

“History Has Its Eyes on You”: Revolutionizing Homeric *Kleos* in Lin-Manuel Mirenda’s
Hamilton

CAMWS 2022 Panel Handout

Greek passages:

1. μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλος δέ.
εἰ μὲν κ’ αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
ᾧλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ’ ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
ᾧλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰῶν
ἔσσειται, οὐδέ κέ μ’ ᾧκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχεῖη. *Iliad* 9.410-416

For my mother, a goddess, silver-footed Thetis tells me
of twofold fates that bring me towards the end of death.
If I, staying here, fight around the city of the Trojans,
my homecoming is destroyed, however there would be immortal glory;
but if I go home to the beloved fatherland,
my beautiful glory is destroyed, but my years will be long,
swiftly the end of death would not come upon me.

2. ὧς σὺ μὲν οὐδὲ θανὼν ὄνομ’ ᾧλεσας, ἀλλά τοι αἰεὶ
πάντας ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπους κλέος ἔσσειται ἐσθλόν, Ἀχιλλεῦ *Odyssey* 24.94-95

Not even dying did you destroy your name, but always
you will have beautiful glory among all men, Achilles

Passages

1. Alexander Hamilton to Eliza, dated October 13th, 1780: “I would not have you imagine Miss that I write to you so often either to gratify your wishes or to please your vanity; but merely to indulge myself and to comply with that restless propensity of my mind, which will not allow me to be happy when I am not doing something in which you are concerned. This may seem a very idle disposition in a philosopher and a soldier; but I can plead illustrious examples in my justification. Achilles had liked to have sacrificed Greece and his glory to his passion for a female captive; and Anthony lost the world for a woman.” Source <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0902s>
2. Hamilton writes under pseudonym “Pericles” in the evening post, dated February 8th, 1803: “If the President would adopt this course, he might yet retrieve his character; induce the best part of the community to look favorably on his political career, exalt himself in the eyes of Europe, save the country, and secure a permanent fame. But for this, alas! Jefferson is not destined! – Pericles”, *Alexander Hamilton: From Obscurity to Greatness* ed. John Kaminski. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2016.

Songs from *Hamilton* (in order of appearance)

1. "Alexander Hamilton": "get your education, don't forget from whence you came, and the world's gonna know your name" ... "when America sings for you, will they know what you overcame, will they know you rewrote the game? The world will never be the same"
2. "My Shot": "don't be shocked when the history books mention me"
3. "The Story of Tonight": "I may not live to see our glory, but when our children tell our story, they'll tell the story of tonight"
4. "Right Hand Man": "if they tell my story I am either gonna die on the battlefield in glory or rise up" ... "head full of fantasies of dying like a martyr"
5. "Satisfied": "you're like me, I've never been satisfied" ... "I'll never be satisfied" ... "he'll never be satisfied"
6. "History Has Its Eyes on You": "let me tell you what I wished I'd know when I was young and dreamed of glory. You have no control who lives who dies who tells your story" ... "history has its eyes on you"
7. "Non-Stop": "are you aware that we're making history?" ... "why do you write like you're running out of time?" ... "He will never be satisfied." "History has its eyes on you"
8. "The Room Where it Happens": "I wanna build something that's gonna outlive me"
9. "One Last Time": "History has its eyes on you..."
10. "Hurricane": "and when my prayers to God were met with indifference, I picked up a pen, I wrote my own deliverance" ... "this is the only way I can protect my legacy"
11. "The World Was Wide Enough": "I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory, is this where it gets me... if I throw away my shot, is this how you'll remember me" ... "What if this bullet is my legacy?" Legacy, what is a legacy? Its planting seeds in a garden you'll never get to see"
12. "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story": "and when you're gone, who remembers your name, who keeps your flame, who tells your story?" ... "Will they tell your story"