

Book 1: Chryseis and Briseis (neither speaks until Briseis' address to Patroclus' corpse in 19)

The opening speeches: Now Chryses had come to the ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter. He had brought with him a great ransom and bore in his hand the sceptre of Apollo wreathed with a suppliant's wreath. He entreated the Achaeans, but most of all the two sons of Atreus, who were their chiefs. 'Sons of Atreus,' he cried, 'and all other Achaeans, may the gods who dwell in Olympus grant you to sack the city of Priam, and to reach your homes in safety; but free my daughter, and accept a ransom for her, in reverence to Apollo, son of Zeus.' On this the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the priest and taking the ransom that he offered; but not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away. 'Old man,' said he, 'don't let me find you lingering at our ships or coming back again. Your sceptre of the god and your wreath won't help you. I will not free her. She shall grow old in my house at Argos far from her own home, busying herself with her loom and visiting my bed; so go, and do not provoke me or it shall be the worse for you.'

What do Men Want in a Woman? Agamemnon rebukes Calchas: 'I have set my heart on keeping Chryseis in my own house, for I love her better even than my own wife Clytemnestra, whose equal she is in both form and feature, in understanding and accomplishments'.

Negotiating male relative status through access to women. Agamemnon to Achilles: 'I care neither for you nor for your anger. This is what I'll do: since Phoebus Apollo is taking Chryseis from me, I shall send her with my ship and my followers, but I shall come to your tent and take your own prize Briseis, so that you may learn how much more prestigious I am than you are, and so that other men fear to claim equality with me.'

Rare glimpses into woman's own feelings: when Talthibius and Eurybates go to get Briseis, 'Patroclus did as his dear comrade had bidden him. He brought Briseis from the tent and gave her over to the heralds, who took her with them to the ships of the Achaeans - and the woman was unwilling to go.'

Book 3: Helen

Helen speaks on four occasions in the Iliad. She interacts with more men than the other women do and with a goddess. On each occasion, she speaks in her name, in an autonomous manner. She responds once to the questions of a man, taking the role of poet of Troy, and three times she takes the initiative to speak. She is also the topic of the opening speech of Book 3:

Then Hector upbraided him. 'Evil-hearted Paris, handsome but woman-mad, and false of tongue. I wish you'd never been born, or that you had died unwed... Did you not from a far country carry off a lovely woman wedded among a people of warriors, to bring sorrow upon your father, your city, and your whole people, but joy to your enemies, and hang-dog shamefacedness to yourself?'

The two sides decide to settle the matter by single combat between Menelaus and Paris and send for Priam and equipment to ratify the agreement ritually. Our first view of Helen is spectacular: Meanwhile Iris went to Helen in the form of her sister-in-law, wife of the son of Antenor, for Helikaon, son of Antenor, had married **Laodike**, the fairest of Priam's daughters. She found Helen in her own room, working at a great web of purple linen, on which she was embroidering the struggles between Trojans and Achaeans, that Ares had made them fight for her sake. Iris then came close up to her and said, 'Come hither, child, and see the strange doings of the Trojans and Achaeans till now they have been warring upon the plain, mad with lust of battle, but now they have left off fighting, and are leaning upon their shields, sitting still with their spears planted beside them. Alexander and Menelaus are going to fight about you, and you are to be the wife of the victor.'

Thus spoke the goddess, and Helen's heart yearned after her former husband, her city, and her parents. She threw a white mantle over her head, and hurried from her room, weeping as she went, not alone, but attended by two of her handmaids, **Aithra**, daughter of Pittheus, and **Klymene**... When the Trojan elders saw Helen coming towards the tower, they said softly to one another, 'No wonder the Trojans and Achaeans endure so much and so long, for the sake of a woman so marvellously and divinely lovely. There is no ill-will here. Still, beautiful though she be, let them take her and go, or she will breed sorrow for us and for our children.' *Helen says to Priam*, 'I wish that I had chosen death rather than to have come here with your son, far from my bridal chamber, my friends, my darling daughter, and all the companions of my girlhood. But it was not to be, and my lot is one of sorrow'.

