

CLASS ONE

Fragment 16, Sappho

(circa 6th century)

Some say an army of horsemen, others
Say foot soldiers, still others say a fleet
Is the finest thing on the dark earth.
I say it is whatever one loves.

Everyone can understand this - consider
That Helen, far surpassing the beauty
Of mortals, left behind
The best man of all

To sail away to Troy. She remembered
Neither daughter nor dear parents
As [Aphrodite] led her away

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I would rather see her lovely step
And the radiant sparkle of her face
Than all the war chariots in Lydia
And soldiers battling in arms.

W.B. Yeats, *Leda and the Swan*

1933

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

Isocrates, *Encomium to Helen*; excerpt

(Circa second century bc)

(tr. George Norlin)

I will take as the beginning of my discourse the beginning of her family. For although Zeus begat very many of the demigods, of this woman alone he condescended to be called father. While he was devoted most of all to the son of Alcmena and to the sons of Leda, yet his preference for Helen, as compared with Heracles, was so great that, although he conferred upon his son strength of body, which is able to overpower all others by force, yet to her he gave the gift of beauty, which by its nature brings even strength itself into subjection to it.

And knowing that all distinction and renown accrue, not from a life of ease, but from wars and perilous combats, and since he wished, not only to exalt their persons to the gods, but also to bequeath to them glory that would be immortal, he gave his son a life of labours and love of perils, and to Helen he granted the gift of nature which drew the admiration of all beholders and which in all men inspired contention.

In the first place Theseus, reputedly the son of Aegeus, but in reality the progeny of Poseidon, seeing Helen not as yet in the full bloom of her beauty, but already surpassing other maidens, was so captivated by her loveliness that he, accustomed as he was to subdue others, and although the possessor of a fatherland most great and a kingdom most secure, thought life was not worth living amid the blessings he already had unless he could enjoy intimacy with her. And when he was unable to obtain her from her guardians—for they were awaiting her maturity and the fulfilment of the oracle which the Pythian priestess had given—scorning the royal power of Tyndareus, a disdaining the might of Castor and Pollux, and belittling all the hazards in Lacedaemon, he seized her by force and established her at Aphidna in Attica. ...

If the achiever of these exploits had been an ordinary person and not one of the very distinguished, it would not yet be clear whether this discourse is an encomium of Helen or an accusation of Theseus; but as it is, while in the case of other men who have won renown we shall find that one is deficient in courage, another in wisdom, and another in some kindred virtue, yet this hero alone was lacking in naught, but had attained consummate virtue.

And it seems to me appropriate to speak of Theseus at still greater length; for I think this will be the strongest assurance for those who wish to praise Helen, if we can show that those who loved and admired her were themselves more deserving of admiration than other men. For contemporary events we should with good reason judge in accordance with our own opinions, but concerning events in times so remote it is fitting that we show our opinion to be in accord with the opinion of those men of wisdom who were at that time living.

Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women; Works and Days*, excerpt

(circa 6th century)

Fragment 6838: Suitors of Helen

(ll. 89-100) But of all who came for the maid's sake, the lord Tyndareus sent none away, nor yet received the gift of any, but asked of all the suitors sure oaths, and bade them swear and vow with unmixed libations that no one else henceforth should do aught apart from him as touching the marriage of the maid with shapely arms; but if any man should cast off fear and reverence and take her by force, he bade all the others together follow after and make him pay the penalty. And they, each of them hoping to accomplish his marriage, obeyed him without wavering. But warlike Menelaus, the son of Atreus, prevailed against them all together, because he gave the greatest gifts.

(ll. 100-106) But Chiron was tending the son of Peleus, swift-footed Achilles, pre-eminent among men, on woody Pelion; for he was still a boy. For neither warlike Menelaus nor any other of men on earth would have prevailed in suit for Helen, if fleet Achilles had found her unwed. But, as it was, warlike Menelaus won her before.

