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HOMER

The Odyssey

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with an epilogue on translation

With an Introduction by
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THE ODYSSEY

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BOOK I

GODS IN COUNCIL - TELEMACHUS AND ATHENE

GODDESS of song, teach me the story of a hero.

This was the man of wide-ranging spirit who had sacked the sacred town of Troy and who wandered afterwards long and far. Many were those whose cities he viewed and whose minds he came to know, many the troubles that vexed his heart as he sailed the seas, labouring to save himself and to bring his comrades home. But his comrades he could not keep from ruin, strive as he might; they perished instead by their own presumptuousness. Fools, they devoured the cattle of Hyperion, and he, the sun-god, cut off from them the day of their homecoming.

Goddess, daughter of Zeus, to me in turn impart some knowledge of all these things, beginning where you will.

The tale begins when all those others who had escaped the pit of destruction were safe in their own lands, spared by the wars and seas. Only Odysseus was held elsewhere, pining for home and wife; the nymph Calypso, a goddess of strange power and beauty, had kept him captive within her arching caverns, yearning for him to be her husband. And when there came with revolving seasons the year that the gods had set for his journey home to Ithaca, not even then was he past his troubles, not even then was he with his own people. For though all the gods beside had compassion on him, Poseidon's anger was unabated against the hero until he returned to his own land.

But now Poseidon had gone to visit the Ethiopians, those distant Ethiopians whose nation is parted within itself, so that some are near the setting and some near the rising sun, but all alike are at the world's end; to these he had gone to receive a great offering of bulls and rams, and there he was taking his pleasure now, seated at the banquet. But the other gods were gathered together in the palace of Olympian Zeus, and the father of gods and men began to speak to them. His mind was full of Lord Aegisthus, slain by renowned Orestes, the child of Agamemnon; with him in mind

Zeus began to speak to the Deathless Ones.

'O the waywardness of these mortals! They accuse the gods, they say that their troubles come from us, and yet by their own presumptuousness they draw down sorrow upon themselves that outruns their allotted portion. So now; Aegisthus outran his allotted portion by taking in marriage the wedded wife of the son of Atreus and killing her husband when he returned. Yet he knew what pit of destruction was before him, because we ourselves warned him of it. We sent him Hermes, the Keen Watcher, the Radiant One; we forbade him to kill the king or to woo his wife, under pain of the vengeance for Agamemnon that would come upon him from Orestes when the boy grew up and felt a longing for his own country. Thus Hermes warned him, wishing him well, but Aegisthus' heart would not hear reason, and now he has paid all his debts at once.'

Athene, goddess of gleaming eyes, made answer: 'O son of Cronos, father of us and sovereign ruler, that man lies low by a doom well-earned - no question of it; so perish whoever does as he did! It is for Odysseus my heart is wrung - so subtle a man and so ill-starred; he has long been far from everything that he loves, desolate in a wave-washed island, a wooded island, the navel of all the seas. A goddess has made her dwelling there whose father is Atlas the magician; he knows the depths of all the seas, and he, no other, guards the tall pillars that keep the sky and the earth apart.¹ His daughter it is who keeps poor Odysseus pining there, and who seeks continually with her soft and coaxing words to beguile him into forgetting Ithaca;² but he - he would be well content to see even the smoke rising up from his own land, and he longs to die. And yet your own heart, Olympian one, remains all unmoved. There in the wide land of Troy, where the Argives had beached their ships, did not Odysseus do as you would have had him do? Did he not offer you constant sacrifice? Father Zeus, why are you at odds with Odysseus?'³

1. I accept Professor Stella's view that the mythology here goes back to the ancient Near-Eastern tradition which makes the sky a roof or a pavilion of bronze ('the brazen sky' elsewhere in Homer) held up by pillars at the edge of the world. Atlas is the guardian of these, not a living pillar and not a mountain.

