

THE HOMERIC HYMNS

Translated by Christopher Kelk

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I - TO DIONYSUS

Some say that you were born to Semele
In Dracenum, some say in blustery
Icarus, god-born and sewn in Zeus's thigh;
Some say in Naxos; some that it was by
Deep-eddying Alpheus, begot by Zeus
The thunder-lover; other men produce
The tale that it was Thebes. All fabrication!
The father of the gods and every nation
Arranged your birth far from each human eye
And white-armed Hera. There's a mountain, high 10
And thronged by woods, called Nysa, far away
In Phoenice, where Egypt's waters play.
"And many offerings to Semele
Men will put up inside her shrine. Since three
Is sacred, when each three-year span is done,
They'll ever yield you hecatombs." The son
Of Cronus bent his dark brows as he said
These words, while the divine locks on his head
Flowed down and great Olympus reeled. And thus
Wise Zeus confirmed this with a nod. To us 20
Be favourable, o Insewn One, who
Inspire your frenzied women. For of you
We sing from start to finish; one may find
Those who forget you cannot call to mind
One holy song. Farewell to you, Insewn,
O Dionysus, and not you alone –
Farewell, too, to your mother Semele,
Who's known to all mankind as Thyone.

II - TO DEMETER

Fair-haired Demeter, holy deity,
I'll praise – her trim-legged daughter, also, she
Who was by Aïdoneus seduced, for her
He had of Zeus, far-seeing, Thunderer.
Far from Demeter of the golden sword
And glorious fruits, upon the soft greensward
With Ocean's well-endowed young girls she played,
And flowers, which the will of Zeus had made

The earth to grow to satisfy Hades
 And snare the bloomlike girl, she plucked, and these 10
 Were roses, croci, lovely violets and
 The iris, hyacinth, narcissus (grand
 And radiant flower), such a sight to see
 For gods and men. Its deep extremity
 Produced a hundred blooms. Its fragrant smell
 Caused all the heavens to laugh – the earth as well
 And the salt-sea's swell. The maiden's breathless joy
 Made her reach out to grasp the lovely toy
 When Earth with her broad pathways split asunder
 Upon that Nysian plain and then from under 20
 The ground, the lord who goes by many a name,
 The Host of Legions, son of Cronos, came
 With his immortal horses, leaping far.
 Against her will he caught her in his car
 Of gold as she yelled out. With a shrill cry
 She called upon her father, the most high
 And glorious son of Cronos. Not one tree
 That bears rich olives, not one deity
 Nor man could catch her voice; just two were there
 To hear her – tender Hecate, whose hair 30
 Shone bright, Persaeus' daughter, as she lay
 Within her cave, and Helios, Lord of Day,
 Hyperion's bright son, as loud she cried
 To Zeus, her father. But he sat aside
 From all the gods within his temple where
 So many pray, receiving his sweet share
 Of mortal offerings. And so that son
 Of Cronos, host and lord of many a one,
 Who goes by many a name, was carrying 40
 Away the girl by leave of Zeus the king
 On his immortal chariot, though she
 Was most reluctant. While she still could see
 The earth, the starry heavens and the shine
 Of sunlight and the strongly-flowing brine
 Where fishes shoal, the goddess hoped to view
 Her darling mother and the great gods who
 Live endlessly – this calmed her mighty soul.
 The heights of all the mountains and the whole
 Sea-depths with her immortal voice rang out,
 And then her queenly mother heard her shout: 50
 Acute pain seized her heart; her dear hands tore
 Her headdress; and the dusky cloak she wore
 She cast off, speeding bird-like over sea
 And land to find her child. But nobody,

No god nor man, would tell her what was done,
 And of all of the birds of omen none
 Would say the truth. She wandered through the land,
 The queenly Deo, torches in her hand,
 For nine days, forsaking in her misery
 Sweet nectar and ambrosia, while she 60
 Denied to bathe. But when the tenth dawn broke,
 Then Hecate, with a torch, met her and spoke
 These words: "Queenly Demeter, who bring us
 The seasons, you who are so generous
 With rich gifts, say what man or deity
 Has carried off your child Persephone
 And caused you pain? I heard her cry but who
 He was I did not see. I'll tell to you
 In short all that I know." Thus Hecate
 Addressed her. Rich-haired Rhea's progeny 70
 Made no reply but, with her torches, flew
 With her until they came to Helios, who
 Watched over gods and men and there she stood
 Before his horses, telling him: "You should,
 Helios, respect me as a deity
 If ever I have given gaiety
 To you in word or deed. My fair, sweet child
 I heard as one in someone's thrall – a wild
 And thrilling sound! But nothing did I see.
 But by your beams through the extremity 80
 Of both the land and sea and radiant air
 You look down. Have you seen her anywhere?
 My dear child! Who has seized her violently -
 What god or man? – and made escape?" Thus she
 Spoke. Then Hyperion's son gave his reply:
 "Demeter, child of rich-haired Rhea, I
 Will tell the truth to you. Exceedingly
 I honour you and grieve your misery
 Over your slim-legged daughter. None but Zeus
 Cloud-Gatherer's to blame. He dared to loose 90
 The maid to Hades so that she might be
 His buxom wife – yes, his own brother. He
 Snatched her away down to the misty gloom
 As in his chariot she wailed her doom.
 But, goddess, cease your loud lament. For it
 Is wrong to show vain anger. Not unfit
 To be a son-in-law to you, her mother,
 Being of the same stock and your own brother,
 Is Aïdoneus , Lord of Many Men
 Among the deathless deities; again, 100

When honours were first measured out, he gained
 A third part of renown and has remained
 Lord of his fellow-dwellers there.” That said,
 She called her steeds. They heard her voice and sped
 Along like long-winged birds. More suffering
 Assailed her. Angered at the Dark-Cloud King
 Of Gods she shunned their gatherings on high
 Olympus and to towns and fields that lie
 On earth she went, inflicting injury
 A long time on herself. On scrutiny 110
 No man, no, nor yet one deep-bosomed dame
 Knew her for who she was until she came
 To wise Celeus, who then was sovereign
 Of sweet Eleusis. She sat, troubled in
 Her heart, on the roadside by the Maids’ Spring
 Whence folk drew water. Overshadowing
 This dark lace was an olive shrubbery.
 Just like an ancient crone she seemed to be,
 Cut off from childbirth and the offerings 120
 That garland-loving Aphrodite brings,
 Like those who tend the kingly progeny –
 Those kings who weal out justice lawfully –
 Or like the stewards in the halls that sound
 In echoes. There Celeus’s daughters found
 Her as she carried water which they drew
 So easily so they might take it to
 Their father’s house in bronze urns. Like divine
 Goddesses, there were four of them, in fine
 And blooming youth – they were Callidice
 And lovely Demo and Cleisidice 130
 And then Callithoë, the eldest one.
 They, too – for it is not so easily done
 For any man to know a deity –
 Failed to detect her and spoke wingedly:
 “Who are you, ancient one? What is your race?
 Why have you left your city and won’t face
 These houses? Dames like you, and younger, too,
 Live here in dark halls and would welcome you
 In word and deed.” They spoke and in reply
 The queen of all the goddesses said, “I 140
 Greet you, dear children, whosoever you be
 Of womankind. I’ll tell my history
 To you, because the answer is no shame.
 My queenly mother gave to me the name
 Of Doso, and I came across the sea,
 The broad, broad sea, from Crete unwillingly,

Snatched off by pirates. After that they came
 Swiftly to Thoricus, where many a dame,
 And many a man, amassed upon the strand
 And by the ropes began upon the sand 150
 A meal. Wanting no food, I slipped away
 Sadly across that dark land – I'd not stay
 With my imperious masters that they might
 Not carry me, unpaid for, in their flight
 And sell me off. Thus in my wandering
 I landed here – I do not know a thing
 About this place or who you folk may be.
 I pray, though, each Olympian deity
 Will grant you mates, and children, too, the prayer
 Of every parent. Maidens, do not spare 160
 Your pity for me. Please, then, make it clear,
 Dear children, who the folk are who live here,
 The men and women, that I cheerfully
 May work for them with chores befitting me,
 A crone – tending a babe or tidying
 Or in his fine room's recess readying
 The master's bed or giving my advice
 To the women." Thus she spoke and in a trice
 The fairest maid, unwed Callidice,
 Replied, "Mother, in our adversity 170
 We bear the gifts that gods deal out to men –
 They're stronger than we are. I'll tell you, then,
 The names of all the men in power here,
 Who've earned our honour. I *will* make it clear
 Who by their wisdom and their true decrees
 Rule us and guard our city walls. Now these
 Are wise Triptolemus and Dioclus,
 Polyxeinus and splendid Eumolpus
 And our brave father. All have wives who run
 Each house, and on first sight there's not a one 180
 Who would dishonour you and turn you out.
 They'd welcome you because there is no doubt
 That you are like a goddess. Stay here, though,
 If you prefer, and all of us will go
 Back to our house and tell our mother, who
 Is buxom Metaneira, all that you
 Have said. Thus she will bid you to repair
 To us and not seek sanctuary elsewhere.
 In our fine house, she has a late-born son,
 Much prayed for and embraced – her only one. 190
 Nurse him till he's a youth and you will find
 That you're the envy of all womankind.

Such gifts shall you receive!" That's what she said,
And at her words the goddess bowed her head.
They filled their shining buckets and withdrew,
Rejoicing. In a short time they came to
Their father's house and told their mother all
That they had seen and heard. She bade them call
The stranger swiftly so that they might pay
Her boundless wages. Then they went away, 200
Like deer or calves with a sufficiency
Of pasture, who then bound across the lea.
Those maidens down the hollow pathway sped,
Holding their lovely garments' folds ahead
Of them. Just like a crocus flower, their hair
Streamed round their shoulders as they went to where
They'd left the good goddess by the wayside,
And there they found her. Then with her they hied
To their dear father's house. She walked behind,
A veil upon her head, grieved in her mind. 210
Around her slender feet her dark-blue dress
Fluttered about. Quite soon, with the goddess,
They came to heaven-bred Celeus' residence.
They went along the portico and thence
They found their queenly mother sitting near
A pillar of the close-fit roof, her dear
Young son within her arms. To her they sped.
The goddess on the threshold stood, her head
Reaching the roof. Her heavenly radiance
Filled up the doorway. Awe and reverence 220
And pale fear took their mother at this sight.
She got up then so that Demeter might
Sit on her couch, and yet she, who supplies
The seasons and gives perfect gifts, her eyes,
Her lovely eyes, cast down, would not sit there
Upon that golden couch. With tender care
Iambe brought a jointed stool and cast
A silver fleece upon it. Then, at last,
The goddess sat and held a veil before
Her face. A long time there she sat, heart-sore, 230
Unsmiling, never speaking, not by sign
Or word addressing anyone. No wine,
No food she took but, pining wistfully
For her deep-bosomed daughter, there sat she.
Then careful Iambe moved the holy queen
With many a jest, smiling and laughing, keen
To lift her heart – as she would cheer her up
Thereafter. Metaneira filled a cup

Of sweet wine for her, but she put it off. 240
 It was not right, she said, for her to quaff
 Red wine. Water and meal was her request,
 Mixed with soft mint. She fulfilled her behest.
 The great queen drank, for she observed that rite.
 Then spoke up, out of those within her sight,
 Well-girdled Metaneira: "Hail to you,
 Lady, for I believe it to be true
 Your stock is not ignoble – dignity
 And grace shine in your eyes, which you may see
 In justice-dealing kings. What the gods send
 We bear perforce – beneath the yoke we bend 250
 Our necks. Bring up my child, a god-sent boy,
 Late-born, past hope, but a much-prayed-for joy.
 Nurse him till he's a youth and you will find
 You'll be the envy of all womankind.
 Such gifts shall you receive!" Came the reply
 From wreathed Demeter: "Greetings, too, say I,
 God bless you. I will take him willingly
 Just as you bid me and you'll never see
 The Cutter or witchcraft bring him distress
 By reason of his nurse's heedlessness - 260
 The Woodcutter's not stronger than a spell
 I have and there's a safeguard I know well
 Against foul witchcraft." Then she took the boy
 Unto her perfect bosom and with joy
 His mother's heart was filled. Thus the fine son
 Of wise Celeus was nursed – Demophoón,
 Whom the well-girdled Metaneira bore –
 Right there. He grew like an immortal, for
 He neither ate nor suckled at the teat.
 Each day rich-wreathed Demeter breathed so sweet 270
 Upon him at her breast and smeared his skin
 With ambrosia as though he were the kin
 Of gods. She hid him in the fire, though,
 Each night (his loving parents did not know)
 Just like a brand. They were amazed that he
 Grew past his age – godlike he seemed to be.
 Deathless and ageless she'd have made the lad
 If the well-girdled Metaneira had
 Not in her fragrant chamber watched by night
 In heedlessness. Lamenting in her fright, 280
 She smote her hips, afraid for him, and these
 Swift words she spoke, bewailing her unease:
 "Demophoón, the stranger buries you
 Deep in the fire, affording me much rue."

