

## THE HOMERIC HYMNS

### I

#### TO DIONYSUS

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

### II

#### TO DEMETER

Fair-haired Demeter, holy deity,  
I'll praise – her trim-legged daughter, also, she  
Who was by Aïdoneus seduced, for her  
He had of Zeus, far-seeing, Thunderer.

Far from Demeter of the golden sword  
 And glorious fruits, upon the soft greensward  
 With Ocean's well-endowed young girls she played,  
 And flowers, which the will of Zeus had made  
 The earth to grow to satisfy Hades  
 And snare the bloomlike girl, she plucked, and these 10  
 Were roses, croci, lovely violets and  
 The iris, hyacinth, narcissus (grand  
 And radiant flower), such a sight to see  
 For gods and men. Its deep extremity  
 Produced a hundred blooms. Its fragrant smell  
 Caused all the heavens to laugh – the earth as well  
 And the salt-sea's swell. The maiden's breathless joy  
 Made her reach out to grasp the lovely toy  
 When Earth with her broad pathways split asunder  
 Upon that Nysian plain and then from under 20  
 The ground, the lord who goes by many a name,  
 The Host of Legions, son of Cronos, came  
 With his immortal horses, leaping far.  
 Against her will he caught her in his car  
 Of gold as she yelled out. With a shrill cry  
 She called upon her father, the most high  
 And glorious son of Cronos. Not one tree  
 That bears rich olives, not one deity  
 Nor man could catch her voice; just two were there  
 To hear her – tender Hecate, whose hair 30  
 Shone bright, Persaeus' daughter, as she lay  
 Within her cave, and Helios, Lord of Day,  
 Hyperion's bright son, as loud she cried  
 To Zeus, her father. But he sat aside  
 From all the gods within his temple where  
 So many pray, receiving his sweet share  
 Of mortal offerings. And so that son  
 Of Cronos, host and lord of many a one,  
 Who goes by many a name, was carrying  
 Away the girl by leave of Zeus the king 40  
 On his immortal chariot, though she  
 Was most reluctant. While she still could see  
 The earth, the starry heavens and the shine  
 Of sunlight and the strongly-flowing brine  
 Where fishes shoal, the goddess hoped to view  
 Her darling mother and the great gods who  
 Live endlessly – this calmed her mighty soul.  
 The heights of all the mountains and the whole  
 Sea-depths with her immortal voice rang out,  
 And then her queenly mother heard her shout: 50

Acute pain seized her heart; her dear hands tore  
 Her headdress; and the dusky cloak she wore  
 She cast off, speeding bird-like over sea  
 And land to find her child. But nobody,  
 No god nor man, would tell her what was done,  
 And of all of the birds of omen none  
 Would say the truth. She wandered through the land,  
 The queenly Deo, torches in her hand  
 For nine days, forsaking in her misery  
 Sweet nectar and ambrosia, while she 60  
 Denied to bathe. But when the tenth dawn broke,  
 The Hecate, with a torch, met her and spoke  
 These words: "Queenly Demeter, who bring us  
 The seasons, you who are so generous  
 With rich gifts, say what man or deity  
 Has carried off your child Persephone  
 And caused you pain? I heard her cry but who  
 He was I did not see. I'll tell to you  
 In short all that I know." Thus Hecate  
 Addressed her. Rich-haired Rhea's progeny 70  
 Made no reply but, with her torches, flew  
 With her until they came to Helios, who  
 Watched over gods and men and there she stood  
 Before his horses, telling him: "You should,  
 Helios, respect me as a deity  
 If ever I have given gaiety  
 To you in word or deed. My fair, sweet child  
 I heard as one in someone's thrall – a wild  
 And thrilling sound! But nothing did I see.  
 But by your beams through the extremity 80  
 Of both the land and sea and radiant air  
 You look down. Have you seen her anywhere?  
 My dear child! Who has seized her violently -  
 What god or man? – and made escape?" Thus she  
 Spoke. Then Hyperion's son gave his reply:  
 "Demeter, child of rich-haired Rhea, I  
 Will tell the truth to you. Exceedingly  
 I honour you and grieve your misery  
 Over your slim-legged daughter. None but Zeus  
 Cloud-Gatherer's to blame. He dared to loose 90  
 The maid to Hades so that she might be  
 His buxom wife – yes, his own brother. He  
 Snatched her away down to the misty gloom  
 As in his chariot she wailed her doom.  
 But, goddess, cease your loud lament. For it  
 Is wrong to show vain anger. Not unfit

To be a son-in-law to you, her mother,  
 Being of the same stock and your own brother,  
 Is Aïdoneus , Lord of Many Men  
 Among the deathless deities; again, 100  
 When honours were first measured out, he gained  
 A third part of renown and has remained  
 Lord of his fellow-dwellers there.” That said,  
 She called her steeds. They heard her voice and sped  
 Along like long-winged birds. More suffering  
 Assailed her. Angered at the Dark-Cloud King  
 Of Gods she shunned their gatherings on high  
 Olympus and to towns and fields that lie  
 On earth she went, inflicting injury  
 A long time on herself. On scrutiny 110  
 No man, no, nor yet one deep-bosomed dame  
 Knew her for who she was until she came  
 To wise Celeus, who then was sovereign  
 Of sweet Eleusis. She sat, troubled in  
 Her heart, on the roadside by the Maids’ Spring  
 Whence folk drew water. Overshadowing  
 This dark lace was an olive shrubbery.  
 Just like an ancient crone she seemed to be,  
 Cut off from childbirth and the offerings  
 That garland-loving Aphrodite brings, 120  
 Like those who tend the kingly progeny –  
 Those kings who weal out justice lawfully –  
 Or like the stewards in the halls that sound  
 In echoes. There Celeus’s daughters found  
 Her as she carried water which they drew  
 So easily so they might take it to  
 Their father’s house in bronze urns. Like divine  
 Goddesses, there were four of them, in fine  
 And blooming youth – they were Callidice  
 And lovely Demo and Cleisidice 130  
 And then Callithoë, the eldest one.  
 They, too – for it is not so easily done  
 For any man to know a deity –  
 Failed to detect her and spoke wingedly:  
 “Who are you, ancient one? What is your race?  
 Why have you left your city and won’t face  
 These houses? Dames like you, and younger, too,  
 Live here in dark halls and would welcome you  
 In word and deed.” They spoke and in reply  
 The queen of all the goddesses said, “I 140  
 Greet you, dear children, whosoever you be  
 Of womankind. I’ll tell my history

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

In our fine house, she has a late-born son,  
 Much prayed for and embraced – her only one. 190  
 Nurse him till he's a youth and you will find  
 That you're the envy of all womankind.  
 Such gifts shall you receive!" That's what she said,  
 And at her words the goddess bowed her head.  
 They filled their shining buckets and withdrew,  
 Rejoicing. In a short time they came to  
 Their father's house and told their mother all  
 That they had seen and heard. She bade them call  
 The stranger swiftly so that they might pay  
 Her boundless wages. Then they went away, 200  
 Like deer or calves with a sufficiency  
 Of pasture, who then bound across the lea.  
 Those maidens down the hollow pathway sped,  
 Holding their lovely garments' folds ahead  
 Of them. Just like a crocus flower, their hair  
 Streamed round their shoulders as they went to where  
 They'd left the good goddess by the wayside,  
 And there they found her. Then with her they hied  
 To their dear father's house. She walked behind,  
 A veil upon her head, grieved in her mind. 210  
 Around her slender feet her dark-blue dress  
 Fluttered about. Quite soon, with the goddess,  
 They came to heaven-bred Celeus' residence.  
 They went along the portico and thence  
 They found their queenly mother sitting near  
 A pillar of the close-fit roof, her dear  
 Young son within her arms. To her they sped.  
 The goddess on the threshold stood, her head  
 Reaching the roof. Her heavenly radiance  
 Filled up the doorway. Awe and reverence 220  
 And pale fear took their mother at this sight.  
 She got up then so that Demeter might  
 Sit on her couch, and yet she, who supplies  
 The seasons and gives perfect gifts, her eyes,  
 Her lovely eyes, cast down, would not sit there  
 Upon that golden couch. With tender care  
 Iambe brought a jointed stool and cast  
 A silver fleece upon it. Then, at last,  
 The goddess sat and held a veil before  
 Her face. A long time there she sat, heart-sore, 230  
 Unsmiling, never speaking, not by sign  
 Or word addressing anyone. No wine,  
 No food she took but, pining wistfully  
 For her deep-bosomed daughter, there sat she.

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

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



On soft feet for their mother so she may  
 Come from her fragrant chamber. And now they  
 Gathered around the struggling little boy  
 And bathed him, hugging him with loving joy. 330  
 He was not solaced, though – the skilfulness  
 Of those handmaids and nurses was far less.  
 They prayed to the glorious goddess through the night,  
 Shaking with fear, and, at the dawn's first light  
 They told the mighty Celeus all, as she,  
 Well-wreathed Demeter, told them to. Then he  
 Summoned his people to the meeting-place,  
 That countless throng, and bade them then to grace  
 Rich-tressed Demeter, with a temple there,  
 A splendid one, an altar, also, where 340  
 The hillock rose. They heard and started to  
 Do as he ordered, and the infant grew  
 Just like a god. When done and at their rest  
 They all went home. Demeter, golden-tressed,  
 Apart from all the gods sat as she pined  
 For her deep-bosomed child. Mortals would find  
 \Upon the fecund earth a cruel year  
 For the well-wreathed Demeter kept each ear  
 From sprouting. Many a curving plough in vain  
 Was drawn by oxen. White barley would rain 350  
 To no avail upon the ground. So she  
 Would have destroyed with cruel scarcity  
 All of mankind and would have robbed as well  
 Of gifts and sacrifices those who dwell  
 High on Olympus did Lord Zeus not see  
 What she had done. He sent immediately  
 Gold-winged Iris to the richly-tressed  
 Lovely Demeter. That was his behest,  
 And she obeyed dark-clouded Zeus, the son  
 Of Cronus – swiftly to her did she run. 360  
 She came then to Eleusis, rich in scent.  
 She found dark-cloaked Demeter and she went  
 Into the temple where she'd come to rest  
 And said with winged words:" It's the behest  
 Of Father Zeus, who's ever wise, that you  
 Should join the holy tribe of deities who  
 Are everlasting. Don't let this decree  
 Go unbeyed. Still she refused to be  
 Persuaded. Zeus then gave one more command –  
 The blest, eternal gods should see her and, 370  
 Each one after the other, on they came  
 And offered fair gifts, calling out her name.

