



Olympian Gods in Arms

So by the beaked ships the Argives formed for battle,
 arming round you, Achilles—Achilles starved for war—
 and faced by the Trojan ranks along the plain's high ground.
 At the same time, from the peak of rugged ridged Olympus
 Zeus commanded Themis to call the gods to council.
 Themis made her rounds, ranging far and wide
 and summoned all to march to Father's halls.
 Not a single river failed to come, none apart
 from the Ocean stream that holds the earth in place,
 nor a single nymph who haunts the rustling groves
 and the river springs and the lush, grassy meadows.
 All flocked to the halls of Zeus who gathers storms
 and found their seats in the colonnades of polished stone
 Hephaestus built for Father Zeus with all his craft and cunning.

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And so the powers assembled deep in Zeus's halls.
Nor did the god of earthquakes fail to hear the goddess.
Surging up from the sea he came to join their ranks,
took a seat in their midst and probed Zeus's plans:
"Why now, great king of the lightning,
why summon the gods to council once again?
Still some concern for Troy's and Achaea's armies?—
now that battle is set to burst in flames between them!"

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But Zeus who marshals the thunderheads replied,
"God of the earthquake, well you know my plans,
the strategy in my mind, and why I call you here
These mortals do concern me, dying as they are.
Still, here I stay on Olympus throned aloft,
here in my steep mountain cleft, to feast my eyes
and delight my heart. The rest of you: down you go,
go to Trojans, go to Achaeans. Help either side
as the fixed desire drives each god to act.
If Achilles fights the Trojans—unopposed by us—
not for a moment will they hold his breakneck force.
Even before now they'd shake to see him coming.
Now, with his rage inflamed for his friend's death,
I fear he'll raze the walls against the will of fate."

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And with that command Zeus roused incessant battle.
Down the immortals launched to the field of action—
their warring spirits split the gods two ways.
Hera went to the massed ships with Pallas Athena,
Poseidon who grips the earth, and Hermes god of luck
who excels them all at subtle twists and tactics—
and the god of fire flanked them, seething power,
hobbling along but his shrunken legs moved nimbly.
But Ares swept down to the Trojans, helmet flashing,
and pacing him went Phoebus with long hair streaming
and Artemis showering arrows, Leto and River Xanthus
and goddess Aphrodite strong with eternal laughter.

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Now, while the gods had still kept clear of mortal men,
the Achaeans kept on gaining glory—great Achilles 50
who held back from the brutal fighting so long
had just come blazing forth. Chilling tremors
shook the Trojans' knees, down to the last man,
terrified at the sight: the headlong runner coming,
gleaming in all his gear, afire like man-destroying Ares.
But once the Olympians merged with mortal fighters,
Strife the mighty driver of armies rose in strength
and Athena bellowed her stunning war cry—standing now
at the edge of the deep-dug trench outside the rampart,
now at thundering cliffs she loosed her vibrant cry. 60
And Ares bellowed his cry from far across the lines,
churning black as a whirlwind, roaring down now
from the city's crest, commanding Trojans on and now
rushing along the Simois banks and scaling Sunlight Hill.

So the blissful gods were rousing both opposing armies,
clashing front to front but then, in their own ranks,
their overpowering strife broke out in massive war.
Down from the high skies the father of men and gods
let loose tremendous thunder—from down below Poseidon
shook the boundless earth and towering heads of mountains. 70
The whole world quaked, the slopes of Ida with all her springs
and all her peaks and the walls of Troy and all Achaea's ships.
And terror-struck in the underworld, Hades lord of the dead
cringed and sprang from his throne and screamed shrill,
fearing the god who rocks the ground above his realm,
giant Poseidon, would burst the earth wide open now
and lay bare to mortal men and immortal gods at last
the houses of the dead—the dank, moldering horrors
that fill the deathless gods themselves with loathing.
So immense the clash as the war of gods erupted. 80
There, look, rearing against the lord Poseidon
Phoebus Apollo loomed, bristling winged arrows,
rearing against Ares, blazing-eyed Athena,
rearing against Hera, Artemis with arrow of gold

and cry that halloos the hunt, the goddess raining shafts,
Huntress sister of Phoebus the distant deadly Archer—
rearing against Leto, Hermes the running god of luck
and against the Fire-god rose the great deep-swirling river
immortals call the Xanthus, mankind calls Scamander.

