

Messenger: We launched the ship, our best Sidonian vessel, 1770
fitted for fifty rowers. Raising the mast,
and locking the oars, we bound the rudder taut
to the crossbeam and lowered it into the water.
While we worked, some Greeks appeared on the shore,
in rags, looking lost, Menelaus' men,
who were waiting for this moment. He spoke to them:
"Greeks? Shipwrecked here? Poor souls. Help us
bury our leader, Menelaus, who died at sea.
Tyndareus' daughter Helen offers funeral rites 1780
in effigy. Then we'll bring you to the Egyptian king."
We wondered at this strange show of Greeks,
but we followed your orders, for you insisted
that the stranger alone should command the ship.
We loaded the offerings, but the black bull
meant for sacrifice would not walk the plank.
Bellowing, bucking, eyes burning through his horns,
the bull warned us back. Helen's husband took charge:
"You Greeks, sackers of Troy, flip the bull and hoist him
on your shoulders, the way Greeks do it." 1790
And so they did. Our rowers took their oars,
then Helen climbed aboard, moving so gracefully.
She sat amidships, next to her 'dead' husband,
and all the Greeks huddled close at the bulkheads,
with swords (we later learned) hidden under their cloaks.