They promised any rights she might prefer  
 Among them, not prevailing, though, with her,  
 So angry was she. She spurned stubbornly  
 All that they'd said. She'd never go, said she,  
 To well-scented Olympus nor let rise  
 Fruit from the ground till she with her own eyes  
 Saw her fair child. Zeus the Loud-Thunderer,  
 Who sees all, sent the executioner 380  
 Of Argus with his wand of gold to Hell  
 That he with coaxing words might put a spell  
 On Hades to send back into the light  
 Holy Persephone from murky night  
 And let her mother see her and let go  
 Her anger. Hermes was persuaded so  
 To do and left Olympus speedily  
 Down to the places on the earth, then he  
 Found Hades on a couch at home beside  
 His apprehensive and reluctant bride, 390  
 Much yearning for her mother, who yet mused  
 On her dread project far away, abused  
 By the blest gods. Staunch Hermes, standing near,  
 Said: "Dark-haired Hades, sovereign down here  
 Among the dead, I'm given a command  
 By Father Zeus to take out of this land  
 The fair Persephone up to the place  
 Where the gods live so that she, face-to-face,  
 May meet her mother that she may let go  
 Her rage at the gods; a dread scenario 400  
 Demeter had in mind – she planned to bring  
 An end to weakly men by burying  
 Seed underground, the honours that they brought  
 To the immortals thus reduced to nought.  
 She kept her dreadful anger nor would she  
 Mix with the gods but solitarily  
 Kept to her fragrant temple, dwelling in  
 Rocky Eleusis." With a joyless grin  
 The ruler of the dead then acquiesced  
 To Father Zeus' command and thus addressed 410  
 The wise Persephone immediately:  
 "To your dark-robed mother, Persephone,  
 Go now. Think kindly of me. Do not brood  
 Or be in an exceedingly sad mood.  
 Among the gods I'll be a fitting spouse,  
 For I am Zeus's brother. In this house  
 Over all living things you'll have command  
 And with the highest honours will you stand

Among the gods; always those who do ill  
 Shall be chastised, those who refuse to still 420  
 Your power with sacrifices, reverently  
 Performing rites and giving gifts." Thus he  
 Addressed her. Filled with joy then was the shrewd  
 Persephone, and in that happy mood  
 Leapt up. But Hades gave her secretly  
 A pomegranate seed that she'd beside  
 Her dark-robed mother not always abide.  
 Aïdoneus, Ruler of Many Men,  
 Attached his steeds that never perish then 430  
 To his gold chariot. She got on, and strong  
 Hermes took reins and whip and drove headlong  
 Those horses, for they flew on readily.  
 They managed their long journey speedily.  
 No sea, no river, not one mountaintop,  
 No grassy glen was seen to put a stop  
 To their advance as they cleft the wide air  
 Above them. Thus he brought those steeds to where  
 Well-wreathed Demeter stayed, halting before  
 Her fragrant temple. Seeing them she tore 440  
 Outside, as on a wooded mountainside  
 A Maenad tears; Persephone then spied  
 Demeter's sweet eyes, then leapt down and sped  
 To fall upon her neck. Yet in her head,  
 While holding her, Demeter suddenly  
 Fancied some trick and trembled violently,  
 Ceasing her kisses. "Child," she cried, "did you  
 Not eat when down below? Come, tell me true.  
 Hide nothing that we both may truly know.  
 If not, then from that loathsome place below 450  
 With Cronus' son, dark-clouded Zeus, and me  
 You'll come and dwell and will respected be  
 By all the gods. But if you ate, back there  
 Below the earth you'll hold a one-third's share  
 Of every year, the other two with me  
 And all the other gods. But when we see  
 Earth blooming with the fragrant flowers of spring,  
 Up from that gloom you'll rise, a wondrous thing  
 To gods and men. What trick did Hades play  
 Upon you when he spirited you away?" 460  
 Then fair Persephone replied to her:  
 "Mother, I'll tell you all. The messenger,  
 Aid-giving, swift Hermes was sent to me  
 By Zeus, my sire, and each divinity  
 To bring me back to earth from Erebus

That you might feast your eyes on me and thus  
 Cease your dread wrath against the gods. Why, I  
 At once leapt up in joy. But by and by  
 He placed inside my mouth clandestinely  
 A sweet pomegranate seed, thus forcing me 470  
 To taste it. I will tell you, blow by blow,  
 How Hades took me to the depths below  
 Through Zeus's clever plan. In a fair lea  
 We were cavorting – there was Leucippe,  
 Phaino, Electra, Ianthe,,Melite,  
 Rhodeia, Iache, Calirrhoë,  
 Melobosis, Tyche and Acaste,  
 Chryseis, Ianeira, Admete.  
 Also there were gathering blooms with me 480  
 Rhodope, Plouto, Calypso the Fair,  
 Styx, also, and Urania were there,  
 The beauty Galaxaura, Pallas, too,  
 Who rouses battles, and Admetus, who  
 Delights in arrows. We were gathering  
 Sweet blooms - soft crocuses, all mingling  
 With iris, hyacinth, rose, lily – o  
 Such sights! – narcissus, too (these flowers grow  
 On the wide earth like crocuses). With glee  
 I picked them all. The earth, though, suddenly 490  
 Parted beneath me. Up leapt the strong lord,  
 The Host of Many, bundled me aboard  
 His golden car and then against my will  
 Took me beneath the earth. My cry was shrill.  
 All this is true, although it hurts to say  
 These words.” Then with one heart all through the day  
 They cheered each other's souls with many a kiss,  
 Which brought relief as back and forth some bliss  
 They gave and took. Then bright-eyed Hecate  
 Approached them both, embracing frequently 500  
 Demeter's holy child and from then on  
 Queen Hecate was her companion  
 And minister. Then Zeus, Loud-Thunderer,  
 All-Seeing, sent to them a messenger,  
 The well-tressed Rhea, so that she might bring  
 Dark-robed Demeter to the gathering  
 Of gods, and honours of her choice he swore  
 That they would give , agreeing furthermore  
 That one-third of the circling year she'd live  
 In gloom and darkness while the rest he'd give 510  
 To her that with her mother she might stay  
 And the other gods. She did not disobey

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

O queen of sweet Eleusis and the isle  
 Of Paros and the rock-strewn Antron, smile, 560  
 Gift-giver, season-bringer, Deo, fair  
 Persephone as well, and for my air  
 Grant me delightful substance. You I'll tell  
 Of in my song – another song as well.

### III

#### TO DELIAN APOLLO

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

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

And the great ocean everlastingly 80  
 Will surge above me, and then he will go  
 To somewhere else that pleases him, and so  
 Will make his shrine and thickets. As for me,  
 For many-footed creatures of the sea  
 And black seals I shall be their domicile,  
 Quite undisturbed, because I am an isle  
 That lacks folk. But, goddess, if you dare swear  
 A solemn oath, he'll build on me a fair  
 Temple, an oracle for men, he then  
 May build his shrines and groves for other men 90  
 Elsewhere, for he'll be much renowned." That's how  
 She answered. Then a solemn, godly vow  
 Made Leto: "Hear this, Earth and broad, broad Sky  
 And Styx's dropping streams below (for I  
 Now swear the mightiest oath that there can be  
 Among the gods) – a fragrant sanctuary  
 Shall Phoebus have here, and you will have fame  
 Above all folk." To the oath's end she came.  
 At the Far-Shooter's birth great ecstasy  
 Struck Delos. In unwonted misery 100  
 Did Leto groan nine days and nights to bear  
 Apollo. All the goddesses were there  
 Who were the chiefest – Rhea, Dione,  
 Ichnaea, Themis and Amphitrite,  
 Who groans aloud – yes, every goddess, all  
 Save white-armed Hera, who sat in the hall  
 Of Zeus, Cloud-Gatherer. Only one goddess,  
 She of sore childbirth, knew not the distress  
 Of Leto, for on high Olympus she  
 Sat under gold clouds, by the subtlety 110  
 Of white-armed Hera tricked. She kept her there  
 Through envy – well-tressed Leto was to bear  
 A great and faultless son. The goddess, though,  
 Sent Iris from this well-set island so  
 She might bring Eilithyia, promising  
 A massive necklace bound with many a string  
 Of golden threads, nine cubits long, and they  
 Bade Iris move Eilithyia away  
 From white-armed Hera lest she should persuade  
 Her back. The Iris, swift as winds, who'd paid 120  
 Attention to her, ran and soon the space  
 Between was covered and she reached the place  
 On high Olympus where the gods reside.  
 Immediately she bade to come outside  
 The goddess of travail and, wingedly,



Her words told her what each divinity,  
 Each goddess, bade her, and in her great heart  
 She was persuaded and saw them depart  
 Like shy doves. She of Sore Delivery  
 Reached Delos, when Leto in agony 130  
 Began to give birth, hankering to bear  
 Her son. She leant against a palm-tree there  
 And knelt upon the soft grass, and the ground  
 Rejoiced beneath her. Phoebus, with a bound,  
 Now saw the light. The goddesses all cried  
 Aloud. Great Phoebus, you were purified  
 With pleasing water, and then you were wrapped  
 In a fine, new-made garment and then strapped  
 In a gold band. Gold-bladed Phoebus, though,  
 Was never to be suckled by Leto; 140  
 Ambrosia and nectar for the boy  
 Thetis poured out; Leto was filled with joy  
 That she had borne a mighty archer-lad.  
 But, Phoebus, once that heavenly food you'd had,  
 No golden bands or cords kept you in thrall –  
 No longer struggling, you loosed them all.  
 Then to the goddesses immediately  
 He spoke: 'The lyre and the bow by me  
 Shall be esteemed. To men I shall declare  
 Zeus's unfailing will.' Then here and there 150  
 The long-haired Phoebus, the Far-Shooter, went  
 Upon the wide earth, and astonishment  
 Struck all the goddesses. All Delos shone  
 With gold from that time, as we see upon  
 A mountain-top wild blooms. Far-Shooter, Lord,  
 You walked on craggy Cynthus or abroad  
 You wandered in the islands. Wooded brush  
 And shrines you have a-plenty. Streams that gush  
 To sea, high crags and lofty mountains, too –  
 All these are dear to you. But, Phoebus, you 160  
 Most joy in Delos, for across the seas  
 Long-robed Ionians come with obsequies  
 To you with their shy wives and children. They  
 With boxing, dancing, singing make you gay  
 Each time they gather. You might well believe  
 Them ageless and godlike should you perceive  
 Them then. You'd see their graces and you'd stare  
 At them and their well-girded wives and their  
 Swift ships and massive wealth. There is, beside,  
 A wondrous thing that never will subside - 170  
 The girls of Delos, maidens who attend

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

[TO PYTHIAN APOLLO]