Bright-crowned goddess Demeter heard. In spleen
She took the darling child, the boy who'd been
Born in the palace to Metaneira who
Had lost all hope of one more child, and threw
Him from the fire to the ground. Then she
To well-girt Metaneira instantly 290
Said, "You dull mortals cannot see the lot
Awaiting you, both good and bad. For what
Is done's past cure. Be witness the gods' plight,
The endless river Styx, your dear son might
Through me have been immortal all his days
And ageless and been given endless praise.
But now death and a mortal's destiny
He can't avoid, yet he will always be
Much honoured for he lay upon my knees
And slept within my arms. And yet, when he's 300
Full-grown, year after year the progeny
Of the Eleusinians continually
Will fight each other in dread strife. Know, then,
That I'm Demeter, prized by mortal men,
A cause of help and joy to them. And so,
Let there be built a temple and, below,
A shrine beneath the city and sheer wall
Above Callirrhous and on a tall
Hillside. I'll teach my rites that I may be
Won over by your honest purity." 310
The goddess changed her looks as this she said,
No longer old – around her, beauty spread
And from her robe wafted a fine bouquet.
Demeter's body shone from far away
In a divine light, and now golden hair
Spread from her shoulders, and, like lightning, there
Was brightness in that well-built house. Then she
Went from the palace and immediately
Metaneira's knees went weak; she made no sound
For a long time; her child upon the ground, 320
Her late-born child, she overlooked. Nearby
Her sisters heard the infant's pitiful cry
And from their well-spread beds without delay
They sprang. While one took up the child and lay
Him at her breast, another set about
To light a fire and a third set out
On soft feet for their mother so she may
Come from her fragrant chamber. And now they
Gathered around the struggling little boy
And bathed him, hugging him with loving joy. 330

He was not solaced, though – the skilfulness
Of those handmaids and nurses was far less.
They prayed to the glorious goddess through the night,
Shaking with fear, and, at the dawn's first light
They told the mighty Celeus all, as she,
Well-wreathed Demeter, told them to. Then he
Summoned his people to the meeting-place,
That countless throng, and bade them then to grace
Rich-tressed Demeter, with a temple there,
A splendid one, an altar, also, where 340
The hillock rose. They heard and started to
Do as he ordered, and the infant grew
Just like a god. When done and at their rest
They all went home. Demeter, golden-tressed,
Apart from all the gods sat as she pined
For her deep-bosomed child. Mortals would find
Upon the fecund earth a cruel year
For the well-wreathed Demeter kept each ear
From sprouting. Many a curving plough in vain 350
Was drawn by oxen. White barley would rain
To no avail upon the ground. So she
Would have destroyed with cruel scarcity
All of mankind and would have robbed as well
Of gifts and sacrifices those who dwell
High on Olympus did Lord Zeus not see
What she had done. He sent immediately
Gold-winged Iris to the richly-tressed
Lovely Demeter. That was his behest,
And she obeyed dark-clouded Zeus, the son 360
Of Cronus – swiftly to her did she run.
She came then to Eleusis, rich in scent.
She found dark-cloaked Demeter and she went
Into the temple where she'd come to rest
And said with winged words:" It's the behest
Of Father Zeus, who's ever wise, that you
Should join the holy tribe of deities who
Are everlasting. Don't let this decree
Go unbeyed. Still she refused to be
Persuaded. Zeus then gave one more command –
The blest, eternal gods should see her and, 370
Each one after the other, on they came
And offered fair gifts, calling out her name.
They promised any rights she might prefer
Among them, not prevailing, though, with her,
So angry was she. She spurned stubbornly
All that they'd said. She'd never go, said she,

To well-scented Olympus nor let rise
 Fruit from the ground till she with her own eyes
 Saw her fair child. Zeus the Loud-Thunderer,
 Who sees all, sent the executioner 380
 Of Argus with his wand of gold to Hell
 That he with coaxing words might put a spell
 On Hades to send back into the light
 Holy Persephone from murky night
 And let her mother see her and let go
 Her anger. Hermes was persuaded so
 To do and left Olympus speedily
 Down to the places on the earth, then he
 Found Hades on a couch at home beside
 His apprehensive and reluctant bride, 390
 Much yearning for her mother, who yet mused
 On her dread project far away, abused
 By the blest gods. Staunch Hermes, standing near,
 Said: "Dark-haired Hades, sovereign down here
 Among the dead, I'm given a command
 By Father Zeus to take out of this land
 The fair Persephone up to the place
 Where the gods live so that she, face-to-face,
 May meet her mother that she may let go
 Her rage at the gods; a dread scenario 400
 Demeter had in mind – she planned to bring
 An end to weakly men by burying
 Seed underground, the honours that they brought
 To the immortals thus reduced to nought.
 She kept her dreadful anger nor would she
 Mix with the gods but solitarily
 Kept to her fragrant temple, dwelling in
 Rocky Eleusis." With a joyless grin
 The ruler of the dead then acquiesced
 To Father Zeus' command and thus addressed 410
 The wise Persephone immediately:
 "To your dark-robed mother, Persephone,
 Go now. Think kindly of me. Do not brood
 Or be in an exceedingly sad mood.
 Among the gods I'll be a fitting spouse,
 For I am Zeus's brother. In this house
 Over all living things you'll have command
 And with the highest honours will you stand
 Among the gods; always those who do ill
 Shall be chastised, those who refuse to still 420
 Your power with sacrifices, reverently
 Performing rites and giving gifts." Thus he

Addressed her. Filled with joy then was the shrewd
 Persephone, and in that happy mood
 Leapt up. But Hades gave her secretly
 A pomegranate seed that she'd beside
 Her dark-robed mother not always abide.
 Aïdoneus, Ruler of Many Men,
 Attached his steeds that never perish then 430
 To his gold chariot. She got on, and strong
 Hermes took reins and whip and drove headlong
 Those horses, for they flew on readily.
 They managed their long journey speedily.
 No sea, no river, not one mountaintop,
 No grassy glen was seen to put a stop
 To their advance as they cleft the wide air
 Above them. Thus he brought those steeds to where
 Well-wreathed Demeter stayed, halting before 440
 Her fragrant temple. Seeing them she tore
 Outside, as on a wooded mountainside
 A Maenad tears; Persephone then spied
 Demeter's sweet eyes, then leapt down and sped
 To fall upon her neck. Yet in her head,
 While holding her, Demeter suddenly
 Fancied some trick and trembled violently,
 Ceasing her kisses. "Child," she cried, "did you
 Not eat when down below? Come, tell me true.
 Hide nothing that we both may truly know. 450
 If not, then from that loathsome place below
 With Cronus' son, dark-clouded Zeus, and me
 You'll come and dwell and will respected be
 By all the gods. But if you ate, back there
 Below the earth you'll hold a one-third's share
 Of every year, the other two with me
 And all the other gods. But when we see
 Earth blooming with the fragrant flowers of spring,
 Up from that gloom you'll rise, a wondrous thing
 To gods and men. What trick did Hades play
 Upon you when he spirited you away?" 460
 Then fair Persephone replied to her:
 "Mother, I'll tell you all. The messenger,
 Aid-giving, swift Hermes was sent to me
 By Zeus, my sire, and each divinity
 To bring me back to earth from Erebus
 That you might feast your eyes on me and thus
 Cease your dread wrath against the gods. Why, I
 At once leapt up in joy. But by and by
 He placed inside my mouth clandestinely

A sweet pomegranate seed, thus forcing me 470
 To taste it. I will tell you, blow by blow,
 How Hades took me to the depths below
 Through Zeus's clever plan. In a fair lea
 We were cavorting – there was Leucippe,
 Phaino, Electra, Ianthe, Melite,
 Rhodeia, Iache, Calirrhoë,
 Melobosis, Tyche and Acaste,
 Chryseis, Ianeira, Admete.
 Also there were gathering blooms with me 480
 Rhodope, Plouto, Calypso the Fair,
 Styx, also, and Urania were there,
 The beauty Galaxaura, Pallas, too,
 Who rouses battles, and Admetus, who
 Delights in arrows. We were gathering
 Sweet blooms - soft crocuses, all mingling
 With iris, hyacinth, rose, lily – o
 Such sights! – narcissus, too (these flowers grow
 On the wide earth like crocuses). With glee
 I picked them all. The earth, though, suddenly 490
 Parted beneath me. Up leapt the strong lord,
 The Host of Many, bundled me aboard
 His golden car and then against my will
 Took me beneath the earth. My cry was shrill.
 All this is true, although it hurts to say
 These words.” Then with one heart all through the day
 They cheered each other's souls with many a kiss,
 Which brought relief as back and forth some bliss
 They gave and took. Then bright-eyed Hecate
 Approached them both, embracing frequently 500
 Demeter's holy child and from then on
 Queen Hecate was her companion
 And minister. Then Zeus, Loud-Thunderer,
 All-Seeing, sent to them a messenger,
 The well-tressed Rhea, so that she might bring
 Dark-robed Demeter to the gathering
 Of gods, and honours of her choice he swore
 That they would give , agreeing furthermore
 That one-third of the circling year she'd live
 In gloom and darkness while the rest he'd give 510
 To her that with her mother she might stay
 And the other gods. She did not disobey
 The bidding of Lord Zeus but speedily
 Flew down from high Olympus' promontory
 On to the plain of Rharus, whose terrain
 Was once corn-rich but now produced no grain,

Quite leafless, for the white fruit was concealed
By trim-ankled Demeter. Time revealed,
However, long and waving ears of grain
When spring burst out and on the ground they'd gain 520
Rich furrows full of corn. With others bound
In sheaves already, there, upon this ground
She landed first out of the desert air,
And they rejoiced to see each other there.
The rich-tressed Rhea said: "Zeus calls to you -
Loud -Thunderer, All-Seeing. Come, child, do,
And join the other gods. Zeus also swore
Whatever rites you wish and, furthermore,
That one-third of the circling year you'll live
In gloom and darkness while the rest he'll give 530
To you that with your mother you may stay
And *all* the gods. That's what she heard her say
To her and after Zeus's words were said,
In token of his oath he bowed his head.
Obey, child, don't be wrathful endlessly
With Zeus of the Dark Clouds, but instantly
Increase the grain that offers life to men."
That's what she said. Well-wreathed Demeter then
Obeyed and on the rich lands caused their fruits
To spring and with all kinds of blooms and shoots 540
The wide earth groaned. She showed Triptolemus
And Diocles, horse-driver, Eumolpus
The mighty and Celeus, who rules his nation,
Those justice-dealing kings, the operation
Of all her rites and taught her mysteries
(None may transgress or learn or utter these,
For great awe for the gods restrains one's voice).
Those who have seen these mysteries rejoice.
No such bliss comes to those who take no part
In them, however, once they must depart 550
Into the gloom below. When all was taught
To them by the divine goddess, they sought
Olympus and the other gods. There they,
Those holy and revered goddesses, stay
With Zeus the Thunderer. Happy is he
Whom they both freely love. Immediately
To Zeus' great house they sent the god Plutus,
Who gives to mortals opulence. To us,
O queen of sweet Eleusis and the isle
Of Paros and the rock-strewn Antron, smile, 560
Gift-giver, season-bringer, Deo, fair
Persephone as well, and for my air

Grant me delightful substance. You I'll tell
Of in my song – another song as well.