2. 'And ever with smooth speech insidious seeks

To wean his heart from Ithaca.' COWPER

3. With word-play as on p. 237.

Zeus who masses the clouds made answer: 'My child, what a word is this that has passed your lips! How could I ever forget Odysseus, that hero who more than any mortal has subtle wit and more than any has offered sacrifice to the deathless gods whose home is heaven? No; but Poseidon the Earth-Sustainer is stubborn still in his anger against Odysseus because of his blinding of Polyphemus, the Cyclops whose power is greatest among the Cyclops race and whose ancestry is more than human; his mother was the nymph Thoosa, child of Phorcys the lord of the barren sea, and she lay with Poseidon within her arching caverns. Ever since that blinding, Poseidon has been against Odysseus; he has stopped short of killing him, but keeps him wandering far from his native land. But come, let those of us who are here contrive together a way for his homecoming. Poseidon will throw aside his anger; he cannot defy alone all the immortal gods at once.'

The goddess Athene answered him: 'O son of Cronos, father of us and sovereign ruler, if indeed the blessed gods now wish that shrewd Odysseus should come to his own land again, then let us instruct the radiant Hermes, the Messenger, to go to the island of Ogygia and without delay to tell the nymph of braided tresses our firm decree that staunch Odysseus is to depart and journey home. As for myself, I will go to Ithaca to rouse his son and to put fresh eagerness in his heart to call together the flowing-haired Achaeans and speak his mind to all those suitors who daily slaughter his thronging sheep and the swaying cattle with curving horns. Then I will send him to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to gather by hearsay what news he can of his father's homecoming and to win himself a good name in the world.'

This said, she fastened sandals beneath her feet, the immortal sandals of lovely gold that carried her, swift as airy winds, over ocean and over boundless earth. And she took the great spear, tall, strong, heavy and brazen-tipped, with which she strikes down the ranks of warriors who have aroused her wrath - is she not the child of a mighty father? Then off she set; from the heights of Olympus she darted downwards, then came to rest in the land of Ithaca, at Odysseus' outer door on the threshold of the courtyard. She held in her hand her spear of bronze, and had taken now the form of Mentès, a friend of the house and leader of the Taphians. She saw before her the headstrong suitors, seated outside the doors on the hides of oxen that they themselves had

4 killed and beguiling the time with a game of draughts. With them were pages and brisk attendants, the pages mixing wine and water in bowls, the attendants washing tables with pory sponges and setting them in place, or dividing out the abundant meat.

Telemachus, young and handsome, espied her first, as he sat despondently with the suitors. His mind was full of his noble father: would he return from wherever he might be to scatter the suitors in these halls, to retrieve his honours, to be lord of his own estate? Thus the boy wondered as he sat there with suitors all around him; and then he saw Athene. He made straight for the outer porch, inwardly vexed that a guest should stand at the door so long; he came up to her, clasped her right hand and took the bronze spear while his words came forth in rapid flight: 'Greeting, friend; you shall be made welcome here; afterwards, when you have had your meal, you shall tell us what service you require.'

With these words he led the way, and Pallas Athene followed him. When they entered the lofty hall, he laid her spear against a tall pillar, inside the polished spear-stand in which stood also a cluster of spears that were Odysseus' own. He escorted Athene to a chair, a noble piece of good workmanship, spread a cloth above it for her to sit on and gave her a stool to rest her feet. For himself he drew up a lower chair and sat beside her away from the suitors, fearing his guest might resent their boisterousness and shrink from a meal in that overbearing company; he wished, besides, to ask her about his absent father. A maid brought water in a fine golden jug and poured it over their hands for washing, holding a silver basin below; then she drew up a polished table by them. The trusted housekeeper came and put bread where they could reach it; she had many kinds of food as well, and gave ungrudgingly from her store. The carver lifted from his board the trenchers filled with all sorts of meat, put them before guest and host, put goblets of gold before them too, and again and again a page came up to pour the wine.

But now in came the overbearing suitors. They began to take their several places on higher and lower seats: pages poured water on their hands, maids heaped up bread in basketfuls, menservants brimmed the bowls with wine, and the suitors stretched out their hands to the dishes there. When they had eaten and drunk their fill, they turned their thoughts elsewhere, to music and to dancing - these are pleasures that crown a feast. A page put a lyre of

cunning workmanship into the hands of Phemius, who always sang in the suitors' company, though this was against his will. So the bard now touched the strings and began his lovely song; but Telemachus turned to address Athene, putting his head near hers so that the others should not hear:

'Dear guest, will you take amiss what I am about to say? The suitors yonder are all intent upon lyre and song; and well they may be, while they consume scot-free these goods that are not their own, the goods of a man whose whitening bones are cast up, perhaps, upon some shore, mouldering in rain, or are wave-tossed in the salt sea itself. If once that man - if once he himself stood before their eyes again in Ithaca, they would rather pray for more speed of foot than for more gold and more garments. But no, he has perished miserably as I said, and no consolation is left for us, even if somewhere in the world there are those who prophesy his return; his day of homecoming has been blotted out.