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

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

He leaps down to the ground; the empty car  
 The horses rattle, guideless as they are. 260  
 If in the woody grove the horses split  
 The car, the men tend to them but tilt it  
 And leave it there. The rite was ever so.  
 They pray to the shrine's lord; the chariot, though,  
 Falls to the god's lot. You went further still,  
 Far-Shooter, coming to the meadow's rill  
 Of Cephissus, whose water, sweetly flowing,  
 Pours forth from Lilaia. You crossed it, going  
 Past many-towered Ocalea, you who  
 Works from a long way off, and then came to 270  
 The grassy Haliartus. Then your aim  
 Was going to Telphusa, and this same  
 Seemed sweetly fit for shrine and grove. He went  
 Close to her, saying: "It is my intent  
 To build a glorious temple here to be  
 An oracle for all mortality,  
 Telphusa. Perfect hecatombs they'll bear  
 And bring to me, all those who have a care  
 To seek an oracle, those who reside  
 In rich Peloponnesus, those who bide 280  
 In Europe and upon the isles, and I  
 Will give to all honest advice in my  
 Rich temple." Speaking thus, Apollo laid  
 All the foundations out and these he made  
 Both wide and very long. But when she'd seen  
 All this, Telphusa's heart was full of spleen.  
 She said: "A word, Far-Worker, in your ear,  
 Since a fair temple you plan to build here,  
 An oracle for men who'll bring to you  
 Their perfect hecatombs. No listen, do, 290  
 And lay it to you heart – the trampling  
 Of rapid horses and mules watering  
 Here at my sacred spring will irk you. Men  
 Will rather wish to see fine chariots then  
 And stamping rapid horses than to see  
 Your massive shrine and the great quantity  
 Of treasures in it. Hear, then, what I say –  
 You are much mightier than I – I pray,  
 At Crisa build your temple, just below  
 The glades that lie in Parnassus; there no 300  
 Bright chariots will clash nor any steed  
 Near your fine altar at a rapid speed.  
 No, glorious tribes of mortal men will leave  
 Gifts to you as 'Hail-Healer'; you'll receive

Rich sacrifices which will please you well  
 From those who round about these regions dwell.  
 Thus she got the Far-Shooter to agree  
 That she should have renown there, and not he.  
 Further you went, Apollo, coming then  
 To where the Phlegyae dwell, presumptuous men, 310  
 By the Cephisian lake in a fair glade,  
 Taking no note of Zeus. You quickly made  
 Your way to Crisa then, which lies below  
 The mountain of Parnassus, white with snow,  
 A foothill facing west – above, a bluff  
 Hangs over it, beneath, a valley, rough  
 And hollow. Lord Phoebus Apollo planned  
 To build his lovely temple on this land.  
 He said: “I’ll build my lovely temple here,  
 An oracle for men, who will come near 320  
 With perfect hecatombs, those who reside  
 In rich Peloponnesus or abide  
 In Europe and upon the isles, and I  
 Will give to all honest advice in my  
 Rich temple.” Speaking thus, Apollo laid  
 All the foundations out and these he made  
 Both wide and very long. Trephonius  
 And Agamedes, sons of Erginus,  
 Dear to the gods, laid down a pediment  
 Of stone on them, and countless different 330  
 Tribes built the shrine with polished stones to be  
 Sung evermore. In this vicinity  
 Was a sweet spring, where with his mighty bow  
 The lord Apollo, son of Zeus, laid low  
 The bloated, great she-dragon who wrought deep  
 Distress upon the men and their lean sheep –  
 A bloody torment. She of the gold throne,  
 Hera, once gave her fierce, fell Typhaon,  
 Whom she brought up to be a plague to men.  
 Hera had bone him, being angry then 340  
 With Father Zeus when he bore in his head  
 Glorious Athena. Queenly Hera said  
 In anger to the gods who had amassed:  
 “Hear me! Cloud-Gathering Father Zeus has cast  
 Dishonour on me whom he made his wife,  
 His faithful wife. For he has given life  
 To the grey-eyed Athena, far from me  
 (She is the paramount divinity).  
 My son Hephaestus, though, is frail and lame  
 Among the gods, which causes me great shame. 350

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

Gasping for breath, she lay in agony  
 Upon the earth and writhed about. And she  
 Let out an awful noise. It filled the air  
 As in that wood she twisted here and there. 400  
 Then, breathing out the blood of life, she died.  
 Phoebus Apollo swaggeringly cried:  
 "Rot there upon the fecund earth. No more  
 Will you harm man, who feeds upon the store  
 The earth provides for them, and hither they'll  
 Bring perfect hecatombs. To no avail  
 Against fell death now will Typhoeus be  
 Nor the ill-famed Chimaera. We shall see  
 Black Earth and shimmering Hyperion  
 Cause you to rot." Thus he boasted. She was gone 410  
 Into the dark. Then Helios' burning eye  
 Caused her to rot right there, and that is why  
 They call the place Pytho, whose lord they name  
 Pythian Apollo, since the piercing flame  
 Of Helios caused the beast to rot right there.  
 And then it was that Phoebus was aware  
 That the sweet spring had duped him. Seeing red,  
 He then went to Telphusa and he said:  
 "You did not plan, Telphusa, through deceit 420  
 To keep this lovely place and pour forth sweet  
 Waters. To me, not you alone, will cling  
 Renown." He spoke and pushed a showering  
 Of rocks on her and hid her streams, and then  
 He built an altar in a wooded glen  
 Hard by the clear stream. All the people there  
 Offer to 'the Telphusian' a prayer  
 (For thus they call their lord) since he abased  
 Holy Telphusa's streams. And now he faced  
 The problem of electing priests to aid  
 His rites in rocky Pytho. While he made 430  
 These plans, he saw upon the wine-dark sea  
 A swift ship with a goodly company  
 Of Cretans out of Minyan Knossos (these  
 Perform rites to their master whose decrees  
 They promulgate – whatever Phoebus, Lord  
 Apollo, he who bears a golden sword,  
 Below Parnassus' dells gives out when he  
 Replies to them out of the laurel-tree).  
 To sandy Pylos they were sailing then  
 In their black ship to trade with Pylian men. 440  
 Phoebus Apollo met them then, pouncing  
 On their swift ship and lay, a loathsome thing

Just like a dolphin. No-one knew this fish  
 Was Lord Apollo. No, it was their wish  
 To throw it back. He made the black ship shiver  
 On every side – the timbers were aquiver.  
 They sat there in the vessel silently  
 In fear, not did they set the topsail free  
 In their black, hollow ship; their sails they let  
 Alone in that dark-prowed ship. Once they'd set 450  
 It firm with oxhide ropes, they sailed away,  
 Borne by a swift South Wind behind. First they  
 Passed Malea, then skimmed the Spartan strand  
 To Taenarum, sea-wreathèd, in the land  
 Of Helios, a friend to men, where graze  
 Lord Helios's thick-fleeced sheep always  
 In a sweet land. They wished to dock and check  
 And see if that great marvel stayed on deck  
 Or leapt into the fish-filled swelling wave.  
 The well-constructed ship would not behave, 460  
 However, under its helm but skimmed straight past  
 Rich Peloponnese, and, aided by the blast  
 Of winds, Apollo steered her easily.  
 She held her course and came to Arene  
 And lovely Argyrhea and Thryon,  
 The ford of River Alpheus, then on  
 To well-built Aepy, sandy Pylos, too,  
 Past Crumi, Chalcis, Dyme, and straight through  
 To lovely Elis, where the Epei reign.  
 She made for Pheras, helped across the main 470  
 By Zeus's blasts. They spied Mt. Ithaca's height  
 Beneath the clouds, and then came into sight  
 Dulichium, Same, wooded Zacynthus.  
 When they had passed all Peloponnesus,  
 Crise's great gulf, that cuts off all that land,  
 Appeared. Then Zeus ordained a mighty and  
 Clear West Wind, which from heaven boisterously  
 Gusted that with all speed across the sea  
 The ship might run. So they set sail once more  
 Back to the rising dawn, and at the fore 480  
 Was Lord Apollo. Crisa, then, they reached,  
 Seen from afar, the land of vines. They beached  
 Their ship upon the sands. And then their lord,  
 Phoebus Apollo, the Far-Worker, soared  
 From off the ship, just like a star that's seen  
 At noon and many flames with glittering sheen  
 Flew from him up to heaven. To the shrine  
 He went through priceless tripods, and the shine



He caused among the flames was great, as he  
 Showed off his arrows, and a radiancy 490  
 Filled Crisa. This deed raised a hullabaloo  
 From all the wives – and well-bound daughters, too –  
 Of Crisa, for they all were much afraid.  
 Then, swift as thought, back to the ship he made  
 His winged way. A youth, robust and strong,  
 He seemed to be, his hair cascading long  
 On his broad shoulders. He said wingedly:  
 “Strangers, who are you? Whence across the sea  
 Have you sailed? Are you traders? Do you roam,  
 Perhaps, at random, pirates on the foam, 500  
 Risking your lives and bringing injury  
 To foreign folk? Why in timidity  
 Do you rest here, not venturing to go  
 Ashore nor on your black vessel to stow  
 Your gear? That is industrious people’s way  
 When after their black ship is anchored, they,  
 Fatigued with labour, yearn for food.” This said,  
 He gave them courage, and the man who led  
 The Cretans answered: “Since you seem to be,  
 In shape and kind, not of mortality, 510  
 But an immortal god, to you all hail!  
 May you be blest and may the gods not fail  
 To give you cheer. That I may understand  
 Completely, tell me truthfully: What land,  
 What country is this? Who lives here? For we,  
 With other things in mind, crossed the great sea  
 From Crete to Pylos (we’re a Cretan race).  
 In all unwillingness we reached this place  
 On quite another journey, and for home  
 We long. Some god brought us across the foam. 520  
 Apollo, the Far-Worker, then replied:  
 “Stranger, though in past time did you reside  
 In wooded Cnossos, you shall not go back  
 To your dear city; you will ever lack  
 Your fair house, wife and children. Instead, here  
 You’ll keep my rich shrine which is held most dear  
 By many men. I am the progeny  
 Of Zeus – Apollo. Over the wide sea  
 I’ve brought you, wishing you no harm. You’ll know  
 The plans of all the gods, who’ll make it so 530  
 That you’ll be honoured always every day.  
 Come now and with all speed do as I say.  
 First loose the sheets and lower the sail, then tow  
 Your speedy ship up onto land; unstow

