



CLASSICAL WISDOM WEEKLY PRESENTS

DEATH

**AN ANTHOLOGY OF DEATH, SPIRITUALITY, AND
MYSTICISM FROM THE CLASSICAL AGE**

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FOREWORD

BY NICOLE SALDARRIAGA

What happens when we die? It is a question that encompasses centuries of argument, religious doctrine, and mysticism. It seems that as long as humans have attempted to understand the complexities of life, they have also longed to understand what happens when life ends.

Of course, much of what is believed—throughout history and in modern times—about death and the afterlife is heavily informed by religion and the inherently spiritual belief in the existence of the soul (the part of us that separates from the body at the moment of death and travels to this otherworld). However, it is also true that the afterlife is not solely shaped by religious institutions or beliefs—it seems to also be heavily influenced by cultural preoccupations, norms, and collective values.

In terms of classical antiquity, this phenomenon is wonderfully and easily observable in many key literary sources that have survived (and continue to be popular) to this day. *The Odyssey* and *the Aeneid*, for example, both include some incredibly detailed descriptions not just of the Underworld itself, but also of what a hero must do to visit the realm of the dead and survive the journey. By taking a closer look at these two examples (not that they are the only ones—classical literature is rife with discussions of death and the Underworld) we can get a suitable idea of how the Greco-Roman Underworld was shaped by cultural practices and norms, and how this in turn can give us some clues as to what those societies really valued.

But first, let's take a quick look at what the ancients believed happened to us once we were shuffled off this mortal coil.

According to classical mythology, the Underworld (also called Hades after the god who ruled it) was a physical place to which the souls of the dead travelled after being separated from their bodies at the moment of death. This is important—the Underworld was not considered another dimension or a different spiritual plane, but a very real physical space that was brushing up against our own world. Most people believed that Hades was simply hidden deep in the earth—all you had to do was look at your feet and, in a way, you were looking at the realm of the dead (this is also part of the reason why honoring or appeasing the

dead involved pouring libations like wine or honey directly onto the ground). Others believed that the entrance to Hades was just beyond the very edge of the ocean—meaning, of course, that you could theoretically sail there, if you had the chops to do so.

No matter what was believed about the specific geographical location of the Underworld, it's clear that it was very, very real—real enough for the living to touch. There are several famous cases in myths in where the hero or heroine has to prove himself or herself by visiting the Underworld for whatever reason. Orpheus, Psyche, Hercules, and Odysseus are just a few examples of classical characters that walked the gloomy road to the underworld in order to convene with the dead.

Though many classical authors have their own interpretations of the Underworld's geography, there are some constants that shape the Greco-Roman Underworld as we know it today. Many of us have heard, for example, of the five rivers of the Underworld (the Acheron, Styx, Lethe, Cocytus, Phlegethon, and Oceanus), of Charon, the ferryman who transports souls across the Acheron (or the Styx, in some accounts) into the Underworld proper, of Cerberus, the massive three-headed dog that guards the entrance to the Underworld, etc. It was also generally believed that the Underworld was divided into three realms: The Fields of Asphodel, The Elysian Fields, and Tartarus. In the Fields of Asphodel there were the average-joe souls, who were neither really bad nor particularly spectacular in life. In the beautiful Elysian Fields were the souls of the really-amazing (the heroes and warriors, for example). Then there was Tartarus, a place of eternal punishment for the souls of those who were seriously awful in life or who had offended the gods.

You are undoubtedly already familiar with a few classical figures who were unlucky enough to end up in the pits of Tartarus. King Sisyphus was forced, for all of eternity, to roll a heavy boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down the hill once he had crested the peak. There was also the King Tantalus, who killed his son Pelops, boiled him, and fed him as food to the gods, who was forced to stand in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree. Every time he reached up to grasp the fruit, the branches raised the food so it was just out of his reach. Every time he bent over to drink, the water receded.

So, how does this ancient conception of the afterlife show us what was really important to classical society? It's all in the details. Let's take the *Odyssey* for example. In Book XI of Homer's masterpiece, Odysseus visits the Underworld

in order to talk with the soul of Tiresias, the Theban prophet, who would hopefully give him some advice and wisdom that would finally get Odysseus home. It's really in Book X, however, in which the sorceress Circe tells Odysseus how to reach the Underworld and what to do once there, in which we can see some really interesting connections between the Underworld and ancient Greek life.

Circe tells Odysseus that to reach Hades, he need simply open his sails and let the North Wind guide his ship until he crosses the "Ocean"—in other words, until he sails to the end of the world—and there his ship will beach against the shore of Persephone's forest, the outer edge of Hades. This particular method of gaining entrance to the otherworld is interesting in that it reflects the all-important themes of sea-travel and wandering which define the *Odyssey* and made the tale incredibly important to early Greek sea-faring culture. To reach the Underworld, Odysseus and his men must ultimately surrender themselves to a wandering path. They must allow the wind to define their wandering course, and travel farther than any man has ever sailed. In many ways, then, Odysseus's journey to Hades is as much a journey of exotic exploration as his ten-year journey home.

The highly detailed and precise instructions that Odysseus must follow once he reaches the Underworld are an even stronger example of typical Greek culture. According to Circe, Odysseus must dig a precisely measured trench, pour offerings of five kinds (milk, honey, wine, water, and barley) around the trench, then sacrifice a ram and black ewe over the trench so that their blood falls into it. It is only after making these promises and offerings that the souls of the dead will approach Odysseus. The specificity of these instructions—down to the size of the trench he must dig, the order in which he must pour out his libations, and the direction in which he must face while sacrificing the animals—lends insight into the importance of ritual, which was not only seen by the Ancient Greeks as a necessary way of appealing to and appeasing the gods and the dead, but also had to be performed correctly or was essentially meaningless (or worse, an insult).

Evidence of this is seen throughout Greek literature, in everything from mythology to comedic plays to Plato's dialogues. That Odysseus's admittance to the Underworld and his ability to speak with its inhabitants is dependent upon this concept of meticulously performed gift-ritual also speaks to the ancient belief that the gods and the dead had the potential to become angry with the living if the living did not respectfully perform their ritualistic duties. This includes, of course, proper burial of the dead, a concept also emphasized during Odysseus's Underworld journey. Once Odysseus performs the necessary rituals and is met by a procession of dead souls, the first soul to reach him is that of Elpenor, one

of Odysseus's comrades who died on Circe's island and was left unburied. The shade is quick to remind Odysseus that he must bury the dead properly or risk angering the gods. Furthermore, Elpenor is the only soul capable of speaking with Odysseus without first drinking from the trench filled with sheep's blood (a process that seems to reanimate the "witless" dead)—which suggests that Elpenor has not crossed completely into the Underworld. This supports the Greco-Roman belief that the souls of the unburied (or the improperly buried) would not be given access to the Underworld and would be forced to wander—a situation that not only placed the living in danger of being haunted, but also insulted and angered the gods.

Also important is Odysseus's eventual interaction with the shade of Achilles—who plainly tells him that he'd rather be a poor farmhand than the glorious ruler of all the dead—and Odysseus's interaction with the soul of his own mother, who tells him that she died of grief as she waited for Odysseus's homecoming. Both interactions suggest changing cultural attitudes about glory and war. Although Achilles was applauded in the *Iliad* for choosing to die gloriously in war rather than live a long life in obscurity, in the *Odyssey*, the message seems to be that he made the wrong choice. The deeply emotional quality of Odysseus's interaction with his mother also places cultural importance on family, homecomings, and reunions, rather than glorious deaths on the battlefield. There is no glory in the Underworld, where the dead flit around without memories or consciousness unless they happen to be temporarily reanimated by a taste of sacrificial blood, and there are certainly no homecomings—three times Odysseus attempts to hold his mother in his arms, and three times his arms pass through her, ineffective. All of these details—the directions to the Underworld, the rules which govern it, the despair of the unburied, the souls' total lack of memory and thus identity, and the regret of those who were too quick to let life slip away—come together to give us a rather dreary picture of the Underworld. More importantly, this bleak Underworld functions as a kind of potent concentration of the themes that permeate the whole epic—wandering, exploration, ritual responsibility, responsibility to family and comrades over personal glory, the exhaustion and futility of war, the joy of homecoming—themes that would never have been explored had they not been important to the collective cultural mind of the time.

Of course, it isn't just the Homeric afterlife that was shaped by cultural preoccupations. The same can be said for Virgil's afterlife, presented in Book VI of his magnum opus, the *Aeneid*. Like Homer's, Virgil's afterlife is largely shaped by the concepts of responsibility and duty, but it also brings into play a third "lofty" theme: destiny. Aeneas, whose fate and responsibility is to found the set-

tlement that will become the city of Rome, is told in a dream that he must visit the soul of his father in the land of the dead before attempting to complete this divinely sanctioned mission. To do this, Aeneas visits the Sybil—the prophetic priestess of Apollo—in the hopes that she will guide him into and through the Underworld. She tells him that this will only be possible if Aeneas completes two tasks. He must first find a golden bough, growing from a seemingly normal tree in a dense forest. If he does so, and it breaks off easily in his hand, it is a sign that Fate wills his visit to the Underworld. Then he must properly bury the body of a friend who, like Elpenor in the *Odyssey*, lies unburied and is thus ritually polluting Aeneas and his entire fleet.

That Aeneas must complete these tasks before he is even considered worthy of entering the Underworld speaks to the importance, in Roman culture, of fate and ritual. The importance given in both Ancient Greek and Roman society to the proper burial of the dead suggests a cultural preoccupation with familial-social responsibility (burial has always been an essential custom not just for its religious implications but also for its importance as a hygienic practice); and Fate, we know from a vast array of classical literary examples, was considered by Greco-Roman society to be utterly inescapable. It is no wonder, then, that these concepts became essential aspects of the “politics” of the afterlife.

Of course, Virgil’s depiction of Hades takes these themes of duty and destiny even further, beyond the need to properly bury the dead. The epic as a whole is about Aeneas’s duty to fulfill his fate and found Rome, and his (fated) presence in the Underworld is largely for the purpose of boosting his weakened morale and encouraging him to, in a sense, “get on with it.” With this goal in mind, the soul of Aeneas’ father shows Aeneas a large group of souls that will eventually be reincarnated as Aeneas’ descendants. The inclusion of this principle of reincarnation (or metempsychosis, as it was referred to in ancient Greek thought) in Virgil’s description of the Underworld is particularly interesting in that it further emphasizes the cultural importance of Fate. Reincarnation, in as much as it is a “force” that “chooses” a particular soul to be sent back to a particular new body, is simply an extension of Fate—a cosmic power that “chooses” the outcome of history. In this way, all of Rome’s history—its glory and success—was written out by an inescapable power before the city had even been founded. Thus, Virgil’s particular conception of the Underworld and its process of metempsychosis reflects (and was largely shaped by) Roman pride and patriotism. In fact, it can be argued that Book VI is essentially Virgil’s opportunity to give a brief history of Rome’s elite—each of whom is heavily praised and honored—all with the purpose of glorifying Rome.

In fact, the importance of Rome as a city—and the particular experience of city-life with all its positives and negatives—may have done much to shape the physical topography of Virgil’s Underworld as well. Unlike Odysseus, Aeneas has the opportunity to actually travel through Hades, rather than wait on its outskirts. He is thus able to see for himself the different realms that were believed to exist in the Underworld. Tartarus is described as a fortress with gates of iron, creaking chains, adamantine walls and columns. This imagery is city-imagery. “Hell” is not a dreary wood or a shapeless pit of fire—instead it reflects the uniquely Roman experience of crowded city life and its particular nuisances. The same concepts hold true for Virgil’s description of the Elysian Fields (the equivalent to Christian heaven, where the blessed souls dwell). According to Virgil, in the “fresh green fields” of the blessed souls take advantage of the grassy wrestling rings, they dance or chant songs, they lie in the soft grass, and even the horses of the warriors are set free to roam and graze wherever they like.”

This poses a significant contrast to the city-imagery of Tartarus, and the fact that this idyllic country-side imagery functions as an afterlife ideal (the ideal “forever-resting-place”) again speaks to the particular Roman experience of city-life, which had the potential to be as difficult and squalid as it was progressive and sumptuous. As in the *Odyssey*, then, in the *Aeneid* one can see the particular cultural preoccupations and experiences of the ancients literally shape and define their conception of the afterlife.

So, why should this phenomenon matter to us now? Obviously it can give us some insight into the values of these ancient societies, and that’s always important, but the best reason is really that in many ways, we still “do” this today. If we examine our own modern conception of the afterlife (whether it’s a religious conception or a more generally “spiritual” conception) and especially the books, movies, and other forms of entertainment about the afterlife that have been made in the last twenty years, we can pick out clearly all the things that have come to matter to our society (for example, emotional closure, the eradication of bullying, and better respect for women). Someday, someone may be looking back at these books and movies in an attempt to form a better, fuller picture of our society, just as we do with texts from Ancient Greece and Rome

Our questions about death, then, are monumentally important. It’s a lens through which we can look at a culture, a different perspective that helps us get a fuller picture. With that in mind, we give you this “death anthology”.

Included in this collection, you will indeed find the selections from *The Odyssey*

and *The Aeneid*, which we have, by this point, discussed at length. However, you will also find numerous other selections from the classical canon.

Ahead, you will find selections from the Roman philosopher Lucretius, an Epicurean-inspired thinker who believed that it was irrational to fear death, and viewed our dread of death (a “death angst”) as the truest barrier to our own happiness.

You will also find selections from the Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides. The former recounts the tale of Solon and King Croesus, which describes the seemingly preposterous idea that we can only know if a person is truly happy once he or she is dead. The latter narrates the funeral oration of the Statesman Pericles during the early years of the Peloponnesian War. Pericles glorifies the dead soldiers and holds up their sacrifice as the mortar that has, for so long, propped up the Athenian city and allowed it to thrive.

There are also selections from the philosopher Plato, a writer who recounts the final moments of the life of his teacher, Socrates, a man endowed with the title “The Father of Western Philosophy.”

We give you these selections, and more, in the hopes that they will not only give you a fuller picture of the classical human condition, but also the tools to seek a fuller understanding of our own.

-Nicole Saldarriaga (June, 2016)

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

HOMER

THE ODYSSEY, BOOK XI

TRANSLATED BY SAMUEL BUTLER

In book XI of The Odyssey, which has received the nickname “The Book of the Dead”, Odysseus follows the instructions of the witch, Circe, and travels to the river Oceanus in the land of the Cimmerians.

Here, Odysseus must concoct an exotic brew of honey, milk, wine, and the blood of two sacrificial sheep. In doing so, he will attract the ghosts of long-dead heroes and be allowed to visit with some favorites like Ajax, Achilles, and even Agamemnon.

The official reason for Odysseus’ assembly with these departed souls is so that he might confer with the blind prophet, Tiresias, and learn of the best way to continue his voyage home to Ithaca.

This task, however, is taken care of rather quickly. With his official purpose fulfilled, Odysseus spends the rest of his time reacquainting with old friends and comrades. What follows is a who’s who of characters from classical literature and ancient mythology alike.

The purpose of these meetings seems to be purely for the benefit of the reader who may have been pondering the fate of the souls of particular characters who died, often violently, before the events of The Odyssey.

Is Achilles satisfied with his legacy as a warrior? Does Ajax regret taking his own life? How is it that Agamemnon, King of the Greeks, came to dwell in the halls of Hades? All this and more will be answered.



Then, when we had got down to the sea shore we drew our ship into the water and got her mast and sails into her; we also put the sheep on board and took our places, weeping and in great distress of mind. Circe, that great and cunning goddess, sent us a fair wind that blew dead aft and stayed steadily with us keeping our sails all the time well filled; so we did whatever wanted doing to the ship's gear and let her go as the wind and helmsman headed her. All day long her sails were full as she held her course over the sea, but when the sun went down and darkness was over all the earth, we got into the deep waters of the river Oceanus, where lie the land and city of the Cimmerians who live enshrouded in mist and darkness which the rays of the sun never pierce neither at his rising nor as he goes down again out of the heavens, but the poor wretches live in one long melancholy night. When we got there we beached the ship, took the sheep out of her, and went along by the waters of Oceanus till we came to the place of which Circe had told us.

Here Perimedes and Eurylochus held the victims, while I drew my sword and dug the trench a cubit each way. I made a drink-offering to all the dead, first with honey and milk, then with wine, and thirdly with water, and I sprinkled white barley meal over the whole, praying earnestly to the poor feckless ghosts, and promising them that when I got back to Ithaca I would sacrifice a barren heifer for them, the best I had, and would load the pyre with good things. I also particularly promised that Teiresias should have a black sheep to himself, the best in all my flocks. When I had prayed sufficiently to the dead, I cut the throats of the two sheep and let the blood run into the trench, whereon the ghosts came trooping up from Erebus- brides, young bachelors, old men worn out with toil, maids who had been crossed in love, and brave men who had been killed in battle, with their armour still smirched with blood; they came from every quarter and flitted round the trench with a strange kind of screaming sound that made me turn pale with fear. When I saw them coming I told the men to be quick and flay the carcasses of the two dead sheep and make burnt offerings of them, and at the same time to repeat prayers to Hades and to Proserpine; but I sat where I was with my sword drawn and would not let the poor feckless ghosts come near the blood till Teiresias should have answered my questions.

The first ghost 'that came was that of my comrade Elpenor, for he had not yet been laid beneath the earth. We had left his body unwoke and unburied in Circe's house, for we had had too much else to do. I was very sorry for him, and cried when I saw him: 'Elpenor,' said I, 'how did you come down here into this gloom and darkness? You have here on foot quicker than I have with my ship.'

“‘Sir,’ he answered with a groan, ‘it was all bad luck, and my own unspeakable drunkenness. I was lying asleep on the top of Circe’s house, and never thought of coming down again by the great staircase but fell right off the roof and broke my neck, so my soul down to the house of Hades. And now I beseech you by all those whom you have left behind you, though they are not here, by your wife, by the father who brought you up when you were a child, and by Telemachus who is the one hope of your house, do what I shall now ask you. I know that when you leave this limbo you will again hold your ship for the Aeaean island. Do not go thence leaving me unawaked and unburied behind you, or I may bring heaven’s anger upon you; but burn me with whatever armour I have, build a barrow for me on the sea shore, that may tell people in days to come what a poor unlucky fellow I was, and plant over my grave the oar I used to row with when I was yet alive and with my messmates.’ And I said, ‘My poor fellow, I will do all that you have asked of me.’

Thus, then, did we sit and hold sad talk with one another, I on the one side of the trench with my sword held over the blood, and the ghost of my comrade saying all this to me from the other side. Then came the ghost of my dead mother Anticlea, daughter to Autolycus.

I had left her alive when I set out for Troy and was moved to tears when I saw her, but even so, for all my sorrow I would not let her come near the blood till I had asked my questions of Teiresias.

Then came also the ghost of Theban Teiresias, with his golden sceptre in his hand. He knew me and said, ‘Ulysses, noble son of Laertes, why, poor man, have you left the light of day and come down to visit the dead in this sad place? Stand back from the trench and withdraw your sword that I may drink of the blood and answer your questions truly.’

So I drew back, and sheathed my sword, whereon when he had drank of the blood he began with his prophecy.

“‘You want to know,’ said he, ‘about your return home, but heaven will make this hard for you. I do not think that you will escape the eye of Neptune, who still nurses his bitter grudge against you for having blinded his son. Still, after much suffering you may get home if you can restrain yourself and your companions when your ship reaches the Thrinacian island, where you will find the sheep and cattle belonging to the sun, who sees and gives ear to everything. If you leave these flocks unharmed and think of nothing but of getting home, you may yet

after much hardship reach Ithaca; but if you harm them, then I forewarn you of the destruction both of your ship and of your men. Even though you may yourself escape, you will return in bad plight after losing all your men, [in another man's ship, and you will find trouble in your house, which will be overrun by high-handed people, who are devouring your substance under the pretext of paying court and making presents to your wife.

“When you get home you will take your revenge on these suitors; and after you have killed them by force or fraud in your own house, you must take a well-made oar and carry it on and on, till you come to a country where the people have never heard of the sea and do not even mix salt with their food, nor do they know anything about ships, and oars that are as the wings of a ship. I will give you this certain token which cannot escape your notice. A wayfarer will meet you and will say it must be a winnowing shovel that you have got upon your shoulder; on this you must fix the oar in the ground and sacrifice a ram, a bull, and a boar to Neptune. Then go home and offer hecatombs to an the gods in heaven one after the other. As for yourself, death shall come to you from the sea, and your life shall ebb away very gently when you are full of years and peace of mind, and your people shall bless you. All that I have said will come true].”

“This,” I answered, “must be as it may please heaven, but tell me and tell me and tell me true, I see my poor mother’s ghost close by us; she is sitting by the blood without saying a word, and though I am her own son she does not remember me and speak to me; tell me, Sir, how I can make her know me.”

“That,” said he, “I can soon do Any ghost that you let taste of the blood will talk with you like a reasonable being, but if you do not let them have any blood they will go away again.”

On this the ghost of Teiresias went back to the house of Hades, for his prophecyings had now been spoken, but I sat still where I was until my mother came up and tasted the blood. Then she knew me at once and spoke fondly to me, saying, “My son, how did you come down to this abode of darkness while you are still alive? It is a hard thing for the living to see these places, for between us and them there are great and terrible waters, and there is Oceanus, which no man can cross on foot, but he must have a good ship to take him. Are you all this time trying to find your way home from Troy, and have you never yet got back to Ithaca nor seen your wife in your own house?”

““Mother,” said I, “I was forced to come here to consult the ghost of the Theban

prophet Teiresias. I have never yet been near the Achaean land nor set foot on my native country, and I have had nothing but one long series of misfortunes from the very first day that I set out with Agamemnon for Ilius, the land of noble steeds, to fight the Trojans. But tell me, and tell me true, in what way did you die? Did you have a long illness, or did heaven vouchsafe you a gentle easy passage to eternity? Tell me also about my father, and the son whom I left behind me; is my property still in their hands, or has some one else got hold of it, who thinks that I shall not return to claim it? Tell me again what my wife intends doing, and in what mind she is; does she live with my son and guard my estate securely, or has she made the best match she could and married again?’

My mother answered, “Your wife still remains in your house, but she is in great distress of mind and spends her whole time in tears both night and day. No one as yet has got possession of your fine property, and Telemachus still holds your lands undisturbed. He has to entertain largely, as of course he must, considering his position as a magistrate, and how every one invites him; your father remains at his old place in the country and never goes near the town. He has no comfortable bed nor bedding; in the winter he sleeps on the floor in front of the fire with the men and goes about all in rags, but in summer, when the warm weather comes on again, he lies out in the vineyard on a bed of vine leaves thrown anyhow upon the ground. He grieves continually about your never having come home, and suffers more and more as he grows older. As for my own end it was in this wise: heaven did not take me swiftly and painlessly in my own house, nor was I attacked by any illness such as those that generally wear people out and kill them, but my longing to know what you were doing and the force of my affection for you- this it was that was the death of me.’

Then I tried to find some way of embracing my mother’s ghost. Thrice I sprang towards her and tried to clasp her in my arms, but each time she flitted from my embrace as it were a dream or phantom, and being touched to the quick I said to her, ‘Mother, why do you not stay still when I would embrace you? If we could throw our arms around one another we might find sad comfort in the sharing of our sorrows even in the house of Hades; does Proserpine want to lay a still further load of grief upon me by mocking me with a phantom only?’