'But come now, tell me and answer truly: Who are you, and from where? What kind of ship did you travel by? (No one journeys on foot to Ithaca!) How did the sailors bring you here, and what name did they give themselves? And say now frankly - I long to know - is this your first visit here, or are you a friend from my father's time? I know that many guests used to come to this house, because he himself had dealings with many men.'

Athene the goddess answered him: 'I will tell you truly all you ask. My name is Mentes; I am proud to be son of wise Antilochus, and I myself am king of the Taphian oarsmen now. I have come here now, as you see, with my own ship and crew, sailing the wine-dark sea to a foreign land and the city of Temese; I am in quest of copper, and have a cargo of glittering iron. My vessel is not far off, but away from the town, near the fields - in Rheithron harbour under the wooded height of Neion.

'I claim guest-friendship with your family from days long past - you have only to go and question old Lord Laertes; they say he never comes to the city now, but lives a hard life on his distant farm with an aged waiting-woman who brings food and drink up to him when weariness fastens on his limbs as he hobbles about his hilltop vineyard. But I came here now because men were saying your father was home again, though I find instead that the gods are thwarting his return. Surely Odysseus is somewhere still, not dead but alive - in some wave-washed island, it may be, with

wide ocean all around him, held by brutish unfeeling men whose chafing prisoner he has become. But now I will give you a prophecy – truth to tell, I am not a prophet, and I have no certainty with omens, but the Deathless Ones have put this into my mind, and I am sure it will happen as I say: Not much longer will he be absent from his own land, not even if iron chains should bind him; he is rich in resource; he will contrive some way of return. But now tell me this, and speak without concealment: full-grown as you are, are you the son of Odysseus himself? Your likeness to him sets me wondering – the head might be his, and the fine eyes; I speak as one who had much to do with him before he embarked for Troy like the other leaders of the Argives – all of them in their hollow ships bound for the same goal; but since that time I have never set eyes upon Odysseus, nor he upon me.'

Thoughtful Telemachus answered her: 'Friend, I will speak as frankly as you desire. My mother says that I am his son, though I myself have no knowledge of it – what man can be sure of his parentage? If only I might have been the child of some happier man whose latter years found him at ease in his own possessions! Instead – think of the most unhappy of mortal men – it is his son I am said to be.'

Athene the goddess answered him: 'If the gods let Penelope bear such a son as you, they did not mean your lineage to be inglorious in time to come. But now tell me this; speak freely. What is this feasting, what is this throng of men? Why must you have such things about you? Is it one man's banquet? Is it a wedding? Certainly it is no such meal as men offer one another in turn. These banqueters in your hall have a swaggering, domineering air. Any man of sense who joined the gathering would stand aghast at all this grossness.'

Thoughtful Telemachus answered her: 'Friend – since you ask me and search things out – this house was doubtless rich and well-ordered as long as Odysseus was in Ithaca. But now the gods have willed otherwise; bent on mischief, they have swept him out of our sight like no other man in the whole world. Had he simply died, I should grieve less – had he perished among his friends in the land of Troy; then all the Achaeans would have heaped up a cairn for him, and then for his son as well as himself he would have won great glory through after-times. But no, the storm-spirits have snatched him ingloriously away; he has passed beyond all

sight and knowledge, bequeathing to me grief and sorrow. Nor is this mourning for my father my only reason for distress; the gods have contrived other troubles for me. The great island chieftains in Dulichium, in Same, in forested Zacynthus, and those who are princes in craggy Ithaca – they have all of them come to woo my mother, and they are devouring my inheritance. And although the thought of marriage is hateful to her, she dare not refuse outright and make an end of it. Meanwhile with their greed they waste my inheritance away, and before long they will bring destruction on myself.'