III - TO DELIAN APOLLO

Apollo, the Far-Shooter, I'll recall,
Whom all gods tremble at as through the hall
Of Zeus he goes, and from their seats they spring
As he draws near, his bright bow lengthening.
Leto alone by Thunderer Zeus will stay,
Unstring his bow and put his darts away.
From his broad frame she takes the archery
In hand and on a golden hanger she
Drapes it against a pillar in the halls
Where Zeus, her father, lives, and then she falls 10
To guiding him to sit. Then Father Zeus
Greets his dear son and gives him nectar-juice
In a gold cup. The other gods then place
Him on a seat there. Full of queenly grace,
Leto rejoices in her son's great might
And skill in archery. Blest one, delight
In both your glorious children – Artemis
The huntress and the Lord Apollo, this
In rocky Delos, in Ortygia that.
You bore Apollo as you rested at 20
The lengthy Cynthian hill, hard by a tree
Of palm at Inopus' streams. How shall I be
Your bard when you're so fit in every way
To be extolled? For every form of lay
Is yours, on isles and on the rocky mainland where
Calves graze. All mountain-peaks high in the air
And lofty headlands, streams that to the sea
Flow out, shores, ports, all give you jollity.
Shall I sing of how Leto gave you birth,
A source of joy to every man on earth, 30
As she took rest upon that rocky isle
Of Delos on Mt. Cynthus. All this while
Dark waves on either side drive to the strand,
Pressed by shrill winds, whence you assumed command
Over all men. To Crete and Athens town,
Aegina and Euboea whose renown
Is in her ships, Aegae, Peiresiae
And Peparethos, with the sea nearby,
Athos and Pelion's towering heights, Samos,

Ida's dark hills, Phocaea and Scyros, 40
 Autocane's high slope, Imbros, so fair,
 Scorched Lemnos, wealthy Lesbos (who lives there
 But Macar, son of Aeolus?), and Chios,
 The wealthiest of the islands, and Claros,
 Which gleams, and craggy Mimas, Corycos
 With her high hills and water-fed Samos,
 Aesagea's steep slope and Mycale
 With her sheer heights, Miletos, Cos, where be
 The Meropoi, steep Cnidos, Carpathos
 That's racked by winds, and Paros and Naxos 50
 And rocky Rhenaea – thus to and fro,
 Heavy with the Far-Shooter, did Leto
 Wander to see if one would house her son.
 They trembled, though, in fear and not a one –
 No, not the richest - would take him. At last
 Queen Leto to the isle of Delos passed
 And asked in winged words: "If you will take
 My son, Phoebus Apollo, and will make
 A rich shrine for him, Delos, you'll find out
 None else will touch you; though I have no doubt 60
 You won't be rich in oxen or in sheep
 Or harvest wine, nor will your earth be deep
 In plants, yet if a temple should stand here
 For the Far-Shooter, men from far and near
 Shall bring you hecatombs and you shall smell
 Their constant savour and those folk who dwell
 On you shall be fed by an alien hand,
 For truly you are not a fecund land."
 That's what she said, and Delos in delight
 Answered: "Famed daughter of that man of might, 70
 Coeus, I'll take your son, for it is true
 Men don't speak highly of me. But through you
 I'll be renowned. What's said, though, I confess
 I fear – that he'll be full of haughtiness
 And lord it over all the gods and men
 Upon the fruitful earth. I'm fearful, then,
 That he, as soon as you have given birth,
 Because I have a hard and rocky earth,
 Will scorn and stamp me down into the sea
 And the great ocean everlastingly 80
 Will surge above me, and then he will go
 To somewhere else that pleases him, and so
 Will make his shrine and thickets. As for me,
 For many-footed creatures of the sea
 And black seals I shall be their domicile,

Quite undisturbed, because I am an isle
 That lacks folk. But, goddess, if you dare swear
 A solemn oath, he'll build on me a fair
 Temple, an oracle for men, he then
 May build his shrines and groves for other men 90
 Elsewhere, for he'll be much renowned." That's how
 She answered. Then a solemn, godly vow
 Made Leto: "Hear this, Earth and broad, broad Sky
 And Styx's dropping streams below (for I
 Now swear the mightiest oath that there can be
 Among the gods) – a fragrant sanctuary
 Shall Phoebus have here, and you will have fame
 Above all folk." To the oath's end she came.
 At the Far-Shooter's birth great ecstasy
 Struck Delos. In unwonted misery 100
 Did Leto groan nine days and nights to bear
 Apollo. All the goddesses were there
 Who were the chiefest – Rhea, Dione,
 Ichnaea, Themis and Amphitrite,
 Who groans aloud – yes, every goddess, all
 Save white-armed Hera, who sat in the hall
 Of Zeus, Cloud-Gatherer. Only one goddess,
 She of sore childbirth, knew not the distress
 Of Leto, for on high Olympus she
 Sat under gold clouds, by the subtlety 110
 Of white-armed Hera tricked. She kept her there
 Through envy – well-tressed Leto was to bear
 A great and faultless son. The goddess, though,
 Sent Iris from this well-set island so
 She might bring Eilithyia, promising
 A massive necklace bound with many a string
 Of golden threads, nine cubits long, and they
 Bade Iris move Eilithyia away
 From white-armed Hera lest she should persuade
 Her back. Then Iris, swift as winds, who'd paid 120
 Attention to her, ran and soon the space
 Between was covered and she reached the place
 On high Olympus where the gods reside.
 Immediately she bade to come outside
 The goddess of travail and, wingedly,
 Her words told her what each divinity,
 Each goddess, bade her, and in her great heart
 She was persuaded and saw them depart
 Like shy doves. She of Sore Delivery
 Reached Delos, when Leto in agony 130
 Began to give birth, hankering to bear

Her son. She leant against a palm-tree there
And knelt upon the soft grass, and the ground
Rejoiced beneath her. Phoebus, with a bound,
Now saw the light. The goddesses all cried
Aloud. Great Phoebus, you were purified
With pleasing water, and then you were wrapped
In a fine, new-made garment and then strapped
In a gold band. Gold-bladed Phoebus, though,
Was never to be suckled by Leto; 140
Ambrosia and nectar for the boy
Thetis poured out; Leto was filled with joy
That she had borne a mighty archer-lad.
But, Phoebus, once that heavenly food you'd had,
No golden bands or cords kept you in thrall –
No longer struggling, you loosed them all.
Then to the goddesses immediately
He spoke: 'The lyre and the bow by me
Shall be esteemed. To men I shall declare
Zeus's unfailing will.'" Then here and there 150
The long-haired Phoebus, the Far-Shooter, went
Upon the wide earth, and astonishment
Struck all the goddesses. All Delos shone
With gold from that time, as we see upon
A mountain-top wild blooms. Far-Shooter, Lord,
You walked on craggy Cynthus or abroad
You wandered in the islands. Wooded brush
And shrines you have a-plenty. Streams that gush
To sea, high crags and lofty mountains, too –
All these are dear to you. But, Phoebus, you 160
Most joy in Delos, for across the seas
Long-robed Ionians come with obsequies
To you with their shy wives and children. They
With boxing, dancing, singing make you gay
Each time they gather. You might well believe
Them ageless and godlike should you perceive
Them then. You'd see their graces and you'd stare
At them and their well-girded wives and their
Swift ships and massive wealth. There is, beside,
A wondrous thing that never will subside - 170
The girls of Delos, maidens who attend
To the Far-Shooter; praise to him they send,
And then to Leto and to Artemis,
She who delights in arrows; after this
They sing of their forebears and fascinate
The tribes of men, and they can imitate
The tongues of all men and their clattering speech.

Their sweet songs are so close to truth that each
 Would say that he was singing. Phoebus, you
 With Artemis protect us, and adieu 180
 You maidens, and remember me when some
 Outsider who has suffered much should come
 And ask, "O maidens, of those who come here,
 Who sings most sweetly and gives the most cheer
 To you?" With one voice, answer, "He is blind
 And dwells in rocky Chios. You will find
 His songs will ever be supreme, and I
 Shall carry his renown wherever lie
 Well-settled towns I visit, and they, too,
 Will credit what I say, for it is true. 190
 And all my praises never will be done
 For the Far-Shooter, rich-tressed Leto's son.

[TO PYTHIAN APOLLO]

Lycia and lovely Maeonia, o lord,
 And the delightful town on the seaboard,
 Miletus – these are yours. But you hold sway
 Yourself on sea-girt Delos. But his way
 To rocky Pytho famous Phoebus made,
 Queen Leto's son, and on his lyre played,
 In holy, scented garments clothed, and when
 His lyre felt the golden plectrum, then 200
 The sound was sweet indeed. Them, swift as thought,
 He went up to Olympus, where he sought
 Zeus and the other gods. Immediately
 The deathless gods bore only melody
 And song in mind. Their voices answering
 Each other, all the Muses sweetly sing
 Of the unending gifts divinities
 Enjoy and of all mortals' miseries
 At the gods' hands – they're witless, hapless, they
 Cannot cheat death nor can they find a way 210
 To dodge old age. The Graces, with their hair
 So richly-coiffed, the cheerful Seasons there
 Danced with Harmonia and with Hebe
 And Aphrodite, Zeus's progeny,
 Holding each other's wrists. Among them, one
 Not mean nor small but tall to look upon
 And lovely, sang – Apollo's sister, she
 Who joys in arrows. In this company

Were also sporting Hermes, keen of eye,
 And Ares, while Apollo, stepping high 220
 And fine, played on his lyre. All around
 His radiance shone, his gleaming feet would bound,
 His close-weave vest aglow. Felicity
 Filled gold-tressed Leto and wise Zeus to see
 Among the gods their dear son as he played
 The lyre. How, then, shall I, for one who's made
 So apt in theme for song, sing of you? Well,
 Shall I sing of the lover? Shall I tell
 Of when you wooed the daughter of Azan
 When you had by your side that godlike man, 230
 Ioschys, whose father was Elatius,
 The horseman, or the wife of Leucippus,
 Or Leucippus himself, or Phorbas who
 Was Triops' son – he on his chariot, you
 On foot (although he did not lack the art
 Of Triops). Shall I sing how at the start
 Throughout the earth you wandered all around
 That you might set some consecrated ground,
 An oracle for men? First from on high
 You sought Pieria, and you passed by 240
 Sandy Lectus, Enienae, then went through
 The land of the Perrhaebi, and then you
 Came to Iolcus and then placed your feet
 Upon Cenaeum, famous for its fleet
 Of ships, set in Euboea. Then you stood
 On the Lelantine plain – it was not good,
 You thought, though, for a shrine and groves. Phoebus,
 Far-Shooter, then you crossed the Euripus,
 Climbed the green, holy hills to Mycalessus
 And then on to the grasses of Teumessus 250
 And wood-clad Thebe, for that holy spot
 Had yet no mortals nor yet had it got
 Pathways across its grain-filled plain. Then you
 Came to Orchestus where a bright grove grew
 In honour of Poseidon. It was there
 That a new-broken colt, compelled to bear
 The trim car at its back, can convalesce.
 The charioteer is skilful – nonetheless
 He leaps down to the ground; the empty car
 The horses rattle, guideless as they are. 260
 If in the woody grove the horses split
 The car, the men tend to them but tilt it
 And leave it there. The rite was ever so.
 They pray to the shrine's lord; the chariot, though,

Falls to the god's lot. You went further still,
 Far-Shooter, coming to the meadow's rill
 Of Cephissus, whose water, sweetly flowing,
 Pours forth from Lilaea. You crossed it, going
 Past many-towered Ocalea, you who
 Works from a long way off, and then came to 270
 The grassy Haliartus. Then your aim
 Was going to Telphusa, and this same
 Seemed sweetly fit for shrine and grove. He went
 Close to her, saying: "It is my intent
 To build a glorious temple here to be
 An oracle for all mortality,
 Telphusa. Perfect hecatombs they'll bear
 And bring to me, all those who have a care
 To seek an oracle, those who reside
 In rich Peloponnesus, those who bide 280
 In Europe and upon the isles, and I
 Will give to all honest advice in my
 Rich temple." Speaking thus, Apollo laid
 All the foundations out and these he made
 Both wide and very long. But when she'd seen
 All this, Telphusa's heart was full of spleen.
 She said: "A word, Far-Worker, in your ear,
 Since a fair temple you plan to build here,
 An oracle for men who'll bring to you
 Their perfect hecatombs. Now listen, do, 290
 And lay it to you heart – the trampling
 Of rapid horses and mules watering
 Here at my sacred spring will irk you. Men
 Will rather wish to see fine chariots than
 And stamping rapid horses than to see
 Your massive shrine and the great quantity
 Of treasures in it. Hear, then, what I say –
 You are much mightier than I – I pray,
 At Crisa build your temple, just below
 The glades that lie in Parnassus; there no 300
 Bright chariots will clash nor any steed
 Near your fine altar at a rapid speed.
 No, glorious tribes of mortal men will leave
 Gifts to you as 'Hail-Healer'; you'll receive
 Rich sacrifices which will please you well
 From those who round about these regions dwell.
 Thus she got the Far-Shooter to agree
 That she should have renown there, and not he.
 Further you went, Apollo, coming then
 To where the Phlegyae dwell, presumptuous men, 310