“My son,” she answered, “most ill-fated of all mankind, it is not Proserpine that is beguiling you, but all people are like this when they are dead. The sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together; these perish in the fierceness of consuming fire as soon as life has left the body, and the soul flits away as though it were a dream. Now, however, go back to the light of day as soon as you can, and note all these things that you may tell them to your wife hereafter.”

Thus did we converse, and anon Proserpine sent up the ghosts of the wives and daughters of all the most famous men. They gathered in crowds about the blood, and I considered how I might question them severally.

In the end I deemed that it would be best to draw the keen blade that hung by my sturdy thigh, and keep them from all drinking the blood at once. So they came up one after the other, and each one as I questioned her told me her race and lineage.

The first I saw was Tyro. She was daughter of Salmoneus and wife of Cretheus the son of Aeolus. She fell in love with the river Enipeus who is much the most beautiful river in the whole world. Once when she was taking a walk by his side as usual, Neptune, disguised as her lover, lay with her at the mouth of the river, and a huge blue wave arched itself like a mountain over them to hide both woman and god, whereon he loosed her virgin girdle and laid her in a deep slumber. When the god had accomplished the deed of love, he took her hand in his own and said, 'Tyro, rejoice in all good will; the embraces of the gods are not fruitless, and you will have fine twins about this time twelve months. Take great care of them. I am Neptune, so now go home, but hold your tongue and do not tell any one.'

Then he dived under the sea, and she in due course bore Pelias and Neleus, who both of them served Jove with all their might. Pelias was a great breeder of sheep and lived in Iolcus, but the other lived in Pylos. The rest of her children were by Cretheus, namely, Aeson, Pheres, and Amythaon, who was a mighty warrior and charioteer.

Next to her I saw Antiope, daughter to Asopus, who could boast of having slept in the arms of even Jove himself, and who bore him two sons Amphion and Zethus. These founded Thebes with its seven gates, and built a wall all round it; for strong though they were they could not hold Thebes till they had walled it.

Then I saw Alcmena, the wife of Amphitryon, who also bore to Jove indomitable Hercules; and Megara who was daughter to great King Creon, and married the redoubtable son of Amphitryon.

I also saw fair Epicaste mother of king Oedipodes whose awful lot it was to marry her own son without suspecting it. He married her after having killed his father, but the gods proclaimed the whole story to the world; whereon he remained king of Thebes, in great grief for the spite the gods had borne him;

but Epicaste went to the house of the mighty jailor Hades, having hanged herself for grief, and the avenging spirits haunted him as for an outraged mother- to his ruing bitterly thereafter.

Then I saw Chloris, whom Neleus married for her beauty, having given priceless presents for her. She was youngest daughter to Amphion son of Iasus and king of Mynan Orchomenus, and was Queen in Pylos. She bore Nestor, Chromius, and Periclymenus, and she also bore that marvelously lovely woman Pero, who was wooed by all the country round; but Neleus would only give her to him who should raid the cattle of Iphicles from the grazing grounds of Phylace, and this was a hard task. The only man who would undertake to raid them was a certain excellent seer, but the will of heaven was against him, for the rangers of the cattle caught him and put him in prison; nevertheless when a full year had passed and the same season came round again, Iphicles set him at liberty, after he had expounded all the oracles of heaven. Thus, then, was the will of Jove accomplished.

And I saw Leda the wife of Tyndarus, who bore him two famous sons, Castor breaker of horses, and Pollux the mighty boxer. Both these heroes are lying under the earth, though they are still alive, for by a special dispensation of Jove, they die and come to life again, each one of them every other day throughout all time, and they have the rank of gods.

After her I saw Iphimedeia wife of Aloeus who boasted the embrace of Neptune. She bore two sons Otus and Ephialtes, but both were short lived. They were the finest children that were ever born in this world, and the best looking, Orion only excepted; for at nine years old they were nine fathoms high, and measured nine cubits round the chest. They threatened to make war with the gods in Olympus, and tried to set Mount Ossa on the top of Mount Olympus, and Mount Pelion on the top of Ossa, that they might scale heaven itself, and they would have done it too if they had been grown up, but Apollo, son of Leto, killed both of them, before they had got so much as a sign of hair upon their cheeks or chin.

Then I saw Phaedra, and Procris, and fair Ariadne daughter of the magician Minos, whom Theseus was carrying off from Crete to Athens, but he did not enjoy her, for before he could do so Diana killed her in the island of Dia on account of what Bacchus had said against her.

I also saw Maera and Clymene and hateful Eriphyle, who sold her own husband for gold. But it would take me all night if I were to name every single one of the

wives and daughters of heroes whom I saw, and it is time for me to go to bed, either on board ship with my crew, or here. As for my escort, heaven and yourselves will see to it.”

Here he ended, and the guests sat all of them enthralled and speechless throughout the covered cloister. Then Arete said to them:

“What do you think of this man, O Phaeacians? Is he not tall and good looking, and is he not Clever? True, he is my own guest, but all of you share in the distinction. Do not he a hurry to send him away, nor niggardly in the presents you make to one who is in such great need, for heaven has blessed all of you with great abundance.”

Then spoke the aged hero Echeneus who was one of the oldest men among them, “My friends,” said he, “what our august queen has just said to us is both reasonable and to the purpose, therefore be persuaded by it; but the decision whether in word or deed rests ultimately with King Alcinous.”

“The thing shall be done,” exclaimed Alcinous, “as surely as I still live and reign over the Phaeacians. Our guest is indeed very anxious to get home, still we must persuade him to remain with us until to-morrow, by which time I shall be able to get together the whole sum that I mean to give him. As regards- his escort it will be a matter for you all, and mine above all others as the chief person among you.”

And Ulysses answered, “King Alcinous, if you were to bid me to stay here for a whole twelve months, and then speed me on my way, loaded with your noble gifts, I should obey you gladly and it would redound greatly to my advantage, for I should return fuller-handed to my own people, and should thus be more respected and beloved by all who see me when I get back to Ithaca.”

“Ulysses,” replied Alcinous, “not one of us who sees you has any idea that you are a charlatan or a swindler. I know there are many people going about who tell such plausible stories that it is very hard to see through them, but there is a style about your language which assures me of your good disposition. Moreover you have told the story of your own misfortunes, and those of the Argives, as though you were a practiced bard; but tell me, and tell me true, whether you saw any of the mighty heroes who went to Troy at the same time with yourself, and perished there. The evenings are still at their longest, and it is not yet bed time- go on, therefore, with your divine story, for I could stay here listening till to-morrow morning, so long as you will continue to tell us of your adventures.”

“Alcinous,” answered Ulysses, “there is a time for making speeches, and a time for going to bed; nevertheless, since you so desire, I will not refrain from telling you the still sadder tale of those of my comrades who did not fall fighting with the Trojans, but perished on their return, through the treachery of a wicked woman.

“When Proserpine had dismissed the female ghosts in all directions, the ghost of Agamemnon son of Atreus came sadly up to me, surrounded by those who had perished with him in the house of Aegisthus. As soon as he had tasted the blood he knew me, and weeping bitterly stretched out his arms towards me to embrace me; but he had no strength nor substance any more, and I too wept and pitied him as I beheld him.

‘How did you come by your death,’ said I, ‘King Agamemnon? Did Neptune raise his winds and waves against you when you were at sea, or did your enemies make an end of you on the mainland when you were cattle-lifting or sheep-stealing, or while they were fighting in defence of their wives and city?’

“‘Ulysses,’ he answered, ‘noble son of Laertes, was not lost at sea in any storm of Neptune’s raising, nor did my foes despatch me upon the mainland, but Aegisthus and my wicked wife were the death of me between them. He asked me to his house, feasted me, and then butchered me most miserably as though I were a fat beast in a slaughter house, while all around me my comrades were slain like sheep or pigs for the wedding breakfast, or picnic, or gorgeous banquet of some great nobleman. You must have seen numbers of men killed either in a general engagement, or in single combat, but you never saw anything so truly pitiable as the way in which we fell in that cloister, with the mixing-bowl and the loaded tables lying all about, and the ground reeking with our-blood. I heard Priam’s daughter Cassandra scream as Clytemnestra killed her close beside me. I lay dying upon the earth with the sword in my body, and raised my hands to kill the slut of a murderess, but she slipped away from me; she would not even close my lips nor my eyes when I was dying, for there is nothing in this world so cruel and so shameless as a woman when she has fallen into such guilt as hers was. Fancy murdering her own husband! I thought I was going to be welcomed home by my children and my servants, but her abominable crime has brought disgrace on herself and all women who shall come after- even on the good ones.’

“And I said, ‘In truth Jove has hated the house of Atreus from first to last in the matter of their women’s counsels. See how many of us fell for Helen’s sake, and now it seems that Clytemnestra hatched mischief against too during your absence.’

“‘Be sure, therefore,’ continued Agamemnon, ‘and not be too friendly even with your own wife. Do not tell her all that you know perfectly well yourself. Tell her a part only, and keep your own counsel about the rest. Not that your wife, Ulysses, is likely to murder you, for Penelope is a very admirable woman, and has an excellent nature. We left her a young bride with an infant at her breast when we set out for Troy. This child no doubt is now grown up happily to man’s estate, and he and his father will have a joyful meeting and embrace one another as it is right they should do, whereas my wicked wife did not even allow me the happiness of looking upon my son, but killed me ere I could do so. Furthermore I say- and lay my saying to your heart- do not tell people when you are bringing your ship to Ithaca, but steal a march upon them, for after all this there is no trusting women. But now tell me, and tell me true, can you give me any news of my son Orestes? Is he in Orchomenus, or at Pylos, or is he at Sparta with Menelaus- for I presume that he is still living.’

“And I said, ‘Agamemnon, why do you ask me? I do not know whether your son is alive or dead, and it is not right to talk when one does not know.’

“As we two sat weeping and talking thus sadly with one another the ghost of Achilles came up to us with Patroclus, Antilochus, and Ajax who was the finest and goodliest man of all the Danaans after the son of Peleus. The fleet descendant of Aeacus knew me and spoke piteously, saying, ‘Ulysses, noble son of Laertes, what deed of daring will you undertake next, that you venture down to the house of Hades among us silly dead, who are but the ghosts of them that can labour no more?’

“And I said, ‘Achilles, son of Peleus, foremost champion of the Achaeans, I came to consult Teiresias, and see if he could advise me about my return home to Ithaca, for I have never yet been able to get near the Achaean land, nor to set foot in my own country, but have been in trouble all the time. As for you, Achilles, no one was ever yet so fortunate as you have been, nor ever will be, for you were adored by all us Argives as long as you were alive, and now that you are here you are a great prince among the dead. Do not, therefore, take it so much to heart even if you are dead.’

“‘Say not a word,’ he answered, ‘in death’s favour; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man’s house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead. But give me news about son; is he gone to the wars and will he be a great soldier, or is this not so? Tell me also if you have heard anything about my father Peleus- does he still rule among the Myrmidons, or do they show him no respect

throughout Hellas and Phthia now that he is old and his limbs fail him? Could I but stand by his side, in the light of day, with the same strength that I had when I killed the bravest of our foes upon the plain of Troy- could I but be as I then was and go even for a short time to my father's house, any one who tried to do him violence or supersede him would soon me it.'

"I have heard nothing,' I answered, 'of Peleus, but I can tell you all about your son Neoptolemus, for I took him in my own ship from Scyros with the Achaeans. In our councils of war before Troy he was always first to speak, and his judgement was unerring. Nestor and I were the only two who could surpass him; and when it came to fighting on the plain of Troy, he would never remain with the body of his men, but would dash on far in front, foremost of them all in valour. Many a man did he kill in battle- I cannot name every single one of those whom he slew while fighting on the side of the Argives, but will only say how he killed that valiant hero Eurypylos son of Telephus, who was the handsomest man I ever saw except Memnon; many others also of the Ceteians fell around him by reason of a woman's bribes. Moreover, when all the bravest of the Argives went inside the horse that Epeus had made, and it was left to me to settle when we should either open the door of our ambuscade, or close it, though all the other leaders and chief men among the Danaans were drying their eyes and quaking in every limb, I never once saw him turn pale nor wipe a tear from his cheek; he was all the time urging me to break out from the horse- grasping the handle of his sword and his bronze-shod spear, and breathing fury against the foe. Yet when we had sacked the city of Priam he got his handsome share of the prize money and went on board (such is the fortune of war) without a wound upon him, neither from a thrown spear nor in close combat, for the rage of Mars is a matter of great chance.'

"When I had told him this, the ghost of Achilles strode off across a meadow full of asphodel, exulting over what I had said concerning the prowess of his son.

"The ghosts of other dead men stood near me and told me each his own melancholy tale; but that of Ajax son of Telamon alone held aloof- still angry with me for having won the cause in our dispute about the armour of Achilles. Thetis had offered it as a prize, but the Trojan prisoners and Minerva were the judges. Would that I had never gained the day in such a contest, for it cost the life of Ajax, who was foremost of all the Danaans after the son of Peleus, alike in stature and prowess.

"When I saw him I tried to pacify him and said, 'Ajax, will you not forget and

forgive even in death, but must the judgement about that hateful armour still rankle with you? It cost us Argives dear enough to lose such a tower of strength as you were to us. We mourned you as much as we mourned Achilles son of Peleus himself, nor can the blame be laid on anything but on the spite which Jove bore against the Danaans, for it was this that made him counsel your destruction-come hither, therefore, bring your proud spirit into subjection, and hear what I can tell you.'

“He would not answer, but turned away to Erebus and to the other ghosts; nevertheless, I should have made him talk to me in spite of his being so angry, or I should have gone talking to him, only that there were still others among the dead whom I desired to see.

“Then I saw Minos son of Jove with his golden sceptre in his hand sitting in judgement on the dead, and the ghosts were gathered sitting and standing round him in the spacious house of Hades, to learn his sentences upon them.

“After him I saw huge Orion in a meadow full of asphodel driving the ghosts of the wild beasts that he had killed upon the mountains, and he had a great bronze club in his hand, unbreakable for ever and ever.

“And I saw Tityus son of Gaia stretched upon the plain and covering some nine acres of ground. Two vultures on either side of him were digging their beaks into his liver, and he kept on trying to beat them off with his hands, but could not; for he had violated Jove's mistress Leto as she was going through Panopeus on her way to Pytho.

“I saw also the dreadful fate of Tantalus, who stood in a lake that reached his chin; he was dying to quench his thirst, but could never reach the water, for whenever the poor creature stooped to drink, it dried up and vanished, so that there was nothing but dry ground- parched by the spite of heaven. There were tall trees, moreover, that shed their fruit over his head- pears, pomegranates, apples, sweet figs and juicy olives, but whenever the poor creature stretched out his hand to take some, the wind tossed the branches back again to the clouds.

“And I saw Sisyphus at his endless task raising his prodigious stone with both his hands. With hands and feet he' tried to roll it up to the top of the hill, but always, just before he could roll it over on to the other side, its weight would be too much for him, and the pitiless stone would come thundering down again on to the plain. Then he would begin trying to push it up hill again, and the sweat ran off him and the steam rose after him.

“After him I saw mighty Hercules, but it was his phantom only, for he is feasting ever with the immortal gods, and has lovely Hebe to wife, who is daughter of Jove and Juno. The ghosts were screaming round him like scared birds flying all whithers. He looked black as night with his bare bow in his hands and his arrow on the string, glaring around as though ever on the point of taking aim. About his breast there was a wondrous golden belt adorned in the most marvellous fashion with bears, wild boars, and lions with gleaming eyes; there was also war, battle, and death. The man who made that belt, do what he might, would never be able to make another like it. Hercules knew me at once when he saw me, and spoke piteously, saying, my poor Ulysses, noble son of Laertes, are you too leading the same sorry kind of life that I did when I was above ground? I was son of Jove, but I went through an infinity of suffering, for I became bondsman to one who was far beneath me- a low fellow who set me all manner of labours. He once sent me here to fetch the hell-hound- for he did not think he could find anything harder for me than this, but I got the hound out of Hades and brought him to him, for Mercury and Minerva helped me.’

“On this Hercules went down again into the house of Hades, but I stayed where I was in case some other of the mighty dead should come to me. And I should have seen still other of them that are gone before, whom I would fain have seen- Theseus and Pirithous glorious children of the gods, but so many thousands of ghosts came round me and uttered such appalling cries, that I was panic stricken lest Proserpine should send up from the house of Hades the head of that awful monster Gorgon. On this I hastened back to my ship and ordered my men to go on board at once and loose the hawsers; so they embarked and took their places, whereon the ship went down the stream of the river Oceanus. We had to row at first, but presently a fair wind sprang up.

-Translated by Samuel Butler

THE DEATH OF HECTOR

HOMER

THE ILIAD, BOOK XXII

TRANSLATED BY SAMUEL BUTLER

A driving theme of The Iliad is the rage of Achilles. The opening lines of the epic invoke the muses to sing of the rage of Achilles and how it brought about such terrible destruction for the Greeks and Trojans alike.

For most of the epic, however, Achilles refuses to participate in the war. He is quarreling with King Agamemnon, who has stolen the captured woman Briseis from him, and the warrior refuses to fight until proper retribution has been paid.

Achilles remains on strike and is only prompted to rejoin the fray once his comrade and lover, Patroclus, is slain by the Trojan prince, Hector. Equipped with new armor forged by the god Hephaestus, Achilles dives into battle once more, intent on seeking his vengeance.

Achilles' need for revenge is inevitably self-destructive. It was foretold by his mother, Thetis, that Achilles will have to choose one of two destinies. He either will die young and glorious on the battlefields of Troy. Or he will live out his days as an anonymous old man in his homeland.

For much of the epic, the hero does not fully commit to one path or the other, but the injustices committed by Hector spur Achilles to choose. He seeks the death of Hector, knowing full well that doing so will usher in his own untimely demise.



The old man tore his grey hair as he spoke, but he moved not the heart of Hector. His mother hard by wept and moaned aloud as she bared her bosom and pointed to the breast which had suckled him. "Hector," she cried, weeping bitterly the while, "Hector, my son, spurn not this breast, but have pity upon me too: if I

have ever given you comfort from my own bosom, think on it now, dear son, and come within the wall to protect us from this man; stand not without to meet him. Should the wretch kill you, neither I nor your richly dowered wife shall ever weep, dear offshoot of myself, over the bed on which you lie, for dogs will devour you at the ships of the Achaeans.”

Thus did the two with many tears implore their son, but they moved not the heart of Hector, and he stood his ground awaiting huge Achilles as he drew nearer towards him. As serpent in its den upon the mountains, full fed with deadly poisons, waits for the approach of man- he is filled with fury and his eyes glare terribly as he goes writhing round his den- even so Hector leaned his shield against a tower that jutted out from the wall and stood where he was, undaunted.

“Alas,” said he to himself in the heaviness of his heart, “if I go within the gates, Polydamas will be the first to heap reproach upon me, for it was he that urged me to lead the Trojans back to the city on that awful night when Achilles again came forth against us. I would not listen, but it would have been indeed better if I had done so. Now that my folly has destroyed the host, I dare not look Trojan men and Trojan women in the face, lest a worse man should say, ‘Hector has ruined us by his self-confidence.’ Surely it would be better for me to return after having fought Achilles and slain him, or to die gloriously here before the city. What, again, if were to lay down my shield and helmet, lean my spear against the wall and go straight up to noble Achilles? What if I were to promise to give up Helen, who was the fountainhead of all this war, and all the treasure that Alexandrus brought with him in his ships to Troy, aye, and to let the Achaeans divide the half of everything that the city contains among themselves? I might make the Trojans, by the mouths of their princes, take a solemn oath that they would hide nothing, but would divide into two shares all that is within the city- but why argue with myself in this way? Were I to go up to him he would show me no kind of mercy; he would kill me then and there as easily as though I were a woman, when I had off my armour. There is no parleying with him from some rock or oak tree as young men and maidens prattle with one another. Better fight him at once, and learn to which of us Jove will vouchsafe victory.”

Thus did he stand and ponder, but Achilles came up to him as it were Mars himself, plumed lord of battle. From his right shoulder he brandished his terrible spear of Pelian ash, and the bronze gleamed around him like flashing fire or the rays of the rising sun. Fear fell upon Hector as he beheld him, and he dared not stay longer where he was but fled in dismay from before the gates, while Achilles darted after him at his utmost speed. As a mountain falcon, swiftest of all

birds, swoops down upon some cowering dove- the dove flies before him but the falcon with a shrill scream follows close after, resolved to have her- even so did Achilles make straight for Hector with all his might, while Hector fled under the Trojan wall as fast as his limbs could take him.

On they flew along the waggon-road that ran hard by under the wall, past the lookout station, and past the weather-beaten wild fig-tree, till they came to two fair springs which feed the river Scamander. One of these two springs is warm, and steam rises from it as smoke from a burning fire, but the other even in summer is as cold as hail or snow, or the ice that forms on water. Here, hard by the springs, are the goodly washing-troughs of stone, where in the time of peace before the coming of the Achaeans the wives and fair daughters of the Trojans used to wash their clothes. Past these did they fly, the one in front and the other giving ha. behind him: good was the man that fled, but better far was he that followed after, and swiftly indeed did they run, for the prize was no mere beast for sacrifice or bullock's hide, as it might be for a common foot-race, but they ran for the life of Hector. As horses in a chariot race speed round the turning-posts when they are running for some great prize- a tripod or woman- at the games in honour of some dead hero, so did these two run full speed three times round the city of Priam. All the gods watched them, and the sire of gods and men was the first to speak.

“Alas,” said he, “my eyes behold a man who is dear to me being pursued round the walls of Troy; my heart is full of pity for Hector, who has burned the thigh-bones of many a heifer in my honour, at one while on the of many-valleyed Ida, and again on the citadel of Troy; and now I see noble Achilles in full pursuit of him round the city of Priam. What say you? Consider among yourselves and decide whether we shall now save him or let him fall, valiant though he be, before Achilles, son of Peleus.”

Then Minerva said, “Father, wielder of the lightning, lord of cloud and storm, what mean you? Would you pluck this mortal whose doom has long been decreed out of the jaws of death? Do as you will, but we others shall not be of a mind with you.”

And Jove answered, “My child, Triton-born, take heart. I did not speak in full earnest, and I will let you have your way. Do without let or hindrance as you are minded.”

Thus did he urge Minerva who was already eager, and down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus.

