The Cyclops

By Euripides

Translated by E. P. Coleridge

Dramatis Personae

SILENUS, old servant of the CYCLOPS

CHORUS OF SATYRS

ODYSSEUS

THE CYCLOPS

Before the great cave of the CYCLOPS at the foot of Mount Aetna. SILENUS enters. He has a rake with him, with which he cleans up the ground in front of the cave as he soliloquizes.

SILENUS O Bromius, unnumbered are the toils I bear because of thee,

no less now than when I was young and hale; first, when thou wert

driven mad by Hera and didst leave the mountain nymphs, thy nurses;

next, when in battle with earth-born spearmen I stood beside thee

on the right as squire, and slew Enceladus, smiting him full in the

middle of his targe with my spear. Come, though, let me see; must

I confess 'twas all a dream? No, by Zeus! since I really showed his

spoils to the Bacchic god. And now am I enduring to the full a toil

still worse than those. For when Hera sent forth a race of Tyrrhene

pirates against thee, that thou mightest be smuggled far away, I,

as soon as the news reached me, sailed in quest of thee with my children;

and, taking the helm myself, I stood on the end of the stern and steered

our trim craft; and my sons, sitting at the oars, made the grey billows

froth and foam as they sought thee, my liege, But just as we had come

nigh Malea in our course, an east wind blew upon the ship and drove

us hither to the rock of Aetna, where in lonely caverns dwell the

one-eyed children of ocean's god, the murdering Cyclopes. Captured

by one of them we are slaves in his house; Polyphemus they call him

whom we serve; and instead of Bacchic revelry we are herding a godless

Cyclops's flocks; and so it is my children, striplings as they are,

tend the young thereof on the edge of the downs; while my appointed

task is to stay here and fill the troughs and sweep out the cave,

or wait upon the ungodly Cyclops at his impious feasts. His orders

now compel obedience; I have to scrape out his house with the rake

you see, so as to receive the Cyclops, my absent master, and his sheep

in clean caverns.

But already I see my children driving their browsing flocks towards

me.

What means this? is the beat of feet in the Sicinnis dance the same

to you now as when ye attended the Bacchic god in his revelries and

made your way with dainty steps to the music of lyres to the halls

of Althaea? (The CHORUS OF SATYRS enters, driving a flock of goats

and sheep. Servants follow them.)

CHORUS (singing, strophe)

Offspring of well-bred sires and dams, pray whither wilt thou be

gone from me to the rocks? Hast thou not here a gentle breeze, and

grass to browse, and water from the eddying stream set near the cave

in troughs? and are not thy young ones bleating for thee? Pst! pst!

wilt thou not browse here, here on the dewy slope? Ho! ho ere long

will I cast a stone at thee. Away, away! O horned one, to the fold-keeper

of the Cyclops, the country-ranging shepherd.

(antistrophe)

Loosen thy bursting udder; welcome to thy teats the kids, whom thou

leavest in the lambkins' pens. Those little bleating kids, asleep

the livelong day, miss thee; wilt then leave at last the rich grass

pastures on the peaks of Aetna and enter the fold?...

(epode)

Here we have no Bromian god; no dances here, or Bacchantes thyrsus-bearing;

no roll of drums, or drops of sparkling wine by gurgling founts; nor

is it now with Nymphs in Nysa I sing a song of Bacchus, Bacchus! to

the queen of love, in quest of whom I once sped on with Bacchantes,

white of foot. Dear friend, dear Bacchic god, whither art roaming

alone, waving thy auburn locks, while I, thy minister, do service

to the one-eyed Cyclops, a slave and wanderer I, clad in this wretched

goat-skin dress, severed from thy love?

SILENUS Hush, children! and bid our servants fold the flocks in the

rock-roofed cavern.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS (to Servants) Away! (To SILENUS) But prithee,

why such haste, father?

SILENUS I see the hull of a ship from Hellas at the shore, and men,

that wield the oar, on their way to this cave with some chieftain.

About their necks they carry empty vessels and pitchers for water;

they are in want of food. Luckless strangers! who can they be? They

know not what manner of man our master Polyphemus is, to have set

foot here in his cheerless abode and come to the jaws of the cannibal

Cyclops in an evil hour. But hold ye your peace, that we may inquire

whence they come to the peak of Sicilian Aetna. (ODYSSEUS and his

companions enter. They carry baskets for provisions and water jars.)

ODYSSEUS Pray tell us, sirs, of some river-spring whence we might

draw a draught to slake our thirst, or of someone willing to sell

victuals to mariners in need.

Why, what is this? We seem to have chanced upon a city of the Bromian

god; here by the caves I see a group of Satyrs. To the eldest first

I bid "All hail!