Your goods and all your fair ship's gear, then raise  
 An altar on the beach and offer praise  
 Around a fire and offer white meal to me  
 All round the altar. From the hazy sea  
 I leapt upon your swift ship, and therefore  
 Pray to me as Delphinus; furthermore 540  
 The altar shall be called 'Delphinus', too,  
 Forever and 'Offering a splendid view'.  
 By your swift, dark ship cook a meal, and then  
 Make offering to the Olympian gods, and when  
 You no more crave sweet food, then come with me  
 And sing the hymn 'Hail, Healer' till we see  
 Where my rich temple stands to be your care."  
 They harkened and obeyed him. Then and there  
 They loosed the sheets and lowered the sail; that done,  
 They let the mast down by the ropes upon 550  
 The mast-head. Then they landed on the strand  
 And drew their swift ship high upon the sand  
 And fixed stays under her. And then they made  
 An altar on the beach and, after, prayed  
 Around a fire and offered white meal, as he  
 Had ordered them, in all solemnity,  
 By their swift, dark ship cooked a meal, and then  
 Made offering to the Olympian gods, and when  
 They no more craved sweet food, they left the strand,  
 Led by the lord Apollo, in his hand 560  
 A lyre. Stepping high and proud, he played  
 A sweet air, while the Cretans also made  
 Their way to Pytho, dancing to the beat  
 Of their own paean as the men of Crete  
 Perform it, filled with a sweet melody  
 Sent by the Muse. The ridge unwearily  
 They reached, then saw Parnassus and the place,  
 That sweet place, where they'd dwell, receiving grace  
 From many men. The holy sanctum then  
 He showed them, and the rich shrine. In those men 370  
 Their hearts were stirred, and then their master said:  
 "Since from our friends and country we've been led  
 By you, lord - so it pleased you - how shall we  
 Now live? That would we know. Here do we see  
 No vineyards, pastures, nothing else that can  
 Help us to thrive and serve our fellow-man."  
 Apollo smiled and said: "You'd like to be  
 Oppressed by cares, hard toil and poverty,  
 You foolish wretches! Listen, I will say  
 One little thing - although you all will slay 380

These sheep with knives continually, yet still  
 You will have endless plenteousness that will  
 Be brought to me by glorious tribes. So mind  
 My shrine and entertain all of mankind  
 That gathers here and show my will to all.  
 Be righteous, and if anyone should fall  
 From compliance or shun me or, maybe,  
 Utter a word or act unthinkingly  
 Or show conceit, as men will, other men  
 Shall be your masters and forever then  
 Shall you be in their power. Now you know  
 It all – remember it.” So farewell, o  
 You son of Zeus and Leto. You I’ll tell  
 Of in my song – another song as well.

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#### IV

#### TO HERMES

The son of Zeus and Maia, Hermes, sing,  
 O Muse, lord of Arcadia, burgeoning  
 With flocks, and of Cyllene, who brings glee,  
 The herald of the gods and progeny  
 Of Zeus and rich-tressed Maia, a shy  
 Goddess who passed her fellow-deities by  
 And dwelt in a dark cave, and it was there  
 One night she lay with Zeus – and unaware  
 Of what they did were all the gods and men –  
 While white-armed Hera sweetly slept, and when  
 Great Zeus’s deed was done and up on high  
 The tenth moon was established in the sky,  
 She was delivered and a deed was done  
 Of great import: she bore a cunning son,  
 Gifted, a thief, a cattle-driver too,  
 A watcher at the gates by night, one who  
 Brings dreams and will among the gods display  
 Great deeds. Though born at dawn, yet at midday  
 He played the lyre and when nightfall had come,  
 He stole Apollo’s cattle (the month’s sum  
 Of days was four); once from the womb he’d leapt,  
 Within his holy cradle nothing kept  
 Him long. He left his high cave in one bound  
 And in his search an endless joy he found

10

20

In a tortoise, which he first made fit for song.  
 He came upon it waddling along  
 Before the courtyard portals as it fed  
 On the rich grass. He laughed out loud and said:  
 "A wondrous sign of luck so soon for me!  
 I will not slight it. Hail, in ecstasy 30  
 I greet you, lovely beater of the ground,  
 Companion at the feast. Where have you found  
 This spangled shell, this plaything – you who dwell  
 Up in the mountains? Since you'll serve me well,  
 I'll take you home and bring you no disgrace.  
 First you must help me, though. A better place  
 Is home – outdoors is harmful. You shall be  
 A spell against malicious sorcery.  
 You'll sing most sweetly, though, when you are dead."  
 He gathered up the tortoise as he said 40  
 These words and took his fine toy home with him.  
 With a grey iron ladle every limb  
 Of this peak-living beast he lopped away.  
 As swift thought comes to those around whom play  
 Uneasy, thronging cares, as from the gaze  
 Of someone's eyes resplendent glances blaze,  
 Famed Hermes made his plans for word and deed  
 Immediately. He measured stalks of reed  
 Which he had cut and then he fixed each one  
 Across its back and through its shell. This done. 50  
 He stretched an ox-hide very skilfully  
 Across it, put the horns on, too, then he  
 Fit bridges on the horns in, too, and then  
 Stretched seven strings made out of sheep-gut. When  
 He had done that, he tested every string  
 With the plectrum as he held the lovely thing.  
 It sounded wondrously beneath his hand  
 While he sang sweetly, as a youthful band  
 Swaps taunts at festivals. He sang an air  
 Of Zeus and well-shod Maia, how that pair 60  
 Chatted while they made love, and he related  
 The tale of his famed birth and celebrated  
 The nymph's handmaids and her bright home and all  
 The tripods and the cauldrons at her hall.  
 Meanwhile, with other matters he was faced.  
 He took the hollow lyre which he placed  
 Inside his holy cradle. Now he yearned  
 For meat and with sheer trickery he burned  
 As he sprang from the fragrant hall and went  
 To a lookout – on such deeds are rascals bent 70

In dead of night. The sun beneath the land  
 Was setting in the west with horses and  
 Their chariot. Hermes now came at a run  
 To the Pierian peaks that lack the sun,  
 Where the gods' deathless cattle have their stead  
 And on unmown and pleasant grass are fed.  
 And then the son of Maia, he who slew  
 Argos, took fifty beasts that loudly moo  
 From the herd and drove them all a-straggling  
 Across a sandy spot while swivelling 80  
 Their hoof-prints round. It was a clever scheme  
 To turn them in that way that they might seem  
 Not what they were, while he walked normally.  
 With wickerwork he fastened by the sea  
 Wonderful sandals, quite remarkable,  
 Before unheard-of, unimaginable,  
 With myrrh-twigs and with tamarisks mixed. Fresh wood  
 He fastened and attached them – well and good- ,  
 The leaves and all, beneath his feet. Behold,  
 A pair of lightweight sandals. As I told  
 You, this was in Pieria when he  
 Prepared to leave upon his odyssey 90  
 In his unique way. An old greybeard, though,  
 Tilling his flowering vineyard, saw him go  
 Speeding towards the plain as he went through  
 Grassy Onchestus. "Well, old fellow, who  
 Are digging with bowed shoulders, " famed Hermes  
 Said, "you'll have plenteous wine when all of these  
 Vines bear fruit. So remember not to see  
 What you in fact have seen, and similarly  
 Be deaf to what you've heard and do not say  
 A word – you'll not be harmed in any way. 100  
 At this, he sped his sturdy cattle on.  
 Through many shadowy mountains had they gone,  
 Echoing gorges, flowering plains, with night,  
 His holy friend, near over, and daylight,  
 That urges folk to labour, almost nigh,  
 When Pallas' child Selene up on high  
 Climbed to the look-out, shining radiantly,  
 Then to the Alpheius Zeus' strong progeny  
 Drove Phoebus' wide-faced cattle and, still spry,  
 They reached the byres where the roofs loomed very high 110  
 And troughs before the splendid field, and when  
 He'd fed the loudly-lowing cattle, then  
 He drove them close-packed to the byre while they  
 On moist sedge and on lotus chewed away.

He heaped a pile of wood and started out  
 To seek the art of fire. He took a stout  
 Bay-branch and trimmed it with a knife which he  
 Clutched tightly in his hand, and torridly  
 The smoke rose up. For fire he formulated  
 And fire-sticks. Next he accumulated 120  
 Many dried sticks and laid them thick and tight  
 In a sunken trench and with a fiery light  
 A flame began to glow and when the force  
 Of famed Hephaestus took its blazing course  
 He dragged two horned and lowing cows along  
 Close to the fire – for he too was strong –  
 And threw them panting on their backs and, when  
 He'd rolled them to their sides, their life force then  
 He pierced. Then, slice by slice, the meat he slit,  
 The rich and fattened meat, then on a spit 130  
 Of wood the flesh he roasted and the dark  
 Blood of the innards and the chine, the mark  
 Of honour; on a rugged rock each hide  
 He spread and even now through time and tide  
 They still are there and evermore shall be.  
 Then Hermes took the rich meat joyfully  
 And placed it on a stone both smooth and flat  
 And split it into twelve by lot. At that,  
 Each slice would bring much honour to each one  
 Who tasted it. Now Zeus's famous son 140  
 Longed for the holy meat. Its sweet smell made  
 Him dreary, though a god, but he was stayed  
 By his proud heart, but he put it all by,  
 The fat and flesh, in the byre, whose roof was high  
 And quietly placed it high so all might see  
 His youthful theft. Dry sticks accordingly  
 He gathered and then threw into the flame  
 The heads and hooves. When to the end he came  
 Of all these deeds, his sandals then he cast  
 In the deep river Alpheius and passed 150  
 The night in quenching embers and with sand  
 He spread the black ash, while upon the land  
 Selene brightly shone. At break of day  
 To Cyllene's bright crests he went straightaway.  
 And there was neither god nor man – not one –  
 Met him as on he trekked, and no dogs – none –  
 Let out a bark. Then luck-bringing Hermes,  
 The son of Zeus, just like a misty breeze  
 In fall, passed through the keyhole of the hall  
 Straight to the rich shrine and no noise at all 160