By the Cephisian lake in a fair glade,
Taking no note of Zeus. You quickly made
Your way to Crisa then, which lies below
The mountain of Parnassus, white with snow,
A foothill facing west – above, a bluff
Hangs over it, beneath, a valley, rough
And hollow. Lord Phoebus Apollo planned
To build his lovely temple on this land.
He said: “I’ll build my lovely temple here,
An oracle for men, who will come near 320
With perfect hecatombs, those who reside
In rich Peloponnesus or abide
In Europe and upon the isles, and I
Will give to all honest advice in my
Rich temple.” Speaking thus, Apollo laid
All the foundations out and these he made
Both wide and very long. Trephonius
And Agamedes, sons of Erginus,
Dear to the gods, laid down a pediment
Of stone on them, and countless different 330
Tribes built the shrine with polished stones to be
Sung evermore. In this vicinity
Was a sweet spring, where with his mighty bow
The lord Apollo, son of Zeus, laid low
The bloated, great she-dragon who wrought deep
Distress upon the men and their lean sheep –
A bloody torment. She of the gold throne,
Hera, once gave her fierce, fell Typhaon,
Whom she brought up to be a plague to men.
Hera had borne him, being angry then 340
With Father Zeus when he bore in his head
Glorious Athena. Queenly Hera said
In anger to the gods who had amassed:
“Hear me! Cloud-Gathering Father Zeus has cast
Dishonour on me whom he made his wife,
His faithful wife. For he has given life
To the grey-eyed Athena, far from me
(She is the paramount divinity).
My son Hephaestus, though, is frail and lame
Among the gods, which causes me great shame. 350
I picked him up and into the wide sea
I cast the lad. But Nereus’ progeny,
Silver-shod Thetis, took him in her care
With all her sisters. Oh, if only there
Had been some other service she had done
For the blest gods. Oh, wretched, crafty one,

What will you think up now? How could you bear
Grey-eyed Athena all alone? How dare
You do it? Could not I? For after all
The gods who live on Mount Olympus call 360
Me Zeus's wife. Watch out in case I hatch
Some trick against you that will be a match
To yours. In fact I will! Yes, I'll devise
To bear a child who in Olympian eyes
Will top them all. Nor will I shame our bond
Of holy wedlock. I'll consort, beyond
Our house, with all the gods. I will not lie
With you." She spoke and from the gods on high
She went in anger. Then she smote the land,
Did cow-eyed Hera, with the flat of her hand 370
And prayed: "Earth, Heaven, Titan gods as well,
Who in great Tartarus beneath us dwell
Which spawns both men and gods, listen to me.
Grant me a child, apart from Zeus, and see
He's no less great than Zeus. In fact, consent
That he'll be greater still to the extent
All-seeing Zeus tops Cronus." At that word
She smote the earth with her strong hand and stirred
Life-giving Earth, and this filled her with joy
For she believed that she would bear that boy. 380
For one year wise Zeus' nightly company
She did not seek nor sit, as formerly,
On her carved chair where for her mate she made
Fine plans. No, cow-eyed queenly Hera stayed
Within her temples where so many pray,
Enjoying sacrifices. When each day
And month was over, as the year rolled round,
The seasons now approaching, then she found
She'd borne no mortal nor a god, oh no,
But dreadful, cruel Typhaon, a woe 390
To mortals. Then she gave immediately
This evil to another evil. She
Received it, and he plagued so many men.
Whoever met the dragoness, why, then
He met his doom until the mighty bow
Of the far-shooting Phoebus laid her low.
Gasping for breath, she lay in agony
Upon the earth and writhed about. And she
Let out an awful noise. It filled the air
As in that wood she twisted here and there. 400
Then, breathing out the blood of life, she died.
Phoebus Apollo swaggeringly cried:

“Rot there upon the fecund earth. No more
Will you harm man, who feeds upon the store
The earth provides for them, and hither they’ll
Bring perfect hecatombs. To no avail
Against fell death now will Typhoeus be
Nor the ill-famed Chimaera. We shall see
Black Earth and shimmering Hyperion
Cause you to rot.” Thus he boasted. She was gone 410
Into the dark. Then Helios’ burning eye
Caused her to rot right there, and that is why
They call the place Pytho, whose lord they name
Pythian Apollo, since the piercing flame
Of Helios caused the beast to rot right there.
And then it was that Phoebus was aware
That the sweet spring had duped him. Seeing red,
He then went to Telphusa and he said:
“You did not plan, Telphusa, through deceit 420
To keep this lovely place and pour forth sweet
Waters. To me, not you alone, will cling
Renown.” He spoke and pushed a showering
Of rocks on her and hid her streams, and then
He built an altar in a wooded glen
Hard by the clear stream. All the people there
Offer to ‘the Telphusian’ a prayer
(For thus they call their lord) since he abased
Holy Telphusa’s streams. And now he faced
The problem of electing priests to aid 430
His rites in rocky Pytho. While he made
These plans, he saw upon the wine-dark sea
A swift ship with a goodly company
Of Cretans out of Minyan Knossos (these
Perform rites to their master whose decrees
They promulgate – whatever Phoebus, Lord
Apollo, he who bears a golden sword,
Below Parnassus’ dells gives out when he
Replies to them out of the laurel-tree).
To sandy Pylos they were sailing then 440
In their black ship to trade with Pylian men.
Phoebus Apollo met them then, pouncing
On their swift ship and lay, a loathsome thing
Just like a dolphin. No-one knew this fish
Was Lord Apollo. No, it was their wish
To throw it back. He made the black ship shiver
On every side – the timbers were aquiver.
They sat there in the vessel silently
In fear, nor did they set the topsail free

In their black, hollow ship; their sails they let
Alone in that dark-prowed ship. Once they'd set 450
It firm with oxhide ropes, they sailed away,
Borne by a swift South Wind behind. First they
Passed Malea, then skimmed the Spartan strand
To Taenarum, sea-wreathed, in the land
Of Helios, a friend to men, where graze
Lord Helios's thick-fleeced sheep always
In a sweet land. They wished to dock and check
And see if that great marvel stayed on deck
Or leapt into the fish-filled swelling wave.
The well-constructed ship would not behave, 460
However, under its helm but skimmed straight past
Rich Peloponnese, and, aided by the blast
Of winds, Apollo steered her easily.
She held her course and came to Arene
And lovely Argyrhea and Thryon,
The ford of River Alpheus, then on
To well-built Aepy, sandy Pylos, too,
Past Crumi, Chalcis, Dyme, and straight through
To lovely Elis, where the Epei reign.
She made for Pheras, helped across the main 470
By Zeus's blasts. They spied Mt. Ithaca's height
Beneath the clouds, and then came into sight
Dulichium, Same, wooded Zacynthus.
When they had passed all Peloponnesus,
Crise's great gulf, that cuts off all that land,
Appeared. Then Zeus ordained a mighty and
Clear West Wind, which from heaven boisterously
Gusted that with all speed across the sea
The ship might run. So they set sail once more
Back to the rising dawn, and at the fore 480
Was Lord Apollo. Crisa, then, they reached,
Seen from afar, the land of vines. They beached
Their ship upon the sands. And then their lord,
Phoebus Apollo, the Far-Worker, soared
From off the ship, just like a star that's seen
At noon and many flames with glittering sheen
Flew from him up to heaven. To the shrine
He went through priceless tripods, and the shine
He caused among the flames was great, as he
Showed off his arrows, and a radiancy 490
Filled Crisa. This deed raised a hullabaloo
From all the wives – and well-bound daughters, too –
Of Crisa, for they all were much afraid.
Then, swift as thought, back to the ship he made

His winged way. A youth, robust and strong,
 He seemed to be, his hair cascading long
 On his broad shoulders. He said wingedly:
 “Strangers, who are you? Whence across the sea
 Have you sailed? Are you traders? Do you roam,
 Perhaps, at random, pirates on the foam, 500
 Risking your lives and bringing injury
 To foreign folk? Why in timidity
 Do you rest here, not venturing to go
 Ashore nor on your black vessel to stow
 Your gear? That is industrious people’s way
 When after their black ship is anchored, they,
 Fatigued with labour, yearn for food.” This said,
 He gave them courage, and the man who led
 The Cretans answered: “Since you seem to be,
 In shape and kind, not of mortality, 510
 But an immortal god, to you all hail!
 May you be blest and may the gods not fail
 To give you cheer. That I may understand
 Completely, tell me truthfully: What land,
 What country is this? Who lives here? For we,
 With other things in mind, crossed the great sea
 From Crete to Pylos (we’re a Cretan race).
 In all unwillingness we reached this place
 On quite another journey, and for home
 We long. Some god brought us across the foam. 520
 Apollo, the Far-Worker, then replied:
 “Stranger, though in past time did you reside
 In wooded Cnossos, you shall not go back
 To your dear city; you will ever lack
 Your fair house, wife and children. Instead, here
 You’ll keep my rich shrine which is held most dear
 By many men. I am the progeny
 Of Zeus – Apollo. Over the wide sea
 I’ve brought you, wishing you no harm. You’ll know
 The plans of all the gods, who’ll make it so 530
 That you’ll be honoured always every day.
 Come now and with all speed do as I say.
 First loose the sheets and lower the sail, then tow
 Your speedy ship up onto land; unstow
 Your goods and all your fair ship’s gear, then raise
 An altar on the beach and offer praise
 Around a fire and offer white meal to me
 All round the altar. From the hazy sea
 I leapt upon your swift ship, and therefore
 Pray to me as Delphinus; furthermore 540

The altar shall be called 'Delphinus', too,
Forever and 'Offering a splendid view'.
By your swift, dark ship cook a meal, and then
Make offering to the Olympian gods, and when
You no more crave sweet food, then come with me
And sing the hymn 'Hail, Healer' till we see
Where my rich temple stands to be your care."
They harkened and obeyed him. Then and there
They loosed the sheets and lowered the sail; that done,
They let the mast down by the ropes upon 550
The mast-head. Then they landed on the strand
And drew their swift ship high upon the sand
And fixed stays under her. And then they made
An altar on the beach and, after, prayed
Around a fire and offered white meal, as he
Had ordered them, in all solemnity,
By their swift, dark ship cooked a meal, and then
Made offering to the Olympian gods, and when
They no more craved sweet food, they left the strand,
Led by the lord Apollo, in his hand 560
A lyre. Stepping high and proud, he played
A sweet air, while the Cretans also made
Their way to Pytho, dancing to the beat
Of their own paeon as the men of Crete
Perform it, filled with a sweet melody
Sent by the Muse. The ridge unwearily
They reached, then saw Parnassus and the place,
That sweet place, where they'd dwell, receiving grace
From many men. The holy sanctum then
He showed them, and the rich shrine. In those men 570
Their hearts were stirred, and then their master said:
"Since from our friends and country we've been led
By you, lord - so it pleased you - how shall we
Now live? That would we know. Here do we see
No vineyards, pastures, nothing else that can
Help us to thrive and serve our fellow-man."
Apollo smiled and said: "You'd like to be
Oppressed by cares, hard toil and poverty,
You foolish wretches! Listen, I will say
One little thing - although you all will slay 580
These sheep with knives continually, yet still
You will have endless plenteousness that will
Be brought to me by glorious tribes. So mind
My shrine and entertain all of mankind
That gathers here and show my will to all.
Be righteous, and if anyone should fall

From compliance or shun me or, maybe,
Utter a word or act unthinkingly
Or show conceit, as men will, other men
Shall be your masters and forever then 590
Shall you be in their power. Now you know
It all – remember it.” So farewell, o
You son of Zeus and Leto. You I’ll tell
Of in my song – another song as well.