So god went up against god. But blazing Achilles 90
strained to engage Prince Hector, plunge in battle
with him beyond all others—Achilles yearning now
to glut with Hector's blood, his, no other,
Ares who hacks at men behind his rawhide shield.
But Aeneas it was whom Phoebus, urger of armies,
filled with power now and drove against Achilles.
Phoebus, masking his voice like Priam's son Lycaon,
like him to the life the son of Zeus called out,
"Captain of Trojan councils—where have they gone,
those threats you made in your cups before the kings? 100
Boasting you'd face Achilles man-to-man in battle!"

But Aeneas turned and gave the god an answer:
"Son of Priam, why press me to go against Achilles?
It's much against my will—his fury is overwhelming.
Nor would it be the first time I have had to face
the matchless, headlong runner. Once before
he chased me hard with his spear, down from Ida
the day he raided our flocks and sacked Lyrnessus,
Pedasus fort as well. But Zeus saved me then,
put force in my heart, spring in my racing knees. 110
Else I'd gone down at Achilles' hands, Athena's too—
the goddess sweeping before him lent the light of safety,
calling Achilles on that day with his bronze spear
to slaughter Leleges and Trojans. That is why
no mortal can fight Achilles head-to-head:
at every foray one of the gods goes with him,
beating back his death. Even without that power
his spear flies straight to the mark, never stops,
not till it bores clean through some fighter's flesh.
But if only Zeus would stretch the ropes of war dead even 120

the man would have no easy victory then, believe me—
not though he claims he's built of solid bronze!"

Apollo son of Zeus encouraged him still more:
"Hero, why not invoke the deathless gods yourself?
They say you're a son of Aphrodite, Zeus's daughter,
but Achilles sprang from a lesser goddess' loins—
Aphrodite's a child of Zeus,
Thetis comes from the Old Man of the Sea.
So ram him straight on with your tough bronze!
Now—and not for a moment let him turn you back
with his stinging proud contempt and brazen threats!"

130

That breathed enormous strength in the good captain—
right through the front he went, helmed in flashing bronze.
Nor did the white-armed Hera fail to see Anchises' son
advancing there through the press to face Achilles.
And rallying other gods around her, Hera shouted,
"Bend to the work, you two, Poseidon, Athena,
decide in your hearts how this assault will go!
Here comes Aeneas, look, helmed in flashing bronze
to oppose Achilles now and Phoebus speeds him on.
Come, spin him round in his tracks and drive him back.
That, or else one of us might stand beside Achilles
and lend him winning force—his courage must not flag.
Let him know he's loved by the greatest gods on high
while the gods who up till now have shielded Troy
from war and death are worthless as the wind!
We swept down from Olympus, all to join this fight
so Achilles might not fall at Trojan hands today.
Afterward he must suffer what the Fates spun out
on the doomed fighter's life line drawn that day
his mother gave him birth. If Achilles fails
to learn all this from our own immortal voices
he will quail when a god attacks him face-to-face.
The gods are hard to handle—
when they come blazing forth in their true power."

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But the god who grips the earth restrained the Queen:
“Hera, so hard, so senseless! Don’t leap to extremes.
I, at least, have no real lust to drive our forces
against the gods of Troy. Our side is so much stronger.
Come now, let us move off and settle down together 160
far from the trampled field, take a lookout post
and leave the war to mortals . . .

But if Ares or Phoebus cares to start things off,
if they block Achilles and keep him out of action,
they will have a fight on their hands, then and there,
an all-out fight with us. But not for long, I trust—
they will soon break off and slink back to Olympus,
home to the gathered gods who wait their coming,
overwhelmed by the crushing power of our fists!”