II.⁴¹ (ll. 1-2) And she (Helen) bare neat-ankled Hermione in the palace, a child unlooked for.

Culluthus of Lycopolis, *The Rape of Helen*, excerpts

(circa late 5th - early 6th century A.D.)

(tr. A.W. Mair)

Ye Nymphs of Troy, children of the river Xanthus, who oft-times leave on your father's sands the snoods that bind your tresses and the sacred toys of your hands, and array you for the dance on Ida, come hither, leaving the sounding river, and declare to me the counsel of the herdsman judge: say whence from the hills he came, sailing the unaccustomed deep, albeit ignorant of the business of the sea; and what was the occasion of the ships that were the spring of woe, that a cowherd should stir heaven and earth together; and what was the primeval beginning of the feud, that herdsmen should deal judgement to immortals: what was the suit: whence heard he the name of the Argive nymph? For ye came yourselves and beheld, beneath the three-peaked cliff of Idaean Phalacra, Paris sitting on his shepherd seat and the queen of the Graces, even Aphrodite, glorying. So among the high-peaked hills of the Haemonians, the marriage song of Peleus was being sung while, at the bidding of Zeus, Ganymede poured the wine. And all the race of the gods hastened to do honour to the white-armed bride, own sister of Amphitrite: Zeus from Olympus and Poseidon from the sea. Out of the land of Melisseus, from fragrant Helicon, Apollo came leading the clear-voiced choir of the Muses. On either side, fluttering with golden locks, the unshorn cluster of his hair was buffeted by the west wind. And after him followed Hera, sister of Zeus; nor did the queen of harmony herself, even Aphrodite, loiter in coming to the groves of the Centaur. Came also Persuasion, having fashioned a bridal wreath, carrying the quiver of archer Eros. And Athena put off her mighty helmet from her brow and followed to the marriage, albeit of marriage she was untaught. Nor did Leto's daughter Artemis, sister of Apollo, disdain to come, goddess of the wilds though she was. And iron Ares, even as, helmetless nor lifting warlike spear, he comes into the house of Hephaestus, in such wise without breastplate and without whetted sword danced smilingly. But Strife did Cheiron leave unhonoured: Cheiron did not regard her and Peleus heeded her not.

...so Strife, overcome by the pangs of angry jealousy, wandered in search of a way to disturb the banquet of the gods. And often would she leap up from her chair, set with precious stones, and anon sit down

again. She smote with her hand the bosom of the earth and heeded not the rock. Fain would she unbar the bolts of the darksome hollows and rouse the Titans from the nether pit and destroy the heaven, the seat of Zeus, who rules on high. Fain would she brandish the roaring thunderbolt of fire, yet gave way, for all her age, to Hephaestus, keeper of quenchless fire and of iron. And she thought to rouse the heavy-clashing din of shields, if haply they might leap up in terror at the noise.

...And now she bethought her of the golden apples of the Hesperides. Thence Strife took the fruit that should be the harbinger of war, even the apple, and devised the scheme of signal woes. Whirling her arm she hurled into the banquet the primal seed of turmoil and disturbed the choir of goddesses. Hera, glorying to be the spouse and to share the bed of Zeus, rose up amazed, and would fain have seized it. And Cypris [Aphrodite] as being more excellent than all, desired to have the apple, for that it is the treasure of the Loves. But Hera would not give it up and Athena would not yield. And Zeus, seeing the quarrel of the goddesses, and calling his son Hermaon, who sat below his throne, addressed him thus: "If haply, my son, thou hast heard of a son of Priam, one Paris, the splendid youth, who tends his herds on the hills of Troy, give to him the apple; and bid him judge the goddesses' meeting brows and orbèd eyes. And let her that is preferred have the famous fruit to carry away as the prize of the fairer and ornament of the Loves."

...So the father, the son of Cronus, commanded Hermaon. And he hearkened to the bidding of his father and led the goddesses upon the way and failed not to heed. And every goddess sought to make her beauty more desirable and fair. Cypris of crafty counsels unfolded her snood and undid the fragrant clasp of her hair and wreathed with gold her locks, with gold her flowing tresses. And she saw her children the Loves and called to them.