She is then used to describe the Greek leaders from the wall: Agamemnon, Odysseus, Ajax. When Paris is in danger, Aphrodite whisks him from the battlefield takes him to his bedchamber. Then she went to call Helen, and found her on a high tower with the Trojan women crowding round her. Aphrodite took the form of an old woman who used to dress wool for her when she was still in Lacedaemon, and of whom she was very fond. Disguised she plucked Helen by her perfumed robe and said, 'Come along; Alexander says you are to go to the house; he is on his bed in his own room, radiant with beauty and dressed in gorgeous apparel'. With these words she moved the heart of Helen to anger. When she noticed the beautiful neck of the goddess, her lovely bosom, and sparkling eyes, she marvelled at her and said, 'Goddess, why do you thus beguile me? Are you going to send me afield still further to some man whom you have taken up in Phrygia or fair Maeonia? Menelaus has just vanquished Alexander, and is to take my hateful self back with him. You are come here to betray me. Go sit with Alexander yourself; henceforth be goddess no longer; never let your feet carry you back to Olympus; worry about him and look after him till he make you his wife, or, for the matter of that, his slave - but me? I shall not go; I can enhance his bed no longer; I should be criticised by all the women of Troy. Besides, I have trouble on my mind.'

When they came to the house of Alexander the slave girls set about their work, but Helen went into her own room, and the laughter-loving goddess took a seat and set it for her facing Alexander. On this Helen, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, sat down, and with eyes askance began to criticise her husband: 'So you are come from the fight,' said she; 'I wish that you had fallen rather by the hand of that brave man who was my husband.'

Book 6: Hecuba (and Helen again) and Andromache

Hecuba speaks more than any other woman in the Iliad. She is observant of gender roles and pious but also very extreme in her emotions. Andromache speaks little in the poem, just addressing Hector three times, weeping and to speak of loss and vulnerability.

When the Trojans are hard-pressed by Diomedes, Helenus says, 'Hector, tell our mother to bid the matrons gather at the temple of Athena in the acropolis; let her then take her key and open the doors of the sacred building; there, upon the knees of Athena, let her lay the largest, fairest robe she has in her house - the one she sets most store by; let her, moreover, promise to sacrifice twelve yearling heifers that have never yet felt the goad, in the temple of the goddess, if she will take pity on the town, with the wives and little ones of the Trojans.'

Now when Hector reached the Scaean gates and the oak tree, the wives and daughters of the Trojans came running towards him to ask after their sons, brothers, kinsmen, and husbands: he told them to set about praying to the gods, and many were made sorrowful. Presently he reached the splendid palace of King Priam, adorned with colonnades of hewn stone. In it there were fifty bedchambers - all of hewn stone - built near one another, where the sons of Priam slept, each with his wedded wife. Opposite these, on the other side the courtyard, there were twelve upper rooms also of hewn stone for Priam's daughters, built near one another, where his sons-in-law slept with their wives. When Hector got there, his **fond mother** came up to him with **Laodike** the fairest of her daughters.....

His mother went into the house and called her waiting-women who gathered the matrons throughout the city. She then went down into her fragrant store-room...and took out the largest robe, and the one that was most beautifully enriched with embroidery, as an offering to Athena: it glittered like a star... With this she went on her way and many matrons with her. When they reached the temple of Athena, **lovely Theano**, daughter of Kisseus and wife of Antenor, opened the doors, for the Trojans had made her priestess of Athena. The women lifted up their hands to the goddess with a loud cry, and Theano took the robe to lay it upon the knees of Athena, praying the while to the daughter of great Zeus. 'Holy Athena,' she cried, 'protectress of our city, mighty goddess, break the spear of Diomedes and lay him low before the Scaean gates. Do this, and we will sacrifice twelve heifers that have never yet known the goad, in your temple, if you will have pity upon the town, with the wives and little ones of the Trojans.' Thus she prayed, but Pallas Athena did not grant her prayer.

Hector goes to Paris' house: Alexander answered, 'Hector, your rebuke is just; listen therefore, and believe me when I tell you that I am not here so much through rancour or ill-will towards the Trojans, as from a desire to indulge my grief. My wife was even now gently urging me to battle, and I believe it better that I should go, for victory is ever fickle. Wait, then, while I put on my armour, or go first and I will follow. I shall be sure to overtake you.' Hector made no answer, but Helen tried to soothe him. 'Brother,' said she, 'to my abhorred and sinful self, I wish that a whirlwind had caught me up on the day my mother brought me forth, and had borne me to some mountain or to the waves of the roaring sea that should have swept me away before this mischief had come about.... Still, brother, come in and rest upon this seat, for it is you who bear the brunt of that toil that has been

caused by my hateful self and by the veering of Alexander - both of us has Zeus doomed to be a theme of song among those that shall be born hereafter.' And Hector answered, 'Bid me not be seated, Helen, for all the goodwill you bear me. I cannot stay.'