SILENUS All hail, sir! tell me who thou art, and name thy country.

ODYSSEUS Odysseus of Ithaca, king of the Cephallenians' land.

SILENUS I know him for a prating knave, one of Sisyphus' shrewd offspring.

ODYSSEUS I am the man; abuse me not.

SILENUS Whence hast thou sailed hither to Sicily?

ODYSSEUS From Ilium and the toils of Troy.

SILENUS How was that? didst thou not know the passage to thy native

land?

ODYSSEUS Tempestuous winds drove me hither against my will.

SILENUS God wot! thou art in the same plight as I am.

ODYSSEUS Why, wert thou too drifted hither against thy will?

SILENUS I was, as I pursued the pirates who carried Bromius off.

ODYSSEUS What land is this and who are its inhabitants?

SILENUS This is mount Aetna, the highest point in Sicily.

ODYSSEUS But where are the city-walls and ramparts?

SILENUS There are none; the headlands, sir, are void of men.

ODYSSEUS Who then possess the land? the race of wild creatures?

SILENUS The Cyclopes, who have caves, not roofed houses.

ODYSSEUS Obedient unto whom? or is the power in the people's hands?

SILENUS They are rovers; no man obeys another in anything.

ODYSSEUS Do they sow Demeter's grain, or on what do they live?

SILENUS On milk and cheese and flesh of sheep.

ODYSSEUS Have they the drink of Bromius, the juice of the vine?

SILENUS No indeed! and thus it is a joyless land they dwell in.

ODYSSEUS Are they hospitable and reverent towards strangers?

SILENUS Strangers, they say, supply the daintiest meat.

ODYSSEUS What, do they delight in killing men and eating them?

SILENUS No one has ever arrived here without being butchered.

ODYSSEUS Where is the Cyclops himself? inside his dwelling?

SILENUS He is gone hunting wild beasts with hounds on Aetna.

ODYSSEUS Dost know then what to do, that we may be gone from the

land?

SILENUS Not I, Odysseus; but I would do anything for thee.

ODYSSEUS Sell us food, of which we are in need.

SILENUS There is nothing but flesh, as I said.

ODYSSEUS Well, even that is a pleasant preventive of hunger.

SILENUS And there is cheese curdled with fig-juice, and the milk

of kine.

ODYSSEUS Bring them out; a man should see his purchases.

SILENUS But tell me, how much gold wilt thou give me in exchange?

ODYSSEUS No gold bring I, but Dionysus' drink.

SILENUS (joyfully) Most welcome words! I have long been wanting

that.

ODYSSEUS Yes, it was Maron, the god's son, who gave me a draught.

SILENUS What! Maron whom once I dandled in these arms?

ODYSSEUS The son of the Bacchic god, that thou mayst learn more certainly.

SILENUS Is it inside the ship, or hast thou it with thee?

ODYSSEUS This, as thou seest, is the skin that holds it, old sir.

SILENUS Why, that would not give me so much as a mouthful.

ODYSSEUS This, and twice as much again as will run from the skin.

SILENUS Fair the rill thou speakest of, delicious to me.

ODYSSEUS Shall I let thee taste the wine unmixed, to start with?

SILENUS A reasonable offer; for of a truth a taste invites the purchase.

ODYSSEUS Well, I haul about a cup as well as the skin.

SILENUS Come, let it gurgle in, that I may revive my memory by a

pull at it.

ODYSSEUS (pouring) There then!

SILENUS (smelling it) Ye gods! what a delicious scent it has!

ODYSSEUS What! didst thou see it?

SILENUS No, i' faith, but I smell it.

ODYSSEUS Taste it then, that thy approval may not stop at words.

SILENUS (taking a drink) Zounds! Bacchus is inviting me to dance;

ha! ha!

ODYSSEUS Did it not gurgle finely down thy throttle?

SILENUS Aye that it did, to the ends of my fingers.

ODYSSEUS Well, we will give thee money besides.

SILENUS Only undo the skin, and never mind the money.

ODYSSEUS Bring out the cheeses then and lambs.

SILENUS I will do so, with small thought of any master. For let me

have a single cup of that and I would turn madman, giving in exchange

for it the flocks of every Cyclops and then throwing myself into the

sea from the Leucadian rock, once I have been well drunk and smoothed

out my wrinkled brow. For if a man rejoice not in his drinking, he

is mad; for in drinking it's possible for this to stand up straight,

and then to fondle breasts, and to caress well tended locks, and there

is dancing withal, and oblivion of woe. Shall not I then purchase

so rare a drink, bidding the senseless Cyclops and his central eye

go hang? (SILENUS goes into the cave.)