He made then went to his cradle hurriedly  
 And donned his baby-clothes so he might be  
 Just like a babe himself and then he played  
 With the sheet about his knees; yet he had laid  
 At his left hand his sweet lyre. And yet he  
 Was noticed by his goddess mother. She  
 Said: "Oh you rogue, whence have you come at night,  
 Wrapped in your shamelessness? With cords drawn tight  
 Round you shall Phoebus – such is my belief –  
 Eject you or you'll live life as a thief 170  
 Out in the glens. Go! You were spawned to be  
 A bane to men and gods." Then craftily  
 He answered: "Why attempt to make me start,  
 Mother? I'm not a helpless babe whose heart  
 Knows little wrong and fears his mother may  
 Rebuke him. I'll continue to essay  
 What plan is best and feed continually  
 The two of us. I'm not prepared to be  
 A resident here, as you advise, and bear  
 The shame of not receiving gifts or prayer. 180  
 Better to live among the gods always,  
 Wealthy in everything, than spend my days  
 In gloomy caves, and as for honour, why,  
 If Zeus will not allow me them, I'll be  
 The prince of thieves – I've the ability.  
 If I'm sought out by Leto's glorious son,  
 I think that he'll regret what he has done.  
 Into Pytho's great house I plan to break  
 And from it I will splendid tripods take 190  
 And gold and cauldrons, in great number, too,  
 And much bright iron and apparel. All this you  
 May see." That's what they said, each to the other,  
 Hermes the son of Zeus and his royal mother,  
 Maia. When early Dawn brought light to men  
 From the deep-flowing Oceanus, then  
 Phoebus Apollo came to Onchestus,  
 The holy, sweet grove of Gaieochus,  
 The roaring Lord of Earth and there he found  
 An old man who along the trodden ground 200  
 From the courtyard fence his beast was pasturing.  
 The glorious Hermes said the following:  
 "Old man, who weed the grassy land, I came  
 Out of Pieria with just one aim -  
 Cattle, all cows, with curving horns – I own  
 Them all. The pitch-black bull grazed all alone.  
 Four fierce-eyed hounds, though, shadowed them like men,

All of one mind. The dogs and bull were then  
 All left behind – surprisingly. And yet  
 The cows left the sweet pasture at sunset. 210  
 Tell me, have you seen someone passing by  
 Behind these cows? The old man answered: “Why,  
 My friend, it’s hard to tell all one can see.  
 So many pass through this locality,  
 Some bent on bad, some good. It’s hard to know  
 Each one. While digging in my vineyard, though,  
 Till sunset, I believe, sir, that I spied  
 Some child or other walking side to side  
 Behind some long-haired beasts and carrying  
 A stick – though I’m not sure – and piloting 220  
 Them backwards, facing them.” That’s what he said,  
 And at his words Apollo faster sped  
 Upon his way. He noticed presently  
 A long-winged bird and knew the progeny  
 Of Zeus had stolen them. So then with speed  
 He went to splendid Pylos in his need  
 To find the shambling beasts, while all around  
 His massive shoulders a dark cloud was bound.  
 Apollo marked his footsteps, saying: “Oh,  
 This is a wondrous marvel; for, although 230  
 The straight-horned oxen made these tracks, they lead –  
 Or seem to do – back to the flowery mead.  
 No man nor woman, no grey wolf nor bear  
 Nor lion made the tracks that I see there,  
 Nor shaggy Centaur either, I suppose,  
 Whoever made such monstrous tracks as those  
 So swiftly. For on this side of the way  
 They are amazing – even more are they  
 Upon the other. When this he had said,  
 He to well-forested Cyllene sped 240  
 And the deep, rocky cave, beset with shade,  
 Where Zeus was born unto the holy maid.  
 The lovely hill smelled sweetly and a flock  
 Of sleek sheep grazed and he that dusky rock  
 Instantly entered. Hermes, when he knew  
 Apollo’s anger, snuggled down into  
 His fragrant swaddling-clothes. As ash will screen  
 Tree-stumps’ deep embers, Hermes, once he’d seen  
 Apollo, huddled, heads, hands, feet squeezed tight  
 (Just as a new-born seeking sweet sleep might), 250  
 Though wide awake. His lyre he kept below  
 His armpit. Phoebus recognized him, though,  
 And Maia, too, the lovely mountain-maid,



Although he was so craftily arrayed  
 And but a babe. Through that great cavity  
 He peered in every nook; with a bright key  
 He opened up three closets well-supplied  
 With nectar and ambrosia beside  
 Much gold and silver, Maia's garments, too,  
 Some purple and some silver, such as you 260  
 Might see among the blessed gods. then he  
 Said: 'Infant, lying in your cot, lest we  
 Fall out, tell me about my beasts. I'll fling  
 You into dusky Hell, that harrowing  
 And hopeless dark. Your parents shall not flee  
 You as you roam and hold supremacy  
 But over little folk.'" Then said Hermes  
 With cunning: "Phoebus, what harsh words are these?  
 You want your cows? I've not seen them or heard  
 A single mention of them, not a word. 270  
 I cannot help you, cannot claim a prize.  
 Am I a cattle-lifter in your eyes?  
 A strong man? No, this isn't my concern.  
 I care for other things; for sleep I yearn  
 And mother's milk and blankets and to be  
 Bathed in warm baths. Let our controversy  
 Not be reported, for this would astound  
 The gods - that such an infant would be found  
 Bringing home beasts. Unseemly! I was born  
 But yesterday, my soft feet would be torn 280  
 By rugged ground. Upon my father's head  
 I'll swear a great oath, if you wish it said,  
 That I am innocent nor did I see  
 Who took those cows – whatever cows they be,  
 For I have only *heard* of them, "he said.  
 He quickly glanced about and turned his head  
 This way and that and raised his brows as well  
 And whistled long as he heard Phoebus tell  
 His tale as though he lied. Then quietly  
 Apollo laughed and said: "So virtuously 290  
 You speak, you cunning rogue, full of deceit.  
 This night, I think, you've plundered many a seat,  
 Filching in silence. In the glades up high  
 You'll badger many a herdsman, coming by  
 His herds and thick-fleeced sheep in your great thirst  
 For flesh. Come in now, leave your cot, your cursed  
 Companion, if you'd not sleep your last sleep.  
 Among the gods this title shall you keep  
 Forever – prince of thieves." He grabbed the lad,

But Hermes had a plan: while Phoebus had 300  
 Him in his hands, he sent up to the sky  
 A bird, a hard-worked serf that flew on high,  
 A wretched envoy, and immediately  
 He sneezed. Apollo threw him down when he  
 Heard this and, eager though he was to go,  
 Sat down and mockingly addressed him: "Oh,  
 Fear not, you swaddled one, I'll find my herd,  
 My brawny cows, by reason of this bird.  
 And you shall lead the way." Immediately  
 Hermes sprang up and off. The sheet that he 310  
 Had placed around his shoulders he now drew  
 Up to his ears and said: "Hey, where are you  
 Carrying me? The angriest of all  
 The gods are you. Is it these cows that gall  
 You so that you harass me thus? Death to  
 All cattle! Look, I did not filch from you  
 Your cows – whatever they may be – or see  
 The culprit. I but heard their history.  
 Be just and swear to Zeus." They argued thus  
 In detail, nor was Phoebus tyrannous – 320  
 He'd lost his cattle! But duplicity  
 Was Hermes' aim, but when he found that he  
 Was matched in this, across the sand he sped  
 With Phoebus in his wake, himself ahead.  
 They came to sweet Olympus quickly, where  
 The scales of justice waited for this pair.  
 After the hour of Dawn on her gold seat  
 The gods on snowy Olympus came to meet  
 In counsel. Then they stood at Zeus's knees:  
 To Phoebus the High-Thunderer's words were these: 330  
 "Whence have you brought this mighty spoil, this tot  
 So like a messenger? This is a lot  
 For us to think about?" In his reply  
 Apollo said: "Father, the time is nigh  
 For you to hear this weighty tale, although  
 You chide me for my love of spoil. But lo!  
 Here is a child whom, after journeying long,  
 I found, a downright plunderer, among  
 Cyllene's hills. Such pert audacity  
 Among both gods and men I've failed to see – 340  
 Though many men deceive. He pirated  
 My cattle from their meadow, then he led  
 Them west to the shore of the loud-roaring sea  
 And straight to Pylos. Like a prodigy  
 Of some smart sprite, these traces were twofold.

The cattle's tracks, the black dust clearly told,  
 Led to the flowery lea. But that strange thing  
 That led them seemed to have been travelling,  
 Outside the path upon the sandy ground,  
 On neither hands nor feet. He must have found 350  
 Some other means – in slender oaks maybe.  
 The dust showed all these tracks perceptibly.  
 After the sandy trek, though, not a trace  
 Could be detected on the ground's hard face.  
 But as he drove the wide-browed cattle straight  
 To Pylos, someone saw him. When the gate  
 He'd quietly closed behind them, craftily  
 By twists and turns he went back home, then he  
 Lay in his cradle, still as the dark night,  
 In his dim cave – no keen-eyed eagle might 360  
 Have spotted him. Then much he rubbed his eyes  
 And bluntly spoke out as he planned his lies:  
 "I have not seen or heard of them; no man  
 Has told me of them, so of them I can  
 Say nothing nor claim a reward." At that,  
 Phoebus sat down. Then Hermes pointed at  
 Lord Zeus and answered: "Here's the truth for I  
 Am truthful, Zeus, and cannot tell a lie.  
 Seeking his shambling cows, he came today  
 Up to our house just at the break of day. 370  
 He brought no god as witness. Violently  
 He ordered me to make confession. He  
 Vowed he'd send me to the broad land of Hell,  
 Because he's at the height of youth and, well,  
 I was born yesterday – he knows it, too.  
 I don't steal cows, I'm weak. All this is true –  
 Believe, for you claim to have fathered me.  
 I did not take them – as I hope to be  
 Wealthy – nor cross the threshold. I revere  
 Helios and all the gods. You I hold dear 380  
 While dreading him. You know I'm blameless. I  
 Will swear a great oath that I am. Yes, by  
 The finely-decked Olympian drapery!  
 One day I'll punish him, strong though he be,  
 For this harsh grilling. Now, though, give your aid  
 To younger ones. The Cyllenian spoke and made  
 Side glances, while his swaddling-clothes he had  
 Upon his arm. Zeus laughed at this young lad  
 Who plotted ill, denying cunningly  
 His guilt. He ordered both of them to be 390  
 Of one mind and search out the beasts. Hermes

He told to lead and deal no falsities  
 And show where he had left the sturdy herd.  
 Zeus nodded. Good Hermes obeyed his word,  
 For Zeus's will prevailed. And then his two  
 Fine sons to sandy Pylos made and through  
 The ford of Alpheius and the fields they came  
 Up to the high-roofed byre where those same  
 Beasts were brought up. Then to the rocky cove  
 Went Hermes and the hardy herd he drove 400  
 Into the light. Now Phoebus glanced aside  
 And in the precipitous rock cowhides he spied  
 And said to glorious Hermes: "Crafty one,  
 How could you flay two cows? How was it done  
 By one new-born? I dread your future strength;  
 Your growing's almost at its utmost length."  
 With hardy osier cords he tried to bind  
 His hands. About each other, though, they twined  
 And grew beneath their feet immediately  
 And hid the wild beasts through the trickery 410  
 Of Hermes. Phoebus gaped in great surprise.  
 Then furtively the Argos-Slayer's eyes  
 Bent to the ground and flashed like fire as he  
 Desired to hide himself. Yet easily  
 He soothed the son of glorious Leto, stern  
 Though he yet was. He tried each string in turn  
 When he took up the lyre and he produced  
 A sound wondrous to hear and it induced  
 Phoebus to laugh with joy, and that sweet sound  
 Of glorious music touched his heart; around 420  
 His soul a tender longing grew as he  
 Sat listening. Now, playing beautifully,  
 Hermes plucked up his nerve and stood nearby  
 Phoebus' left side and, as he warbled high,  
 Began to sing, and lovely was the sound.  
 Of the deathless gods he sang and of the ground,  
 Their birth and how the portions came to be  
 Doled out to each one. First Mnemosyne,  
 The Muses' mother, he acclaimed – her due  
 Was Maia's son himself. According to 430  
 Their ages, all the rest he hymned – how they  
 Were born – as on his arm his lyre lay.  
 A boundless longing seized Phoebus, and so  
 With winged words he said to Hermes: "O  
 Beast-slayer, busy rogue, friend of the feast,  
 The song you sing's worth fifty cows at least.  
 This problem can be settled, I believe,

