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Stylish Translation of Odyssey 8.343-369

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Translator's Introduction

For my stylish translation, I decided to go with the scene where Poseidon negotiates with Hephaestus for Ares' and Aphrodite's freedom (as well as the surrounding moments that precede and follow). Since there is a focus on Ares needing to pay a physical price for his crime against Hephaestus, there is a lot of honor and transactional language in this passage. Thus, one of my goals was to adapt those nuances by employing phrases commonly found in hostage negotiation scenes in various media as well as language I have come across when discussing transactional matters. Additionally, I want to have fun with translating words and phrases in new ways that I have not seen before (with some added alliterative awesomeness :P) and simplify complex phrases into colloquial ones. I am setting these as my goals because they would allow me to play to my inherent strengths when it comes to how I think.

For one, alliteration comes easily to me, so I wanted to showcase that in the various epithets. Select phrases like "Hephestus the extraordinary engineer" or "the famous fragile footed god" both accurately represent what the Greek says while also adding a playful flair to the translation, encouraging the reader to... well... enjoy reading it.

In regards to the hostage negotiation remark, this scene plays out like something from a nameless crime show I have watched with my parents. We have the hostage taker (Hephaestus), the well-respected negotiator (Poseidon), and the hostages (Ares and Aphrodite). By employing common phrases I have heard in these modern analogical situations like "pulling out" of a deal, holding someone to their word, I hope to invoke the similarities between this mythical scenario

and modern day stories told through the tv. Also, with the added notion that someone could sexually “pull out” of someone else, the conditions of the agreement change to where if Ares pulls out of the deal, he would not pull out of Aphrodite, and vice versa. As for transactional situations I have been in, I have definitely used the phrase “I’ll cover for you” when talking about payment.

Finally, I want to translate this passage with a bit of Gen Z flair, informality, and joy since it brings this translation into the very present day for people to understand the emotions of the gods. By saying “Poseidon was not having it” versus the more literal “Laughter does not hold Poseidon,” I can convey Poseidon’s unamusement with Hermes’ previous remark with language used by me and others nowadays. However, I did not limit myself to this playful and informal tone for the whole translation. I took great pleasure in translating Aphrodite’s post adultery/incest spa moment with grace(s) and beauty to reflect how mesmerized I was by the passage.

Translation of Odyssey.8.343-369

So Hermes spoke, and laughter infected the death-exempt deities.

But Poseidon was not having it, and was quick to beg

Hephaestus the extraordinary engineer to free Ares.

And he spoke to him carefully,

“Let him go. I’ll do just as you say

And I will respect your demands on the immortal gods’ behalf.”

Again, the famous fragile-footed god responds,

“Don’t even, Earth-embracing Poseidon.

Ares’ promises aren’t worth the paper they’re written
on. How could I hold you to it on the immortal gods’
behalf If Ares pulls out?”

Again, Poseidon the Earthshaker responds,

“Hephaestus, if Ares pulls out,

Then I’ll cover for him.”

Then the famous fragile-footed god retorted,

“Ugh, fine. It would look bad if I didn’t respect your word.” As
soon as he finished, he released his power with a snap. Once the
two of them were freed from those unbreakable bindings, They
booked it: Ares fled to Thrace

While audaciously amorous Aphrodite reached Cyprus, to Paphos.

Here there was a temple and altar smelling sweet with sacrifice for her.

Here the Graces bathed her and anointed her with

Ethereal olive-oil, which cover the unceasing gods,

And dripped lovely clothes around her,

Serving golden goddess glamour and glory.

So the famous bard sings such things. Looking to Odysseus,

He delights in the bard’s wit as he sings

As do the oar-loving Phaeacians, those star-studded seamen.