"The contest is at hand, dear children! embrace your mother that nursed you. To-day it is beauty of face that judges me. I fear to whom this herdsman will award the apple. Hera they call the holy nurse of the Graces, and they say that she wields sovereignty and holds the sceptre. And Athena they ever call the queen of battles. I only, Cypris, am an

unwarlike goddess. I have no queenship of the gods, wield no warlike spear, nor draw the bow. But wherefore am I sore afraid, when for spear I have, as it were, a swift lance, the honeyed girdle of the Loves! I have my girdle, I ply my goad, I raise my bow: even that girdle, whence women catch the sting of my desire, and travail often-times, but not unto death."

...So spake Cypris of the rosy fingers and followed. And the wandering Loves heard the dear bidding of their mother and hasted after their nurse.

...Now they had just passed over the summit of the hill of Ida, where under a rock-crowned cliff's height young Paris herded his father's flocks. On either side the streams of the mountain torrent he tended his herds, numbering apart the herd of thronging bulls, apart measuring the droves of feeding flocks. And behind him hung floating the hide of a mountain goat, that reached right to his thighs. But his herdsman's crook, driver of kine, was laid aside: for so, wailing mincingly in his accustomed ways, he pursued the shrill minstrelsy of his pipe's rustic reeds. Often as he sang in his shepherd's shielding he would forget his bulls and heed no more his sheep. Hence with his pipe, in the fair haunts of shepherds, he was making dear music to Pan and Hermaon. The dogs bayed not, and the bull did not bellow. Only windy Echo with her untutored cry, answered his voice from Ida's hills; and the bulls upon the green grass, when they had eaten their fill, lay down and rested on their heavy flanks.

...So as he made shrill music under the high-roofed canopy of trees, he beheld from afar the messenger Hermaon. And in fear he leapt up and sought to shun the eye of the gods. He leaned against an oak his choir of musical reeds and checked his lay that had not yet laboured much. And to him in his fear wondrous Hermes spake thus: "Fling away thy milking-pail and leave thy fair flocks and come hither and give decision as judge of the goddesses of heaven. Come hither and decide which is the more excellent beauty of face, and to the fairer give this apple's lovely fruit."

...So he cried. And Paris bent a gentle eye and quietly essayed to judge the beauty of each. He looked at the light of their grey eyes, he looked on the neck arrayed with gold, he marked the bravery of each;

the shape of the heel behind, yea and the soles of their feet. But, before he gave judgement, Athena took him, smiling, by the hand and spake to Alexander thus: "Come hither, son of Priam! leave the spouse of Zeus and heed not Aphrodite, queen of the bridal bower, but praise thou Athena who aids the prowess of men. They say that thou art a king and keepest the city of Troy. Come hither, and I will make thee the saviour of their city to men hard pressed: lest ever Enyo of grievous wrath weigh heavily upon thee. Hearken to me and I will teach thee war and prowess."

...So cried Athena of many counsels, and white-armed Hera thus took up the tale: "If thou wilt elect me and bestow on me the fruit of the fairer, I will make thee lord of all mine Asia. Scorn thou the works of battle. What has a king to do with war? A prince gives command both to the valiant and to the unwarlike. Not always are the squires of Athena foremost. Swift is the doom and death of the servants of Enyo!"

...Such lordship did Hera, who hath the foremost throne, offer to bestow. But Cypris lifted up her deep-bosomed robe and bared her breast to the air and had no shame. And lifting with her hands the honeyed girdle of the Loves she bared all her bosom and heeded not her breasts. And smilingly she thus spake to the herdsman: "Accept me and forget wars: take my beauty and leave the sceptre and the land of Asia. I know not the works of battle. What has Aphrodite to do with shields? By beauty much more do women excel. In place of manly prowess I will give thee a lovely bride, and, instead of kingship, enter thou the bed of Helen. Lacedaemon, after Troy, shall see thee a bridegroom."