Amicably. Therefore, please give me leave,  
 O clever one, to know if this great thing  
 Was yours from birth or did you learn to sing 440  
 With some god's teaching? For it's marvellous,  
 This new-sung sound, which I think none of us-  
 No god nor man – but you has ever known,  
 You thief. What is this talent that you own?  
 To take away one's desperate cares? For here  
 Are three things one may choose from – love and cheer  
 And restful sleep. I am a satellite  
 Of the Olympian Muses who delight  
 In song and dance and in the thrilling cry  
 And full-toned chant of flutes. However, I 450  
 Have never liked those clever feats before  
 One hears at young men's sprees. Now I adore  
 Your sound. I marvel at how well you play.  
 But sit down, since, though born but yesterday,  
 You have such skills. Lend a respectful ear  
 To counsel which from your elders you'll hear.  
 Among the gods, you, and your mother too,  
 Shall have renown. This shall I tell to you  
 Directly. By this cornel-shaft, you'll be,  
 Among the gods, a leader – dignity 460  
 And glorious gifts I'll give you. Nor will I  
 Deceive you ever." Hermes, in reply,  
 Said craftily: Your questions to me are  
 Most careful, o you who work from afar.  
 I am not jealous that you want a part  
 In my great skill: today I shall impart  
 This fact to you. I wish to be a friend  
 To you in thought and deed. Now there's an end:  
 You know it all. Foremost you sit among  
 The deathless gods, and you are good and strong. 470  
 Zeus rightly loves you. Splendid presents he's  
 Given to you. They say that dignities  
 And his decrees and oracles you know  
 Of him. I've heard you're rich. Whateverso  
 You wish to know, you may. But since to play  
 The lyre is your wish, then chant away  
 And pluck its strings. Give way to gaiety.  
 This is my gift to you. Yet give to me  
 Renown, my friend. With this ally who's so  
 Clear-voiced within your hands, sing well. You know 480  
 The art of balanced utterance. Now bring  
 It boldly to rich feasts, to revelling.  
 To lovely dances – such festivity

Both night and day. If someone knowingly  
 Should ask about it, by its very sound  
 It teaches wondrous things that play around  
 The mind. With its humanity and ease  
 And feeling, toilsome drudgery it flees.  
 But if some fool should query violently,  
 It chatters nothing but mere vanity. 490  
 You can discover what you please, though. So  
 Here is my lyre. For my part, I'll go  
 And on both plain and hill my beasts I'll feed.  
 Then, coupling with my bulls, the cows will breed  
 Heifers and bulls galore. Though you've a bent  
 For greed, you've no need to be violent  
 And angry. He held out the instrument.  
 Apollo took it and, unhesitant,  
 Proffered to him his whip that shone so bright  
 And made him keeper of the herds. Delight 500  
 Caught Hermes as he took it while Apollo  
 Took up the lyre and placed it in the hollow  
 Of his left arm and tested every string  
 With the plectrum one by one. And did it sing  
 As he so sweetly trilled! Subsequently  
 They took the herd back to the sacred lea,  
 Then sped to snowy Olympus once again,  
 Delighting in the lyre. Wise Zeus then  
 Was glad and joined those two in amity.  
 And since that time Hermes continually 510  
 Loved Phoebus, having given the instrument  
 To him as token. More than competent  
 Was he in playing it. But he now found  
 Another cunning art – the pipes, whose sound  
 Is heard afar. Phoebus said to him: "Guide  
 So full of cunning, I am terrified  
 That you will steal the lyre and the curved bow,  
 For Zeus has authorized that you shall go  
 And travel through the fruitful earth to trade  
 With men. But if a mighty oath you made 520  
 Among the gods by nodding of your head  
 Or by the potent waters which the dead  
 Traverse, you'll please me well and comfort me.  
 Then Hermes bowed his head in surety  
 That he'd not steal whatever he possessed  
 Or near his mighty house. Phoebus professed  
 His friendship with the lad and vowed he'd love  
 Not one of those immortals high above  
 The earth nor any Zeus-born mortals more.

Zeus sent an eagle then, and Phoebus swore: 530  
 "To all the gods above I shall impart  
 You as a token that within my heart  
 You're prized and trusted. I'll give you to hold  
 A splendid staff of riches made of gold,  
 Three-branched, which will preserve you and fulfil  
 All words and actions, so they be not ill.  
 This do I know from Zeus. The prophecy,  
 However, noble, heaven-born progeny,  
 Of which you query, never must be known  
 By any other god but Zeus alone. 540  
 As pledge a great and solemn oath I swore  
 That to no god who lives for evermore  
 But me shall Zeus his clever plans unfold.  
 So, brother, you who bear the staff of gold,  
 Don't bid me tell them. As for mortals, I'll  
 Harm one and aid another, all the while  
 Sorely perplexing all humanity.  
 That man who hears the bird of prophecy  
 And sees its flight and comes to me shall get  
 My vocal aid and not be misled. Yet 550  
 Who trusts in birds that idly chatter and  
 Wishes, against my will, to understand  
 More than the gods, his journey's been in vain.  
 And yet the gifts he brings I shall retain.  
 I'll tell you something more, lad: there are three  
 Pure, holy winged sisters whom you'll see  
 Sprayed with white meal about their heads. They dwell  
 In their home beneath Parnassus in a dell,  
 All teachers of the art of prophecy,  
 Apart from me, an art which occupied me 560  
 When, as a boy, I followed herds, although  
 My father paid no heed. They to and fro  
 Fly, feeding on honeycomb as they induce  
 The future. When inspired by the juice  
 Of honey, they'll speak truth. But if denied  
 The gods' sweet food, they'll tell lies as they glide  
 About. I give you them. If you enquire  
 Strictly of them, you'll gain your heart's desire.  
 If you teach this to someone else, he'll hear  
 Your answer often, if he wins good cheer. 570  
 Take these and tend your roving, horned herd,  
 All steeds and patient mules." That was his word.  
 And over all the wild beasts that are fed  
 By the broad earth, he made famed Hermes head –  
 The grim-eyed lion, the gleaming-tuskèd boar,

All flocks, all dogs, all sheep and, furthermore,  
 Made him sole messenger to Hades: though  
 Hades receives no bounty, even so  
 He'll give him no mean prize. The progeny  
 Of Maia thus received great amity 580  
 From Lord Apollo who augmented then  
 His gifts with grace – with all the gods and men  
 He traffics. Though he makes some gains, yet he  
 Cheats men throughout the night continually.  
 So farewell, son of Maia. You I'll tell  
 Of in my song – another song as well.

## V

### TO APHRODITE

Of golden Aphrodite, Muse, tell me –  
 That Cyprian goddess who stirs ecstasy  
 Among the gods, subduing men, as well,  
 And birds and animals, all those that dwell  
 On earth and in the sea. They all hold dear  
 The well-wreathed one's exploits. There are a mere  
 Three hearts she cannot bend nor yet beguile:  
 Grey-eyed Athene's one – she'll never smile  
 At Aphrodite's deeds. Her care is war,  
 The work of Ares, conflict, blood and gore. 10  
 She was the first to teach mortals to build  
 Bronze chariots of battle, and she filled  
 Soft maids with knowledge of the arts. Also,  
 The laughter-loving love goddess had no  
 Ability to tame the dark huntress,  
 Gold-shafted Artemis, in amorousness,  
 For she loves slaying beasts and archery,  
 The lyre, thrilling cries, terpsichory,  
 Dark groves and just men's cities. Now the chaste  
 Istia is the third to have no taste 20  
 For Aphrodite's works (first progeny  
 Of wily Cronus, and the last, was she  
 By aegis-bearing Zeus's will) - a queen  
 Of whom Poseidon and Phoebus had been  
 Wooers, whom she rejected stubbornly.  
 She swore a great oath, which would come to be  
 Fulfilled, by touching Father Zeus's head.



She'd be a virgin evermore, she said.  
 For this she was given a great reward  
 And lodged inside the house of Zeus, the lord 30  
 Of all and got the greatest share, and she  
 Is praised in all the shrines, the primary  
 Goddess among all mortals. These are they  
 That she can't influence in any way.  
 But Aphrodite cannot be ignored  
 By other gods or men. Even the lord,  
 Thunderer Zeus, she leads astray, though he  
 Is mightiest of all. Easily she  
 Seduces his wise heart and, at a whim,  
 With mortal womenfolk enforces him 40  
 To couple, although Hera does not know  
 Of this (she is his sister and, also,  
 His wife) and Hera's the most beauteous  
 Of all the goddesses – most glorious  
 Child whom with Rhea sly Cronus created.  
 With the chaste, modest goddess Zeus then mated,  
 The ever-wise one. Zeus, though, this goddess  
 For a mortal man imbued with amorousness.  
 And she lay with him so that even she  
 Might soon know mortal love nor laughingly 50  
 Say gods to mortal women she had paired,  
 Creating mortal men, while men had shared,  
 Through her, goddesses' beds. So she straightway  
 Then made Anchises love her who, that day,  
 In godlike shape, was tending herds around  
 Many-springed Ida's steep hills. When she found  
 The man, she loved him passionately. She went  
 To Paphos where her altar, sweet with scent,  
 And precinct were. She entered there, and tight  
 She shut the doors, those doors that shone so bright. 60  
 The Graces bathed her with the oil that's seen  
 Upon the deathless gods with heavenly sheen,  
 Fragrant and sweet. Her rich clothes they arrayed  
 Her in, then, swathed in gold, for Troy she made  
 With speed high in the air. And thus she came  
 To Ida (of the beasts she cannot tame  
 She is the mother). To the high retreat  
 She came, where, fawning, grey wolves came to meet  
 Her – grim-eyed lions and speedy leopards, too,  
 Hungry for deer and bears. All, two by two, 70  
 Mated among the shadowy haunts. But she  
 Came to the well-built leas. And there was he -  
 The hero Anchises, some way away

