you are now desperate and cannot find  
the medicine to cure your own disease.

#### PROMETHEUS

Just listen to what else I have to say,  
and you will be astonished even more  
by the ideas and skills I came up with.  
The greatest one was this: if anyone  
was sick, they had no remedies at all,  
no healing potions, food, or liniments.  
Without such things, they simply withered up.  
But then I showed them how to mix mild cures,  
which they now use to fight off all disease.  
I set up many forms of prophecy  
and was the first to organize their dreams,  
to say which ones were fated to come true.  
I taught them about omens—vocal sounds  
hard to understand, as well as random signs  
encountered on the road. The flights of birds  
with crooked talons I classified for them—  
both those which by their nature are auspicious  
and those whose prophecies are ominous—  
observing each bird's different way of life,  
its enemies, its friends, and its companions,  
as well as the smooth texture of its entrails,  
what colour the gall bladder ought to have  
to please the gods, and the best symmetry  
for speckled lobes on livers. I roasted  
thigh bones wrapped in fat and massive cuts of meat  
and showed those mortal beings the right way  
to read the omens which are hard to trace.  
I opened up their eyes to fiery symbols

590

[480]

600

[490]

610

which previously they could not understand.  
Yes, I did all that. And then I helped them  
with what lay hidden in the earth—copper,  
iron, silver, gold. Who could ever claim  
he had discovered these before I did?  
No one. I am quite confident of that,  
unless he wished to waste his time in chat.  
To sum up everything in one brief word,  
know this—all the artistic skills men have  
come from Prometheus.

[500]

620

CHORUS

But you should not  
be giving help like that to human beings  
beyond the proper limits, ignoring  
your own troubles, for I have every hope  
you will be liberated from these chains  
and be as powerful as Zeus himself.

[510]

630

PROMETHEUS

It is not destined that almighty Fate  
will ever end these matters in that way.  
I will lose these chains, but only after  
I have been left twisting here in agony,  
bowed down by countless pains. Artistic skill  
has far less strength than sheer Necessity.

CHORUS

Then who is the one who steers Necessity?

PROMETHEUS

The three-formed Fates and unforgetting Furies.

CHORUS

Are they more powerful than Zeus?

PROMETHEUS

Well, Zeus  
will not at any rate escape his destiny.

640

CHORUS

But what has destiny foretold for Zeus,  
except to rule eternally?

PROMETHEUS

That point  
you must not know quite yet. Do not pursue it. [520]

CHORUS

It is some holy secret you conceal.

PROMETHEUS

Think of something else. It is not yet time  
to talk of this. The matter must remain  
completely hidden, for if I can keep  
the secret safe, then I shall be released  
from torment and lose these shameful fetters.

CHORUS

May Zeus, who governs everything, 650  
never direct his power at me  
and fight against my purposes.

And may I never ease my efforts [530]  
to approach the gods with offerings  
of oxen slain in sacrifice  
beside my father's restless stream,  
the ceaseless flow of Oceanus.

May I not speak a profane word.  
Instead let this resolve remain  
and never melt away from me. 660

It is sweet to spend a lengthy life  
with hope about what lies in store,  
feeding one's heart with happy thoughts.  
But when I look at you, Prometheus,  
tormented by these countless pains,  
I shiver in fear—with your self-will [540]  
you show no reverence for Zeus  
and honour mortal beings too much.

Come, my friend, those gifts you gave—  
what gifts did you get in return? 670

Tell me how they could offer help?  
What can such creatures of a day provide?  
Do you not see how weak they are,  
the impotent and dream-like state,  
in which the sightless human race  
is bound, with chains around their feet? [550]  
Whatever mortal beings decide to do,  
they cannot overstep what Zeus has planned.

I learned these things, Prometheus,  
by watching your destructive fate. 680



The song which now steals over me  
is different from that nuptial chant  
I sang around your couch and bath  
to celebrate your wedding day,  
when with your dowry gifts you won  
Hesione, my sister, as your wife,  
and led her to your bridal bed.

[560]

[Enter IO]

IO

What land is this? What race of living beings?  
Who shall I say I see here bound in chains,  
exposed and suffering on these cold rocks?  
What crime has led to such a punishment  
and your destruction? Tell me where I am.  
Where has my wretched wandering brought me?  
To what part of the world?

690

[Io is suddenly in great pain.]

Aaaaiiii! The pain!!!  
That gadfly stings me once again, the ghost  
of earth-born Argus! Get him away from me,  
O Earth, that herdsman with a thousand eyes—  
the very sight of him fills me with terror!  
Those crafty eyes of his keep following me.  
Though dead, he is not hidden underground,  
but moves out from the shades beneath the earth  
and hunts me down and, in my wretched state,  
drives me to wander without nourishment  
along the sandy shore beside the sea.  
A pipe made out of reeds and wax sings out  
a clear relaxing strain. Alas for me!  
Where is this path of roaming far and wide  
now leading me? What did I ever do,  
O son of Cronos, how did I go wrong,  
that you should yoke me to such agonies . . .

700 [570]

710 [580]

[Io reacts to another attack.]

Aaaaiiii! . . . and by oppressing me like this,  
setting a fearful stinging fly to chase  
a helpless girl, drive me to this madness?  
Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth,  
or feed me to the monsters of the sea.  
Do not refuse these prayers of mine, my lord!  
I have had my fill of all this wandering,  
this roaming far and wide—and all this pain!

I do not know how to escape the pain!  
Do you not hear the ox-horned maiden call? 720

PROMETHEUS

How could I not hear that young girl's voice,  
the child of Inachus, in a frantic state  
from the gadfly's sting? She fires Zeus's heart [590]  
with sexual lust, and now, worn down  
by Hera's hate, is forced to roam around  
on paths that never end.

IO

Why do you shout  
my father's name? Tell this unhappy girl  
just who you are, you wretched sufferer,  
and how, in my distress, you call to me,  
knowing who I am and naming my disease, 730  
the heaven-sent sickness which consumes me  
as it whips my skin with maddening stings . . .

*[Io is attacked again by the gadfly. She moves spasmodically as she wrestles with the pain.]*

. . . Aaaiii! . . . I have come rushing here, wracked  
with driving pangs of hunger, overwhelmed [600]  
by Hera's plans for her revenge. Of those  
who are in misery . . . Aaaiii! . . . which ones  
go through the sufferings I face? Give me  
some clear sign how much more agony  
I have to bear! Is there no remedy?  
Tell me the medicines for this disease, 740  
if you know any. Say something to me!  
Speak to a wretched wandering young girl!

PROMETHEUS

I will clarify for you all those things  
you wish to know—not by weaving riddles, [610]  
but by using simple speech. For with friends  
our mouths should tell the truth quite openly.  
You are looking at the one who offered men  
the gift of fire. I am Prometheus.

IO

O you who have shown to mortal beings  
so many benefits they all can share, 750  
poor suffering Prometheus! What act  
has led you to be punished in this way?

PROMETHEUS

I have just finished mourning my own pain.

IO

Will you not grant this favour to me, then?

PROMETHEUS

Ask what you wish to know. For you will learn  
the details of it all from me.

IO

Tell me  
who chained you here against this rocky cleft.

PROMETHEUS

The will of Zeus and Hephaestus's hands.

IO

For what offence are you being punished?

[620]

PROMETHEUS

I have said enough. I will not tell you  
any more than that.

760

IO

But I need more.  
At least inform me when my wandering ends.  
How long will I be in this wretched state?

PROMETHEUS

For you it would be better not to know  
than to have me answer.

IO

I'm begging you—  
do not conceal from me what I must bear.

PROMETHEUS

It is not that I begrudge that gift to you.

IO

Then why do you appear so hesitant  
to tell me everything?

PROMETHEUS

I am not unwilling,  
but I do not wish to break your spirit.

770

IO

Do not be more concerned for how I feel  
than I wish you to be.

PROMETHEUS

Since you insist,  
I am obliged to speak. So listen to me.

[630]

CHORUS

No, not yet. Give us a share in this, as well,  
so we may be content with what you say.  
We should first learn how she became diseased.  
So let the girl herself explain to us  
the things that led to her destructive fate.  
Then you can teach her what still lies in store.

PROMETHEUS

Well then, Io, it is now up to you  
to grace them with this favour—above all,  
because they are your father's sisters.  
And whenever one is likely to draw tears  
from those who listen, it is well worthwhile  
to weep aloud, lamenting one's own fate.

780

IO

I do not know how I could now refuse you.  
From the plain tale I tell you will find out  
all things you wish to know, although to talk  
about the brutal storm sent by the gods,  
the cruel transformation of my shape,  
and where the trouble came from, as it swept  
down on a miserable wretch like me—  
that makes me feel ashamed.

[640]

During the night  
visions were always strolling through my rooms  
calling me with smooth, seductive words:

“You are a very fortunate young girl,  
so why remain a virgin all this time,  
when you could have the finest match of all?  
For Zeus, smitten by the shaft of passion,  
now burns for you and wishes to make love.  
My child, do not reject the bed of Zeus,

800 [650]

but go to Lerna's fertile meadowlands,  
to your father's flocks and stalls of oxen,  
so Zeus's eyes can ease his fierce desire."