...Not yet had she ceased speaking and he gave her the splendid apple, beauty's offering, the great treasure of Aphrogeneia, a plant of war, of war an evil seed. ...

... So she got the prize of beauty that should work the ruin of a city, repelling Hera and indignant Athena. And unhappy Paris, yearning with love and pursuing one whom he had not seen, gathered men that were skilled of Atrytone queen of handicraft, and led them to a shady wood. There the oaks from Ida of many tree-trunks were cut and felled by the excellent skill of Phereclus,²⁸ source of woe; who at that time, doing pleasure to his frenzied king, fashioned with the wood-cutting bronze

ships for Alexander. On the same day he willed and on the same made the ships: ships which Athena²⁹ neither planned nor wrought.

[202] And now he had just left the hills of Ida for the deep, and, after with many a sacrifice upon the shore he had besought the favour of Aphrodite that attended him to aid his marriage, he was sailing the Hellespont over the broad back of the sea...

... And Helen unbarred the bolts of her hospitable bower and suddenly went to the court of the house, and, looking in front of the goodly doors, soon as she saw, so soon she called him and led him within the house, and bade him sit on a new-wrought chair of silver. And she could not satisfy her eyes with gazing, now deeming that she looked on the golden youth that attends on Cythereia-- and late she recognized that it was not Eros; she saw no quiver of arrows -- and often in the beauty of his face and eyes she looked to see the king of the vine: but no blooming fruit of the vine did she behold spread upon the meeting of his gracious brows. And after long time, amazed, she uttered her voice and said:

... "Stranger, whence art thou? declare thy fair lineage even unto us. In beauty thou art like unto a glorious king, but thy family I know not among the Argives..."

So, yearning for Paris, spake the lady of sweet voice. And he opened honeyed speech and answered her: "If haply thou hast heard of a town in the bounds of Phrygia, even Ilios, whereof Poseidon built the towers and Apollo: if thou hast haply heard of a very wealthy king in Troy, sprung from the fruitful race of Cronus: thence am I a prince and pursue all the works of my race. I, lady, am the dear son of Priam rich in gold, of the lineage of Dardanus am I, and Dardanus was the son of Zeus. ...And I, O Queen, am the judge of goddesses. For, deciding a suit for the aggrieved daughters of heaven, I praised the beauty of Cypris and her lovely form. And she vowed that she would give me a worthy recompense of my labour, even a glorious and a lovely bride, whom they call Helen, sister of Aphrodite; and it is for her sake that I have endured to cross such seas. Come, let us join wedlock, since Cythereia bids. Despise me not, put not my love to shame. I will not say -- why

should I tell thee who knowest so much? for thou knowest that Menelaus is of an unvaliant race." ...So he spake. And the lady fixed her lovely eyes upon the ground, and long time perplexed replied not. But at last amazed she uttered her voice and said: "... Come now, carry me from Sparta unto Troy. I will follow, as Cythereia, queen of wedlock, bids. I do not fear Menelaus, when Troy shall have known me."

So the fair-ankled lady plighted her troth. ...And he carried Helen from the bowers of hospitable Menelaus to the benches of his sea-faring ships; and exulting exceedingly in the promise of Cythereia he hastened to carry to Ilios his freight of war.

Homer, *Iliad*, excerpts

(circa 8th century)

(Tr. Caroline Alexander)

Book 3, ll.121-242

[Helen at her loom and at the gates]

Then Iris went as messenger to white-armed Helen
in the likeness of her husband's sister, the wife of Antenor's
son,
she whom Antenor's son, lord Helikaon, held-
Laodike, most outstanding in beauty of all of Priam's daughters.
She found Helen in her chamber; she was weaving a great cloth,
a crimson cloak of double thickness, and was working in the many trials
of the Trojan horse-breakers and bronze-clad Achaeans,
trials which for her sake they had suffered under the hand of Ares.
Standing close, Iris of the swift feet addressed her:
"Come this way, dear bride, and see the marvelous deeds
of the Trojan horse-breakers and bronze-clad Achaeans,
who earlier carried war and all its tears against each other
into the plain, in their longing for deadly battle;
these men now sit in silence, the war stopped,
leaning on their shields, their great spears fixed upright beside them;
and Alexandros and Menelaos beloved by Ares
are to fight with their great spears on your account;
and you will be called wife of that man who is victor."