Achilles was still in full pursuit of Hector, as a hound chasing a fawn which he has started from its covert on the mountains, and hunts through glade and thicket. The fawn may try to elude him by crouching under cover of a bush, but he will scent her out and follow her up until he gets her- even so there was no escape for Hector from the fleet son of Peleus. Whenever he made a set to get near the Dardanian gates and under the walls, that his people might help him by showering down weapons from above, Achilles would gain on him and head him back towards the plain, keeping himself always on the city side. As a man in a dream who fails to lay hands upon another whom he is pursuing- the one cannot escape nor the other overtake- even so neither could Achilles come up with Hector, nor Hector break away from Achilles; nevertheless he might even yet have escaped death had not the time come when Apollo, who thus far had sustained his strength and nerved his running, was now no longer to stay by him. Achilles made signs to the Achaean host, and shook his head to show that no man was to aim a dart at Hector, lest another might win the glory of having hit him and he might himself come in second. Then, at last, as they were nearing the fountains for the fourth time, the father of all balanced his golden scales and placed a doom in each of them, one for Achilles and the other for Hector. As he held the scales by the middle, the doom of Hector fell down deep into the house of Hades- and then Phoebus Apollo left him. Thereon Minerva went close up to the son of Peleus and said, "Noble Achilles, favoured of heaven, we two shall surely take back to the ships a triumph for the Achaeans by slaying Hector, for all his lust of battle. Do what Apollo may as he lies grovelling before his father, aegis-bearing Jove, Hector cannot escape us longer. Stay here and take breath, while I go up to him and persuade him to make a stand and fight you."

Thus spoke Minerva. Achilles obeyed her gladly, and stood still, leaning on his bronze-pointed ashen spear, while Minerva left him and went after Hector in the form and with the voice of Deiphobus. She came close up to him and said, "Dear brother, I see you are hard pressed by Achilles who is chasing you at full speed round the city of Priam, let us await his onset and stand on our defence."

And Hector answered, "Deiphobus, you have always been dearest to me of all my brothers, children of Hecuba and Priam, but henceforth I shall rate you yet more highly, inasmuch as you have ventured outside the wall for my sake when all the others remain inside."

Then Minerva said, "Dear brother, my father and mother went down on their knees and implored me, as did all my comrades, to remain inside, so great a fear has fallen upon them all; but I was in an agony of grief when I beheld you;

now, therefore, let us two make a stand and fight, and let there be no keeping our spears in reserve, that we may learn whether Achilles shall kill us and bear off our spoils to the ships, or whether he shall fall before you.”

Thus did Minerva inveigle him by her cunning, and when the two were now close to one another great Hector was first to speak. “I will no longer fly you, son of Peleus,” said he, “as I have been doing hitherto. Three times have I fled round the mighty city of Priam, without daring to withstand you, but now, let me either slay or be slain, for I am in the mind to face you. Let us, then, give pledges to one another by our gods, who are the fittest witnesses and guardians of all covenants; let it be agreed between us that if Jove vouchsafes me the longer stay and I take your life, I am not to treat your dead body in any unseemly fashion, but when I have stripped you of your armour, I am to give up your body to the Achaeans. And do you likewise.”

Achilles glared at him and answered, “Fool, prate not to me about covenants. There can be no covenants between men and lions, wolves and lambs can never be of one mind, but hate each other out and out an through. Therefore there can be no understanding between you and me, nor may there be any covenants between us, till one or other shall fall and glut grim Mars with his life’s blood. Put forth all your strength; you have need now to prove yourself indeed a bold soldier and man of war. You have no more chance, and Pallas Minerva will forthwith vanquish you by my spear: you shall now pay me in full for the grief you have caused me on account of my comrades whom you have killed in battle.”

He poised his spear as he spoke and hurled it. Hector saw it coming and avoided it; he watched it and crouched down so that it flew over his head and stuck in the ground beyond; Minerva then snatched it up and gave it back to Achilles without Hector’s seeing her; Hector thereon said to the son of Peleus, “You have missed your aim, Achilles, peer of the gods, and Jove has not yet revealed to you the hour of my doom, though you made sure that he had done so. You were a false-tongued liar when you deemed that I should forget my valour and quail before you. You shall not drive spear into the back of a runaway- drive it, should heaven so grant you power, drive it into me as I make straight towards you; and now for your own part avoid my spear if you can- would that you might receive the whole of it into your body; if you were once dead the Trojans would find the war an easier matter, for it is you who have harmed them most.”

He poised his spear as he spoke and hurled it. His aim was true for he hit the middle of Achilles’ shield, but the spear rebounded from it, and did not pierce

it. Hector was angry when he saw that the weapon had sped from his hand in vain, and stood there in dismay for he had no second spear. With a loud cry he called Diphobus and asked him for one, but there was no man; then he saw the truth and said to himself, "Alas! the gods have lured me on to my destruction. I deemed that the hero Deiphobus was by my side, but he is within the wall, and Minerva has inveigled me; death is now indeed exceedingly near at hand and there is no way out of it- for so Jove and his son Apollo the far-darter have willed it, though heretofore they have been ever ready to protect me. My doom has come upon me; let me not then die ingloriously and without a struggle, but let me first do some great thing that shall be told among men hereafter."

As he spoke he drew the keen blade that hung so great and strong by his side, and gathering himself together he sprang on Achilles like a soaring eagle which swoops down from the clouds on to some lamb or timid hare- even so did Hector brandish his sword and spring upon Achilles. Achilles mad with rage darted towards him, with his wondrous shield before his breast, and his gleaming helmet, made with four layers of metal, nodding fiercely forward. The thick tresses of gold which Vulcan had crested the helmet floated round it, and as the evening star that shines brighter than all others through the stillness of night, even such was the gleam of the spear which Achilles poised in his right hand, fraught with the death of noble Hector. He eyed his fair flesh over and over to see where he could best wound it, but all was protected by the goodly armour of which Hector had spoiled Patroclus after he had slain him, save only the throat where the collar-bones divide the neck from the shoulders, and this is a most deadly place: here then did Achilles strike him as he was coming on towards him, and the point of his spear went right through the fleshy part of the neck, but it did not sever his windpipe so that he could still speak. Hector fell headlong, and Achilles vaunted over him saying, "Hector, you deemed that you should come off scatheless when you were spoiling Patroclus, and recked not of myself who was not with him. Fool that you were: for I, his comrade, mightier far than he, was still left behind him at the ships, and now I have laid you low. The Achaeans shall give him all due funeral rites, while dogs and vultures shall work their will upon yourself."

Then Hector said, as the life ebbed out of him, "I pray you by your life and knees, and by your parents, let not dogs devour me at the ships of the Achaeans, but accept the rich treasure of gold and bronze which my father and mother will offer you, and send my body home, that the Trojans and their wives may give me my dues of fire when I am dead."

Achilles glared at him and answered, "Dog, talk not to me neither of knees nor parents; would that I could be as sure of being able to cut your flesh into pieces and eat it raw, for the ill have done me, as I am that nothing shall save you from the dogs- it shall not be, though they bring ten or twenty-fold ransom and weigh it out for me on the spot, with promise of yet more hereafter. Though Priam son of Dardanus should bid them offer me your weight in gold, even so your mother shall never lay you out and make lament over the son she bore, but dogs and vultures shall eat you utterly up."

Hector with his dying breath then said, "I know you what you are, and was sure that I should not move you, for your heart is hard as iron; look to it that I bring not heaven's anger upon you on the day when Paris and Phoebus Apollo, valiant though you be, shall slay you at the Scaean gates."

When he had thus said the shrouds of death enfolded him, whereon his soul went out of him and flew down to the house of Hades, lamenting its sad fate that it should en' youth and strength no longer. But Achilles said, speaking to the dead body, "Die; for my part I will accept my fate whensoever Jove and the other gods see fit to send it."

As he spoke he drew his spear from the body and set it on one side; then he stripped the blood-stained armour from Hector's shoulders while the other Achaeans came running up to view his wondrous strength and beauty; and no one came near him without giving him a fresh wound. Then would one turn to his neighbour and say, "It is easier to handle Hector now than when he was flinging fire on to our ships" and as he spoke he would thrust his spear into him anew.

When Achilles had done spoiling Hector of his armour, he stood among the Argives and said, "My friends, princes and counsellors of the Argives, now that heaven has vouchsafed us to overcome this man, who has done us more hurt than all the others together, consider whether we should not attack the city in force, and discover in what mind the Trojans may be. We should thus learn whether they will desert their city now that Hector has fallen, or will still hold out even though he is no longer living. But why argue with myself in this way, while Patroclus is still lying at the ships unburied, and unmourned- he Whom I can never forget so long as I am alive and my strength fails not? Though men forget their dead when once they are within the house of Hades, yet not even there will I forget the comrade whom I have lost. Now, therefore, Achaean youths, let us raise the song of victory and go back to the ships taking this man along with us; for we have achieved a mighty triumph and have slain noble Hector to whom the Trojans prayed throughout their city as though he were a god."

On this he treated the body of Hector with contumely: he pierced the sinews at the back of both his feet from heel to ankle and passed thongs of ox-hide through the slits he had made: thus he made the body fast to his chariot, letting the head trail upon the ground. Then when he had put the goodly armour on the chariot and had himself mounted, he lashed his horses on and they flew forward nothing loth. The dust rose from Hector as he was being dragged along, his dark hair flew all abroad, and his head once so comely was laid low on earth, for Jove had now delivered him into the hands of his foes to do him outrage in his own land.

-Translated by Samuel Butler

AENEAS TRAVELS TO THE UNDERWORLD

VIRGIL

THE AENEID, BOOK VI

TRANSLATED BY JOHN DRYDEN

In Book VI of The Aeneid, the hero drops anchor off the coast of Cumae, modern-day Naples, in hopes of gaining the assistance of the Sibyl, a priestess of Apollo. After a brief challenge to test his worthiness, the Sibyl leads Aeneas to the entrance of the Underworld.

From here, Aeneas not only witness the innumerable dead souls that populate the underworld, but also learns of the geography and topography of the final resting place for all souls.



Thus, from the dark recess, the Sibyl spoke,
And the resisting air the thunder broke;
The cave rebellow'd, and the temple shook.
Th' ambiguous god, who rul'd her lab'ring breast,
In these mysterious words his mind express'd;
Some truths reveal'd, in terms involv'd the rest.
At length her fury fell, her foaming ceas'd,
And, ebbing in her soul, the god decreas'd.

Then thus the chief: "No terror to my view,
No frightful face of danger can be new.
Inur'd to suffer, and resolv'd to dare,
The Fates, without my pow'r, shall be without my care.
This let me crave, since near your grove the road
To hell lies open, and the dark abode
Which Acheron surrounds, th' innavigable flood;

Conduct me thro' the regions void of light,
And lead me longing to my father's sight.
For him, a thousand dangers I have sought,
And, rushing where the thickest Grecians fought,
Safe on my back the sacred burthen brought.
He, for my sake, the raging ocean tried,
And wrath of Heav'n, my still auspicious guide,
And bore beyond the strength decrepid age supplied.
Oft, since he breath'd his last, in dead of night
His reverend image stood before my sight;
Enjoin'd to seek, below, his holy shade;
Conducted there by your unerring aid.
But you, if pious minds by pray'rs are won,
Oblige the father, and protect the son.
Yours is the pow'r; nor Proserpine in vain
Has made you priestess of her nightly reign.
If Orpheus, arm'd with his enchanting lyre,
The ruthless king with pity could inspire,
And from the shades below redeem his wife;
If Pollux, off'ring his alternate life,
Could free his brother, and can daily go
By turns aloft, by turns descend below-
Why name I Theseus, or his greater friend,
Who trod the downward path, and upward could ascend?
Not less than theirs from Jove my lineage came;
My mother greater, my descent the same."
So pray'd the Trojan prince, and, while he pray'd,
His hand upon the holy altar laid.
Then thus replied the prophetess divine:
"O goddess-born of great Anchises' line,
The gates of hell are open night and day;
Smooth the descent, and easy is the way:
But to return, and view the cheerful skies,
In this the task and mighty labor lies.
To few great Jupiter imparts this grace,
And those of shining worth and heav'nly race.
Betwixt those regions and our upper light,
Deep forests and impenetrable night
Possess the middle space: th' infernal bounds
Cocytus, with his sable waves, surrounds.

But if so dire a love your soul invades,
As twice below to view the trembling shades;
If you so hard a toil will undertake,
As twice to pass th' innavigable lake;
Receive my counsel. In the neighb'ring grove
There stands a tree; the queen of Stygian Jove
Claims it her own; thick woods and gloomy night
Conceal the happy plant from human sight.
One bough it bears; but (wondrous to behold!)
The ductile rind and leaves of radiant gold:
This from the vulgar branches must be torn,
And to fair Proserpine the present borne,
Ere leave be giv'n to tempt the nether skies.
The first thus rent a second will arise,
And the same metal the same room supplies.
Look round the wood, with lifted eyes, to see
The lurking gold upon the fatal tree:
Then rend it off, as holy rites command;
The willing metal will obey thy hand,
Following with ease, if favor'd by thy fate,
Thou art foredoom'd to view the Stygian state:
If not, no labor can the tree constrain;
And strength of stubborn arms and steel are vain.
Besides, you know not, while you here attend,
Th' unworthy fate of your unhappy friend:
Breathless he lies; and his unburied ghost,
Depriv'd of fun'ral rites, pollutes your host.
Pay first his pious dues; and, for the dead,
Two sable sheep around his hearse be led;
Then, living turfs upon his body lay:
This done, securely take the destin'd way,
To find the regions destitute of day.”
She said, and held her peace. Aeneas went
Sad from the cave, and full of discontent,
Unknowing whom the sacred Sibyl meant.
Achates, the companion of his breast,
Goes grieving by his side, with equal cares oppress'd.
Walking, they talk'd, and fruitlessly divin'd
What friend the priestess by those words design'd.
But soon they found an object to deplore:

Misenus lay extended the shore;
Son of the God of Winds: none so renown'd
The warrior trumpet in the field to sound;
With breathing brass to kindle fierce alarms,
And rouse to dare their fate in honorable arms.
He serv'd great Hector, and was ever near,
Not with his trumpet only, but his spear.
But by Pelides' arms when Hector fell,
He chose Aeneas; and he chose as well.
Swoln with applause, and aiming still at more,
He now provokes the sea gods from the shore;
With envy Triton heard the martial sound,
And the bold champion, for his challenge, drown'd;
Then cast his mangled carcass on the strand:
The gazing crowd around the body stand.
All weep; but most Aeneas mourns his fate,
And hastens to perform the funeral state.
In altar-wise, a stately pile they rear;
The basis broad below, and top advanc'd in air.
An ancient wood, fit for the work design'd,
(The shady covert of the salvage kind,)
The Trojans found: the sounding ax is plied;
Firs, pines, and pitch trees, and the tow'ring pride
Of forest ashes, feel the fatal stroke,
And piercing wedges cleave the stubborn oak.
Huge trunks of trees, fell'd from the steepy crown
Of the bare mountains, roll with ruin down.
Arm'd like the rest the Trojan prince appears,
And by his pious labor urges theirs.
Thus while he wrought, revolving in his mind
The ways to compass what his wish design'd,
He cast his eyes upon the gloomy grove,
And then with vows implor'd the Queen of Love:
"O may thy pow'r, propitious still to me,
Conduct my steps to find the fatal tree,
In this deep forest; since the Sibyl's breath
Foretold, alas! too true, Misenus' death."
Scarce had he said, when, full before his sight,
Two doves, descending from their airy flight,
Secure upon the grassy plain alight.

He knew his mother's birds; and thus he pray'd:
"Be you my guides, with your auspicious aid,
And lead my footsteps, till the branch be found,
Whose glitt'ring shadow gilds the sacred ground.
And thou, great parent, with celestial care,
In this distress be present to my pray'r!"
Thus having said, he stopp'd with watchful sight,
Observing still the motions of their flight,
What course they took, what happy signs they shew.
They fed, and, flutt'ring, by degrees withdrew
Still farther from the place, but still in view:
Hopping and flying, thus they led him on
To the slow lake, whose baleful stench to shun
They wing'd their flight aloft; then, stooping low,
Perch'd on the double tree that bears the golden bough.
Thro' the green leafs the glitt'ring shadows glow;
As, on the sacred oak, the wintry mistletoe,
Where the proud mother views her precious brood,
And happier branches, which she never sow'd.
Such was the glitt'ring; such the ruddy rind,
And dancing leaves, that wanton'd in the wind.
He seiz'd the shining bough with griping hold,
And rent away, with ease, the ling'ring gold;
Then to the Sibyl's palace bore the prize.
Meantime the Trojan troops, with weeping eyes,
To dead Misenus pay his obsequies.
First, from the ground a lofty pile they rear,
Of pitch trees, oaks, and pines, and unctuous fir:
The fabric's front with cypress twigs they strew,
And stick the sides with boughs of baleful yew.
The topmost part his glitt'ring arms adorn;
Warm waters, then, in brazen caldrons borne,
Are pour'd to wash his body, joint by joint,
And fragrant oils the stiffen'd limbs anoint.
With groans and cries Misenus they deplore:
Then on a bier, with purple cover'd o'er,
The breathless body, thus bewail'd, they lay,
And fire the pile, their faces turn'd away-
Such reverend rites their fathers us'd to pay.
Pure oil and incense on the fire they throw,

And fat of victims, which his friends bestow.
These gifts the greedy flames to dust devour;
Then on the living coals red wine they pour;
And, last, the relics by themselves dispose,
Which in a brazen urn the priests inclose.
Old Corynaeus compass'd thrice the crew,
And dipp'd an olive branch in holy dew;
Which thrice he sprinkled round, and thrice aloud
Invok'd the dead, and then dismissed the crowd.
But good Aeneas order'd on the shore
A stately tomb, whose top a trumpet bore,
A soldier's fauchion, and a seaman's oar.
Thus was his friend interr'd; and deathless fame
Still to the lofty cape consigns his name.
These rites perform'd, the prince, without delay,
Hastes to the nether world his destin'd way.
Deep was the cave; and, downward as it went
From the wide mouth, a rocky rough descent;
And here th' access a gloomy grove defends,
And there th' unnavigable lake extends,
O'er whose unhappy waters, void of light,
No bird presumes to steer his airy flight;
Such deadly stench from the depths arise,
And steaming sulphur, that infects the skies.
From hence the Grecian bards their legends make,
And give the name Avernus to the lake.
Four sable bullocks, in the yoke untaught,
For sacrifice the pious hero brought.
The priestess pours the wine betwixt their horns;
Then cuts the curling hair; that first oblation burns,
Invoking Hecate hither to repair:
A pow'rful name in hell and upper air.
The sacred priests with ready knives bereave
The beasts of life, and in full bowls receive
The streaming blood: a lamb to Hell and Night
(The sable wool without a streak of white)
Aeneas offers; and, by fate's decree,
A barren heifer, Proserpine, to thee,
With holocausts he Pluto's altar fills;
Sev'n brawny bulls with his own hand he kills;

Then on the broiling entrails oil he pours;
Which, ointed thus, the raging flame devours.
Late the nocturnal sacrifice begun,
Nor ended till the next returning sun.
Then earth began to bellow, trees to dance,
And howling dogs in glimm'ring light advance,
Ere Hecate came. "Far hence be souls profane!"
The Sibyl cried, "and from the grove abstain!
Now, Trojan, take the way thy fates afford;
Assume thy courage, and unsheathe thy sword."
She said, and pass'd along the gloomy space;
The prince pursued her steps with equal pace.
Ye realms, yet unreveal'd to human sight,
Ye gods who rule the regions of the night,
Ye gliding ghosts, permit me to relate
The mystic wonders of your silent state!
Obscure they went thro' dreary shades, that led
Along the waste dominions of the dead.
Thus wander travelers in woods by night,
By the moon's doubtful and malignant light,
When Jove in dusky clouds involves the skies,
And the faint crescent shoots by fits before their eyes.
Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell,
Revengeful Cares and sullen Sorrows dwell,
And pale Diseases, and repining Age,
Want, Fear, and Famine's unresisted rage;
Here Toils, and Death, and Death's half-brother, Sleep,
Forms terrible to view, their sentry keep;
With anxious Pleasures of a guilty mind,
Deep Frauds before, and open Force behind;
The Furies' iron beds; and Strife, that shakes
Her hissing tresses and unfolds her snakes.
Full in the midst of this infernal road,
An elm displays her dusky arms abroad:
The God of Sleep there hides his heavy head,
And empty dreams on ev'ry leaf are spread.
Of various forms unnumber'd specters more,
Centaur, and double shapes, besiege the door.
Before the passage, horrid Hydra stands,
And Briareus with all his hundred hands;

Gorgons, Geryon with his triple frame;
And vain Chimaera vomits empty flame.
The chief unsheath'd his shining steel, prepar'd,
Tho' seiz'd with sudden fear, to force the guard,
Off'ring his brandish'd weapon at their face;
Had not the Sibyl stopp'd his eager pace,
And told him what those empty phantoms were:
Forms without bodies, and impassive air.
Hence to deep Acheron they take their way,
Whose troubled eddies, thick with ooze and clay,
Are whirl'd aloft, and in Cocytus lost.
There Charon stands, who rules the dreary coast-
A sordid god: down from his hoary chin
A length of beard descends, uncomb'd, unclean;
His eyes, like hollow furnaces on fire;
A girdle, foul with grease, binds his obscene attire.
He spreads his canvas; with his pole he steers;
The freights of flitting ghosts in his thin bottom bears.
He look'd in years; yet in his years were seen
A youthful vigor and autumnal green.
An airy crowd came rushing where he stood,
Which fill'd the margin of the fatal flood:
Husbands and wives, boys and unmarried maids,
And mighty heroes' more majestic shades,
And youths, intomb'd before their fathers' eyes,
With hollow groans, and shrieks, and feeble cries.
Thick as the leaves in autumn strow the woods,
Or fowls, by winter forc'd, forsake the floods,
And wing their hasty flight to happier lands;
Such, and so thick, the shiv'ring army stands,
And press for passage with extended hands.
Now these, now those, the surly boatman bore:
The rest he drove to distance from the shore.
The hero, who beheld with wond'ring eyes
The tumult mix'd with shrieks, laments, and cries,
Ask'd of his guide, what the rude concourse meant;
Why to the shore the thronging people bent;
What forms of law among the ghosts were us'd;
Why some were ferried o'er, and some refus'd.
"Son of Anchises, offspring of the gods,"

The Sibyl said, “you see the Stygian floods,
The sacred stream which heav’n’s imperial state
Attests in oaths, and fears to violate.
The ghosts rejected are th’ unhappy crew
Depriv’d of sepulchers and fun’ral due:
The boatman, Charon; those, the buried host,
He ferries over to the farther coast;
Nor dares his transport vessel cross the waves
With such whose bones are not compos’d in graves.
A hundred years they wander on the shore;
At length, their penance done, are wafted o’er.”
The Trojan chief his forward pace repress’d,
Revolving anxious thoughts within his breast,
He saw his friends, who, whelm’d beneath the waves,
Their fun’ral honors claim’d, and ask’d their quiet graves.
The lost Leucaspis in the crowd he knew,
And the brave leader of the Lycian crew,
Whom, on the Tyrrhene seas, the tempests met;
The sailors master’d, and the ship o’erset.
Amidst the spirits, Palinurus press’d,
Yet fresh from life, a new-admitted guest,
Who, while he steering view’d the stars, and bore
His course from Afric to the Latian shore,
Fell headlong down. The Trojan fix’d his view,
And scarcely thro’ the gloom the sullen shadow knew.
Then thus the prince: “What envious pow’r, O friend,
Brought your lov’d life to this disastrous end?
For Phoebus, ever true in all he said,
Has in your fate alone my faith betray’d.
The god foretold you should not die, before
You reach’d, secure from seas, th’ Italian shore.
Is this th’ unerring pow’r?” The ghost replied;
“Nor Phoebus flatter’d, nor his answers lied;
Nor envious gods have sent me to the deep:
But, while the stars and course of heav’n I keep,
My wearied eyes were seiz’d with fatal sleep.
I fell; and, with my weight, the helm constrain’d
Was drawn along, which yet my gripe retain’d.
Now by the winds and raging waves I swear,
Your safety, more than mine, was then my care;