Then Hector left her, and quickly was at his own house. He did not find **Andromache**, for she was on the wall with her child and one of her maids, weeping bitterly. Seeing, then, that she was not within, he stood on the threshold of the women's rooms and said, 'Women, tell me, and tell me true, where did Andromache go when she left the house? Was it to my sisters, or to my brothers' wives? or is she at the temple of Athena where the other women are propitiating the awful goddess?' **His good housekeeper** answered, 'Hector, since you bid me tell you truly, she did not go to your sisters nor to your brothers' wives, nor yet to the temple of Athena, where the other women are propitiating the awful goddess, but she is on the high wall of Ilium, for she had heard the Trojans were being hard pressed, and that the Achaeans were in great force: she went to the wall in frenzied haste, and the nurse went with her carrying the child.'

...Hector smiled as he looked upon the boy, but he did not speak, and Andromache stood by him weeping and taking his hand in her own. 'Dear husband,' said she, 'your valour will bring you to destruction; think on your infant son, and on my unlucky self who before long shall be your widow - for the Achaeans will set upon you in a body and kill you. It would be better for me, should I lose you, to lie dead and buried, for I shall have nothing left to comfort me when you are gone, except for sorrow. I have neither father nor mother now. Achilles slew my father when he sacked Thebe the goodly city of the Cilicians... I had seven brothers in my father's house, but on the same day they all went within the house of Hades. Achilles killed them as they were with their sheep and cattle. My mother - her who had been queen of all the land under Mount Plakos - he brought here with the spoil, and freed her for a great sum, but the archer - queen Artemis took her in the house of your father. No, Hector - you who to me are father, mother, brother, and dear husband - have mercy upon me; stay here upon this wall; do not make your child fatherless, and your wife a widow; as for the troops, place them near the fig-tree, where the city can be best scaled, and the wall is weakest.

And Hector answered, 'Wife, with what face should I look upon the Trojans, men or women, if I shirked battle like a coward? I cannot do so: I know nothing save to fight bravely in the forefront of the Trojan host and win renown alike for my father and myself. Well do I know that the day will surely come when mighty Ilium shall be destroyed with Priam and Priam's people, but I grieve for none of these - not even for Hecuba, nor King Priam, nor for my brothers many and brave who may fall in the dust before their foes - for none of these do I grieve as for yourself when the day shall come on which some one of the Achaeans shall rob you for ever of your freedom, and bear you weeping away. It may be that you will have to ply the loom in Argos at the bidding of a mistress, or to fetch water from the springs Messeis or Hypereia, treated brutally by some cruel task-master.'

Book 9: Agamemnon's Daughters as Bargaining Chips

Agamemnon's Offer: 'I will give him seven tripods that have never yet been on the fire, and ten talents of gold. I will give him twenty iron cauldrons and twelve strong horses that have won races and carried off prizes... I will give him seven excellent workwomen, from Lesbos - all of surpassing beauty. I will give him her whom I earlier from him, the daughter of Briseus; and I swear a great oath that I never went up into her couch, nor did I lie down with her.... If the gods grant me to sack the city of Priam, let him come when we Achaeans are dividing the spoil, and load his ship with gold and bronze to his liking; furthermore let him take twenty Trojan women, the loveliest after Helen herself. Then, when we reach Achaean Argos, wealthiest of all lands, he shall be my son-in-law and I will show him honour equivalent to my own dear son Orestes, who is being nurtured in all abundance. I have three daughters, Chrysothemis, Laodike, and Iphianassa; let him take the one of his choice, freely and without gifts of wooing, to the house of Peleus; I will add such dowry as well as no man ever yet gave his daughter...