So speaking the goddess aroused in Helen's heart sweet longing
for her husband of old, her city and her children.
At once, veiling herself with gleaming white shawls,
she started up from her chamber, weeping soft tears
and not on her own; for with her followed her two handmaids.

Aithra daughter of Pittheus and ox-eyed Klymene.

Swiftly they arrived where stood the Scaean gates;
and those men by Priam-Panthoös and Thymoites
and Lampos, Klytios and Hiketaon, companion of Ares,
as well as Oukealegon and Antenor, both sound men-
elders of the city, sat above the Scaean gates,
having ceded war to their old age, but were fine speakers all,
like chirping cicadas, which settling themselves throughout the forest
on trees, issue forth their lily-soft voice.

Such then were the leaders of Troy sitting upon the tower.

And they, as they saw Helen approaching the tower,
in undertones spoke winged words to one another:

"No blame that the Trojans and strong-greaved Achaeans
have suffered so long on account of such a woman;
terribly does she seem like immortal goddesses to look on.
But even so-such as she is, let her go back home in the ships,
let her not stay as a bane to us and our children after."

So they spoke; but Priam called aloud to Helen:

"Come here, dear child, and sit in front of me
so that you may see your husband of old, your friends and his kinsmen-
to me you are not in any way to blame, but in my eyes it is the gods
who
are blameworthy,
who stirred up against me this sorrowful war of the Achaeans-
so tell me the name of this gigantic man,
who is this Achaean man, good and great?
To be sure there are other men even greater in height,
But I have never beheld with my eyes a man so handsome,
Nor so majestic; for he seems a kingly man."

And Helen shining among women answered him with these words:

"Honored are you to me, dear father-in-law, and revered,

and would that evil death had pleased me at that time when
I followed your son here, abandoning my marriage chamber and kinsmen,
My late-born child, and the lovely companions of my own age.
But that did not happen; and so I waste away weeping.
But this I will tell you, which you asked me and questioned;
That man is the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon,
Both a good kind and a powerful spear-warrior.
He was my brother-in-law, dog-faced as I am—if that ever happened.”

So she spoke; and the old man marveled at him and exclaimed:
“O most fortunate son of Atreus, child of fortune, heaven-blessed;
many indeed are the young men of the Achaeans subject to you.
In time before I went to Phrygia, rich in vines,
Where I saw a multitude of Phrygian men and their flashing horses,
the arms of Atreus and godlike Mygdon,
who were camped along the banks of the Sangarious;
and I too, being young, was numbered with them
on that day when came the Amazons, a match for men—
but they were not so numerous as the dark-eyed Achaeans.”

Then seeing Odysseus, the old man inquired a second time:
“Come, tell me this too, dear child, who this man is;
he is lesser in height than Agamemnon son of Atreus,
but he seems broader in the shoulders and chest.
His armor lies upon the nourishing earth,
and he himself like a ram ranges the ranks of men.
I would liken him to a deep-fleeced ram,
who moves through a great flock of gleaming white sheep.”

Then answered him Helen, born of Zeus:
“Now this is the son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus,
who was raised in the country of Ithaca, rough though it is,
knowing every kind of stratagem and shrewd plan.”