LEADER Hearken, Odysseus, let us hold some converse with thee.

ODYSSEUS Well, do so; ours is a meeting of friends.

LEADER Did you take Troy and capture the famous Helen?

ODYSSEUS Aye, and we destroyed the whole family of Priam.

LEADER After capturing your blooming prize, were all of you in turn

her lovers? for she likes variety in husbands; the traitress! the

sight of a man with embroidered breeches on his legs and a golden

chain about his neck so fluttered her, that she left Menelaus, her

excellent little husband. Would there had never been a race of women

born into the world at all, unles it were for me alone!

SILENUS (reappearing with food) Lo! I bring you fat food from the

flocks, king Odysseus, the young of bleating sheep and cheeses of

curdled milk without stint. Carry them away with you and begone from

the cave at once, after giving me a drink of merry grape-juice in

exchange.

LEADER Alack! yonder comes the Cyclops; what shall we do?

ODYSSEUS Then truly are we lost, old sir! whither must we fly?

SILENUS Inside this rock, for there ye may conceal yourselves.

ODYSSEUS Dangerous advice of thine, to run into the net!

SILENUS No danger; there are ways of escape in plenty in the rock.

ODYSSEUS No, never that; for surely Troy will groan and loudly too,

if we flee from a single man, when I have oft withstood with my shield

a countless host of Phrygians. Nay, if die we must, we will die a

noble death; or, if we live, we will maintain our old renown at least

with credit. (The CYCLOPS enters as SILENUS goes into the cave. The

CYCLOPS, not noticing ODYSSEUS and his companions, addresses the CHORUS

in anger.)

CYCLOPS A light here! hold it up! what is this? what means this idleness,

your Bacchic revelry? Here have we no Dionysus, nor clash of brass,

nor roll of drums. Pray, how is it with my newly-born lambs in the

caves? are they at the teat, running close to the side of their dams?

Is the full amount of milk for cheeses milked out in baskets of rushes?

How now? what say you? One of ye will soon be shedding tears from

the weight of my club; look up, not down.

LEADER There! my head is bent back till I see Zeus himself; I behold

both the stars and Orion.

CYCLOPS Is my breakfast quite ready?

LEADER 'Tis laid; be thy throat only ready.

CYCLOPS Are, the bowls too full of milk?

LEADER Aye, so that thou canst swill off a whole hogshead, so it

please thee.

CYCLOPS Sheep's milk or cows' milk or a mixture of both?

LEADER Whichever thou wilt; don't swallow me, that's all.

CYCLOPS Not I; for you would start kicking in the pit of my stomach

and kill me by your antics. (Catching sight Of ODYSSEUS and his followers)

Ha! what is this crowd I see near the folds? Some pirates or robbers

have put in here. (SILENUS comes out of the cave. He has made himself

appear as though he had just suffered a terrible beating.) Yes, I

really see the lambs from my caves tied up there with twisted osiers,

cheese-presses scattered about, and old Silenus with his bald pate

all swollen with blows.

SILENUS Oh! oh! poor wretch that I am, pounded to a fever.

CYCLOPS By whom? who has been pounding thy head, old sirrah?

SILENUS These are the culprits, Cyclops, all because I refused to

let them plunder thee.

CYCLOPS Did they not know I was a god and sprung from gods?

SILENUS That was what I told them, but they persisted in plundering

thy goods, and, in spite of my efforts, they actually began to eat

the cheese and carry off the lambs; and they said they would tie thee

in a three-cubit pillory and tear out thy bowels by force at thy navel,

and flay thy back thoroughly with the scourge; and then, after binding

thee, fling thy carcase down among the benches of their ship to sell

to someone for heaving up stones, or else throw thee into a mill.

CYCLOPS Oh, indeed! Be off then and sharpen my cleavers at once;

heap high the faggots and light them; for they shall be slain forthwith

and fill this maw of mine, what time I pick my feast hot from the

coals, waiting not for carvers, and fish up the rest from the cauldron

boiled and sodden; for I have had my fill of mountain-fare and sated

myself with banquets of lions and stags, but 'tis long I have been

without human flesh.

SILENUS Truly, master, a change like this is all the sweeter after

everyday fare; for just of late there have been no fresh arrivals

of strangers at these caves.

ODYSSEUS Hear the strangers too in turn, Cyclops. We had come near

the cave from our ship, wishing to procure provisions by purchase,

when this fellow sold us the lambs and handed them over for a stoup

of wine to drink himself, a voluntary act on both sides, there was

no violence employed at all. No, there is not a particle of truth

in the story he tells; now that he has been caught selling thy property

behind thy back.

SILENUS I? Perdition catch thee!

ODYSSEUS If I am lying, yes.