Lest, of the guide bereft, the rudder lost,
Your ship should run against the rocky coast.
Three blust'ring nights, borne by the southern blast,
I floated, and discover'd land at last:
High on a mounting wave my head I bore,
Forcing my strength, and gath'ring to the shore.
Panting, but past the danger, now I seiz'd
The craggy cliffs, and my tir'd members eas'd.
While, cumber'd with my dropping clothes, I lay,
The cruel nation, covetous of prey,
Stain'd with my blood th' unhospitable coast;
And now, by winds and waves, my lifeless limbs are toss'd:
Which O avert, by yon ethereal light,
Which I have lost for this eternal night!
Or, if by dearer ties you may be won,
By your dead sire, and by your living son,
Redeem from this reproach my wand'ring ghost;
Or with your navy seek the Velin coast,
And in a peaceful grave my corpse compose;
Or, if a nearer way your mother shows,
Without whose aid you durst not undertake
This frightful passage o'er the Stygian lake,
Lend to this wretch your hand, and waft him o'er
To the sweet banks of yon forbidden shore.”
Scarce had he said, the prophetess began:
“What hopes delude thee, miserable man?
Think'st thou, thus unintomb'd, to cross the floods,
To view the Furies and infernal gods,
And visit, without leave, the dark abodes?
Attend the term of long revolving years;
Fate, and the dooming gods, are deaf to tears.
This comfort of thy dire misfortune take:
The wrath of Heav'n, inflicted for thy sake,
With vengeance shall pursue th' inhuman coast,
Till they propitiate thy offended ghost,
And raise a tomb, with vows and solemn pray'r;
And Palinurus' name the place shall bear.”
This calm'd his cares; sooth'd with his future fame,
And pleas'd to hear his propagated name.
Now nearer to the Stygian lake they draw:

Whom, from the shore, the surly boatman saw;
Observ'd their passage thro' the shady wood,
And mark'd their near approaches to the flood.
Then thus he call'd aloud, inflam'd with wrath:
"Mortal, whate'er, who this forbidden path
In arms presum'st to tread, I charge thee, stand,
And tell thy name, and bus'ness in the land.
Know this, the realm of night- the Stygian shore:
My boat conveys no living bodies o'er,
Nor was I pleas'd great Theseus once to bear,
Who forc'd a passage with his pointed spear,
Nor strong Alcides- men of mighty fame,
And from th' immortal gods their lineage came.
In fetters one the barking porter tied,
And took him trembling from his sov'reign's side:
Two sought by force to seize his beauteous bride."
To whom the Sibyl thus: "Compose thy mind;
Nor frauds are here contriv'd, nor force design'd.
Still may the dog the wand'ring troops constrain
Of airy ghosts, and vex the guilty train,
And with her grisly lord his lovely queen remain.
The Trojan chief, whose lineage is from Jove,
Much fam'd for arms, and more for filial love,
Is sent to seek his sire in your Elysian grove.
If neither piety, nor Heav'n's command,
Can gain his passage to the Stygian strand,
This fatal present shall prevail at least."
Then shew'd the shining bough, conceal'd within her vest.
No more was needful: for the gloomy god
Stood mute with awe, to see the golden rod;
Admir'd the destin'd off'ring to his queen-
A venerable gift, so rarely seen.
His fury thus appeas'd, he puts to land;
The ghosts forsake their seats at his command:
He clears the deck, receives the mighty freight;
The leaky vessel groans beneath the weight.
Slowly she sails, and scarcely stems the tides;
The pressing water pours within her sides.
His passengers at length are wafted o'er,
Expos'd, in muddy weeds, upon the miry shore.

No sooner landed, in his den they found
The triple porter of the Stygian sound,
Grim Cerberus, who soon began to rear
His crested snakes, and arm'd his bristling hair.
The prudent Sibyl had before prepar'd
A sop, in honey steep'd, to charm the guard;
Which, mix'd with pow'rful drugs, she cast before
His greedy grinning jaws, just op'd to roar.
With three enormous mouths he gapes; and straight,
With hunger press'd, devours the pleasing bait.
Long draughts of sleep his monstrous limbs enslave;
He reels, and, falling, fills the spacious cave.
The keeper charm'd, the chief without delay
Pass'd on, and took th' irremeable way.
Before the gates, the cries of babes new born,
Whom fate had from their tender mothers torn,
Assault his ears: then those, whom form of laws
Condemn'd to die, when traitors judg'd their cause.
Nor want they lots, nor judges to review
The wrongful sentence, and award a new.
Minos, the strict inquisitor, appears;
And lives and crimes, with his assessors, hears.
Round in his urn the blended balls he rolls,
Absolves the just, and dooms the guilty souls.
The next, in place and punishment, are they
Who prodigally throw their souls away;
Fools, who, repining at their wretched state,
And loathing anxious life, suborn'd their fate.
With late repentance now they would retrieve
The bodies they forsook, and wish to live;
Their pains and poverty desire to bear,
To view the light of heav'n, and breathe the vital air:
But fate forbids; the Stygian floods oppose,
And with circling streams the captive souls inclose.
Not far from thence, the Mournful Fields appear
So call'd from lovers that inhabit there.
The souls whom that unhappy flame invades,
In secret solitude and myrtle shades
Make endless moans, and, pining with desire,
Lament too late their unextinguish'd fire.

Here Procris, Eriphyle here he found,
Baring her breast, yet bleeding with the wound
Made by her son. He saw Pasiphae there,
With Phaedra's ghost, a foul incestuous pair.
There Laodamia, with Evadne, moves,
Unhappy both, but loyal in their loves:
Caeneus, a woman once, and once a man,
But ending in the sex she first began.
Not far from these Phoenician Dido stood,
Fresh from her wound, her bosom bath'd in blood;
Whom when the Trojan hero hardly knew,
Obscure in shades, and with a doubtful view,
(Doubtful as he who sees, thro' dusky night,
Or thinks he sees, the moon's uncertain light,)
With tears he first approach'd the sullen shade;
And, as his love inspir'd him, thus he said:
"Unhappy queen! then is the common breath
Of rumor true, in your reported death,
And I, alas! the cause? By Heav'n, I vow,
And all the pow'rs that rule the realms below,
Unwilling I forsook your friendly state,
Commanded by the gods, and forc'd by fate-
Those gods, that fate, whose unresisted might
Have sent me to these regions void of light,
Thro' the vast empire of eternal night.
Nor dar'd I to presume, that, press'd with grief,
My flight should urge you to this dire relief.
Stay, stay your steps, and listen to my vows:
'T is the last interview that fate allows!"
In vain he thus attempts her mind to move
With tears, and pray'rs, and late-repenting love.
Disdainfully she look'd; then turning round,
But fix'd her eyes unmov'd upon the ground,
And what he says and swears, regards no more
Than the deaf rocks, when the loud billows roar;
But whirl'd away, to shun his hateful sight,
Hid in the forest and the shades of night;
Then sought Sichaeus thro' the shady grove,
Who answer'd all her cares, and equal'd all her love.
Some pious tears the pitying hero paid,

And follow'd with his eyes the flitting shade,
Then took the forward way, by fate ordain'd,
And, with his guide, the farther fields attain'd,
Where, sever'd from the rest, the warrior souls remain'd.
Tydeus he met, with Meleager's race,
The pride of armies, and the soldiers' grace;
And pale Adrastus with his ghastly face.
Of Trojan chiefs he view'd a num'rous train,
All much lamented, all in battle slain;
Glaucus and Medon, high above the rest,
Antenor's sons, and Ceres' sacred priest.
And proud Idaeus, Priam's charioteer,
Who shakes his empty reins, and aims his airy spear.
The gladsome ghosts, in circling troops, attend
And with unwearied eyes behold their friend;
Delight to hover near, and long to know
What bus'ness brought him to the realms below.
But Argive chiefs, and Agamemnon's train,
When his refulgent arms flash'd thro' the shady plain,
Fled from his well-known face, with wonted fear,
As when his thund'ring sword and pointed spear
Drove headlong to their ships, and glean'd the routed rear.
They rais'd a feeble cry, with trembling notes;
But the weak voice deceiv'd their gasping throats.
Here Priam's son, Deiphobus, he found,
Whose face and limbs were one continued wound:
Dishonest, with lopp'd arms, the youth appears,
Spoil'd of his nose, and shorten'd of his ears.
He scarcely knew him, striving to disown
His blotted form, and blushing to be known;
And therefore first began: "O Tsucer's race,
Who durst thy faultless figure thus deface?
What heart could wish, what hand inflict, this dire disgrace?
'Twas fam'd, that in our last and fatal night
Your single prowess long sustain'd the fight,
Till tir'd, not forc'd, a glorious fate you chose,
And fell upon a heap of slaughter'd foes.
But, in remembrance of so brave a deed,
A tomb and fun'ral honors I decreed;
Thrice call'd your manes on the Trojan plains:

The place your armor and your name retains.
Your body too I sought, and, had I found,
Design'd for burial in your native ground.”
The ghost replied: “Your piety has paid
All needful rites, to rest my wand'ring shade;
But cruel fate, and my more cruel wife,
To Grecian swords betray'd my sleeping life.
These are the monuments of Helen's love:
The shame I bear below, the marks I bore above.
You know in what deluding joys we pass'd
The night that was by Heav'n decreed our last:
For, when the fatal horse, descending down,
Pregnant with arms, o'erwhelm'd th' unhappy town
She feign'd nocturnal orgies; left my bed,
And, mix'd with Trojan dames, the dances led
Then, waving high her torch, the signal made,
Which rous'd the Grecians from their ambuscade.
With watching overworn, with cares oppress'd,
Unhappy I had laid me down to rest,
And heavy sleep my weary limbs possess'd.
Meantime my worthy wife our arms mislaid,
And from beneath my head my sword convey'd;
The door unlatch'd, and, with repeated calls,
Invites her former lord within my walls.
Thus in her crime her confidence she plac'd,
And with new treasons would redeem the past.
What need I more? Into the room they ran,
And meanly murder'd a defenseless man.
Ulysses, basely born, first led the way.
Avenging pow'rs! with justice if I pray,
That fortune be their own another day!
But answer you; and in your turn relate,
What brought you, living, to the Stygian state:
Driv'n by the winds and errors of the sea,
Or did you Heav'n's superior doom obey?
Or tell what other chance conducts your way,
To view with mortal eyes our dark retreats,
Tumults and torments of th' infernal seats.”
While thus in talk the flying hours they pass,
The sun had finish'd more than half his race:

And they, perhaps, in words and tears had spent
The little time of stay which Heav'n had lent;
But thus the Sibyl chides their long delay:
"Night rushes down, and headlong drives the day:
'T is here, in different paths, the way divides;
The right to Pluto's golden palace guides;
The left to that unhappy region tends,
Which to the depth of Tartarus descends;
The seat of night profound, and punish'd fiends."
Then thus Deiphobus: "O sacred maid,
Forbear to chide, and be your will obey'd!
Lo! to the secret shadows I retire,
To pay my penance till my years expire.
Proceed, auspicious prince, with glory crown'd,
And born to better fates than I have found."
He said; and, while he said, his steps he turn'd
To secret shadows, and in silence mourn'd.
The hero, looking on the left, espied
A lofty tow'r, and strong on ev'ry side
With treble walls, which Phlegethon surrounds,
Whose fiery flood the burning empire bounds;
And, press'd betwixt the rocks, the bellowing noise resounds
Wide is the fronting gate, and, rais'd on high
With adamantine columns, threatens the sky.
Vain is the force of man, and Heav'n's as vain,
To crush the pillars which the pile sustain.
Sublime on these a tow'r of steel is rear'd;
And dire Tisiphone there keeps the ward,
Girt in her sanguine gown, by night and day,
Observant of the souls that pass the downward way.
From hence are heard the groans of ghosts, the pains
Of sounding lashes and of dragging chains.
The Trojan stood astonish'd at their cries,
And ask'd his guide from whence those yells arise;
And what the crimes, and what the tortures were,
And loud laments that rent the liquid air.
She thus replied: "The chaste and holy race
Are all forbidden this polluted place.
But Hecate, when she gave to rule the woods,
Then led me trembling thro' these dire abodes,

And taught the tortures of th' avenging gods.
These are the realms of unrelenting fate;
And awful Rhadamanthus rules the state.
He hears and judges each committed crime;
Enquires into the manner, place, and time.
The conscious wretch must all his acts reveal,
(Loth to confess, unable to conceal),
From the first moment of his vital breath,
To his last hour of unrepenting death.
Straight, o'er the guilty ghost, the Fury shakes
The sounding whip and brandishes her snakes,
And the pale sinner, with her sisters, takes.
Then, of itself, unfolds th' eternal door;
With dreadful sounds the brazen hinges roar.
You see, before the gate, what stalking ghost
Commands the guard, what sentries keep the post.
More formidable Hydra stands within,
Whose jaws with iron teeth severely grin.
The gaping gulf low to the center lies,
And twice as deep as earth is distant from the skies.
The rivals of the gods, the Titan race,
Here, sing'd with lightning, roll within th' unfathom'd space.
Here lie th' Alaeon twins, (I saw them both,)
Enormous bodies, of gigantic growth,
Who dar'd in fight the Thund'rer to defy,
Affect his heav'n, and force him from the sky.
Salmeoneus, suff'ring cruel pains, I found,
For emulating Jove; the rattling sound
Of mimic thunder, and the glitt'ring blaze
Of pointed lightnings, and their forky rays.
Thro' Elis and the Grecian towns he flew;
Th' audacious wretch four fiery coursers drew:
He wav'd a torch aloft, and, madly vain,
Sought godlike worship from a servile train.
Ambitious fool! with horny hoofs to pass
O'er hollow arches of resounding brass,
To rival thunder in its rapid course,
And imitate inimitable force!
But he, the King of Heav'n, obscure on high,
Bar'd his red arm, and, launching from the sky

His writen bolt, not shaking empty smoke,
Down to the deep abyss the flaming felon strook.
There Tityus was to see, who took his birth
From heav'n, his nursing from the foodful earth.
Here his gigantic limbs, with large embrace,
Infold nine acres of infernal space.
A rav'nous vulture, in his open'd side,
Her crooked beak and cruel talons tried;
Still for the growing liver digg'd his breast;
The growing liver still supplied the feast;
Still are his entrails fruitful to their pains:
Th' immortal hunger lasts, th' immortal food remains.
Ixion and Perithous I could name,
And more Thessalian chiefs of mighty fame.
High o'er their heads a mold'ring rock is plac'd,
That promises a fall, and shakes at ev'ry blast.
They lie below, on golden beds display'd;
And genial feasts with regal pomp are made.
The Queen of Furies by their sides is set,
And snatches from their mouths th' untasted meat,
Which if they touch, her hissing snakes she rears,
Tossing her torch, and thund'ring in their ears.
Then they, who brothers' better claim disown,
Expel their parents, and usurp the throne;
Defraud their clients, and, to lucre sold,
Sit brooding on unprofitable gold;
Who dare not give, and ev'n refuse to lend
To their poor kindred, or a wanting friend.
Vast is the throng of these; nor less the train
Of lustful youths, for foul adult'ry slain:
Hosts of deserters, who their honor sold,
And basely broke their faith for bribes of gold.
All these within the dungeon's depth remain,
Despairing pardon, and expecting pain.
Ask not what pains; nor farther seek to know
Their process, or the forms of law below.
Some roll a weighty stone; some, laid along,
And bound with burning wires, on spokes of wheels are hung
Unhappy Theseus, doom'd for ever there,
Is fix'd by fate on his eternal chair;

And wretched Phlegyas warns the world with cries
(Could warning make the world more just or wise):
'Learn righteousness, and dread th' avenging deities.'
To tyrants others have their country sold,
Imposing foreign lords, for foreign gold;
Some have old laws repeal'd, new statutes made,
Not as the people pleas'd, but as they paid;
With incest some their daughters' bed profan'd:
All dar'd the worst of ills, and, what they dar'd, attain'd.
Had I a hundred mouths, a hundred tongues,
And throats of brass, inspir'd with iron lungs,
I could not half those horrid crimes repeat,
Nor half the punishments those crimes have met.
But let us haste our voyage to pursue:
The walls of Pluto's palace are in view;
The gate, and iron arch above it, stands
On anvils labor'd by the Cyclops' hands.
Before our farther way the Fates allow,
Here must we fix on high the golden bough."
She said: and thro' the gloomy shades they pass'd,
And chose the middle path. Arriv'd at last,
The prince with living water sprinkled o'er
His limbs and body; then approach'd the door,
Possess'd the porch, and on the front above
He fix'd the fatal bough requir'd by Pluto's love.
These holy rites perform'd, they took their way
Where long extended plains of pleasure lay:
The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,
With ether vested, and a purple sky;
The blissful seats of happy souls below.
Stars of their own, and their own suns, they know;
Their airy limbs in sports they exercise,
And on the green contend the wrestler's prize.
Some in heroic verse divinely sing;
Others in artful measures led the ring.
The Thracian bard, surrounded by the rest,
There stands conspicuous in his flowing vest;
His flying fingers, and harmonious quill,
Strikes sev'n distinguish'd notes, and sev'n at once they fill.
Here found they Tsucer's old heroic race,

Born better times and happier years to grace.
Assaracus and Ilus here enjoy
Perpetual fame, with him who founded Troy.
The chief beheld their chariots from afar,
Their shining arms, and coursers train'd to war:
Their lances fix'd in earth, their steeds around,
Free from their harness, graze the flow'ry ground.
The love of horses which they had, alive,
And care of chariots, after death survive.
Some cheerful souls were feasting on the plain;
Some did the song, and some the choir maintain,
Beneath a laurel shade, where mighty Po
Mounts up to woods above, and hides his head below.
Here patriots live, who, for their country's good,
In fighting fields, were prodigal of blood:
Priests of unblemish'd lives here make abode,
And poets worthy their inspiring god;
And searching wits, of more mechanic parts,
Who grac'd their age with new-invented arts:
Those who to worth their bounty did extend,
And those who knew that bounty to commend.
The heads of these with holy fillets bound,
And all their temples were with garlands crown'd.
To these the Sibyl thus her speech address'd,
And first to him surrounded by the rest
(Tow'ring his height, and ample was his breast):
"Say, happy souls, divine Musaeus, say,
Where lives Anchises, and where lies our way
To find the hero, for whose only sake
We sought the dark abodes, and cross'd the bitter lake?"
To this the sacred poet thus replied:
"In no fix'd place the happy souls reside.
In groves we live, and lie on mossy beds,
By crystal streams, that murmur thro' the meads:
But pass yon easy hill, and thence descend;
The path conducts you to your journey's end."
This said, he led them up the mountain's brow,
And shews them all the shining fields below.
They wind the hill, and thro' the blissful meadows go.
But old Anchises, in a flow'ry vale,

Review'd his muster'd race, and took the tale:
Those happy spirits, which, ordain'd by fate,
For future beings and new bodies wait-
With studious thought observ'd th' illustrious throng,
In nature's order as they pass'd along:
Their names, their fates, their conduct, and their care,
In peaceful senates and successful war.
He, when Aeneas on the plain appears,
Meets him with open arms, and falling tears.
"Welcome," he said, "the gods' undoubted race!
O long expected to my dear embrace!
Once more 't is giv'n me to behold your face!
The love and pious duty which you pay
Have pass'd the perils of so hard a way.
'T is true, computing times, I now believ'd
The happy day approach'd; nor are my hopes deceiv'd.
What length of lands, what oceans have you pass'd;
What storms sustain'd, and on what shores been cast?
How have I fear'd your fate! but fear'd it most,
When love assail'd you, on the Libyan coast."
To this, the filial duty thus replies:
"Your sacred ghost before my sleeping eyes
Appear'd, and often urg'd this painful enterprise.
After long tossing on the Tyrrhene sea,
My navy rides at anchor in the bay.
But reach your hand, O parent shade, nor shun
The dear embraces of your longing son!"
He said; and falling tears his face bedew:
Then thrice around his neck his arms he threw;
And thrice the flitting shadow slipp'd away,
Like winds, or empty dreams that fly the day.
Now, in a secret vale, the Trojan sees
A sep'rate grove, thro' which a gentle breeze
Plays with a passing breath, and whispers thro' the trees;
And, just before the confines of the wood,
The gliding Lethe leads her silent flood.
About the boughs an airy nation flew,
Thick as the humming bees, that hunt the golden dew;
In summer's heat on tops of lilies feed,
And creep within their bells, to suck the balmy seed:

The winged army roams the fields around;
The rivers and the rocks remurmur to the sound.
Aeneas wond'ring stood, then ask'd the cause
Which to the stream the crowding people draws.
Then thus the sire: "The souls that throng the flood
Are those to whom, by fate, are other bodies ow'd:
In Lethe's lake they long oblivion taste,
Of future life secure, forgetful of the past.
Long has my soul desir'd this time and place,
To set before your sight your glorious race,
That this presaging joy may fire your mind
To seek the shores by destiny design'd."-
"O father, can it be, that souls sublime
Return to visit our terrestrial clime,
And that the gen'rous mind, releas'd by death,
Can covet lazy limbs and mortal breath?"
Anchises then, in order, thus begun
To clear those wonders to his godlike son:
"Know, first, that heav'n, and earth's compacted frame,
And flowing waters, and the starry flame,
And both the radiant lights, one common soul
Inspires and feeds, and animates the whole.
This active mind, infus'd thro' all the space,
Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.
Hence men and beasts the breath of life obtain,
And birds of air, and monsters of the main.
Th' ethereal vigor is in all the same,
And every soul is fill'd with equal flame;
As much as earthy limbs, and gross alloy
Of mortal members, subject to decay,
Blunt not the beams of heav'n and edge of day.
From this coarse mixture of terrestrial parts,
Desire and fear by turns possess their hearts,
And grief, and joy; nor can the groveling mind,
In the dark dungeon of the limbs confin'd,
Assert the native skies, or own its heav'nly kind:
Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains;
But long-contracted filth ev'n in the soul remains.
The relics of inveterate vice they wear,
And spots of sin obscene in ev'ry face appear.