In deep indignation Pallas answered: 'Unhappy boy! How bitterly do you feel the need of that absent one to put forth his strength against the shameless suitors! Would to heaven we might see Odysseus now, standing at his own house's threshold, back from his wanderings, helmeted, shielded, poising a pair of spears, looking as when I saw him first in my own home, though then he was drinking and making merry. He had been at Ephyra, with Ilus the son of Mermerus, and now he was on his way home; he had sailed with his rapid ship to Ephyra in search of a deadly poison to smear on his arrows' brazen tips. Ilus would not give him the poison, for he stood in awe of the deathless gods; but my own father in his unbounded friendship gave it to him instead. Would to heaven he were here, unchanged, to confront the suitors! They would find death quickly, all of them, and their hoped-for wedding would have a bitter taste. But will he or will he not return to deal retribution in his own house? That must rest on the knees of the gods. As for yourself – I urge you to think of means to banish the suitors from your house. Listen now, and take heed of what I say. When tomorrow comes, call the Achaean chiefs together; make known to them what you have resolved, and let the gods be witnesses to it. Tell the suitors they must disperse to their own estates; as for your mother, supposing her heart is set on marriage, let her go back to her father's house – he is a powerful prince – and her kinsmen will prepare the wedding and charge themselves with the many gifts that go with a beloved daughter.¹ And then for yourself I have special counsel; I

1. Meaning uncertain because of a change in bridal customs (there is also an ambiguous pronoun). At an early period the suitor offered gifts to the bride's kinsmen; later, kinsmen offered a dowry with the bride. An alternative translation might be: 'The suitors will bring about a wedding and provide the many gifts ...'.

think it wise and I hope you will follow it. All too long has your father been away. Take twenty rowers to man the best ship you have, and go to find news of him. Perhaps some human witness will speak; perhaps you will hear some rumour that comes from Zeus, a great source of tidings for mankind. First go to Pylos and question King Nestor there; then to Sparta and yellow-haired Menelaus, for of all the bronze-clad Achaeans he was the last to return home. If you hear that your father is alive and is on his way, you may hold your ground for a year more despite your troubles; but if you hear he is dead and gone, journey back to your own country and raise a cairn to him; then pay him in full his due of funeral honours, and find a new husband for your mother. Having done all these things from first to last, set your wits to work and find some means to kill the suitors in your own halls, whether openly or by stratagem; you must not cling to the childish ways that you have outgrown. Have you not been told what fame Prince Orestes has won throughout the world after slaying his father's murderer, that treacherous Aegisthus who slew majestic Agamemnon? You too, whom I see so tall and handsome, you too, my friend, must show your courage and win fair fame among future men. I myself will go back now to my rapid ship and my own crew, who doubtless are fretting at my delay. This new adventure must be your own; take my words to heart.'

Thoughtful Telemachus answered her: 'Friend, all you say shows concern for me; a father might speak so to his son, and these are words I shall not forget. But I beg of you, wait a little longer, eager though you may be to depart; stay to bathe and enjoy good cheer and be given a present to take aboard triumphantly, something precious and very beautiful to remember me by, a true affectionate parting gift from host to guest.'

Athene the goddess answered him: 'Do not keep me longer, now that I so much wish to go; and as for the gift that you have in mind for me, take out from your store as beautiful a one as you will, and when I come back again give it to me to take home; you will find it brings you ample return.'

With these words the gleaming-eyed goddess left him and took her flight upwards like a bird; but she put in his heart strength and courage, and more than ever she brought his father before his mind. He had seen what she did and was astonished; it came to him that this was a god.

Then the princely boy walked at once towards the suitors. The famous bard was singing to them, and they were listening quietly; his theme was the homecoming of the Achaeans from Troy, and how Athene had made it sorrowful.

His inspired singing broke in on the thoughts of wise Penelope, daughter of Icarius; she had been in the upper part of the house, but now she passed from her own room down the high staircase, not unescorted but with two waiting-women. When the great queen had reached the suitors, she halted beside the pillar that bore the massy roof, her bright headscarf drawn over her cheeks, while her faithful women stood there on either side.

With sudden tears she spoke to the heaven-taught bard: 'Phemius, you know many other lays to beguile men's hearts, deeds of heroes and deeds of gods that the bards sing of; choose one of those and sing it among the suitors here while they drink their wine in silence, but cease from this melancholy lay that always wrings my heart within me, because I more than any other am pierced by sorrow beyond forgetting; so peerless a man is he I mourn for, he I remember always, a man whose fame has gone through the length and breadth of Hellas and of Argos.'