And with that threat the god of the sea-blue mane 170
led the way to the fortress raised for godlike Heracles:
earth piled on both sides, a high imposing breastwork
men of Troy and Pallas Athena flung up for the man
where he could race and escape that sea monster
whenever it charged him hard from shore to plain.
There Poseidon sat at ease with his deathless friends
who spread unbroken shrouds of mist around their shoulders,
while far on the other side the gods of Troy sat down
on the brows of Sunlight Hill, flanking you, Apollo,
god of the wild cry, and Ares scourge of cities. 180

So either side of the lines they took positions,
weighing tactics, each Olympian force reluctant now
to launch out first on the wrenching horrors of war . . .
while Zeus on the heights sat poised to thunder orders.

But the whole plain filled with men and flashed with bronze,
with troops and horse and beneath their feet the earth quaked
as armies rushed together. And now in the no man’s land
two champions, greatest of all, strode and closed,
both men burning for battle,
Aeneas son of Anchises and brilliant Achilles. 190

Aeneas came up first with long, menacing strides,
 head tossing his heavy helmet, his charging shield
 thrust out to defend his chest, and shook his bronze spear.
 But over against him came Achilles rearing like some lion
 out on a rampage, and a whole town of men has geared
 for the hunt to cut him down: but at first he lopes along,
 all contempt, till one of the fast young hunters spears him—
 then . . . crouched for attack, his jaws gaping, over his teeth
 the foam breaks out, deep in his chest the brave heart groans,
 he lashes his ribs, his flanks and hips with his tail, 200
 he whips himself into fighting-fury, eyes glaring,
 hurls himself head-on—kill one of the men or die,
 go down himself at the first lethal charge!
 So now magnificent pride and fury lashed Achilles
 to go against Aeneas the greathearted fighter.
 As they closed on each other, both in range,
 the matchless runner Achilles opened up: “Aeneas—
 why so far from your own ranks, standing all exposed?
 Does your courage really drive you to challenge *me*?
 In hopes of ruling your stallion-breaking friends 210
 and filling Priam’s throne? Even if you killed me,
 would Priam drop his crown in your hands—for that?
 The king has sons. He’s sound of limb. No half-wit either.
 Or have the Trojans sworn to carve you a fine estate?
 The choicest land in the realm, rich in vineyards
 and good tilled fields for you to lord it over—
 if only you kill *me*!
 Ah but I think you’ll find the work quite taxing.
 I seem to remember once before you fled my spear . . .
 Or have you forgot the time I caught you all alone, 220
 I cut you off from your flocks and sent you scurrying down
 the slopes of Ida? Running for dear life, legs driving,
 never a look behind. And you escaped that time,
 you fled to Lyrnessus’ walls, but at one charge
 I sacked the place with Athena’s help and Father Zeus,
 I tore the day of freedom away from all the women,
 dragged them off as slaves. Zeus saved you then
 and other gods joined in. But he won’t save you now,

I'd say—though the hope goes racing through your mind.
Go back to your own rank and file, I tell you!
Don't stand up against me—or you will meet your death.
Even a fool learns something once it hits him."

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But Aeneas, taking a long, deep breath, replied,
"Don't think for a moment, Achilles, son of Peleus,
you can frighten me with words like a child, a fool—
I'm an old hand myself at trading taunts and insults.
We both know each other's birth, each other's parents,
we've heard their far-flung fame on the lips of mortal men,
though you have never set eyes on mine, or I on yours.
They say you are Peleus' son, that fine, flawless man;
your mother, Thetis, sleek-haired child of the Sea.
And I am Aeneas, and I can boast Anchises' blood,
the proud Anchises, but my mother is Aphrodite.
Our parents—one pair or the other will mourn
a dear son today. Certain it is, I warn you,
we won't break off from battle and leave the field
with no more than a youngster's banter light as this.
But about my birth, if you'd like to learn it well,
first to last—though many people know it—
here's my story, Achilles . . .
Starting with Dardanus, Storm-king Zeus's son
who founded Dardania, long before holy Troy arose,
that city reared on the plain to shelter all our people.
They still camped on the slopes of Ida wet with springs.
Then Dardanus had a son in turn, King Erichthonius,
and he was the richest man in all the world—
three thousand mares he owned, grazing the marshes,
brood-mares in their prime, proud of their leaping foals.
And the North Wind, lusting once for the herd at pasture,
taking on the build of a black stallion, mounted several
and swelling under his force they bore him twelve colts.
And when they'd frisk on the tilled fields ripe with grain
they'd brush the crests of the corn and never snap a stalk,
but when they'd frisk and vault on the sea's broad back
they'd skim the crests of whitecaps glistening foam.