For this are various penances enjoin'd;
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
Some plung'd in waters, others purg'd in fires,
Till all the dregs are drain'd, and all the rust expires.
All have their manes, and those manes bear:
The few, so cleans'd, to these abodes repair,
And breathe, in ample fields, the soft Elysian air.
Then are they happy, when by length of time
The scurf is worn away of each committed crime;
No speck is left of their habitual stains,
But the pure ether of the soul remains.
But, when a thousand rolling years are past,
(So long their punishments and penance last,)
Whole droves of minds are, by the driving god,
Compell'd to drink the deep Lethaeon flood,
In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares
Of their past labors, and their irksome years,
That, unrememb'ring of its former pain,
The soul may suffer mortal flesh again."
Thus having said, the father spirit leads
The priestess and his son thro' swarms of shades,
And takes a rising ground, from thence to see
The long procession of his progeny.
"Survey," pursued the sire, "this airy throng,
As, offer'd to thy view, they pass along.
These are th' Italian names, which fate will join
With ours, and graff upon the Trojan line.
Observe the youth who first appears in sight,
And holds the nearest station to the light,
Already seems to snuff the vital air,
And leans just forward, on a shining spear:
Silvius is he, thy last-begotten race,
But first in order sent, to fill thy place;
An Alban name, but mix'd with Dardan blood,
Born in the covert of a shady wood:
Him fair Lavinia, thy surviving wife,
Shall breed in groves, to lead a solitary life.
In Alba he shall fix his royal seat,
And, born a king, a race of kings beget.
Then Procas, honor of the Trojan name,

Capys, and Numitor, of endless fame.
A second Silvius after these appears;
Silvius Aeneas, for thy name he bears;
For arms and justice equally renown'd,
Who, late restor'd, in Alba shall be crown'd.
How great they look! how vig'rously they wield
Their weighty lances, and sustain the shield!
But they, who crown'd with oaken wreaths appear,
Shall Gabian walls and strong Fidena rear;
Nomentum, Bola, with Pometia, found;
And raise Collatian tow'rs on rocky ground.
All these shall then be towns of mighty fame,
Tho' now they lie obscure, and lands without a name.
See Romulus the great, born to restore
The crown that once his injur'd grandsire wore.
This prince a priestess of your blood shall bear,
And like his sire in arms he shall appear.
Two rising crests, his royal head adorn;
Born from a god, himself to godhead born:
His sire already signs him for the skies,
And marks the seat amidst the deities.
Auspicious chief! thy race, in times to come,
Shall spread the conquests of imperial Rome—
Rome, whose ascending tow'rs shall heav'n invade,
Involving earth and ocean in her shade;
High as the Mother of the Gods in place,
And proud, like her, of an immortal race.
Then, when in pomp she makes the Phrygian round,
With golden turrets on her temples crown'd;
A hundred gods her sweeping train supply;
Her offspring all, and all command the sky.
“Now fix your sight, and stand intent, to see
Your Roman race, and Julian progeny.
The mighty Caesar waits his vital hour,
Impatient for the world, and grasps his promis'd pow'r.
But next behold the youth of form divine,
Caesar himself, exalted in his line;
Augustus, promis'd oft, and long foretold,
Sent to the realm that Saturn rul'd of old;
Born to restore a better age of gold.

Afric and India shall his pow'r obey;
He shall extend his propagated sway
Beyond the solar year, without the starry way,
Where Atlas turns the rolling heav'ns around,
And his broad shoulders with their lights are crown'd.
At his foreseen approach, already quake
The Caspian kingdoms and Maeotian lake:
Their seers behold the tempest from afar,
And threat'ning oracles denounce the war.
Nile hears him knocking at his sev'nfold gates,
And seeks his hidden spring, and fears his nephew's fates.
Nor Hercules more lands or labors knew,
Not tho' the brazen-footed hind he slew,
Freed Erymanthus from the foaming boar,
And dipp'd his arrows in Lernaean gore;
Nor Bacchus, turning from his Indian war,
By tigers drawn triumphant in his car,
From Nisus' top descending on the plains,
With curling vines around his purple reins.
And doubt we yet thro' dangers to pursue
The paths of honor, and a crown in view?
But what's the man, who from afar appears?
His head with olive crown'd, his hand a censer bears,
His hoary beard and holy vestments bring
His lost idea back: I know the Roman king.
He shall to peaceful Rome new laws ordain,
Call'd from his mean abode a scepter to sustain.
Him Tullus next in dignity succeeds,
An active prince, and prone to martial deeds.
He shall his troops for fighting fields prepare,
Disus'd to toils, and triumphs of the war.
By dint of sword his crown he shall increase,
And scour his armor from the rust of peace.
Whom Ancus follows, with a fawning air,
But vain within, and proudly popular.
Next view the Tarquin kings, th' avenging sword
Of Brutus, justly drawn, and Rome restor'd.
He first renews the rods and ax severe,
And gives the consuls royal robes to wear.
His sons, who seek the tyrant to sustain,

And long for arbitrary lords again,
With ignominy scourg'd, in open sight,
He dooms to death deserv'd, asserting public right.
Unhappy man, to break the pious laws
Of nature, pleading in his children's cause!
Howeer the doubtful fact is understood,
'T is love of honor, and his country's good:
The consul, not the father, sheds the blood.
Behold Torquatus the same track pursue;
And, next, the two devoted Decii view:
The Drusian line, Camillus loaded home
With standards well redeem'd, and foreign foes o'ercome
The pair you see in equal armor shine,
Now, friends below, in close embraces join;
But, when they leave the shady realms of night,
And, cloth'd in bodies, breathe your upper light,
With mortal hate each other shall pursue:
What wars, what wounds, what slaughter shall ensue!
From Alpine heights the father first descends;
His daughter's husband in the plain attends:
His daughter's husband arms his eastern friends.
Embrace again, my sons, be foes no more;
Nor stain your country with her children's gore!
And thou, the first, lay down thy lawless claim,
Thou, of my blood, who bearist the Julian name!
Another comes, who shall in triumph ride,
And to the Capitol his chariot guide,
From conquer'd Corinth, rich with Grecian spoils.
And yet another, fam'd for warlike toils,
On Argos shall impose the Roman laws,
And on the Greeks revenge the Trojan cause;
Shall drag in chains their Achillean race;
Shall vindicate his ancestors' disgrace,
And Pallas, for her violated place.
Great Cato there, for gravity renown'd,
And conqu'ring Cossus goes with laurels crown'd.
Who can omit the Gracchi? who declare
The Scipios' worth, those thunderbolts of war,
The double bane of Carthage? Who can see
Without esteem for virtuous poverty,

Severe Fabricius, or can cease t' admire
The plowman consul in his coarse attire?
Tir'd as I am, my praise the Fabii claim;
And thou, great hero, greatest of thy name,
Ordain'd in war to save the sinking state,
And, by delays, to put a stop to fate!
Let others better mold the running mass
Of metals, and inform the breathing brass,
And soften into flesh a marble face;
Plead better at the bar; describe the skies,
And when the stars descend, and when they rise.
But, Rome, 't is thine alone, with awful sway,
To rule mankind, and make the world obey,
Disposing peace and war by thy own majestic way;
To tame the proud, the fetter'd slave to free:
These are imperial arts, and worthy thee.”
He paus'd; and, while with wond'ring eyes they view'd
The passing spirits, thus his speech renew'd:
“See great Marcellus! how, untir'd in toils,
He moves with manly grace, how rich with regal spoils!
He, when his country, threaten'd with alarms,
Requires his courage and his conqu'ring arms,
Shall more than once the Punic bands affright;
Shall kill the Gaulish king in single fight;
Then to the Capitol in triumph move,
And the third spoils shall grace Feretrian Jove.”
Aeneas here beheld, of form divine,
A godlike youth in glitt'ring armor shine,
With great Marcellus keeping equal pace;
But gloomy were his eyes, dejected was his face.
He saw, and, wond'ring, ask'd his airy guide,
What and of whence was he, who press'd the hero's side:
“His son, or one of his illustrious name?
How like the former, and almost the same!
Observe the crowds that compass him around;
All gaze, and all admire, and raise a shouting sound:
But hov'ring mists around his brows are spread,
And night, with sable shades, involves his head.”
“Seek not to know,” the ghost replied with tears,
“The sorrows of thy sons in future years.

This youth (the blissful vision of a day)
Shall just be shown on earth, and snatch'd away.
The gods too high had rais'd the Roman state,
Were but their gifts as permanent as great.
What groans of men shall fill the Martian field!
How fierce a blaze his flaming pile shall yield!
What fun'ral pomp shall floating Tiber see,
When, rising from his bed, he views the sad solemnity!
No youth shall equal hopes of glory give,
No youth afford so great a cause to grieve;
The Trojan honor, and the Roman boast,
Admir'd when living, and ador'd when lost!
Mirror of ancient faith in early youth!
Undaunted worth, inviolable truth!
No foe, unpunish'd, in the fighting field
Shall dare thee, foot to foot, with sword and shield;
Much less in arms oppose thy matchless force,
When thy sharp spurs shall urge thy foaming horse.
Ah! couldst thou break thro' fate's severe decree,
A new Marcellus shall arise in thee!
Full canisters of fragrant lilies bring,
Mix'd with the purple roses of the spring;
Let me with fun'ral flow'rs his body strow;
This gift which parents to their children owe,
This unavailing gift, at least, I may bestow!"

Thus having said, he led the hero round
The confines of the blest Elysian ground;
Which when Anchises to his son had shown,
And fir'd his mind to mount the promis'd throne,
He tells the future wars, ordain'd by fate;
The strength and customs of the Latian state;
The prince, and people; and forearms his care
With rules, to push his fortune, or to bear.
Two gates the silent house of Sleep adorn;
Of polish'd ivory this, that of transparent horn:
True visions thro' transparent horn arise;
Thro' polish'd ivory pass deluding lies.
Of various things discoursing as he pass'd,

Anchises hither bends his steps at last.
Then, thro' the gate of iv'ry, he dismiss'd
His valiant offspring and divining guest.

-Translated by Joseph Dryden

FED BY THE FEAR OF DEATH

Lucretius

De Rerum Natura, Book III

Translated by Anthony M. Esolen

Lucretius was a Roman poet, philosopher, and author of the philosophical epic De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of the Universe). He was influenced by the Greek philosopher, Epicurus and developed many central Epicurean ideas within De Rerum Natura.

As an Epicurean, Lucretius believed that our fears and anxieties are what prevent us from living a peaceful, virtuous existence. Chief among our fears is the fear of death. Below Lucretius describes the paralyzing fear of death that is common in the hearts of all people.

However, Lucretius argued that our fear of death was unfounded. He states that death is merely a cessation of existence, and therefore a cessation of all feeling and perception. He contends that just as we were unafraid of the time before our birth (when we partook of nonexistence) we should similarly not fear the time after our life when we no longer are capable of feeling fear or pain.

By freeing us from our fears, Lucretius hoped that we might come to fully appreciate our lives. It is only after conquering our fear of death that we are truly able to live.



Though men preach that sickness or a life
Of infamous vice ought sooner be feared
Than the realm of death, and say they know their souls
Are nothing but blood (or air, if the fancy strikes them),
And don't need our philosophy at all,
Turn your thoughts this way and you'll see it's just.
Swagger and bluster and not firm belief:

Men driven out of their country and kept far
From human sight, men tarred by crime and scandal,
Wretched in every way, still hang to life,
Pathetic, and invoke ancestral shades,
And slaughter black cattle and send the spirits down
To the gods of the dead. In bitter times
They turn their minds more keenly toward religion.
All the more, in danger and doubt, when things go wrong,
We should keep our eye on the man, see what he is-
For that's the spell that snatches his mask and makes him
Cry out at last from the heart. The truth remains.
And greed and the blind craving for rank, which drive
Pitiful men to overleap the bounds
Of law, drive friends-in-evil and their henchmen
To struggle night and day with the utmost strain
To fight to the heights of wealth- these sores of life
Are fed in no small part by fear of death.
To be despised, to feel the pinch for money,
Are ills that seem to linger at Death's door,
Far from the sweetness of a steadfast life.
And so, spurred on by groundless fears, men strive
To escape, to hustle themselves far out of their reach,
And from the blood of countrymen they forge,
Riches, and double them, heaping slaughter on slaughter.
With a bloodthirsty glee they bury their own brothers
And hate and fear to eat at a cousin's table.
In the same way, from the same fear, men often
Grow lean with envy. There he is, that powerbroker,
That rising star attracting every gaze
While they're bogged down in the mud (they whine) and darkness.
Some waste away for statues and a name.
And often from fear of dying, men will be
Seized with disgust for life, will hate the light,
So with sorrowing hearts they pass their sentence, death,
Forgetting that all their cares spring from this fear-
This puts their shame to rout, this breaks the bonds
Of friendship and subverts all piety.
And men have sold the land that gave them birth,
Sold their dear parents, to shun the underworld.
For as little boys tremble and fear whatever's lurking

In the blind dark, so we in the light of day
Tremble at what is no more terrible than
What little boys dream in the dark and fear will come.
And so this darkness and terror of the mind
Shall not by the sun's rays, by the bright lances of daylight
Be scattered, but by nature and her law.

-Translated by Anthony M. Esolen

ON SUICIDE AND FEARING DEATH

SENECA THE YOUNGER

MORAL LETTERS TO LUCILIUS/LETTER 77

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD M. GUMMERE

Seneca the younger, often just called “Seneca”, was a Roman Stoic philosopher and, notably, the tutor to a young Emperor Nero. In Book 77 of his Moral Letters to Lucilius, the philosopher discusses suicide, the fear of death, and the conclusion of a voyage that we are all on.

This particular book is of interest because Seneca himself died by suicide. In 65 AD, Emperor Nero ordered Seneca to take his own life for his supposed involvement in a conspiracy against the Emperor’s life. It is unlikely that Seneca was involved in the plot, but he obediently obeyed the order of his once-student.

“After murdering his mother and brother,” Seneca declared, “it only remained for him to kill his teacher and tutor”



An expedition will be incomplete if one stops half-way, or anywhere on this side of one’s destination; but life is not incomplete if it is honourable. At whatever point you leave off living, provided you leave off nobly, your life is a whole. Often, however, one must leave off bravely, and our reasons therefore need not be momentous; for neither are the reasons momentous which hold us here.

There are times when we ought to die and are unwilling; sometimes we die and are unwilling. No one is so ignorant as not to know that we must at some time die; nevertheless, when one draws near death, one turns to flight, trembles, and laments. Would you not think him an utter fool who wept because he was not alive a thousand years ago? And is he not just as much of a fool who weeps because he will not be alive a thousand years from now? It is all the same; you will not be, and you were not. Neither of these periods of time belongs to you.

You have been cast upon this point of time; if you would make it longer, how much longer shall you make it? Why weep? Why pray? You are taking pains to no purpose. Give over thinking that your prayers can bend Divine decrees from their predestined end.

These decrees are unalterable and fixed; they are governed by a mighty and everlasting compulsion. Your goal will be the goal of all things. What is there strange in this to you? You were born to be subject to this law; this fate befell your father, your mother, your ancestors, all who came before you; and it will befall all who shall come after you. A sequence which cannot be broken or altered by any power binds all things together and draws all things in its course. Think of the multitudes of men doomed to death who will come after you, of the multitudes who will go with you! You would die more bravely, I suppose, in the company of many thousands; and yet there are many thousands, both of men and of animals, who at this very moment, while you are irresolute about death, are breathing their last, in their several ways. But you, – did you believe that you would not some day reach the goal towards which you have always been travelling? No journey but has its end.

You think, I suppose, that it is now in order for me to cite some examples of great men. No, I shall cite rather the case of a boy. The story of the Spartan lad has been preserved: taken captive while still a stripling, he kept crying in his Doric dialect, “I will not be a slave!” and he made good his word; for the very first time he was ordered to perform a menial and degrading service, – and the command was to fetch a chamber-pot, – he dashed out his brains against the wall. So near at hand is freedom, and is anyone still a slave? Would you not rather have your own son die thus than reach old age by weakly yielding? Why therefore are you distressed, when even a boy can die so bravely? Suppose that you refuse to follow him; you will be led. Take into your own control that which is now under the control of another. Will you not borrow that boy’s courage, and say: “I am no slave!”? Unhappy fellow, you are a slave to men, you are a slave to your business, you are a slave to life. For life, if courage to die be lacking, is slavery.

Have you anything worth waiting for? Your very pleasures, which cause you to tarry and hold you back, have already been exhausted by you. None of them is a novelty to you, and there is none that has not already become hateful because you are cloyed with it. You know the taste of wine and cordials. It makes no difference whether a hundred or a thousand measures pass through your bladder; you are nothing but a wine-strainer. You are a connoisseur in the flavour of the oyster and of the mullet; your luxury has not left you anything untasted for the

years that are to come; and yet these are the things from which you are torn away unwillingly. What else is there which you would regret to have taken from you? Friends? But who can be a friend to you? Country? What? Do you think enough of your country to be late to dinner? The light of the sun? You would extinguish it, if you could; for what have you ever done that was fit to be seen in the light? Confess the truth; it is not because you long for the senate chamber or the forum, or even for the world of nature, that you would fain put off dying; it is because you are loth to leave the fish-market, though you have exhausted its stores.

You are afraid of death; but how can you scorn it in the midst of a mushroom supper? You wish to live; well, do you know how to live? You are afraid to die. But come now: is this life of yours anything but death? Gaius Caesar was passing along the Via Latina, when a man stepped out from the ranks of the prisoners, his grey beard hanging down even to his breast, and begged to be put to death. "What!" said Caesar, "are you alive now?" That is the answer which should be given to men to whom death would come as a relief. "You are afraid to die; what! are you alive now?"

"But," says one, "I wish to live, for I am engaged in many honourable pursuits. I am loth to leave life's duties, which I am fulfilling with loyalty and zeal." Surely you are aware that dying is also one of life's duties? You are deserting no duty; for there is no definite number established which you are bound to complete. There is no life that is not short. Compared with the world of nature, even Nestor's life was a short one, or Sattia's, the woman who bade carve on her tombstone that she had lived ninety and nine years. Some persons, you see, boast of their long lives; but who could have endured the old lady if she had had the luck to complete her hundredth year? It is with life as it is with a play, – it matters not how long the action is spun out, but how good the acting is. It makes no difference at what point you stop. Stop whenever you choose; only see to it that the closing period is well turned.

-Translated by Richard M. Gummer

MEETING A STOIC END

MARCUS AURELIUS

THE MEDITATIONS

It's no accident or lighthearted joke that Marcus Aurelius is commonly called the "philosopher king." His commitment to the philosophy of Stoicism is evident not just in his personal writings and journals, but is also reflected in his qualities as an emperor.

Aurelius rose to power during a time of incredible peace and prosperity known as the Pax Romana, and his reign (161-180) was characterized by the principles he used to govern himself as an individual. His fairness, gentleness, compassion, and love of the human spirit were reflected in his desire to protect the well-being and happiness of his subjects. Aurelius established orphanages, founded schools, opened hospitals, refused to raise taxes, waged war only when absolutely necessary for the defense of his people (and fought alongside his troops), and ruled overall with a light and loving hand.



And as for death, if there be any gods, it is no grievous thing to leave the society of men. The gods will do thee no hurt, thou mayest be sure. But if it be so that there be no gods, or that they take no care of the world, why should I desire to live in a world void of gods, and of all divine providence? But gods there be certainly, and they take care for the world; and as for those things which be truly evil, as vice and wickedness, such things they have put in a man's own power, that he might avoid them if he would: and had there been anything besides that had been truly bad and evil, they would have had a care of that also, that a man might have avoided it. But why should that be thought to hurt and prejudice a man's life in this world, which cannot any ways make man himself the better, or the worse in his own person? Neither must we think that the nature of the universe did either through ignorance pass these things, or if not as ignorant of them, yet as unable either to prevent, or better to order and dispose them. It cannot be that she through want either of power or skill, should have committed such a thing, so as to suffer all things both good and bad, equally and promiscuously, to happen unto all both good and bad. As for life therefore, and death,

honour and dishonour, labour and pleasure, riches and poverty, all these things happen unto men indeed, both good and bad, equally; but as things which of themselves are neither good nor bad; because of themselves, neither shameful nor praiseworthy.

IX.

Consider how quickly all things are dissolved and resolved: the bodies and substances themselves, into the matter and substance of the world: and their memories into the general age and time of the world. Consider the nature of all worldly sensible things; of those especially, which either ensnare by pleasure, or for their irksomeness are dreadful, or for their outward lustre and show are in great esteem and request, how vile and contemptible, how base and corruptible, how destitute of all true life and being they are.

X.

It is the part of a man endowed with a good understanding faculty, to consider what they themselves are in very deed, from whose bare conceits and voices, honour and credit do proceed: as also what it is to die, and how if a man shall consider this by itself alone, to die, and separate from it in his mind all those things which with it usually represent themselves unto us, he can conceive of it no otherwise, than as of a work of nature, and he that fears any work of nature, is a very child. Now death, it is not only a work of nature, but also conducing to nature.

XI.

Consider with thyself how man, and by what part of his, is joined unto God, and how that part of man is affected, when it is said to be diffused. There is nothing more wretched than that soul, which in a kind of circuit compasseth all things, searching (as he saith) even the very depths of the earth; and by all signs and conjectures prying into the very thoughts of other men's souls; and yet of this, is not sensible, that it is sufficient for a man to apply himself wholly, and to confine all his thoughts and cares to the tendance of that spirit which is within him, and truly and really to serve him. His service doth consist in this, that a man keep himself pure from all violent passion and evil affection, from all rashness and vanity, and from all manner of discontent, either in regard of the gods or men. For indeed whatsoever proceeds from the gods, deserves respect for their worth and excellency; and whatsoever proceeds from men, as they are our kinsmen,

should by us be entertained, with love, always; sometimes, as proceeding from their ignorance, of that which is truly good and bad, (a blindness no less, than that by which we are not able to discern between white and black:) with a kind of pity and compassion also.

XII.

If thou shouldst live three thousand, or as many as ten thousands of years, yet remember this, that man can part with no life properly, save with that little part of life, which he now lives: and that which he lives, is no other, than that which at every instant he parts with. That then which is longest of duration, and that which is shortest, come both to one effect. For although in regard of that which is already past there may be some inequality, yet that time which is now present and in being, is equal unto all men. And that being it which we part with whensoever we die, it doth manifestly appear, that it can be but a moment of time, that we then part with. For as for that which is either past or to come, a man cannot be said properly to part with it. For how should a man part with that which he hath not? These two things therefore thou must remember. First, that all things in the world from all eternity, by a perpetual revolution of the same times and things ever continued and renewed, are of one kind and nature; so that whether for a hundred or two hundred years only, or for an infinite space of time, a man see those things which are still the same, it can be no matter of great moment. And secondly, that that life which any the longest liver, or the shortest liver parts with, is for length and duration the very same, for that only which is present, is that, which either of them can lose, as being that only which they have; for that which he hath not, no man can truly be said to lose.

THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENIA

EURIPIDES

IPHIGENIA AT AULIS

Euripides is often considered the third installment of the famous Athenian tragedians from the classical age of Athens (the other two being Aeschylus and Sophocles). He was considered something of a recluse, a tortured and eccentric writer, in his own time. He often took creative liberties with otherwise familiar stories that were shocking and occasionally bordered on sacrilegious.

The play Iphigenia at Aulis recounts a notable incident preceding the Trojan War. The Achaeans (the Greeks) have amassed an enormous army, complete with ships and warriors from all over Greece. The convoy is eager to be on their way to Troy, but is delayed by a strange lack of wind.

The Greeks learn that the goddess Artemis, who doesn't wish to see the army ever set foot on Trojan lands, has caused the lack of winds. The only way to reverse this calamity is for Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks, to sacrifice his eldest daughter, Iphigenia to the gods.

Despite his horror, Agamemnon must seriously consider going through with the sacrifice. His men are growing increasingly restless, and unless their bloodlust is satisfied, they may rebel against the king.

The murder of Iphigenia is the key motivation for Clytemnestra, who murders her husband in the bathtub years later.