Visions like that upset me every night,  
till I got brave enough to tell my father  
about what I was seeing in my dreams.  
He sent many messengers to Delphi  
and Dodona, to see if he could learn  
what he might do or say to please the gods.  
But his men all came back bringing reports  
of cryptic and confusing oracles,  
with wording difficult to comprehend.

810 [660]

Inachus at last received a clear response,  
a simple order which he must obey—  
to drive me from my home and native land,  
to turn me out and force me into exile,  
roaming the remotest regions of the earth—  
and if he was unwilling, Zeus would send  
a flaming thunderbolt which would destroy  
his entire race, not leaving one alive.

820

So he obeyed Apollo's oracles  
by forcing me away against my will  
and denying me entry to his home.

[670]

He did not want to do it but was forced  
by the controlling majesty of Zeus.  
Immediately my mind and shape were changed.  
My head acquired these horns, as you can see,  
and a vicious fly began tormenting me  
with such ferocious stings I ran away,  
madly bounding off to the flowing stream  
of sweet Cherchneia and then to Lerna's springs.

830

But the herdsman Argus, a child of Earth,  
whose rage is violent, came after me,  
with all those close-packed eyes of his, searching  
for my tracks. But an unexpected fate  
which no one could foresee robbed him of his life.

[680]

And now, tormented by this stinging gadfly,  
a scourge from god, I am being driven  
from place to place.

So now you understand  
the story of what I have had to suffer.  
If you can talk about my future troubles,  
then let me know. But do not pity me  
and speak false words of reassurance,  
for, in my view, to use deceitful speech  
is the most shameful sickness of them all.

840

CHORUS

Alas, alas! Tell me no more! Alas!  
I never, never thought my ears  
would hear a story strange as this  
or suffering so hard to contemplate  
and terrible to bear, the outrage  
and the horror of that two-edged goad  
would pierce me to my soul. Alas!  
O Fate, Fate, how I shake with fear  
to see what has been done to Io.

850 [690]

PROMETHEUS

These cries and fears of yours are premature.  
Wait until you learn what lies in store for her.

CHORUS

Then speak, and tell us everything. The sick  
find solace when they clearly understand  
the pain they have to face before it comes.

860

PROMETHEUS

What you desired to learn about before  
you now have readily obtained from me,  
for you were eager first of all to hear  
Io herself tell you what she suffered.  
Now listen to what she has yet to face,  
the ordeals this girl must still experience  
at Hera's hands. You, too, child of Inachus,  
set what I have to say inside your heart,  
so you will find out how your roaming ends.

[700]

First, turn from here towards the rising sun,  
then move across those lands as yet unploughed,  
and you will reach the Scythian nomads,  
who live in wicker dwellings which they raise  
on strong-wheeled wagons. These men possess  
far-shooting bows, so stay away from them.  
Keep moving on along the rocky shoreline  
beside the roaring sea, and pass their lands.  
The Chalybes, men who work with iron,  
live to your left. You must beware of them,  
for they are wild and are not kind to strangers.  
Then you will reach the river Hubristes,  
correctly named for its great turbulence.  
Do not cross it, for that is dangerous,  
until you reach the Caucasus itself,  
the very highest of the mountains there,

870

[710]

880

[720]

where the power of that flowing river  
comes gushing from the slopes. Then cross those peaks,  
which stretch up to the stars, and take the path  
going south, until you reach the Amazons,  
a tribe which hates all men. In days to come,  
they will found settlements in Themiscyra,  
beside the Thermodon, where the jagged rocks  
of Salmydessus face the sea and offer  
sailors and their ships a savage welcome.  
They will be pleased to guide you on your way.  
Next, you will reach the Cimmerian isthmus,  
beside the narrow entrance to a lake.

890

You must be resolute and leave this place  
and at Maeotis move across the stream,  
a trip that will win you eternal fame  
among all mortal men, for they will name  
that place the Bosphorus in praise of you.  
Once you leave behind the plains of Europe  
you will arrive in Asian lands.

[730]

900

And now,  
does it not strike you that this tyrant god  
is violent in everything he does?  
Because this maiden was a mortal being  
and he was eager to have sex with her,  
he threw her out to wander the whole world.  
Young girl, the one you found to seek your hand  
is vicious. As for the story you just heard,  
you should know this—I am not even past  
the opening prelude.

910

[740]

IO

O no, no, no! Alas!

PROMETHEUS

Are you crying and moaning once again?  
How will you act once you have learned from me  
the agonies that still remain?

CHORUS

You mean  
you have still more to say about her woes?

PROMETHEUS

I do—a wintry sea of dreadful pain.

IO

What point is there for me in living then?  
Why do I not hurl myself this instant 920  
from these rough rocks, fall to the plain below,  
and put an end to all my misery?  
I would prefer to die once and for all, [750]  
than suffer such afflictions every day.

PROMETHEUS

Then you would find it difficult to face  
the torments I endure, for I am one  
who cannot die, and death would offer me  
relief from pain. But now no end is set  
to tortures I must bear, until the day  
when Zeus is toppled from his tyrant's throne. 930

IO

What's that? Will Zeus's power be overthrown?

PROMETHEUS

It seems to me that if that came about  
you would be pleased.

IO

Why not? Because of him  
I suffer horribly.

PROMETHEUS

Then rest assured— [760]  
these things are true.

IO

But who will strip away  
his tyrant's sceptre?

PROMETHEUS

He will do that himself  
with all those brainless purposes of his.

IO

But how? If it will do no harm, tell me.

PROMETHEUS

He will get married—a match he will regret.

IO



To someone mortal or divine? Tell me—  
if that is something you may talk about.

PROMETHEUS

Why ask me that? I cannot speak of it.

IO

His wife will force him from his throne?

PROMETHEUS

She will.  
For she will bear a child whose power  
is greater than his father's.

IO

Is there some way  
Zeus can avert this fate?

PROMETHEUS

No, none at all—  
except through me, once I lose these chains.

[770]

IO

Who will free you if Zeus does not consent?

PROMETHEUS

One of your grandchildren. So Fate decrees.

IO

What are you saying? Will a child of mine  
bring your afflictions to an end?

950

PROMETHEUS

He will—  
when thirteen generations have gone by.

IO

I find it difficult to understand  
what you foresee.

PROMETHEUS

You should not seek to know  
the details of the pain you still must bear.

IO

Do not say you will do me a favour  
and then withdraw it.

PROMETHEUS

I will offer you  
two possibilities, and you may choose.

IO

What are they? Tell me what the choices are.  
Then let me pick which one.

PROMETHEUS

All right, I will.  
Choose whether I should clarify for you  
the ordeals you still must face in days to come,  
or else reveal the one who will release me.

960  
[780]

CHORUS

Do her a favour by disclosing one  
and me by telling us about the other.  
Do not refuse to tell us all the story.  
Describe her future wanderings to her,  
and speak to me of who will set you free.  
I long to hear that.

PROMETHEUS

Well, since you insist,  
I will not refuse to tell you everything  
you wish to know. First, Io, I will speak  
about the grievous wandering you face.  
Inscribe this on the tablets of your mind,  
deep in your memory.

970  
[790]

Once you have crossed  
the stream that separates two continents,  
[select the route that] leads towards the east,  
the flaming pathway of the rising sun,  
[and you will come, at first, to northern lands  
where cold winds blow, and here you must beware  
of gusting storms, in case a winter blast  
surprises you and snatches you away.]  
Then cross the roaring sea until you reach  
the Gorgons' plains of Cisthene, the home  
of Phorcys' daughters, three ancient women  
shaped like swans, who possess a single eye  
and just one tooth to share among themselves.  
Rays from the sun do not look down on them,

980

nor does the moon at night. Beside them live  
their sisters, three snake-haired, winged Gorgons,  
whom human beings despise. No mortal man  
can gaze at them and still continue breathing. 990  
[800]

I tell you this to warn you to take care.  
Now hear about another fearful sight.  
Keep watching out for gryphons, hounds of Zeus,  
who have sharp beaks and never bark out loud,  
and for that one-eyed Arimasian horde  
on horseback, who live beside the flow  
of Pluto's gold-rich stream. Do not go near them.  
And later you will reach a distant land  
of people with dark skins who live beside 1000  
the fountains of the sun, where you will find  
the river Aethiop. Follow its banks, [810]  
until you move down to the cataract  
where from the Bybline mountains the sweet Nile  
sends out his sacred flow. He will guide you  
on your journey to the three-cornered land  
of Nilotis, where destiny proclaims  
you, Io, and your children will set up  
a distant settlement.

If any of this  
remains obscure and hard to understand, 1010  
question me again, and I will tell you.  
For I have more leisure time than I desire.

#### CHORUS

If you have left out any incidents  
or can say more about what lies ahead [820]  
in Io's cruel journeying, go on.  
But if that story has now reached an end,  
then favour us, in turn, with what we asked,  
if you by chance remember our request.