Then wise Antenor in turn addressed her:
"O lady, unerring indeed is this word you spoke!
For shining Odysseus once before came here too
as an embassy with Menelaos, beloved by Ares, concerning you;
I received them as guests and treated them kindly in my hall,
and I got to know the character and shrew plans of both.
And when they took their places among the assembled Trojans,
Maenelaos standing towered with his broad shoulders,
but when both were seated, Odysseus was the more majestic;
and then they began to weave for everyone their web of words and
counsels,
Menelaos, to be sure, was a fluent speaker,
but brief, although very clear, as he was not a man of many words,
nor a rambler—and yet indeed he was younger;
but when resourceful Odysseus rose to speak,
he would stand and fixing his eyes on the ground would raise his gaze
from time to time,
and he did not gesture with his staff back and forth,
but held it without moving, like an ignorant man
you would think him to be surly and some mere simpleton.
But when he let go the great voice from his chest
and words like snowflakes in winter—
then no other mortal man could rival Odysseus.
Then we marveled no longer at Odysseus's appearance."

Again, seeing Ajax, the old man then inquired a third time:
"Who is this other Achaean man, good and great,
outstanding among the Argives in height and broad shoulders?"
And Helen, shining among women with her trailing gown, answered:
"That man is huge Ajax, bulwark of the Achaeans.
And on the other side Idomeneus stands like a god among the Cretans,
and the leaders of Crete are gathered around him.

Many ties Menelaos beloved by Ares received him as a guest
in our home, whenever he came from Crete.
I see them all now, the rest of the dark-eyed Achaeans,
those I know well and could name-
but I cannot see the two marshalls of the people,
Castor, breaker of horses, and the skilful boxer Polydeukes,
my two bothers, born with me of the same mother.
Perhaps they did not follow the others from lovely Ladedaeon;
or they did follow here in the seagoing ships,
but now are not willing to enter the combat of men,
fearing the many insults and reproaches against me."

Iliad,

Book Three, ll. 374-447

[a fight with Aphrodite]

And indeed Menelaos would have dragged him [Paris] away and won for himself

glory everlasting,

had not Aphrodite Zeus's daughter taken sharp notice;

she snapped the strap, the leather of a slaughtered ox;

and the helmet came empty in his massive hand.

Then the warrior hurled it among the well-greaved Achaeans,

whirling around, and his loyal companions caught it up;

and he himself rushed forward again, raging to kill

with his bronze spear—but Aphrodite snatched Alexandros away,

easily, goddess that she was, enfolded in dense mist,

and set him down in his incense-perfumed bedroom.

She once she set out to summon Helen; and found her by the lofty tower, thronged around by the women of Troy.

Grasping with her hand, she twitched Helen's fragrant robe;

and addressed her in the likeness of an old woman a woolworker of advanced years

who, when she lived in Lacedaemon,

used to fashion for her beautiful wools, and Helen loved her above all others;

In likeness of this woman divine Aphrodite addressed her:

"Come here; Alexandros summons you home;

he is there, in his bedroom, on his bed that is inlaid with rings, shining in beauty and raiment—you would not think

that he came from fighting a man, but rather that he was going to a dance, or had just left the dance and was reclining."

So she spoke; and stirred the anger in Helen's breast.

And when she recognized the goddess's beautiful cheeks
and ravishing breasts and gleaming eyes,
she stood amazed, and spoke out and addressed her by name:
"Mad one; why do you so desire to seduce me in this way?
Will you drive me to some further place among well-settled cities,
to Phrygia or lovely Maeonia?
Perhaps there too is some mortal man beloved by you-
since now Menelaos has vanquished godlike Alexandros
and desires that I, loathsome as I am, be taken home.
Is it for this reason you stand her now conniving?
Go, sit yourself beside him, renounce the haunts of the gods,
never turn your feet to Olympus,
but suffer for him and tend him forever,
until he makes you either his wife, or his girl slave.
As for me, I will not go there-it would be shameful-
to share the bed of that man. The Trojan women
will all blame me afterward; the sufferings I have in my heart are
without end."