CHORUS

Ah, wretched Helen! Awful the struggle that has come to the sons of Atreus and their children, thanks to thee and those marriages of thine.

AGAMEMNON

While loving my own children, I yet understand what should move my pity and

what should not; I were a madman else. 'Tis terrible for me to bring myself to this, nor less terrible is it to refuse, daughter; for I must fare the same. Ye see the vastness of von naval host, and the numbers of bronze clad warriors from Hellas, who can neither make their way to Ilium's towers nor raze the far-famed citadel of Troy, unless I offer thee according to the word of Calchas the seer. Some mad desire possesses the host of Hellas to sail forthwith to the land of the barbarians, and put a stop to the rape of wives from Hellas, and they will slay my daughters in Argos as well as you and me, if I disregard the goddess's behests. It is not Menelaus who hath enslaved me to him, child, nor have I followed wish of his; nay, 'tis Hellas, for whom I must sacrifice thee whether I will or no; to this necessity I bow my head; for her freedom must be preserved, as far as any help of thine, daughter, or mine can go; nor must they, who are the sons Hellas, be pillaged of their wives by barbarian robbery.

AGAMEMNON rushes from the stage,

CLYTAEMNESTRA

My child Ye stranger ladies! Woe is me for this thy death! Thy father flies, surrendering thee to Hades.

IPHIGENIA

Woe is me, O mother mine! for the same strain hath fallen to both of us in our fortune. No more for me the light of day! No more the beams of yonder sun! Woe for that snow-beat glen in Phrygia and the hills of Ida, where Priam once exposed a tender babe, torn from his mother's arms to meet a deadly doom, e'en Paris, called the child of Ida in the Phrygians' town. Would Priam ne'er had settled him, the herdsman reared amid the herds, beside that water crystal-clear, where are fountains of the Nymphs and their meadow rich with blooming flowers, where hyacinths and rose-buds blow for goddesses to gather! Hither one day came Pallas and Cypris of the subtle heart, Hera too and Hermes messenger of Zeus-Cypris, proud of the longing she causes; Pallas of her prowess; and Hera of her royal marriage with king Zeus-to decide a hateful strife about their beauty; but it is my death, maidens-fraught,'tis true, with glory to the Danai-that Artemis has received as an offering, before they begin the voyage to Ilium.

O mother, mother! he that begat me to this life of sorrow has gone and left me all alone. Ah! woe is me! a bitter, bitter sight for me was Helen, evil Helen! to me now doomed to bleed and die, slaughtered by an impious sire.

I would this Aulis had never received in its havens here the sterns of their bronze-

beaked ships, the fleet which was speeding them to Troy; and would that Zeus had never breathed on the Euripus a wind to stop the expedition, tempering, as he doth, a different breeze to different men, so that some have joy in setting sail, and sorrow some, and others hard constraint, to make some start and others stay and others furl their sails! Full of trouble then, it seems, is the race of mortals, full of trouble verily; and 'tis ever Fate's decree that man should find distress.

Woe! woe to thee, thou child of Tyndareus, for the suffering and anguish sore, which thou art causing the Danaï!

CHORUS

I pity thee for thy cruel fate-a fate I would thou ne'er hadst met!

IPHIGENIA

O mother that bare me! I see a throng of men approaching.

CLYTAEMNESTRA It is the goddess-born thou seest, child, for whom thou camest hither.

IPHIGENIA (Calling into the tent)

Open the tent-door to me, servants, that I may hide myself.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Why seek to fly, my child?

IPHIGENIA

I am ashamed to face Achilles.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Wherefore?

IPHIGENIA

The luckless ending to our marriage causes me to feel abashed.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

No time for affectation now in face of what has chanced. Stay then; reserve will do no good, if only we can-

(Enter ACHILLES.)

ACHILLES

Daughter of Leda, lady of sorrows!

CLYTAEMNESTRA

No misnomer that.

ACHILLES

A fearful cry is heard among the Argives.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

What is it? tell me.

ACHILLES

It concerns thy child.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

An evil omen for thy words.

ACHILLES

They say her sacrifice is necessary.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

And is there no one to say a word against them?

ACHILLES

Indeed I was in some danger myself from the tumult.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

In danger of what? kind sir.

ACHILLES

Of being stoned.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Surely not for trying to save my daughter?

ACHILLES

The very reason.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Who would have dared to lay a finger on thee?

ACHILLES

The men of Hellas, one and all.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Were not thy Myrmidon warriors at thy side?

ACHILLES

They were the first who turned against me.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

My child! we are lost, undone, it seems.

ACHILLES

They taunted me as the man whom marriage had enslaved.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

And what didst thou answer them?

ACHILLES

I craved the life of her I meant to wed-

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Justly so.

ACHILLES

The wife her father promised me.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Aye, and sent to fetch from Argos.

ACHILLES

But I was overcome by clamorous cries.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Truly the mob is a dire mischief.

ACHILLES

But I will help thee for all that.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Wilt thou really fight them single-handed?

ACHILLES

Dost see these warriors here, carrying my arms?

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Bless thee for thy kind intent!

ACHILLES

Well, I shall be blessed.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Then my child will not be slaughtered now?

ACHILLES

No, not with my consent at any rate.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

But will any of them come to lay hands on the maid?

ACHILLES

Thousands of them, with Odysseus at their head.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

The son of Sisyphus?

ACHILLES

The very same.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Acting for himself or by the army's order?

ACHILLES

By their choice-and his own.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

An evil choice indeed, to stain his hands in blood!

ACHILLES

But I will hold him back.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Will he seize and bear her hence against her will?

ACHILLES

Aye, by her golden hair no doubt.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

What must I do, when it comes to that?

ACHILLES

Keep hold of thy daughter.

CLYTAEMNESTRA

Be sure that she shall not be slain, as far as that can help her.

ACHILLES

Believe me, it will come to this.

IPHIGENIA

Mother, hear me while I speak, for I see that thou art wroth with thy husband to no purpose; 'tis hard for us to persist in impossibilities. Our thanks are due to this stranger for his ready help; but thou must also see to it that he is not reproached by the army, leaving us no better off and himself involved in trouble. Listen, mother; hear what thoughts have passed across my mind. I am resolved to die; and this I fain would do with honour, dismissing from me what is mean. Towards this now, mother, turn thy thoughts, and with me weigh how well I speak; to me the whole of mighty Hellas looks; on me the passage o'er the sea depends; on me the sack of Troy; and in my power it lies to check henceforth barbarian raids on happy Hellas, if ever in the days to come they seek to seize her daughters, when once they have atoned by death for the violation of Helen's marriage by Paris. All this deliverance will my death insure, and my fame for setting Hellas free will be a happy one. Besides, I have no right at all to cling too fondly to my life; for thou didst not bear me for myself alone, but as a public blessing to all Hellas. What! Shall countless warriors, armed with shields, those myriads sitting at the oar, find courage to attack the foe and die for Hellas, because their fatherland is wronged, and my one life prevent all this? What kind of justice is that? could I find a word in answer? Now turn we to that other point. It is not right that this man should enter the lists with all Argos or be slain for a woman's sake. Better a single man should see the light than ten thousand women. If Artemis is minded to take this body, am I, a weak mortal, to thwart the goddess? Nay, that were impossible. To Hellas I resign it; offer this sacrifice and make an utter end of Troy. This is my enduring monument; marriage, motherhood, and fame—all these is it to me. And it is but right, mother, that Hellenes should rule barbarians, but not barbarians Hellenes, those being slaves, while these are free.

A PRAYER FOR REVENGE

AESCHYLUS

THE LIBATION BEARERS

TRANSLATED BY H.W. SMYTH

Aeschylus is often dubbed “the father of Greek tragedy”. And this is a title that he has undoubtedly earned. His plays revolutionized the art of tragedy and he subsequently became the yearly favorite to win the Dionysia, an annual festival of plays held in ancient Athens that handed out awards to the crowd favorites.

The Libation Bearers is the second play in a trilogy that recounts the familiar legend of the murder of Agamemnon by his wife, Clytemnestra (she is avenging the death of her daughter, Iphigenia) and the subsequent act of vengeance by Orestes and Electra, his children.

In the scene below, Orestes, who has just returned home from living abroad, visits his father’s grave and leaves a lock of hair as tribute. Electra, his sister, then enters the room to similarly honor her father.

The two siblings meet after years apart and Orestes announces his design to take his revenge. He has been ordered by the god Apollo to avenge his father by killing his mother.

Even with Apollo’s blessing, this is a shocking sentiment. For while Clytemnestra did murder Orestes’ father, the act of matricide, no matter the circumstances, would have been considered appalling by the ancient Greek audience.



ORESTES

Hermes of the nether world, you who guard the powers that are your father’s, prove yourself my savior and ally, I entreat you, now that I have come to this land and returned from exile. On this mounded grave I cry out to my father to hearken, to hear me. . . . [Look, I bring] a lock to Inachus in requital for his care,

and here, a second, in token of my grief. For I was not present, father, to lament your death, nor did I stretch forth my hand to bear your corpse.

What is this I see? What is this throng of women that moves in state, marked by their sable cloaks? To what calamity should I set this down? Is it some new sorrow that befalls our house? Or am I right to suppose that for my father's sake they bear these libations to appease the powers below? It can only be for this cause: for indeed I think my own sister Electra is approaching, distinguished by her bitter grief. Oh grant me, Zeus, to avenge my father's death, and may you be my willing ally!

Pylades, let us stand apart, that I may know clearly what this band of suppliant women intends.

[Exit Orestes and Pylades. Enter Electra with women carrying libations.]

CHORUS

Sent forth from the palace I have come to convey libations to the sound of sharp blows of my hands. My cheek is marked with bloody gashes where my nails have cut fresh furrows. And yet through all my life my heart is fed with lamentation. Rips are torn by my griefs through the linen web of my garment, torn in the cloth that covers my breast, the cloth of robes struck for the sake of my mirthless misfortunes.

For with a hair-raising shriek, Terror, the diviner of dreams for our house, breathing wrath out of sleep, uttered a cry of terror in the dead of night from the heart of the palace, a cry that fell heavily on the women's quarter. And the readers of these dreams, bound under pledge, cried out from the god that those beneath the earth cast furious reproaches and rage against their murderers.

Intending to ward off evil with such a graceless grace, O mother Earth, she sends me forth, godless woman that she is. But I am afraid to utter the words she charged me to speak. For what atonement is there for blood fallen to earth? Ah, hearth of utter grief! Ah, house laid low in ruin! Sunless darkness, loathed by men, enshrouds our house due to the death of its master.

The awe of majesty once unconquered, unvanquished, irresistible in war, that penetrated the ears and heart of the people, is now cast off. But there is still fear. And prosperity—this, among mortals, is a god and more than a god. But the balance of Justice keeps watch: swiftly it descends on those in the light; sometimes

pain waits for those who linger on the frontier of twilight; and others are claimed by strengthless night.

Because of blood drunk up by the fostering earth, the vengeful gore lies clotted and will not dissolve away. Soul-racking calamity distracts the guilty man till he is steeped in utter misery. But for the violator of a bridal chamber there is no cure. And though all streams flow in one course to cleanse the blood from a polluted hand, they rush in vain. For since the gods laid constraining doom about my city and led me from my father's house to a slave's lot, it is fitting for me to govern my bitter hate, even against my will, and submit to the wishes of my masters, whether just or unjust. But I weep beneath my veil over the senseless fate of my lord, my heart chilled by secret grief.

ELECTRA

You handmaidens who set our house in order, since you are here as my attendants in this rite of supplication, give me your counsel on this: what should I say while I pour these offerings of sorrow? How shall I find gracious words, how shall I entreat my father? Shall I say that I bring these offerings to a loved husband from a loving wife—from my own mother? I do not have the assurance for that, nor do I know what I should say as I pour this libation onto my father's tomb. Or shall I speak the words that men are accustomed to use: "To those who send these honors may he return benefits"—a gift, indeed, to match their evil?

Or, in silence and dishonor, even as my father perished, shall I pour them out for the earth to drink and then retrace my steps, like one who carries refuse away from a rite, hurling the vessel from me with averted eyes?

In this, my friends, be my fellow-counsellors. For we cherish a common hatred within our house. Do not hide your counsel in your hearts in fear of anyone. For the portion of fate awaits both the free man and the man enslaved by another's hand. If you have a better course to urge, speak!

CHORUS

In reverence for your father's tomb, as if it were an altar, I will speak my thoughts from the heart, since you command me.

ELECTRA

Speak, even as you revere my father's grave.

CHORUS

While you pour, utter benedictions for loyal hearts.

ELECTRA

And to whom of those dear to me should I address them?

CHORUS

First to yourself, then to whoever hates Aegisthus.

ELECTRA

Then for myself and for you also shall I make this prayer?

CHORUS

That is for you, using your judgment, to consider now for yourself.

ELECTRA

Then whom else should I add to our company?

CHORUS

Remember Orestes, though he is still away from home.

ELECTRA

Well said! You have indeed admonished me thoughtfully.

CHORUS

For the guilty murderers now, mindful of—

ELECTRA

What should I say? Instruct my inexperience, prescribe the form.

CHORUS

Pray that some divinity or some mortal may come to them—

ELECTRA

As judge or as avenger, do you mean?

CHORUS

Say in plain speech, "One who will take life for life."

ELECTRA

And is it right for me to ask this of the gods?

CHORUS

How could it not be right to repay an enemy with ills?

ELECTRA

Supreme herald of the realm above and the realm below, O Hermes of the nether world, come to my aid, summon to me the spirits beneath the earth to hear my prayers, spirits that watch over my father's house, and Earth herself, who gives birth to all things, and having nurtured them receives their increase in turn. And meanwhile, as I pour these lustral offerings to the dead, I invoke my father: "Have pity both on me and on dear Orestes! How shall we rule our own house? For now we are bartered away like vagrants by her who bore us, by her who in exchange got as her mate Aegisthus, who was her accomplice in your murder. As for me, I am no better than a slave, Orestes is an outcast from his inheritance, while they in their insolence revel openly in the winnings of your toil. But that Orestes may come home with good fortune I pray to you, father: Oh, hearken to me! And as for myself, grant that I may prove far more circumspect than my mother and more reverent in deed. I utter these prayers on our behalf, but I ask that your avenger appear to our foes, father, and that your killers may be killed in just retribution. So I interrupt my prayer for good to offer them this prayer for evil. But be a bearer of blessings for us to the upper world, with the help of the gods and Earth and Justice crowned with victory."

[She pours out the libations.]

Such are my prayers, and over them I pour out these libations. It is right for you to crown them with lamentations, raising your voices in a chant for the dead.

CHORUS

Pour forth your tears, splashing as they fall for our fallen lord, to accompany this protection against evil, this charm for the good against the loathsome pollution. Hear me, oh hear me, my honored lord, out of the darkness of your spirit. Woe, woe, woe! Oh for a man mighty with the spear to deliver our house, an Ares, brandishing in the fight the springing Scythian bow and wielding his hilted sword in close combat.

[As they conclude, Electra discovers the lock of Orestes' hair.]

ELECTRA

My father has by now received the libations, which the earth has drunk. But take your share of this startling news.

CHORUS

Speak—but my heart is dancing with fear.

ELECTRA

I see here a lock cut as an offering for the tomb.

CHORUS

A man's, or a deep-girt maid's?

ELECTRA

That is open to conjecture—anyone may guess.

CHORUS

How then? Let my age be taught by your youth.

ELECTRA

There is no one who could have cut it but myself.

CHORUS

Yes, for those who ought to have mourned with a lock of hair are enemies.

ELECTRA

And further, in appearance it is very much like—

CHORUS

Whose lock? This is what I would like to know.

ELECTRA

It is very much like my own in appearance.

CHORUS

Then can this be a secret offering from Orestes?

ELECTRA

It is his curling locks that it most resembles.

CHORUS

But how did he dare to come here?

ELECTRA

He has merely sent this cut lock to honor his father.

CHORUS

What you say is no less a cause of tears for me, if he will never again set foot on this land.

ELECTRA

Over my heart, too, there sweeps a surge of bitterness, and I am struck as if a sword had run me through. From my eyes thirsty drops of a stormy flood fall unchecked at the sight of this tress. For how can I expect to find that someone else, some townsman, owns this lock? Nor yet in truth did she clip it from her head, the murderess, my own mother, who has assumed a godless spirit regarding her children that ill accords with the name of mother. But as for me, how am I to assent to this outright, that it adorned the head of Orestes, the dearest to me of all mortals? No, hope is merely flattering me. Ah, woe! If only, like a messenger, it had a kind voice, so that I would not be tossed by my distracted thoughts. Rather it would plainly bid me to spurn this tress, if it was severed from a hated head. Or if it were a kinsman's, he would share my grief as an adornment to this tomb and a tribute to my father.

But I invoke the gods, who know by what storms we are tossed like seafarers. Yet if I am fated to reach safety, a great stock may come from a little seed.

And look! Another proof! Footprints matching each other—and like my own! Yes, here are the outlines of two sets of feet, his own and some companion's. The heels and the imprints of the tendons agree in proportion with my own tracks. I am in torment, my brain is in a whirl!

[Enter Orestes.]

ORESTES

Give recognition to the gods that your prayers have been fulfilled, and pray that success may attend you in the future.

ELECTRA

What? Have I succeeded now by the will of the gods?

ORESTES

You have come to the sight of what you have long prayed for.

ELECTRA

And do you know whom among mortals I was invoking?

ORESTES

I know that you are pining for Orestes.

ELECTRA

Then how have I found an answer to my prayers?

ORESTES

Here I am. Search for no other friend than me.

ELECTRA

But surely, stranger, you are weaving some snare about me?

ORESTES

Then I am devising plots against myself.

ELECTRA

No, you wish to mock my distress.

ORESTES

Then my own also, if yours.

ELECTRA

Am I then to address you as Orestes in truth?

ORESTES

Now, even though you see him in me, you are slow to learn. Yet at the sight of this tress cut in mourning, and when you were scrutinizing the footprints of my tracks, your thought took wings and you knew you had found me. Put the lock of hair, your own brother's, in the spot it was cut from and observe how it matches the hair on my head. And see this piece of weaving, your handiwork, the strokes of the batten and the beasts in the design. Control yourself! Do not go mad with joy! For I know that our nearest kin are bitter foes to us both.

ELECTRA

O best beloved darling of your father's house, its hope of a saving seed longed for with tears, trust in your prowess and you will win back your father's house. O delightful eyes that have four parts of love for me: for I must call you father; and to you falls the love I should bear my mother, whom I most rightly hate; and the love I bore my sister, victim of a pitiless sacrifice; and you were my faithful brother, bringing me your reverence. May Might and Justice, with Zeus, supreme over all, in the third place, lend you their aid!

ORESTES

O Zeus, O Zeus, regard our cause! Behold the orphaned brood of a father eagle that perished in the meshes, in the coils of a fierce viper. They are utterly orphaned, gripped by the famine of hunger: for they are not grown to full strength to bring their father's quarry to the nest. So you see both me and poor Electra here, children bereft of their father, both outcasts alike from our home. If you destroy these nestlings of a father who made sacrifice and revered you greatly, from what like hand will you receive the homage of rich feasts? Destroy the brood of the eagle and you cannot again send tokens that mortals will trust; nor, if this royal stock should wither utterly away, will it serve your altars on days when oxen are sacrificed. Oh foster it, and you may raise our house from low estate to great, though now it seems utterly overthrown.

CHORUS

O children, O saviors of your father's hearth, speak not so loud, dear children, in case someone should overhear and report all this to our masters merely for the sake of rumor. May I some day see them dead in the ooze of flaming pitch!

ORESTES

Surely he will not abandon me, the mighty oracle of Loxias, who urged me to brave this peril to the end and loudly proclaims calamities that chill the warmth of my heart, if I do not take vengeance on my father's murderers. He said that, enraged by the loss of my possessions, I should kill them in requital just as they killed. And he declared that otherwise I should pay the debt myself with my own life, after many grievous sufferings. For he spoke revealing to mortals the wrath of malignant powers from underneath the earth, and telling of plagues: leprous ulcers that mount with fierce fangs on the flesh and eat away its primal nature; and how a white down should sprout up on the diseased place. And he spoke of other assaults of the Furies that are destined to be brought to pass from paternal blood. For the dark bolt of the infernal powers, who are stirred by kindred victims calling for vengeance, and madness, and groundless terrors out of the night, torment and harass a man, and he sees clearly, though he moves his eyebrows in the dark. And with his body marred by the brazen scourge, he is even chased in exile from his country. And the god declared that to such as these it is not allowed to have a part either in the ceremonial cup or in the cordial libation; his father's wrath, though unseen, bars him from the altar; no one receives him or lodges with him; and at last, despised by all, friendless, he perishes, shrivelled pitifully by a death that wastes him utterly away.

Must I not put my trust in oracles such as these? Yet even if I do not trust them, the deed must still be done. For many impulses conspire to one conclusion. Besides the god's command, my keen grief for my father, and also the pinch of poverty—that my countrymen, the most renowned of mortals, who overthrew Troy in the spirit of glory, should not be subjected so to a pair of women. For he has a woman's mind, or if not, it will soon be found out.

- Translated by H.W. Smyth

COUNT NO MAN HAPPY UNTIL THE END IS KNOWN

HERODOTUS

THE HISTORIES, BOOK I

TRANSLATED BY GEORGE RAWLINSON

In Book I of his The Histories, the historian Herodotus recounts the tale of the Athenian lawgiver and philosopher, Solon, visiting King Croesus of Sardis. Croesus was a prosperous king who ruled over the ancient kingdom of Lydia (modern day Turkey).

Croesus invites the Athenian sage to tour his palace and witness his wealth and power. Once Croesus believes that his riches have adequately awed Solon, the king asks the philosopher who, in his opinion, is the happiest of men.

The king already believes himself to be happiest, but hopes Solon will parrot his name back to him.

Instead, Solon, claims that several dead men are the happiest he knows. One was a valiant soldier; the others were virtuous young men. These men were able to raise healthy families, achieve self-sufficiency and virtue, and then died nobly with these good fortunes in tact.

Solon says he cannot claim that Croesus is happy because he doesn't know yet the manner of his death. Does Croesus die with his good fortune in tact? Or does die miserable and destitute. Only once an entire account of ones life is known can we claim that somebody is truly happy or not.

This prompts the famous maxim: count no man happy until the end is known.



When all these conquests had been added to the Lydian empire, and the prosperity of Sardis was now at its height, there came thither, one after another, all

the sages of Greece living at the time, and among them Solon, the Athenian. He was on his travels, having left Athens to be absent ten years, under the pretence of wishing to see the world, but really to avoid being forced to repeal any of the laws which, at the request of the Athenians, he had made for them. Without his sanction the Athenians could not repeal them, as they had bound themselves under a heavy curse to be governed for ten years by the laws which should be imposed on them by Solon.