#### PROMETHEUS

Io has now heard about her travels,  
a full account up to the very end. 1020  
But so she learns that what she heard from me  
was no mere empty tale, I will go through  
the troubles she endured before she came here,  
and thus provide a certain guarantee  
of what I have just said. I will omit  
most of the details and describe for you  
the final stages of your journey here.

Once you came to the Molossian plains

and the steep mountain ridge beside Dodona, [830]  
the home of the prophetic oracle 1030  
of Thesprotian Zeus, that miracle  
which defies belief, the talking oak trees,  
clearly and quite unambiguously  
saluted you as one who would become  
a celebrated bride of Zeus. Is this  
a memory that gives you some delight?  
From there, chased by the gadfly's sting, you rushed  
along the path beside the sea and reached  
the mighty gulf of Rhea and from there  
were driven back by storms. And you should know 1040  
an inner region of that sea will now,  
in days to come, be called Ionian, [840]  
a name to make all mortal men recall  
how Io moved across it.

These details  
are tokens of how much I understand—  
they show how my intelligence can see  
more things than what has been revealed.

The rest  
I will describe for you and her to share,  
pursuing the same track I traced before.  
On the very edges of the mainland, 1050  
where at its mouth the Nile deposits soil,  
there is a city—Canopus. There Zeus  
will finally restore you to your senses  
by merely stroking and caressing you  
with his non-threatening hand. After that,  
you will give birth to dark-skinned Epaphus,  
named from the way he was conceived by Zeus, [850]  
and he will harvest all the fruit that grows  
in regions watered by the flowing Nile.

Five generations after Epaphus, 1060  
fifty young girls will return to Argos,  
not of their own free will, but to escape  
a marriage with their cousins, while the men,  
with passionate hearts, race after them,  
like hawks in close pursuit of doves, seeking  
marriages they should not rightfully pursue.  
But the gods will not allow them to enjoy  
the young girls' bodies. They will be buried  
in Pelasgian earth, for their new brides [860]  
keeping watch at night, will overpower 1070  
and kill them all, in a daring murder,  
and each young bride will take her husband's life,  
bathing a two-edged sword in her man's blood.

I hope my enemies find love like that!  
But passion will bewitch one of those wives  
to spare her husband's life, and her resolve  
will fade. She will prefer to hear herself  
proclaimed a coward than the alternative,  
a murderess. And she will then give birth  
in Argos to a royal line.

To describe 1080  
all these events in detail would require [870]  
a lengthy story. However, from her seed  
a bold man will be born, who will become  
a famous archer, and he is the one  
who will deliver me from these afflictions.  
My primeval Titan mother, Themis,  
revealed this prophecy to me in full,  
but to describe how and when it happens  
would take up too much time. And learning that  
would bring no benefit to you at all. 1090

IO

Alas, alas for me! These spasms of pain,  
these agonizing fits which drive me mad  
are turning me to fire. That gadfly's string—  
not forged in any flame—is piercing me. [880]  
My fearful heart is beating in my chest,  
my eyes are rolling in a frantic whirl,  
and raging blasts of sheer insanity  
are sweeping me away. This tongue of mine  
is now beyond control—delirious words  
beat aimlessly against the surging flood  
of my abhorred destruction. 1100

[Exit IO.]

CHORUS

That wise man was truly wise who first  
devised that saying in his mind and then  
whose tongue expressed the words aloud—  
the finest marriages by far are those [890]  
when both the parties have an equal rank.  
The poor should never yearn to match themselves  
with those whose wealth has made them indolent  
or those who always praise their noble birth.

O you Fates, may you never, never see 1110  
me going as Zeus's partner to his bed,  
and may I never be the wedded bride

of anyone from heaven. I shake with fear  
to look on this unmarried girl, young Io,  
so devastated by the cruel journey,  
her punishment from goddess Hera.

[900]

For me, when a married couple stands  
on equal footing, there is no cause to fear  
and I am not afraid. So may the love  
of mightier gods never cast on me  
that glance which no one can withstand.  
That is a battle where there is no fight,  
where what cannot be done is possible.  
I do not know what would become of me,  
for I can see no way I could escape  
the skilled resourcefulness of Zeus.

1120

#### PROMETHEUS

And yet Zeus, for all his obdurate heart,  
will be brought down, when he prepares a match  
which will remove him from his tyrant's throne  
and hurl him into deep obscurity.

[910]

1130

And then the curse his father, Cronos, spoke,  
the one he uttered when he was deposed  
and lost his ancient throne, will all come true.  
None of the gods can clearly offer him  
a certain way to stave off this defeat,  
except for me. I know what is involved  
and how to save him. So for the moment  
let him sit full of confidence, trusting  
the rumbling he can make high in the sky  
and waving in his hands that lightning bolt  
which breathes out fire. None of these will help.

1140

They will not stop him falling in disgrace,  
a setback he cannot withstand. For now  
he is himself preparing the very one  
who will oppose him, someone marvellous  
and irresistible, who will produce  
a fiercer fire than Zeus's lightning flash,  
and a roar to drown out Zeus's thunder.

[920]

Poseidon's trident he will split apart,  
the spear which whips the sea and shakes the earth.  
And when Zeus stumbles on this evil fate,  
he will find out how great the difference is  
between a sovereign king and abject slave.

1150

#### CHORUS

You keep maligning Zeus because these things  
fit in with your desires.

PROMETHEUS

They may be what I want,  
but they will come to pass.

CHORUS

So must we then  
expect someone to lord it over Zeus?

[930]

PROMETHEUS

Yes. His neck will be weighed down with chains  
more onerous than mine.

CHORUS

Why are you not afraid  
to shout out taunts like this?

PROMETHEUS

Why should I fear  
when I am destined not to die?

1160

CHORUS

But Zeus  
could load you with afflictions worse than these.

PROMETHEUS

Then let him do it. I am quite prepared  
for anything he may inflict.

CHORUS

But it is wise  
to pay due homage to Necessity.

PROMETHEUS

Well then, pay homage. Bow your heads in awe.  
Flatter the one who has the power to rule,  
at least for now. But as for me, I think  
of Zeus as less than nothing. Let him act  
however he wants and reign for a brief while.  
He will not rule the gods for very long.  
But wait! I see the messenger of Zeus,  
a servant of our brand-new tyrant lord.  
No doubt he has come here to give us news.

1170

[940]

[Enter Hermes.]

HERMES

You devious, hot-tempered schemer, who sinned  
against the gods by giving their honours  
to creatures of a day, you thief of fire,  
I am here to speak to you. Father Zeus  
is ordering you to make known this marriage  
you keep boasting of and to provide the name 1180  
of who will bring on Zeus's fall from power.  
Do not speak in enigmatic riddles,  
but set down clearly each and every fact. [950]  
And do not make me come a second time,  
Prometheus. What you are doing here,  
as you well know, will not make Zeus relent.

PROMETHEUS

Your speech is crammed with pride and arrogance,  
quite fitting for a servant of the gods.  
You all are young—so is your ruling power—  
and you believe the fortress where you live 1190  
lies far beyond all grief. But I have seen  
two tyrant rulers cast out from that place,  
and I will see a third, the present king,  
abruptly tossed from there in great disgrace.  
Do you think I am afraid and cower down [960]  
before you upstart gods? The way I feel  
is far removed from any sense of fear.  
So you should hurry back the way you came,  
for you will not learn anything at all  
in answer to what you demand of me. 1200

HERMES

But earlier with this wilfulness of yours  
you brought these torments on yourself.

PROMETHEUS

Know this—  
I would not trade these harsh conditions of mine  
for the life you lead as Zeus's slave.

HERMES

I suppose  
you find it preferable to serve this rock  
than be a trusted messenger of Father Zeus.

PROMETHEUS

Insolence like yours deserves such insults. [970]

HERMES



It sounds as if you find your present state  
a source of pleasure.

PROMETHEUS

Of pleasure? How I wish  
I could see my foes enjoying themselves  
the way I do. And I count you among them.

1210

HERMES

You think I am to blame for your misfortune?

PROMETHEUS

To put it bluntly—I hate all the gods  
who received my help and then abused me,  
perverting justice.

HERMES

From the words you speak  
I see your madness is no mild disease.

PROMETHEUS

I may well be insane, if madness means  
one hates one's enemies.

HERMES

If you were well,  
you would be unendurable.

PROMETHEUS

Alas for me!

HERMES

Alas? That word is one  
Zeus does not recognize.

1220 [980]

PROMETHEUS

But time grows old  
and teaches everything.

HERMES

That well may be,  
and yet you have not learned to demonstrate  
a sense of self-control in how you think.

PROMETHEUS

If I had that, I would not talk to you—  
to such a subservient slave.

HERMES

So then  
it seems, as far as what my father wants,  
you will say nothing.

PROMETHEUS

Well, obviously  
I owe him and should repay the favour.

HERMES

You taunt me now, as if I were a child. 1220

PROMETHEUS

Well, are you not a child, or even stupider,  
to think you will learn anything from me?  
There is no torture, no form of punishment,  
that Zeus can use to force my mouth to speak [990]  
before these vicious chains are taken off.

So let him throw his fiery lightning bolt,  
and with his white-winged snow and thunderclaps  
and earthquakes underground shake everything,  
and hurl the world into complete disorder—  
for none of that will force me to submit 1230  
or even name the one who Fate decrees  
will cast him from his sovereignty.