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Now Erichthonius sired Tros, a lord of the Trojans,
 and Tros, in turn, had three distinguished sons:
 Ilus, Assaracus and Ganymede radiant as a god,
 and he was the handsomest mortal man on earth—
 and so the immortals, awestruck by his beauty, 270
 snatched him away to bear the cup of Zeus
 and pour out wine for all the deathless gods.

And Ilus, in turn, sired a valiant son Laomedon,
 Laomedon had his sons as well, Tithonus and Priam,
 Lampus and Clytius, Hicetaon the gallant aide of Ares,
 and Assaracus fathered Capys, and he had a son Anchises
 and Anchises fathered me, but Priam had Prince Hector.
 There you have my lineage.

That is the blood I claim, my royal birth.
 As for strength in war, Zeus lends power to some, 280
 others he wastes away, whatever his pleasure—
 the strongest god of all.

Come, Achilles,
 no more bragging on this way like boys,
 standing here in the thick of a pitched battle.
 Plenty of insults we could fling against each other,
 enough to sink a ship with a hundred benches!
 A man's tongue is a glib and twisty thing . . .
 plenty of words there are, all kinds at its command—
 with all the room in the world for talk to range and stray.
 And the sort you use is just the sort you'll hear. 290
 What do we need with wrangling, hurling insults?
 Cursing each other here like a pair of nagging women
 boiling over with petty, heartsick squabbles, blustering
 into the streets to pelt themselves with slander,
 much of it true, much not. Anger stirs up lies.
 I blaze for battle—your taunts can't turn me back,
 not till we've fought it out with bronze. On with it—
 taste the bite of each other's brazen spears!"

With that
 he hurled a heavy lance at the great and awesome shield
 and its massive surface clanged as it took the point. 300
 Achilles had thrust it forth with his strong fist,

fearing staunch Aeneas' spear with its long shadow
would drive its whole length lightly through his buckler—
groundless fears. The fighter had no idea at all
that famous gifts of the gods do not break lightly,
can't be crushed when a mortal hand assails them.
So now not even seasoned Aeneas' heavy shaft
could smash Achilles' shield:
the gold blocked it, forged in the god's gift.
It did bore through two plies but three were left,
since the crippled Smith had made it five plies thick
with two of bronze on the outside, inside two of tin,
between them one of gold where the ashen spear held fast.

310

Achilles next—he hurled his spear and its long shadow flew
and the weapon struck the balanced round shield of Aeneas
under the outer rim where the bronze ran thinnest,
backed by the thinnest bull's-hide. Straight through
the Pelian ash burst, the shield rang out with a screech—
but Aeneas crouched low, holding the buckler off his chest,
terrified as the shaft shot past his back, hurled so hard
it plunged deep in the ground, even after it tore up
two round plies of the shield that cased his body.
Dodging the big spear, Aeneas got to his feet . . .
a dizzying swirl of anguish rushing down his eyes,
blind with fear, the point had stuck so close.
But drawing his sharp sword, Achilles charged, wild,
hurtling toward him, loosing a savage cry as Aeneas
hefted a boulder in his hands, a tremendous feat—
no two men could hoist it, weak as men are now,
but all on his own he raised it high with ease.
Then and there he'd have struck Achilles lunging in,
the rock would have hit him square in casque or shield,
the gear would have warded off grim death, and Achilles, closing,
would have slashed his life away with a well-honed blade—
if the god of earthquakes had not marked it quickly
and called the gods at once who grouped around him:
"Now, I tell you, my heart aches for great Aeneas!
He'll go down to the House of Death this instant,