Then in anger divine Aphrodite addressed her:
"Do not provoke me, wicked girl, lest I drop you in anger,
and hate you as much as I now terribly love you,
and devise painful hostilities, and you are caught in the middle of
both, Trojans and Danaans, and are destroyed by an evil fate."
So she spoke; and Helen born of Zeus was frightened;
and she left, covering herself with her shining white robe,
in silence, and escaped notice of the women of Troy; and the divine one
led her.

When the women arrived at the splendid house of Alexandros,
the handmaids swiftly turned to their work,
and she, shining among women, entered into the high-roofed chamber,
then laughter-loving Aphrodite, taking a stool for her,
placed it opposite Alexandros, the goddess herself carrying it.

There Helen took her seat, daughter o Sues who wields the aegis,
and averting her eyes, reviled her husband with her words:
"You're back from war; would that you had died there
broken by the stronger man, he who in time past was my husband.
Yet before this you used to boast ath you were stronger
than Menelaos beloved by Ares in your courage and strength of hand and
skill with spear;
go now and challenge Menelaos beloved by Ares,
to fight again, face-to-face—but no, I
recommend you give it up, and not fight fair-haired Menelaos
Man-to-man, or recklessly do battle,
lest you be swiftly broken beneath his spear."

But in answer Paris addressed her with his words:
"Do not, woman, rebuke my spirit with hard reproaches.
Now Menelaos is victorious with Athena's help,
but another time I'll defeat him; for the gods are with us too.
But come, let us to go be and pleasure ourselves with love;
for never at any time has desire so overwhelmed my senses—
not when I first carried you off from lovely Lacedaemon
and sailed in my seagoing ships,
and on that rocky island first joined in love and sex—
as now I desire you and sweet passion holds me."
He spoke and led the way toward the bed; and his wife followed with
him.

Iliad

Book 6, ll.344-368

[an attempt to persuade Hector]

But Helen addressed him [Hector] softly:
"Brother-in-law of me, an evil-thinking dog who strikes cold fear,
would that on the day when first my mother gave me birth,
some foul-weather storm of wind carrying me had borne me
to a mountain or a swelling wave of the tumultuous sea,
where the wave would have swept me away before these deeds had
happened.
But since the gods have so decreed these evils,
Then would I were the wife of a better man,
a man who knew what righteous blame was and the many reproaches that
men make
but the wits of this man here are not steady now, nor will they be
hereafter; and I think that he will reap the fruit of this.
But come now, come in and take your seat upon this stool,
brother-in-law, since the toil of fighting has mostly stood astride
your heart
because of me, a dog, and Alexandros's infatuation,
we on whom Zeus has laid this evil fate, so that even after this
there will be songs of us for men to come."

Iliad

Book 24, ll.761-776

[burial of Hector]

Then third among the women, Helen led the lament:

"Hector, far dearest of my heart of all my husband's brothers;
too true, my husband is Alexandros of godlike beauty,
who led me to Troy; would that I had died before;
for this is now the thirtieth year for me
since I set out from there and forsook my fatherland,
but never yet did I hear a harsh or abusive word from you,
but if someone else would reviled me in these halls,
one of my husband's brothers, or his sisters, or one of my fine-robed
sisters-in-law,
or my husband's mother—but my husband's father was like a kind father
always—
you with soothing words would restrain them
with your gentle nature and kind speech.
Therefore I weep, grieving at heart, for you and for me, ill-fated,
together;
For no longer is there anyone else in broad Troy
To be kind or friendly to me, but all shudder at me."
So she spoke crying, and in response all the great multitude moaned.