On this account, as well as to see the world, Solon set out upon his travels, in the course of which he went to Egypt to the court of Amasis, and also came on a visit to Croesus at Sardis. Croesus received him as his guest, and lodged him in the royal palace. On the third or fourth day after, he bade his servants conduct Solon over his treasures, and show him all their greatness and magnificence. When he had seen them all, and, so far as time allowed, inspected them, Croesus addressed this question to him. "Stranger of Athens, we have heard much of thy wisdom and of thy travels through many lands, from love of knowledge and a wish to see the world. I am curious therefore to inquire of thee, whom, of all the men that thou hast seen, thou deemest the most happy?" This he asked because he thought himself the happiest of mortals: but Solon answered him without flattery, according to his true sentiments, "Tellus of Athens, sire." Full of astonishment at what he heard, Croesus demanded sharply, "And wherefore dost thou deem Tellus happiest?" To which the other replied, "First, because his country was flourishing in his days, and he himself had sons both beautiful and good, and he lived to see children born to each of them, and these children all grew up; and further because, after a life spent in what our people look upon as comfort, his end was surpassingly glorious. In a battle between the Athenians and their neighbours near Eleusis, he came to the assistance of his countrymen, routed the foe, and died upon the field most gallantly. The Athenians gave him a public funeral on the spot where he fell, and paid him the highest honours."

Thus did Solon admonish Croesus by the example of Tellus, enumerating the manifold particulars of his happiness. When he had ended, Croesus inquired a second time, who after Tellus seemed to him the happiest, expecting that at any rate, he would be given the second place. "Cleobis and Biton," Solon answered; "they were of Argive race; their fortune was enough for their wants, and they were besides endowed with so much bodily strength that they had both gained prizes at the Games. Also this tale is told of them:- There was a great festival in honour of the goddess Juno at Argos, to which their mother must needs be taken in a car. Now the oxen did not come home from the field in time: so the youths, fearful of being too late, put the yoke on their own necks, and themselves drew

the car in which their mother rode. Five and forty furlongs did they draw her, and stopped before the temple. This deed of theirs was witnessed by the whole assembly of worshippers, and then their life closed in the best possible way. Herein, too, God showed forth most evidently, how much better a thing for man death is than life. For the Argive men, who stood around the car, extolled the vast strength of the youths; and the Argive women extolled the mother who was blessed with such a pair of sons; and the mother herself, overjoyed at the deed and at the praises it had won, standing straight before the image, besought the goddess to bestow on Cleobis and Bito, the sons who had so mightily honoured her, the highest blessing to which mortals can attain. Her prayer ended, they offered sacrifice and partook of the holy banquet, after which the two youths fell asleep in the temple. They never woke more, but so passed from the earth. The Argives, looking on them as among the best of men, caused statues of them to be made, which they gave to the shrine at Delphi.”

When Solon had thus assigned these youths the second place, Croesus broke in angrily, “What, stranger of Athens, is my happiness, then, so utterly set at nought by thee, that thou dost not even put me on a level with private men?”

“Oh! Croesus,” replied the other, “thou askedst a question concerning the condition of man, of one who knows that the power above us is full of jealousy, and fond of troubling our lot. A long life gives one to witness much, and experience much oneself, that one would not choose. Seventy years I regard as the limit of the life of man. In these seventy years are contained, without reckoning intercalary months, twenty-five thousand and two hundred days. Add an intercalary month to every other year, that the seasons may come round at the right time, and there will be, besides the seventy years, thirty-five such months, making an addition of one thousand and fifty days. The whole number of the days contained in the seventy years will thus be twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty, whereof not one but will produce events unlike the rest. Hence man is wholly accident. For thyself, oh! Croesus, I see that thou art wonderfully rich, and art the lord of many nations; but with respect to that whereon thou questionest me, I have no answer to give, until I hear that thou hast closed thy life happily. For assuredly he who possesses great store of riches is no nearer happiness than he who has what suffices for his daily needs, unless it so hap that luck attend upon him, and so he continue in the enjoyment of all his good things to the end of life. For many of the wealthiest men have been unfavoured of fortune, and many whose means were moderate have had excellent luck. Men of the former class excel those of the latter but in two respects; these last excel the former in many. The wealthy man is better able to content his desires, and to bear up

against a sudden buffet of calamity. The other has less ability to withstand these evils (from which, however, his good luck keeps him clear), but he enjoys all these following blessings: he is whole of limb, a stranger to disease, free from misfortune, happy in his children, and comely to look upon. If, in addition to all this, he end his life well, he is of a truth the man of whom thou art in search, the man who may rightly be termed happy. Call him, however, until he die, not happy but fortunate. Scarcely, indeed, can any man unite all these advantages: as there is no country which contains within it all that it needs, but each, while it possesses some things, lacks others, and the best country is that which contains the most; so no single human being is complete in every respect- something is always lacking. He who unites the greatest number of advantages, and retaining them to the day of his death, then dies peaceably, that man alone, sire, is, in my judgment, entitled to bear the name of 'happy.' But in every matter it behoves us to mark well the end: for oftentimes God gives men a gleam of happiness, and then plunges them into ruin."

Such was the speech which Solon addressed to Croesus, a speech which brought him neither largess nor honour. The king saw him depart with much indifference, since he thought that a man must be an arrant fool who made no account of present good, but bade men always wait and mark the end.

-Translated by George Rawlinson

THE FUNERAL ORATION OF PERICLES

THUCYDIDES

THE HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR, BOOK II

TRANSLATED BY GEORGE RICHARD CRAWLEY

At Athens, it was the tradition to deliver a public eulogy honoring the soldiers who died in combat. In 431-430 BC, Pericles gave the eulogy for the year. Instead of praising the soldiers directly, Pericles exalts the greatness of Athens, the glory of which embraces those who give their lives for her. Thucydides revives for us in this passage a magnificent moment of Athenian patriotism by one of its most brilliant orators, politicians, and strategists.

This famous episode of Athenian history was succeeded by a far more tragic event: an epidemic that, beginning in the second year of the war in 430 BC, ravaged Athens for four years. The scourge would kill more than one third of the population, including Pericles. Thucydides himself fell ill, but he survived and passed down to us a vivid description of its devastation.

“PERICLES: Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy.”



Meanwhile these were the first that had fallen, and Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was chosen to pronounce their eulogium. When the proper time arrived, he advanced from the sepulchre to an elevated platform in order to be heard by as many of the crowd as possible, and spoke as follows:

“Most of my predecessors in this place have commended him who made this speech part of the law, telling us that it is well that it should be delivered at the burial of those who fall in battle. For myself, I should have thought that the worth which had displayed itself in deeds would be sufficiently rewarded by honours

also shown by deeds; such as you now see in this funeral prepared at the people's cost. And I could have wished that the reputations of many brave men were not to be imperilled in the mouth of a single individual, to stand or fall according as he spoke well or ill. For it is hard to speak properly upon a subject where it is even difficult to convince your hearers that you are speaking the truth. On the one hand, the friend who is familiar with every fact of the story may think that some point has not been set forth with that fullness which he wishes and knows it to deserve; on the other, he who is familiar with every fact of the story may think that some point has not been set forth with that fullness which he wishes and knows it to deserve; on the other, he who is a stranger to the matter may be led by envy to suspect exaggeration if he hears anything above his own nature. For men can endure to hear others praised only so long as they can severally persuade themselves of their own ability to equal the actions recounted: when this point is passed, envy comes in and with it incredulity. However, since our ancestors have stamped this custom with their approval, it becomes my duty to obey the law and to try to satisfy your several wishes and opinions as best I may.

“I shall begin with our ancestors: it is both just and proper that they should have the honour of the first mention on an occasion like the present. They dwelt in the country without break in the succession from generation to generation, and handed it down free to the present time by their valour. And if our more remote ancestors deserve praise, much more do our own fathers, who added to their inheritance the empire which we now possess, and spared no pains to be able to leave their acquisitions to us of the present generation. Lastly, there are few parts of our dominions that have not been augmented by those of us here, who are still more or less in the vigour of life; while the mother country has been furnished by us with everything that can enable her to depend on her own resources whether for war or for peace. That part of our history which tells of the military achievements which gave us our several possessions, or of the ready valour with which either we or our fathers stemmed the tide of Hellenic or foreign aggression, is a theme too familiar to my hearers for me to dilate on, and I shall therefore pass it by. But what was the road by which we reached our position, what the form of government under which our greatness grew, what the national habits out of which it sprang; these are questions which I may try to solve before I proceed to my panegyric upon these men; since I think this to be a subject upon which on the present occasion a speaker may properly dwell, and to which the whole assemblage, whether citizens or foreigners, may listen with advantage.

“Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many

instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if no social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

“Further, we provide plenty of means for the mind to refresh itself from business. We celebrate games and sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to banish the spleen; while the magnitude of our city draws the produce of the world into our harbour, so that to the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own.

“If we turn to our military policy, there also we differ from our antagonists. We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger. In proof of this it may be noticed that the Lacedaemonians do not invade our country alone, but bring with them all their confederates; while we Athenians advance unsupported into the territory of a neighbour, and fighting upon a foreign soil usually vanquish with ease men who are defending their homes. Our united force was never yet encountered by any enemy, because we have at once to attend to our marine and to dispatch our citizens by land upon a hundred different services; so that, wherever they engage with some such fraction of our strength, a success against a detachment is magnified into a victory over the nation, and a defeat into a reverse suffered at the hands of our entire people. And yet if with habits not of labour but of ease, and courage not of art but of nature, we are still willing to encounter danger, we have the double advantage of escap-

ing the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them.

“Nor are these the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration. We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and, instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. Again, in our enterprises we present the singular spectacle of daring and deliberation, each carried to its highest point, and both united in the same persons; although usually decision is the fruit of ignorance, hesitation of reflection. But the palm of courage will surely be adjudged most justly to those, who best know the difference between hardship and pleasure and yet are never tempted to shrink from danger. In generosity we are equally singular, acquiring our friends by conferring, not by receiving, favours. Yet, of course, the doer of the favour is the firmer friend of the two, in order by continued kindness to keep the recipient in his debt; while the debtor feels less keenly from the very consciousness that the return he makes will be a payment, not a free gift. And it is only the Athenians, who, fearless of consequences, confer their benefits not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality.

“In short, I say that as a city we are the school of Hellas, while I doubt if the world can produce a man who, where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies, and graced by so happy a versatility, as the Athenian. And that this is no mere boast thrown out for the occasion, but plain matter of fact, the power of the state acquired by these habits proves. For Athens alone of her contemporaries is found when tested to be greater than her reputation, and alone gives no occasion to her assailants to blush at the antagonist by whom they have been worsted, or to her subjects to question her title by merit to rule. Rather, the admiration of the present and succeeding ages will be ours, since we have not left our power without witness, but have shown it by mighty proofs; and far from needing a Homer for our panegyrist, or other of his craft whose verses might charm for the moment only for the impression which they gave to melt at the touch of fact, we have forced every sea and land to be the highway of our daring, and everywhere, whether for evil or for good, have left imperishable

monuments behind us. Such is the Athens for which these men, in the assertion of their resolve not to lose her, nobly fought and died; and well may every one of their survivors be ready to suffer in her cause.

“Indeed if I have dwelt at some length upon the character of our country, it has been to show that our stake in the struggle is not the same as theirs who have no such blessings to lose, and also that the panegyric of the men over whom I am now speaking might be by definite proofs established. That panegyric is now in a great measure complete; for the Athens that I have celebrated is only what the heroism of these and their like have made her, men whose fame, unlike that of most Hellenes, will be found to be only commensurate with their deserts. And if a test of worth be wanted, it is to be found in their closing scene, and this not only in cases in which it set the final seal upon their merit, but also in those in which it gave the first intimation of their having any. For there is justice in the claim that steadfastness in his country’s battles should be as a cloak to cover a man’s other imperfections; since the good action has blotted out the bad, and his merit as a citizen more than outweighed his demerits as an individual. But none of these allowed either wealth with its prospect of future enjoyment to unnerve his spirit, or poverty with its hope of a day of freedom and riches to tempt him to shrink from danger. No, holding that vengeance upon their enemies was more to be desired than any personal blessings, and reckoning this to be the most glorious of hazards, they joyfully determined to accept the risk, to make sure of their vengeance, and to let their wishes wait; and while committing to hope the uncertainty of final success, in the business before them they thought fit to act boldly and trust in themselves. Thus choosing to die resisting, rather than to live submitting, they fled only from dishonour, but met danger face to face, and after one brief moment, while at the summit of their fortune, escaped, not from their fear, but from their glory.

“So died these men as became Athenians. You, their survivors, must determine to have as unflinching a resolution in the field, though you may pray that it may have a happier issue. And not contented with ideas derived only from words of the advantages which are bound up with the defence of your country, though these would furnish a valuable text to a speaker even before an audience so alive to them as the present, you must yourselves realize the power of Athens, and feed your eyes upon her from day to day, till love of her fills your hearts; and then, when all her greatness shall break upon you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty, and a keen feeling of honour in action that men were enabled to win all this, and that no personal failure in an enterprise could make them consent to deprive their country of their valour, but they laid it at her feet

as the most glorious contribution that they could offer. For this offering of their lives made in common by them all they each of them individually received that renown which never grows old, and for a sepulchre, not so much that in which their bones have been deposited, but that noblest of shrines wherein their glory is laid up to be eternally remembered upon every occasion on which deed or story shall call for its commemoration. For heroes have the whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there is enshrined in every breast a record unwritten with no tablet to preserve it, except that of the heart. These take as your model and, judging happiness to be the fruit of freedom and freedom of valour, never decline the dangers of war. For it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives; these have nothing to hope for: it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown, and to whom a fall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences. And surely, to a man of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and patriotism!

“Comfort, therefore, not condolence, is what I have to offer to the parents of the dead who may be here. Numberless are the chances to which, as they know, the life of man is subject; but fortunate indeed are they who draw for their lot a death so glorious as that which has caused your mourning, and to whom life has been so exactly measured as to terminate in the happiness in which it has been passed. Still I know that this is a hard saying, especially when those are in question of whom you will constantly be reminded by seeing in the homes of others blessings of which once you also boasted: for grief is felt not so much for the want of what we have never known, as for the loss of that to which we have been long accustomed. Yet you who are still of an age to beget children must bear up in the hope of having others in their stead; not only will they help you to forget those whom you have lost, but will be to the state at once a reinforcement and a security; for never can a fair or just policy be expected of the citizen who does not, like his fellows, bring to the decision the interests and apprehensions of a father. While those of you who have passed your prime must congratulate yourselves with the thought that the best part of your life was fortunate, and that the brief span that remains will be cheered by the fame of the departed. For it is only the love of honour that never grows old; and honour it is, not gain, as some would have it, that rejoices the heart of age and helplessness.

“Turning to the sons or brothers of the dead, I see an arduous struggle before you. When a man is gone, all are wont to praise him, and should your merit be ever so transcendent, you will still find it difficult not merely to overtake, but

even to approach their renown. The living have envy to contend with, while those who are no longer in our path are honoured with a goodwill into which rivalry does not enter. On the other hand, if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men, whether for good or for bad.

“My task is now finished. I have performed it to the best of my ability, and in word, at least, the requirements of the law are now satisfied. If deeds be in question, those who are here interred have received part of their honours already, and for the rest, their children will be brought up till manhood at the public expense: the state thus offers a valuable prize, as the garland of victory in this race of valour, for the reward both of those who have fallen and their survivors. And where the rewards for merit are greatest, there are found the best citizens.

“And now that you have brought to a close your lamentations for your relatives, you may depart.”

-Translated by George Richard Crawley

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

PLATO

THE PHAEDO

TRANSLATED BY HAROLD NORTH FOWLER

Plato's Phaedo recounts the final moments of Socrates, the Father of Western Philosophy. Socrates has been found guilty of corrupting the youth and believing in strange gods. His punishment is death. However, before Socrates drinks the hemlock poison, he has time for one more discussion with his acolytes, who have all gathered in his prison cell.

The dialogue is characteristic of Plato. The philosopher uses his teacher, Socrates, as a literary mouthpiece to craft, and presumably give weight to, some of his own philosophical ideas. While the dialogue is used to provide some scaffolding for later Platonic ideas, the dialogue's contributors do talk, at length, on the nature of death and the state of the soul after life.

It is eventually agreed that the soul continues on from this world, taking only its wisdom. The souls are then judged and escorted into the underworld. The wicked souls are punished. The pious souls are rewarded.

Once the discussion is concluded, Socrates is ready to see his sentence carried out. He drinks the poison and gracefully expires. The death of this grand old teacher is steeped in dramatic detail and brings all those present to tears. Even the prison guard begins sobbing uncontrollably.

So dies the man who, in the words of Plato, was "the best and wisest and most righteous of men."

THE JUDGEMENT OF DEAD SOULS AND THE JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLD



If the soul is immortal, we must care for it, not only in respect to this time, which we call life, but in respect to all time, and if we neglect it, the danger now appears to be terrible. For if death were an escape from everything, it would be a boon to the wicked, for when they die they would be freed from the body and from their wickedness together with their souls. But now, since the soul is seen to be immortal, it cannot escape from evil or be saved in any other way than by becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul takes with it to the other world nothing but its education and nurture, and these are said to benefit or injure the departed greatly from the very beginning of his journey thither. And so it is said that after death, the tutelary genius of each person, to whom he had been allotted in life, leads him to a place where the dead are gathered together; then they are judged and depart to the other world with the guide whose task it is to conduct thither those who come from this world; and when they have there received their due and remained through the time appointed, another guide brings them back after many long periods of time.

And the journey is not as Telephus says in the play of Aeschylus; for he says a simple path leads to the lower world, but I think the path is neither simple nor single, for if it were, there would be no need of guides, since no one could miss the way to any place if there were only one road. But really there seem to be many forks of the road and many windings; this I infer from the rites and ceremonies practiced here on earth. Now the orderly and wise soul follows its guide and understands its circumstances; but the soul that is desirous of the body, as I said before, flits about it, and in the visible world for a long time, and after much resistance and many sufferings is led away with violence and with difficulty by its appointed genius. And when it arrives at the place where the other souls are, the soul which is impure and has done wrong, by committing wicked murders or other deeds akin to those and the works of kindred souls, is avoided and shunned by all, and no one is willing to be its companion or its guide, but it wanders about alone in utter bewilderment, during certain fixed times, after which it is carried by necessity to its fitting habitation. But the soul that has passed through life in purity and righteousness, finds gods for companions and guides, and goes to

dwell in its proper dwelling. Now there are many wonderful regions of the earth, and the earth itself is neither in size nor in other respects such as it is supposed to be by those who habitually discourse about it, as I believe on someone's authority.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED AND THE REWARD TO THE PIOUS



Such is the nature of these things. Now when the dead have come to the place where each is led by his genius, first they are judged and sentenced, as they have lived well and piously, or not. And those who are found to have lived neither well nor ill, go to the Acheron and, embarking upon vessels provided for them, arrive in them at the lake; there they dwell and are purified, and if they have done any wrong they are absolved by paying the penalty for their wrong doings, and for their good deeds they receive rewards, each according to his merits. But those who appear to be incurable, on account of the greatness of their wrongdoings, because they have committed many great deeds of sacrilege, or wicked and abominable murders, or any other such crimes, are cast by their fitting destiny into Tartarus, whence they never emerge. Those, however, who are curable, but are found to have committed great sins—who have, for example, in a moment of passion done some act of violence against father or mother and have lived in repentance the rest of their lives, or who have slain some other person under similar conditions—these must needs be thrown into Tartarus, and when they have been there a year the wave casts them out, the homicides by way of Cocytus, those who have outraged their parents by way of Pyriphlegethon. And when they have been brought by the current to the Acherusian lake, they shout and cry out, calling to those whom they have slain or outraged, begging and beseeching them to be gracious and to let them come out into the lake; and if they prevail they come out and cease from their ills, but if not, they are borne away again to Tartarus and thence back into the rivers, and this goes on until they prevail upon those whom they have wronged; for this is the penalty imposed upon them by the judges.

But those who are found to have excelled in holy living are freed from these regions within the earth and are released as from prisons; they mount upward into their pure abode and dwell upon the earth. And of these, all who have duly purified themselves by philosophy live henceforth altogether without bodies, and pass to still more beautiful abodes which it is not easy to describe, nor have we now time enough.

“But, Simmias, because of all these things which we have recounted we ought to do our best to acquire virtue and wisdom in life. For the prize is fair and the hope great.

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES



I am now already, as a tragedian would say, called by fate, and it is about time for me to go to the bath; for I think it is better to bathe before drinking the poison, that the women may not have the trouble of bathing the corpse.”

When he had finished speaking, Crito said: “Well, Socrates, do you wish to leave any directions with us about your children or anything else—anything we can do to serve you?”

“What I always say, Crito,” he replied, “nothing new. If you take care of yourselves you will serve me and mine and yourselves, whatever you do, even if you make no promises now; but if you neglect yourselves and are not willing to live following step by step, as it were, in the path marked out by our present and past discussions, you will accomplish nothing, no matter how much or how eagerly you promise at present.”

“We will certainly try hard to do as you say,” he replied. “But how shall we bury you?”

“However you please,” he replied, “if you can catch me and I do not get away from you.” And he laughed gently, and looking towards us, said: “I cannot persuade Crito, my friends, that the Socrates who is now conversing and arranging the details of his argument is really I; he thinks I am the one whom he will presently see as a corpse, and he asks how to bury me. And though I have been saying at great length that after I drink the poison I shall no longer be with you, but shall go away to the joys of the blessed you know of, he seems to think that was idle talk uttered to encourage you and myself. So,” he said, “give security for me to Crito, the opposite of that which he gave the judges at my trial; for he gave security that I would remain, but you must give security that I shall not remain when I die, but shall go away, so that Crito may bear it more easily, and may not be troubled when he sees my body being burnt or buried, or think I am undergoing terrible treatment, and may not say at the funeral that he is laying out Socrates, or following him to the grave, or burying him. For, dear Crito, you may be sure that such wrong words are not only undesirable in themselves, but

they infect the soul with evil. No, you must be of good courage, and say that you bury my body,—and bury it as you think best and as seems to you most fitting.”

When he had said this, he got up and went into another room to bathe; Crito followed him, but he told us to wait. So we waited, talking over with each other and discussing the discourse we had heard, and then speaking of the great misfortune that had befallen us, for we felt that he was like a father to us and that when bereft of him we should pass the rest of our lives as orphans. And when he had bathed and his children had been brought to him—for he had two little sons and one big one—and the women of the family had come, he talked with them in Crito’s presence and gave them such directions as he wished; then he told the women to go away, and he came to us. And it was now nearly sunset; for he had spent a long time within. And he came and sat down fresh from the bath. After that not much was said, and the servant of the eleven came and stood beside him and said: “Socrates, I shall not find fault with you, as I do with others, for being angry and cursing me, when at the behest of the authorities, I tell them to drink the poison. No, I have found you in all this time in every way the noblest and gentlest and best man who has ever come here, and now I know your anger is directed against others, not against me, for you know who are blame. Now, for you know the message I came to bring you, farewell and try to bear what you must as easily as you can.”

And he burst into tears and turned and went away. And Socrates looked up at him and said: “Fare you well, too; I will do as you say.” And then he said to us: “How charming the man is! Ever since I have been here he has been coming to see me and talking with me from time to time, and has been the best of men, and now how nobly he weeps for me! But come, Crito, let us obey him, and let someone bring the poison, if it is ready; and if not, let the man prepare it.”

And Crito said: “But I think, Socrates, the sun is still upon the mountains and has not yet set; and I know that others have taken the poison very late, after the order has come to them, and in the meantime have eaten and drunk and some of them enjoyed the society of those whom they loved. Do not hurry; for there is still time.”