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overwhelmed by Achilles—all because he trusted
 the distant deadly Archer's urgings. Poor fool— 340
 as if Apollo would lift a hand to save him now
 from death, grim death. Aeneas the innocent!
 Why should Aeneas suffer here, for no good reason,
 embroiled in the quarrels of others, not his own?
 He always gave us gifts to warm our hearts,
 gifts for the gods who rule the vaulting skies.
 So come, let us rescue him from death ourselves,
 for fear the son of Cronus might just tower in rage
 if Achilles kills this man. He is destined to survive.
 Yes, so the generation of Dardanus will not perish, 350
 obliterated without an heir, without a trace:
 Dardanus, dearest to Zeus of all the sons
 that mortal women brought to birth for Father.
 Now he has come to hate the generation of Priam,
 and now Aeneas will rule the men of Troy in power—
 his sons' sons and the sons born in future years."

But Hera the Queen broke in, her eyes open wide:
 "Decide in your own mind, god of the earthquake,
 whether to save Aeneas now or let him die,
 crushed by Achilles, for all his fighting heart. 360
 But time and again we two have sworn our oaths
 in the eyes of all the gods—I and Pallas Athena—
 never to drive the fatal day away from the Trojans,
 not even when all Troy burns in the ramping flames
 when the warring sons of Achaea burn her down!"

As soon as he heard that, the god of earthquakes
 surged through the clashing troops and raining spears
 to reach the place where the two famed heroes fought.
 Quickly he poured a mist across Achilles' eyes,
 wrenched the spear from stalwart Aeneas' shield, 370
 laid the bronze-shod ashen shaft at Achilles' feet
 and hoisting Aeneas off the earth he slung him far . . .
 And over the massing lines of men and massing chariots,
 high in the air Aeneas vaulted, hurled by the god's hand

till he came to ground at the battle's churning flank
 where Cauconian units braced themselves for action.
 The god of the earthquake swept beside him there
 and gave the man a burst of winging orders: "Aeneas—
 what god on high commands you to play the madman?
 Fighting against Achilles' overwhelming fury!— 380
 both a better soldier and more loved by the gods.
 Pull back at once, whenever you're thrown against him—
 or go down to the House of Death against the will of fate.
 But once Achilles has met his death, his certain doom,
 take courage then, go fight on the front lines then—
 no other Achaeon can bring you down in war."

With that,

with destiny made clear, he left him there on the spot
 and turning back to Achilles quickly brushed away
 the mist from his eyes, the magic, godsent haze.
 And Achilles stared with all his might, dazzled, 390
 disgusted too, and addressed his own great heart:
 "Impossible—look, a marvel right before my eyes!
 That spear I hurled is lying here on the ground.
 That man—I cannot see him—
 the one I hurled at, wild to cut him down.
 Ah, so the deathless gods must love Aeneas too.
 And I thought his vaunts were empty, hollow boasting.
 Well let him go, I say! Never, never again
 will he have the nerve to test my fighting power—
 even now he was glad to save himself from death. 400
 Now, quick, I'll marshal our battle-hungry Argives—
 face the rest of the Trojans, test them, fight them down!"

And back to the lines he leapt and urged each man,
 "No more standing back from the Trojans, brave Achaeans!
 Now fighter go against fighter, out for bloodshed!
 It's hard for me, strong as I am, single-handed
 to make for such a force and fight them all.
 Why, not even Ares the deathless god of war,
 not even Athena—for all their heavy labor—
 could hack a passage through such jaws of battle. 410

But I—whatever fists and feet and strength can do,
 that I will do, I swear, not hang back, not one inch.
 Straight through enemy columns I go plowing now—
 and no Trojan, I guarantee, will thrill with pleasure
 once he meets my spearshaft head-to-head!”