Achilles is not impressed by the offer. Agamemnon has taken from him 'the woman in whom I delighted - let him keep her and sleep with her. Why, pray, must the Argives needs fight the Trojans? What made the son of Atreus gather the host and bring them? Was it not for the sake of Helen? Are the sons of Atreus the only men in the world who love their wives? Any man of common right feeling will love and cherish her who is his own, as I this woman, with my whole heart, though she was won by my spear.'

Heteronormative end of Book 9: 'Achilles slept in an inner room, and beside him the daughter of Phorbas lovely **Diomedes**, whom he had carried off from Lesbos. Patroclus lay on the other side of the room, and with him fair **Iphis** whom Achilles had given him when he took Skyros the city of Enyeus'.

Book 19: Briseis and the Other Asiatic War Captives

Briseis, fair as Aphrodite, when she saw the mangled body of Patroclus, flung herself upon it and cried aloud, tearing her breast, her neck, and her lovely face with her hands. Beautiful as a goddess she wept and said, 'Patroclus, dearest friend, when I left here you were alive; I return, O prince, to find you dead; thus do fresh sorrows multiply upon me... I saw him to whom my father and mother married me, cut down before our city, and my three own dear brothers perished with him the same day; but you, Patroclus, even when Achilles slew my husband and sacked the city of noble Mynes, told me that I was not to weep, for you said you would make Achilles marry me, and take me back with him to Phthia, we should have a wedding feast among the Myrmidons. You were always kind to me and I shall never cease to grieve for you.' She wept as she spoke, and the women joined in her lament-making as though their tears were for Patroclus, but in truth each was weeping for her own sorrows.

Book 22: Hecuba and Andromache on Past and Future

Priam begs Hector: 'Have pity also on your unhappy father whom the son of Kronos will destroy by a terrible doom on the threshold of old age, after I have seen my sons slain and my daughters dragged away as captives, my bridal chambers pillaged, little children dashed to earth amid the rage of battle, and my sons' wives dragged away by the cruel hands of the Achaeans...' **His mother** wept nearby and moaned aloud as she bared her bosom and pointed to the breast which had suckled him. 'Hector,' she cried, weeping bitterly the while, 'Hector, my son, spurn not this breast, but have pity upon me too: if I have ever given you comfort from my own bosom, think on it now, dear son, and come within the wall to protect us from this man; stand not without to meet him...

End 22: **Hecuba** then raised the cry of wailing among the Trojans. 'Alas, my son,' she cried, 'what have I left to live for now that you are no more? Night and day did I glory in you throughout the city, for you were a tower of strength to all in Troy, and both men and women alike hailed you as a god. So long as you lived you were their pride, but now death and destruction have fallen upon you.'

Hector's wife had as yet heard nothing, for no one had come to tell her that her husband had stayed outside the gates. She was at her loom inside the house, weaving a double purple web, and embroidering it with many flowers. She told her maids to set a large tripod on the fire, to have a warm bath ready for Hector when he came from battle; poor woman, she knew not that he was now beyond the reach of baths, and that Athena had laid him low by the hands of Achilles. She heard the cry coming as from the wall, and trembled in every limb; the shuttle fell from her hands, and again she spoke to her waiting-women. 'Two of you,' she said, 'come with me to learn what has happened; I heard the voice of my husband's honoured mother; my own heart beats as though it would come into my mouth and my limbs refuse to carry me; some great misfortune for Priam's children must be at hand. May I never live to hear it, but I'm terrified that Achilles has cut off the retreat of brave Hector and has chased him on to the plain alone.'

