Man and woman and speech and deed and city and object should be honoured, if praiseworthy, with praise and incur, if unworthy, blame, for it is an equal error and mistake to blame the praiseable and to praise the blameable.

It is the part of one and the same man both to speak the needful rightly and to refute what is said not rightly; it is fitting, then, to refute those who rebuke Helen, a woman about whom univocal and unanimous has been the testimony of inspired poets, as has the ill omen of her name, which has become a memorial of misfortunes.

For my part, by introducing some reasoning into my speech, I wish to free the accused from blame (pausai tès aitias), and, by revealing her detractors as liars and showing forth the truth, to free her from ignorance (pausai tès amathias).

So then, that in nature and in ancestry the woman who is subject of this speech is pre-eminent among pre-eminent men and women is not uncouth, even to a few.

For it is clear that her mother was Leda, and her father was in fact (genomenon) a god, Zeus, but said to be (legomenon) a mortal, Tyndareus, of whom the one was shown to be her father because he was (dia to einai), and the latter was disproved, because he was said to be (dia to piíanai), and the latter was the most powerful of men, while the former was lord of all things.

Born of such stock, she had godlike beauty, which, taking and not mistaking (labousa kai ou lathousa), she kept.

In many did she work much desire for her love,
and with her one body she brought together many bodies of men
thinking great thoughts for great goals,
of whom some had greatness of wealth
some the glory of ancient nobility,
some the vigour of personal agility,
some command of acquired knowledge;
and all came
because of a passion which loved to conquer
(philonikou)
and a love of honour which was unconquered (anēkētou).

[5] Who it was, and why and how he sailed away,
taking Helen as his love, I shall not say.
To tell the knowing what they know already
shows the right but brings no delight.
Having passed over the time then in my speech now,\textsuperscript{92}
I shall go on to the beginning of my future speech,
and I shall set forth the causes which made it likely
that Helen's voyage to Troy should take place.

[6] For either it was
by the will of Fate
and the wishes of the Gods
and the votes of Necessity
that she did what she did,
or by force reduced
or by words seduced
<or by love possessed>\textsuperscript{93}

Now if through the first,
it is right for the responsible to be held responsible;
for God's predetermination (prothymin) cannot be hindered
by human premeditation (promēthiāi).
For it is the nature of things,
not for the stronger to be hindered by the weaker,
but for the weaker to be ruled and drawn by the stronger,
and for the stronger to lead and the weaker to follow.

God is a stronger force than man
in might and in wit and in other ways.
If then on Fate and on God one must place blame
(anatheteon)
Helen from disgrace one must free (apolyteon).

[7] But if she was by violence raped
and lawlessly forced
and unjustly outraged
it is plain that the rapist, as the outrager, did the wronging,
and the raped, as the outraged, did the suffering.

It is right, then,
for the barbarian who undertook a barbaric undertaking
in word and law and deed
to meet with blame in word,
exclusion in law,
and punishment in deed.
And how would it not be reasonable for a woman
raped and robbed of her country and deprived of her friends
to be pitied rather than pilloried?
He did the dread deeds; she suffered them.
It is just, therefore,
to pity her, but to hate him.

[8] But if it was speech which persuaded her
and deceived her soul,
not even to this is it difficult to make an answer
and to banish blame,
as follows:
Speech is a powerful lord, who
with the finest and most invisible body
achieves the most divine works:
it can stop fear and banish grief
and create joy and nurture pity.
I shall show how this is the case,
for I must offer proof to the opinions (doxēi deixai) of my hearers.
I both deem and define all poetry
as speech possessing metre.

[9] There come upon its hearers
fearful shuddering (phrikê periphobos)
and {tearful pity (eleos polydakrys)
and {grievous longing (pothos phiiopenhê),
and at the good fortunes and evil actions
of others’ affairs and bodies
through the agency of words
the soul experiences suffering of its own.
But come, I shall turn from one argument to another.94

[10] Inspired incantations conveyed through words
become {bearers of pleasure (epagôgoi bêdonês)
and {banishers of pain (apagôgoi lypês);
for, merging with opinion in the soul,
the power of the incantation beguiles it
and persuades it
and alters it by witchcraft.
Of witchcraft and magic twin arts have been discovered,95
which are {errors of the soul (psychês haematma)
and {deceptions of opinion (doxês apatemata).