Spurring his men

while Hector aflash in armor urged his Trojans—
 thinking he’d even go up against Achilles:
 “No fear of Pelides now, my gallant Trojans!
 I too could battle the deathless gods with words—
 it’s hard with a spear, the gods are so much stronger. 420
 Not even Achilles can bring off all his boasts:
 some he’ll accomplish, some cut short, half done.
 I’m off to engage the man, though his fists are fire,
 though his fists are fire and his fury burnished iron!”

Spurring them on to raise their spears for full assault
 and the Trojans’ fury massed and mounted, war cries broke
 but Apollo suddenly stood by Hector, shouting,
 “Don’t for a moment duel Achilles, Hector,
 out in front of your ranks!
 Withdraw to your main lines and wait him there, 430
 out of the crash of battle. Else he’ll spear you down
 or close for the kill and hack you with his sword.”

So Hector drew back to his thronging comrades,
 terrified to hear the voice of god. Not Achilles—
 armored in battle-power down he flung on the Trojans,
 loosed barbaric cries, and his first kill was Iphition,
 Otrynteus’ hardy son and a chief of large contingents,
 born of a river nymph to Otrynteus, scourge of towns,
 below Tmolus’ snows in the wealthy realm of Hyde . . .
 As the Trojan charged head-on Achilles speared him 440
 square in the brows—his whole skull split in half
 and down he crashed, Achilles exulting over him:
 “Here you lie, Otrynteus’ son—most terrible man alive!
 Here’s your deathbed! Far from your birthplace, Gyge Lake

where your father's fine estate lies next to the Hyllus
stocked with fish and next to the whirling Hermus!"

Vaunting over the dark that swept his quarry's eyes
and the running-rims of Argive war-cars cut him to shreds
at the onset's breaking edge. And next Achilles lunged
at Demoleon, son of Antenor, a tough defensive fighter— 450
he stabbed his temple and cleft his helmet's cheekpiece.
None of the bronze plate could hold it—boring through
the metal and skull the bronze spearpoint pounded,
Demoleon's brains splattered all inside his casque,
the Trojan beaten down in his fury. Hippodamas next,
he leapt from his chariot fleeing before Achilles—
Achilles' spearshaft rammed him through the back
and he gasped his life away, bellowing like some bull
that chokes and grunts when the young boys drag him round
the lord of Helice's shrine and the earthquake god 460
delights to see them dragging—so he bellowed now
and the man's proud spirit left his bones behind.
Achilles rushed with his spear at noble Polydorus
son of Priam. His father would not let him fight,
ever, he was the youngest-born of all his sons—
Priam loved him most, the fastest runner of all
but now the young fool, mad to display his speed,
went dashing along the front to meet his death.
Just as he shot past the matchless runner Achilles
speared him square in the back where his war-belt clasped, 470
golden buckles clinching both halves of his breastplate—
straight on through went the point and out the navel,
down on his knees he dropped—
screaming shrill as the world went black before him—
clutched his bowels to his body, hunched and sank.

But Hector seeing his own brother Polydorus
clutching his entrails, sinking limp to the ground—
the mist came swirling down his eyes as well . . .
He could bear no more, wheeling off at a distance—
shaking his whetted spear he charged Achilles now, 480

coming fierce as fire but Achilles marked him quickly
and springing forth to take him, triumphed to himself,
“Here is the man who’s raked my heart the most,
who killed my cherished comrade! No more delay,
dodging each other down the passageways of battle!”

Under his brows he glared at royal Hector, shouting,
“Quick, charge me—the sooner to meet your death!”

But Hector, his helmet flashing, never flinched:
“Don’t think for a moment, Achilles, son of Peleus,
you can frighten me with words like a child, a fool— 490
I’m an old hand myself at trading taunts and insults.
Well I know you are brave, and I am far weaker.
True—but all lies in the lap of the great gods.
Weaker I am, but I still might take your life
with one hurl of a spear—my weapon can cut too,
long before now its point has found its mark!”