Her heart beat fast, and as she spoke she flew from the house like a maniac, with her waiting-women following after. When she reached the battlements and the crowd of people, she stood looking out upon the wall, and saw Hector being borne away in front of the city - the horses dragging him without heed or care over the ground towards the ships of the Achaeans. Her eyes were then shrouded as with the darkness of night and she fell fainting backwards, losing her life-breath. She tore the head-dress from her head and flung it from her, the frontlet and net with its plaited band, and the veil which golden Aphrodite had given her on the day when Hector took her with him from the house of Eetion, after having given countless gifts of wooing for her sake. Her husband's sisters and the wives of his brothers crowded round her and supported her, for she wanted to die in her distraction; when she again presently breathed and came to herself, she sobbed and made lament among the Trojans. 'Woe is me, O Hector... Even if our infant escape the horrors of this woeful war with the Achaeans, yet shall his life henceforth be one of labour and sorrow, for others will seize his lands. The day that robs a child of his father severs him from his own kind; his head is bowed, his cheeks are wet with tears, and he will go about destitute among the friends of his father, plucking one by the cloak and another by the shirt. Some one or other of these may so far pity him as to hold the cup for a moment towards him and let him moisten his lips, but he must not drink enough to wet the roof of his mouth; then one whose parents are alive will drive him from the table with blows and angry words. 'Out with you,' he will say, 'you have no father here,' and the child will go crying back to his widowed mother - he, Astyanax, who used to sit upon his father's knees, and have none but the daintiest and choicest morsels set before him. When he had played till he was tired and went to sleep, he would lie in a bed, in the arms of his nurse, on a soft couch, knowing neither want nor care, whereas now that he has lost his father his lot will be full of hardship.' In such wise did she cry aloud amid her tears, and the women joined in her lament.

24 Women of Troy: Hector's Sister, Mother, Wife and Sister-in-Law

Iris went to Priam's house, and found weeping and lamentation inside. His sons were seated round their father in the outer courtyard, and their clothes were wet with tears: the old man sat in the middle with his mantle wrapped close about his body, and his head and neck all covered with the filth which he had clutched as he lay grovelling in the mud. His daughters and his sons' wives went wailing about the house, as they thought of the many and brave men who lost their life-breath, slain by the Argives.

Hecuba tries to stop Priam going. 'His wife cried aloud as she heard him, and said, 'Alas, what has become of that judgment for which you have been ever famous... How can you venture alone to the ships of the Achaeans, and face the man who has slain so many of your brave sons? You must have iron courage, for if the cruel savage sees you and lays hold on you, he will know neither respect nor pity. Let us then weep Hector from afar here in our own house, for when I gave him birth the threads of overruling fate were spun for him that dogs should eat his flesh far from his parents, in the house of that terrible man on whose liver I would fain fasten and devour it. Thus would I avenge my son, who showed no cowardice when Achilles slew him, and thought neither of Right nor of avoiding battle as he stood in defence of Trojan men and Trojan women.'

They Lead the Dirge: Priam and Idaios then drove on toward the city lamenting and making moan, and the mules drew the body of Hector. No one neither man nor woman saw them, till Cassandra, fair as golden Aphrodite standing on Pergamos, caught sight of her dear father in his chariot, and his servant that was the city's herald with him. Then she saw him that was lying upon the bier, drawn by the mules, and with a loud cry she went about the city saying, 'Come hither Trojans, men and women, and look on Hector; if ever you rejoiced to see him coming from battle when he was alive, look now on him that was the glory of our city and all our.'

There was not man nor woman left in the city, so great a sorrow possessed them. By the gates they met Priam as he was bringing in the body. Hector's wife and his mother were the first to mourn him: they flew towards the wagon and laid their hands upon his head, while the crowd stood weeping around. They would have stayed before the gates, weeping and lamenting all day until sunset, had not Priam spoken to them from the chariot: 'Make way for the mules to pass you. Afterwards when I have taken the body home you shall have your fill of weeping.'

When they had borne the body within the house they laid it upon a bed and seated minstrels round it to lead the dirge, whereon the women joined in the sad music of their lament. **Foremost among them all Andromache** led their wailing as she clasped the head of mighty Hector in her embrace. 'Husband,' she cried, 'you have died young, and leave me in your house a widow; he of whom we are the ill-starred parents is still a mere child, and I fear he may not reach manhood. Before he can do so our city will be razed and overthrown, for you who watched over it are no more - you who were its saviour, the guardian of our wives and children. Our women will be carried away captives to the ships, and I among them; while you, my child, who will be with me will be put to some unseemly tasks, working for a cruel master. Or, may be, some Achaean will hurl you (O miserable death) from our walls, to avenge some brother, son, or father whom Hector slew; many of them have died at his hands, for your father's hand in battle was strong'.

Bitterly did she weep the while, and the women joined in her lament. **Hecuba in her turn** took up the strains of woe. 'Hector,' she cried, 'dearest to me of all my children. So long as you were alive the gods loved you well, and even in death they have not been utterly unmindful of you; for when Achilles took any other of my sons, he would sell him beyond the seas, to Samos Imbros or rugged Lemnos; and when he had taken away with his sword your life-breath as well, many a time did he drag you round the sepulchre of his comrade - though this could not give him life - yet here you lie all fresh as dew, and comely as one whom Apollo has slain with his painless shafts.'