SILENUS (in agitation) O Cyclops, by thy sire Poseidon, by mighty

Triton and Nereus, by Calypso and the daughters of Nereus, by the

sacred billows and all the race of fishes! I swear to thee, most noble

sir, dear little Cyclops, master mine, it is not I who sell thy goods

to strangers, else may these children, dearly as I love them, come

to an evil end.

LEADER Keep that for thyself; with my own eyes I saw thee sell the

goods to the strangers; and if I lie, perdition catch my sire! but

injure not the strangers.

CYCLOPS Ye lie; for my part I put more faith in him than Rhadamanthus,

declaring him more just. But I have some questions to ask. Whence

sailed ye, strangers? of what country are you? what city was it nursed

your childhood?

ODYSSEUS We are Ithacans by birth, and have been driven from our

course by the winds of the sea on our way from Ilium, after sacking

its citadel.

CYCLOPS Are ye the men who visited on Ilium, that bordereth on Scamander's

wave, the rape of Helen, worst of women?

ODYSSEUS We are; that was the fearful labour we endured.

CYCLOPS A sorry expedition yours, to have sailed to the land of Phrygia

for the sake of one woman

ODYSSEUS It was a god's doing; blame not any son of man. But thee

do we implore, most noble son of Ocean's god, speaking as free-born

men; be not so cruel as to slay thy friends on their coming to thy

cave, nor regard us as food for thy jaws, an impious meal; for we

preserved thy sire, O king, in possession of his temple-seats deep

in the nooks of Hellas; and the sacred port of Taenarus and Malea's

furthest coves remain unharmed; and Sunium's rock, the silver-veined,

sacred to Zeus-born Athena, still is safe, and Geraestus, the harbour

of refuge; and we did not permit Phrygians to put such an intolerable

reproach on Hellas. Now in these things thou too hast a share, for

thou dwellest in a corner of the land of Hellas beneath Aetna's fire-streaming

rock; and although thou turn from arguments, still it is a custom

amongst mortal men to receive shipwrecked sailors as their suppliants

and show them hospitality and help them with raiment; not that these

should fill thy jaws and belly, their limbs transfixed with spits

for piercing ox-flesh. The land of Priam hath emptied Hellas quite

enough, drinking the blood of many whom the spear laid low, with the

ruin it has brought on widowed wives, on aged childless dames, and

hoary-headed sires; and if thou roast and consume the remnant,-a meal

thou wilt rue,-why, where shall one turn? Nay, be persuaded by me,

Cyclops; forego thy ravenous greed and choose piety rather than wickedness;

for on many a man ere now unrighteous gains have brought down retribution.

SILENUS I will give thee a word of advice! as for his flesh, leave

not a morsel of it, and if thou eat his tongue, Cyclops, thou wilt

become a monstrous clever talker.

CYCLOPS Wealth, manikin, is the god for the wise; all else is mere

vaunting and fine words. Plague take the headlands by the sea, on

which my father seats himself! Why hast thou put forward these arguments?

I shudder not at Zeus's thunder, nor know I wherein Zeus is a mightier

god than I, stranger; what is more, I reck not of him; my reasons

hear. When he pours down the rain from above, here in this rock in

quarters snug, feasting on roast calf's flesh or some wild game and

moistening well my up-turned paunch with deep draughts from a tub

of milk, I rival the thunder-claps of Zeus with my artillery; and

when the north wind blows from Thrace and sheddeth snow, I wrap my

carcase in the hides of beasts and light a fire, and what care I for

snow? The earth perforce, whether she like it or not, produces grass

and fattens my flocks, which I sacrifice to no one save myself and

this belly, the greatest of deities; but to the gods, not I! For surely

to eat and drink one's fill from day to day and give oneself no grief

at all, this is the king of gods for your wise man, but lawgivers

go hang, chequering, as they do, the life of man! And so I will not

cease from indulging myself by devouring thee; and thou shalt receive

this stranger's gift, that I may be free of blame,-fire and my father's

element yonder, and a cauldron to hold thy flesh and boil it nicely

in collops. So in with you, that ye may feast me well, standing round

the altar to honour the cavern's god. (The CYCLOPS goes into his

cave, driving ODYSSEUS' men before him.)

ODYSSEUS Alas! escaped from the troubles of Troy and the sea, my

barque now strands upon the whim and forbidding heart of this savage.

O Pallas, mistress mine, goddess-daughter of Zeus, help me, help me

now; for I am come to toils and depths of peril worse than all at

Ilium; and thou, O Zeus, the stranger's god, who hast thy dwelling

'mid the radiant stars, behold these things; for, if thou regard them

not, in vain art thou esteemed the great god Zeus, though but a thing

of naught. (He follows the CYCLOPS reluctantly. SILENUS also goes

in.)