HERMES

But now  
you should consider if this stance of yours  
will help your cause.

PROMETHEUS

What I am doing now  
has been foretold, determined long ago.

HERMES

You self-willed fool, for once you should submit,  
given the present torments facing you. [1000]  
Let your mind be ruled by what is right.

PROMETHEUS

It is pointless to pester me this way—  
as if you were advising ocean waves. 1240

For you should never entertain the thought  
that I will be afraid of Zeus's schemes,  
turn into a woman, and raise my hands,  
the way that supplicating females do,  
and beg an enemy I hate so much  
to free me from these chains. To act like that  
is far beneath me.

HERMES

Well, it seems to me  
if I keep talking to you at great length  
my words will all be wasted—my appeals  
do not improve your mood or calm you down. 1250  
Like a young colt newly yoked, you bite the bit  
and use your strength to fight against the reins. [1010]  
But the vehement resistance you display  
rests on a feeble scheme, for on its own  
mere stubbornness in those with foolish minds  
is less than useless. If these words of mine  
do not convince you, think about the storm,  
the triple wave of torment which will fall  
and you cannot escape. First, Father Zeus  
will rip this mountain crag with thunder claps 1260  
and bolts of flaming lightning, burying  
your body in the rock, and yet this cleft  
will hold you in its arms. When you have spent [1020]  
a long time underground, you will return  
into the light, and Zeus's winged hound,  
his ravenous eagle, will cruelly rip  
your mutilated body into shreds  
and, like an uninvited banqueter,  
will feast upon your liver all day long,  
until its chewing turns the organ black. 1270  
Do not expect your suffering to end  
until some god appears who will take on  
your troubles and be willing to descend  
to sunless Hades and the deep black pit [1030]  
of Tartarus. And so you should think hard.  
What I have said is no fictitious boast,  
but plain and simple truth. For Zeus's mouth  
does not know how to utter something false.  
No. Everything he says will be fulfilled.  
Look around you and reflect. And never think 1280  
self-will is preferable to prudent thought.

CHORUS

To us it seems that what Hermes has said

is not unreasonable. His orders  
tell you to set aside your stubbornness  
and seek out wise advice. Do what he says.  
It is dishonourable for someone wise  
to persevere in doing something wrong.

PROMETHEUS

Well, I already know about the news [1040]  
this fellow has announced with so much fuss.  
There is no shame in painful suffering 1290  
inflicted by one enemy on another.  
So let him hurl his twin-forked lightning bolts  
down on my head, convulse the air with thunder  
and frantic gusts of howling wind, and shake  
the earth with hurricanes until they shift  
the very roots of its foundations. Let him  
make the wildly surging sea waves mingle  
with the pathways of the heavenly stars, [1050]  
then lift my body up and fling it down  
to pitch black Tartarus, into the whirl 1300  
of harsh Necessity. Let him do all that—  
he cannot make me die.

HERMES [*to the Chorus*]

Ideas like these,  
expressed the way he does, are what we hear  
from those who are quite mad. This prayer of his—  
how is that not delusion? When does it stop,  
this senseless raving? Well, in any case,  
you who sympathize with his afflictions  
should move off with all speed to somewhere else, [1060]  
in case the roaring force of Zeus's thunder  
affects your minds and drives you all insane. 1310

CHORUS

You will have to give me different advice  
and try to urge me in some other way  
in order to convince me. For I believe  
your stream of words is unendurable.  
How can you order me to act so badly?  
I wish to share with him whatever pain  
Fate has in store, for I have learned to hate  
those who betray—of all the sicknesses  
that is most despicable to me. [1070]

HERMES

As you wish—but remember what I said. 1320

Do not blame your luck when you are trapped  
in Ruin's nets, and never claim that Zeus  
flung you into torments without warning.  
No—you can blame yourselves. For now you know  
by your own folly you will be caught up  
in Ruin's web, not by a secret ruse  
or unexpectedly. And from that net  
there will be no escape.

[Exit Hermes.]

PROMETHEUS

And now things are already being transformed [1080]  
from words to deeds—the earth is shuddering, 1330  
the roaring thunder from beneath the sea  
is rumbling past me, while bolts of lightning  
flash their twisting fire, whirlwinds toss the dust,  
and blasting winds rush out to launch a war  
of howling storms, one against another.  
The sky is now confounded with the sea.  
This turmoil is quite clearly aimed at me  
and comes from Zeus to make me feel afraid. [1090]  
O sacred mother Earth and heavenly Sky, 1340  
who rolls around the light that all things share,  
you see these unjust wrongs I must endure!

# L7 Hypothesis-Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, Part I

## The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite

Translated by S. Ahmed, E. Bodner, R. Nickel, A. Rappold

### Invocation: the Universal Power of Aphrodite

Muse, tell me the deeds of gold-adorned

Aphrodite, Cyprus-born

She rouses sweet desire in the gods,  
overpowers all men and women,

as well as birds who soar in the sky  
and all creatures land and sea nurture.

5

All beings take pleasure in the deeds of garland-crowned

Aphrodite of Kythera.

### The Three Exceptions

There are three exceptions –

only three whose minds she can't persuade or deceive.

One: the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, owl-eyed Athena.

She finds no pleasure in the deeds of gold-adorned Aphrodite

Instead, wars and the deeds of Ares bring her joy –

combat and battle – and inspiring deeds that bring glory:

She was the first to teach craftsmen on the Earth

how to make carriages and chariots elaborately fitted with bronze.

Soft-skinned girls still at home –

these too she taught glorious works, implanting this knowledge in each woman's mind.

10

15

Two: Artemis, golden-arrowed, loud-crying.

Laughter-loving Aphrodite was never able to overpower her with love's delights.

Instead, she takes pleasure in the bow and slaying wild animals on mountain tops.

In her rites: lyres and dances with piercing loud cries,

In her domains: shady groves, and the city of just men.

20

Three: Hestia – in no way did the deeds of Aphrodite please her: modest, revered eternal maiden.

Crooked-counselling Kronos fathered her first,

but also last of all, through the plans of aegis-bearing Zeus.

A queen:

Poseidon and Apollo both tried to marry her.

But she was absolutely unwilling and refused, unable to be moved.

25

She swore a great oath, which in fact has been accomplished,

touching the head of father Zeus the aegis-bearer,

swearing that she – shining among goddesses – would be a virgin for all eternity.

To her, father Zeus granted this noble gift, in place of marriage:

She sits in the middle of every household, holding the richest prize.

30

In all the gods' temples she too has her portion of honour.

And by all mortals she is revered as the eldest of the gods.

## Not even Zeus is exempt

These goddesses only are exempt from her persuasion and deception.

No one else is able to escape Aphrodite –

Not among the gods, who live carefree, and

Not among men, haunted by death.

35

She even twisted the divine plan and intentions of Zeus, who delights in thunder,

though he is the greatest god and, in the distribution of honours, he received the greatest portion.

Whenever she wanted, she misled his most carefully held intentions.

She did so easily – forcing him to have sex with lowly mortal women.

Any thought of Hera, she erased from his mind –

despite the respect owed to a sister and a wife.

40

Even though Hera was the most attractive of all the immortal gods

And from a noble family: descended from crooked-counseling Kronos and

Rhea, the mother. Zeus, the steadfast counselor,

made Hera his respected wife and within his household, his trusted confidant.

## Zeus's plan

In Aphrodite's own heart, Zeus cast sweet longing

45

to have sex with a mortal man, so that, as soon as possible,

even she could no longer refrain from a mortal's bed.

In case she ever again started boasting to the assembled gods

with a cruel-sweet laugh – Laughter-loving Aphrodite claiming

that she could make any god she wanted have sex with mortal women

50

and give sons, subject to death, to deathless parents,

and that she could make goddesses have sex with mortal men.

Anchises was at that time grazing his cattle

high up on Mount Ida with its many springs. Into Aphrodite's heart

Zeus now cast desire for him, a man in appearance like the gods. 55  
When laughter-loving Aphrodite saw him  
She fell in love  
and violent desire seized her mind.

Arriving in Cyprus, she descended to her fragrant temple  
in Paphos, where her sacred precinct and fragrant altar lie.  
There she entered and closed its gleaming doors. 60  
Inside, the Graces bathed her and anointed her with oil,  
divine oil which gleams on the gods who are forever,  
an ambrosial substance, made pleasantly fragrant for her.  
She placed around her naked body beautiful clothing, and  
adorned in gold, laughter-loving Aphrodite 65  
went quickly towards Troy, leaving behind sweet-smelling Cyprus.

## Aphrodite arrives on Mount Ida

High among the clouds, her journey was swift.  
She came to Mount Ida of many springs, mother of beasts.  
She went straight through the mountain to the shepherd's hut. Following behind  
and fawning around her, grey wolves, savage-eyed lions, 70  
bears, and swift leopards ever hungry for deer  
lept about. When she saw this the spirit within her breast rejoiced  
and she cast sweet desire in their hearts, and all of them at once  
lay down together in pairs in their shadowy dens.