And Socrates said: “Crito, those whom you mention are right in doing as they do, for they think they gain by it; and I shall be right in not doing as they do; for I think I should gain nothing by taking the poison a little later. I should only make myself ridiculous in my own eyes if I clung to life and spared it, when there is no more profit in it. Come,” he said, “do as I ask and do not refuse.”

Thereupon Crito nodded to the boy who was standing near. The boy went out and stayed a long time, then came back with the man who was to administer the poison, which he brought with him in a cup ready for use. And when Socrates saw him, he said: "Well, my good man, you know about these things; what must I do?" "Nothing," he replied, "except drink the poison and walk about till your legs feel heavy; then lie down, and the poison will take effect of itself."

At the same time he held out the cup to Socrates. He took it, and very gently, Echecrates, without trembling or changing color or expression, but looking up at the man with wide open eyes, as was his custom, said: "What do you say about pouring a libation to some deity from this cup? May I, or not?" "Socrates," said he, "we prepare only as much as we think is enough."

"I understand," said Socrates; "but I may and must pray to the gods that my departure hence be a fortunate one; so I offer this prayer, and may it be granted."

With these words he raised the cup to his lips and very cheerfully and quietly drained it. Up to that time most of us had been able to restrain our tears fairly well, but when we watched him drinking and saw that he had drunk the poison, we could do so no longer, but in spite of myself my tears rolled down in floods, so that I wrapped my face in my cloak and wept for myself; for it was not for him that I wept, but for my own misfortune in being deprived of such a friend. Crito had got up and gone away even before I did, because he could not restrain his tears. But Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time before, then wailed aloud in his grief and made us all break down, except Socrates himself. But he said, "What conduct is this, you strange men! I sent the women away chiefly for this very reason, that they might not behave in this absurd way; for I have heard that it is best to die in silence. Keep quiet and be brave."

Then we were ashamed and controlled our tears. He walked about and, when he said his legs were heavy, lay down on his back, for such was the advice of the attendant. The man who had administered the poison laid his hands on him and after a while examined his feet and legs, then pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. He said "No"; then after that, his thighs; and passing upwards in this way he showed us that he was growing cold and rigid. And again he touched him and said that when it reached his heart, he would be gone. The chill had now reached the region about the groin, and uncovering his face, which had been covered, he said—and these were his last words—"Crito, we owe a cock to Aesculapius. Pay it and do not neglect it." "That," said Crito, "shall be done; but see if you have anything else to say." To this question he made no reply, but after

a little while he moved; the attendant uncovered him; his eyes were fixed. And Crito when he saw it, closed his mouth and eyes.

Such was the end, Echebrates, of our friend, who was, as we may say, of all those of his time whom we have known, the best and wisest and most righteous man.

-Translated by Harold North Fowler

THE MYTH OF ER

PLATO

THE REPUBLIC, BOOK X

TRANSLATED BY BENJAMIN JOWETT

The myth of Er is a fanciful tale that is told by Socrates at the conclusion of The Republic. Socrates recounts the tale of a warrior named Er who died in battle, but whose body did not decompose. Twelve days after his death, Er comes back to life just before his countrymen can burn his body.

He recounts his experience in the afterlife. His story includes a description of the cosmos and the fate of the newly deceased souls. The myth of Er has greatly influenced philosophical and religious thought since it was originally put to parchment in Plato's Republic.



Well, I said, I will tell you a tale; not one of the tales which Odysseus tells to the hero Alcinous, yet this too is a tale of a hero, Er the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth. He was slain in battle, and ten days afterwards, when the bodies of the dead were taken up already in a state of corruption, his body was found unaffected by decay, and carried away home to be buried. And on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pile, he returned to life and told them what he had seen in the other world. He said that when his soul left the body he went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place at which there were two openings in the earth; they were near together, and over against them were two other openings in the heaven above. In the intermediate space there were judges seated, who commanded the just, after they had given judgment on them and had bound their sentences in front of them, to ascend by the heavenly way on the right hand; and in like manner the unjust were bidden by them to descend by the lower way on the left hand; these also bore the symbols of their deeds, but fastened on their backs. He drew near, and they told him that he was to be the messenger who would carry the report of the other

world to men, and they bade him hear and see all that was to be heard and seen in that place. Then he beheld and saw on one side the souls departing at either opening of heaven and earth when sentence had been given on them; and at the two other openings other souls, some ascending out of the earth dusty and worn with travel, some descending out of heaven clean and bright. And arriving ever and anon they seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went forth with gladness into the meadow, where they encamped as at a festival; and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath. And they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty. The Story, Glaucon, would take too long to tell; but the sum was this: --He said that for every wrong which they had done to any one they suffered tenfold; or once in a hundred years --such being reckoned to be the length of man's life, and the penalty being thus paid ten times in a thousand years. If, for example, there were any who had been the cause of many deaths, or had betrayed or enslaved cities or armies, or been guilty of any other evil behaviour, for each and all of their offences they received punishment ten times over, and the rewards of beneficence and justice and holiness were in the same proportion. I need hardly repeat what he said concerning young children dying almost as soon as they were born. Of piety and impiety to gods and parents, and of murderers, there were retributions other and greater far which he described. He mentioned that he was present when one of the spirits asked another, 'Where is Ardiaeus the Great?' (Now this Ardiaeus lived a thousand years before the time of Er: he had been the tyrant of some city of Pamphylia, and had murdered his aged father and his elder brother, and was said to have committed many other abominable crimes.) The answer of the other spirit was: 'He comes not hither and will never come. And this,' said he, 'was one of the dreadful sights which we ourselves witnessed. We were at the mouth of the cavern, and, having completed all our experiences, were about to reascend, when of a sudden Ardiaeus appeared and several others, most of whom were tyrants; and there were also besides the tyrants private individuals who had been great criminals: they were just, as they fancied, about to return into the upper world, but the mouth, instead of admitting them, gave a roar, whenever any of these incurable sinners or some one who had not been sufficiently punished tried to ascend; and then wild men of fiery aspect, who were standing by and heard the sound, seized and carried them off; and Ardiaeus and others they bound head and foot and hand, and threw them down and flayed them with

scourges, and dragged them along the road at the side, carding them on thorns like wool, and declaring to the passers-by what were their crimes, and that they were being taken away to be cast into hell.' And of all the many terrors which they had endured, he said that there was none like the terror which each of them felt at that moment, lest they should hear the voice; and when there was silence, one by one they ascended with exceeding joy. These, said Er, were the penalties and retributions, and there were blessings as great.

Now when the spirits which were in the meadow had tarried seven days, on the eighth they were obliged to proceed on their journey, and, on the fourth day after, he said that they came to a place where they could see from above a line of light, straight as a column, extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth, in colour resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer; another day's journey brought them to the place, and there, in the midst of the light, they saw the ends of the chains of heaven let down from above: for this light is the belt of heaven, and holds together the circle of the universe, like the under-girders of a trireme. From these ends is extended the spindle of Necessity, on which all the revolutions turn. The shaft and hook of this spindle are made of steel, and the whorl is made partly of steel and also partly of other materials. Now the whorl is in form like the whorl used on earth; and the description of it implied that there is one large hollow whorl which is quite scooped out, and into this is fitted another lesser one, and another, and another, and four others, making eight in all, like vessels which fit into one another; the whorls show their edges on the upper side, and on their lower side all together form one continuous whorl. This is pierced by the spindle, which is driven home through the centre of the eighth. The first and outermost whorl has the rim broadest, and the seven inner whorls are narrower, in the following proportions --the sixth is next to the first in size, the fourth next to the sixth; then comes the eighth; the seventh is fifth, the fifth is sixth, the third is seventh, last and eighth comes the second. The largest (of fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one another, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish; the sixth (Jupiter) is in whiteness second. Now the whole spindle has the same motion; but, as the whole revolves in one direction, the seven inner circles move slowly in the other, and of these the swiftest is the eighth; next in swiftness are the seventh, sixth, and fifth, which move together; third in swiftness appeared to move according to the law of this reversed motion the fourth; the third appeared fourth and the second fifth. The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning

a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal intervals, there is another band, three in number, each sitting upon her throne: these are the Fates, daughters of Necessity, who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens --Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, Atropos of the future; Clotho from time to time assisting with a touch of her right hand the revolution of the outer circle of the whorl or spindle, and Atropos with her left hand touching and guiding the inner ones, and Lachesis laying hold of either in turn, first with one hand and then with the other.

When Er and the spirits arrived, their duty was to go at once to Lachesis; but first of all there came a prophet who arranged them in order; then he took from the knees of Lachesis lots and samples of lives, and having mounted a high pulpit, spoke as follows: 'Hear the word of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your genius will not be allotted to you, but you choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser --God is justified.' When the Interpreter had thus spoken he scattered lots indifferently among them all, and each of them took up the lot which fell near him, all but Er himself (he was not allowed), and each as he took his lot perceived the number which he had obtained. Then the Interpreter placed on the ground before them the samples of lives; and there were many more lives than the souls present, and they were of all sorts. There were lives of every animal and of man in every condition. And there were tyrannies among them, some lasting out the tyrant's life, others which broke off in the middle and came to an end in poverty and exile and beggary; and there were lives of famous men, some who were famous for their form and beauty as well as for their strength and success in games, or, again, for their birth and the qualities of their ancestors; and some who were the reverse of famous for the opposite qualities. And of women likewise; there was not, however, any definite character them, because the soul, when choosing a new life, must of necessity become different. But there was every other quality, and the all mingled with one another, and also with elements of wealth and poverty, and disease and health; and there were mean states also. And here, my dear Glaucon, is the supreme peril of our human state; and therefore the utmost care should be taken. Let each one of us leave every other kind of knowledge and seek and follow one thing only, if peradventure he may be able to learn and may find some one who will make him able to learn and discern between good and evil, and so to choose always and

everywhere the better life as he has opportunity. He should consider the bearing of all these things which have been mentioned severally and collectively upon virtue; he should know what the effect of beauty is when combined with poverty or wealth in a particular soul, and what are the good and evil consequences of noble and humble birth, of private and public station, of strength and weakness, of cleverness and dullness, and of all the soul, and the operation of them when conjoined; he will then look at the nature of the soul, and from the consideration of all these qualities he will be able to determine which is the better and which is the worse; and so he will choose, giving the name of evil to the life which will make his soul more unjust, and good to the life which will make his soul more just; all else he will disregard. For we have seen and know that this is the best choice both in life and after death. A man must take with him into the world below an adamantine faith in truth and right, that there too he may be undazzled by the desire of wealth or the other allurements of evil, lest, coming upon tyrannies and similar villainies, he do irremediable wrongs to others and suffer yet worse himself; but let him know how to choose the mean and avoid the extremes on either side, as far as possible, not only in this life but in all that which is to come. For this is the way of happiness.

And according to the report of the messenger from the other world this was what the prophet said at the time: 'Even for the last comer, if he chooses wisely and will live diligently, there is appointed a happy and not undesirable existence. Let not him who chooses first be careless, and let not the last despair.' And when he had spoken, he who had the first choice came forward and in a moment chose the greatest tyranny; his mind having been darkened by folly and sensuality, he had not thought out the whole matter before he chose, and did not at first sight perceive that he was fated, among other evils, to devour his own children. But when he had time to reflect, and saw what was in the lot, he began to beat his breast and lament over his choice, forgetting the proclamation of the prophet; for, instead of throwing the blame of his misfortune on himself, he accused chance and the gods, and everything rather than himself. Now he was one of those who came from heaven, and in a former life had dwelt in a well-ordered State, but his virtue was a matter of habit only, and he had no philosophy. And it was true of others who were similarly overtaken, that the greater number of them came from heaven and therefore they had never been schooled by trial, whereas the pilgrims who came from earth, having themselves suffered and seen others suffer, were not in a hurry to choose. And owing to this inexperience of theirs, and also because the lot was a chance, many of the souls exchanged a good destiny for an evil or an evil for a good. For if a man had always on his arrival in this world dedicated himself from the first to sound philosophy, and had been moderately

fortunate in the number of the lot, he might, as the messenger reported, be happy here, and also his journey to another life and return to this, instead of being rough and underground, would be smooth and heavenly. Most curious, he said, was the spectacle --sad and laughable and strange; for the choice of the souls was in most cases based on their experience of a previous life. There he saw the soul which had once been Orpheus choosing the life of a swan out of enmity to the race of women, hating to be born of a woman because they had been his murderers; he beheld also the soul of Thamyras choosing the life of a nightingale; birds, on the other hand, like the swan and other musicians, wanting to be men. The soul which obtained the twentieth lot chose the life of a lion, and this was the soul of Ajax the son of Telamon, who would not be a man, remembering the injustice which was done him the judgment about the arms. The next was Agamemnon, who took the life of an eagle, because, like Ajax, he hated human nature by reason of his sufferings. About the middle came the lot of Atalanta; she, seeing the great fame of an athlete, was unable to resist the temptation: and after her there followed the soul of Epeus the son of Panopeus passing into the nature of a woman cunning in the arts; and far away among the last who chose, the soul of the jester Thersites was putting on the form of a monkey. There came also the soul of Odysseus having yet to make a choice, and his lot happened to be the last of them all. Now the recollection of former toils had disenchanted him of ambition, and he went about for a considerable time in search of the life of a private man who had no cares; he had some difficulty in finding this, which was lying about and had been neglected by everybody else; and when he saw it, he said that he would have done so had his lot been first instead of last, and that he was delighted to have it. And not only did men pass into animals, but I must also mention that there were animals tame and wild who changed into one another and into corresponding human natures --the good into the gentle and the evil into the savage, in all sorts of combinations.

All the souls had now chosen their lives, and they went in the order of their choice to Lachesis, who sent with them the genius whom they had severally chosen, to be the guardian of their lives and the fulfiller of the choice: this genius led the souls first to Clotho, and drew them within the revolution of the spindle impelled by her hand, thus ratifying the destiny of each; and then, when they were fastened to this, carried them to Atropos, who spun the threads and made them irreversible, whence without turning round they passed beneath the throne of Necessity; and when they had all passed, they marched on in a scorching heat to the plain of Forgetfulness, which was a barren waste destitute of trees and verdure; and then towards evening they encamped by the river of Unmindfulness, whose water no vessel can hold; of this they were all obliged to drink a certain

quantity, and those who were not saved by wisdom drank more than was necessary; and each one as he drank forgot all things. Now after they had gone to rest, about the middle of the night there was a thunderstorm and earthquake, and then in an instant they were driven upwards in all manner of ways to their birth, like stars shooting. He himself was hindered from drinking the water. But in what manner or by what means he returned to the body he could not say; only, in the morning, awaking suddenly, he found himself lying on the pyre.

And thus, Glaucon, the tale has been saved and has not perished, and will save us if we are obedient to the word spoken; and we shall pass safely over the river of Forgetfulness and our soul will not be defiled. Wherefore my counsel is that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing.

-Translated by Benjamin Jowett

PLANNING THE END-GAME

PETRONIUS

SATYRICON

TRANSLATED BY HAROLD NORTH FOWLER

Gaius Petronius Arbiter, commonly just called "Petronius", was a Roman author during the reign of Emperor Nero. In addition to writing, Petronius was also a courtier for the Emperor. Tacitus describes his duty to Nero as being akin to that of a fashion adviser.

His Satyricon combines comedic and dramatic storytelling devices to narrate the fictional misadventures of the narrator, Encolpius, and his lover, a handsome sixteen-year-old servant boy named Giton.

Below is a speech given by the freedman, Trimalchio, during a dinner party in which the main characters are present.



“Yes! my friends, slaves are human beings too, and have sucked mother’s milk as well as we, though untoward circumstance has borne them down. Nevertheless, without prejudicing me, they shall some day soon drink the water of the free. In a word, I enfranchise them all in my will. I bequeath into the bargain a farm and his bedfellow to Philargyrus, a street block to Cario, besides a twentieth and a bed and bedding. I name Fortunata my heir, and commend her to all my friends’ kindness. And all this I make public, to the end my whole household may love me now as well as if I were dead already.”

All began to express their gratitude to so kind a master, when Trimalchio, quite dropping his trifling vein, ordered a copy of his will to be fetched, and read it through from beginning to end amid the groans of all members of the household. Then turning to Habinnas, he asked him, “What say you, dear friend? are you building my monument according to my directions? I ask you particularly that

at the feet of my effigy you have my little bitch put, and garlands and perfume caskets and all Petraities' fights, that by your good help I may live on even after death. The frontage is to be a hundred feet long, and it must reach back two hundred. For I wish to have all kinds of fruit trees growing around my ashes and plenty of vines. Surely it's a great mistake to make houses so fine for the living, yet to give never a thought to these where we have to dwell far, far longer. And that's why I especially insist on the notice:

THIS MONUMENT DOES NOT DESCEND
TO THE HEIR.

But I shall take good care to provide in my will against my remains being insulted. For I intend to put one of my freedmen in charge of my burial place, to see that the rabble don't come running and dirtying up my monument. I beg you to have ships under full sail carved on it, and me sitting on the tribunal, in my Senator's robes, with five gold rings on my fingers, and showering money from a bag among the public; for you remember I gave a public banquet once, two denars a head. Also there should be shown, if you approve, a banqueting-hall, and all the people enjoying themselves pleasantly. On my right hand put a figure of my wife, Fortunata, holding a dove and leading a little bitch on a leash, also my little lad, and some good capacious wine-jars, stoppered so that the wine may not escape. Also you may carve a broken urn, and a boy weeping over it. Also a horologe in the center, so that anyone looking to see the time must willy-nilly read my name. As for the lettering, look this over carefully and see if you think it is good enough:

HERE LIES
C. POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO,
A SECOND MAECENAS.
HE WAS NOMINATED SEVIR
IN HIS ABSENCE.
HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MEMBER
OF EVERY DECURIA IN ROME,
BUT DECLINED.
PIOUS, BRAVE, HONORABLE,
HE ROSE FROM THE RANKS.
WITHOUT LEARNING OR EDUCATION,
HE LEFT A MILLION OF MONEY
BEHIND HIM.
FAREWELL;
GO AND DO THOU LIKEWISE!"

When he had finished reading this document, Trimalchio fell to weeping copiously. Fortunata wept too; so did Habinnas; so did the servants; in fact, the whole household filled the room with lamentations, for all the world like guests at a funeral. Indeed I was beginning to weep myself, when Trimalchio resumed. "Well!" said he, "as we know we've got to die, why not make the most of life? As I should like to see you all happy, let's jump into the bath. I guarantee you'll be none the worse; it's as hot as an oven."

MEMORY AND MOURNING

PLUTARCH

CONSOLATIO AD UXOREM
(CONSULTATION TO HIS WIFE)

The Consolatio ad Uxorem is a letter written by the Greek historian and essayist, Plutarch to his wife after receiving the news that their daughter had died at the age of two. The daughter was named Timoxena, after her mother, and her birth was preceded by the birth of four boys.

In the letter Plutarch speaks lovingly of his daughter and encourages his wife to not shun the memory of their daughter out of fear that it would be too painful. Rather, he urges his wife to cherish the memory of their daughter and use it as a source of joy during difficult times.



The messenger you sent to report the death of our little child seems to have missed me on the way as he travelled to Athens; but when I reached Tanagra I learned of it from my granddaughter. Now the funeral, I suppose, has already been held — and my desire is that it has been so held as to cause you the least pain, both now and hereafter; but if you want something done that you are leaving undone while you await my decision, something that you believe will make your grief easier to bear, that too you shall have, so it be done without excess or superstition, faults to which you are not at all prone.

Only, my dear wife, in your emotion keep me as well as yourself within bounds. For I know and can set a measure to the magnitude of our loss, taken by itself; but if I find any extravagance of distress in you, this will be more grievous to me than what has happened. Yet neither was I born “from oak or rock”; you know this yourself, you who have reared so many children in partnership with me, all of them brought up at home under our own care. And I know what great satisfaction lay in this that after four sons the longed-for daughter was born to you, and that she made it possible for me to call her by your name. Our affection for

children so young has, furthermore, a poignancy all its own: the delight it gives is quite pure and free from all anger or reproach.

She had herself, moreover, a surprising gift of mildness and good temper, and her way of responding to friendship and of bestowing favours gave us pleasure while it afforded an insight into her kindness. For she would invite the nurse to offer the breast and feed with it not only other infants, but even the inanimate objects and playthings she took pleasure in, as though serving them at her own table, dispensing in her kindness what bounty she had and sharing her greatest pleasures with whatever gave her delight.

But I do not see, my dear wife, why these things and the like, after delighting us while she lived, should now distress and dismay us as we take thought of them. Rather I fear on the contrary that while we banish painful thoughts we may banish memory as well. like Clymenê, who said...

I hate the crooked bow of cornel wood,
I hate the sports of youth: away with them!

ever shunning and shrinking from what reminded her of her son, because it was attended with pain; for nature shuns everything unpleasant. But rather, just as she was herself the most delightful thing in the world to embrace, to see, to hear, so too must the thought of her live with us and be our companion, bringing with it joy in greater measure, nay in many times greater measure, than it brings sorrow (if indeed it is reasonable that the arguments we have often used to others should be of seasonable aid to ourselves as well), and we must not sit idle and shut ourselves in, paying for those pleasures with sorrows many times as great.

Do, however, try to carry yourself back in your thoughts and return again and again to the time when this little child was not yet born and we had as yet no complaint against Fortune; next try to link this present time with that as though our circumstances had again become the same. For, my dear wife, we shall appear to be sorry that our child was ever born if our conduct leads us to regard the state of things before her birth as preferable to the present.

Yet we must not obliterate the intervening two years from our memory; rather, since they afforded us delight and enjoyment of her, we should credit them to the account of pleasure; and we should not consider the small good a great evil, nor, because Fortune did not add what we hoped for, be ungrateful for what was given. For reverent language toward the Deity and a serene and uncomplaining

attitude toward Fortune never fail to yield an excellent and pleasant return; while in circumstances like these he who in greatest measure draws upon his memory of past blessings and turns his thought toward the bright and radiant part of his life, averting it from the dark and disturbing part, either extinguishes his pain entirely, or by thus combining it with its opposite, renders it slight and faint. For just as perfume, while always a delight to the smell, serves on occasion to counteract foul odours, so the thought of our blessings has in time of trouble a further, necessary, use: it is an antidote in the hands of those who do not shun the remembrance of happiness and do not insist on reproaching Fortune in everything. It ill becomes us to fall into this state by cavilling at our own life for receiving, like a book, a single stain, while all the rest is clean and unspoiled. For you have often heard that felicity depends on correct reasoning resulting in a stable habit, and that the changes due to fortune occasion no serious departure from it and do not bring with them a falling away that destroys the character of our lives.

MARK ANTONY'S FUNERAL ORATION FOR CAESAR

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

JULIUS CAESAR

Shakespeare might not have been from classical antiquity, but the subject of his play, Julius Caesar, most certainly was.

At the funeral of Caesar, Antony is allowed by the conspirators to speak upon the condition that he not blame them for the death of Caesar. What follows is masterful use of rhetoric. Antony's sarcasm becomes more and more apparent as he refers, again and again, to Brutus and the conspirators as "honorable men".



Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:

Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.



CLASSICAL WISDOM WEEKLY

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