But thoughtful Telemachus answered her: 'Mother, why grudge this faithful bard the right to please us by any path that his fancy takes? In all such things it is not the bards who are accountable; Zeus, it may be, is accountable, when he allots to toiling men whatever is his pleasure for each. If Phemius sings of the sorrows of the Danaans, that is in no way blameworthy, for men will applaud most eagerly whatever song falls freshest upon the listening ear. On your own side rather, heart and mind must be schooled to listen. Odysseus was not the only hero whose day of return was blotted out in the land of Troy; many another fell there also. No, go up to your room again and look to your own province, distaff and loom, and tell your women to ply their task; public speech shall be men's concern, and my concern most of all; authority in this house is mine.'

At this she withdrew to her room in wonder, laying to heart her son's wise words. She mounted with her waiting-women to the upper quarters of the palace, then began weeping for Odysseus, her darling husband, till Athene sent down welcome slumber upon her eyelids.

Meanwhile, in the shadowy halls below, the suitors clamorously

called out, voicing prayers, every one of them, to share her bed and lie beside her. But Telemachus broke in upon them: 'Chieftains who seek to woo my mother, you pass all bounds in your arrogance. Come, for today let us take our pleasure at the feast, and let there be no din of voices; men should be content to listen to such a bard as this, who is godlike in his utterance. But tomorrow morning let us gather and take our seats in the meeting-place; I shall have a forthright message for you. I shall tell you to leave my halls and to look for your feasts elsewhere, changing from house to house to consume possessions that are your own. But if to yourselves it seems a better thing, a more desirable thing, to waste one man's substance and go scot-free - so be it, waste on! I for my part will call aloud on the deathless gods, hoping that Zeus will let requital be made at last; then you will perish in these same halls and it is I who shall go scot-free.'

So he spoke; they all of them bit their lips and wondered at him, so fearless had been his words. But Antinous answered (he was Eupheithes' son): 'Telemachus, it must be the gods themselves who teach you to speak so fearlessly and disdainfully. I pray that it may never be you that Zeus makes ruler in Ithaca, heir to the kingship though you may be.'

Thoughtful Telemachus answered him: 'Antinous, you may resent my words, but if Zeus allowed I would gladly enough accept supremacy. Is that, do you think, the worst evil in the world? Surely kingship is no bad thing; wealth flows into the palace readily, and the name of king brings a man more honour. Nevertheless, in this island of Ithaca there are many princes beside myself, some young, some old; one of these may well gain the kingship, now that great Odysseus is dead. But still I shall reign over my own house and over the slaves that Odysseus once made his prize and left for me.'

Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him: 'Telemachus, if we ask who among the Achaeans is to be king in Ithaca, the answer lies on the knees of the gods. But my hope is that you will keep your inheritance and be lord in your own palace still; heaven forbid that while Ithaca still stands any man should do you violence and rob you of your possessions. But now, dear friend, may I question you on your guest? Where does he come from, what land does he call his own, where are his kindred, where are his native fields? Did he bring some news of your father's home-

coming, or had he some errand of his own? It is strange how he suddenly rose and went, before any of us could come to know him, though by his looks he was no ignoble man.'

Thoughtful Telemachus answered him: 'Eurymachus, doubtless my father's homecoming has been blotted out; I no longer trust the news from here or the news from there; I heed no prophetic message such as my mother seeks when she calls some soothsayer here to question him. No, this is a friend of the house from my father's time; he comes from Taphos; his name, he says, is Mentès, son of Anchialus, and he himself is king of the Taphian oarsmen now.'

So said Telemachus, though in his heart he had known the goddess for an immortal. The suitors meanwhile had turned to dancing and heart-rejoicing music, and taking their pleasure thus, they waited for evening to come on. As they took their pleasure the dusky evening came, and every suitor went back to his own house to sleep. Telemachus had his own room high up in the pleasant courtyard, in a spot with a clear space round it; towards this he walked on his way to rest, while thoughts came thronging through his mind. A faithful servant lighted his way with burning torches - Eurycleia, daughter of Ops, Peisenor's son. Laertes had bought her long ago as a girl, giving twenty oxen's worth of goods for her; in the household he paid her no less regard than he did his wife, but he never lay with her in love, lest the queen should be indignant with him. Among all the maids she was always the fondest of Telemachus; in his childhood she had been his nurse. She it was who lighted his way now. He opened the door of his well-built room, sat down on the bed, took off his soft tunic and handed it to the shrewd old woman. She smoothed the tunic, folded it, and hung it up by the bedstead on a peg; then left the room, pulling the door to by its silver handle and drawing home the bolt by its strap. Telemachus, wrapped in softest wool, meditated inwardly all night the journey counselled him by Athene.