IV - TO HERMES

The son of Zeus and Maia, Hermes, sing,
O Muse, lord of Arcadia, burgeoning
With flocks, and of Cyllene, who brings glee,
The herald of the gods and progeny
Of Zeus and rich-tressed Maia, a shy
Goddess who passed her fellow-deities by
And dwelt in a dark cave, and it was there
One night she lay with Zeus – and unaware
Of what they did were all the gods and men –
While white-armed Hera sweetly slept, and when 10
Great Zeus’s deed was done and up on high
The tenth moon was established in the sky,
She was delivered and a deed was done
Of great import: she bore a cunning son,
Gifted, a thief, a cattle-driver too,
A watcher at the gates by night, one who
Brings dreams and will among the gods display
Great deeds. Though born at dawn, yet at midday
He played the lyre and when nightfall had come,
He stole Apollo’s cattle (the month’s sum 20
Of days was four); once from the womb he’d leapt,
Within his holy cradle nothing kept
Him long. He left his high cave in one bound
And in his search an endless joy he found
In a tortoise, which he first made fit for song.
He came upon it waddling along
Before the courtyard portals as it fed
On the rich grass. He laughed out loud and said:
“A wondrous sign of luck so soon for me!
I will not slight it. Hail, in ecstasy 30
I greet you, lovely beater of the ground,
Companion at the feast. Where have you found
This spangled shell, this plaything – you who dwell

Up in the mountains? Since you'll serve me well,
 I'll take you home and bring you no disgrace.
 First you must help me, though. A better place
 Is home – outdoors is harmful. You shall be
 A spell against malicious sorcery.
 You'll sing most sweetly, though, when you are dead.”
 He gathered up the tortoise as he said 40
 These words and took his fine toy home with him.
 With a grey iron ladle every limb
 Of this peak-living beast he lopped away.
 As swift thought comes to those around whom play
 Uneasy, thronging cares, as from the gaze
 Of someone's eyes resplendent glances blaze,
 Famed Hermes made his plans for word and deed
 Immediately. He measured stalks of reed
 Which he had cut and then he fixed each one
 Across its back and through its shell. This done. 50
 He stretched an ox-hide very skilfully
 Across it, put the horns on, too, then he
 Fit bridges on the horns in, too, and then
 Stretched seven strings made out of sheep-gut. When
 He had done that, he tested every string
 With the plectrum as he held the lovely thing.
 It sounded wondrously beneath his hand
 While he sang sweetly, as a youthful band
 Swaps taunts at festivals. He sang an air
 Of Zeus and well-shod Maia, how that pair 60
 Chatted while they made love, and he related
 The tale of his famed birth and celebrated
 The nymph's handmaids and her bright home and all
 The tripods and the cauldrons at her hall.
 Meanwhile, with other matters he was faced.
 He took the hollow lyre which he placed
 Inside his holy cradle. Now he yearned
 For meat and with sheer trickery he burned
 As he sprang from the fragrant hall and went
 To a lookout – on such deeds are rascals bent 70
 In dead of night. The sun beneath the land
 Was setting in the west with horses and
 Their chariot. Hermes now came at a run
 To the Pierian peaks that lack the sun,
 Where the gods' deathless cattle have their stead
 And on unmown and pleasant grass are fed.
 And then the son of Maia, he who slew
 Argos, took fifty beasts that loudly moo
 From the herd and drove them all a-straggling

Across a sandy spot while swivelling 80
 Their hoof-prints round. It was a clever scheme
 To turn them in that way that they might seem
 Not what they were, while he walked normally.
 With wickerwork he fastened by the sea
 Wonderful sandals, quite remarkable,
 Before unheard-of, unimaginable,
 With myrrh-twigs and with tamarisks mixed. Fresh wood
 He fastened and attached them – well and good- ,
 The leaves and all, beneath his feet. Behold,
 A pair of lightweight sandals. As I told
 You, this was in Pieria when he
 Prepared to leave upon his odyssey 90
 In his unique way. An old greybeard, though,
 Tilling his flowering vineyard, saw him go
 Speeding towards the plain as he went through
 Grassy Onchestus. “Well, old fellow, who
 Are digging with bowed shoulders, “ famed Hermes
 Said, “you’ll have plenteous wine when all of these
 Vines bear fruit. So remember not to see
 What you in fact have seen, and similarly
 Be deaf to what you’ve heard and do not say
 A word – you’ll not be harmed in any way. 100
 At this, he sped his sturdy cattle on.
 Through many shadowy mountains had they gone,
 Echoing gorges, flowering plains, with night,
 His holy friend, near over, and daylight,
 That urges folk to labour, almost nigh,
 When Pallas’ child Selene up on high
 Climbed to the look-out, shining radiantly,
 Then to the Alpheius Zeus’ strong progeny
 Drove Phoebus’ wide-faced cattle and, still spry,
 They reached the byres where the roofs loomed very high 110
 And troughs before the splendid field, and when
 He’d fed the loudly-lowing cattle, then
 He drove them close-packed to the byre while they
 On moist sedge and on lotus chewed away.
 He heaped a pile of wood and started out
 To seek the art of fire. He took a stout
 Bay-branch and trimmed it with a knife which he
 Clutched tightly in his hand, and torridly
 The smoke rose up. For fire he formulated
 And fire-sticks. Next he accumulated 120
 Many dried sticks and laid them thick and tight
 In a sunken trench and with a fiery light
 A flame began to glow and when the force

Of famed Hephaestus took its blazing course
He dragged two horned and lowing cows along
Close to the fire – for he too was strong –
And threw them panting on their backs and, when
He'd rolled them to their sides, their life force then
He pierced. Then, slice by slice, the meat he slit,
The rich and fattened meat, then on a spit 130
Of wood the flesh he roasted and the dark
Blood of the innards and the chine, the mark
Of honour; on a rugged rock each hide
He spread and even now through time and tide
They still are there and evermore shall be.
Then Hermes took the rich meat joyfully
And placed it on a stone both smooth and flat
And split it into twelve by lot. At that,
Each slice would bring much honour to each one
Who tasted it. Now Zeus's famous son 140
Longed for the holy meat. Its sweet smell made
Him dreary, though a god, but he was stayed
By his proud heart, but he put it all by,
The fat and flesh, in the byre, whose roof was high
And quietly placed it high so all might see
His youthful theft. Dry sticks accordingly
He gathered and then threw into the flame
The heads and hooves. When to the end he came
Of all these deeds, his sandals then he cast
In the deep river Alpheius and passed 150
The night in quenching embers and with sand
He spread the black ash, while upon the land
Selene brightly shone. At break of day
To Cyllene's bright crests he went straightaway.
And there was neither god nor man – not one –
Met him as on he trekked, and no dogs – none –
Let out a bark. Then luck-bringing Hermes,
The son of Zeus, just like a misty breeze
In fall, passed through the keyhole of the hall
Straight to the rich shrine and no noise at all 160
He made then went to his cradle hurriedly
And donned his baby-clothes so he might be
Just like a babe himself and then he played
With the sheet about his knees; yet he had laid
At his left hand his sweet lyre. And yet he
Was noticed by his goddess mother. She
Said: "Oh you rogue, whence have you come at night,
Wrapped in your shamelessness? With cords drawn tight
Round you shall Phoebus – such is my belief –

Eject you or you'll live life as a thief 170
 Out in the glens. Go! You were spawned to be
 A bane to men and gods." Then craftily
 He answered: "Why attempt to make me start,
 Mother? I'm not a helpless babe whose heart
 Knows little wrong and fears his mother may
 Rebuke him. I'll continue to essay
 What plan is best and feed continually
 The two of us. I'm not prepared to be
 A resident here, as you advise, and bear
 The shame of not receiving gifts or prayer. 180
 Better to live among the gods always,
 Wealthy in everything, than spend my days
 In gloomy caves, and as for honour, why,
 If Zeus will not allow me them, I'll be
 The prince of thieves – I've the ability.
 If I'm sought out by Leto's glorious son,
 I think that he'll regret what he has done.
 Into Pytho's great house I plan to break
 And from it I will splendid tripods take 190
 And gold and cauldrons, in great number, too,
 And much bright iron and apparel. All this you
 May see." That's what they said, each to the other,
 Hermes the son of Zeus and his royal mother,
 Maia. When early Dawn brought light to men
 From the deep-flowing Oceanus, then
 Phoebus Apollo came to Onchestus,
 The holy, sweet grove of Gaieochus,
 The roaring Lord of Earth and there he found
 An old man who along the trodden ground 200
 From the courtyard fence his beast was pasturing.
 The glorious Hermes said the following:
 "Old man, who weed the grassy land, I came
 Out of Pieria with just one aim -
 Cattle, all cows, with curving horns – I own
 Them all. The pitch-black bull grazed all alone.
 Four fierce-eyed hounds, though, shadowed them like men,
 All of one mind. The dogs and bull were then
 All left behind – surprisingly. And yet
 The cows left the sweet pasture at sunset. 210
 Tell me, have you seen someone passing by
 Behind these cows? The old man answered: "Why,
 My friend, it's hard to tell all one can see.
 So many pass through this locality,
 Some bent on bad, some good. It's hard to know
 Each one. While digging in my vineyard, though,

Till sunset, I believe, sir, that I spied
Some child or other walking side to side
Behind some long-haired beasts and carrying
A stick – though I’m not sure – and piloting 220
Them backwards, facing them.” That’s what he said,
And at his words Apollo faster sped
Upon his way. He noticed presently
A long-winged bird and knew the progeny
Of Zeus had stolen them. So then with speed
He went to splendid Pylos in his need
To find the shambling beasts, while all around
His massive shoulders a dark cloud was bound.
Apollo marked his footsteps, saying: “Oh,
This is a wondrous marvel; for, although 230
The straight-horned oxen made these tracks, they lead –
Or seem to do – back to the flowery mead.
No man nor woman, no grey wolf nor bear
Nor lion made the tracks that I see there,
Nor shaggy Centaur either, I suppose,
Whoever made such monstrous tracks as those
So swiftly. For on this side of the way
They are amazing – even more are they
Upon the other. When this he had said,
He to well-forested Cyllene sped 240
And the deep, rocky cave, beset with shade,
Where Zeus was born unto the holy maid.
The lovely hill smelled sweetly and a flock
Of sleek sheep grazed and he that dusky rock
Instantly entered. Hermes, when he knew
Apollo’s anger, snuggled down into
His fragrant swaddling-clothes. As ash will screen
Tree-stumps’ deep embers, Hermes, once he’d seen
Apollo, huddled, heads, hands, feet squeezed tight
(Just as a new-born seeking sweet sleep might), 250
Though wide awake. His lyre he kept below
His armpit. Phoebus recognized him, though,
And Maia, too, the lovely mountain-maid,
Although he was so craftily arrayed
And but a babe. Through that great cavity
He peered in every nook; with a bright key
He opened up three closets well-supplied
With nectar and ambrosia beside
Much gold and silver, Maia’s garments, too,
Some purple and some silver, such as you 260
Might see among the blessed gods. then he
Said: ‘Infant, lying in your cot, lest we

Fall out, tell me about my beasts. I'll fling
You into dusky Hell, that harrowing
And hopeless dark. Your parents shall not flee
You as you roam and hold supremacy
But over little folk." Then said Hermes
With cunning: "Phoebus, what harsh words are these?
You want your cows? I've not seen them or heard
A single mention of them, not a word. 270
I cannot help you, cannot claim a prize.
Am I a cattle-lifter in your eyes?
A strong man? No, this isn't my concern.
I care for other things; for sleep I yearn
And mother's milk and blankets and to be
Bathed in warm baths. Let our controversy
Not be reported, for this would astound
The gods - that such an infant would be found
Bringing home beasts. Unseemly! I was born
But yesterday, my soft feet would be torn 280
By rugged ground. Upon my father's head
I'll swear a great oath, if you wish it said,
That I am innocent nor did I see
Who took those cows - whatever cows they be,
For I have only *heard* of them, "he said.
He quickly glanced about and turned his head
This way and that and raised his brows as well
And whistled long as he heard Phoebus tell
His tale as though he lied. Then quietly
Apollo laughed and said: "So virtuously 290
You speak, you cunning rogue, full of deceit.
This night, I think, you've plundered many a seat,
Filching in silence. In the glades up high
You'll badger many a herdsman, coming by
His herds and thick-fleeced sheep in your great thirst
For flesh. Come in now, leave your cot, your cursed
Companion, if you'd not sleep your last sleep.
Among the gods this title shall you keep
Forever - prince of thieves." He grabbed the lad,
But Hermes had a plan: while Phoebus had 300
Him in his hands, he sent up to the sky
A bird, a hard-worked serf that flew on high,
A wretched envoy, and immediately
He sneezed. Apollo threw him down when he
Heard this and, eager though he was to go,
Sat down and mockingly addressed him: "Oh,
Fear not, you swaddled one, I'll find my herd,
My brawny cows, by reason of this bird.