She now arrived at the shepherd's well-built hut. 75  
She found him alone at the cattle pens where he had been left by the others,  
Anchises, a hero who had beauty from the gods.  
At that time all the others were following their cattle through grassy meadows.  
But he, left alone at the cattle pens by the others  
was wandering here and there, playing a clear-sounding song on his lyre. 80

Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus stood before him  
in stature and form, looking like an unmarried virgin,  
so as not to frighten him when he saw her with his eyes.

Seeing her, Anchises observed and marveled at  
her beauty and stature and gleaming clothes. 85  
She wore a dress more radiant than the bright light of fire,  
curved bracelets and shining earrings;  
around her soft throat were exquisite necklaces,  
elegant, golden, intricate. And as the moon shines,  
a glow radiated around her soft breasts, wondrous to behold. 90

Desire seized Anchises and, coming close, he spoke:

“Welcome, lady! Whoever you are of the blessed gods who has come to this house,



either Artemis or Leto or golden Aphrodite,  
noble Themis or grey-eyed Athena,  
or maybe one of the Graces who has come here — 95  
who dine with the gods and are called immortal,  
or one of the nymphs  
    who inhabit beautiful groves  
    or one of those who dwell on this lovely mountain  
    and in the streams of its rivers and grassy meadows.  
On a mountain peak, visible all around. 100  
I will make an altar for you and perform noble sacrifices  
in every season. With a gracious spirit,  
grant that I be preeminent among the Trojans,  
and make my offspring flourish in the time to come; grant that I too  
live long and well, looking upon the light of the Sun, 105  
that I prosper among my people and reach the threshold of old age.”

Then Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, answered him:

“Anchises, most honoured of humans born on the Earth,  
I am in no way a god. Why do you compare me to the immortals?  
I am mortal, and a mortal mother bore me. 110  
Otreus is my father, a glorious name, if perhaps you’ve heard it.  
He rules over all the Phrygians who have well-built walls.

I know both your language and my own well.  
For a Trojan nurse brought me up in my house; she took me from my mother  
when I was a small child and for many years cared for me. 115  
Surprising as it seems — that is why I know your language so well.

I was abducted by the Watchdog-Slayer, Hermes with the golden wand,  
from the dances to Artemis, golden-arrowed, loud-crying.

There were many women in our chorus — some virgins, some near to womanhood,  
and some already marriageable, worth a high bride-price.  
We were dancing. All around, a vast audience encircled us. 120

Right then, he abducted me: the golden-wanded Watchdog-Slayer.  
Over many farmsteads he took me — the works of men, mortal such as yourself —  
and over many fields not yet divided and plowed,  
where wild beasts, eaters of flesh, prowl, slinking out from their shadowy dens.  
Not once did my feet seem to touch the ground: life-bearing and fertile. 125

Anchises’ own, he kept saying: in his bed I would be called,  
His lawful wife. And that I would bear you glorious children.  
But after he showed me the way out and explained all this,  
He flew back to the immortals, the powerful Watchdog-Slayer.  
Now I have come to you, compelled by powerful Necessity. 130

I beg you, calling on Zeus — as I kneel before you and touch your thigh — and your parents,  
who must be exceptional. For ugly people could not produce one so perfect.  
Since I am a virgin and inexperienced in the ways of sex, take me

and present me to your father and devoted mother,  
to your brothers – all those born from the same fruitful union. 135  
For them, I will not be disreputable, an easy woman but a respectable daughter-in-law.

But send a messenger right away to the swift-horsed Phrygians  
to inform my father and mother, who will be most anxious.  
Gold in abundance and exquisitely woven garments,  
they will send. I beg you, accept this great and noble bride price. 140  
Afterwards hold a feast for the wedding I desire so much,  
one which will give you honour both among men  
and the immortal gods.”

Speaking in this way, the goddess cast sweet desire into his heart.  
Lust seized Anchises and he spoke, calling out to her:

“If you are mortal, and a mortal woman bore you, 145  
and Otreus – a famous name – is your father, as you proclaim,  
and you have come here with the help of the immortal Guide,  
Hermes, and you will be called my wife for all our days,  
then no one, neither a god nor a mortal man,  
will hold me back here and now before I mingle in love with you 150  
this very moment, not even if the far-shooter himself, Apollo,  
sends forth painful arrows from his silver bow.  
Then I would be willing, lady like the goddesses,  
once I have lain in your bed, to enter the house of Hades.”

Speaking so, he took her hand, and laughter-loving Aphrodite 155  
turned and went, casting her beautiful eyes downwards,  
into the well-strewn bed, which earlier had been covered  
by its master with soft blankets. On top of these  
lay the hides of bears and loud-roaring lions,  
which he himself had slain high in the mountains. 160

Once they'd mounted the well-crafted bed,  
Anchises first took the splendid jewelry from her skin,  
brooches and spiral bracelets, earrings and necklaces.  
He loosened her belt and removed her shining clothes,  
placing them on a silver-studded chair. 165

Then, by the will of the gods and by destiny,  
a mortal man lay beside an immortal goddess, not knowing clearly what he did.

When shepherds guide their cattle and fat sheep  
from flowery meadows back to the fold,  
then the shining goddess poured a sweet, profound sleep over Anchises, 170  
and put back on her beautiful clothing.  
Once all her clothes and jewelry were perfectly arranged,  
she stood in the hut. Her head reached  
the well-made roof beam, and from her cheeks immortal beauty  
shone forth, beauty such as belongs to the violet -garlanded goddess of Kythera. 175

She roused him from sleep and spoke, calling his name,

“Awaken, son of Dardanus! Why do you sleep so deeply?  
Consider whether I appear the same to you  
as when you first perceived me with your eyes.”

So she spoke, and startled out of sleep, he obeyed.

180

When he saw the beautiful throat and eyes of Aphrodite,  
he was frightened and turned his eyes aside, looking elsewhere.  
Once more he covered his handsome face with his cloak  
and, supplicating her, spoke with winged words:

“Immediately, Goddess, when I first saw you with my eyes,  
I knew you were a god. But you did not speak the truth.  
I implore you, in the name of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
do not allow me to live impotent among men and women.  
Take pity! No man’s life flourishes  
once he sleeps with immortal goddesses.”

185

190

# L8 Hypothesis-Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, Part 2

## *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*

Translated by E. Bodner and R. Nickel

### Aphrodite's Great Speech

Then Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, answered him:

“Anchises, most honoured of death-bound humans,  
have courage and do not fear too much in your heart.  
Have no fear you will suffer any evil from me  
or the other carefree gods, since you are most dear to them.

195

You will have a dear son who will rule among the Trojans,  
and children will be born to children throughout time.  
His name will be Aeneas because dreadful distress  
held me since I fell upon the bed of a mortal man.

### Ganymede

Of mortal men and women, your race  
has always been especially like the gods in beauty and form.  
Zeus the counselor abducted golden-haired Ganymede,  
on account of his beauty, to be among the immortals  
and pour wine for the gods throughout the house of Zeus —  
wondrous to behold and honoured by all the immortals —  
drawing the red nectar out of a golden bowl.

200

205

But unceasing sorrow took hold of Tros, his father; he did not know at all  
where the divine whirlwind had carried off his dear son.  
Without end, he cried aloud for his son for all his days.  
Zeus pitied him and gave to him a ransom for his son,  
brisk-trotting horses, the kind that carry the immortals.  
He gave them as a gift for him to keep. Hermes the messenger, Watch-dog Slayer,  
told him everything at the command of Zeus,  
that Ganymede would be immortal and ageless like the gods.  
When Tros heard Zeus's news,

210

215

no longer did he lament, but rejoiced within his heart and  
joyously rode his storm-footed steeds.

## Tithonus

Likewise Eos, golden-throned goddess of the Dawn, abducted Tithonus,  
a man like the gods, and also from your family.  
Eos went on her way to ask the dark-clouded son of Kronos 220  
that he become immortal and live forever.  
Zeus nodded assent and fulfilled her wish.

Fool that she was, queenly Eos did not think in her heart  
to ask for youth, for the scraping away of destructive old-age.

As long as he possessed youth, which everyone desires, 225  
he remained pleasing to golden-throned, early-born Eos  
and dwelt by the streams of Ocean at the edges of the Earth.

But when the first grey hair came forth  
from his beautiful head and noble cheeks,  
then queenly Eos kept away from his bed. 230  
She cared for him still, keeping him inside her palace,  
with food and ambrosia and giving him beautiful clothes.

But once loathsome old age bore down hard upon him  
and he could no longer move or even raise his limbs,  
this plan seemed best to her in her heart: 235  
She set him down in a small room and closed its shining doors.  
Still his voice continues to flow without end,  
but no vigour remains in his once supple, strong limbs.

Immortal like this — I would not choose for you  
to live forever among the immortals in this. 240  
But if, you could live remaining as you are now  
in beauty and form and be called my husband,  
grief would not then envelop my shrewd mind.

But quickly now old age, which does not discriminate, will envelop you.  
Without pity, it soon stands besides all humans — 245  
destructive, debilitating, despised by the gods.