...then **Helen** for a third time took up the strain of lamentation. 'Hector,' said she, 'dearest of all my brothers-in-law-for I am wife to Alexander who brought me hither to Troy - would that I had died ere he did so - twenty years are come and gone since I left my home and came from over the sea, but I have never heard one word of insult or unkindness from you. When another would chide with me, as it might be one of your brothers or sisters or of your brothers' wives, or my mother-in-law - for Priam was as kind to me as though he were my own father - you would rebuke and check them with words of gentleness and goodwill. Therefore my tears flow both for you and for my unhappy self, for there is no one else in Troy who is kind to me, but all shrink and shudder as they go by me.' She wept as she spoke and the vast population that was gathered round her joined in her lament.

Recap

- 1) Women's worth is similar to and accounted alongside that of livestock and hardware.
- 2) Women are crucial to the way male warriors negotiate their competitive status.
- 3) Women are admired for their beauty and weaving skills. Helen is semi-divine, like Achilles, and surpasses other women in both, as he surpasses other men in masculine virtues.
- 4) Women are granted few opportunities to express their subjective feelings but there are some striking exceptions.
- 5) Women are granted little agency but there are exceptions.
- 6) ALL the women we meet are Trojan or allied cities/islands (Cilician Thebe, Lesbos, Tenedos) except Helen. Helen is uniquely placed as offering a female perspective on both Greece and Troy.
- 7) Women structure the *Iliad* aesthetically in terms of the episodes where they appear.
- 8) Women often express moral and emotional perspectives, especially through ritual lament.
- 9) Women are crucial in terms of the *Iliad*'s capacity for telling the whole story of the war, from early days when heroes were babies, life in peace-time and weddings, to the grim future ahead.
- 10) There is a great deal of variety in the characterisation of the prominent women.
- 11) Helen is used as a 'double' of the poet in describing the Greek heroes, creating artworks which portray the very war being waged, and understanding that her story will make her and Hector immortal.
- 12) Andromache's emotional isolation makes her the key figure for bearing the weight of the bereavement women routinely experienced in ancient warfare. The poet, unusually, comments on her misery in 'his own' voice.
- 13) There is a good deal of discussion of the non-individualised women of Troy, their movements, responses, and the moral pressure they can apply, especially to Helen but also to warriors.
- 14) A few dramatically insignificant women are named to lend richness and depth to Homer's characterisation of the formerly happy community in Troy. See e.g. Laodice in book 22, when Priam can't see his sons by her. Also Hecamede, Nestor's housekeeper with skill in medicine in book 11.
- 15) Women are important in individuating the men through the way the men treat them: compare Agamemnon and Achilles on loving women, or Hector and Patroclus' kindness compared with other heroes on their respective sides, etc.

Additionally

- 1) Women are important to the characterisation of peacetime activities, especially on Achilles shield in 18 and the detail in 22 about the laundry by the springs of the Scamander, at the 'washing-pools scooped out in the hollow rocks and broad and smooth where the wives of Troy and all their lovely daughters would wash their glistening robes in the old days, the days of peace before the sons of Achaea came.
- 2) Women appear in some crucial similes, such as Achilles when he asks Patroclus why he is weeping at the beginning of 16, 'like some silly child that comes running to her mother, and begs to be taken up and carried- she catches hold of her mother's dress to stay her though she is in a hurry, and looks tearfully up until her mother carries her'.
- 3) There are three embedded tales of digressions where women outside the main plot behave like women in tragedy (connected with kin-murder, sexual deviance etc): Antea and Bellerophon in book 6, Althaea and Meleager in Book 9, and Niobe in 24.
- 4) Epithets are uninformative about women! Epithets routinely applied to women are 'fair-cheeked', lovely-haired' (especially Helen). Chryseis has 'lively eyes'; Briseis has a 'beautiful face'; Andromache has a 'soft bosom'; the women of Troy have deep-folded or gowns. Helen throws a white mantle over her head. Paris and Helen's bedchamber is 'scented and perfumed'.