And you shall lead the way.” Immediately
 Hermes sprang up and off. The sheet that he 310
 Had placed around his shoulders he now drew
 Up to his ears and said: “Hey, where are you
 Carrying me? The angriest of all
 The gods are you. Is it these cows that gall
 You so that you harass me thus? Death to
 All cattle! Look, I did not filch from you
 Your cows – whatever they may be – or see
 The culprit. I but heard their history.
 Be just and swear to Zeus.” They argued thus
 In detail, nor was Phoebus tyrannous – 320
 He’d lost his cattle! But duplicity
 Was Hermes’ aim, but when he found that he
 Was matched in this, across the sand he sped
 With Phoebus in his wake, himself ahead.
 They came to sweet Olympus quickly, where
 The scales of justice waited for this pair.
 After the hour of Dawn on her gold seat
 The gods on snowy Olympus came to meet
 In counsel. Then they stood at Zeus’s knees:
 To Phoebus the High-Thunderer’s words were these: 330
 “Whence have you brought this mighty spoil, this tot
 So like a messenger? This is a lot
 For us to think about?” In his reply
 Apollo said: ”Father, the time is nigh
 For you to hear this weighty tale, although
 You chide me for my love of spoil. But lo!
 Here is a child whom, after journeying long,
 I found, a downright plunderer, among
 Cyllene’s hills. Such pert audacity
 Among both gods and men I’ve failed to see – 340
 Though many men deceive. He pirated
 My cattle from their meadow, then he led
 Them west to the shore of the loud-roaring sea
 And straight to Pylos. Like a prodigy
 Of some smart sprite, these traces were twofold.
 The cattle’s tracks, the black dust clearly told,
 Led to the flowery lea. But that strange thing
 That led them seemed to have been travelling,
 Outside the path upon the sandy ground,
 On neither hands nor feet. He must have found 350
 Some other means – in slender oaks maybe.
 The dust showed all these tracks perceptibly.
 After the sandy trek, though, not a trace
 Could be detected on the ground’s hard face.

Into the light. Now Phoebus glanced aside
And in the precipitous rock cowhides he spied
And said to glorious Hermes: “Crafty one,
How could you flay two cows? How was it done
By one new-born? I dread your future strength;
Your growing’s almost at its utmost length.”
With hardy osier cords he tried to bind
His hands. About each other, though, they twined
And grew beneath their feet immediately
And hid the wild beasts through the trickery 410
Of Hermes. Phoebus gaped in great surprise.
Then furtively the Argos-Slayer’s eyes
Bent to the ground and flashed like fire as he
Desired to hide himself. Yet easily
He soothed the son of glorious Leto, stern
Though he yet was. He tried each string in turn
When he took up the lyre and he produced
A sound wondrous to hear and it induced
Phoebus to laugh with joy, and that sweet sound
Of glorious music touched his heart; around 420
His soul a tender longing grew as he
Sat listening. Now, playing beautifully,
Hermes plucked up his nerve and stood nearby
Phoebus’ left side and, as he warbled high,
Began to sing, and lovely was the sound.
Of the deathless gods he sang and of the ground,
Their birth and how the portions came to be
Doled out to each one. First Mnemosyne,
The Muses’ mother, he acclaimed – her due
Was Maia’s son himself. According to 430
Their ages, all the rest he hymned – how they
Were born – as on his arm his lyre lay.
A boundless longing seized Phoebus, and so
With winged words he said to Hermes: “O
Beast-slayer, busy rogue, friend of the feast,
The song you sing’s worth fifty cows at least.
This problem can be settled, I believe,
Amicably. Therefore, please give me leave,
O clever one, to know if this great thing
Was yours from birth or did you learn to sing 440
With some god’s teaching? For it’s marvellous,
This new-sung sound, which I think none of us-
No god nor man – but you has ever known,
You thief. What is this talent that you own?
To take away one’s desperate cares? For here
Are three things one may choose from – love and cheer

And restful sleep. I am a satellite
 Of the Olympian Muses who delight
 In song and dance and in the thrilling cry
 And full-toned chant of flutes. However, I 450
 Have never liked those clever feats before
 One hears at young men's sprees. Now I adore
 Your sound. I marvel at how well you play.
 But sit down, since, though born but yesterday,
 You have such skills. Lend a respectful ear
 To counsel which from your elders you'll hear.
 Among the gods, you, and your mother too,
 Shall have renown. This shall I tell to you
 Directly. By this cornel-shaft, you'll be,
 Among the gods, a leader – dignity 460
 And glorious gifts I'll give you. Nor will I
 Deceive you ever." Hermes, in reply,
 Said craftily: Your questions to me are
 Most careful, o you who work from afar.
 I am not jealous that you want a part
 In my great skill: today I shall impart
 This fact to you. I wish to be a friend
 To you in thought and deed. Now there's an end:
 You know it all. Foremost you sit among
 The deathless gods, and you are good and strong. 470
 Zeus rightly loves you. Splendid presents he's
 Given to you. They say that dignities
 And his decrees and oracles you know
 Of him. I've heard you're rich. Whatever you
 You wish to know, you may. But since to play
 The lyre is your wish, then chant away
 And pluck its strings. Give way to gaiety.
 This is my gift to you. Yet give to me
 Renown, my friend. With this ally who's so
 Clear-voiced within your hands, sing well. You know 480
 The art of balanced utterance. Now bring
 It boldly to rich feasts, to revelling.
 To lovely dances – such festivity
 Both night and day. If someone knowingly
 Should ask about it, by its very sound
 It teaches wondrous things that play around
 The mind. With its humanity and ease
 And feeling, toilsome drudgery it flees.
 But if some fool should query violently,
 It chatters nothing but mere vanity. 490
 You can discover what you please, though. So
 Here is my lyre. For my part, I'll go

And on both plain and hill my beasts I'll feed.
Then, coupling with my bulls, the cows will breed
Heifers and bulls galore. Though you've a bent
For greed, you've no need to be violent
And angry. He held out the instrument.
Apollo took it and, unhesitant,
Proffered to him his whip that shone so bright
And made him keeper of the herds. Delight 500
Caught Hermes as he took it while Apollo
Took up the lyre and placed it in the hollow
Of his left arm and tested every string
With the plectrum one by one. And did it sing
As he so sweetly trilled! Subsequently
They took the herd back to the sacred lea,
Then sped to snowy Olympus once again,
Delighting in the lyre. Wise Zeus then
Was glad and joined those two in amity.
And since that time Hermes continually 510
Loved Phoebus, having given the instrument
To him as token. More than competent
Was he in playing it. But he now found
Another cunning art – the pipes, whose sound
Is heard afar. Phoebus said to him: "Guide
So full of cunning, I am terrified
That you will steal the lyre and the curved bow,
For Zeus has authorized that you shall go
And travel through the fruitful earth to trade
With men. But if a mighty oath you made 520
Among the gods by nodding of your head
Or by the potent waters which the dead
Traverse, you'll please me well and comfort me.
Then Hermes bowed his head in surety
That he'd not steal whatever he possessed
Or near his mighty house. Phoebus professed
His friendship with the lad and vowed he'd love
Not one of those immortals high above
The earth nor any Zeus-born mortals more.
Zeus sent an eagle then, and Phoebus swore: 530
"To all the gods above I shall impart
You as a token that within my heart
You're prized and trusted. I'll give you to hold
A splendid staff of riches made of gold,
Three-branched, which will preserve you and fulfil
All words and actions, so they be not ill.
This do I know from Zeus. The prophecy,
However, noble, heaven-born progeny,

Of which you query, never must be known
By any other god but Zeus alone. 540
As pledge a great and solemn oath I swore
That to no god who lives for evermore
But me shall Zeus his clever plans unfold.
So, brother, you who bear the staff of gold,
Don't bid me tell them. As for mortals, I'll
Harm one and aid another, all the while
Sorely perplexing all humanity.
That man who hears the bird of prophecy
And sees its flight and comes to me shall get
My vocal aid and not be misled. Yet 550
Who trusts in birds that idly chatter and
Wishes, against my will, to understand
More than the gods, his journey's been in vain.
And yet the gifts he brings I shall retain.
I'll tell you something more, lad: there are three
Pure, holy winged sisters whom you'll see
Sprayed with white meal about their heads. They dwell
In their home beneath Parnassus in a dell,
All teachers of the art of prophecy,
Apart from me, an art which occupied me 560
When, as a boy, I followed herds, although
My father paid no heed. They to and fro
Fly, feeding on honeycomb as they induce
The future. When inspired by the juice
Of honey, they'll speak truth. But if denied
The gods' sweet food, they'll tell lies as they glide
About. I give you them. If you enquire
Strictly of them, you'll gain your heart's desire.
If you teach this to someone else, he'll hear
Your answer often, if he wins good cheer. 570
Take these and tend your roving, horned herd,
All steeds and patient mules." That was his word.
And over all the wild beasts that are fed
By the broad earth, he made famed Hermes head –
The grim-eyed lion, the gleaming-tusked boar,
All flocks, all dogs, all sheep and, furthermore,
Made him sole messenger to Hades: though
Hades receives no bounty, even so
He'll give him no mean prize. The progeny
Of Maia thus received great amity 580
From Lord Apollo who augmented then
His gifts with grace – with all the gods and men
He traffics. Though he makes some gains, yet he
Cheats men throughout the night continually.

So farewell, son of Maia. You I'll tell
Of in my song – another song as well.

V - TO APHRODITE

Of golden Aphrodite, Muse, tell me –
That Cyprian goddess who stirs ecstasy
Among the gods, subduing men, as well,
And birds and animals, all those that dwell
On earth and in the sea. They all hold dear
The well-wreathed one's exploits. There are a mere
Three hearts she cannot bend nor yet beguile:
Grey-eyed Athene's one – she'll never smile
At Aphrodite's deeds. Her care is war, 10
The work of Ares, conflict, blood and gore.
She was the first to teach mortals to build
Bronze chariots of battle, and she filled
Soft maids with knowledge of the arts. Also,
The laughter-loving love goddess had no
Ability to tame the dark huntress,
Gold-shafted Artemis, in amorousness,
For she loves slaying beasts and archery,
The lyre, thrilling cries, terpsichory,
Dark groves and just men's cities. Now the chaste 20
Istia is the third to have no taste
For Aphrodite's works (first progeny
Of wily Cronus, and the last, was she
By aegis-bearing Zeus's will) - a queen
Of whom Poseidon and Phoebus had been
Wooers, whom she rejected stubbornly.
She swore a great oath, which would come to be
Fulfilled, by touching Father Zeus's head.
She'd be a virgin evermore, she said.
For this she was given a great reward 30
And lodged inside the house of Zeus, the lord
Of all and got the greatest share, and she
Is praised in all the shrines, the primary
Goddess among all mortals. These are they
That she can't influence in any way.
But Aphrodite cannot be ignored
By other gods or men. Even the lord,
Thunderer Zeus, she leads astray, though he
Is mightiest of all. Easily she
Seduces his wise heart and, at a whim,

With mortal womenfolk enforces him 40
 To couple, although Hera does not know
 Of this (she is his sister and, also,
 His wife) and Hera's the most beautiful
 Of all the goddesses – most glorious
 Child whom with Rhea sly Cronus created.
 With the chaste, modest goddess Zeus then mated,
 The ever-wise one. Zeus, though, this goddess
 For a mortal man imbued with amorousness.
 And she lay with him so that even she
 Might soon know mortal love nor laughingly 50
 Say gods to mortal women she had paired,
 Creating mortal men, while men had shared,
 Through her, goddesses' beds. So she straightway
 Then made Anchises love her who, that day,
 In godlike shape, was tending herds around
 Many-springed Ida's steep hills. When she found
 The man, she loved him passionately. She went
 To Paphos where her altar, sweet with scent,
 And precinct were. She entered there, and tight
 She shut the doors, those doors that shone so bright. 60
 The Graces bathed her with the oil that's seen
 Upon the deathless gods with heavenly sheen,
 Fragrant and sweet. Her rich clothes they arrayed
 Her in, then, swathed in gold, for Troy she made
 With speed high in the air. And thus she came
 To Ida (of the beasts she cannot tame
 She is the mother). To the high retreat
 She came, where, fawning, grey wolves came to meet
 Her – grim-eyed lions and speedy leopards, too, 70
 Hungry for deer and bears. All, two by two,
 Mated among the shadowy haunts. But she
 Came to the well-built leas. And there was he -
 The hero Anchises, some way away
 From others, in the homesteads. One could say
 That he was godlike in his beauty. Though
 The others urged their cattle all to go
 With them to grassy pasturelands, yet he
 Was playing on his lyre thrillingly
 While strolling to and fro. And there she stood
 Before him like a girl in maidenhood, 80
 In height and mien, that she might quell his fright.
 He saw her and he wondered at the sight –
 Her height and mien, her shining clothes. For she
 Had on a robe whose shining brilliancy
 Capped fire, gorgeous, golden and enhanced