CHORUS (singing) Ope wide the portal of thy gaping throat, Cyclops;

for strangers' limbs, both boiled and grilled, are ready from off

the coals for the to gnaw and tear and mince up small, reclining in

thy shaggy goat-skin coat.

Relinquish not thy meal for me; keep that boat for thyself alone.

Avaunt this cave! avaunt the burnt-offerings, which the godless Cyclops

offers on Aetna's altars, exulting in meals on strangers' flesh!

Oh! the ruthless monster! to sacrifice his guests at his own hearth,

the suppliants of his halls, cleaving and tearing and serving up to

his loathsome teeth a feast of human flesh, hot from the coals.

ODYSSEUS (reappearing with a look of horror) O Zeus! what can I

say after the hideous sights I have seen inside the cave, things past

belief, resembling more the tales men tell than aught they do?

LEADER OF THE CHORUS What news, Odysseus? has the Cyclops, most godless

monster, been feasting on thy dear comrades?

ODYSSEUS Aye, he singled out a pair, on whom the flesh was fattest

and in best condition, and took them up in his hand to weigh.

LEADER How went it with you then, poor wretch?

ODYSSEUS When we had entered yonder rocky abode, he lighted first

a fire, throwing logs of towering oak upon his spacious hearth, enough

for three wagons to carry as their load; next, close by the blazing

flame, he placed his couch of pine-boughs laid upon the floor, and

filled a bowl of some ten firkins, pouring white milk thereinto, after

he had milked his kine; and by his side he put a can of ivy-wood,

whose breadth was three cubits and its depth four maybe; next he set

his brazen pot a-boiling on the fire, spits too he set beside him,

fashioned of the branches of thorn, their points hardened in the fire

and the rest of them trimmed with the hatchet, and the blood-bowls

of Aetna for the axe's edge. Now when that hell-cook, god-detested,

had everything quite ready, he caught up a pair of my companions and

proceeded deliberately to cut the throat of one of them over the yawning

brazen pot; but the other he clutched by the tendon of his heel, and,

striking him against a sharp point of rocky stone, dashed out his

brains; then, after hacking the fleshy parts with glutton cleaver,

he set to grilling them, but the limbs he threw into his cauldron

to seethe. And I, poor wretch, drew near with streaming eyes and waited

on the Cyclops; but the others kept cowering like frightened birds

in crannies of the rock, and the blood forsook their skin. Anon, when

he had gorged himself upon my comrades' flesh and had fallen on his

back, breathing heavily, there came a sudden inspiration to me. I

filled a cup of this Maronian wine and offered him a draught, saying,

"Cyclops, son of Ocean's god, see here what heavenly drink the grapes

of Hellas yield, glad gift of Dionysus." He, glutted with his shameless

meal, took and drained it at one draught, and, lifting up his hand,

he thanked me thus "Dearest to me of all my guests! fair the drink

thou givest me to crown so fair a feast." Now when I saw his delight,

I gave him another cup, knowing the wine would make him rue it, and

he would soon be paying the penalty. Then he set to singing; but I

kept filling bumper after bumper and heating him with drink. So there

he is singing discordantly amid the weeping of my fellow-sailors,

and the cave re-echoes; but I have made my way out quietly and would

fain save thee and myself, if thou wilt. Tell me then, is it your

wish, or is it not, to fly from this unsocial wretch and take up your

abode with Naiad nymphs in the halls of the Bacchic god? Thy father

within approves this scheme; but there! he is powerless, getting all

he can out of his liquor; his wings are snared by the cup as if he

had flown against bird-lime, and he is fuddled; but thou art young

and lusty; so save thyself with my help and regain thy old friend

Dionysus, so little like the Cyclops.

LEADER Best of friends, would we might see that day, escaping the

godless Cyclops!

ODYSSEUS Hear then how I will requite this vile monster and rescue

you from thraldom.

LEADER Tell me how; no note of Asiatic lyre would sound more sweetly

in our ears than news of the Cyclops' death.

ODYSSEUS Delighted with this liquor of the Bacchic god, he fain would

go a-reveling with his brethren.

LEADER I understand; thy purpose is to seize and slay him in the

thickets when clone, or push him down a precipice.

ODYSSEUS Not at all; my plan is fraught with subtlety.

LEADER What then? Truly we have long heard of thy cleverness.