Grim reminder—

he brandished the shaft and hurled with all his might
but Athena blew it back from Achilles bent on glory—
a quick light breath and the shaft flew back again
to tall Prince Hector and fell before his feet. 500
Achilles blazed, charging, raging to cut him down,
loosing savage cries—but Phoebus whisked him away,
easy work for a god, and wrapped him round in mist.
Three times the brilliant runner Achilles charged him,
lunged with his bronze spear, three times he slashed at cloud—
then at Achilles’ fourth assault like something superhuman
his terrifying voice burst out in winging words:
“Now, again, you’ve escaped your death, you dog,
but a good close brush with death it was, I’d say!
Now, again, your Phoebus Apollo pulls you through, 510
the one you pray to, wading into our storm of spears.
We’ll fight again—I’ll finish you off next time
if one of the gods will only urge *me* on as well.
But now I’ll go for the others, anyone I can catch.”

Whirling

he stabbed Dryops, speared him right through the neck—
 he dropped at his feet and Achilles left him dead
 and smashed Demuchus' knee, Philetor's strapping son,
 stopped him right in his tracks with a well-flung spear
 then sprang with his great sword and ripped his life away.
 Then on he rushed at the sons of Bias—Laogonus, Dardanus— 520
 hurled them off their chariot, slammed them both to ground,
 one with a spear-thrust, one chopped down with a blade.
 Then Tros, Alastor's son, crawled to Achilles' knees
 and clutched them, hoping he'd spare him,
 let Tros off alive, no cutting him down in blood,
 he'd pity Tros, a man of his own age—the young fool,
 he'd no idea, thinking *Achilles* could be swayed!
 Here was a man not sweet at heart, not kind, no,
 he was raging, wild—as Tros grasped his knees,
 desperate, begging, Achilles slit open his liver, 530
 the liver spurted loose, gushing with dark blood,
 drenched his lap and the night swirled down his eyes
 as his life breath slipped away.

And Mulius next—

he reared and jammed his lance through the man's ear
 so the lance came jutting out through the other ear,
 bronze point glinting.

Echeclus son of Agenor next—

Achilles split his head at the brow with hilted sword
 so the whole blade ran hot with blood, and red death
 came plunging down his eyes, and the strong force of fate.
 Deucalion next—he lanced his arm with a bronze-shod spear, 540
 he spitted the Trojan through where the elbow-tendons grip
 and there he stood, waiting Achilles, arm dangling heavy,
 staring death in the face—and Achilles chopped his neck
 and his sword sent head and helmet flying off together
 and marrow bubbling up from the clean-cut neckbone.
 Down he went, his corpse full length on the ground—
 just as Achilles charged at Piras' handsome son,
 Rhigmus who'd sailed from the fertile soil of Thrace—
 Achilles pierced his belly, the bronze impaled his guts
 and out of his car he pitched as his driver Areithous 550

swung the horses round but Achilles speared his back
and the spearshaft heaved him off the chariot too
and the panicked stallions bolted.

Achilles now

like inhuman fire raging on through the mountain gorges
splinter-dry, setting ablaze big stands of timber,
the wind swirling the huge fireball left and right—
chaos of fire—Achilles storming on with brandished spear
like a frenzied god of battle trampling all he killed
and the earth ran black with blood. Thundering on,
on like oxen broad in the brow some field hand yokes 560
to crush white barley heaped on a well-laid threshing floor
and the grain is husked out fast by the bellowing oxen's hoofs—
so as the great Achilles rampaged on, his sharp-hoofed stallions
trampled shields and corpses, axle under his chariot splashed
with blood, blood on the handrails sweeping round the car,
sprays of blood shooting up from the stallions' hoofs
and churning, whirling rims—and the son of Peleus
charioteering on to seize his glory, bloody filth
splattering both strong arms, Achilles' invincible arms—