

Jan Kochanowski = The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys

Helen's Speech (1.88-114)

All this have I foreseen, as in a glass;
Short-lived the mean enjoyment of his gain
For faithless Paris. See, soon the mighty Greeks
Disrupt his leisure and his peace of mind;
Then he, like raging wolf, scurries away
When all the flock is scattered. But they
Give chase, as shepherds with their hounds. He nigh
His prey must loose, himself dishonour'd hide
In forest deep. – Alas, how will my homing be?
They say I am with chains around my neck
To sit astern, to all the Grecian fleet
On view... How shall I then my brethren greet
And how, a shameless wretch, am I to come
Before thee, husband dear, and tell
All that hath happed to me? And shall I dare
To look thee full in th' face? O, would that thou
Hadst never Sparta seen, O, ill-starr'd Prince!
For truly tell, what wealth did I then want?
Of honoured princes born, as bride came I
Unto an honoured prince's house. God blessed
My lot with beauty, offspring, and foremost
With honourable name. This all I've lost
Through one bad man. My country's far, my friends,
My children see I not, nor know if safe,
And little better than a slave fare I
Who, taunted by bad tongues and shame, await
What none save Thee, Lord, know will come from Fate.

Ulysses' speech (1.383-409)

O, corrupted kingdom and nearing fast its doom,
Where neither laws are heeded, nor is justice
Given her place, but all's redeemed in gold!
Where but a single profligate youth hath schemed
With such success that all his most notorious
And most villainous deeds, from small to gross,
All noisily defend, with no regard
For truth nor to what end the matter speeds.
No knowledge have they, nor foreboding feel
What cank'rous worm devours the commonweal,
Bred in lascivious youth. Such is youth's price
On virtue and on shame, and honesty

Must hide 'fore their approach! They ruin
On their houses bring, and poverty,
Nay, very death (thou, Troy, shalt prove) to realm.
But, worst of all, what motley crowd they drag
Along by bad example to deprave!
What swarms of parasites that continually
Laze, and roll in luxury like swine!
Could any, think ye, from such stock arise
To render service to his state? Or breast-mail
Bear, he that in silks is often
Out of breath? How shall he stand on guard
When e'en at noon he's used to sleep? How resist
The enemy's attack when stagg'ring blind
In's own drunken stupor? Such strength feeling,
Or rather – feeling not, to war they cry!
O, God, with such brave men let me e'er vie!

Chorus (l.161-180)

All ye who rule the commonweal,
With human justice set to deal;
All ye, appointed shepherds sent
To tend God's flocks, as guardians meant:

This in your minds do always bear:
On earth ye sit in God's just chair,
From whence ye not for your affair
But for the common good must care.

Above the smaller rule supreme,
But over ye your God esteem,
To whom your acts' accounts ye'll owe
One day – ye wicked governors, woe!

This Lord no gifts will take, nor hark
If ye of kings or peasants stark
Be born, or fine or coarse your dress:
He evil deeds comes to redress.

Less danger private men commit
By private wrong, themselves forfeit.
But rulers' ills whole realms have tossed,
Yea, e'en the greatest empires lost.