ODYSSEUS I mean to keep him from this revel, saying he must not give

this drink to his brethren but keep it for himself alone and lead

a happy life. Then when he falls asleep, o'ermastered by the Bacchic

god, I will put a point with this sword of mine to an olive-branch

I saw lying in the cave, and will set it on fire; and when I see it

well alight, I will lift the heated brand, and, thrusting it full

in the Cyclops' eye, melt out his sight with its blaze; and, as when

a man in fitting the timbers of a ship makes his auger spin to and

fro with a double strap, so will I make the brand revolve in the eye,

that gives the Cyclops light and will scorch up the pupil thereof.

LEADER Ho! ho! how glad I feel! wild with joy at the contrivance!

ODYSSEUS That done, I will embark thee and those thou lovest with

old Silenus in the deep hold of my black ship, my ship with double

banks of oars, and carry you away from this land.

LEADER Well, can I too lay hold of the blinding brand, as though

the god's libation had been poured? for I would fain have a share

in this offering of blood.

ODYSSEUS Indeed thou must, for the brand is large, and thou must

help hold it.

LEADER How lightly would I lift the load of e'en a hundred wains,

if that will help us to grub out the eye of the doomed Cyclops, like

a wasp's nest.

ODYSSEUS Hush! for now thou knowest my plot in full, and when I bid

you, obey the author of it; for I am not the man to desert my friends

inside the cave and save myself alone. And yet I might escape; I am

clear of the cavern's depths already; but no! to desert the friends

with whom I journeyed hither and only save myself is not a righteous

course. (He re-enters the cave.)

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS (singing) Come, who will be the first and who

the next to him upon the list to grip the handle of the brand, and,

thrusting it into the Cyclops' eye, gouge out the light thereof?

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS (singing) Hush! hush! Behold the drunkard leaves

his rocky home, trolling loud some hideous lay, a clumsy tuneless

clown, whom tears await. Come, let us give this boor a lesson in revelry.

Ere long will he be blind at any rate.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS (singing) Happy he who plays the Bacchanal amid

the precious streams distilled from grapes, stretched at full length

for a revel, his arm around the friend he loves, and some fair dainty

damsel on his couch, his hair perfumed with nard and glossy, the while

he calls, "Oh! who will ope the door for me?" (The CYCLOPS enters.

He is obviously drunk.)

CYCLOPS (singing) Ha! ha! full of wine and merry with a feast's

good cheer am I, my hold freighted like a merchant-ship up to my belly's

very top. This turf graciously invites me to seek my brother Cyclopes

for revel in the spring-tide. Come, stranger, bring the wine-skin

hither and hand it over to me.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS (singing) Forth from the house its fair lord

comes, casting his fair glance round him. We have someone to befriend

us. A hostile brand is awaiting thee, no tender bride in dewy grot.

No single colour will those garlands have, that soon shall cling so

close about thy brow.

ODYSSEUS (returning with the wine-skin. He is followed by SILENUS,

who is also drunk.) Hearken, Cyclops; for I am well versed in the

ways of Bacchus, whom I have given thee to drink.

CYCLOPS And who is Bacchus? some reputed god?

ODYSSEUS The greatest god men know to cheer their life.

CYCLOPS I like his after-taste at any rate.

ODYSSEUS This is the kind of god he is; he harmeth no man.

CYCLOPS But how does a god like being housed in a wine-skin?

ODYSSEUS Put him where one may, he is content there.

CYCLOPS It is not right that gods should be clad in leather.

ODYSSEUS What of that, provided he please thee? does the leather

hurt thee?

CYCLOPS I hate the wine-skin, but the liquor we have here I love.

ODYSSEUS Stay, then, Cyclops; drink and be merry.

CYCLOPS Must I not give my brethren a share in this liquor?

ODYSSEUS No, keep it thyself and thou wilt appear of more honour.

CYCLOPS Give it my friends and I shall appear of more use.

ODYSSEUS Revelling is apt to end in blows, abuse, and strife.

CYCLOPS I may be drunk, but no man will lay hands on me for all that.

ODYSSEUS Better stay at home, my friend, after a carouse.

CYCLOPS Who loves not revelling then is but a simpleton.

ODYSSEUS But whoso stays at home, when drunk, is wise.

CYCLOPS What shall we do, Silenus? art minded to stay?

SILENUS That I am; for what need have we of others to share our drink,

Cyclops?

CYCLOPS Well, truly the turf is soft as down with its fresh flowering

plants.

SILENUS (seating himself) Aye, and 'tis pleasant drinking in the

warm sunshine. Come, let me see thee stretch thy carcase on the ground.

CYCLOPS (sitting down) There then Why art thou putting the mixing-bowl

behind me?

SILENUS That no one passing by may upset it.

CYCLOPS Nay, but thy purpose is to drink upon the sly; set it between

us. (To ODYSSEUS) Now tell me, stranger, by what name to call thee.