But for me, there will be much abuse among the immortal gods  
for all my days, endlessly, because of you.  
They used to tremble before my intimate whisperings and cunning strategies;  
with these I once forced all the immortals to have sex with mortal women. 250  
My plans once overpowered them all.  
But now my mouth will no longer dare to mention this  
among the immortals, since I was completely blinded,

miserably, unspeakably deluded – I was driven out of my mind:  
I slept with a mortal and conceived a child in my womb.

255

## The Mountain-dwelling Nymphs

When first the sun's light shines upon this child,  
deep-bosomed, mountain-dwelling nymphs will raise him.

They belong neither among mortals nor immortals.  
They live for a long time and eat ambrosial food.  
Gracefully they move in lovely dances with the gods.  
The Silens – half-horse, half-man – and clear-sighted Hermes  
mingle in love with them in a charming corner of their caves.

260

When they are born, fir trees and tall-crowned oaks  
start growing on the all-nourishing Earth;  
in beauty they flourish on lofty mountains.  
Sky-high they stand, and mortals call them sanctuaries  
of the immortals and never cut them down with iron.

265

But when the fate of death stands beside them,  
first these beautiful trees wither upon the Earth;  
the bark begins to decay all around, branches fall away,  
and joined together the soul [of nymph and tree] leaves the light of the sun.

270

These nymphs will keep my son with them and raise him.  
When first much-desirable youth takes hold of him,  
goddesses will bring him here and show you the child.  
But I, so that I might explain all that I have in mind,  
will come again bringing my son in his fifth year

275

When first you set eyes on our son,  
you will rejoice as you look at him. For he will most resemble the gods.  
Straightaway you will lead him to windy Ilium.

280

If any mortal man asks you  
what mother conceived your dear son in her womb,  
say this to him, remembering what I command you:

‘They say he's the child of a nymph with eyes like flower buds,  
one of those who inhabit this forest-clad mountain.’

285

But if you speak out and foolishly boast

you mingled in love with

the fair-garlanded

goddess of Kythera,

Zeus in anger will blast you with his smoldering thunderbolt.  
Everything has been told to you.

Ponder it in your mind.  
Keep it there and do not name me.  
Respect the wrath of the gods.”

290

Once she finished speaking,

she darted straight up  
into the windy Sky.

Farewell,

divine guardian

of well-built Cyprus.

Having made my start with you, I shall pass on to another song.

293

# L9 Hypothesis-Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Part 1

## The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Part 1

Translated by E. Bodner and R. Nickel

### Invocation

Demeter, flaxen-haired, formidable goddess: with her I begin my song,  
and with her slender-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus  
abducted. Loud-thundering, wide-seeing Zeus gave his permission,  
distant from Demeter of the golden-sword and glorious fruit.

### The Abduction of Persephone

The girl was playing with Ocean's ample-breasted daughters, 5  
gathering flowers – roses, crocus, and lovely violets,  
all along the soft-meadow, irises, hyacinth, and a narcissus flower:  
Gaia made it grow – a trap for the maiden whose face was like a flower bud –  
part of Zeus's plan, showing her support for the All-Receiver.  
Radiantly it glittered, an object of wonder for all to see, 10  
immortal gods and human mortals.  
From its roots a hundred blossoms grew,  
their scent, the sweetest perfume. All the wide heaven above,  
all the Earth, and the salty swell of the sea laughed.  
Amazed, she reached out with both hands 15  
to take the delightful toy, but the wide-wayed Earth gaped open.

There, along the Plain of Nysa, the All-Receiving son of Cronus  
who has many names leapt out with his immortal horses.  
He seized her against her will and on his golden chariot  
he carried her away wailing. With high-pitched screams she cried out, 20  
calling to her father, highest and best son of Cronos,  
But no one of the immortals nor of mortal men  
heard her cries, not even the olive trees with their glorious fruit,  
except for the carefree daughter of Persaios,  
Hecate of the shining diadem; from her cave she heard. 25  
So did lord Helios, glorious son of Hyperion,  
as the girl called upon her father, the son of Cronus. But far away  
he was seated apart from the gods in a temple where many come to worship



receiving rich sacrifices from mortal men.  
Zeus set the plan in motion, and her uncle  
who receives and commands many, Cronus' son who has many names  
carried her away with his mortal horses against her will.  
As long as she saw the Earth,  
and starry sky, the swift-flowing, fish-filled sea,  
and the Sun's rays, she still hoped to see  
her beloved mother and the community of the everlasting gods.  
Hope still enchanted her great mind, even as she grieved.

## Demeter's Search

The mountain peaks and the sea's depths echoed back  
her immortal voice, and her queenly mother heard.  
Sharp grief took hold of her heart. With her hands,  
she tore the headband around her fragrant hair,  
and cast the deep blue veil from her shoulders.  
Like a bird over land and sea she rushed  
in frenzied terror. But no god, no mortal  
was willing to give her an accurate account,  
no bird came as a truth-bearing messenger.

For nine days and nights queenly Deo wandered  
over the Earth with blazing torches in her hands.  
In her grief she ate no ambrosia,  
drank no sweet nectar, nor washed her flesh.

## Hekate and Helios intervene

But when the tenth Dawn brought her light,  
Hekate came to her, holding a torch in her hands.  
She came to tell her what she knew:

“Honoured Demeter, Bringer of the Seasons, Splendid Giver of Gifts,  
who of the heavenly gods or mortal men  
abducted Persephone and brought this grief to your heart?  
I heard her voice but did not see with my eyes  
who it was. Everything I'm swiftly telling you is true.”

So spoke Hekate. But the daughter of fair-haired Rhea  
gave no response. Swiftly she rushed away, together with Hecate,  
holding blazing torches in her hands.  
They came to Helios who watches over gods and men.

They stood before his horses, and the divine goddess questioned him:

“Helios, honour me — like you, I am a god — if ever I pleased  
your heart and spirit with word or action. 65  
The daughter I bore — sweet child, still growing, noble in beauty —  
I heard her voice throbbing through the empty air,  
as though she was being attacked, but with my eyes I saw nothing.  
Since you look down from the sky with your rays  
over all the Earth and sea, 70  
tell me truly if you have seen my beloved child anywhere.  
What god or mortal has seized her and taken her  
against her will away from me?”

So she spoke and Hyperion’s son answered her,

“Daughter of flaxen-haired Rhea, noble Demeter, 75  
you will know, for I respect and pity you greatly  
in your grief for your slender-ankled child. No one else  
Of the immortals is responsible other than cloud-gathering Zeus,  
who gave her to Hades, your own brother, to be called  
his youthful wife. He has seized her and taken her 80  
crying aloud down to the misty darkness.  
But, goddess, cease your loud lamentation. You must not  
keep insatiable anger like this, in vain. No undignified son-in-law  
among the immortals is the commander of many, Hades,  
your own brother, born of the same seed. As for honour 85  
he received Fate’s allotment when first the three-fold division occurred.  
He dwells among those whom Fate assigned him to command.”

Once he finished speaking, he summoned his horses. At his call,  
They lightly bore away his swift chariot, like long-winged birds.  
But to her heart came a more fierce and dog-like grief. 90

## Demeter comes to Eleusis

Angry at the dark-clouded son of Cronus and  
abandoning the assembly of the gods and lofty Olympus,  
she made her way to the cities and rich fields of men and women,  
concealing her true form over a long time. No one of men  
and deep-girded women when they saw her, recognized her, 95  
until she came to the house of wise-minded Keleos  
who was then a leader in fragrant Eleusis.

She sat by the road, grieving in her heart,  
near the Maidens’ Well where the citizens fetch water,  
in the shade which an olive bush produced from above. 100  
She looked like an old woman, born long ago,

Excluded from childbirth and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite.  
Such are children's nurses and housekeepers  
in the echoing palaces of kings who administer laws.

The daughters of Eleusinian Keleus saw her 105  
when they came to fetch water easily drawn  
into bronze pitchers to carry home to the beloved house of their father:  
four of them, just like goddesses, in the flower of their youth — ,  
Kallidike, Kleisidike, and lovely Demo,  
and Kallithoe, who was eldest of all. 110

They did not recognize her — gods are difficult for mortals to see.  
Standing near, they spoke to her with winged words:

“Who are you, old woman, of people born long ago and where are you from?  
Why did you go away from the city and not approach 115  
the houses? There, throughout their shady halls, are women  
as old as you and younger ones too  
who would welcome you both with kind words and gestures.”

So they spoke. And she, a queen among goddesses, answered with this story:

“Dear children, whoever you are of delicate women,  
greetings. I will tell you. Surely it is not unseemly, 120  
when you ask me to tell the truth.  
I will give you my name: Doso.

My revered mother gave it to me.

From Crete, over the wide back of the sea,  
I came, unwillingly. With violent force  
pirate men abducted me against my will. 125  
They set sail for Thorikos in their swift ship, and once there, the women  
all in a group disembarked onto the land, and the men too.  
They began to prepare dinner beside the ship's stern cables.  
But my spirit desired no sweet-tasting dinner.  
Secretly hastening through the dark land, 130  
I fled my arrogant commanders, so that they would receive  
no benefit from the price of selling me, a captive not paid for, as a slave.  
So I came wandering here.