TELEMACHUS DEFIES THE SUITORS

DAWN comes early, with rosy fingers. When she appeared, the son that Odysseus loved sat up to put on his clothes and left his bed, then slung the keen sword about his shoulders, fastened his sandals under his glistening feet and went out from his room, like a god to look upon. At once he ordered the clear-voiced heralds to call the flowing-haired Achaeans to the assembly-place. The heralds made their proclamation and the people soon began to gather. When they were ready – when the assembly-place was filled – Telemachus also took his way there. In his hand was a spear of bronze, beside him were two swift-footed hounds, and Athene shed upon the boy a grace of presence more than human, so that as he came nearer to themselves the people all gazed at him in wonder. He took his place in his father's seat, and the elders made way for him.

The first to speak to those assembled was Lord Aegyptius, bent with age and unfathomably wise. When King Odysseus sailed with his hollow ships, bound for Troy of the noble horses, a son of Aegyptius had gone with him, and this was the spearsman Antiphus; but the savage Cyclops had killed him inside his arching cave, making a meal of him after all the rest. The old lord had three other sons; one of them – Eurynomus – was among the suitors, and the other two saw to their father's farms; but still he never forgot the first in his grief and mourning, and with a tear for him he now spoke in council:

'Men of Ithaca, listen to my words. There has been no council and no assembly here from the day when King Odysseus sailed with his hollow ships. Who has thus called us together now? On whom has there come this pressing need, among our younger men or among our elders? Has our summoner heard some news of a host of men approaching, news he would bring before us clearly as being the first to hear of it? Is there some other public matter which he would tell and apprise us of? A worthy man he must be, I think, a heaven-favoured man. May Zeus bring to accomplishment whatever good thing he has at heart!'

So he spoke, and the son of Odysseus accepted the omen joyfully, nor did he stay seated longer; eager to speak, he stood up

in mid-assembly. The staff of office was put in his hands by Peisenor, a herald versed in the ways of wisdom; then he spoke thus, addressing Aegyptius first:

'Sir, the man you speak of is not far off, as you will now find. It was I who summoned the people here, because of a thing that bears hard upon me. I have heard no news of a host approaching, news I might bring before you as having myself first learned of it, nor is there any other public matter I wish to tell and apprise you of. The business is my own. Evil has fallen upon my house – a double evil. First I have lost my noble father, who once was king among all you here and ruled you as gently as a father; then something far worse has befallen me, which before long will ruin my house altogether and bring to nothing my means of living. My mother, greatly to her distress, has been beset by suitors, sons of the greatest nobles here. They dare not go to the house of Icarius her father so that he in person might receive bride-gifts for his daughter,¹ giving her to any suitor he pleased who was acceptable to herself. Instead, they haunt my palace day in, day out; they slaughter my sheep and oxen and fatted goats; they make merry here, they selfishly drink the glowing wine, and thus abundance of things is wasted. All this is because there is no man left with the mettle of Odysseus to ward off ruin from the house. I myself am not able to ward it off; I fear I shall always be a weakling, with no skill to resist at all. Had I the strength, I would take my stand gladly enough, because these men's deeds and the havoc they make of my possessions are beyond all justice, beyond endurance. Do you feel no self-reproach yourselves, no shame for the reproach of your neighbours, of those who live all around you here? You should shrink from the anger of the gods; the gods in their indignation may bring your misdoings down on your own heads. I appeal to you by Olympian Zeus himself, I appeal by Themis, who convenes men's councils and dissolves them, cease from these ways, you men of Ithaca, and leave me unmolested to pine away in my bitter grief. Or can it be that Odysseus my noble father once did in malice some harm to the Achaeans for which in counter-malice you take your revenge on me by hounding on these men against me? Better for me that you yourselves should devour my cattle and hoarded

1. As on p. 7 there is some ambiguity because of a change in bridal customs. Perhaps 'might offer a dowry with his daughter'.