(SILENUS is drinking steadily and stealthily.)

ODYSSEUS Noman. What boon shall I receive of thee to earn my thanks?

CYCLOPS I will feast on thee last, after all thy comrades.

ODYSSEUS Fair indeed the honour thou bestowest on thy guest, sir

Cyclops!

CYCLOPS (turning suddenly to SILENUS) Ho, sirrah! what art thou

about? taking a stealthy pull at the wine?

SILENUS No, but it kissed me for my good looks.

CYCLOPS Thou shalt smart, if thou kiss the wine when it kisses not

thee.

SILENUS Oh! but it did, for it says it is in love with my handsome

face.

CYCLOPS (holding out his cup) Pour in; only give me my cup full.

SILENUS H'm! how is it mixed? just let me make sure. (Takes another

pull.)

CYCLOPS Perdition! give it me at once.

SILENUS Oh, no! I really cannot, till I see thee with a crown on,

and have another taste myself.

CYCLOPS My cup-bearer is a cheat.

SILENUS No really, but the wine is so luscious. Thou must wipe thy

lips, though, to get a draught.

CYCLOPS There! my lips and beard are clean now.

SILENUS Bend thine elbow gracefully, and then quaff thy cup, as thou

seest me do, and as now thou seest me not. (Burying his face in his

cup)

CYCLOPS Aha! what next?

SILENUS I drunk it off at a draught with much pleasure.

CYCLOPS Stranger, take the skin thyself and be my cup-bearer.

ODYSSEUS Well, at any rate the grape is no stranger to my hand.

CYCLOPS Come, pour it in.

ODYSSEUS In it goes! keep silence, that is all.

CYCLOPS A difficult task when a man is deep in his cups.

ODYSSEUS Here, take and drink it off; leave none. Thou must be silent

and only give in when the liquor does.

CYCLOPS God wot! it is a clever stock that bears the grape.

ODYSSEUS Aye, and if thou but swallow plenty of it after a plentiful

meal, moistening thy belly till its thirst is gone, it will throw

thee into slumber; but if thou leave aught behind, the Bacchic god

will parch thee for it.

CYCLOPS Ha! ha! what a trouble it was getting out! This is pleasure

unalloyed; earth and sky seem whirling round together; I see the throne

of Zeus and all the godhead's majesty. Kiss thee! no! There are the

Graces trying to tempt me. I shall rest well enough with my Ganymede

here; yea, by the Graces, right fairly; for I like lads better than

the wenches.

SILENUS What! Cyclops, am I Ganymede, Zeus's minion?

CYCLOPS (attempting to carry him into the cave) To be sure, Ganymede

whom I am carrying off from the halls of Dardanus.

SILENUS I am undone, my children; outrageous treatment waits me.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Dost find fault with thy lover? dost scorn him

in his cups?

SILENUS Woe is me! most bitter shall I find the wine ere long. (SILENUS

is dragged into the cave by the CYCLOPS.)

ODYSSEUS Up now, children of Dionysus, sons of a noble sire, soon

will yon creature in the cave, relaxed in slumber as ye see him, spew

from his shameless maw the meat. Already the brand inside his lair

is vomiting cloud of smoke; and the only reason we prepared it was

to burn the Cyclops' eye; so mind thou quit thee like a man.

LEADER I will have a spirit as of rock or adamant; but go inside,

before my father suffers any shameful treatment; for here thou hast

things ready.

ODYSSEUS O Hephaestus, lord of Aetna, rid thyself for once and all

of a troublesome neighbour by burning his bright eye out. Come, Sleep,

as well, offspring of sable Night, come with all thy power on the

monster god-detested; and never after Troy's most glorious toils destroy

Odysseus and his crew by the hands of one who recketh naught of God

or man; else roust we reckon Chance a goddess, and Heaven's will inferior

to hers. (ODYSSEUS re-enters the cave.)

CHORUS (singing) Tightly the pincers shall grip the neck of him

who feasts upon his guests; for soon will he lose the light of his

eye by fire; already the brand, a tree's huge limb, lurks amid the

embers charred. Oh! come ye then and work his doom, pluck out the

maddened Cyclops' eye, that he may rue his drinking. And I too fain

would leave the Cyclops' lonely land and see king Bromius, ivy-crowned,

the god I sorely miss. Ah! shall I ever come to that?

ODYSSEUS (leaving the cave cautiously) Silence, ye cattle! I adjure

you; close your lips; make not a sound I'll not let a man of you so

much as breathe or wink or clear his throat, that yon pest awake not,

until the sight in the Cyclops' eye has passed through the fiery ordeal.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Silent we stand with bated breath.

ODYSSEUS In then, and mind your fingers grip the brand, for it is

splendidly red-hot.