With many hues and, like a moon, it glanced
 Over her delicate breasts, a wondrous sight,
 And twisted brooches, earrings shining bright,
 And lovely necklaces were set around
 Her tender throat. Now Eros quickly found 90
 Anchises, who said: "Lady queen, may bliss
 Be on you whether you are Artemis
 Or golden Aphrodite or, maybe,
 Noble Themis or bright-eyed Athene
 Or Leto? Does a Grace, p'raps, come to me?
 (They're called immortal, seen in company
 With gods). Or else a Nymph, who's seen around
 The pleasant woods, or one, perhaps, who's found
 Upon this lovely mountain way up high
 Or in streams' springs or grassy meadows? I 100
 Will build a shrine to you, seen far away
 Upon a peak, and on it I will lay
 In every season some rich offering.
 Be gracious, granting that all men may sing
 Of my prestige in Troy, my progeny
 All strong forever after. As for me,
 May I live long in wealth." Then in reply
 The child of Zeus addressed him and said: "I
 Am no goddess, Anchises, most sublime
 Of earth-born ones. Why do you think that I'm 110
 Immortal? No, a mortal gave me birth.
 My father's Otreus, very well known on earth,
 If you have heard of him. He holds command
 In well-walled Phrygia. I understand
 Your language well. At home have I been bred
 By a Trojan nurse who, in my mother's stead,
 Nurtured me from a child, and that is why
 I know *your* tongue as well. However, I
 Was seized by Hermes, who took me away
 From Artemis's dance. A great array 120
 Of marriageable maids were we as we
 Frolicked together. A great company
 Surrounded us. Thence Hermes snatched me, then
 Guided me over many fields of men,
 Much land that was not harrowed nor possessed,
 Where beasts of prey roamed the dark vales. I guessed
 I'd never touch the earth again. He said
 I'd be the wedded partner of your bed
 And birth great brood. Back to the gods he flew,
 And here I am! I have great need of you. 130
 So by your noble parents (for no-one

Of wretched stock could create such a son)
And Zeus, I beg, take me to wife, who know
Nothing of love, a maiden pure, and show
Me to your parents and your brothers, who
Shall like me well. Then send a herald to
The swift-horsed Phrygians that immediately
My sorrowing folks shall know of this. You'll see
From them much gold and woven stuff and more.
Take these as bride-price, then make ready for 140
A lovely wedding that for gods and men
Shall be immortalized. The goddess then
Put love into his heart. Then Anchises,
Thus stricken, said: "If I can credit these
Words that you say, if you're of mortals bred,
That Otreus fathered you – that's what you said –
And Hermes brought you here that you might be
My wife forever, no-one shall stop me –
No god nor man – from having intercourse
With you right now, not even if perforce 150
Phoebus shot arrows from his silver bow
At me. I'd go into the land below
The earth most gladly once I'd broached your bed,
O godlike lady." That is what he said.
He took her hand. She threw her glance aside,
Her lovely eyes cast down, and slowly hied
To the well-spread bed, which was already made
With delicate coverings. On it were laid
Bearskins and skins of roaring lions he
Had killed in that mountainous territory. 160
In bed, each twisted brooch and each earring
And necklace he removed – each shining thing –
And doffed her girdle and bright clothes and laid
Her on a golden-studded seat, then made
Love to her, man and goddess – destiny
And the gods' will condoned it – although he
Did not know what he did. But at the hour
When oxen and tough sheep back from the flower-
Filled pasture were led home, the goddess blessed
Anchises with sweet sleep but then she dressed 170
Herself in her rich garments. With her head
Reaching the well-hewn roof-tree, by the bed
She stood, and from her cheeks there radiated
Unearthly beauty one associated
With well-wreathed Cytherea. And then she
Roused him and said: "Why sleep so heavily?
Get up, Anchises! Tell me, is my guise

The same to you as when you first laid eyes
 Upon me?" He awoke immediately.

Seeing her neck and lovely eyes, was he 180
 Afraid; he turned his eyes, his cloak concealing
 His comely face. His winged words appealing,
 He said: "When first I looked on you, I knew
 You were a goddess – you did not speak true.
 By aegis-bearing Zeus, I beg, let me
 Not live my life among humanity,
 A palsied thing. Have pity. For a man
 Who lies with goddesses no longer can
 Be sound." She answered him: "O leading light

Of mortals, courage! You've no need of fright. 190
 Nor I nor any god will cause you fear –
 The gods love you. A son who shall be dear
 To you shall over Troy hold sovereignty,
 As shall his offspring in posterity.
 His name shall be Aeneas, for the pain
 Of grief I felt inside because I'd lain
 With a mortal. Yet the people of your race
 Are the most godlike, being fair of face
 And tall. Zeus seized golden-haired Ganymede

Thanks to his beauty, that he might indeed 200
 Pour wine for all the gods and always be
 Among them all – remarkable to see.
 Honoured by all, he from the golden bowl
 Drew the red nectar. Grief, though, filled the soul
 Of Tros, not knowing if a heaven-sent blow
 Had snatched away his darling son, and so
 He mourned day after day unceasingly.
 In pity, Zeus gave him indemnity-
 High-stepping horses such as carry men.

Hermes, the Argos-slaying leader, then, 210
 At Zeus's bidding, told him all – his son
 Would live forever agelessly, atone
 With all the gods. So, when he heard of this
 No longer did he mourn but, filled with bliss,
 On his storm-footed horses joyfully
 He rode away. Tithonus similarly
 Was seized by golden-throned Eos – he, too,
 Was of your race and godlike, just like you.
 She begged dark-clouded Zeus to give consent

That he'd be deathless, too. Zeus granted this. 220
 But thoughtless queenly Eos was amiss,
 Not craving youth so that senility
 Would never burden him and so, though he

Lived happily with Eos far away
On Ocean's streams, at the first signs of grey
Upon his lovely head and noble chin,
She spurned his bed but cherished him within
Her house and gave him lovely clothes to wear,
Food and ambrosia. But when everywhere
Old age oppressed him and his every limb
He could not move, her best resolve for him 230
Was this – to place him in a room and close
The shining doors. An endless babbling rose
Out of his mouth; he had no strength at all
As once he had. I'd not have this befall
Yourself. But if you looked as now you do
Forevermore and everyone called you
My husband, I'd not grieve. But pitiless
Old age will soon enshroud you – such distress
Will burden every mortal – wearying
And deadly, even by the gods a thing 240
Of fear. You've caused great endless infamy
For me among the gods who formerly
Feared all my jibes and wiles with which I mated
The gods with mortal maids and subjugated
Them all. However, no more shall my word
Have force among the gods, since I've incurred
Much madness on myself, dire, full of dread.
My mind has gone astray! I've shared a bed
With a mortal! Underneath my girdle lies
A child! As soon as he has cast his eyes 250
Upon the sun, the mountain Nymphs whose breasts
Are deep, who dwell on those great sacred crests,
Shall rear him. They're not of mortality
Nor immortality; extendedly
They live, eat heavenly food and lightly tread
The dance among the deathless ones and bed
With Hermes and Sileni, hid away
In pleasant caves, and on the very day
That they are born, up from the fruitful earth
Pines and high oaks also display *their* birth, 260
Trees so luxuriant, so very fair,
Called the gods' *sancta*, high up in the air.
No mortal chops them down. When the Fates mark
Them out for death, they wither there, their bark
Shrivelling too, their twigs fall down. As one,
Both Nymph and tree leave the light of the sun.
They'll rear my son. And at his puberty
The goddesses will show you him. Let me

Tell you what I propose – when he is near
His fifth year on this earth, I'll bring him here 270
That you may gaze upon him and enjoy
The sight, for he will be a godlike boy.
Bring him to windy Ilium. If you
Are queried by some mortal as to who
Gave birth to him, then say, as I propose,
It was a flower-like Nymph, one Nymph of those
Who dwell upon that forest-covered crag.
Should you tell all, though, and foolishly brag
That you have lain with rich-crowned Aphrodite,
Then with a smoky bolt will Zeus Almighty 280
Strike you. That's all. Take heed. Do not name me.
Respect the anger of the gods." Then she
Soared up to windy heaven. Queen, farewell.
Your tale is told. I have one more to tell.

VI - TO APHRODITE

Of stately Aphrodite, crowned with gold
And beautiful I'll sing, her whose stronghold
Is well-walled, sea-girt Cyprus, whither she
Was wafted on soft foam across the sea
By the moist West Wind, received with happiness
By the gold-circleted Hours, her heavenly dress
Provided by them, and a diadem
They placed upon her heavenly head – a gem
Of gold, fair and well-wrought. Her ears, which she
Had pierced, they hung with fine-gold jewelry 10
And copper-mountain gems. Her snowy-white
Breasts and her tender neck were decked with bright-
Gold necklaces, which they themselves would wear
When they went to their father's house, for there
They joined the gods in fair terpsichory.
Decked out they took her to the company
Of the gods who warmly greeted her and prayed,
As each one welcomed with his hands the maid,
That she might be his wedded wife, their eyes
Gazing upon the goddess in surprise. 20
O sweetly-winning, coy-eyed goddess, hail!
O grant that in this contest I'll not fail.
Give orders for my song. For you I'll tell
Of in my song – another song as well.

VII - TO DIONYSUS

I'll sing of Dionysus, who's the son
Of glorious Semele, just like someone
In the first flush of youth close by the strand
Of the fruitless sea on a jutting headland,
While all about him waved his rich dark hair,
A purple robe on his strong back. Soon there
Appeared, in a well-decked ship, a company
Of Tyrrhenian pirates on the wine-dark sea.
They saw him, nodded each to each and sprang
Out quickly and their hearts joyfully sang 10
As he was seized, for they believed that he
Was son of heavenly kings and wished to see
Him tightly bound but could not do it. No,
The bonds fell from his hands and feet and lo!
He sat there with his dark eyes smiling. Then
The helmsman, now enlightened, to his men
Said: "Madmen! Who's this god you've taken here
And bound? Even this well-built ship, I fear,
Can't hold him. He is strong! He's Zeus, maybe,
Or else Apollo or Poseidon. He 20
Does not appear to be like mortal men.
No, he's a god, I'm sure. Let's set him, then,
On the dark shore at once, and do not lay
Your hands on him lest, in a rage, he may
Send dangerous winds and heavy squalls." Thus he
Addressed them. But the master tauntingly
Said in reply: "Madman yourself! Go check
The wind. Help hoist the sail. All hands on deck
To catch the sheets! We'll deal with him. I claim 30
That Egypt or else Cyprus is his aim
Or else the Northern Folk or farther yet.
But he will speak out in the end, I bet,
About his friends, wealth, brothers. Destiny
Has thrown him in our way." And, with this, he
Got them to hoist the mast and sail. The blast
Of winds then filled the sail and on the mast
They tautly hauled the sheets on either side.
But strange things happened soon. Both far and wide
Throughout the black ship wine, fragrant and sweet,
Flowed free. A heavenly scent arose. The fleet 40
Of men was all amazed. A vine now spread
On the topsail, while clusters pivoted

Down from it. From the mast dark ivy wound
With flowers blossoming and all around
Rich berries grew. The tholes were garlanded.
They told the helmsman, hearing this, to head
For land. The god, however, now transformed
Into a lion in the bows and stormed
With roaring, then amidships wondrously
He was a shaggy bear, rapaciously 50
Arising. On the deck he made appear
The fiercely glaring lion. Then in fear
The sailors hurried to the stern and pressed
All round about the helmsman, who was blest
With wisdom. Then the master suddenly
Was seized on by the lion. Into the sea
They all leapt, seeing this, and in this way
Escaped the master's wretched fate, but they
Changed into dolphins. In his mercy, though,
Dionysus held the helmsman back, and so 60
He made him truly happy and addressed
Him thus: "Take heed, my friend, for you have been
Blessed by me. I am Dionysus, he
Who loudly shouts, the son of Semele
And Zeus." Farewell, fair Semele's offspring.
Forgetting you, no-one can sweetly sing.