I don't know at all

what land this is or what people are born here.  
But may all those who have houses on Olympus 135  
give you wedded husbands and, with them, children to bear,  
when your parents wish it.

Please take pity on me, maidens.

Give me clear and honest advice, so that I may know  
dear children, to whose house I should go,  
to the home of what man and woman, so that I may work for them,  
eagerly, the kind of work suitable for an elderly woman? 140  
Holding a new-born in my arms,  
expertly I would care for the child and watch over the house.

I would make the master's bed in the nook of a well-built bedroom  
and supervise the women at their work."

So spoke the goddess. At once the unwed maiden, 145  
Kallidike, the most beautiful of Keleus's daughters, answered her:

"Sweet mother, though we grieve, we humans are forced by Necessity  
to bear the gifts of the gods, for they are much stronger.  
I will advise you clearly in these matters and name  
the men who have great power and honour here, 150  
leaders of the community who protect the city's battlements  
with their advice and straight judgments:  
prudent Triptolemos and Dioklos,  
Polyxeinos, and blameless Eumolpos,  
Dolichos, and our own noble father. 155

The wives of all of these men preside over their houses.  
None these women on first sight will exclude you  
from her house, dishonouring your appearance.  
They will accept you. For you are truly godlike.

If you are willing, wait here, that we may go 160  
to our father's house and tell all these things right through  
to our deep-girded mother, Metaneira, in the hope that she may urge you  
to come to our house and not seek out the house of others.

Her only son is being raised in the well-built halls,  
born late in her life, but much desired and gladly welcomed. 165  
If you care for him and he reaches the measure of youth,  
easily anyone of delicate women, seeing you,  
will be jealous. Our mother will give such great rewards for his rearing."

So she spoke. Demeter nodded her head in assent. The maidens,  
filling their shining pitchers, left, pleased with themselves. 170

Soon they arrived at their father's great house, and quickly told  
their mother what they had seen and heard. She  
ordered them to go quickly and summon the goddess, for an immense wage.

Just as deer or calves in spring time  
leap through a meadow, satisfying their hearts with food, 175  
so they, holding up the folds of their lovely, fine robes,  
darted down the hollow carriage road. Their unbound hair  
floated all around each one's shoulders, like a crocus flower.

They found the illustrious goddess near the road, where earlier  
they had left her. Back to their dear father's house 180  
they led the way. The goddess, grieving in her heart,  
walked behind them, veiling her head entirely.  
Her dark robe coiled all around her slender ankles.

## Demeter in the home of Keleus and Metaneira

Quickly they arrived at the house of Zeus-cherished Keleus.  
They walked through the corridor where their queenly mother  
sat near a pillar of the strongly made roof,  
holding a child in her bosom: a newborn. 185

The maidens ran to her. But as the goddess crossed over the threshold,  
her head reached the ceiling and she filled the doorway with a divine radiance.

Reverence, astonished awe, and pale fear seized the lady. 190  
She yielded her seat and urged the goddess to sit.

But Demeter, giver of splendid gifts, bringer of seasons,  
did not wish to sit upon the radiant couch.  
In silence, she waited, casting her beautiful eyes downward,  
until hard working Iambe placed 195  
a well-built chair for her and threw over it a silver-shining fleece

## Iambe and Metaneira console Demeter

Sitting down there, Demeter held her veil in her hands.  
Speechless and grieving she sat on the chair for a long time.  
She did not greet anyone, neither by word nor gesture.  
Without laughter, without tasting food and drink, 200  
she sat, wasting away with longing for her deep-girded daughter

Until hard working Iambe, making faces at her side and  
telling her many jokes, moved the holy mistress  
to smile and laugh and have a gracious spirit once again.  
From that time forward, Iambe always pleased the goddess's moods. 205

Metaneira gave her a goblet filled with honey-sweet wine.  
But Demeter refused. She said it was not right for her  
to drink red wine. She urged her host to give her  
a mixture of water with barley-meal and soft pennyroyal to drink.  
Once the potion was made, Metaneira offered it to her, as had she requested. 210  
Accepting it to show respect, the great queen Deo [drank].

With these words, well-girded Metaneira began to speak:

“Greetings, Lady, since I suspect you are not from base parents,  
but good ones. Reverence shines forth from your eyes,  
and grace too, as if from law-ministering kings. 215  
Though we grieve, we humans are forced by Necessity  
to bear the gifts of the gods. For a yoke lies upon our necks.  
Now, since you came here, whatever I have will be here for you.

Raise this child for me, a child the gods granted  
late-born and unexpected but still much desired by me. 220  
If you raise him and he reaches the measure of youth –  
easily anyone of these delicate women, seeing you,  
will be envious – then I will give you immense rewards for his rearing.”

Again well-garlanded Demeter spoke to her:

“You also, Lady, many greetings. May the gods grant you fortune. 225  
Eagerly I will take the child to raise for you, as you bid me.  
I will raise him and, I expect, neither a bewitching nor the undercutter  
will harm him through the neglect of his nurse.  
For I know an antidote much stronger than the woodcutter;  
I know a fine safeguard against baneful bewitchings.” 230

## Demeter and Demophoön

Speaking so, she took him into her fragrant bosom  
with immortal hands and his mother rejoiced in her heart.  
So the shining son of noble Keleus,  
Demophoön, whom well-girded Metaneira bore,  
she nursed in the halls.

And he grew like a god. 235

He was eating no grain, nor sucking [the milk from his mother. For, by day,  
lovely-garlanded] Demeter anointed him with ambrosia, as if he were born of a god,  
while sweetly breathing over him and holding him in her bosom.

But by night, she buried him in the force of the fire, like a fire-brand,  
in secret from his dear parents; to them she brought about a great wonder 240  
that he was growing so early; For he had become like the gods to look at.  
And she would have made him immortal and ageless,  
if not for the thoughtlessness of well-girded Metaneira,  
who, watching from her fragrant bedroom one night,  
spied this.

She shrieked and struck both thighs in terror. 245

Fearing for her child, she was very misled by her heart,  
and wailing she spoke to him with winged words:

“My child, Demophoön, this stranger buried you in a great fire,  
and she causes mourning and baneful sorrow for me.”

So she spoke, lamenting.. And she, shining among goddesses, heard her. 250  
Angry with her, lovely-garlanded Demeter  
seized the dear child, whom Metaneira bore unexpected in the halls,  
from the fire with immortal hands and hurled him to the ground.  
With dreadful anger in her heart,  
she spoke to well-girded Metaneira.: 255

“Humans are oblivious and without the sense to know  
their destiny, whether coming upon good or bad.  
You were incurably misled by your own foolishness.  
May the oath of the gods, the harsh Stygian water, know  
that I would have made the dear child immortal and ageless  
forever and I would have granted him imperishable honour. 260

Now he will not be able to flee mortality and death.  
Still, his honour will be ever-imperishable because on my knees  
he climbed and in my arms he slept.  
Through seasons and the passing years, 265  
the children of th Eleusinians will wage battle and hostile strife  
always with one another for all days.

I am Demeter, honour-holder, who is the greatest  
benefit and delight for immortals and mortals.  
Come, let all the people of the community build me a great temple 270  
and an altar below it, beneath the city and towering wall  
of Kallichoron atop the jutting hill.

I myself will reveal my secret rites, so that when  
you offer sacrifices reverently, you may appease my mind.”

# L10 Hypothesis-Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Part 2

## *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Part 2*

Translated by E. Bodner and R. Nickel

*At the end of Part 1, Metaneira had interrupted Demeter's attempted apotheosis of Demophon. In anger, the goddess removed the infant from the fire, declared that he could now never be immortal. Now she doffs her mortal disguise and appears in full epiphany before a terrified Metaneira as she departs.*

### The Epiphany of Demeter

Speaking so, the goddess changed her size and form, 275  
thrusting away old age. Beauty breathed all around and over her.  
A lovely scent spread out from her fragrant robes,  
and a brilliance shone far off from the immortal skin of the goddess.

Flaxen locks of hair draped her shoulders,  
and with radiant light, the sturdy house was filled like lightning. 280

She walked out through the halls and immediately Metaneira's knees weakened.  
She was speechless for a long time and did not at all  
remember to pick up her dear son from the floor.

Her sisters heard his piteous cry  
and leapt down from their bed laden with tapestries. 285  
Picking up the child in her hands, one held him in her bosom.  
Another lit up the fire and a third ran with tender feet  
to raise up the child's mother from her sweet-smelling bedroom.

Gathering together, they bathed him and as he was struggling,  
they embraced him lovingly. But his heart was not soothed; 290  
for inferior nurses and nannies were holding him.

All night long they were appeasing the illustrious goddess,  
trembling in fear, and when Dawn appeared,  
to mighty Keleus they spoke truthfully,  
as the goddess beautiful-garlanded Demeter commanded. 295

He, summoning men from all over to an assembly,  
ordered them to build for lovely-haired Demeter a rich temple  
and an altar on the jutting hill.  
Very quickly they heard him speaking and obeyed.  
They made it, as he commanded. And it grew as though divine. 300





## Hermes goes to Hades

When deep-thundering, wide-seeing Zeus heard this,  
he sent the Watch-dog Slayer with the golden wand into the dark Underworld 335  
to persuade Hades with gentle words and  
to lead holy Persephone out from the misty Darkness  
into the light among the gods, so that her mother  
could see her with her own eyes and end her anger.