[11] All who have and do persuade people of things
do so by moulding a false argument.
For if all men on all subjects
had both {memory of things past
and <awareness>96 of things present
and {foreknowledge of the future,
speech would not be similarly similar,
since, as things are now, it is not easy for them
to recall the past
nor to consider the present
nor to divine the future;
so that on most subjects most men
take opinion as counsellor to their soul.
But opinion, being slippery and insecure,
casts those employing it into slippery and insecure
successes.

[12] What cause, then,97 prevents the conclusion
that Helen similarly, against her will,
might have come under the influence of speech,
just as if ravished by the force of pirates?
For the mode of persuasion is in no way like that of necessity,
but its power is the same.
For the speech which persuades the soul
constrains that soul which it persuades
both to obey its utterances
and to approve its doings.
The persuader, as constrainer, does the wrong,
and the persuaded, as constrained, is wrongly blamed.

[13] That persuasion, when added to speech,
can impress the soul as it wishes,
one may learn
first from the utterances of the astronomers
who, substituting opinion for opinion,
taking away one but creating another,
make what is incredible and unclear
seem true to the eyes of opinion;
and second, compelling contests in words,
in which a single speech,
written with art, but not spoken with truth,
may charm and persuade a large multitude;
and third, the struggles of philosophic arguments,
in which swiftness of thought is also shown
making belief in an opinion easily changed.

[14] The effect of speech upon the structure of soul
is as the structure of drugs over the nature of bodies;
for just as different drugs dispel different secretions from
the body,
and some bring an end to disease, and others to life,
so also in the case of speeches
some distress, others delight,
some cause fear, others embolden their hearers, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.

[15] It has been stated, then, that, if she was persuaded by speech,
she did not do wrong (édikësen), but was unfortunate (énykësen).
The fourth cause I shall discuss in a fourth section.
For if it was love which did these things,
no difficulty will she have in escaping the charge
of the sin which is alleged to have taken place.
For the things we see
do not have the nature which we wish them to have,
but the nature which each happens to have;
through sight the soul is impressed even to its core.

[16] For example,
when enemy bodies fit themselves out against enemies,
with warlike gear of bronze and iron,
some for defence, some for offence,
if the sight sees this, it is alarmed, and alarms the soul,
so that often men flee in terror
from future danger as if it were present.
For strong as is the habit of obedience to the law,
it is driven out by fear resulting from sight
which, coming to a man, causes him to see: at naught
both the noble that is adjudged through law,
and the good that comes about through victory.

[17] It has happened that people, having seen frightening sights,
have lost presence of mind for the present moment;
even thus does fear extinguish and expel thought.
And many have fallen victim to
useless labour (mataiois ponoi)
and dread diseases (deinais nosois)
and madnesses hard to cure (dysiatois manais).

In this way the sight engraves upon the mind
images of things seen.
And many frightening impressions linger,
and what lingers is very similar to what is said.

[18] Moreover, whenever pictures from many colours and figures
perfectly create a single figure and form,
they delight the sight;
while the crafting of statues and the production of art-works
provide a pleasant vision to the eyes.
So it is natural for the sight
to be grieved by some things and to long for others;
and much love and desire for many things and bodies
is wrought in many people.

[19] If, therefore, the eye of Helen,
pleased by the body of Alexander,
presented to her soul eager desire and contest of love,
what is wonderful in that?
If, being a god, love has the divine power of the gods,
how could he lesser being reject and refuse it?
But if it is a disease (nosëma) of human origin
and a blind-spot (agnoëma) in the soul,
it should not be condemned as a sin (hamartême),
but considered a misfortune (atykhêma);
for she came – as she did come –
by the snares of fate (tykhês agreumasin)
not by the counsels of reason (gnômës bouleumasin),
and by the constraints of love (erôtos anangkais),
not by the devices of art (tekhnês parasites).

[20] How then can one regard the blame of Helen as just,
seeing as, whether she did what she did,
by love o'er mastered
or by speech persuaded
or by force ravished
or by divine constraint compelled,
she is utterly acquitted of all charge?

[21] I have through speech removed ill fame from a
woman.
I have stayed true to the procedure that I set up
at the outset of my speech.
I have tried to end the injustice of blame (mómou adikian)
and the ignorance of opinion (doxès amathian).
My purpose was to compose a speech as an encomium of
Helen
and an amusement for myself.98