LEADER Thyself ordain who first must seize the blazing bar and burn

the Cyclops' eye out, that we may share alike whate'er betides.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS Standing where I am before the door, I am too far

off to thrust the fire into his eye.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS I have just gone lame.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS Why, then, thou art in the same plight as I; for

somehow or other I sprained my ankle, standing still.

ODYSSEUS Sprained thy ankle, standing still?

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS Yes, and my eyes are full of dust or ashes from

somewhere or other.

ODYSSEUS These are sorry fellows, worthless as allies.

LEADER Because I feel for my back and spine, and express no wish

to have my teeth knocked out, I am a coward, am I? Well, but I know

a spell of Orpheus, a most excellent one, to make the brand enter

his skull of its own accord, and set alight the one-eyed son of Earth.

ODYSSEUS Long since I knew thou wert by nature such an one, and now

I know it better; I must employ my own friends; but, though thou bring

no active aid, cheer us on at any rate, that I may find my friends

emboldened by thy encouragement. (ODYSSEUS goes back into the cave.)

LEADER That will I do; the Carian shall run the risk for us; and

as far as encouragement goes, let the Cyclops smoulder.

CHORUS (singing) What ho! my gallants, thrust away, make haste and

burn his eyebrow off, the monster's guest-devouring. Oh! singe and

scorch the shepherd of Aetna; twirl the brand and drag it round and

be careful lest in his agony he treat thee to some wantonness.

CYCLOPS (bellowing in the cave) Oh! oh! my once bright eye is burnt

to cinders now.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Sweet indeed the triumph-song; pray sing it

to us, Cyclops.

CYCLOPS (from within) Oh! oh! once more; what outrage on me and

what ruin! But never shall ye escape this rocky cave unpunished, ye

worthless creatures; for will stand in the entrance of the cleft and

fit my hands into it thus. (Staggering to the entrance)

LEADER Why dost thou cry out, Cyclops?

CYCLOPS I am undone.

LEADER Thou art indeed a sorry sight.

CYCLOPS Aye, and a sad one, too.

LEADER Didst fall among the coals in a drunken fit?

CYCLOPS Noman has undone me,

LEADER Then there is no one hurting thee after all.

CYCLOPS Noman is blinding me.

LEADER Then art thou not blind.

CYCLOPS As blind as thou, forsooth.

LEADER How, pray, could no man have made thee blind?

CYCLOPS Thou mockest me; but where is this Noman?

LEADER Nowhere, Cyclops.

CYCLOPS It was the stranger, vile wretch! who proved my ruin, that

thou mayst understand rightly, by swilling me with the liquor he gave

me.

LEADER Ah! wine is a terrible foe, hard to wrestle with.

CYCLOPS Tell me, I adjure thee, have they escaped or are they still

within? (During the following lines, ODYSSEUS and his men slip by

the CYCLOPS, despite his efforts to stop them.)

LEADER Here they are ranged in silence, taking the rock to screen

them.

CYCLOPS On which side?

LEADER On thy right.

CYCLOPS Where?

LEADER Close against the rock. Hast caught them?

CYCLOPS Trouble on trouble! I have run my skull against the rock

and cracked it

LEADER Aye, and they are escaping thee.

CYCLOPS This way, was it not? 'Twas this way thou saidst.

LEADER No, not this way.

CYCLOPS Which then?

LEADER They are getting round thee on the left.

CYCLOPS Alas! I am being mocked; ye jeer me in my evil plight.

LEADER They are no longer there; but facing thee that stranger stands.

CYCLOPS Master of villainy, where, oh! where art thou?

ODYSSEUS Some way from thee I am keeping careful guard over the person

of Odysseus.

CYCLOPS What, a new name! hast changed thine?

ODYSSEUS Yes, Odysseus, the name my father gave me. But thou wert

doomed to pay for thy unholy feast; for I should have seen Troy burned

to but sorry purpose, unless I had avenged on thee the slaughter of

my comrades.

CYCLOPS Woe is me! 'tis an old oracle coming true; yes, it said I

should have my eye put out by thee on thy way home from Troy; but

it likewise foretold that thou wouldst surely pay for this, tossing

on the sea for many day.

ODYSSEUS Go hang! E'en as I say, so have I done. And now will I get

me to the beach and start my hollow ship across the sea of Sicily

to the land of my fathers.

CYCLOPS Thou shalt not; I will break a boulder off this rock and

crush thee, crew and all, beneath my throw. Blind though I be, I will

climb the hill, mounting through yonder tunnel.

LEADER As for us, henceforth will we be the servants of Bacchus,

sharing the voyage of this hero Odysseus.

THE END