From others, in the homesteads. One could say  
 That he was godlike in his beauty. Though  
 The others urged their cattle all to go  
 With them to grassy pasturelands, yet he  
 Was playing on his lyre thrillingly  
 While strolling to and fro. And there she stood  
 Before him like a girl in maidenhood, 80  
 In height and mien, that she might quell his fright.  
 He saw her and he wondered at the sight –  
 Her height and mien, her shining clothes. For she  
 Had on a robe whose shining brilliancy  
 Capped fire, gorgeous, golden and enhanced  
 With many hues and, like a moon, it glanced  
 Over her delicate breasts, a wondrous sight,  
 And twisted brooches, earrings shining bright,  
 And lovely necklaces were set around  
 Her tender throat. Now Eros quickly found 90  
 Anchises, who said: “Lady queen, may bliss  
 Be on you whether you are Artemis  
 Or golden Aphrodite or, maybe,  
 Noble Themis or bright-eyed Athene  
 Or Leto? Does a Grace, p’raps, come to me?  
 (They’re called immortal, seen in company  
 With gods). Or else a Nymph, who’s seen around  
 The pleasant woods, or one, perhaps, who’s found  
 Upon this lovely mountain way up high  
 Or in streams’ springs or grassy meadows? I 100  
 Will build a shrine to you, seen far away  
 Upon a peak, and on it I will lay  
 In every season some rich offering.  
 Be gracious, granting that all men may sing  
 Of my prestige in Troy, my progeny  
 All strong forever after. As for me,  
 May I live long in wealth.” Then in reply  
 The child of Zeus addressed him and said: “I  
 Am no goddess, Anchises, most sublime  
 Of earth-born ones. Why do you think that I’m 110  
 Immortal? No, a mortal gave me birth.  
 My father’s Otreus, very well known on earth,  
 If you have heard of him. He holds command  
 In well-walled Phrygia. I understand  
 Your language well. At home have I been bred  
 By a Trojan nurse who, in my mother’s stead,  
 Nurtured me from a child, and that is why  
 I know *your* tongue as well. However, I  
 Was seized by Hermes, who took me away

From Artemis's dance. A great array 120  
 Of marriageable maids were we as we  
 Frolicked together. A great company  
 Surrounded us. Thence Hermes snatched me, then  
 Guided me over many fields of men,  
 Much land that was not harrowed nor possessed,  
 Where beasts of prey roamed the dark vales. I guessed  
 I'd never touch the earth again. He said  
 I'd be the wedded partner of your bed  
 And birth great brood. Back to the gods he flew,  
 And here I am! I have great need of you. 130  
 So by your noble parents (for no-one  
 Of wretched stock could create such a son)  
 And Zeus, I beg, take me to wife, who know  
 Nothing of love, a maiden pure, and show  
 Me to your parents and your brothers, who  
 Shall like me well. Then send a herald to  
 The swift-horsed Phrygians that immediately  
 My sorrowing folks shall know of this. You'll see  
 From them much gold and woven stuff and more.  
 Take these as bride-price, then make ready for 140  
 A lovely wedding that for gods and men  
 Shall be immortalized. The goddess then  
 Put love into his heart. Then Anchises,  
 Thus stricken, said: "If I can credit these  
 Words that you say, if you're of mortals bred,  
 That Otreus fathered you – that's what you said –  
 And Hermes brought you here that you might be  
 My wife forever, no-one shall stop me –  
 No god nor man – from having intercourse  
 With you right now, not even if perforce 150  
 Phoebus shot arrows from his silver bow  
 At me. I'd go into the land below  
 The earth most gladly once I'd broached your bed,  
 O godlike lady." That is what he said.  
 He took her hand. She threw her glance aside,  
 Her lovely eyes cast down, and slowly hied  
 To the well-spread bed, which was already made  
 With delicate coverings. On it were laid  
 Bearskins and skins of roaring lions he  
 Had killed in that mountainous territory. 160  
 In bed, each twisted brooch and each earring  
 And necklace he removed – each shining thing –  
 And doffed her girdle and bight clothes and laid  
 Her on a golden-studded seat, then made  
 Love to her, man and goddess – destiny

And the gods' will condoned it – although he  
 Did not know what he did. But at the hour  
 When oxen and tough sheep back from the flower-  
 Filled pasture were led home, the goddess blessed  
 Anchises with sweet sleep but then she dressed 170  
 Herself in her rich garments. With her head  
 Reaching the well-hewn roof-tree, by the bed  
 She stood, and from her cheeks there radiated  
 Unearthly beauty one associated  
 With well-wreathed Cytherea. And then she  
 Roused him and said: "Why sleep so heavily?  
 Get up, Anchises! Tell me, is my guise  
 The same to you as when you first laid eyes  
 Upon me?" He awoke immediately.  
 Seeing her neck and lovely eyes, was he 180  
 Afraid; he turned his eyes, his cloak concealing  
 His comely face. His winged words appealing,  
 He said: "When first I looked on you, I knew  
 You were a goddess – you did not speak true.  
 By aegis-bearing Zeus, I beg, let me  
 Not live my life among humanity,  
 A palsied thing. Have pity. For a man  
 Who lies with goddesses no longer can  
 Be sound." She answered him: "O leading light  
 Of mortals, courage! You've no need of fright. 190  
 Nor I nor any god will cause you fear –  
 The gods love you. A son who shall be dear  
 To you shall over Troy hold sovereignty,  
 As shall his offspring in posterity.  
 His name shall be Aeneas, for the pain  
 Of grief I felt inside because I'd lain  
 With a mortal. Yet the people of your race  
 Are the most godlike, being fair of face  
 And tall. Zeus seized golden-haired Ganymede  
 Thanks to his beauty, that he might indeed 200  
 Pour wine for all the gods and always be  
 Among them all – remarkable to see.  
 Honoured by all, he from the golden bowl  
 Drew the red nectar. Grief, though, filled the soul  
 Of Tros, not knowing if a heaven-sent blow  
 Had snatched away his darling son, and so  
 He mourned day after day unceasingly.  
 In pity, Zeus gave him indemnity-  
 High-stepping horses such as carry men.  
 Hermes, the Argos-slaying leader, then, 210  
 At Zeus's bidding, told him all – his son

Would live forever agelessly, atone  
 With all the gods. So, when he heard of this  
 No longer did he mourn but, filled with bliss,  
 On his storm-footed horses joyfully  
 He rode away. Tithonus similarly  
 Was seized by golden-throned Eos – he, too,  
 Was of your race and godlike, just like you.  
 She begged dark-clouded Zeus to give consent  
 That he'd be deathless, too. Zeus granted this. 220  
 But thoughtless queenly Eos was amiss,  
 Not craving youth so that senility  
 Would never burden him and so, though he  
 Lived happily with Eos far away  
 On Ocean's streams, at the first signs of grey  
 Upon his lovely head and noble chin,  
 She spurned his bed but cherished him within  
 Her house and gave him lovely clothes to wear,  
 Food and ambrosia. But when everywhere  
 Old age oppressed him and his every limb  
 He could not move, her best resolve for him 230  
 Was this – to place him in a room and close  
 The shining doors. An endless babbling rose  
 Out of his mouth; he had no strength at all  
 As once he had. I'd not have this befall  
 Yourself. But if you looked as now you do  
 Forevermore and everyone called you  
 My husband, I'd not grieve. But pitiless  
 Old age will soon enshroud you – such distress  
 Will burden every mortal – wearying  
 And deadly, even by the gods a thing 240  
 Of fear. You've caused great endless infamy  
 For me among the gods who formerly  
 Feared all my jibes and wiles with which I mated  
 The gods with mortal maids and subjugated  
 Them all. However, no more shall my word  
 Have force among the gods, since I've incurred  
 Much madness on myself, dire, full of dread.  
 My mind has gone astray! I've shared a bed  
 With a mortal! Underneath my girdle lies  
 A child! As soon as he has cast his eyes 250  
 Upon the sun, the mountain Nymphs whose breasts  
 Are deep, who dwell on those great sacred crests,  
 Shall rear him. They're not of mortality  
 Nor immortality; extendedly  
 They live, eat heavenly food and lightly tread  
 The dance among the deathless ones and bed

With Hermes and Sileni, hid away  
 In pleasant caves, and on the very day  
 That they are born, up from the fruitful earth  
 Pines and high oaks also display *their* birth, 260  
 Trees so luxuriant, so very fair,  
 Called the gods' *sancta*, high up in the air.  
 No mortal chops them down. When the Fates mark  
 Them out for death, they wither there, their bark  
 Shrivelling too, their twigs fall down. As one,  
 Both Nymph and tree leave the light of the sun.  
 They'll rear my son. And at his puberty  
 The goddesses will show you him. Let me  
 Tell you what I propose – when he is near  
 His fifth year on this earth, I'll bring him here 270  
 That you may gaze upon him and enjoy  
 The sight, for he will be a godlike boy.  
 Bring him to windy Ilium. If you  
 Are queried by some mortal as to who  
 Gave birth to him, then say, as I propose,  
 It was a flower-like Nymph, one Nymph of those  
 Who dwell upon that forest-covered crag.  
 Should you tell all, though, and foolishly brag  
 That you have lain with rich-crowned Aphrodite,  
 Then with a smoky bolt will Zeus Almighty 280  
 Strike you. That's all. Take heed. Do not name me.  
 Respect the anger of the gods." Then she  
 Soared up to windy heaven. Queen, farewell.  
 Your tale is told. I have one more to tell.

## VI

### TO APHRODITE

Of stately Aphrodite, crowned with gold  
 And beautiful I will sing, her whose stronghold  
 Is well-walled, sea-girt Cyprus, whither she  
 Was wafted on soft foam across the sea  
 By the moist West Wind, received with happiness  
 By the gold-circleted Hours, her heavenly dress  
 Provided by them, and a diadem  
 They placed upon her heavenly head – a gem  
 Of gold, fair and well-wrought. Her ears, which she  
 Had pierced, they hung with fine-gold jewelry 10

And copper-mountain gems. Her snowy-white  
 Breasts and her tender neck were decked with bright-  
 Gold necklaces, which they themselves would wear  
 When they went to their father's house, for there  
 They joined the gods in fair terpsichory.  
 Decked out they took her to the company  
 Of the gods who warmly greeted her and prayed,  
 As each one welcomed with his hands the maid,  
 That she might be his wedded wife, their eyes  
 Gazing upon the goddess in surprise. 20  
 O sweetly-winning, coy-eyed goddess, hail!  
 O grant that in this contest I'll not fail.  
 Give orders for my song. For you I'll tell  
 Of in my song – another song as well.