Quintus Smyrnaeus, *Posthomerica*, excerpt

(circa 4th century)

(tr. unknown)

Book 14

[17] Amidst of these Menelaus led his wife forth of the burning city, having wrought a mighty triumph -- joy and shame were his. Cassandra heavenly-fair was haled the prize of Agamemnon: to Achilles' son Andromache had fallen: Hecuba Odysseus dragged unto his ship. The tears poured from her eyes as water from a spring; trembled her limbs, fear-frenzied was her heart; rent were her hoary tresses and besprent with ashes of the hearth, cast by her hands when she saw Priam slain and Troy aflame. And aye she deeply groaned for thraldom's day that trapped her vainly loth. Each hero led a wailing Trojan woman to his ship. Here, there, uprose from these the wild lament, the woeful-mingling cries of mother and babe. As when with white-tusked swine the herdmen drive their younglings from the hill-pens to the plain as winter closeth in, and evermore each answereth each with mingled plaintive cries; so moaned Troy's daughters by their foes enslaved, handmaid and queen made one in thraldom's lot.

...But Helen raised no lamentation: shame sat on her dark-blue eyes, and cast its flush over her lovely cheeks. Her heart beat hard with sore misgiving, lest, as to the ships she passed, the Achaeans might mishandle her. Therefore with fluttering soul she trembled sore; and, her head darkly mantled in her veil, close-following trod she in her husband's steps, with cheek shame-crimsoned, like the Queen of Love, what time the Heaven-abiders saw her clasped in Ares' arms, shaming in sight of all the marriage-bed, trapped in the myriad-meshed toils of Hephaestus: tangled there she lay in agony of shame, while thronged around the Blessed, and there stood Hephaestus' self: for fearful it is for wives to be beheld by husbands' eyes doing the deed of shame. Lovely as she in form and roseate blush passed Helen mid the Trojan captives on to the Argive ships. But the folk all around marvelled to see the glory of loveliness of that all-flawless woman. No man dared or secretly or openly to cast reproach on her. As on a Goddess all gazed on her with adoring wistful eyes. As when to wanderers on a stormy sea, after long time and passion of prayer, the sight of fatherland is

given; from deadly deeps escaped, they stretch hands to her joyful-souled; so joyed the Danaans all, no man of them remembered any more war's travail and pain. Such thoughts Cytherea stirred in them, for grace to Helen starry-eyed, and Zeus her sire.

[160] But in his tent Menelaus lovingly with bright-haired Helen spake; for on their eyes sleep had not fallen yet. The Cyprian Queen brooded above their souls, that olden love might be renewed, and heart-ache chased away.

...

Helen first brake the silence, and she said: "O Menelaus, be not wroth with me! Not of my will I left thy roof, thy bed, nut Alexander and the sons of Troy came upon me, and snatched away, when thou wast far thence. Oftentimes did I essay by the death-noose to perish wretchedly, or by the bitter sword; but still they stayed mine hand, and still spake comfortable words to salve my grief for thee and my sweet child. For her sake, for the sake of olden love, and for thine own sake, I beseech thee now, forget thy stern displeasure against thy wife."

[178] Answered her Menelaus wise of wit: "No more remember past griefs: seal them up hid in thine heart. Let all be locked within the dim dark mansion of forgetfulness. What profits it to call ill deeds to mind?"

[183] Glad was she then: fear flitted from her heart, and came sweet hope that her lord's wrath was dead. She cast her arms around him, and their eyes with tears were brimming as they made sweet moan; and side by side they laid them, and their hearts thrilled with remembrance of old spousal joy. And as a vine and ivy entwine their stems each around other, that no might of wind avails to sever them, so clung these twain twined in the passionate embrace of love.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

(circa 3rd century)

(tr. Lloyd-Jones)

lines 436-455

(The Chorus Speaks)

And Ares, the gold-changer of bodies
and holder of the scales in the battle of the spear
from Ilium sends to their dear ones
heavy gold dust that has felt the fire,
dust bitterly bewailed; with ashes
that were once men he loads the urns, easily stowed.
And they lament them, praising this man
as skilled in battle,
and that as having died a noble death amid the slaughter—
"for the sake of another man's wife."
These are the words they mutter low;
and over them comes grief with resentment
against the champions of justice, the Atreidae.
But the men where they fell about the wall
in all their beauty occupy
their tombs in Ilium's earth;
and the enemy land covers its occupiers.