Hermes did not disobey. Swiftly he leapt down into 340  
the Earth's hiding places leaving his home on Olympus.

He found the king within his palace  
seated on his marriage bed beside his timid spouse,  
against her will and longing for her mother. Far away she  
[was devising a plan to punish the carefree gods for their actions.] 345

Standing nearby the powerful Watch-dog Slayer addressed him:

“Dark-haired Hades, ruler of the dead,  
father Zeus urges you to bring noble Persephone  
out from the Darkness among the upper gods so that her mother  
might see her with her own eyes and cease her anger and deadly wrath 350  
against the immortals. She is plotting an enormous action,  
to destroy the weakened stock of Earth-born men and women  
hiding the seed beneath the ground, wiping out the honours  
of the immortals. She holds onto a deadly anger and no longer  
keeps company with the gods. Far away in a fragrant temple 355  
she sits, remaining in the rocky city of Eleusis.”

He finished speaking, and Aidoneus, the king of those below, smiled  
with his eyebrows. He did not disobey the command of king Zeus.

Straightaway he gave orders to attentive Persephone,

“Go, Persephone, to your dark-robed mother. 360  
Keep a gentle heart and spirit in your breast  
and do not despair too much beyond others.

Among the immortals I will not be an unworthy husband,  
brother as I am of your father, Zeus.

When you are here,  
you will rule over everything that lives and moves. 365

Honours will be yours, the greatest among the immortals:  
Against those who commit injustice there will be vengeance for all days,  
when they fail to appease your anger with sacrificial offerings,  
performing holy rites and presenting fitting gifts.”

So he spoke, and thoughtful Persephone rejoiced. 370  
Straightaway she leapt up with joy. But he in secret

gave her the sweet seed of a pomegranate to eat,  
keeping watch all around him, so that she might not remain all her days  
there beside revered Demeter of the dark robes.

Then Hades, commander of many, harnessed 375  
immortal horses before a golden chariot.  
She mounted the chariot box; beside her the powerful Watch-dog Slayer,  
taking the reins and goad in his hands,  
sped away from the palace. The two horses took flight.  
Swiftly they completed the long journey. Neither the sea 380  
nor river waters, grassy valleys,  
mountain peaks held back the immortal horses' onrush.  
High above they cut through the air as they sped along.

## Persephone returns

Hermes stopped the horses and led the way to where well garlanded Demeter  
waited before her fragrant temple.

Seeing her daughter, 385  
she rushed forward like a maenad down a shady, wooded mountain.  
For her part, Persephone, [when she saw with her own eyes],  
jumped down, [leaving behind chariot and horses],  
to run to her mother [and threw her arms around her neck.]  
For Demeter, [as she held her beloved child in her arms], 390  
[suddenly her heart suspected a trick, and she began to tremble dreadfully].

End[ing her embrace, straightaway she questioned her:]

“Child, tell me, you did not [taste, when you were below,]  
any food? Speak out; [hide nothing so that we might both know].  
For if you did not, you will come up [from dreadful Hades;] 395  
beside me and your father, the da[rk-clouded son of Cronus],  
you will live, held in honour by [all the immortals].  
But if you did eat, you will go back down beneath [the Earth's hiding places]  
and live there for a third portion of the seasons [every year],  
and two portions with me and the other [immortals]. 400  
Whenever the Earth blossoms with fragrant spring flow[ers]  
of every kind, then from the misty darkness  
you will rise up again, a great wonder for gods and mortal women and men.  
And so, did the powerful god who receives many beguile you with a trick?”

Beautiful Persephone spoke to her mother in response: 405

“I will tell you everything unerringly.  
When the swift Watch-dog Slayer came  
from my father, the son of Cronus, and the other heavenly gods,  
to depart from the Darkness — so that, seeing me with your own eyes,

you might cease your anger and dreadful wrath against the immortals – 410  
I leapt up in joy, but Hades secretly  
made me eat the seed of a pomegranate.

He compelled me to swallow it by force, against my will.

How he seized me through the shrewd cunning of Cronus's son,  
my father, and bore me away beneath the Earth's hiding places, 415  
I will tell you and recount everything you ask.

All along a lovely meadow, all of us –  
Leucippe, Phaino, Electra and Ianthé,  
Melité, Iakhé, Rhodeia and Callirhoé,  
Melebobosis, Tukhé, and Okuroé whose face is like a flower bud, 420  
Chryseis, Ianeira, Akasté and Admeté,  
Rhodopé, Plouto, and graceful Kalypso,  
Styx, Ourania, and lovely Galaxaura,  
Battle-ready Pallas Athena and arrow-pouring Artemis –  
were playing and gathering lovely flowers by hand, 425  
all mixed together – soft crocus, irises and hyacinth,  
rose-buds and lilies, wonderful to see,  
and a narcissus which the wide Earth made grow like a crocus.

I was plucking them out of joy, but from beneath the Earth  
gave way and the powerful lord who receives many leapt out. 430  
He carried me off beneath the Earth in his golden chariot,  
by force against my will. With high-pitched screams I cried out  
Though this causes you pain, everything I tell you is true.”

All day long, with one mind  
each comforted the other's heart and spirit, 435  
together in each other's arms, and their spirits ceased grieving.  
Each received joy from the other, and gave it in return.

Hecate of the shining headdress came to them;  
she too held the daughter of holy Demeter in her embrace.  
From that time forward, queenly Hecate has been her attendant and companion. 440

Next deep-thundering, wide-seeing Zeus sent a messenger,  
fair-haired Rhea, their dark-robed mother,  
to bring her back to the company of the gods. He promised  
to give whatever honours she might choose among the immortal gods.  
He agreed that her daughter remain for a third portion 445  
of the revolving year beneath the misty Darkness,  
and two portions with her mother and the other immortals.  
So he spoke, nor did divine Rhea disobey Zeus's commands.

Swiftly she leapt down the peaks of Mount Olympus  
and came to Rharion, a life-bearing, fertile land 450  
in time before, but at that time it produced no life; it lay  
at rest, without a single plant. The white barley remained

concealed through the plans of fair-ankled Demeter. But soon  
afterwards it would be adorned with long ears of grain  
when spring came once again, and thick rows of wheat and barley 455  
would stand heavy on the plain, waiting to be tied together in bundles.  
There first Rhea came down from the empty air.

So pleased were they to see one another, their hearts were filled with joy.  
Then Rhea of the shining headdress spoke to her daughter:

“Come, child, deep-thundering, wide-seeing Zeus summons you 460  
to return to the company of the gods. He promises to give  
[whatever honours you wish] among the immortal gods.  
[He has agreed that your daughter] remain for a third portion  
[of the revolving year beneath the misty] Darkness,  
[and two portions at your side and with the other] immortals. 465  
[He said that it would be accom]plished like this; he nodded his head in assent.  
[Come now, my] child, obey; do not rage excessively  
[and without end] against the dark-clouded son of Cronus.  
[Quickly now,] allow the life-bearing fruit to grow for men and women.”

## Demeter establishes the Eleusinian Mysteries

She spoke, and fair-garlanded Demeter did not disobey. 470  
At once she sent up the grain of the tilled fields,  
and all the wide Earth was weighed down with leaves and  
flowers. Then she went to the kings who administer laws –  
to Triptolemus and the charioteer Diokles,  
to strong Eumolpus and Keleus, leader of his people. She showed them 475  
the administration of her holy mysteries and revealed her sacred rites to all –  
to Triptolemus and Polyxeinos, and in addition to them to Diokles –  
awe-inspiring rites that must never be violated [nor asked about]  
nor discussed. Great reverence for the gods impedes our speech.

Blessed are they among women and men on Earth who have seen these rites. 480

But those who are uninitiated in the holy mysteries and have no share in them, never  
have a portion of the same blessings when they are dead beneath the chilly Darkness.

When the shining goddess had established all her rites,  
they both made their way to Olympus, to the company of the other gods.

There they dwell alongside Zeus who delights in thunder – 485  
Revered and adored goddesses.

Greatly blessed are those whom the two goddesses  
willingly love among women and men on Earth.  
Straightaway they send a hearth-guest to their great homes –  
Prosperity, who grants riches to mortal men and women.

Come now, goddesses who preside over fragrant Eleusis,  
sea-girt Paros and rocky Antros,  
queenly Deo, giver of splendid gifts, bringer of seasons,  
you and your beautiful daughter, Persephone,  
willingly in return for my song grant me a soul-pleasing livelihood.

490

Next I will remember you and another song.

495

# Hypothesis Practice Exercise-Arachne & Minerva

[https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph6.php#anchor\\_Toc64106362](https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph6.php#anchor_Toc64106362)





# Glossary

This is where you can create a glossary of terms and definitions for the book. For more information about creating and using glossaries, check the [Public Domain Core Collection Faculty Guide](#).