## VII

### TO DIONYSUS

I will sing of Dionysus, son  
 Of glorious Semele, just like someone  
 In the first flush of youth close by the strand  
 Of the fruitless sea on a jutting headland,  
 While all about him waved his rich dark hair,  
 A purple robe on his strong back. Soon there  
 Appeared, in a well-decked ship, a company  
 Of Tyrrhenian pirates on the wine-dark sea.  
 They saw him, nodded each to each and sprang  
 Out quickly and their hearts joyfully sang 10  
 As he was seized, for they believed that he  
 Was son of heavenly kings and wished to see  
 Him tightly bound but could not do it. No,  
 The bonds fell from his hands and feet and lo!  
 He sat there with his dark eyes smiling. Then  
 The helmsman, now enlightened, to his men  
 Said: "Madmen! Who's this god you've taken here  
 And bound? Even this well-built ship, I fear,  
 Can't hold him. He is strong! He's Zeus, maybe,  
 Or else Apollo or Poseidon. He 20  
 Does not appear to be like mortal men.  
 No, he's a god, I'm sure. Let's set him, then,  
 On the dark shore at once, and do not lay  
 Your hands on him lest, in a rage, he may

Send dangerous winds and heavy squalls.” Thus he  
 Addressed them. But the master tauntingly  
 Said in reply: “Madman yourself! Go check  
 The wind. Help hoist the sail. All hands on deck  
 To catch the sheets! We’ll deal with him. I claim  
 That Egypt or else Cyprus is his aim 30  
 Or else the Northern Folk or farther yet.  
 But he will speak out in the end, I bet,  
 About his friends, wealth, brothers. Destiny  
 Has thrown him in our way.” And, with this, he  
 Got them to hoist the mast and sail. The blast  
 Of winds then filled the sail and on the mast  
 They tautly hauled the sheets on either side.  
 But strange things happened soon. Both far and wide  
 Throughout the black ship wine, fragrant and sweet,  
 Flowed free. A heavenly scent arose. The fleet 40  
 Of men was all amazed. A vine now spread  
 On the topsail, while clusters pivoted  
 Down from it. From the mast dark ivy wound  
 With flowers blossoming and all around  
 Rich berries grew. The tholes were garlanded.  
 They told the helmsman, hearing this, to head  
 For land. The god, however, now transformed  
 Into a lion in the bows and stormed  
 With roaring, then amidships wondrously  
 He was a shaggy bear, rapaciously 50  
 Arising. On the deck he made appear  
 The fiercely glaring lion. Then in fear  
 The sailors hurried to the stern and pressed  
 All round about the helmsman, who was blest  
 With wisdom. Then the master suddenly  
 Was seized on by the lion. Into the sea  
 They all leapt, seeing this, and in this way  
 Escaped the master’s wretched fate, but they  
 Changed into dolphins. In his mercy, though,  
 Dionysus held the helmsman back, and so 60  
 He made him truly happy and addressed  
 Him thus: “Take heed, my friend, for you have been  
 Blessed by me. I am Dionysus, he  
 Who loudly shouts, the son of Semele  
 And Zeus.” Farewell, fair Semele’s offspring.  
 Forgetting you, no-one can sweetly sing.



## TO ARES

Mighty Ares, with helmet all of gold,  
A charioteer, a shield-bearer, so bold,  
Saviour of cities, harnessed in bronze and strong  
Of arm, and mighty with the spear, who long  
Toils, never tired, father of Victory,  
Olympus' champion, accessory  
Of Themis, rebels' tyrant, governing  
The just, of manliness the sceptred king  
Who would your fiery sphere up in the air  
Among the sevenfold starry courses, where 10  
In the third firmament you were conveyed  
By blazing steeds, hear me, you who give aid  
To men, who give us youth, a kindly ray  
Shed on my life so that in strength I may  
Drive bitter cowardice away and quell  
My soul's deceitful impulses. As well,  
Restrain my fury, which would make me tread  
The ways of bloody strife. Blest one, instead  
Grant me kind peace and let me shun the fate  
Of strife, the violent fiends of death and hate. 20

## IX

## TO ARTEMIS

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

## X

## TO APHRODITE

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

## XI

## TO ATHENE

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

## XII

## TO HERA

Golden-throned Hera, Rhea's child, I sing,  
The queen of all immortals, bettering  
Them all in beauty, both sister and mate  
Of Zeus, who thunders loud. We celebrate  
You. The immortals make Olympus ring  
With awe for you and Zeus, loud-thundering.

## XIII

## TO DEMETER

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

#### XIV

#### TO THE MOTHER OF THE GODS

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

#### XV

#### TO HERACLES THE LION-HEARTED

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

10

#### XVI

#### TO ASCLEPIUS

Asclepius the healer I begin

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

## XVII

### TO THE DIOSCURI

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

## XVIII

### TO HERMES

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

10

## XIX

### TO PAN

O Muse. Of Hermes' darling son tell me,  
 Goat-footed, horned, lover of revelry.  
 In wooded glades with dancing nymphs he'll tread  
 While they climb high upon a sheer cliff's head  
 To call on Pan, the shepherd-god, whose hair  
 Is long and shaggy. Each white crest's his lair,  
 Each rocky peak. Through the close shrubbery  
 He'll roam about, now struck with ecstasy  
 For soft streams, now on high crags wandering,  
 Where flocks are seen below. Through glistening 10  
 High mountains on he often goes, his sight  
 So keen, or else upon some shouldered height  
 He slays wild beasts. Only at dusk does he,  
 As he comes from the chase, play melody  
 Upon his reed-pipes, sweet and low. A bird  
 Could not surpass his music, though she's heard  
 Amid the leaves in flower-laden spring  
 To pour out her lament while uttering  
 Her honeyed song. The clear-voiced Nymphs then rush  
 Beside him, where some dark fount's waters gush, 20  
 And sing, while echo on the mountain-peak  
 Wails, and the choir-god sometimes will sneak  
 Into their midst, but nimbly hither and yon  
 He bounds. A spotted lynx-pelt he has on.  
 He joys in song in a soft meadow, where  
 Sweet hyacinths and croci here and there  
 At random bloom. They sing about the blessed  
 Gods and Olympus but, above the rest,  
 Luck-bringing Hermes, their swift go-between,  
 How he came to Arcadia, the scene 30  
 Of many springs and flocks – his sanctuary  
 As the god of Cyllene's there, where he,  
 Although immortal, served a man and fed  
 A flock of sheep because he yearned to wed  
 Dryops' well-tressed child, and the ceremony  
 He brought about was full of joy, and she  
 Bore Hermes there a dear son, such a sight  
 To see – goat-footed, horned, a sheer delight,  
 A noisy, laughing tot. The nurse, though, feared  
 The infant's uncouth face and his full beard, 40  
 And fled. Then the Luck-Bringer instantly  
 Picked up the babe, so glad at heart. Then he  
 Took him, wrapped up in many a thick hide  
 Of mountain-hares, to where the gods abide.  
 He sat beside Lord Zeus and showed his son

To all the other gods, and every one  
Was pleased, especially Bacchus, and they called  
The infant Pan because he had enthralled  
Them all. This is my song. Hail, Lord, to you!  
You I'll recall – and another song, too.

50

## XX

### TO HEPHAESTUS

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

## XXI

### TO APOLLO

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

## XXII

### TO POSEIDON

I'll sing of great Poseidon. It is he  
Who shakes the very earth and fruitless sea.  
God of the deep, you're lord of wide Aegae  
And Helicon. A twofold office by

The gods was given you, Earth-Shaker: you  
Recover ships and break in horses, too.  
Hail, Holder of the Earth, hail, dark-haired lord.  
Blest be, be kind! To sailors help afford!

### XXIII

#### TO THE MOST HIGH SON OF CRONUS

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

### XXIV

#### TO HESTIA

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

### XXV

#### TO THE MUSES AND APOLLO

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

My song with approbation, and now you  
I will remember – and another song, too.

## XXVI

### TO DIONYSUS

Of loud and ivied Bacchus hear my lay,  
The splendid son of glorious Semele  
And Zeus, received by all the Nymphs, whose hair  
Is rich, from his father Zeus. With every care  
They nursed and nurtured him in Nysa's dells,  
Where, in a cave exuding pleasant smells,  
Zeus wished him reared, gods' darling. But once raised  
By the goddesses, in hymns often praised,  
He'd roam the wooded valleys, garlanded  
Thickly with bay and ivy, and he led 10  
The Nymphs. The never-ending wood would sound  
With their outcry. So, Bacchus, who abound  
In clusters, hail. May we come gladly here  
Next season and thenceforth for many a year.

## XXVII

### TO ARTEMIS

Of Artemis, whose shafts are gold, I sing,  
Hurrahing to her hounds and revelling  
In archery, stag-shooter, virgin miss,  
Gold-sworded Phoebus' sister – Artemis  
Across dark hills and windy peaks will pace,  
Her gold bow drawn, rejoicing in the chase  
And shooting grievous shafts, and at the sound  
Of groaning beasts, the dusky wood all round  
Echoed amazingly. The earth and sea  
Both shook. But the bold goddess whirlingly 10  
Dealt death to the animal world. Once satisfied,  
This huntress puts her slackened bow aside.  
To her dear brother's mansion now she flies  
To make arrangements there in rich Delphi



For the Muses' and the Graces' dance. When she  
Has hung her weapons up, then, gracefully  
Arrayed, she leads the dances, while they sing  
Their songs with heavenly voices, recounting  
How trim-legged Leto bore her progeny  
Supreme among the heavenly company 20  
In thought and deed. Children, all hail to you.  
I shall recall you – and another song, too.

## XXVIII

### TO ATHENA

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

## XXIX

### TO HESTIA

Hestia, where gods and men in great homes dwell  
You've gained a constant place; splendidly well  
You're honoured. Mortal banquets without you  
Do not exist; sweet wine – which is your due –

Both first and last is not poured anywhere  
But to you. Phoebus Apollo, too, who bear  
The gold rod, the gods' messenger, both you  
And holy, dear Hestia, come and dwell  
In this grand house together. You know well 10  
Men's noble deeds, so make them wise and strong.  
Daughter of Cronus, listen to my song,  
And Hermes, too, for now I welcome you.  
I shall recall you – and another song, too.

### XXX

#### TO EARTH THE MOTHER OF ALL

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

### XXXI

#### TO HELIOS

Daughter of Zeus, Calliope, now sing  
Of bright Helios, whom the far-glistening

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

## XXXII

### TO SELENE

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

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

20

### XXXIII

#### TO THE DIOSCURI

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

10