VIII - TO ARES

Mighty Ares, with helmet all of gold,
A charioteer, a shield-bearer, so bold,
Saviour of cities, harnessed in bronze and strong
Of arm, and mighty with the spear, who long
Toils, never tired, father of Victory,
Olympus' champion, accessory
Of Themis, rebels' tyrant, governing
The just, of manliness the sceptred king
Who wound your fiery sphere up in the air
Among the sevenfold starry courses, where 10
In the third firmament you were conveyed
By blazing steeds, hear me, you who give aid
To men, who give us youth, a kindly ray
Shed on my life so that in strength I may
Drive bitter cowardice away and quell
My soul's deceitful impulses. As well,
Restrain my fury, which would make me tread

The ways of bloody strife. Blest one, instead
Grant me kind peace and let me shun the fate
Of strife, the violent fiends of death and hate. 20

IX - TO ARTEMIS

Muse, sing of Artemis, the archer-maid,
Far-Shooter's sister, she with whom she played
When young. Her steeds she waters in Meles,
Thick with deep reeds, where she, preparing these
Through Smyrna swiftly drives her golden car
To viny Claros where, awaiting Far-
Discharging Artemis, armed with his bow
Of silver sits the god Apollo. So,
Hail to all goddesses, but first to you –
Now I've begun I'll sing another, too. 10

X - TO APHRODITE

Of Cyprian Aphrodite I will sing,
Who gives men lovely bounty, shimmering
Delightfully with smiles. Goddess, farewell,
Who in fine Salamis, your kingdom, dwell
And Cyprus. Be my cheerful muse, for you
I will remember – and one more song, too.

XI - TO ATHENE

The guardian of the city I will sing,
Pallas Athene, dread one, revelling
On war, destroying cities and the cries
Of conflict in the battle, and she flies
In aid of all the warriors. Goddess,
Give us good fortune and all happiness!

XII - TO HERA

Golden-throned Hera, Rhea's child, I sing,

The queen of all immortals, bettering
Them all in beauty, both sister and mate
Of Zeus, who thunders loud. We celebrate
You. The immortals make Olympus ring
With awe for you and Zeus, loud-thundering.

XIII - TO DEMETER

I sing the dread goddess with the rich hair,
Demeter, and Persephone the fair,
Her daughter. Guide my song and do not fail
To keep secure the city. Goddess, hail.

XIV - TO THE MOTHER OF THE GODS

The mother of all gods and men, pray, sing,
Clear-voiced Muse – she’s the child of Zeus the king.
Rattles, timbrels and flutes are her delight,
The cry of wolves and lions with eyes so bright,
Echoing mountains, wooded dells. To you
O sing “Hail” and to other goddesses, too.

XV - TO HERACLES THE LION-HEARTED

Of Heracles, the strongest man on earth,
I’ll sing. In Thebes Alcmena gave him birth –
The city of lovely dances – when she lay
With dusky-clouded Zeus. Once, many a day,
He roamed through countless lands and on the sea
At King Eurystheus’ bidding. Violently
He acted, suffering much. In joy and fame
He lives now on Olympus. To him came
Neat-ankled Hebe who would be his wife.
Lord, give me wealth and fortune all my life.

10

XVI - TO ASCLEPIUS

Asclepius the healer I begin

To sing, son of Apollo. It was in
The Dotian plain where Coronis the fair,
King Phlegyas' daughter, bore him. He takes care
Of savage pangs, a joy to men. Hail, lord!
My prayer to you my song will now afford.

XVII - TO THE DIOSCURI

Clear-voiced Muse, sing of the Tyndaridae,
Castor and Polydeuces, born on high
Of Zeus. Upon Taygetus' heights the queen
Leda gave birth to them when she had been
Subdued in secret by dark-clouded Zeus.
Swift horsemen, hail, the sons of Tyndareus.

XVIII - TO HERMES

I sing Cyllenian Hermes, him who slew
Argos. Cyllene's lord – Arcadia's, too,
So rich in flocks – luck-bringing messenger
To all the gods. When Zeus had lain with her,
Maia, the child of Atlas, bore him. She
Would ever shun the immortals' company,
Remaining shyly in her dark cave where
At dead of night the nymph with the rich hair
Would lie with Zeus when white-armed Hera, bound
In sweet sleep, lay. No god or mortal found
Them out. Hail, Zeus' and Maia's son. To you
I've sung a song – I'll sing another too.

10

XIX - TO PAN

O Muse. Of Hermes' darling son tell me,
Goat-footed, horned, lover of revelry.
In wooded glades with dancing nymphs he'll tread
While they climb high upon a sheer cliff's head
To call on Pan, the shepherd-god, whose hair
Is long and shaggy. Each white crest's his lair,
Each rocky peak. Through the close shrubbery
He'll roam about, now struck with ecstasy

Sing, clear-voiced Muse, of him who captured fame
For great inventions – Hephaestus by name.
With bright-eyed Athene he showed to all men,
Who'd dwelt in mountain grottos until then
Like wild beasts, glorious crafts. But, having kenned
These things, within their houses they now spend
All year at ease in peace. Be kind to me,
Hepaestus, and give me prosperity.

XXI - TO APOLLO

Even the swan, Apollo, clearly sings
Of you as he alights with beating wings
Beside the eddying Peneus. First and last
The minstrel with his sweet tongue, holding fast
His high-pitched lyre, sings of you. Hail, lord.
I hope my song your favour will afford.

XXII - TO POSEIDON

I'll sing of great Poseidon. It is he
Who shakes the very earth and fruitless sea.
God of the deep, you're lord of wide Aegae
And Helicon. A twofold office by
The gods was given you, Earth-Shaker: you
Recover ships and break in horses, too.
Hail, Holder of the Earth, hail, dark-haired lord.
Blest be, be kind! To sailors help afford!

XXIII - TO THE MOST HIGH SON OF CRONUS

Of Zeus, the chief of all the gods, I'll sing,
The greatest lord of all, all-noticing,
Fulfiller, who whispers profundity
To Themis as she sits, obediently
Leaning towards him. Great, all-seeing son
Of Cronus, grant to us your benison.

XXIV - TO HESTIA

You, Hestia, who at goodly Pytho
Tend the holy house of Apollo,
Far-Shooter, soft oil ever from your hair
Dripping, who with omniscient Lord Zeus share
All wisdom, come into this house; advance
And with your kindness my song enhance.

XXV - TO THE MUSES AND APOLLO

The Muses, Zeus and Phoebus shall give birth
To my song: that there are minstrels on this earth
And lutanists is due to the Muses and
To Phoebus. Kings, though, are from Zeus. How grand
He sounds who's dear to the Muses, for how sweet
He sings! Hail, Zeus's children! Hail, and greet
My song with approbation, and now you
I will remember – and another song, too.

XXVI - TO DIONYSUS

Of loud and ivied Bacchus hear my lay,
The splendid son of glorious Semele
And Zeus, received by all the Nymphs, whose hair
Is rich, from his father Zeus. With every care
They nursed and nurtured him in Nysa's dells,
Where, in a cave exuding pleasant smells,
Zeus wished him reared, gods' darling. But once raised
By the goddesses, in hymns often praised,
He'd roam the wooded valleys, garlanded
Thickly with bay and ivy, and he led
The Nymphs. The never-ending wood would sound
With their outcry. So, Bacchus, who abound
In clusters, hail. May we come gladly here
Next season and thenceforth for many a year.

10

XXVII - TO ARTEMIS

Of Artemis, whose shafts are gold, I sing,
Hurrahing to her hounds and revelling
In archery, stag-shooter, virgin miss,
Gold-sworded Phoebus' sister – Artemis
Across dark hills and windy peaks will pace,
Her gold bow drawn, rejoicing in the chase
And shooting grievous shafts, and at the sound
Of groaning beasts, the dusky wood all round
Echoed amazingly. The earth and sea
Both shook. But the bold goddess whirlingly 10
Dealt death to the animal world. Once satisfied,
This huntress puts her slackened bow aside.
To her dear brother's mansion now she flies
To make arrangements there in rich Delphi
For the Muses' and the Graces' dance. When she
Has hung her weapons up, then, gracefully
Arrayed, she leads the dances, while they sing
Their songs with heavenly voices, recounting
How trim-legged Leto bore her progeny
Supreme among the heavenly company 20
In thought and deed. Children, all hail to you.
I shall recall you – and another song, too.

XXVIII - TO ATHENA

Of Pallas Athene I begin my lay,
Famed goddess, clever, staunch, with eyes of grey,
Pure, city-saviour, full of bravery,
Of Triton born, wise Zeus's progeny –
From his dread head he bore her, all arrayed
In armour flashing gold. When the gods laid
Their eyes on her, awe seized them all. Bounding
From Zeus's head, she stood there brandishing
A spear. Then great Olympus horribly
Reeled at the sight of her, while fearfully 10
The earth cried out, the sea shook and was smashed
With dark waves; of a sudden white foam splashed.
The bright sun his swift steeds some long time stayed
While from her frame Athene doffed and laid
Aside her armour. Wise Zeus then was glad.
And so, daughter of Zeus, who's always had
The aegis in his hand, all hail to you.
I will recall you – and another song, too.

XXIX - TO HESTIA

Hestia, where gods and men in great homes dwell
You've gained a constant place; splendidly well
You're honoured. Mortal banquets without you
Do not exist; sweet wine – which is your due –
Both first and last is not poured anywhere
But to you. Phoebus Apollo, too, who bear
The gold rod, the gods' messenger, both you
And holy, dear Hestia, come and dwell
In this grand house together. You know well 10
Men's noble deeds, so make them wise and strong.
Daughter of Cronus, listen to my song,
And Hermes, too, for now I welcome you.
I shall recall you – and another song, too.

XXX - TO EARTH THE MOTHER OF ALL

I'll sing the mother of all, well-founded Earth,
The eldest being, who throughout the girth
Of all the world, feeds everyone, on sea
And land and in the air. All progeny,
Both fruits and children, come from her. You may
Give life to men or else take it away,
O queen. That man is rich whom you delight
To prize – he has it all. His fields are bright
With corn, his herd is large. His house is full
Of luxury. Such men as he will rule 10
Cities of lovely women formally:
Great riches follow them; their sons will be
Blithe always, while their daughters will cavort
In flowery bands and jubilantly sport
Over the fields of flowers. It is thus
With those you honour, holy, bounteous
Goddess. O mother of the gods, all hail,
The wife of starry heaven. Do not fail
To cheer me for this song I sing to you.
I will recall you – and another song, too.

XXXI - TO HELIOS

Daughter of Zeus, Calliope, now sing
Of bright Helios, whom the far-glistening
And cow-eyed one engendered by the son
Of Earth and starry heaven. Hyperion
Married that glorious maid, his sister, who
Bore rosy-armed Eos, Selene, too,
Rich-tressed, and strong, godlike Helios – all three
Delightful. Helios, gazing piercingly
Beneath his golden helmet, as he goes
On his chariot, on gods and mortals glows, 10
His bright locks streaming down arrestingly,
Screening his far-seen features gracefully.
He wears a garment, finely-spun and fair,
That gleams about him, fluttering in the air,
And stallions carry him; then, at one spot,
He stays his steeds and gold-yoked chariot
And at the zenith takes his rest and then
In fine style drives them through the heaven again
To Ocean. Hail to you, lord. Liberally
Delight my heart. With you my poetry 20
Began, so I will praise the half-divine
Whose deeds the Muses have induced to shine.

XXXII - TO SELENE

And next, o sweet-voiced Muses, progeny
Of Zeus, well-skilled in singing, sing for me
Of the long-winged Moon whose sheen embraces Earth
Out of her heavenly head and thus gives birth
To beauty from her light. The air, unlit
Before, now by the golden crown of it
Shines, and her rays display a beaming path,
When fair and bright Selene takes a bath
In Ocean, putting on a robe a gleam
From far away. She yokes her strong-necked team 10
Of shining, long-maned steeds. With all their might
She drives them, mid-month at approaching night.
Then is her orbit full and every beam,
As she increases, shines its brightest gleam,
A certain token and a sign to men.
The son of Cronus lay with her, and then
She bore Pandeia, in the company
Of gods the fairest. Bright divinity,

Mild, white-armed, bright-tressed queen, Selene, hail.
I'll leave you now so I may sing the tale 20
Of glorious demi-gods, whom minstrels praise,
Serving the Muses in delightful lays.

XXXIII - TO THE DIOSCURI

O bright-eyed Muses, sing the history
Of the Tyndaridae, the progeny
Of trim-legged Leda – Castor, who can tame
All steeds, and Polydeuces, free from blame.
Beneath great Mt. Taygetus she lay
With Zeus of the Dark Clouds and bore them – they
Save men and swift ships when the ruthless sea
Rages with squalls: then sailors guarantee
White lambs for them when to the prow they go.
Strong winds, however, force the ship below 10
The surface. But all of a sudden they
With tawny wings dart forward and allay
The cruel blasts and still the foaming sea –
Fair tokens and release from misery.
The sight of them brings gladness to the men
Because they now have rest from toil. Hail, then,
Tyndaridae, swift horsemen, to you two.
I will recall you – and another song, too.